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He's The Trans Son Of An Anti-Trans Influencer. It's His Turn To Speak.

Renton Sinclair's mother is a former Miss Illinois who wants to force trans people out of public life. That's exactly what makes her a rising star in MAGA World.

By Christopher Mathias

Jun 30, 2023, 05:45 AM EDT | Updated Jun 30, 2023





Renton Sinclair in a kitchen he co-owns and works as sous-chef. CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — When Renton Sinclair texted his mom to say that he was transgender, she summoned a curse on the testosterone he was taking.

“I actually went after the medicine, and I cursed it in the name of Jesus, and I said, ‘No, you’re not going to work. I don’t know if you’re going to make her sick or whatever, but she’s going to have to go off that medicine,’” Tania Joy Gibson recounted recently during an episode of her podcast, repeatedly misgendering her child.

Renton doesn’t talk to Tania anymore. But Tania is always talking about Renton these days, on podcasts and livestreams and stages across the country, from California to South Dakota to Pennsylvania. She often tells the story of how God appeared to her in a dream before her first child was born, telling her what to name her child, a name

with Biblical origins.

Renton is not that name. Tania refuses to call her son that name. In fact, she refuses to call her son her *son*. “It’s demonic,” Tania said about the existence of transgender people. “My daughter is in there, my daughter who was born and prophesied over and given the name from God is in there, but the Devil has taken and twisted her mind...”

In Tania’s telling, she is a victim, a mother who lost her child to the woke cult of “gender ideology.” She once [told](#) a crowd of 4,000 people that the gender-affirming care Renton and other trans people receive is the work of the literal devil, a scheme of mass sterilization to steal the “seed” of humanity.

She then broke into a rendition of “America The Beautiful,” a sea of middle-aged white people rising to their feet and placing red MAGA hats over their hearts.

Renton knows his mom has always loved the spotlight. She was, after all, a Miss America contestant, having been crowned Miss Illinois in 1996. Renton is horrified that, in a way, Tania has a new, albeit crueler, pageant. It’s a pageant similarly obsessed with gender. For Tania, it has higher stakes than a sash and crown: She believes it’s her divine destiny and duty to take part in the current conservative crusade to force trans people out of public life, a necessary step in paving the path for Christ’s return. As outlandish and self-aggrandizing as that may seem, Tania has allies in high places to help her on this holy mission.

Renton has watched as his mom has started to speak from the same stages as famous

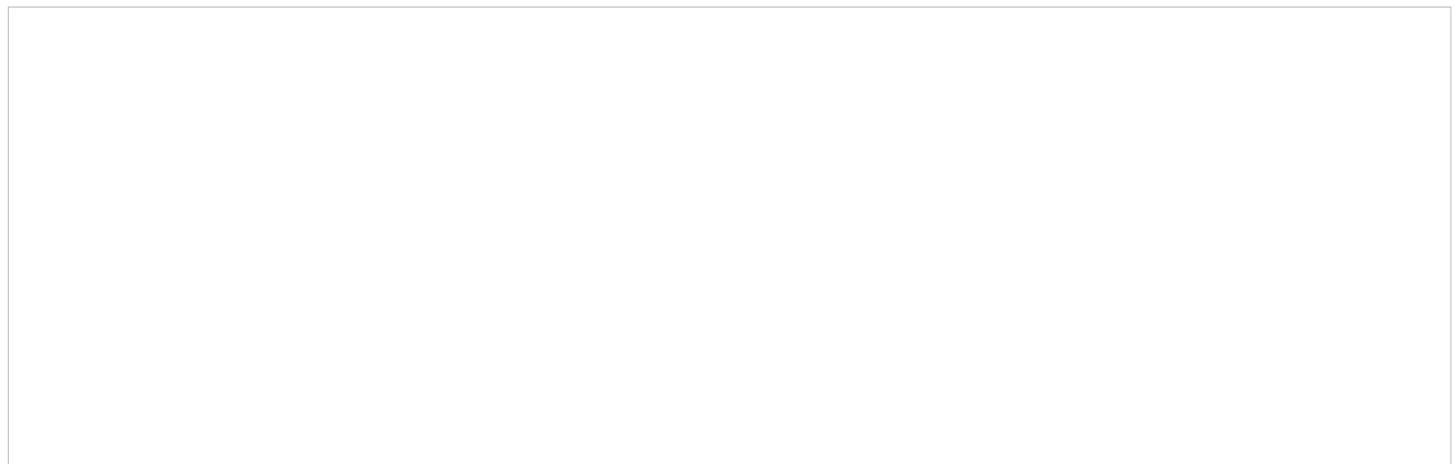
right-wing figures — Eric Trump, Roger Stone, Michael Flynn and others — calling for laws that would force him to be everything he’s not.

