

Klansmen in the White House

written by Stephen Millies

August 5, 2019



California Gov. Ronald Reagan was angry that the most populous country in the

world—the People’s Republic of China—had finally taken its rightful seat in the United Nations in 1971. But he was furious at the African delegates who welcomed their friend to the U.N.

So [Reagan called the White House and talked to President Richard Nixon](#). “Last night, I tell you, to watch that thing on television, as I did, to see those, those monkeys from those African countries—damn them—they’re still uncomfortable wearing shoes!”

This repulsive exchange was recorded on the Nixon tapes. It could and should have been made public in time for the 1980 election, when racist Reagan was elected president. But it was suppressed for 48 years.

No surprise

The reaction of most of the media to Reagan’s comments was like the Claude Rains character in the movie “Casablanca.” Rains told the cafe owner played by Humphrey Bogart that he “was shocked, shocked to discover that gambling is going on here!”

Nobody should be shocked by Reagan’s racism — or Nixon’s. While Reagan was on the phone with the White House, he was trying to railroad Dr. Angela Davis to California’s gas chamber.

The month before, in September 1971, Nixon congratulated New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller for massacring 29 prisoners at Attica. Nixon himself was massacring hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian people.

Nixon used the tag team of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney to dismantle the meager anti-poverty programs that had been started in the 1960s. These two war criminals later played key roles in the bloody invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reagan called Black people in Watts “mad dogs” when he successfully ran for

governor of California in 1966. (“The Metropolitan Frontier” by Carl Abbott.) When hungry people lined up for food packages during the kidnapping of millionaire heiress Patty Hearst, the California governor asked “whether there shouldn’t be an outbreak of botulism.” (Sarasota Journal, March 7, 1974)

Reagan deliberately started his 1980 presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Miss., where three civil rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner — had been murdered by the Klan.

Reagan didn’t mention these Black and Jewish martyrs in his speech that day. Instead he called for “states’ rights”—the slogan of the slave-owning confederacy — in a blatant appeal for racist votes.

Ku Klux Klan Imperial Wizard Bill Wilkinson endorsed Reagan and said that the 1980 Republican platform “reads as if it was written by a Klansman.” (“The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America,” by Wyn Craig Wade) [Thirty-six years later the Klan endorsed Donald Trump.](#)

Inciting racist violence

Once in the White House, Reagan busted the strike of the PATCO air traffic controllers in 1981. Union busting and all forms of bigotry go hand-in-hand.

[Reagan ignored the HIV/AIDS epidemic for years while his press secretary Larry Speakes laughed about it.](#)

Racist violence spiked before and after Reagan’s 1980 election. Black churches were burned. White racist Joseph Christopher killed a dozen Black and Latinx men in the Buffalo, N.Y., area, Rochester, N.Y. and New York City.

Thirteen days after Reagan was elected, an all-white jury ignored video evidence and acquitted five Klansmen of murdering Communist Workers Party members César

Cauce, Mike Nathan, Bill Sampson, Sandy Smith and Jim Waller. [They had been killed in the 1979 Greensboro, N.C., massacre.](#)

During this same period, at least 28 Black children were killed in Atlanta. Although Wayne Williams was controversially convicted of some of the murders, there's no way he could have killed all the victims.

Reagan fueled his 1984 re-election by invading Grenada in the Caribbean. Two aircraft carriers and thousands of troops attacked the Black population living on the small, 135-square-mile island.

Hatred of China

The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 was a defeat of white supremacy, colonialism and capitalism. Wall Street and Reagan never got over it. The U.S. Navy occupies the Pacific Ocean today to target China.

Malcolm X wrote how China impressed him when he was imprisoned. The Chinese Revolution was part of the reason for a unanimous Supreme Court decision against school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

All the Asian revolutions had a big impact on Africa. After the Vietnamese defeated the French colonialists in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, Frantz Fanon wrote in ["The Wretched of the Earth"](#) that Africans were asking, "What must we do to have a Dien Bien Phu?"

Chinese premier Zhou Enlai declared Africa was "ripe for revolution" when he visited several African countries in 1963 and 1964. Thousands of Chinese volunteers helped build a railroad from Tanzania to landlocked Zambia. It was being blockaded by the racist white settler regime of Ian Smith in occupied Zimbabwe. (The settlers called it "Rhodesia.")

After African U.N. delegates welcomed China, the U.S. Senate voted to violate U.N. sanctions on Zimbabwe. Led by the longtime segregationist Strom Thurmond, they allowed chrome to be imported from there.

Thurmond and the other racist senators couldn't stop the liberation fighters in Zimbabwe from defeating Ian Smith and winning independence in 1980.

Both Democratic and Republican administrations have since enacted economic sanctions on Zimbabwe, just as they have on Iran, Cuba, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen. Zimbabwe's "crime" was to take over the land occupied by white settlers and return it to African farmers.

But China has stood by Zimbabwe and has extended aid to this embattled African country.

