

strengthen the movement for reparations. And on the left, we need to rekindle the refusal to countenance acts of racial insult, offensive language, and cultural insensitivity which have at times seeped back into the socialist and left community. We should embrace more firmly than ever the best socialist and left traditions of advanced, unrelenting struggle for justice and equality. And -let's keep moving on!

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### END OF SYMPOSIUM



## Trent Lott -- And Racism -- Must Go!

### A Statement of the National Coordinating Committee of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism

(Adopted on December 15, 2002)

Trent Lott's endorsement of Strom Thurmond's segregationist legacy was no slip of the tongue. It illuminated an entire political career rooted in racist politics and association with racist groups. Even if one were to grant Lott's ridiculous claim that he was only citing Thurmond's "conservatism, anti-communism and fiscal responsibility" in wishing that Thurmond had become President, those concepts and acts themselves have perpetuated racism by being invoked to smear the civil rights movement, bust unions in the South, and viciously undercut social and economic justice for African Americans and other working people.

Yet, Lott has climbed to the fulcrum of political power, confirming the long-standing and continuing centrality of racism in shaping and influencing the nation's political institutions. The fact that the designated Senate Majority Leader's disgraceful record is only now being "discovered" by much of the political establishment in both parties also illustrates the scope and extent of retreat from engagement with racism that drives so much of the nation's politics. For all the talk heard today of creating a "bigger Republican tent", that party's ascendancy (personified by Lott) in the South and North has been built by promoting, exploiting, and manipulating racist and segregationist currents. George W. Bush and other

Republicans did not utter a word of rebuke until public outrage became deafening. Lott's outrageous endorsement of segregation initially induced little more than a forgiving shrug from Democratic Senate leader Tom Daschle. Daschle's recent "explanation" that he had been "unaware" of the "full context" of Lott's record defies credulity and again underscores the growing insensitivity and palpable retreat from the struggle for racial justice and equality by Democratic as well as Republican leaders. The media silence for days after Lott's paean to segregation also reflects wounding insensitivity and downgrading of honest reporting of continuing assaults on racial justice.

The issues are far greater than Trent Lott's personal fate. They concern the efforts by the Ashcroft Department of Justice to reduce its Civil Rights Division to ineffectiveness and turn the clock back on civil rights. In Florida and elsewhere the near-systematic disfranchisement of African American voters has wrought disastrous consequences for all. The gutting of affirmative action, attempted dismantling of public education, intensified racial profiling, attacks on the constitutional rights of communities of color in particular, growing denial of health services to those communities, escalating joblessness and incarceration especially among African-Americans, and a relentless push to war in the Middle East accompanied by a cascade of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hatred have been cornerstones of a right wing racist offensive that threatens the well being of the vast majority.

CCDS calls for the censure of Trent Lott and his resignation not only as majority leader but also from the Senate itself. We urge messages to members of the Senate and to the White House ([www.gov.com](http://www.gov.com) provides contact information) with this demand. We also urge that letters and messages be sent to local media demanding Lott's resignation from all posts along with a commitment by the nation's elected leaders to reinvigorate an equal rights agenda. A renewed public awareness of the racist character of a heretofore "respected" political leader opens the door to a deeper understanding of the depths of racism running through the nation's political life and thus compels us to confront not just the public figure but the policies that he and others have pursued. With a Supreme Court majority poised to further gut affirmative action, there is an urgent need for concerted pressure to preserve that vital policy; with the crisis in public services impacting first African Americans and all communities of color, there is a need for renewed efforts to end both the racist-driven war on public services and the planned war on Iraq.

Trent Lott must go. At the same time every manifestation of racism, the nation's greatest single obstacle to progress, must go as well.

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