

DAILY BEAST

Black Republicans Keep Chasing White Racist Votes

By Kali Holloway

July 10, 2022

Racially aggrieved white conservatives actually love to vote for “the Black guy,” as long as they’re attacking blackness.

There have been plenty of Republican campaign ads featuring candidates tacitly threatening to shoot people.

There’s the one where Missouri Senate wannabe Eric Greitens advocates “[RINO hunting](#),” or [the one](#) where Michigan gubernatorial contender Garrett Soldano fires multiple guns for 45 seconds—but [the latest Jerone Davison](#) ad stands out for a few reasons.

For starters, Davison, who is running for a U.S. House seat representing Arizona, is a Black Republican and regardless of what every Black Republican claims, that’s [still the rarest kind](#). Then there’s the fact that the ad shows a gathering mob of men in Ku Klux Klan robes, various crude weapons in their hands, descending on Davison’s back yard as he sips coffee at a kitchen table. The commercial ends with Davison crossing his lawn toward the mob, a machine gun held aloft.

“When this rifle is the only thing standing between your family and a dozen angry Democrats in Klan hoods,” Davison says in voiceover, “you just might need that semi-automatic and all 30 rounds.”

There was plenty of outrage after Davison posted the ad on Twitter (though he somehow escaped criticism for a shot in the ad that so clearly bites [an iconic photo of Malcolm X](#) that it should trigger an immediate settlement payment and note of apology to the Shabazz family). Most of the indignation focused on the ad’s violence, but there was also the matter of its near comical ahistoricism.

In the midst of an ongoing gun epidemic that has seen white racists stalk and cut down Black folks in spaces as sacred as a Charleston, South Carolina, church, and as mundane as a Buffalo, New York, grocery store—here’s Davison manipulating the timeline to make it seem as if the current scourge of murderous white racial terror isn’t a rightwing phenomenon tied to the GOP. We know this [because](#) of all the [intelligence reports](#) indicating that “far-right-wing extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States” and [investigations indicating](#) a surge of white supremacist and “right-wing extremist attacks and plots greatly eclipsing those from the far left and causing more deaths.”

The calls, in other words, are not coming from a Democratic klavern meeting on Davison's lawn. They are very obviously coming from right inside his chosen political house.

Davison is leaning into a fairly standard trick of Black Republicanism, which is to anachronistically cite post-Reconstruction history—and to exploit and invert the racial terror endured by his ancestors and contemporaries—as a way to deflect from the racism of the modern GOP, while also denying that anti-Black racism is a pervasive American problem. It's a stance that you can expect to see a lot more of in the near future from white Republicans and their Black cohort, an historic number of whom are currently running for office. According to [the Republican National Committee](#), there are 120 Black members of the GOP currently campaigning for political positions, 81 of whom [the National Republican Congressional Committee](#) identifies as running for Congress. And the only way to be a viable Republican candidate in a party that has proudly waved its white supremacist flag in recent years is to promote the same *anti-anti-racist*, gun-toting, cisheteronormative, bootstrapping conservatism as their competitors.

Wesley Hunt, the former Army captain who just won the Republican primary in a Houston congressional district that was reportedly [gerrymandered to give him an edge](#), ticks every box. Hunt claims Ketanji Brown Jackson was nominated to the Supreme Court “[just because she's a Black woman](#),” intentionally misgenders [transgender folks](#), and went on Fox News to say teaching the U.S.'s history of anti-blackness to those serving in the military is “[indoctrinating reverse racism](#).”

There's Air Force veteran Jennifer-Ruth Green of Indiana, who in a [campaign ad states](#) that she's worried about “woke madness like indoctrinating our children with critical race theory” and promises to “advance President Trump's America First policy.”

Kristina Karamo, now running for Michigan Secretary of State, claims she witnessed vote tampering in the 2020 presidential election, earning a Trump endorsement; notably, she has also labeled abortion, yoga, the [Democratic Party](#), and [Jay-Z as satanic](#).

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Virginia congressional candidate Terry Namkung [claims](#) “leftists have gradually overtaken the education system, spreading their anti-American vision” which apparently includes respecting people's gender identities and acknowledging the effects of racism.

Florida's 10th Congressional District has one Black Republican candidate, Willie Montague, who accused his Black Dem opponent of using a “[Black Privilege card](#)” after he, *of all things*, was arrested and fined for protesting Black voter suppression; Calvin Wimbish, another Black Republican in the same contest, does ideology-by-numbers messaging on his website, declaring “children shouldn't be taught about critical race theory, sexuality, or politically-motivated propaganda.”

