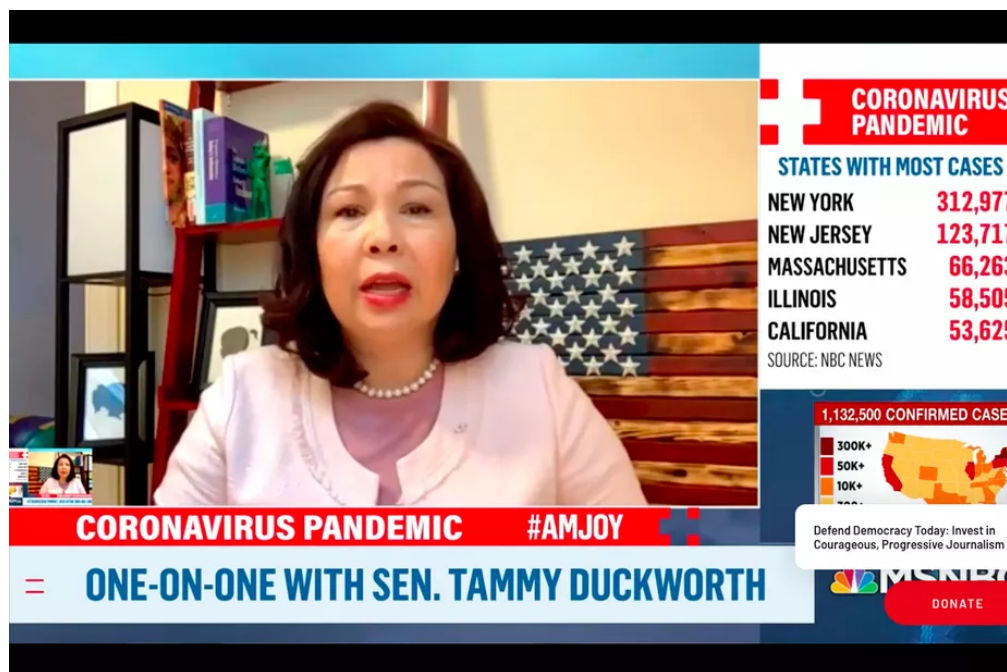


NEWS POLITICS CORONAVIRUS

Sen. Tammy Duckworth deplores use of Nazi slogan at Chicago stay-at-home protest

Duckworth also blasted President Trump for “sucking up to the Communist head of an authoritarian regime in President Xi of China” instead of preparing for the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Lynn Sweet | Updated May 3, 2020, 8:24pm CDT



Sen. Tammy Duckworth on MSNBC's "AM Joy" on May 3, 2020 | MSNBC screen grab

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., on Sunday deplored the use of an infamous Nazi slogan at a Chicago protest against Gov. J.B. Pritzker's stay-at-home order. And she continued to slam President Donald Trump for his handling of the COVID-19 crisis and for ordering West Point cadets back to campus for his graduation speech.

Duckworth, during an interview on MSNBC's "AM Joy" with host Joy Reid, was asked about Trump's upcoming West Point address and the protesters outside the Thompson Center in Chicago. **One of the handmade signs said "Arbeit Macht Frei, JB."**

That infamous phrase, cited through the decades to remember and invoke the horror of the Holocaust, was above the main entrance gate to the **German Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland**. It means “work makes one free.” Pritzker is Jewish.

“That Nazi slogan is not acceptable,” said Duckworth, who is Asian American.

May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and Duckworth said that should serve as a reminder of the soldiers who served in the 442nd regimental team and liberated Dachau.

“For me as an Asian-American, it just strikes at my heart. And as a soldier it strikes at my heart,” Duckworth said.

The 442nd was a Japanese American unit, formed during World War II when the U.S. government forced its citizens of Japanese origin into internment camps.

The **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum encyclopedia** states “Japanese American men in these camps were not permitted to enlist in the US military until 1943. The 442nd regimental combat team, made up entirely of Japanese Americans, became the highest decorated military unit in American history and liberated a subcamp of Dachau.”

TRUMP ‘SUCKING UP’ TO THE CHINESE

Duckworth said Trump, when “he found out and was warned about this pandemic, this crisis looming back in January and February, spent his time pandering and basically sucking up to the Communist head of an authoritarian regime in President Xi of China, talking to, flattering the man instead of preparing our country for this pandemic.”

TRUMP’S WEST POINT SPEECH

Duckworth, a wounded Iraq war vet, is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and West Point’s Board of Visitors. She is highly critical of Trump’s plan to return 1,000 cadets to West Point in the midst of the pandemic so he can deliver a graduation speech to them next month.

Asked about Duckworth’s comments during a Fox News town hall on Sunday night, Trump at first said “a Democrat” dismissively. He added, “there’s no risk” and “they wanted me to speak,” a reference to unnamed generals. Trump said he did not “necessarily” want to do it.

West Point is about 50 miles from the New York City area, the hardest hit in the nation from the coronavirus outbreak.

Duckworth raised her criticisms with Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy in a phone call last week.

At a Pentagon briefing, Gen. James McConville, the Army's chief of staff, told reporters, "We can't telecommute to combat."

Duckworth acknowledged cadets do have to return to campus to pick up their gear and for processing into their military assignments, but they could have done so in small groups.

"To take all 1,000 of them and bring them all at once to a confined area, a single space so the president can just talk at them, that's the poor decision-making that's happening right now," she said.

As for telecommuting to combat, "Come on, this is talking about putting people in a graduation ceremony; graduation ceremonies are not combat. I don't think any one of those cadets would hesitate to run into combat to lead troops into battle, but now you are just needlessly exposing them."

Duckworth, who lost her legs and the partial use of an arm when her helicopter was shot down in Iraq, has blistered Trump for his "bone spurs" draft deferment.

She said Trump wants to deliver the commencement address so he can "just stroke his own ego," which is the "height of narcissism, but it is not, it is not, good leadership."