

Was This Donald Trump Aide Right About Female Genital Mutilation? He Made A Shocking Claim



Reactions

Hoping to derail accusations of sexism, a senior [Donald Trump aide claimed female genital mutilation](#) could affect half a million girls in the United States due to "uncontrolled migration." Trump's senior policy adviser, Stephen Miller, introduced the claim while appearing on CNN's *State of the Union* on Sunday in an effort to change the topic after talk turned to Trump's recent remarks on rival Ted Cruz's wife and allegations Miller had defended tweets from Trump that many viewed to be sexist.

"You want to talk about women's issues? Here's something we should be talking about," Miller said. "It is a fact: As a result of uncontrolled migration into this country — you can look this up, it's a statistic from Equality Now — half a million U.S. girls in this country are at risk of female genital mutilation."

Miller's statement is based in fact — the report Equality Now took their statistic from was issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in January 2016 and

estimated [513,000 women and girls in the U.S.](#) were at risk of being subjected to female genital mutilation — however, Miller failed to provide this statistic's necessary context, thereby distorting its interpretation.

What do you think?

The report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the women and girls estimated to be at risk for FGM were so because either they or a parent was born in a country which practices the tradition. The report also clarifies that "no reliable sources of data exist on the number of U.S. resident women and girls who have undergone FGM/C either in the United States or in their country of origin."

In his citation of the report, Miller makes it seem as if migrants entering the country are threatening women with FGM but the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's report draws no connection between immigration policy and potential FGM risk. However, Equality Now includes a citation to [a Population Reference Bureau report](#) that claims the increase in girls at risk for FGM in the U.S. is the result of speculation based on a rise in the number of African and Middle Eastern immigrants and that there is [no evidence the practice of FGM has grown](#).

Center for American Progress President Neera Tanden accused Miller of saying "something outrageous" to deflect attention. "This is exactly what happens," she said on *State of the Union*.

Miller's comments appeared to be a frantic effort to reroute conversation after discussion turned to allegations Trump had sunk to new sexist lows in attacking the physical appearance of Cruz's wife last week. "We get wrong what we're mad about in America!" a visibly agitated Miller told host Jake Tapper when asked if he felt Trump publicly attacking Heidi Cruz could be considered "presidential" behavior. "We don't get mad when Americans are murdered by illegal immigrants. We don't get mad when people have their jobs taken by cheaper foreign workers here on visa programs. ... The political class in D.C. works itself up into a feigned indignation over things that don't really affect the lives of people."

The panel discussion then spiraled into chaotic bickering when former RNC Communications Director Doug Heye countered that concern over Trump was far from feigned and accused Miller of defending his boss' "sexist" tweets. "You want to get into an argument? Then we'll get into an argument!" Miller yelled back. "I said in that interview [with Kate Bolduan] that [it is a trivial issue to be debating retweets](#) [attacking Cruz's wife] when it is a fact you have Americans dying every single day as a result of immigration policies!" Miller said to groans of disbelief and exclamations of "Oh, my God" from other panel members. "Americans all over this country see their communities destroyed by uncontrolled migration," he said.

FGM is absolutely a topic that deserves more attention and efforts to form national debate around the issue should generally be applauded, hardly anyone would argue that. However, it shouldn't be pushed into the spotlight under the guise of justifying closing America's borders to immigrants and refugees. Moreover, it's important to avoid cherry picking the facts on something as complicated and controversial as tying immigration policy to FGM in order to avoid distorting the truth. Miller's assertion that immigrants are responsible for the increased number of girls currently at risk for FGM shows a clear lack of sensitivity and understanding on the issue.

Image: CNN (1)