



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Memo: Fact Checking the New York Times Misquote of Steve King

UPDATED: February 3, 2020

Washington, D.C.- Congressman Steve King releases this memo as a service to the constituents of Iowa's 4th Congressional District. The memo lays out important information concerning the recent misquote of Congressman Steve King by the New York Times. King encourages interested parties to consider this important information as they form their opinions on the matter.

Fact Checking the New York Times Misquote of Steve King

Allegation: In a quote attributed to him by the New York Times, King is alleged to have wondered when the phrases "White nationalist, white supremacist, Western Civilization" became offensive, suggesting to some that he does not view the first two terms as disparaging.

King's response: King has consistently disputed this interpretation, maintaining that he was simply trying to ask when the phrase "Western Civilization" had gained a pejorative connotation, an assertion that is supported by the remaining section of the Times' quote.

King [says the conversation](#) in which this quote is alleged to happen was about the left's use of weaponized language: "*we discussed the changing use of language in political discourse. We discussed the worn out label "racist" and my observation that other slanderous labels have been increasingly assigned to Conservatives by the Left, who injected into our current political dialog such terms as Nazi, Fascist, 'White Nationalist, White Supremacist, — Western Civilization, how did THAT language become offensive? Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?'...just to watch Western Civilization become a derogatory term in political discourse today.*"

Notably, none of the context of the discussion which spawned the "quote" was included in the New York Times story. This context would have added greater clarity to King's reported remarks, revealing that his intention was to question the inclusion of "WESTERN CIVILIZATION" alone as a pejorative.

Important Facts:

- **No tape of the interview with the *New York Times* exists and the paper refuses to release the reporter's notes of the conversation.**
- **The content of the Times "quote" makes it clear that King was ONLY talking about "Western Civilization".**

The "quote": "White Nationalist, white Supremacist, Western civilization--- how did THAT language become offensive? Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?"

NOBODY IN AMERICA EVER SAT IN A CLASS about the merits of **White Nationalism or White Supremacism**. The incorrect interpretation that has been given to this "quote" refutes itself based on the "quoted" sentence's own construction.

- **Mark Steyn, hosting Rush Limbaugh's show on January 18, explains the Times' game: "That's not a good faith interview request."**

Said Steyn:

*"He made a mistake, Steve King. He agreed to give an interview on national immigration policy to the *New York Times*. That's not a good faith interview request. They're only asking you, and he should know this, they're only asking you to stitch you up. To talk to you for three hours and get you to use one phrase in there that they can lift out and kill you with."*

...

*"This guy, Steve King, was trapped, trapped! **The words he said about 'when did that become controversial,' he meant the phrase 'Western Civilization.'** He's not a white supremacist. He's not a white nationalist. It's all stupid talk. So you've just surrendered the phrase 'Western Civilization.' I don't get that. I don't see what's in it for conservatism in surrendering that phrase, in accepting the leftist's view that the term 'Western Civilization' is beyond the pale."*

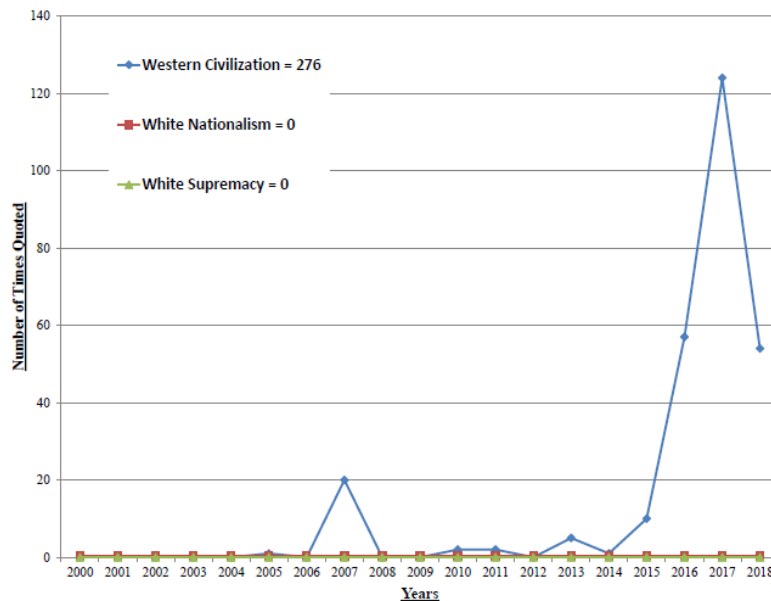
- **Contemporaneous evidence supports King's version of story:** In a ***Christian Science Monitor*** article published on 1/15/19 (5 days after the ***Times*** story broke) King is quoted

