

The Conway Daily Sun

Trickle down hate

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The United States has always had a problem with racism. We've never been willing to tackle it head on, preferring to sweep it under the carpet and pretend that passing a law or two and paying annual homage to Dr. Martin Luther King is enough to take care of it.

Then along came Barack Obama. In 2004, after three terms in the Illinois Senate, Obama ran for U.S. Senate. He delivered a well-received speech to the Democratic National Convention that same year. In the interest of full disclosure, I was in Chicago on business that year, and heard him speak at a dinner I attended. He gave a fine speech — it was easy to see why there was so much buzz around him.

That was the year that birtherism was born. It's been traced back to perennial candidate (and something of a vexatious litigant) Andy Martin, who has run for office in a number of states, including New Hampshire. Martin began the rumors about Obama — that he wasn't born in the U.S., that he was a Muslim and so on. Those rumors persisted over the years but had nearly died down when along came Donald Trump who demanded to see Obama's "long form" birth certificate in 2011, and birtherism kicked into high gear.

Obama took it all in stride. He even made jokes about it. (He didn't sit around in his underpants tweeting in a vituperative frenzy.) The Trump birtherism spread and deepened, and suddenly it was OK to be openly racist in public again, in a way that had been unacceptable since the '60s. The Trump administration has continually exacerbated that open racism.

We've seen violence against people of color, violence and bullying against children — including children right here in New Hampshire. The wall has served as fuel for a national tiki torch-sized outpouring of racist outrage. Every day, Trump sends out malevolent rage tweets about caravans, invasions and a crisis at the border. The reports from the border don't bear any of this out. There is no crisis. Trump spent last weekend playing golf, which illustrates how serious this crisis is.

Given the rise in racist rhetoric, it shouldn't surprise anyone to see it mirrored in the N.H. Legislature. This year, there are two anti-immigrant bills, one in the House and one in the Senate. House Bill 232 requires state and local governments to comply with federal detainer requests and prohibits state and local government entities from adopting policies that prohibit, restrict or discourage the enforcement of federal immigration law. (Republicans love local control, except that they really don't.) This is an unpleasant bit of work, called the "anti-sanctuary act," and sponsored by a variety of tea partiers and Free Staters.

HB 232 pales in comparison to Senate Bill 317, which bills itself as "an act prohibiting sanctuary locations in New Hampshire." Its statement of intent says it "is necessary to protect our country from foreign and domestic terrorism, diminished prosperity caused by artificially low wages paid to those present in the United States in violation of our immigration laws, a disregard of the rule

of law, the presence of foreign criminals, foreign persons participating in our elections, and strained local and state finances caused by a disproportionate participation of foreign welfare recipients.”

This is a load of codswallop. Domestic terrorism in this country is perpetuated by angry white men. Foreign terrorists aren't behind mass shootings. The pinkos at the CATO Institute found in 2018 that you were more likely to die from an animal attack than be killed by a foreign terrorist. There are no foreign persons participating in N.H. elections. That is a nasty bit of xenophobia aimed at perpetuating the GOP myth of voter fraud. The Republicans need to keep that myth alive, because it's how they'll continue to chip away at voting rights. As for foreign welfare recipients? More bunk. Undocumented people don't have the documents needed to receive public assistance.

New Hampshire Republicans eliminated the state minimum wage and have resisted every attempt to put one into place. Yet here they are, mouthing concerns about artificially low wages? These hypocrites have turned their backs on the plight of low wage workers for decades.

Please read SB 317 and take notice of the sponsors. There is only one from Carroll County, State Sen. Jeb Bradley. Jeb Bradley has long enjoyed an undeserved reputation as a moderate. These days, he's a political windsock, flapping in the racist breeze generated by what the Republican Party has become in the era of Trump. Wealthy old white men like Jeb don't actually march with tiki torches. They write the inflammatory rhetoric that ratchets up the kind of anger that fuels the mob mentality and leads to violence.

No matter how you feel about the wall, you should be ashamed that our state senator put his name on this dishonest and shockingly xenophobic piece of legislation.