Richard Corcoran's ad exploits anti-immigrant fear | Thumbs down

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We would have dismissed House Speaker Richard Corcoran's political ad targeting sanctuary cities as ridiculous if it weren't so scary.

We don't call it scary because we live in fear of immigrants who are in the country illegally. "Scary" is the only way to describe how Corcoran, who's all but announced he's running for governor this year, chose to stoke xenophobic fears to appeal to GOP primary voters.

In the ad funded by his political committee, a red-haired young woman walks through a suburban neighborhood smiling and texting when a man in a hoodie, supposedly an illegal immigrant, shoots her. The camera zooms in on his gun barrel.

"A young woman gunned down by an illegal immigrant who should have been deported but was protected by a sanctuary city," Corcoran says.

The ad makes reference to the 2015 case of San Francisco's Kate Steinle, whose tragic death President Trump also exploited in his campaign. Steinle died after being shot by a homeless undocumented immigrant with previous convictions. The man was later acquitted of murder and manslaughter charges because evidence showed the bullet from a gun he had found moments earlier ricocheted off the pavement before striking her. A jury found him guilty of being a felon in possession of a gun.

The Miami New Times correctly pointed out last week the similarity between Cocoran's ad and the 1915 pro-Ku Klux Klan movie "Birth of a Nation," in which a young white woman is chased in the woods by a black man, portrayed by a white actor in blackface, and jumps off a cliff out of fear of him and dies.

Corcoran has taken note on how painting undocumented immigrants as criminals helped Trump ascend to the White House. That's despite the fact those immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans, according to a 2017 CATO Institute study.

Corcoran can show tough stances on illegal immigration to primary voters without vilifying an entire group of people.