

# [***Here's the real reason why right-wing media figures are targeting Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B77-R4W1-JBSS-S01F-00000-00&context=1516831)

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New York (CNN) &#8212; Editor's Note: A version of this article first appeared in the "Reliable Sources" newsletter. [*Sign up for the daily digest chronicling the evolving media landscape here*](https://www.cnn.com/newsletters/reliable-sources).

Conservatives are going into self-exile.

The movement that once championed small, business-friendly government is now led by far-right media forces hoping to cash in on attention from raging culture wars, sealing off its adherents from the rest of society.

From a bird's eye view, the state of affairs among MAGA Media diehards as it sits today is remarkable. A subset of America actually purports to boycott Disney, the world's preeminent entertainment company; Bud Light, once America's most popular beer; Target, the quintessential brick-and-mortar shopping destination; Pfizer, the pharmaceutical company that produced life-saving Covid-19 vaccines; Major League Baseball, the nation's favorite pastime; and now Taylor Swift, a generational icon and one of the most successful musical artists of all time.

"There's something striking about watching the far-right tying itself in knots and attacking Swift and [her boyfriend Travis] Kelce that demonstrates how badly the far-right media has alienated itself from most of society," Charlie Warzel, a staff writer at The Atlantic who covers the intersection of ***politics***, technology, and culture, told me Tuesday. "They've built out this alternate universe and reality of grievance and it feels like instead of using it to wage an effective culture war, they're fully lost in it and can't see that they've chosen as their primary enemy the person with the literal highest approval rating in American life right now."

"This isn't the first time it's happened," Warzel added. "The far-right is systematically alienating itself from many of the institutions and people that normal Americans frequent, like, and associate themselves with. And I don't think they can see how exhausting and off-putting that is to people who don't spend their days mainlining Fox News or on X."

A crucial factor in this bleak reality is that the incentive structure in conservative ***politics*** has gone awry. The irresponsible and dishonest stars of the right-wing media kingdom are motivated by vastly different goals than those who are actually trying to advance conservative causes, get Republicans elected, and then ultimately govern in office.

For a right-wing online influencer, the top incentive is to amass video views and shares - all in a bid to increase one's social media footprint and, thus, power and treasure. When viewed from that vantage point, peddling increasingly outlandish, attention-grabbing junk makes sense. The same goes for Fox News hosts and talk radio personalities, who are simultaneously quietly worried that more provocative newcomers to the scene might eat into their audiences if they aren't hardline enough.

In effect, declaring war on popular institutions like Disney and celebrities like Swift makes business sense for these media personalities. It delivers them the attention they so desperately crave while appealing to a sliver of the population - enough to carve out a lucrative career in this arena.

"Within the conservative base, it's great strategy, but when you are trying to win over swing voters, it isn't going to help, as they'll see it as weird," Evan Siegfried, a GOP strategist who has written extensively about how Republicans can try to attract new voters to their causes, candidly told me. "Right now, the GOP does not seem to have a real interest in growing, but rather prefers to stick with grievance ***politics***."

The problem is that lies and conspiracy theories can cause enormous harm to the body ***politic***. And the figures who traffic in mis-and disinformation have amassed great power in the Republican Party. In fact, right-wing media stars have far more power over the GOP's direction than most of its actual leaders, like Mitch McConnell. Don't believe me? Just talk to Kevin McCarthy. The people standing at the helm of the ship, actually charting its path, are the handsomely paid talk-show hosts who command legions of fans and excite them into participating in the culture war battles on a weekly basis. Not the boring Washington politicians. Donald Trump is successful because he falls into the former camp far more than the latter.

The problem for the diminishing few in the Republican Party who hunger for responsible conservative governance is that these MAGA Media celebrities are leading the GOP down a path of isolation, which could ultimately result in its irrelevance with the rest of society. These conspiracy talk hosts have little-to-no incentive to behave in a way that results in Republicans getting elected to higher office. In fact, arguably it's just the opposite. The right-wing media kingdom thrives when Democrats are in office and there are political opponents whom they can demonize.

That's not to say the right-wing media machine holds no power. It certainly does. Just a tiny percentage of the population falling under the trance of its stars translates into millions of people who can, for example, be convinced to head to the nation's Capital to try to overturn a democratic election. And polling indicates that a good chunk of the country has bought some of the nonsense MAGA Media has been relentlessly selling.

But heading into the 2024 election, alienating the rest of the country - which still handily outnumbers the MAGA loyalists - with absurd conspiracy theories about Swift, Kelce, and some of its most treasured institutions makes little sense as an electoral strategy.

As Alyssa Farah Griffin, the former Trump White House communications director turned vocal critic of the former president, [*put it*](https://e.newsletters.cnn.com/click?Eam9uLnBhc3NhbnRpbm9AdHVybmVyLmNvbQ/CeyJtaWQiOiIxNzA2NjY3MjAwMTIxZTQyMGU5ZjIwY2ZlIiwiY3QiOiJjbm4tYjczZTkyYjc4ZjNhZWRhYjI3MGExMTYyNDJmMDI2NWEtMSIsInJkIjoidHVybmVyLmNvbSJ9/HWkhfQ05OX2lfTmV3c19OREJBTjAxMzEyMDI0YzExNTM2MTFiMSxjbjEsaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuaG9sbHl3b29kcmVwb3J0ZXIuY29tL3R2L3R2LW5ld3MvdGF5bG9yLXN3aWZ0LWNvbnNwaXJhY3ktdGhlb3JpZXMtdGhlLXZpZXctMTIzNTgxMDQxOC8/s8l160b7230) on "The View" Tuesday: "I cannot think of a dumber political fight to pick than one with the Swifties."

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