I would be remiss not to mention Georgia Senate candidate Herschel Walker, who—[despite lying](#) about his entire biography—is still [beloved by white evangelicals](#) because he disparages critical race theory (he calls it “CTR”), [pathologizes Black](#) families, and says [nonsense like](#), “We're Americans. We're not Black. We're not white. We're Americans.”

There may be Black Republicans with less extreme outlooks, but on topics like CRT—which they have warped to mean anything race-related that most white Republicans disagree with—they overwhelmingly seem to stand in unified opposition. That’s because those who strive to move up the political ranks realize a key part of that ascent depends on distancing themselves from blackness.

A Southern Poverty Law Center poll from April found nearly [70 percent of Republican](#) voters believe in the Great Replacement Theory, and [the Cato Institute](#) finds that more than 7 in 10 Trump supporters think that “discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against Blacks and other minorities.” The GOP has led on the white racist CRT-social panic, with Republican legislatures [in at least 24 states](#) successfully passing anti-CRT measures. For Black Republicans, divorcing themselves from an investment in addressing racism as an entrenched systemic problem—which would require acknowledging its historical roots—and instead claiming that racism is a matter of large-scale Black individual failure is key to winning over a particular white audience—one that steadfastly believes the racial hierarchy is just a product of nature. And for that same racially aggrieved white voting base, having a Black bullhorn announce that their status is merited not only offers the absolution they desire, but a convenient way to shake off claims of racism. How can you be a bigot when you voted for the Black guy?

Over at the Never Trump conservative site [The Bulwark](#), Theodore T. Johnson points to a couple of surveys that help bolster this idea. The first, a 2015 paper from two University of Georgia political scientists, notes that white conservatives “are either more supportive of minority Republicans or just as likely to vote for a minority as they are a white Republican.” A [second 2021 study](#) out of the University of Chicago concludes that “racially resentful [white] voters prefer to vote for a Black candidate over a white competitor” and that “some Black candidates—most notably, Republicans with an individualist message—benefit electorally from higher levels of racial resentment in the electorate.” Taken together, the implication of both studies is that Black candidates who flash the signifiers of *anti-anti-racism*—adopting the trappings of MAGAhood and sermonizing on how Black folks just need to *do better*—can rack up votes from white racists.

If you’re a Black person who’s willing to go out and essentially pledge allegiance to white supremacy, white racists understand you’re probably less of a threat to their place in the racial order than even the white dude running beside you.

“So many Black Americans have been raised in a conservative way,” Paris Dennard, who made his name as Trump’s Black surrogate on CNN, and now serves as the director of Black media affairs for the Republican National Committee, told [The Hill](#). “When you think about Black conservatism, that is being a strong family. That’s having a lot of faith, being able to work hard and have a strong and safe community.”

Dennard isn’t wrong that there is a deep strain of Black conservatism rooted in religion, family and the virtue of self-reliance. But it’s also necessarily tied to survival and self-preservation—which includes an interest in the social safety net, race-specific solutions to a history anti-black policymaking, and a host of economic and social issues that serve the whole.

To be clear, racism is a plague in both parties, with the Democrats failing to deliver on promises related to Black voting rights, endemic police abuse or mass incarceration, the disproportionate burdens of student loan debt, the theft [of black land](#), I could endlessly go on. There’s a reason

Black support for Joe Biden [has declined](#) since 2020, but the Black Republican insistence that there's a coming Blexit is nonsense.

Black voters have always had to make political calculations to mitigate harm, and despite the insidiousness of current Democratic inaction, the math still gives them an advantage over the Republicans.

On a not-so-side note, just hours after Davison's ad dropped, the antisemitic and white nationalist activist Nick Fuentes set aside some time [on his show](#) to discuss the video. Fuentes—the head of the America First Political Action Conference which has hosted Republican members of Congress such as Reps. [Paul Gosar](#) and Marjorie Taylor Greene—dubbed the Davis ad “a blood libel against the white race and specifically white Americans.”

“Is this guy gonna kill me?” Fuentes asked, before getting to the real heart of the matter, “Is he gonna kill Donald Trump?”

That's who Black Republicans are sharing a big tent with, who they're covering for, who they're not pretending not to notice. Fuentes, at the very least, is being honest about it.