July 29, 2020

OPPOSE THE CONFIRMATION OF ANTHONY TATA TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

Dear Senator,

On behalf of 54 organizations representing civil and human rights advocates, people of color, people of faith, teachers, students, disabled people, and allies, we strongly urge you to vocally and unequivocally reject the pending nomination of Anthony Tata to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

All of our communities have been directly harmed by Mr. Tata’s words and actions. We believe that the bigotry and discrimination he has perpetuated over this career disqualify him from any federal appointment and especially one of this importance. He is one of the most openly and brazenly bigoted nominees in recent memory.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is the third highest position at the Pentagon. With a deeply diverse workforce of almost three million employees and service members and a budget of over $700 billion, the Defense Department is the largest employer in America. Anthony Tata’s record of discrimination and bigotry show that he’s patently unfit to assume such a vital role.

Tata’s use of racist rhetoric shows a deep disregard for Black people and victims of police violence.

- He called veteran Congresswoman Maxine Waters a “vicious race baiting racist” for her defense of Rodney King, a victim of police violence.¹
- He invoked plantation slavery to criticize a Black news anchor.²
- He repeatedly invoked the “birtherism” conspiracy theory about President Obama.³

He is deeply hostile to American Muslims and routinely invoked bigoted anti-Muslim rhetoric and conspiracies, including:

- He repeated false claims based on bigoted narratives about Islam that the nation’s first Black President was a “Muslim,” and a “terrorist leader” with “Islamic roots”⁴ who sought “a weaker America.”⁵
- He called Islam “most oppressive violent religion I know of.”⁶

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⁵ [https://imgur.com/a/KDLpvsi](https://imgur.com/a/KDLpvsi)
In one of his novels that was published in 2019, he included a subplot about “Islamic gang rape” of white women.⁷

Anthony Tata was a leader in the effort to resegregate schools. In late 2010, Tata was hired to lead the Wake County, North Carolina school system and immediately dismantled a nationally lauded desegregation program. He wrote and implemented a plan to eliminate school diversity in the face of multiple civil rights complaints and actions.⁸ “His racial insensitivity quickly became notorious,” according to the North Carolina NAACP. After his Defense Department nomination was announced, the organization called him “a walking scandal” who “seemed to regard African American parents as ideological adversaries, rather than taxpayers invested in the quality of their Public Schools.”⁹ He would go on to be fired less than two years after he was hired.

Under Tata’s leadership, Wake County schools discriminated against disabled students and Latinos. His time at Wake County schools was marred by allegations of violating various civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for refusing to provide Spanish-speaking parents with information related to special education services and processes and information about long-term suspensions.¹⁰

One simply cannot lead a diverse department while having such contempt for diverse people. A vote for Anthony Tata would be a vote to confirm one of the most clearly bigoted executive nominees in recent memory. We urge you to vocally and unequivocally reject the Tata nomination.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Naheed Qureshi at naheed@muslimadvocates.org.

Signed,

Muslim Advocates, Co-Organizer
NAACP, Co-Organizer
American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Co-Organizer
Center for Disability Rights, Co-Organizer
SPLC Action Fund, Co-Organizer
A. Philip Randolph Institute
American Atheists

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⁸ https://www.facingsouth.org/2012/09/political-controversy-roils-nc-school-system-at-ce.html
¹⁰ https://www.splcenter.org/news/2012/05/08/nc-school-system-must-stop-discrimination-against-latino-students
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Andrew Goodman Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Athlete Ally
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Center for Disability Rights, Co-Organizer
Center for Responsible Lending
CenterLink
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
Color Of Change
EDGE Consulting Partners
Emgage Action
Equality North Carolina
Faith in Public Life
Faithful America
Family Equality
Feminist Majority Foundation
Free Press
Human Rights Campaign
Lambda Legal
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens of Iowa (LULAC)
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF)
MoveOn
National Action Network
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
North Carolina NAACP
Reconstructing Judaism
Revolutionary Love Project
Rian Immigrant Center
Seattle Immigrant Rights Action Group
The Interfaith Center of New York
Voices for Progress
Wallingford Indivisible
Washington State Religious Campaign Against Torture
Win Without War
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center