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Hey President Trump--Invite Cong Omar to White House for discussion as Obama did with Gates

By Robert Weiner and Kim Bartenfelder



Ilhan Omar

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Hey, President Trump--If you want to reduce the flames, as Ivanka suggested you do, why not invite Cong. Ilhan Omar to the White House Lawn for lunch-drinks and discussion about mutual respect and lower rhetoric on both sides as Obama did with Henry Gates after a brouhaha on race relations, and as you did with Cong. Cummings on prescription prices.

An invitation to conversation and understanding is what it took to begin to come to terms back in 2009. President Obama invited Henry Louis Gates Jr., a Harvard professor and African American man, and Sgt. James Crowley, a white policeman, to the White House-- the Beer Summit. The conversation detailed how Henry Louis Gates Jr. had earlier that year been arrested by Sgt. James Crowley because he was thought to have been a burglar. In a situation of being ill-informed and a swiftness to arrest, Gates was charged with disorderly conduct for refusing to leave his home. By the time of the Beer Summit, Obama had more thoroughly prepared for a discussion on race, race relations, and racial profiling.

Come 2019, Mr. Trump needs to do the same thing-- invite Congresswoman Omar to the White House, one-on-one, and say we "both", including me, have used some hyperbolic rhetoric, and I'd like to tone down the flames.

The racist and xenophobic language many say was used by Trump and his supporters over the past few weeks has called the attention of every news station and without a doubt made every representative on The Hill follow the backlash. However, the direct targets have been four women of color, representatives Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley. These representatives are proving that when challenged on the basis of their race and ethnicity, their leadership will not falter and that women of color and those they serve will overcome hatred and ignorance.

There is also merit to pointing out the oversized rhetoric of some on the squad about Israel and the President's supporters. The House passed a resolution criticizing House members' anti- rhetoric too, on March 7, 2019.

At the most recent Trump rally July 16, his supporters chanted "send her back", directed towards Rep. Ilhan Omar. However, as everyone knows by now, Omar was born in Somalia, became a refugee at 10 years old with her family who sought asylum in the U.S., and became a U.S. citizen when her family made a permanent home in Minnesota. She currently serves Minnesota's 5th district. After the rally, Trump denied his support of the chanters even though he paused to let them finish and they did in his 13-second silence.

However, one day after the rally Omar returned home to Minnesota. Once welcomed by her constituents Omar said, "We are going to continue to be a nightmare to this president because his policies are a nightmare to us. We are not deterred, we are not frightened, we are ready."

This past Tuesday the House voted to condemn Trump's language, 240 to 187. All Democrats voted for the resolution as did six others. The Republican representatives who voted in favor to condemn were Rep. Will Hurd, Rep. Susan Brooks, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick and Rep. Fred Upton.

Even though Trump could tweet all day and the four congresswomen can dispute him, pride must be swallowed. It's about making right and putting forth an example to the freest country in the world. Firstly Trump must invite Omar for civil conversation. This is a time to heal and while the congresswomen are gaining public support the President must concede that there was a serious error in his actions and words. From there, all parties involved can say they made a worthy effort to compromise, understanding, and rationale.

Cummings and Gates have now repeatedly said how they have worked with Presidents Obama and Trump on joint issues. Trump and Omar could do the same.

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Bob Weiner, a national issues and public affairs strategist, has been spokesman for and directed the public affairs offices of White House Drug Czar and Four Star General Barry McCaffrey, the House Government Operations Committee and Chairman John Conyers (D-MI), Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY) and the House Narcotics Committee, and was Chief of Staff for the House Aging Committee and Chairman Claude Pepper (D-FL). He also was Legislative Assistant to Ed Koch of New York and a political aide to Ted Kennedy (D-MA) for his Presidential and Senate races. Bob worked at the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate as youth voter registration director in 1971-1972 when the constitution was amended to allow 18-year olds the vote.

Since he left the White House in 2001, Bob heads up a public affairs and issue strategies company, Robert Weiner Associates. He is a regular political analyst on Radio America and has appeared on Bill Maher, CNN Crossfire, Today, Good Morning America, and the CBS, NBC, and ABC evening news. He is widely published in columns he writes on national issues in major papers throughout the country including recently the Washington Post, Denver Post, Miami Herald, Christian Science Monitor, New York Daily News, Baltimore Sun, Boston Globe, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Atlanta Constitution, New York Post, Washington Times, Sacramento Bee, Palm Beach Post, Salt Lake Tribune, Minneapolis Star Tribune, and Adweek. He is also regularly quoted in key media coast-to-coast, including the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, AP and Reuters, concerning the presidential campaign and national issues.