He has watched his mom get on these stages and call him a “prodigal daughter” — a reference to the biblical story of the Prodigal Son, a wayward child destined to one day repent and return to God, return home, return to her.

But Renton is neither a prodigal nor a daughter. He’d like you to know he’s never going home to Tania because that home was hell — the type of hell he’s horrified that Republican legislators are trying to recreate for every trans kid in America.

He has forged a new home for himself. A new family, too. And if Tania Joy Gibson is going to keep giving speeches about him, then maybe it’s time for Renton Sinclair to speak up about her.

‘I Never Planned To Live Past 16’



Renton Sinclair's old diary in Kansas City. Renton kept the diary in a hole in his bed to keep it out of his parent's detection.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton Sinclair reads through his old diary on his porch.

Renton Sinclair reads through his old diary on his porch.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton was around 6 years old when his mom put him in a beauty pageant. He didn't take to it. "I just stole a crown off the table," he recalls, laughing. "We left, and I was in the back seat, and they were like, 'Where did you get that?' And I just said, 'I took it.'"

The crown is somewhere in his place now, a two-story house with a front porch in a working-class part of Kansas City, Missouri, that Renton, 23, shares with his partner Greg Hyatt, their three dogs, and a large orange cat.

He has other artifacts from his childhood stuffed into a Home Depot moving box — old family photos, Christmas cards, and a beat-up blue journal, the first page inscribed with an urgent, all-caps message: "MOM, GO AWAY." (Tania did not respond to a list of detailed questions for this story. "It would be inappropriate for me to discuss my daughter's health issues or her experiences as an adolescent," she wrote in an email where she deadnamed and repeatedly misgendered her child. "My only request is that you respect my daughter's fragile condition and consider the harm the Huffington Post can bring her by making her problems known worldwide.")

Renton was 8 when his parents divorced, and he struggled with depression thereafter. His mom sent him to therapy and put him on meds, but nothing seemed to help ease a profound despair and anxiety that had grown inside him, feelings he could never quite

identify the origins of and which intensified with puberty. “A lot of it was just internally like feeling terrible about myself and just not really knowing why,” he recalls.

He didn’t have much of a frame of reference for being queer — save for a couple of gay men he saw serving on pageant boards with his mom — but he suspected he probably was. “What’s worse is my whole sexuality issue,” he wrote in his journal once. “I can’t decide if I’m homo or bi.”

Then, when he was about 12, one of Renton’s favorite YouTubers, an anime cosplayer named [twinfools](#), posted a video announcing that he was transgender. “I’ve just decided I might as well be honest now, maybe I can help people this way,” 19-year-old twinfools said in the video. (twinfools has since received a master’s in public health and is a popular transgender advocate.)

The two-and-half-minute announcement was a revelation for Renton.

“I just remember being like, ‘Oh, fuck, that’s what it is,’” he said. “I just immediately was like, ‘Oh shit, this is the thing I can do. This all makes so much more sense now.’ It was just like 1,000 pounds of bricks off my chest.”

Renton knew to keep this epiphany from his mom and stepdad, who he says were very religious and conservative. He was already the black sheep of the family — he never wanted to go to church, he liked comic books (which his mom disapproved of, saying they were for boys), he listened to metal and screamo music and he was obsessed with horror and sci-fi movies (he watched “The Matrix” so many times the VHS broke). He was, in every way, the opposite of his mom, Miss Illinois.

