

The media has misrepresented Trump’s statements about Charlottesville protestors, falsely accusing him of calling neo-Nazis “fine people.”

After a neo-Nazi ran over and killed peaceful counter-protester Heather Heyer at a protest over the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, President Trump said at a press conference that there were people “on both sides” of the protests who are “very fine people,” but stressed, “I’m not talking about the neo-Nazis and white nationalists because they should be condemned totally.”

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“[T]hey didn’t put themselves down as neo-Nazis, and you had some very bad people in that group,” Trump said at the tense press conference at Trump Tower. “But you also had people that were very fine people on both sides. You had people in that group – excuse me, excuse me, I saw the same pictures you did. You had people in that group that were there to protest the taking down of, to them, a very, very important statue and the renaming of a park from Robert E. Lee to another name.” Later in the press conference, Trump emphasized: “I’m not talking about the neo-Nazis and white nationalists because they should be condemned totally. But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists.”

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Following Trump’s press conference, ABC News reported that Trump’s “very fine people” comments included “white supremacists and white nationalists,” an unfair claim echoed by other mainstream and left-wing outlets.

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Trump was not alone in describing violence from “both sides” at the Charlottesville rally—mainstream media sources reported the same thing.

The ostensible reason for the rally was to protest the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, but many participants approached it as a “White Pride” rally.

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While some came to demonstrate peacefully, many members of white nationalist, neo-Nazi, and Antifa groups came prepared for violence. “[M]any of the rally participants were seen carrying firearms, sticks and shields. Some also wore helmets,” Reuters reported. “Counter-protesters likewise came equipped with sticks, helmets and shields.”

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The mayor and law enforcement in Charlottesville were unprepared to deal with the violence that ensued.

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After clashes between white nationalists and Antifa erupted, a young counter-protester, Heather Heyer, was killed by a neo-Nazi who ran over her with his vehicle.

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At a press conference at Trump Tower, Trump said both the far-right racists and the far-left Antifa bore some of the blame for the violence at the rally. “You had a group on one side that was bad, and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent, and nobody wants to say that, but I’ll say it right now. You had a group — you had a group on the other side that came charging in without a permit, and they were very, very violent.”

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President Trump’s press conference after the Charlottesville rally sparked a media firestorm that focused on three words taken out of context.

Out of a heated exchange between the president and the media, one phrase eclipsed the thousands of words exchanged: The media reported that President Trump described neo-Nazis as “very fine people.”

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As he emphasized in the press conference, Trump was referring to both sides of the debate over the Confederate monument, not neo-Nazis and Antifa.

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Ignoring the distinction, the Atlantic ran a headline stating, “Trump Defends White-Nationalist Protesters.”

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But as the New York Times confirmed in a story they published the day after the tragic Charlottesville rally, there were indeed people there to protest the removal of the statue who opposed the racist agenda of white nationalists: “Good people can go to Charlottesville,’ said Michelle Piercy, a night shift worker at a Wichita, Kansas retirement home, who drove all night with a conservative group that opposed the planned removal of a statue of the Confederate general Robert E. Lee. After listening to Mr. Trump on Tuesday, she said it was as if he had channeled her and her friends... who had no interest in standing with Nazis or white supremacists...”

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Commenting on the peaceful protesters at Charleston, President Trump said, “you had a lot of people in that group that were there to innocently protest and very legally protest.”

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Despite Trump’s clear condemnation of neo-Nazis and white nationalists, the media has continued to distort his Charlottesville comments.

The false claim that President Trump called white supremacists and white nationalists at the tragic Charlottesville rally “very fine people” continues to be repeated in headlines, such as “Trump Echoes Infamous ‘Both Sides’ Quote By Comparing White Supremacy To Antifa” in HuffPost.

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In August 2019, a New York Times opinion piece read, “Trump Is a White Nationalist Who Inspires Terrorism,” and repeated the faulty claim that Trump referenced “‘very fine people’ among the neo-Nazis.”

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In the press conference, President Trump repeatedly condemned the KKK, neo-Nazis, and white supremacists, calling them thugs and criminals and saying “they should be condemned totally.”

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The misrepresentation of Trump's Charlottesville comments falls in line with a larger campaign to paint the president as a racist.

The media's insistence on misrepresenting President Trump's comments about participants in the Charlottesville rally falls in line with a larger trend of the media portraying President Trump and his supporters as racists.

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According to Dennis Prager, "nearly every Democrat running for president, New York Times and Washington Post columnist, CNN and MSNBC host, and your left-wing brother-in-law — labels every Trump supporter and, of course, President Donald Trump, a 'racist.'"

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At the tense press conference after the violent Charlottesville rally, President Trump made clear that he was not referring to white supremacists as "very fine people." Not only did Trump stress that point in the press conference — saying, "I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and white nationalists because they should be condemned totally" — the president's daughter and son-in-law are Orthodox Jews.

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Related reading: "Trump Didn't Call Neo-Nazis 'Fine People.' Here's Proof." — Steve Cortes

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