

Trump attacks immigrants, defends January 6 fascists and white supremacists at black journalists' convention

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On Wednesday, in a bid to appeal to a layer of upper middle class African Americans, former President Donald Trump appeared in person for a sit-down panel interview at the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) convention in Chicago. The interview was conducted by Rachel Scott of ABC News, Kadia Goba of Semafor and, a Trump favorite, Harris Faulkner of Fox News.

The convention has previously hosted a bevy of former and aspiring Democratic presidents, including Bill Clinton, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden and Barack Obama. Besides Trump, Republican President George W. Bush appears to be the only other Republican president who has spoken at an NABJ convention.

Trump's appearance immediately descended into the gutter when he took exception to the first question posed by ABC's Scott, who said, "You have used words like 'animal' and 'rabid' to describe black district attorneys. You've attacked black journalists—calling them a loser, saying the questions that they asked are, quote, 'stupid' and 'racist.'"

Turning to Trump's chummy relationship with neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes, Scott noted, "You've had dinner with a white supremacist at your Mar-a-Lago resort." She then asked, "So my question sir, now that you are asking black supporters to vote for you, why should black voters trust you after you have used language like that?"

Trump refused to answer the "very nasty" and "disgraceful" question and instead attacked Scott for being employed by "ABC ... a fake news network."

Turning to Republican attacks on the ethnic identity of Vice President and presumptive Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris, Scott asked Trump if he rejected Republicans' characterization of her as a "D.E.I. (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) hire?"

Trump, again, refused to answer the question. Scott

pressed if he thought Harris "is only on the ticket because she was a black woman?"

Trump claimed he "only knew her" from her "Indian heritage" until "a number of years ago, when she happened to turn black."

"So I don't know, is she Indian or is she black?" Trump asked, adding, "I respect either one, obviously she doesn't."

Harris's father is a Jamaican immigrant and a professor at Stanford University, while her mother is an immigrant from India. Despite speaking in front of a room of African Americans, Trump is apparently incapable of understanding the concept of multiracial families.

While much of the mainstream press focused on Trump's attacks on Harris's identity, near the end of the truncated interview, in response to a question from Scott, Trump promised to pardon violent January 6 fascists if he was re-elected.

"Oh, absolutely I would," Trump said. An incredulous Scott retorted, "They've been convicted."

When the audience reacted positively to Scott's comment, Trump responded, "Well, they were convicted by a very, very tough system." He then pivoted to attacking anti-police violence protesters, falsely claiming they suffered no consequences for exercising their right to protest unending police murder.

Scott emphasized the well-documented violent character of the January 6 coup, noting that there is video of Trump supporters beating and dragging Capitol Police officers. Trump responded by defending Ashli Babbitt, a former Air Force veteran and QAnon fascist who was shot and killed by police while attempting to breach the interior of the Capitol.

"They shot a young lady in the face who was protesting," Trump said, then falsely claimed that "you

know, nobody died that day.”

In between his racist attacks on Harris and defense of January 6, Trump railed against immigrants. He repeated his well-worn fascist talking points about an “invasion” of migrants “stealing” “black jobs.” Asked to define what a “black job” was, Trump replied, “It’s anybody who has a job.”

The convention was held in Chicago, Illinois, and represented Trump’s first major appearance in the city in nearly five years. As part of his fascistic rhetoric, Trump regularly denigrates cities with large African American populations such as Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Atlanta as dens of crime and violence.

Outside the event, a few hundred people protested Trump’s appearance in the city. Some chanted, “Say it loud, say it clear! Racists are not welcome here!” Others carried signs in support of immigrant rights and Palestine, a few in support of Kamala Harris.

Prior to the conference, Trump attacked Harris on his social media network for not appearing at the event. Trump wrote:

Crazy Kamala disrespectfully refused to attend the National Association of Black Journalists Conference, but I am on my way to meet with em now in Chicago. Because of which, she’ll probably end up doing, she has no choice, but remember—it is only for that reason!

President Joe Biden had been previously scheduled to appear at the event, until he dropped out of the presidential race. Campaign staff for Harris confirmed prior to the event that the presumptive Democratic nominee would also appear for questions in September, either in person or virtually.

The fact that NABJ hosted Trump by himself provoked a crisis within the organization. Prior to the event, several members of the group condemned organizers for hosting Trump due to his previous attacks on members of the press, including black journalists.

2017 NABJ Journalist of the Year recipient and MSNBC contributor April Ryan wrote on X/Twitter Tuesday:

The reports of attacks on Black women White House correspondents by the then-president of the

United States are not myth or conjecture, but fact. To have a presumed orchestrated session with the former president is an affront to what this organization stands for and a slap in the face to the Black women journalists (NABJ journalists of the year) who had to protect themselves from the wrath of this Republican presidential nominee who is promoting an authoritarian agenda that plans to destroy this nation and her democracy with his Project 2025. I object to this NABJ session with Donald Trump in Chicago.

Washington Post columnist and NABJ co-chair Karen Attiah announced on Tuesday that she was stepping down from her position over Trump’s invitation, noting that her decision “was influenced by a variety of factors, I was not involved or consulted with in any way with the decision to platform Trump in such a format.”

Responding to Trump’s statements at a campaign event Wednesday, Kamala Harris offered the banalities that made her a non-entity until recently:

This afternoon, Donald Trump spoke at the annual meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists. And it was the same old show, the divisiveness and the disrespect. And let me just say, the American people deserve better. The American people deserve better.



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