So Renton found refuge in an online network of queer youth on sites like Tumblr and DeviantArt. He started going by the name Axel with this online coterie — a name adapted from a male character in the video game “Kingdom Hearts” — and eventually set up a secret Facebook account where he could try on this new identity.

He and his new friends confided in each other and talked about being queer. At one point, Renton felt comfortable enough offline to come out to some friends at a Bible camp in Wisconsin. “I told two friends about my LGBT stuff,” he wrote in his journal.

But the depression only deepened. On Dec. 22, 2011, Renton tried to kill himself by overdosing on Tylenol.

“Today I learned that when you OD and then sleep for six and a half hours, and then get sick, that my parents won’t notice anything’s wrong,” Renton wrote that day. “I should be in a fucking hospital right now drinking charcoal but no, I’m putting on eyeliner and getting ready for a Christmas party.”

Trans and nonbinary youth experience exponentially [higher rates](#) of self-harm and suicidal ideation. Over half of trans youth identifying as male say they have attempted suicide, according to a 2018 [study](#) by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

A few months later, in spring 2012, Renton wrote in his journal that his mom and stepdad had confiscated his phone and computer. They ripped his bedroom and

closet doors off their hinges, so he had nowhere to be by himself. He was also forbidden from spending time with other kids his age.

“I have no friends,” Renton wrote. “I can’t hang out with anybody. No laptop, no phone. No freedom. My family hates me. There’s not a point anymore.”

Renton says his mom and stepdad had discovered he’d been cutting himself. Moreover, his stepdad had gone on Renton’s computer and found the “Axel” Facebook account. He and Tania read through his messages about being queer.

“They freaked the fuck out,” Renton recalls. (Renton’s stepdad, who is no longer married to Tania, did not return requests for comment.)

One day they told Renton they needed to stop by the hospital so Tania could get a blood test. But while waiting in the lobby, it became clear to Renton that it was a ruse: “I saw a sign saying ‘adolescent inpatient psychiatric’ or some shit, and I was just like, ‘God damn it, here we fucking go.’”

Renton says they kept him there for a week. Sometimes Tania visited with a pastor, the pair loudly praying over Renton in the visitor’s room and speaking in tongues — the practice, popular in certain charismatic evangelical churches, of harnessing a supernatural ability to speak in an unknown, divine language. (To nonbelievers, however, it can sound like gibberish.)

Tania would also bring Christian counselors for therapy sessions, Renton says, during

which they'd sit in a room reading Bible verses and telling Renton that being queer was wrong. It was only years later that he realized this was conversion therapy.

"I don't think the goal was necessarily to make people straight or whatever as much as it was just to, like, repress you to the point where you either just die or you just stop arguing with it," Renton remembers.

Renton eventually was allowed to spend nights at home, but he claims he spent daytime hours when he should have been at school at the psychiatric facility. He was still forbidden from seeing friends, even the kids next door. Renton remembers his grandmother, Tania's mom, telling him over and over that there was a war over his soul between angels and demons. He says he was put on a battery of drugs — lithium, Zoloft, Xanax — that made him feel "just completely fucking numb." His mom took away his studded belts and any clothing she deemed unfeminine. She excised his shelf of books and DVDs that weren't Christian enough. Renton cut a hole in the box spring beneath his mattress to hide his journal, one of the few places where he could be honest about his feelings.

The whole experience wore him down. Desperate to see his friends and get out of the house, Renton eventually quit talking about being queer. "I just kind of stopped fighting things, if that makes sense," he says. "I completely was like back in the closet and almost forgot about it for like years."

A 2019 study [found](#) that trans people who experience conversion therapy are twice as likely to attempt suicide as other trans people. A 2018 study [showed](#) that youth

“whose gender identities are not strongly supported by their parents” are 14 times as likely to attempt suicide, and a 2022 study from the Trevor Project, an LGBTQ+ advocacy group, [revealed](#) that 16% of queer youth run away from home at some point.

Renton was racked with constant feelings of self-hatred and guilt and depression, feelings he often tried to escape by sneaking out of the house at night, going into Chicago with friends to hang out in alleys and basements, doing drugs and couchsurfing from punk house to punk house. He was 13 years old.

