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USA

Trump's Racism Brings Chaos to a Small Town in Ohio

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We know racism stands at the center of Donald Trump's politics, but one recent absurd story shows just how dangerous it is. And it reveals just how profoundly sick is our society, that he still has the support of half of the electorate.

During the presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, he claimed that the country was being invaded and overrun by millions of illegal immigrants, released from prisons and mental hospitals in countries around the world, who have caused a wave of crime in American cities. And, he said, in one town, Springfield, Ohio, "they're eating the dogs, the people that came in, they're eating the cats, they're eating the pets of the people that live there."

The story began with a Facebook post by Springfield resident Erika Lee who claimed a neighbor saw her daughter's boyfriend's cat, which had been missing, taken and eaten by Haitians. "I've been told they are doing this to dogs, they have been doing it at Snyder Park with the ducks and geese." There was no truth in any of this. But the Facebook post was picked up on far-right social media sites and then by Senator J.D. Vance, Trump's running mate, who repeated the story. Once Trump said it in the debate, the story became national news.

Springfield's mayor and city manager repudiated the false claims about immigrants eating pets, yet both Trump and Vance continued to repeat the story at their rallies. The story, of course, suggested that the Haitian people were savages.

Donald Trump, Jr., who often speaks for his father, added this. "You look at Haiti, you look at the demographic makeup, you look at the average I.Q. — if you import the third world into your country, you're going to become the third world," he said on a conservative broadcasting network. "That's just basic. It's not racist. It's just fact."

The Trumps' racist language soon created chaos in Springfield as provocateurs, began to call in bomb threats that eventually led authorities to shut down local schools, hospitals, and city hall, as well as Wittenberg University and Clark State College. Springfield officials also canceled a planned Culture Fest, featuring art and music, "in light of recent threats and safety concerns." The Haitians in Springfield feel fearful and worried.

Mike DeWine, the Republican governor of Ohio, who was born and grew up in Springfield, also repudiated the false claims about the Haitian immigrants and wrote in a New York Times opinion piece, "As a supporter of former President Donald Trump and Senator JD Vance, I am saddened by how they and others continue to repeat claims that lack evidence and disparage the legal migrants living in Springfield. This rhetoric hurts the city and its people, and it hurts those who have spent their lives there."

Springfield is a town of 60,000 that has in recent years received between 12,000 and 15,000 Haitian immigrants. The immigrants are not "illegals," as Trump and Vance have claimed, but enjoy "temporary protected status," which allows them to live and work in the United States because it is not safe for them to return to their home country. As DeWine wrote, "They are there legally. They are there to work."

As his rallies Trump rails against what he calls an invasion of immigrants who are he says, "animals," "vermin," and "poisoning the blood of our country." Trump promises that as president he will launch a national effort to round up millions of illegal immigrants and deport them. Now he says that he'll begin in Springfield.

All the more reason to stop this dangerous racist from becoming president.

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