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Trump tweets, stays out of sight for hours after shootings

By Jonathan Lemire

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) - As the nation reeled from two mass shootings in less than a day, President Donald Trump spent the first hours after the tragedies out of sight at his New Jersey golf course, sending out tweets of support awkwardly mixed in with those promoting a celebrity fight and attacking his political foes.

Americans did not glimpse the Republican president in the immediate aftermath of a shooting in El Paso, Texas, that killed at least 20 people and, hours later, one in Dayton, Ohio, that claimed at least nine lives. Not until Trump and the first lady prepared to fly back to Washington in the late afternoon Sunday did he appear before cameras.

"Hate has no place in our country, and we're going to take care of it," Trump declared before boarding Air Force One.

While connecting "hate" and mental illness to the shootings, Trump made no direct mention of gun laws, a factor brought up by Democratic officials and those seeking their party's nomination to challenge Trump's reelection next year. He also ignored questions about the anti-immigration language in a manifesto written by the El Paso shooter that mirrors some of his own.

Trump tried to assure Americans he was dealing with the problem and defended his administration in light of criticism following the latest in a string of mass shootings.

"We have done much more than most administrations," he said, without elaboration. "We have done actually a lot. But perhaps more has to be done."

Never seemingly comfortable consoling a nation in grief, Trump will be carefully watched for his response to the attacks, again inviting comparison to his predecessors who have tried to heal the country in moments of national trauma.

Investigators focused on whether the El Paso attack was a hate crime after the emergence of a racist, anti-immigrant screed that was posted online shortly beforehand. Detectives sought to determine if it was written by the man who was arrested.

In recent weeks, the president has issued racist tweets about four women of color who serve in Congress, and in rallies has spoken of an "invasion" at the southern border. His reelection strategy has placed racial animus at the forefront in an effort that his aides say is designed to activate his base of conservative voters, an approach not seen by an American president in the modern era.

Trump also has been widely criticized for offering a false equivalency when discussing racial violence, notably when he said there were "very fine people, on both sides," after a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that resulted in the death of an anti-racism demonstrator.

The shootings will likely complicate that strategy, and Democrats who are campaigning to deny Trump a second term were quick to lay blame at the president's feet.

"You reap what you sow, and he is sowing seeds of hate in this country. This harvest of hate violence we're seeing right now lies at his feet," Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "He is responsible."

White House aides said the president has been receiving updates about both shootings.

"The FBI, local and state law enforcement are working together in El Paso and in Dayton, Ohio," Trump tweeted Sunday morning. "God bless the people of El Paso Texas. God bless the people of Dayton, Ohio."

His first tweet after the El Paso shooting on Saturday hit similar notes, with Trump calling it "terrible" and promising the full support of the federal government. But just 14 minutes later, he tweeted again, a discordant post wishing UFC fighter Colby Covington, a Trump supporter, good luck in his fight that evening. That was soon followed up with a pair of retweets of African American supporters offering testimonials to Trump's policies helping black voters, though the president polls very poorly with black people.

Trump's two eldest sons attended the UFC fight, while social media photos show that Trump stopped by a wedding at his Bedminster club on Saturday night.

The motive for the Dayton shooting, which happened in a popular nightlife district, was not immediately known. But Democrats pointed to the El Paso attack and blamed Trump for his incendiary rhetoric about immigrants that they say fosters an atmosphere of hate and violence.

Federal officials said they were treating the El Paso attack as a domestic terrorism case.

Trump's language about immigrants, and his hardline policies, loomed over the El Paso shooting.

He has described groups of immigrants as "infestations," declared in his campaign kickoff that many of those coming from Mexico were "rapists," deemed a caravan of Hispanic migrants as invaders and wondered why the United States accepted so many immigrants from "shithole countries" like Haiti, El Salvador and African nations. Critics also point to his campaign proposal to ban all Muslims from entering the United States, his suggestion that President Barack Obama was not born in the United States and his administration's efforts to curtail asylum and separate immigrant children from their parents at the border.

The president also has repeatedly been denounced for being slow to criticize acts of violence carried out by white nationalists, or deem them acts of domestic terrorism, most notably when he declared there were good people on "both sides" of the deadly clash in Charlottesville in 2017. The number of hate groups has surged to record highs under Trump's presidency, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"He is encouraging this. He doesn't just tolerate it; he encourages it. Folks are responding to this. It doesn't just offend us, it encourages the kind of violence that we're seeing, including in my home town of El Paso yesterday," former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a 2020 Democratic contender, said on CNN's "State of the Union." "He is an open, avowed racist and is encouraging more racism in this country. And this is incredibly dangerous for the United States of America right now."



Pulitzer Prize Winning novelist Alice Walker.

Alice Walker: Hometown Celebrates Literary Legends 75th Birthday

By Nsenga K. Burton, Ph.D.,

NNPA Newswire Culture and Entertainment Editor

Alice Walker, one of the premiere writers of the 20th Century, was honored in July by her hometown of Eatonton, GA for her 75th Birthday (Alice Walker 75). Hundreds of people flocked from all over the country to Walker's birthplace to celebrate the birthday of the Pulitzer Prize winning author.