Renton says he found a “genuine community” in the Chicago punk scene then. “I could go sit in the basement, and it’s loud, and it’s packed, and it’s dark, and I don’t have to fucking think about things, and I can like be in a mosh pit in someone’s basement, and we can just like ‘Fight Club’ it out,” he recalls.

In retrospect, he sees it was no place for a 13-year-old. But he made some of the best friends of his life then, some of whom have since died from drugs. He’s devastated that he never kept any photos of these friends — he’d been scared at the time that his mom might find them.

Renton says it’s a miracle that he made it out of adolescence alive.

“I never planned to live past 16 or to be an adult,” Renton remembers. “I spent a lot of my childhood just fully accepting that I’m not going to be an adult like that’s just not a thing that’s happening.”

There She Is, Your Ideal, The Dream Of A Million Girls

Tania Joy Gibson was crowned Miss Illinois 1996.

Tania Joy Gibson was crowned Miss Illinois 1996.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS MCGONIGAL/HUFFPOST; PHOTO VIA RUMBLE

Tania was 16 when she was crowned Miss Teen America. Three years later, she traveled to the Miss America pageant as Miss Illinois.

Her father had bought her breast implants ahead of the competition, family members told HuffPost. (Her father did not respond to a request for comment.) Tania walked across a stage in Atlantic City, New Jersey, wearing a black and gold one-piece swimsuit. She sang “As If We Never Said Goodbye” from “Sunset Boulevard.” And when it came time to talk about her political platform — protecting “at-risk youth” — Tania explained to the host that it would take a “team effort” between “community

leaders, business leaders, and educators alike, with the main foundation starting at the family” to “offer at-risk youth a hope and a purpose that they can accomplish any goal in their life.”

Some 12.7 million American households tuned in for the pageant, which Regis Philbin hosted. They would’ve seen Tania among the 51 contestants, all in short red skirts, doing a choreographed dance. And they would’ve seen Miss Kansas eventually crowned the winner, crying with joy as Philbin sang “There She Is, Miss America.” (“There she is, your ideal / The dreams of a million girls .../ Oh she may turn out to be / The queen of femininity.../ She’ll take the town by storm / With her all-American face and form.”)

Dr. Donnell Ruwe, in her seminal [essay](#) about the pageant system, “I Was Miss Meridian 1985,” argued that Miss America contestants — with their elaborate regimens of hair and makeup, their deep literacy with the language of fashion, their duct-taped breasts, Vaseline teeth, butts glued to swimsuits, and penchant for plastic surgeries — are perhaps more familiar than most people with how gender is constructed. “The actual Miss America Pageant system teaches its participants that the Miss America ideal is imaginary; the woman who wins the crown in the nationally televised event does not exist in nature; her looks are not real but manufactured,” wrote Ruwe, a former pageant contestant herself.

Other observers have [noted](#) that beauty pageants are, in essence, a form of “high-femme drag” in which contestants perform or cosplay traditional American femininity.

Tania maintains her performance at Miss America in 1996 should've earned her a spot as a top 10 finalist. She blames her omission on a nascent “cancel culture” — a conspiracy among pageant officials to blacklist her due to her conservative Christian beliefs.

Miss America Pageant 1997 Prelims (September 1996)



A year after the pageant, she married her first husband, Stephen Smith, during a ceremony at Disney World. Then, two years later, in 1999, Tania gave birth with the help of a midwife at the couple's home in Lake Hills, Illinois. “I really hate needles,” she told the Chicago Daily Herald at the time, explaining her decision not to go to a hospital. “Home birth is a non-interventive method, just doing what your body naturally does with no drugs.”

The midwife applied olive oil compresses to prevent tearing; after the delivery, she monitored the baby's heartbeat. Tania then took Renton with her into an herbal bath. "That was the best part of the whole thing," she told the Daily Herald. "The baby was wide awake and looking around..."

