

## [NY TIMES - OPINION](#)

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### **Kanye Shows Where the Right's Troll Politics Lead**

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In a [sketch](#) on the German comedy show “Browser Ballett,” a man in a Nazi uniform, replete with jackboots and a red swastika armband, is marching down a street in 1933 when another man hisses, “Nazi.” The Nazi, aghast at the insult, confronts him.

“When you’re running out of arguments it’s easy to play the Nazi card,” says the Nazi. He continues, “Just because someone doesn’t share the mainstream opinion he isn’t automatically a Nazi.” Flustered, the other man replies: “But being a Nazi is already mainstream. You National Socialists already have the power.” To which the Nazi, with a condescending grin, says: “Oh, I forgot. In your world everyone is a Nazi.”

It’s a perfect satire of how the modern right operates. The right-winger starts with a bigoted provocation and, when criticized, defaults to aggrieved claims of persecution and accusations of oversensitivity. He revels in the power he’s amassed even as he poses as a victim. This dynamic has been particularly stark since the musician Kanye West, who now goes by Ye, [declared his intention](#) to go “death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE.”

Usually, mainstream conservatives are a bit more nuanced in their antisemitism. They decry the Luciferian puppet master George Soros, or, as Donald Trump did in a 2016 [campaign ad](#) featuring images of prominent Jews in finance, refer to “those who control the levers of power” and “global special interests.” Marjorie Taylor Greene attributed the 2018 California wildfires to space lasers controlled, in part, by the Rothschild banking family. Doug Mastriano, the Republican candidate for Pennsylvania governor — and not, in general, an opponent of religious education — has recently [attacked](#) his Democratic rival, Josh Shapiro, for sending his kids to an “exclusive, elite” Jewish day school, saying it shows “disdain for people like us.”

Such insinuating rhetoric lets Republicans speak to antisemites and then take umbrage when other people notice. The umbrage itself then becomes part of the political message: Those people won’t let you say *anything* anymore! Usually, this performance depends on language with at least a shred of ambiguity, allowing the speaker to adopt a posture of put-upon faux naïveté. “Apparently now it’s some kind of racist thing if I talk about the school,” huffed Mastriano.

Ye, however, doesn’t bother with ambiguity. Last week, after Sean Combs, the rapper known as Diddy, criticized him for his “[White Lives Matter](#)” T-shirts, Ye posted an exchange on Instagram accusing Combs of being controlled by Jews. That got Ye’s Instagram account frozen, so he went on Twitter, where he was [welcomed back](#) by the site’s likely future owner, Elon Musk. There, after announcing his vendetta against the Jewish people, Ye addressed us directly: “You guys have toyed with me and tried to blackball anyone whoever opposes your agenda.”

If Republicans were capable of shame they might have felt some. Ye, who long ago embraced Donald Trump, had just given an interview to Tucker Carlson in which he lambasted the media's "godless agenda" and railed against abortion. Always thirsty for celebrity validation, conservatives ate the interview up. The account for the Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee [tweeted](#), "Kanye. Elon. Trump." And now here was Ye showing, in a completely unvarnished way, just what his right-wing conversion entails. (As it turns out, Carlson already knew; Vice has [since revealed](#) that Ye's most paranoid and unhinged comments were edited out.)

It's not surprising that few conservatives are rushing to distance themselves from Ye, committed as they are to defending their right to malign their enemies without consequence. Antisemites, after all, may be the original trolls. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in "Anti-Semite and Jew," first published in English in 1948, antisemites "know that their remarks are frivolous, open to challenge. But they are amusing themselves, for it is their adversary who is obliged to use words responsibly, since he believes in words." It was antisemites who perfected the pose of *just asking questions*; the Holocaust denier David Irving famously demanded that [Deborah Lipstadt](#), a scholar of the Holocaust, debate him.

Criticizing Ye requires acknowledging that there's such a thing as going too far, and that there are values higher than owning the libs. A few conservatives made the pivot; the hosts of "Fox & Friends Weekend," who'd earlier condemned Ye's Instagram suspension, [called his tweets](#) "ugly" and "unfortunate." Others, however, stuck to the typical right-wing script.

On Twitter, Todd Rokita, the Indiana attorney general last in the news for attacking a doctor who performed an abortion on a 10-year-old rape victim, [accused the media](#) of targeting Ye for his "independent thinking" and for "having opposing thoughts from the norm of Hollywood." (He later added that he was "100 percent supportive of the Jewish community and Israel.") The right-wing media figure Candace Owens — who'd worn a White Lives Matter shirt alongside Ye — channeled "Browser Ballett," acting outraged that anyone would interpret a man promising to wage his own personal war on the Jewish people as antisemitic.

"First and foremost, what is 'death con three?'" [she asked](#). "Did he mean Def Con 3? Which would be a military defense position, not an offense — for those of you who are offended. A military *defense* position." She added, indignant, "It's like you cannot even say the word 'Jewish' without people getting upset."

The absurdism here is darkly funny, but it shouldn't distract us from the serious thing that's happening. What's striking about Ye's naked antisemitism isn't that he crossed a line but that, for some of his powerful allies, he didn't. The tweet from the House Judiciary Republicans has not, as of this writing, been taken down. On Monday night, Owens was on Carlson's show — one of the most-watched cable news shows in the country — praising Ye for standing up for oppressed white people. His tweets about Jews didn't come up.