The activist, who was born February 9, 1944 in Eatonton left in 1961 to attend Spelman College, eventually enrolling at Sarah Lawrence College due to controversy surrounding her political activism at Spelman.

Walker's legacy of activism and storytelling was on full display at the event, which was held at the Georgia Writers Museum and included a day of activities and events to honor Walker's life and achievements. The event was co-chaired by award-winning author Valerie Boyd, editor of *Gathering Blossoms Under Fire: The Journals of Alice Walker*, which will be released in 2020 and Lou Benjamin, founder of Eatonton's Briar Patch Arts Council.

Walker, who lived just outside of town, acknowledged this was the first time she had been to Eatonton and was unaware the Plaza Arts Center existed, which is where many of the festivities were held.

The day kicked off with a screening and discussion of the American Masters Documentary, *Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth* followed by a discussion with the filmmaker Pratibha Parmar and scholar Salamisha Tillet at The Plaza Arts Center.

Celebrants were able to take bus tours of the area and see Walker's birthplace while fellow authors and poets and friends paid tribute to the game changer, who was clearly touched by the praise, humbly thanking the audience throughout the day of events.

An American Marriage novelist Tayari Jones read from the novel *Meridian*, poet Daniel Black read Walker's short story "Flowers," and poet Kamilah Aisha Moon read Walker's poem, "How Poems are Made." Journalist and author Evelyn C. White offered remembrances of friendship and activism and classically trained Gospel violinist Melanie R. Hill performed a medley of songs honoring the legend.

Perhaps the most poignant part of the program was when Walker's daughter Rebecca, read several pieces including "Now That Book Is Finished," a poem Walker wrote about Rebecca when she was a child. Rebecca's son Tenzin, 14, performed an original song he composed entitled, "Sun and Steam," which he played beautifully on the piano. Rebecca Walker's words, expressions of love and gratitude to her mother and Tenzin's performance were symbolic of the reconciliation between Walker and her daughter who had been estranged during a difficult period. Walker's former husband Melvyn R. Levanthal was also in attendance.

The special birthday celebration ended with Walker taking the stage of The Plaza Arts Center for a candid conversation with Boyd, author of the award-winning biography *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston. Walker and Boyd* "ended with an invitation for all attendees to take the stage and dance with the celebrated author to two of her favorite songs, "Rock Steady," by Aretha Franklin and - by Stevie Wonder, concluding a lovely day of celebration of one of the 20th Century's greatest writers.

This article was written by Nsenga K Burton, Ph.D., founder & editor-in-chief of The Burton Wire. An expert in intersectionality and media industries, Dr. Burton is also a professor of film and television at Emory University and co-editor of the book, Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability. Follow her on Twitter @Ntellectual or @TheBurtonWire.

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Sporadic outages at 8chan and a new host after mass shooting

NEW YORK (AP) - The online message board 8chan suffered sporadic outages recently after its cybersecurity provider cut it off for what it called a "cesspool of hate" following mass shootings in Texas and Ohio.

But the board, which has a history of use by violent extremists, also quickly found a new online host. That company also provides such support for Gab.com, another social media site frequented by white supremacists that doesn't ban hate speech.

8chan was up and down after the security company Cloudflare said it would no longer provide services that protect web sites from denial-of-service attacks that can make them unreachable.

The operators of 8chan said there might be downtime in the next one or two days as the site sought a solution, and online records indicated the site had been moved to a new domain host: Sannamish, Washington-based web services provider Epik.com.

The company bills itself on its site as "the Swiss bank of domains." Epik.com did not immediately respond to requests sent by email and via LinkedIn.

Police are investigating commentary posted on 8chan and believed to have been written by the suspect in a shooting that killed 20 people in El Paso, Texas.

If there is a connection, it would be the third known instance of a shooter posting to the site before going on a rampage following mass shootings at two New Zealand mosques in the spring, and another at a California synagogue.

The suspect in El Paso "appears to have been inspired" by discussions on 8chan, said Cloudflare CEO Matthew Prince in a blog post on his company's site. He said a suspect in an earlier shooting at a synagogue in Poway, California, also posted a "hate-filled 'open letter'" on 8chan, as did the mosque attacker in Christchurch, New Zealand.

"8chan has repeatedly proven itself to be a cesspool of hate," wrote Prince. "They have proven themselves to be lawless and that lawlessness has caused multiple tragic deaths."

Prince acknowledged that little can be done under current rules to silence sites like 8chan.

Two years ago, Cloudflare terminated service to the Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi and white supremacist site.

"Today, the Daily Stormer is still available and still disgusting," Prince wrote. "They have bragged that they have more readers than ever. They are no longer Cloudflare's problem, but they remain the Internet's problem."

In fact, the Daily Stormer's new security provider, BitMigate, was purchased in February by Epik.com, whose CEO is Robert Monster of Bellevue, Washington.

In November, Monster defended in a blog post his company's decision to host Gab.com after its previous domain host, GoDaddy, dropped it.