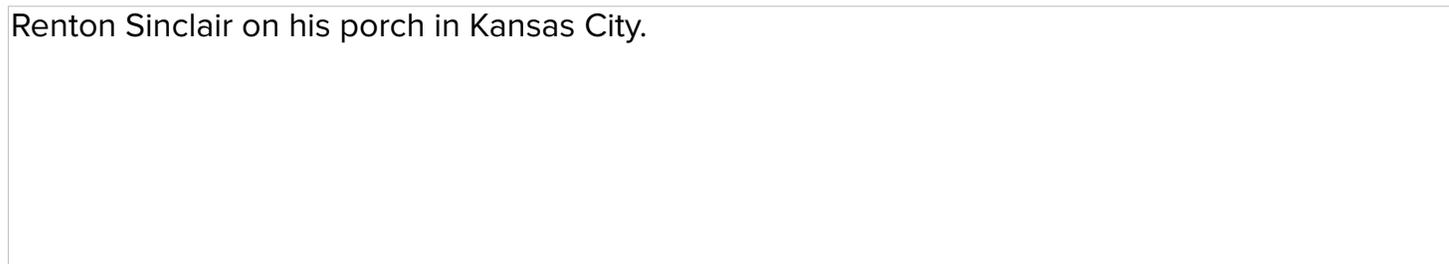
About eight years later, Stephen and Tania divorced, which Renton said he only recently learned was due to his dad discovering that Tania had been having an affair with his best friend. Stephen left Illinois for Kansas City, leaving a young Renton to live with Tania, who remarried not long after.

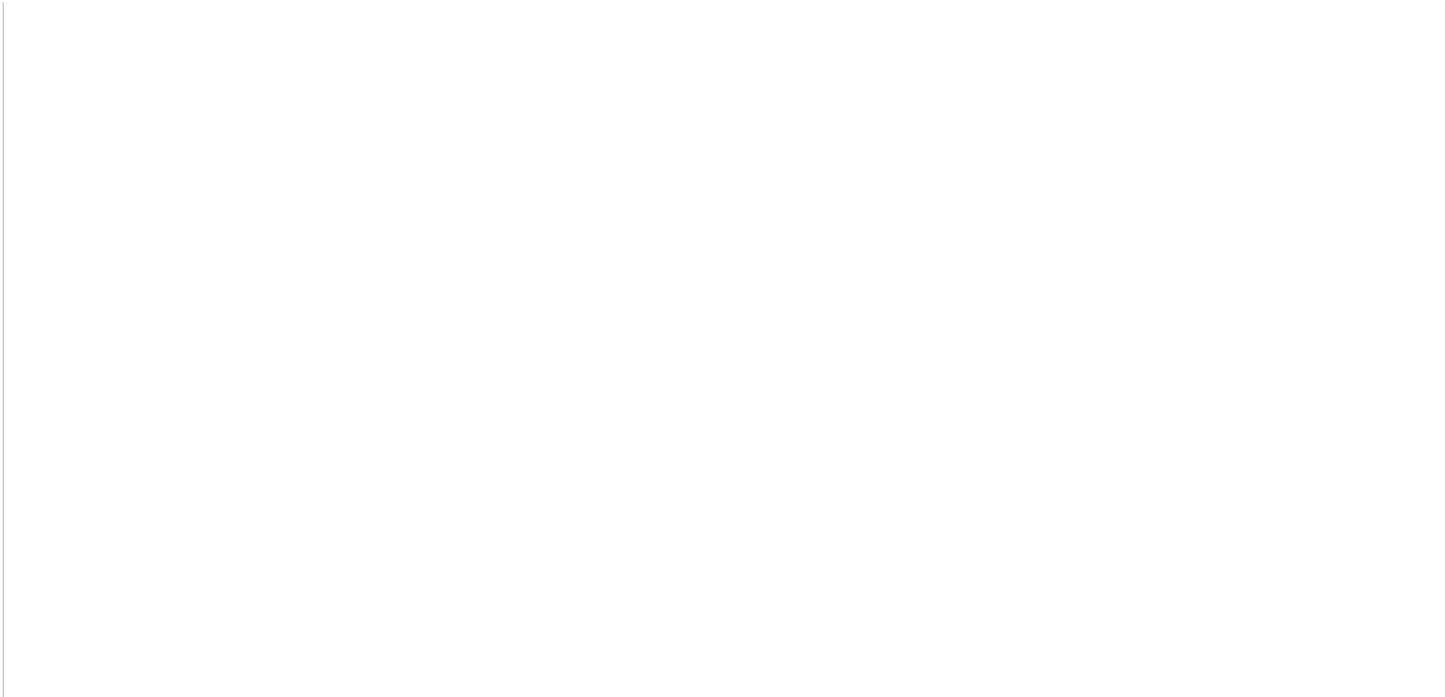
According to Tania, the devil got a hold of Renton when he was about 11 years old. "First she said she was gay, then she said she was bi, then she said something else — I don't know, I kept having to look up what these terms meant," Tania recounted recently during a livestream, repeatedly misgendering her son.