making a similar argument: “In a conversation with the Monitor **just before the holidays**, King defended himself against accusations of racism. The left, he says, has weaponized terms like “racist,” “Nazi,” and “white nationalist,” using them against anyone who dares to defend American values or the Constitution. “There are people that don’t like America the way it is,” he says, “and there are people that don’t like America when she was at her best. They want to tear down the systems we have. I don’t believe that. I think our Founding Fathers got it right.”

However, this **CSM** interview **occurred prior to the release of the Times** article, and shows how King had been making a variation of this argument at the approximate time he spoke to the **Times** reporter. In this case, though, the CSM actually published it in the context in which it was made. **It is clear that King was making a similar argument to the Times.**

- The quote in the **CSM** is the **FIRST DOCUMENTED INSTANCE** of Steve King ever using the phrase “white nationalist.” This is an important point, because King has asserted that “That ideology never shows up in my head. I don't know how it could possibly come out of my mouth.” A Lexis-Nexis search dating back to 2000 shows **King has never used any** of the following phrases: “white nationalism,” “white nationalist,” “white supremacist,” or “white supremacy.” In the same time frame, King is quoted 276 times using the term “Western Civilization.”

Steve King Quoted Saying “Western Civilization”, “White Nationalism”, or “White Supremacy”



Based on this data, it appears unlikely that King spontaneously used the phrases “white nationalist” and “white supremacist” in his discussion with the Times reporter, as they were never common elements of his speech. It suggests that King was repeating terms fed to him by the Times.

- The contention that King reacted to the Times reporter’s use of the phrases “white nationalist,” “white supremacist” and “western civilization” as pejoratives is supported by the body of the Times article itself.

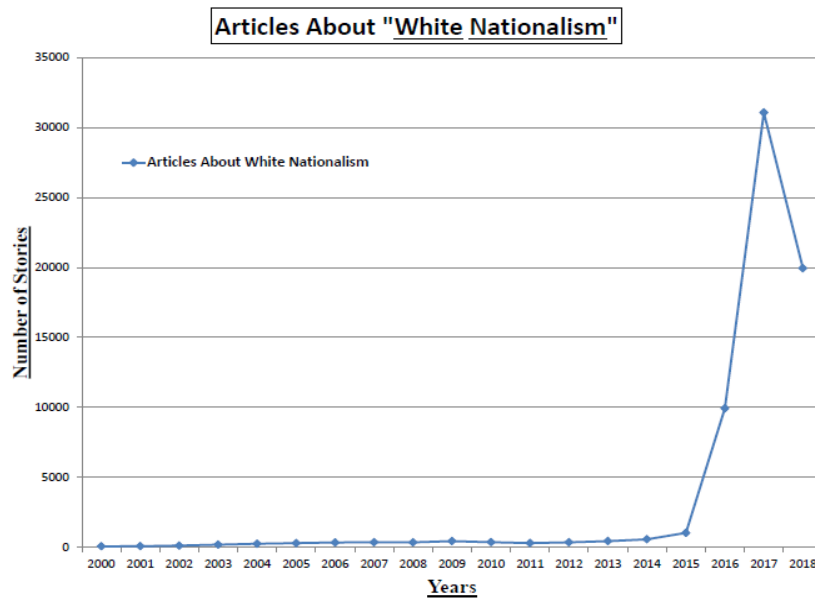
The article contains the following passage, likely written prior to the King interview: “Elected to Congress in 2002, Mr. King attracted the attention of hate-watch groups like the Anti-Defamation League as he spoke increasingly about preserving ‘Western Culture’ or ‘Western Civilization.’ The groups consider those buzzwords that signal support to white nationalists, along with an obsession with birthrates and abortion rates among different ethnic groups.”

