

David Duke and Donald Trump

Politics can be tough. Answering complex questions with a simple answer can be difficult. Taking a position at odds with your base can be tricky. But nothing – absolutely nothing – should be easier for a politician than to say, “I don’t want to have anything to do with the Ku Klux Klan – or its poster boy, David Duke.”

But on CNN on Sunday Donald Trump couldn’t bring himself to say it.

A little background: While Duke hasn’t formally endorsed Donald Trump, he has embraced him. On his radio show, Duke said that, “Voting against Donald Trump at this point is really treason to your heritage.”

In Klan talk, that means “Voting against Donald Trump is treason if you’re white.”

And on Facebook, Duke said of Trump: “I think he deserves a close look by those who believe the era of political correctness needs to come to an end.”

Duke, who was once a Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, said America needed a leader who would dismantle what he called the “Jewish controlled” financial industry.

If this were basketball, condemning David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan would be an uncontested layup. But on CNN, Trump blew the shot.

Jake Tapper asked Trump – *three times* – about David Duke’s support. “Will you unequivocally condemn David Duke and say you don’t want his votes or that of other white supremacists in this election?” Tapper asked. Here’s how Trump answered:

“Well, just so you understand, I don’t know anything about David Duke. I don’t know anything about what you’re even

talking about with white supremacy or white supremacists.”

Donald Trump doesn't know anything about David Duke? If that were true he'd be the only grownup in the entire country who doesn't know anything about David Duke.

Then there was this exchange:

Trump: You wouldn't want me to condemn a group that I know nothing about. ... If you would send me a list of the groups, I will do research on them and certainly I would disavow them if I thought there was something wrong.

Tapper: The Ku Klux Klan?

Trump: You may have groups in there that are totally fine and it would be very unfair. So give me a list of the groups and I'll let you know.

Tapper: I'm just talking about David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan here.

Trump: Honestly, I don't know David Duke.

But it's not the lie that came out of Trump's mouth that's so distressing; we're accustomed to that from Mr. Trump. It's how weak he sounded uttering the lie. It would have taken absolutely no courage to denounce Duke and disavow his support. But Trump couldn't do it. Instead, he he came off as afraid – afraid to lose any support, even support from a bigot like David Duke.

Ted Cruz and John Kasich condemned Trump's refusal to disavow Duke, and a spokesman for Marco Rubio said, “If you need to do research on the KKK before you can repudiate them, you are not ready or fit to be president.” It doesn't matter that Rubio has a vested interest. He's right.

Donald Trump's weakness, of course, won't put a dent in his support. Nothing he says or does hurts him. It just doesn't

matter to his loyal followers that he is a narcissist, or that he's thin-skinned, or that he's mean-spirited. As long as he tells "the man" to shove it, they adore him. Never mind that Donald Trump *is* the man! And never mind that he didn't have the decency to denounce the former Grand Wizard of the KKK on national television.

"I don't know David Duke," he told Jake Tapper. "I don't believe I have ever met him. I'm pretty sure I didn't meet him. And I just don't know anything about him."

A few hours later, when he realized just how pathetic he sounded, Donald Trump took to Twitter and pointed to a statement he made at a news conference just two days earlier when he was asked about Duke's embrace and replied, "I disavow." And then on the Today Show on Monday he again disavowed Duke and again said he didn't know what white supremacists groups Jake Tapper was talking about – and besides, he said, he couldn't hear the questions clearly because CNN had given him a "lousy ear piece."

Despite the lame excuses, the fact remains that on television on Sunday Donald Trump couldn't bring himself to do the simple, easy and most of all, the right thing. That might have offended a few bigots who listen to David Duke and were planning on voting for their Great White Hope, Donald Trump. And Donald wouldn't want to offend any potential voter. Every vote counts, you know.

And this is the man who is the odds on favorite to be the Republican nominee for President of the United States? I no longer care very much about Donald Trump. But I do care about a political party that would make him its leader – and possibly a nation that would make him its president.