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By Patrick Martin
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Trump aide demands of Jewish reporter: “What’s your ethnicity?”

In a televised incident that gave a moment of insight into the fascistic atmosphere inside the Trump White House, presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway reacted to a reporter’s question about Trump’s racist vilification of four Democratic congresswomen by demanding to know his

Conway was speaking with reporters outside the White House Tuesday morning, when Andrew Feinberg, a White House reporter for Breakfast Media, asked her a follow-up question on a previous comment she had made about Trump’s tweets against the congresswomen. Conway had denied that Trump was telling them to go back to their countries of origin when he told them to “leave the country.”

“If the president was not telling these four congresswomen to return to their supposed countries of origin, to which countries was he referring?” Feinberg asked.

Conway replied, “What’s your ethnicity?”

Reporters were visibly staggered by the implications of the question, and Feinberg, who is Jewish, asked her why his ethnicity was relevant to his question.

“Because I’m asking you a question,” Conway said, without any evident effort to actually explain herself. She continued, “My ancestors are from Ireland and Italy.”

This comment appeared to suggest that an official whose ancestry was European has an edge on a reporter—or four congresswomen—whose ancestry might not be. But the

sheer *non sequitur* character of the responses appeared to leave reporters fumbling for words.

There was no attempt by other reporters to pursue the matter, and Conway then began to rant about Trump's reasons for targeting the four congresswomen, saying, "He's tired, a lot of us are sick and tired of this country—of America coming last, to people who swore an oath of office."

The exchange involving Conway has been hailed by neo-Nazi groups in the US, including the fascist *Daily Stormer*, which declared her comments, which it directly linked with anti-Semitism, as "almost too glorious to even be real."

In a subsequent appearance on Fox News, Conway vented more racist poison, describing the four congresswomen—all from racial or ethnic minorities—as "a dark underbelly of people in this country." She added, in a further suggestion that opposition to Trump was tantamount to treason, "We are sick and tired of people denigrating that American flag, the American military, veterans and America."

Andrew Feinberg later tweeted, "By asking about my ethnicity ... in response to my question, [@KellyannePolls](#) inadvertently confirmed that [@realDonaldTrump](#) was telling [@IlhanMN](#), [@RashidaTlaib](#), [@AOC](#), [@AyannaPressley](#) to return to Somalia, Gaza, Puerto Rico, and somewhere in Africa."

Interviewed on CNN, Feinberg added, "I have been a journalist in Washington for about 10 years, and I have never had any government official speak to me that way or ask such an inappropriate question."

There are undoubtedly multiple factors behind this explosion. Conway's own husband, George, a prominent attorney who was considered for a top Justice Department position in the Trump administration, has become a vociferous public opponent of Trump, despite his right-wing politics. In an op-ed column published Tuesday in the *Washington Post*—only a few hours before his wife's outburst—Conway described how his mother, born in the Philippines, had occasionally been accosted by racists who demanded that she "go back where you came from."

Conway may have issues with Feinberg himself. He has written several pointed articles on Conway's blatant violation of the Hatch Act, which bars federal employees from engaging in partisan politics. A report issued last month by the Office of Special Counsel, the executive branch agency that vets political appointees, recommended that Conway be fired for multiple violations of the Hatch Act.

Conway was free to continue her public attacks on Democrats, the OSC said, but she should be employed by the Trump reelection campaign or the Republican Party, not the White House. The White House has refused to allow Conway to testify about this issue before a House committee, defying a congressional subpoena.

But whatever the peculiarities of her personal situation, Conway's bizarre and semi-deranged response to a predictable press question gives a glimpse of the mood within Trump's inner circle.

The fascist ranting of the president is not merely a matter of his individual psychology, however odious, but expresses the sentiments of a definite political grouping that shares these sentiments and, when challenged in public, automatically reaches for the clubs of racism and authoritarianism to hit back.

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