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Almost eight years later, Trump confirms he used the phrase 'shithole countries'

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President Donald Trump speaks in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday. *(Alex Brandon/AP)*

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It was an **international controversy** during President Donald Trump's first term. Media outlets **including CNN** reported that, at a closed-door January 2018 meeting with senators about immigration policy, Trump had asked why the US should accept immigrants from "shithole countries" **such as some in Africa**.

Trump's White House spokesperson at the time **didn't deny that the president had referred to "shithole countries,"** but Trump himself made some **vague** statements that were phrased to **sound like denials**. The morning after The Washington Post **broke the story of the disparaging remark**, he **tweeted**, "The language used by me at the DACA meeting was tough, but this was not the language used."

That was then.

On Tuesday, almost eight years later, Trump explicitly confirmed he had spoken of "shithole countries" during a past closed-door meeting with senators.

Trump delivered the confirmation during a speech in Pennsylvania that was officially devoted to economic issues but that **veered into various other topics**. When the president **said** he had "announced a permanent pause on Third World migration, including from hellholes like Afghanistan, Haiti, Somalia, and many other countries," somebody in the audience called out the word "shithole." Trump responded, to laughter, "I didn't say 'shithole,' you did."

But then Trump said this.

"Remember I said that to the senators that came in, the Democrats. They wanted to be bipartisan. So they came in. And they said, 'This is totally off the record, nothing mentioned here, we want to be honest,' because our country was going to hell. And we had a meeting. And I say: Why is it we only take people from shithole countries, right? Why can't we have some people from Norway, Sweden – just a few – let us have a few. From Denmark – do you mind sending us a few people? Send us some nice people, do

you mind? But we always take people from Somalia. Places that are a disaster, right? Filthy, dirty, disgusting, ridden with crime.”

Trump didn't specify the meeting with senators in which he made these remarks, but his description of his comments, including his plea for immigrants from Scandinavia, matches media reports about what he had said at that January 2018 meeting that sparked the “shithole countries” controversy. For example, a CNN **report** said: “One person briefed on the meeting said when (**Sen. Dick Durbin**) got to Haiti, Trump began to ask why we want people from Haiti and more Africans in the US and added that the US should get more people from countries like Norway.” The report said a source said Trump had asked during the meeting, “Why do we want all these people from ‘shithole countries’ coming here?”

In 2018, two Republican senators who were at the meeting, Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and then-Sen. David Perdue of Georgia, **issued a statement** saying they did “not recall” Trump using such language, and Perdue **went on to say** on television, “I’m telling you he did not use that word” and “I’m telling you it’s a gross misrepresentation.” Then-Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who was also present, **said** on television at the time, “It was an impassioned conversation. I don’t

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Durbin, a Democrat, **publicly confirmed** at the time Trump had referred in the meeting to “shithole countries.” But Trump **tweeted**, “Senator Dicky Durbin totally misrepresented what was said at the DACA meeting.”

Durbin said on the Senate floor Wednesday morning that he wanted to note Trump’s Tuesday admission in the official record.

“Because for six years, I have lived with the shadow of people saying that I misled the American people as to what the president said. Yesterday he admitted what he said,” Durbin said.

This article has been updated with Durbin's remarks on the Senate floor.



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