Doesn’t it make more sense that the reporter asked a question in which “Western Civilization” was linked with the offensive epithets, and King responded by wondering how it came to be that the meritorious phrase “Western Civilization” became a similar pejorative? Certainly, the answer he is alleged to have given fits with this belief.

- The point King was attempting to make about the Left’s use of labels to smear conservatives, labels which now include even the concept of “Western Civilization” itself, is supported by Lexis-Nexis data. Since 2015 there has been an explosive increase in the use of the labels “White Supremacist,” “White Supremacy,” “White Nationalist,” and “White Nationalism.” This squares closely with what Congressman King told Dave Price of WHO-TV regarding the phrase “White Nationalist”: “It is a derogatory term today. I wouldn’t have thought so maybe a year or two or three ago. Today they use it as a derogatory term, and it implies that you are a racist.”

In his statement, King was trying to put into words his entirely accurate observation that the term “white nationalist” has been weaponized by the left against conservatives, and that its use in this form has markedly increased over the past several years.

King’s point about the increased frequency with which the weaponized term “white nationalist” has been injected into modern political dialogue is evident when data from a Lexis-Nexis News Database search is analyzed.



As King told Price, it has only been in the last “year or two or three” that the pejorative phrase “white nationalist” has gained purchase in the political debate as a weaponized term.

- **“Completely Bogus”**: A follow up *New York Times* story about Steve King entitled “A Timeline of Steve King’s Racist Remarks and Divisive Actions” was criticized by legendary journalist Brit Hume as being “completely bogus.” This “completely bogus” story was written the next day by the same writer, in the same paper, on the same general topic, and could possibly be revealing of a bias regarding Congressman King.
- The *Congressional Record* made the exact same error as the *New York Times* in transcribing King’s 1/15/19 floor statement, when the transcriptionist left out a break between the words “white supremacist” and “western civilization.” Video shows King intentionally inserting a break between those words, but the transcript does not reflect this.

No one believes the *Congressional Record* was acting with animus. But their error did reveal how either a similar error, or an intentional misplacement of punctuation, could have led to a botched quote in the times. Remember, King has always disputed the quote as it was portrayed in the *Times*.

King [is insisting upon a correction](#) in the *Congressional Record* so that it reflects the quote as he intentionally delivered it on the House floor. King's correction reveals that he was attempting to separate "Western Civilization" from the other two pejorative terms.

New York Times/Congressional record mistaken quote: *"White Nationalist, White Supremacist, Western Civilization---how did THAT language become offensive? Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?"*

Corrected quote: *"White Nationalist, White Supremacist,— Western Civilization, how did THAT language become offensive? Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?"*

One misplaced hyphen in the NY Times story gave birth to a meritless controversy, by falsely implying that Congressman King did not differentiate between the three phrases.

- **Steve King has no accusers.** In the case of Brett Kavanaugh and the students from Covington High School, they had accusers whose claims could be rebutted. King has no accusers. No one has ever come forward to state that King has treated them improperly.

