

Eric Holder: 'racial animus' drives some opponents of Obama administration



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Eric Holder, the US attorney general, has accused some of the Obama administration's conservative opponents of being motivated by “racial animus”, suggesting that both he and President Obama are treated differently because they are black.

In unusually candid terms, Holder said that visceral criticism – including calls for impeachment of both the president and Holder, and Tea Party warnings about the direction of the country – were in part racially motivated. “There’s a certain level of vehemence, it seems to me, that’s directed at me [and] directed at the president. You know, people talking about taking their country back.”

He added: “There’s a certain racial component to this for some people. I don’t think this is the thing that is a main driver, but for some there’s a racial animus.”

Holder made his comments [in a wide-ranging interview with ABC News](#). Though he did not name any particular individual or group for such racially motivated hostility, he did talk about Sarah

Palin, the Republican vice-presidential candidate in 2008 and a Tea Party favourite, who has called for Obama to be impeached. “She wasn’t a particularly good vice-presidential candidate. She’s an even worse judge of who ought to be impeached and why,” he said.

In the course of more than five years in office, Obama has tried hard not to be sucked into the debate about any racial component of the opposition to his administration. When he has talked about racial issues, [such as his remarks following the acquittal of George Zimmerman](#), accused of murdering a teenager in Florida last year, he has tended to talk in general terms about the impact of discrimination, rather than make specific allegations about his conservative enemies.

Other prominent African American politicians have been less reserved. Charlie Rangel, the long-standing Democratic Congress member for Harlem, [recently said that the Republican stand-off with Obama](#) was entirely motivated by race.

On Holder’s part, this is not the first time that he has allowed himself to comment on how America deals with its racial legacy. Just after he took over the job as the senior official at the department of justice in 2009, he made a much-discussed speech in which he said “though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot, in things racial we have always been and continue to be, in too many ways, essentially a nation of cowards.”

Asked by ABC News whether he stood by that speech, he said he did. “I think we are still a nation that is too afraid to confront racial issues,” he said, adding that Americans rarely engaged “one another across the color line [to] talk about racial issues”.

The attorney general was outspoken in his condemnation of Republican-dominated legislatures that have passed [new voter ID laws](#) that have been decried as thinly-veiled attempts to restrict black voters’ access to the polls. The Department of Justice is currently [suing Texas](#) and [North Carolina](#) over their new voter ID legislation, and is expected to do the same in Ohio and Wisconsin.

“I’m attorney general of the United States. I will not stand for – I will not allow people to take away that which people gave their lives to give, and that is the ability for the American people to vote,” he said.