

What's a 'Black Job'? Trump's Anti-Immigration Remarks Are Met With Derision

Donald J. Trump accused immigrants of stealing “Black jobs” and “Hispanic jobs” during Thursday’s debate, prompting criticism from Democrats and other social media users.



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By Maya King

June 28, 2024

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Former President Donald J. Trump claimed during the presidential debate on Thursday that immigrants entering the United States illegally were taking “Black jobs” and “Hispanic jobs,” a claim with little basis that Democrats immediately seized on as evidence that Mr. Trump and Republicans were not serious about cultivating support from voters of color.

It also touched off a host of internet jokes and memes over what, exactly, a “Black job” is.

“They’re taking Black jobs and they’re taking Hispanic jobs and you haven’t seen it yet but you’re going to see something that’s going to be the worst in our history,” Mr. Trump said on Thursday, speaking of migrants crossing the southern U.S. border. He then repeated the reference during a campaign rally in Virginia on Friday, adding that Black Americans who have had jobs “for a long time” are losing employment to immigrants.

Black political strategists, elected officials and heads of organizations quickly joined hundreds of social media users to post photos of themselves at their workplaces and to crack jokes about the reductive and racist nature of the former president’s comments.

Among them was, Stacey Plaskett, the Democratic House delegate from the U.S. Virgin Islands, who posted a photo on X alongside two women in her congressional office on Friday that was captioned, “Another day in Congress doing our ‘Black jobs.’”

Malcolm Kenyatta, a Black Pennsylvania Democrat and surrogate for Mr. Biden’s campaign, quipped: “Did we ever figure out what a ‘Black job’ is? Asking for me.”

And Derrick Johnson, the president of the N.A.A.C.P., also criticized Mr. Trump’s remarks, writing on X that Black Americans “are not confined to any one #BlackJob.”

Republicans, who have sought to take advantage of President Biden’s softening support among Black voters, have made the issue of immigration a cornerstone of their appeals to the bloc, whose turnout in November could decide the election. Mr. Trump has said migrants are “poisoning the blood” of the country, and has repeatedly claimed that the migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border are escapees from prisons and mental institutions, something the evidence does not support.

Immigrants have made up an increasingly large portion of the American labor force in recent years, but economic experts say their presence has been healthy for the nation's economy. And while Mr. Trump claims that migrant workers are taking jobs from American citizens, the population of foreign-born workers in the country is not large enough to offset the job creation of the last three years.

Democrats have increasingly gone on the offensive. In a statement, Mr. Biden's communications director Michael Tyler pointed to the online fray of responses to Mr. Trump's comments, saying Black voters "dragged Trump throughout the night for his racist rant."

"They know Trump has done nothing for Black communities, so he tries to pit communities of color against one another as a distraction," he said. "We aren't distracted. We see Trump's racism clearly, and it's why Black voters will reject him this November."

Maya King is a politics reporter covering the Southeast, based in Atlanta. She covers campaigns, elections and movements in the American South, as well as national trends relating to Black voters and young people.