

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC: I'm joined now by Congressman Steve King, Republican from Iowa who has endorsed Ted Cruz for president. Congressman, I saw some comments you had made earlier today in reaction to Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims coming in to the U.S. You said you didn't necessarily agree with it, but you were glad it opened up space for it to be debated on the merits. Can you elaborate what you mean by that?

REP. STEVE KING (R), IOWA: Well, yes. I mean, the politically correct enforcement that's out there in our society has tightened things down to the point where people just walk on eggshells and they are afraid to address things that are really on their mind.

And Donald Trump has opened this up wide. He's made a very bold statement, and he's backed it back just a little bit when he said it is temporary. But now that lets us all have an open conversation about what this might mean if Donald Trump gets his way or how we might be able to adjust that in a way to make American people safer. And I hope we are able to shift this debate over to the Middle East and change this debate to how we help the people in their home countries rather than believing we can be their relief valve for the poverty and the grief that's in the world by bringing people here.

HAYES: But you talk about political correctness sort of tamping down. I mean, if someone said we should stop letting Jews into the country, and people had a reaction against that, would that be an example of that same kind of toxic political correctness tamping down honest discussion?

KING: Well, if Jews in the name of their religion were killing Americans, then I think that would be an appropriate comparison. But as far as I know there is only one religion that's doing that, and it is a segment of the religion of Islam that's doing that. So I don't know --

HAYES: Congressman, let me just stop you right there. Congressman, there was a man named Robert Dear who in court today said he was a warrior for the babies, whose ex-wife talked about his Christian beliefs motivating his desire to attack and murder three people, including a police officer, in Colorado. That man is a Christian, he's an avowed Christian. He appears to have acted on those Christian beliefs to undertake that act of violence.

KING: I don't think that he's following Jesus' teachings --

HAYES: But who are you to say? He says he's a Christian.

KING: That's what he says, all right. But that's not Jesus' teachings. Jesus didn't teach people to kill.

HAYES: But you're doing the exact same thing that every Muslim I've seen on air says do in the wake of what happened in San Bernardino. They say they weren't following actual Islam. Islam does not preach hatred and violence and destruction, right?

I mean, why is this any different? You understandably as a Christian is someone of the faith, right? You look at what happened at Planned Parenthood, you said that's not the faith that I believe in. Millions and billions --

KING: What Planned Parenthood is doing is not the faith that I believe in, but Jesus never ordered anyone to be killed and he never raised his hand to injure anyone specifically. But Mohammed did, and there is a big difference in this. And so they're carrying on the traditions that are centuries old --

HAYES: Let me ask you this.

KING: Yes.

HAYES: Yes, because what I hear from you is there is this difference in kind when we're talking about Islam. And I was looking today, there's a piece in The L.A. Times about a paper called The Menace back in 1915 that was railing against Catholics. And it said all sorts of things about Catholics. They are essentially a fifth column, they are

crypto-fascists, that they said if “we were compelled to live in this country with Romanists” – that’s their term for Catholics – “the Romanists will have to be taught their place in society.” There were anti-Catholic lynch mobs that came up, huge movements. Was that bigotry, or were they correct back then to look at Catholicism as fundamentally alien and threatening to the American way of life?

KING: Well, it's difficult to judge people from 100 years ago by today's standards. But I go back into the earlier, middle part of the nineteenth century also. The Know-Nothings were a Protestant movement, and they rejected Catholics and didn't want Catholics essentially brought into America.

HAYES: But were they right?

KING: No, they turned out to be wrong. And me being a Catholic sitting here you couldn't get me to say they were right.

(CROSSTALK)

HAYES: But Congressman, that’s my point.

KING: Here’s what’s happened.

HAYES: Let me ask you this. Why are you so confident that they got that wrong, that we now look with the sort of benefit of hindsight, we say well, clearly that's bigotry. Catholics weren't infiltrating America to bring it orders down from the Vatican.

How can you be so confident that you are correct about the religion of Islam that it is really different in this insidious way, and 50 years from now, people aren't going to back on what you are saying and put it that that same category?

KING: Well, first, I would say that Catholics came in and competed with the Protestant work ethic. That was one thing. And they did assimilate into the broader society, and a lot of them, especially Irish Catholic, did their best to sound like they were English rather than Irish by dropping the O and the apostrophe would be one of the things. They changed their names to blend in more --

HAYES: Congressman, I can cite you chapter and verse of literature at the times saying these Italians, they speak only Italian. They don't speak our language. These folks coming from other places -- it sounds identical to what you are saying about Muslims now. It really does.

KING: But you're hearing the imams that are preaching in places like the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The imam there preached to the migrants go in to western Europe, build your enclaves there, breed their women, and do not associate or assimilate into the broader society.

You might call that a peaceful invasion, but that's the nicest thing can you call it. They're not assimilating, and they're not assimilating because Sharia law is incompatible with the Constitution of the United States. And that's an important principle that we need to have a debate about.

HAYES: Last question here. I’m going to have Congressman Ellison in a moment. You said that he would not renounce Sharia law. What do you mean by that?

KING: Well, when Congressman Ellison takes an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and also -- you'll get to ask him. I'm glad he is going to be there to answer this question. And it is, which is superior? The Constitution or Sharia law? And in Sharia law, by their teachings, is superior to everything else. It replaces everything else. It replaces the Constitution itself.

So you can't be assimilated into the American civilization and accept Sharia law as being superior to our

Constitution. It's antithetical to Americanism.

HAYES: OK. I'm going to talk to him about that. Congressman Steve King, thank you for coming on.

KING: Please ask him. Thank you, Chris.

HAYES: I will.