

Republicans Attack AOC For Accurately Describing Their Immigrant Concentration Camps

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New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is facing frothy-mouthed rage from Republicans after calling the concentration camps along the southern border "concentration camps."

The freshman Democrat, who represents parts of the Bronx and Queens, provoked the ire of right-wing officials on Tuesday, when she took to Instagram to accurately describe the sprawling network of camps that they support and fund.

Those comments were picked up by a journalist for the right wing Daily Wire, and were in turn shared by Rep. Liz Cheney. In totally good faith, as always, Cheney accused her fellow Congressman of demeaning the memory of the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust, and encouraged her to "spend just a few minutes learning some actual history."

Please @AOC do us all a favor and spend just a few minutes learning some actual history. 6 million Jews were exterminated in the Holocaust. You demean their memory and disgrace yourself with comments like this. <https://t.co/NX5KPPb2Hl>

— Liz Cheney (@Liz_Cheney) June 18, 2019

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(Does all of this sound vaguely familiar? That's because we had this debate already, exactly one year ago. Time flies when you are spending it downplaying the toll of human suffering inflicted on desperate families by an increasingly unstable despot).

As was previously the case, a range of historians and scholars of the Holocaust immediately joined the discussion to explain that concentration camps don't exclusively refer to Nazi death camps, and have historically denoted a prison-like facility where civilians are held without trial based on their group identities.

In this particular case, the camps in question are highly cramped, kennel-fenced enclosures run by federal employees, some of whom who see immigrants as "subhuman shit." At least six children have died at the border while detained by those authorities, in addition to 24 immigrants who have died in ICE custody since the beginning of the Trump administration.

I did my dissertation on #ConcentrationCamps, so I have a few thoughts about @AOC's use of the term to describe the build up of camps on the US southern border. For those in a hurry, here's the take-home message: By any reasonable definition, these are concentration camps

— Lester Andrist (@landrist) June 18, 2019

Hi, historian specializing in Eugenics and the Holocaust here. Hitler didn't snap his finger and suddenly kill Jews one day, he imposed a system of oppression towards them including but not limited to work camps before it got to that. Aka: ur wrong. 🙄 <https://t.co/Om5FNshlZL>

— allie (@janetsnakeholez) June 19, 2019

1/x Historian here, @Liz_Cheney: The term "concentration camp" does NOT refer only to Nazi or more specifically Holocaust camps. In fact (yes, just a fact: please read up) it is also commonly used for camps in other contexts, for instance the Boer War or former Soviet camps. @AOC <https://t.co/tS8PvHBsm1>

— Tarik Cyril Amar (@TarikCyrilAmar) June 18, 2019

Recently, the list of border sites was expanded to include an Army base in Oklahoma, which was once used as an internment camp for Japanese-Americans during World War II. This afternoon, the Japanese American Citizens League sent out a statement protesting the decision to hold unaccompanied minors in the "modern concentration camps."

I know what concentration camps are. I was inside two of them, in America. And yes, we are operating such camps again.

— George Takei (@GeorgeTakei) June 19, 2019

Of course, none of this has dissuaded other Republicans from cloaking their support for concentration camps in a supposed defense of Jewish people. Others have also joined the finger-wagging, including the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, which posted a letter telling the Congresswoman to refrain from "using terminology evocative of the Holocaust to voice concerns about contemporary political issues." Signatories to that letter have since said it was sent without their consultation. Other Jewish groups have voiced their support for the descriptor.

If we want to take the mandate of “never again” seriously, we need to mean never again for anyone. @AOC is right, this country is running concentration camps on the southern border. And our country has run concentration camps before — the internment of Japanese Americans in WWII.

— IfNotNow 🌻 (@IfNotNowOrg) June 19, 2019

Re: JCRC AOC letter - We were not consulted. It does not reflect our views. We will have a fuller statement soon.

— Workmen's Circle (@workmenscircle) June 19, 2019

On Wednesday, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy held a press conference about the matter, in which he demanded that Ocasio-Cortez apologize "not only to the nation but to the world."

"To take somewhere in history where millions of Jews died...and equate that to somewhere that's happening on the border...she owes this nation an apology," he continued.

Maybe we just call the camps something uncontroversial like "Big Beautiful Trump MAGulags" and move on.

Or, is the actual issue here—and hear me out on this one—that Republicans are using the mock outrage over the memory of the Holocaust in bad faith in order to sink a political opponent?

Because that feels like the actual issue here.

— Julia Ioffe (@juliaioffe) June 18, 2019