

Trump gets it wrong on Latinos, but so does the media

The Hill (<https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/media/282540-trump-gets-it-wrong-on-latinos-but-so-does-the-media/>) · by Alex Gangitano

Presumptive GOP nominee Donald Trump declares that a “Mexican” judge overseeing a Trump University fraud lawsuit has an inherent conflict of interest, and the major TV news media strike out when reporting on the controversy. Journalists on all major networks accustomed to discussing bias in black and white terms erroneously questioned whether Trump’s comments were in fact racist.

{mosads}Federal Judge Gonzalo Curiel is white. It’s not his race that is at issue; it’s his ethnic heritage. Curiel is Mexican-American, or an American of Mexican descent. He’s not Mexican or “Spanish” (for the completely uninformed). Trump has learned that describing someone as Mexican has a *sub rosa* pejorative meaning. Nothing could be further from the truth, and yet we know that Trump’s use of the term has a dog-whistle implication. In this instance, it is simply an inaccurate way to describe Curiel. Imagine if we called African-Americans solely by their continent of origin, or called Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas an African and asked that he recuse himself of matters related to that entire continent. Where do you draw the line? Would Jews in Congress be forced to recuse themselves on matters related to Israel? The issue is two-pronged: Trump’s controversial comments about Curiel’s ethnicity and the media’s lack of knowledge and lexicon for discussing issues related to U.S. Latinos.

Latinos are not a race; Mexicans are not a race. If bias is expressed against Jews, it is bigotry, not racism. If bias is expressed against the LGBT community, it is bigotry, not racism. Similarly, bias against Hispanics is bigotry, not racism, because Hispanics are an ethnic group, not a racial group. Latinos can be of any race.

The media did not even bother analyzing Trump's assertion that Curiel's ethnicity in fact represented a conflict of interest in the case. Trump argues that he is "building a wall" between Mexico and the U.S., and that Curiel's ethnicity poses an inherent conflict that hinders impartial rulings. Trump is not an elected official; he has no governmental power to independently authorize a wall on our southern border. Trump's border wall is a fantasy. You can't have a conflict of interest over something that doesn't exist and is nowhere near coming to fruition. Finally, Curiel is first and foremost a respected American federal jurist.

While all the major Sunday talk shows — ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos"; CBS's "Face the Nation"; CNN's "Inside Politics," "State of the Union" and "Reliable Sources"; "Fox News Sunday"; and NBC's "Meet the Press" — all tracked the Trump/Curiel controversy, not one Sunday news show included a Latino journalist or political analyst. Not even the gold standard of political reporting, the "Friday News Roundup" on NPR's "The Diane Rehm Show," proffered a Latino political analyst to discuss the Curiel issue. The lack of Latino representation on the Sunday morning talk shows has been well documented by Media Matters and others. The Curiel issue is damning primarily to Trump for his continued Latino bashing and to the major broadcast and cable news programs for their lack of basic understanding on how to report on U.S. Latinos and their virtual exclusion of Latino commentators on issues of direct concern to the U.S. Latino community. Frankly, I don't know who is more irresponsible — Trump for the horrendous and unjust damage he has inflicted on the Latino community, or the news media, who have failed to accurately report on these events or provide Latino analysts to interpret them to the nation and the world.

Last week, at Trump's bombastic press conference on his foundation's disbursement of funds to veterans, he verbally attacked two journalists: Jim Acosta from CNN and ABC News' Tom Llamas. Yet no major network reported the bashing of Latino journalists, despite the well-known press conference expulsion of Univision's Jorge Ramos and Trump's tête à tête with Telemundo and MSNBC anchor Jose Diaz-Balart during Trump's one and only trip to the U.S.-Mexico border.

I don't condone violent protest, but is it a wonder that Latinos are enraged at having become the GOP's new Willie Horton? Is it fair to egg on Latinos at every turn, and to insult Native Americans and indigenous people by giggling and

glossing over the use of historical figures like Pocahontas for purposes of ridiculing and denigrating the heritage of Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)?

Only one on-air political commentator, CNN's Ana Navarro, comprehended the depth of anger and outrage in the Latino community over Trump's intolerant and incessant attacks. Navarro, a conservative commentator, stridently and righteously rose to the occasion last Friday to defend the honor of everyday American Latinos. Navarro also took umbrage at the slanderous and ludicrous Trump venom spewed against Curiel, who is both a then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) and President Obama court appointee.

Trump and the news media are a perfect storm, battering the Latino community with their lack of understanding of these issues. Last year, we saw the uproar over the lack of minorities represented in the Oscar nominations. This year, we see what happens when Latinos are underrepresented in the sister medium of news. The Latino protests you see out on the campaign trail are as much directed toward Trump's vitriol as they are toward TV media's inadequate and substandard news gathering and reporting.

Sanchez is the chairman and co-founder of the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts in Washington.

The Hill (<https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/media/282540-trump-gets-it-wrong-on-latinos-but-so-does-the-media/>) · by Alex Gangitano