



TRUMP AND THE SNAKE

Posted on June 20, 2016 by Cyrus Mehta

Donald Trump is fond of reading the lyrics from Al Wilson's 1968 R&B hit song "[The Snake](#)" in his campaign rallies. While this is a catchy tune, Trump has now corrupted the song by associating it with his opposition to Muslims. He first called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, including Syrian refugees, and recently modified it by calling for a suspension of immigration from areas of the world when there is a proven history of terrorism against the United States or its allies. Trump most recently said that the United States should consider more racial profiling, in response to a question about whether he supported greater law enforcement scrutiny of Muslim Americans after the Orlando mass shooting. If all of these proposals were implemented, it would impede the ability of millions of temporary visa holders and immigrants to legitimately enter the United States.

This video depicting [Trump's reading of The Snake in his rally in Greensboro, NC on June 14, 2016](#) is too chilling to watch, as the reading is interspersed with the ejection of a protestor amidst frenzied chants of "USA... USA". Although the lyrics are inspired by Aesop's fable of the [Farmer and the Viper](#), the lyrics appear very sinister when Trump associates them with his war on Muslims. The lyrics revolve around a tender hearted woman who rescues a half frozen snake. After the snake is rescued, he bites the woman, and when she is dying, the snake tells her that she knew very well that she took in a poisonous snake. One view regarding the moral of this fable is to teach the lesson not to expect a reward from the wicked. Another view is that the rescuer realizes that it is his own fault for pitying a scoundrel. Trump first associated these lyrics with Syrian refugees, fully realizing that almost all the refugees have genuinely escaped harm in Syria, and many have been desperate enough to even die, including children, while trying to reach safer shores.

Read the lyrics yourself to see how they have been twisted to suit Trump's

agenda:

*On her way to work one morning
Down the path alongside the lake
A tender hearted woman saw a poor half frozen snake
His pretty colored skin had been all frosted with the dew
"Oh well," she cried, "I'll take you in and I'll take care of you"
"Take me in oh tender woman
Take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake*

*She wrapped him up all cozy in a curvature of silk
And then laid him by the fireside with some honey and some milk
Now she hurried home from work that night as soon as she arrived
She found that pretty snake she'd taking in had been revived
"Take me in, oh tender woman
Take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake*

*Now she clutched him to her bosom, "**You're** so beautiful, " she cried
"But if I hadn't brought you in by now you might have died"
Now she stroked his pretty skin and then she kissed and held him tight
But instead of saying thanks, that snake gave her a vicious bite
"Take me in, oh tender woman
Take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake*

*"I saved you," cried that woman
"And you've bit me even, why?
You know your bite is poisonous and now I'm going to die"
"Oh shut up, silly woman," said the reptile with a grin
"You knew damn well I was a snake before you took me in
"Take me in, oh tender woman
Take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake*

Trump has even more shamelessly exploited these lyrics after the massacre of innocent LGBT party goers in an Orlando night club by Omar Mateen, who was discovered to be a Muslim and born in the United States. The snake, according to Trump, represents the Muslim immigrant who was let into the country, and

who now viciously bites the people who let him in. Even though Mateen was a US citizen by virtue of his birth in this country, Trump falsely asserted in one of his speeches that he “was born in Afghan, of Afghan parents, who immigrated to the United States.” Trump went on to add that the “only reason the killer was in America in the first place was because we allowed his family to come here.” While there was profiling of Muslim immigrants following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Trump’s proposals would far exceed the profiling policies that were put into place following 9/11.

Following 9/11, the Bush administration through Attorney General Ashcroft tweaked the rules to make it easier to detain immigrants. The expanded regulation, which took effect on September 20, 2001, authorized the then INS to hold any non-citizen in custody for 48 hours or an unspecified “additional reasonable time” before charging the person with an offense. In the post 9/11 sweep, immigrants from mainly Muslim countries were detained and deported in secret. Although they were detained because of immigration violations, it was under the pretext of investigating them for suspected links to terrorism. In the end, the 1000+ immigrants who were detained and deported in secret were not charged or convicted of terrorism.

