Trump and the Ethics of Stigma
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Last June, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump infamously said that Judge Gonzalo Curiel’s Mexican heritage rendered him unsuitable to preside over the Trump University fraud case. Pointing to his campaign promise to build a wall between Mexico and the U.S., Trump alleged that Curiel’s ethnicity created “an inherent conflict of interest” and “an absolute conflict.” (Judge Curiel was born in Indiana.)

Trump’s statement was widely and swiftly denounced, including by members of his own party: House Speaker Paul Ryan, for example, stated that “Claiming a person can’t do the job because of their race is sort of like the textbook definition of a racist comment.” And yet, incongruously, Ryan continued to endorse Trump.

In this talk I want to flesh out that incongruity. Was Trump’s stance racist? Was Ryan right to label it as such? And does it make sense for a person who disavows racism to endorse a man who unrepentantly makes racist remarks? I plan to address these questions by exploring the ethics and pragmatics of attributions of bigotry.