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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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OPINION | COMMENTARY

Kanye Had One of the Best Tweets of All Time

Maxine Waters said the rapper spoke 'out of turn' by praising Trump, but he affirmed his freedom.



Then-President-elect Donald Trump and Kanye West at Trump Tower in New York City, Dec. 13, 2016.

PHOTO: SETH WENIG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Jason Whitlock

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After a nearly yearlong social-media hiatus, polarizing rap star Kanye West re-emerged on Twitter last month. On April 25 he shocked the mainstream media by expressing admiration for President Donald Trump.

"You don't have to agree with trump but the mob can't make me not love him," Mr. West tweeted. "We are both dragon energy. He is my brother. I love everyone. I don't agree with everything anyone does. That's what makes us individuals. And we have the right to independent thought."

The tweet heard round the internet pleased America's Twitter-loving president, who promptly thanked the rapper. It had a much different effect on liberal elites. Mr. West's tweet and his other missives supporting center-right figures like Candace Owens and Scott Adams constituted left-wing betrayal of the highest order. The man who once vilified George W. Bush for the slow response to Hurricane Katrina was joining the birther president?

Rep. Maxine Waters (D., Calif.) bashed Mr. West for speaking "out of turn." Mr. West shared over Twitter text messages from singer John Legend scolding him for aligning with President Trump. "Don't let this be a part of your legacy," implored Mr. Legend. The Atlantic's Ta-Nehisi Coates even spent 5,000 words admonishing Mr. West for straying too far from his betters' thinking.

Last week, when Mr. West flippantly and foolishly ascribed blame for American slavery on African-Americans during a TMZ interview, he provided his critics the out they needed to dismiss him. But Mr. West's larger point should not be rejected because bravado caused him to suggest he would've chosen death over slavery. Should we also now discard his criticism of President Bush? Liberals loved that. But they now fear what Mr. West is attempting to credibly convey to black people. It's a message that could devastate the Democratic Party.

Liberalism is black people's cigarette. In the immediate aftermath of the civil-rights movement, Democrats marketed liberalism to us as fashionable, sophisticated and liberating. Today it needs a surgeon general's warning: hazardous to your family and the values you were taught as a child.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Southern, conservative minister who believed in the American promise. His dream was patriotic and traditional. Family, work, self-determination and religion comprised his core values. He never demonized his enemies. He chose to shame them by being better.

The turbulent and assassination-scarred 1960s created an acute leadership void in black America. The Democratic Party capitalized by promising black people government dependency disguised as assistance. The welfare check, the replacement for black fathers, is liberalism's nicotine. Hollywood celebrities were once deployed by advertising companies to make smoking

seem cool; today, they are deployed by liberal interest groups to make progressive politics seem like the only solution to black people's problems.

Since King's death, liberalism has increasingly become our religion and the Democratic Party our church. The rewards for our allegiance are at best disappointing: Our families have disintegrated. Our men have been incarcerated and emasculated. Our communities have been abandoned by high achievers. And our children are confused and resentful of their elders.

In 1965, the Moynihan report sounded alarm because only 76% of black children were born to married women. By 2015, 77% of nonimmigrant black children were born to single mothers, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Major cities such as Baltimore and Detroit—run almost exclusively by black Democrats—remain crime-ridden and economically challenged, especially for black residents.

Perhaps this can be attributed to the evil work of conservative Republican politicians at the federal level. Or maybe we, African-Americans, have chosen the wrong strategy. No other ethnic group is chained to a single political ideology. Hispanics, whites and Asians actually make political parties compete for their support. Maybe Mr. West is trying to warn us of the dangers of Democratic cigarette addiction?

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On April 18 he tweeted: "Don't follow crowds. Follow the innate feelings inside of you. Do what you feel not what you think. Thoughts have been placed in our heads to make everyone assimilate. Follow what you feel."

On April 22: "there was a time when slavery was the trend and apparently that time is still upon us. But now it's a mentality."

On April 23: "new ideas will no longer be condemned by the masses. We are on the frontier of massive change. Starting from breaking out of our mental prisons."

Here's the tweet just before his now infamous President Trump tweet: "Free thinkers don't fear retaliation for your thoughts. The traditional thinkers are only using thoughts and words but they are in a mental prison. You are free. You've already won. Feel energized. Move in love not fear. Be afraid of nothing."

Black people have no reason to fear political free agency.

Mr. Whitlock is a co-host of "Speak for Yourself" on Fox Sports 1.

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