The Bush Administration then implemented Special Registration, which applied to males from 26 countries, 25 of which had significant Islamic populations. Dutifully, 85,000 people lined up to register, thinking that they should cooperate with the government. 13,000 men who were found to have immigration violations, many of whom may have been on the path to getting green cards, were placed in deportation proceedings. Not a single terrorist was discovered under the Special Registration program, which proved to be a colossal waste of tax payer money and was disbanded.

Trump now wishes to take these discredited policies even further. Although there was profiling since 9/11, and every application for an immigration benefit since those attacks is viewed through the prism of national security, immigration did not stop. The basic architecture of our immigration system remained intact, and eligible applicants have been admitted while undergoing more extensive security checks. If Trump’s proposals are implemented, there will be a complete ban on immigration from countries where there is a proven history of terrorism against the United States. Just as finding out who is a Muslim would be unclear, it is equally unclear whether this ban would include people from countries such as Syria or Pakistan, or whether it would also

involve certain European countries such as France, the United Kingdom and Belgium. Would it also include countries like India or The Philippines, which sends one of the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States? The ban would cover visitors, students and people from these countries, which have all inspired terrorist attacks on its soil, who are legitimately immigrating, including spouses of US citizens. To blame immigrants for the Orlando killings goes beyond the pale, which was perpetrated by a mentally unstable American citizen who may have been inspired by terrorism but also by hate against LGBTs. And where does this stop? Trump said that if the parents were not allowed into the country, this massacre would not have happened. But what about the countless gun deaths caused by other mentally unstable US citizens? Is Trump blaming these killers' ancestors who may have at some point in time come from another country? Trump is inappropriately casting doubt on an entire religion of over 1.2 billion adherents worldwide who are essentially peaceful.

While Trump's rhetoric is frightening enough, there is ample authority in the law that would allow him to implement his proposed ban if he became President. Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act provides in part, as follows:

(f) Suspension of entry or imposition of restrictions by President – *Whenever the President finds that the entry of any aliens or of any class of aliens into the United States would be detrimental to the interests of the United States, he may by proclamation, and for such period as he shall deem necessary, suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens as immigrants or nonimmigrants, or impose on the entry of aliens any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate.*

Apart from Congress putting a check on the President's authority under INA 212(f), and possibly the courts, the only likely limitations on the exercise of this authority is with respect to lawful permanent residents who have taken brief trips abroad and would be assimilated to the status of a continuously-present resident under [*Delgadillo v. Carmichael*](#), [*Kwong Hai Chew v. Colding*](#) and [*Landon v. Plasencia*](#). Even they would be at some risk of being denied readmission, and would probably be better advised not to travel outside the US under a hypothetical President Trump.

The good news is that despite playing to irrational fear and reciting the lyrics of The Snake, Trump's poll numbers have slipped. The conventional wisdom used

to be that a Republican presidential candidate who was forceful on security issues would gain an advantage prior to an election. It appears that the attack in Orlando has not helped Trump, and [fear mongering may have lost its appeal](#). This could well change if there was another attack orchestrated by a foreign terrorist organization rather than by an unstable US citizen, but so far Trump's war on Muslims does not seem to be helping him. After all the senseless racial profiling following 9/11, it should become pretty obvious to the American people that profiling a whole community for the acts of one person is not a good law enforcement tactic. It would only alienate the community whose members are well integrated into the American fabric and contributing to the country, and who would also be willing to cooperate with law enforcement. It is also most un-American to profile a whole community as a substitute for individualized guilt, which goes against the principles upon which this nation was founded and has set an example for scores of countries around the world. If Trump continues to slip, it is hoped that The Snake again be viewed as a cool R&B song in the soul music genre rather than a hate anthem against Muslims.