

O'MALLEY'S EXPLANATION FOR WHITE LIVES MATTER

As you've no doubt heard the Presidential forum at Netroots Nation was interrupted by a Black Lives Matter action, with probably about 50-75 people (mostly, but not entirely, African Americans) who interrupted the discussion between Jose Antonio Vargas and Governor Martin O'Malley chanting the names of Sandra Bland and others who have been killed by cops. The action virtually ended O'Malley's discussion, which only got worse when he tried to respond and said, "black lives matter, white lives matter, all lives matter." The term "white lives matter" got used by white people using other racist comments in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Effectively he was responding to an expression of outrage by repeating language used by people who want to suppress that expression.

I attended a roundtable with Governor O'Malley shortly after the forum.

Angélique Roché, an African American political consultant who serves as a Director at the Women's Campaign School at Yale, asked the first question. She asked how, across a number of issues (including Black Lives Matter, but she named several others), he is ensuring a wide variety of voices are represented: not just people of color, women, orientation, class, but also generation and region. O'Malley responded by talking about keeping a broad circle of advisors, and suggested that, technology allows you to do that in ways that weren't possible [a few] years ago." Roché reiterated that to really hear that kind of diversity represented, you really need to work to make that happen.

Later in the round table, someone asked O'Malley to explain his "white lives matter" comment. He explained that he had first used that term about 90 days ago, and that in the moment he used it

again. He hadn't upgraded his lexicon to reflect the new connotation the term has taken on. O'Malley said, "that was a mistake and I shouldn't have said it." (He has since given a similar statement on This Week in Blackness.)

I'll have more to say about the action – which I think fits squarely within a tradition of such confrontations at Netroots Nation – later. But I did want to explain part of what happened right after.