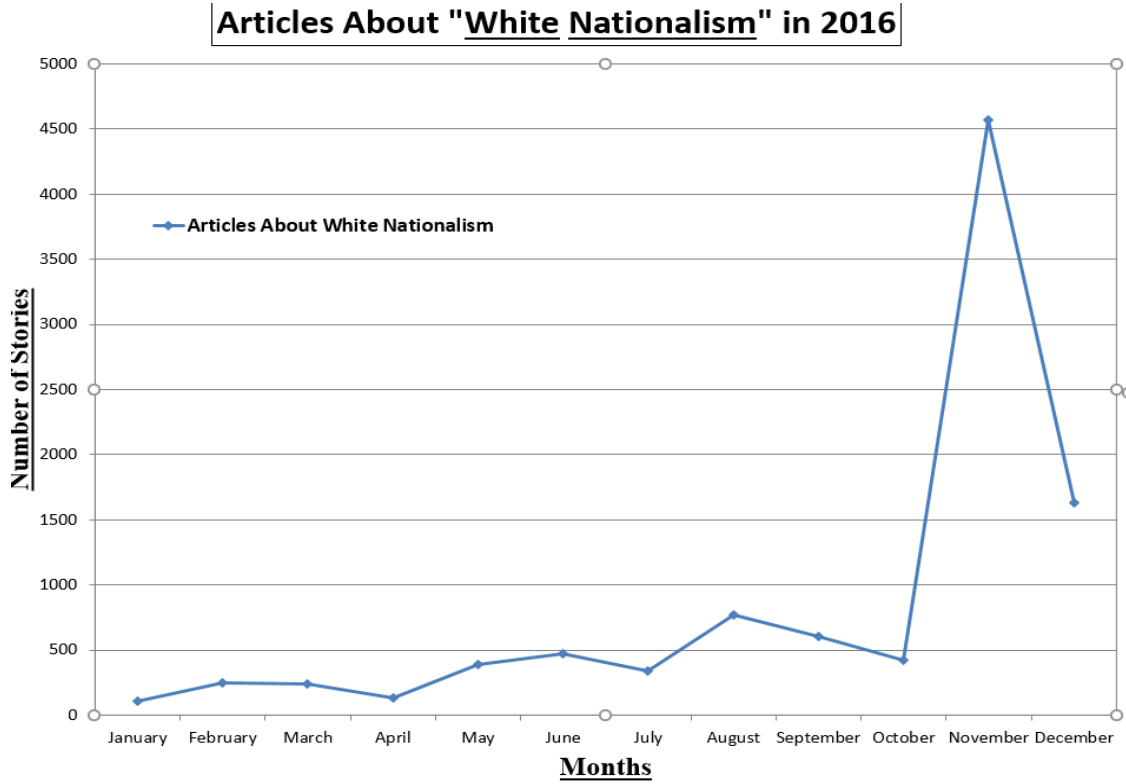
UPDATES: 2/3/2020

Since the initial release of this fact check document, additional information has been revealed which further shows the extent to which a misquote in the New York Times was weaponized and used against Steve King. Further, this information also shows that Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's unilateral decision to strip King of committee assignments was an unjust and unprecedented abuse of power.

- **The Left has weaponized the use of racially charged phrases to attack Conservatives:** On November 14, 2016 Politico ran a story entitled "[Soros Bands With Donors to Resist Trump, 'Take Back Power'](#)". The article discusses a three day conference, beginning on November 13th, 2016, in which *"George Soros and other rich liberals who spent tens of millions of dollars trying to elect Hillary Clinton are gathering in Washington for a three-day, closed door meeting to retool the big-money left to fight back against Donald Trump."*
- **King has frequently asserted that one of the strategies the activists attending the "Resistance" conference developed was the weaponization of new terminology**

