

Townhall

Leadership Malpractice: John Conyers' Resignation Is 50 Years Too Late

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Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., hospitalized for an undefined stress-related illness, announced his retirement after serving more than 50 years in the House. Two other Conyers -- a son and a great-nephew -- immediately announced plans to vie for the elder Conyers' seat. The great-nephew said, "His doctor advised him that the rigor of another campaign would be too much for him just in terms of his health."

Despite his sudden retirement, Conyers "vehemently" denies all accusations that he ever committed sexual harassment. "My legacy can't be compromised or diminished in any way by what we are going through now," Conyers said in a radio interview from the hospital. "This too shall pass. My legacy will continue through my children."

One former aide describes how the congressman, who was driving while she was in the passenger seat, attempted to fondle her: "He was trying to feel me up with his right hand. I kept pushing his hand away. Then he put his hand on my neck and started trying to tickle me. We were on I-75, and he was driving erratically. I was saved by the bell because we got pulled over by the police for the way he was driving." Another former staffer claimed that Conyers would sit "close to (her) while stroking and rubbing (her) thighs," and that once, while she was at Conyers' home, he "came out of the bathroom completely naked."

After initially defending Conyers as an "icon," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., called for Conyers to resign. Her call for his resignation, however, came 50 years too late.

For what has Conyers, a co-founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, achieved in his over half-century of service? Every two years since 1989, Conyers has introduced a bill for reparations for slavery. It has never gotten out of committee.

This blacks-are-owed-something-because-of-slavery mindset is dangerous and counterproductive. It is this mindset that is the basis for "affirmative action," or race-based preferences.

While "affirmative action" to achieve "diversity" is now a staple on college campuses, some warned about its unintended negative consequences. Archie Epps was one. He served as one of

Harvard's first black deans. He criticized Harvard for admitting unqualified black students, and warned the school as early as the late '60s about the perils of admitting scholastically unqualified students to achieve "diversity." Epps predicted that lowered standards for incoming black students would lead to a higher dropout rate, precisely what has happened.

Similarly, Judge Macklin Fleming, a former Yale graduate, wrote a letter in 1969 warning the dean of Yale Law School about its new "quota" policy, which guaranteed that 10 percent of each entering class would be composed of black students. Fleming predicted that "minority groups" that outperform relative to blacks, such as Asian-Americans, would be penalized in favor of lesser-qualified minorities. He predicted that those admitted with lower standards would struggle academically. The students, Fleming predicted, would make demands for watered-down courses or would accuse "racist" professors of giving them poor grades. All of this, he argued, would create a supposition that minorities are not as competent as non-minorities. Their degrees would be viewed with suspicion.

Conyers supports race-based preferences. Yet in 2000, The Detroit News evaluated the affirmative action programs of seven colleges and universities in Michigan. They reported: "Among black students who were freshmen in 1994, just 40 percent got their diplomas after six years, compared to 61 percent of white students and 74 percent of Asians. ... Universities knowingly admit students who have a high chance of failing. ... The 10 years' worth of data analyzed by The News shows that the more selective a university is in choosing its students, the more likely its students are to graduate."

One history professor even said: "We're throwing them out after taking their money and they're getting nothing out of it. We're mugging (the majority) of them, taking their money, taking their dignity. I feel like I am participating in a vast criminal conspiracy."

Conyers opposes school vouchers, which would allow the money for education to follow the student rather than the other way around. In Detroit, the average urban high school student reads several grades below grade level. Urban parents want vouchers so they can send their child to a private or parochial school, and not to the underperforming public school chosen by government. Conyers opposes the privatization of Social Security. The libertarian think tank CATO Institute calculates that because blacks die at a younger age, there is a net transfer of about \$10,000 from black workers to non-black workers.

Conyers does not understand the connection between the welfare state and the demise of the nuclear black family. In 1965, 25 percent of black babies were born to unmarried mothers. Fifty years later, and over \$22 trillion spent on the "War on Poverty," and now 72 percent of black kids are born out of wedlock.

Conyers' indifference about open borders allows unskilled illegal workers to compete for urban jobs and puts downward pressure on wages.

It is long past time for Conyers to pack up his race cards and call it a career.