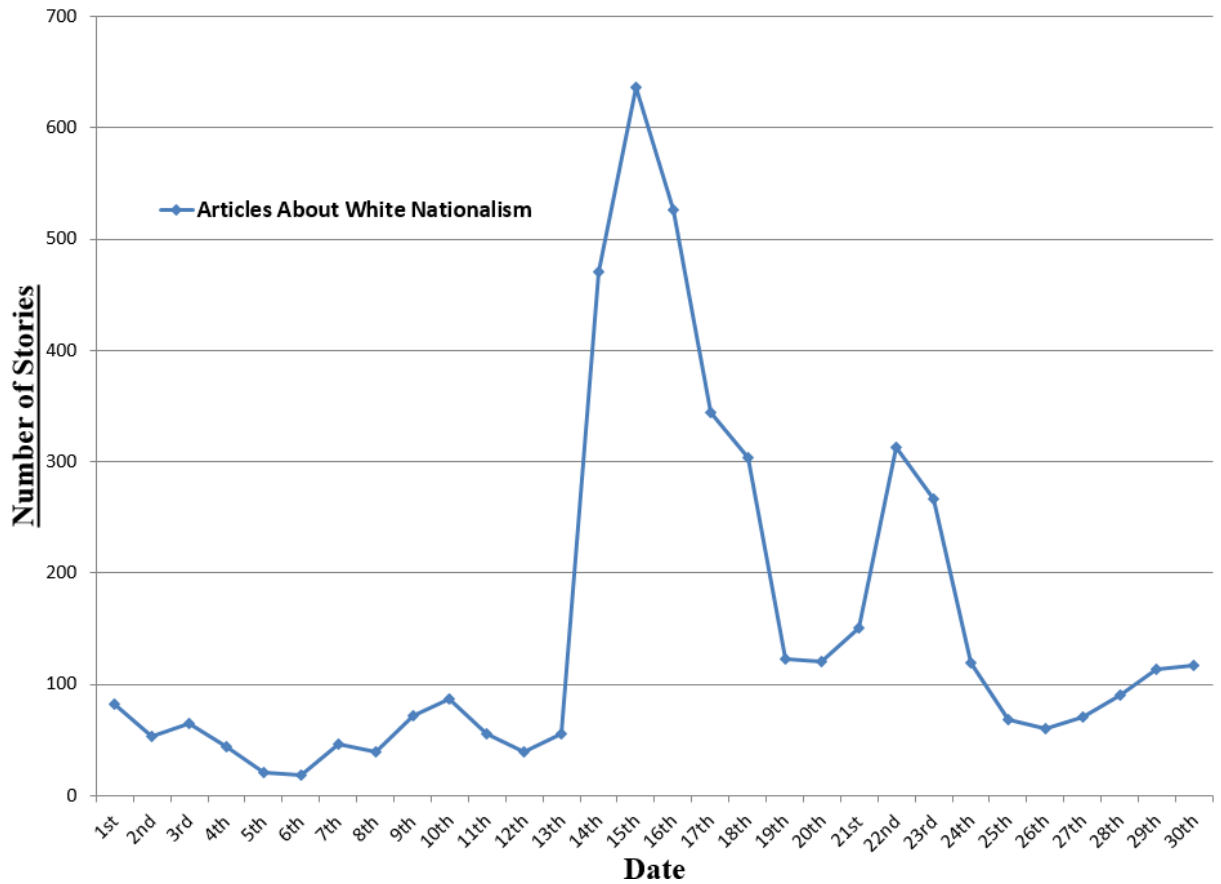
spread through the media to malign conservatives, an assertion that data corroborates.

For example, Lexis-Nexis data shows that the use of the phrase “White Nationalism” in the national media was virtually non-existent until November of 2016.



In fact, the spike in usage on November 2016 **correlates perfectly with the “Resistance” gathering in the Mandarin Hotel**. Note that the November spikes in usage of “white nationalism” correspond to the exact days (November 13-14-15) in which the Soros-led conference was being held and covered by the media.

Articles About "White Nationalism" in November '16



- Another indicator of the recent weaponization of the phrase “white nationalism” can be found in a study of the Congressional Record. According to CRS, **no Member of Congress has ever said, in their original words, the term White Nationalist on the House Floor prior to President Donald Trump being elected.**
- **Kevin McCarthy’s decision to remove King from all three of his committees for a misquote in the New York Times is unprecedented** with no analogous case to Congressman King’s. Apart from party switches/level of party support, King is only the 4th Member in modern history, according to CRS, to be stripped of all committee assignments, and he is the only one who was removed from committees for a reason that has no basis in history, House or Conference Rules, or Federal law.

Conclusion: Congressman King was railroaded over a false quote. To believe the version of events relied upon by Kevin McCarthy to strip King of committee assignments, one must believe that an unreasonable but “sensational” interpretation, for which no evidence exists, is more likely to be accurate than a reasonable, “noncontroversial” interpretation which is internally supported by context clues and externally supported by data and other contemporaneous, published accounts. One must also believe that *The New York Times*, a hostile, liberal paper which has had other articles about Congressman Steve King written by the same author thoroughly debunked as “completely bogus,” set aside its animus in this particular case.

Note: This document contains hyperlinks to source material. Parties interested in reviewing the links can do so thru Congressman King’s website (<https://steveking.house.gov>) which is hosting this document in an internet friendly version.