"And I would sit down with her, I would tell her what the Bible says, I would say, 'No, that's not *true*.'"

Warfare Prayer

Renton Sinclair on his porch in Kansas City.





Renton Sinclair on his porch in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Once, when Renton was 13, he went down to Kansas City to spend time with Stephen. He had a life-changing moment there, in the food court of an amusement park called World of Fun, where he and his dad talked over cheap Chinese food. Renton told him about being queer. His dad did something revolutionary then — he said something along the lines of: “I’m gonna support you no matter what.”

The next summer Renton went back to Kansas City for a longer visit. When the trip was over, he had a panic attack on the drive back to his mom’s. “We were like maybe

two hours from Chicago, and I was like, ‘I can’t fucking live here anymore,’” he remembers saying. “And I straight-up told my dad, ‘I need to move in with you, or I’m running away.’”

Renton spent the weekend at his mom’s, putting his things in boxes, then into his dad’s van for the drive back to Kansas City. “I didn’t say bye to people. I was just fucking out like I was done,” he remembers.

Tania didn’t put up too much of a fight. “I thought she was going for the summer,” she once recounted, again misgendering her son. “But her plan was going for good.”

To Tania’s horror, Renton enrolled in a public high school in Kansas City (she wanted to start homeschooling him) and stopped attending church. Tania blamed this on his dad’s influence. He’d been a “Godly man” when she married him, she told her podcast listeners, but he’d since “gone off the deep end,” no longer believing that “there is one God” and that the Bible is a “moral book.”

Although finally free of Tania, Renton struggled to adjust to his new life in Kansas City. He reckons the trauma from conversion therapy kept him in the closet throughout high school and contributed to his depression and a burgeoning drug habit. By the time he was 19, his mental health had hit rock bottom. Then the pandemic happened.

There’s [anecdotal evidence](#) of a COVID-era phenomenon known colloquially as “quarantrans” — a period when many in-the-closet trans people, in the isolation of lockdown and surrounded by news of death, came to terms with being trans. Renton

suddenly didn't have to go to work, didn't have to perform or present his gender in public the way he always had. "Just having to be with myself was a lot of it," he said.

The night where he remembers saying, "fuck, I gotta admit this to myself again," happened in 2020 after rolling a blunt at a friend's place. He went to the bathroom when he was suddenly struck by the young man looking back at him in the mirror.

"I was like, 'God fucking damn it,'" he said. "It was just like, 'Shit, here we go.'"

And so, eight years after leaving his mom's home, during the lockdowns of 2020, Renton sent Tania a text saying he was starting to transition. Tania was confused.

"Transition from what to what? What are you talking about?" she [remembers](#) texting.

"Transition to a man," she says Renton wrote back.

Tania sometimes resorts to the supernatural during times of crisis. She claims to have once attended the [Toronto Blessing](#) — a yearslong charismatic Christian revival at a strip-mall church in Ontario where thousands flocked to experience religious ecstasy and wild phenomena. Some attendees broke into hysterical bouts of laughter or fell to the floor in raptures after being "slain by the spirit." Some spoke in tongues or roared like lions. And many others claimed that the cavity fillings in their mouths turned suddenly from silver to gold.

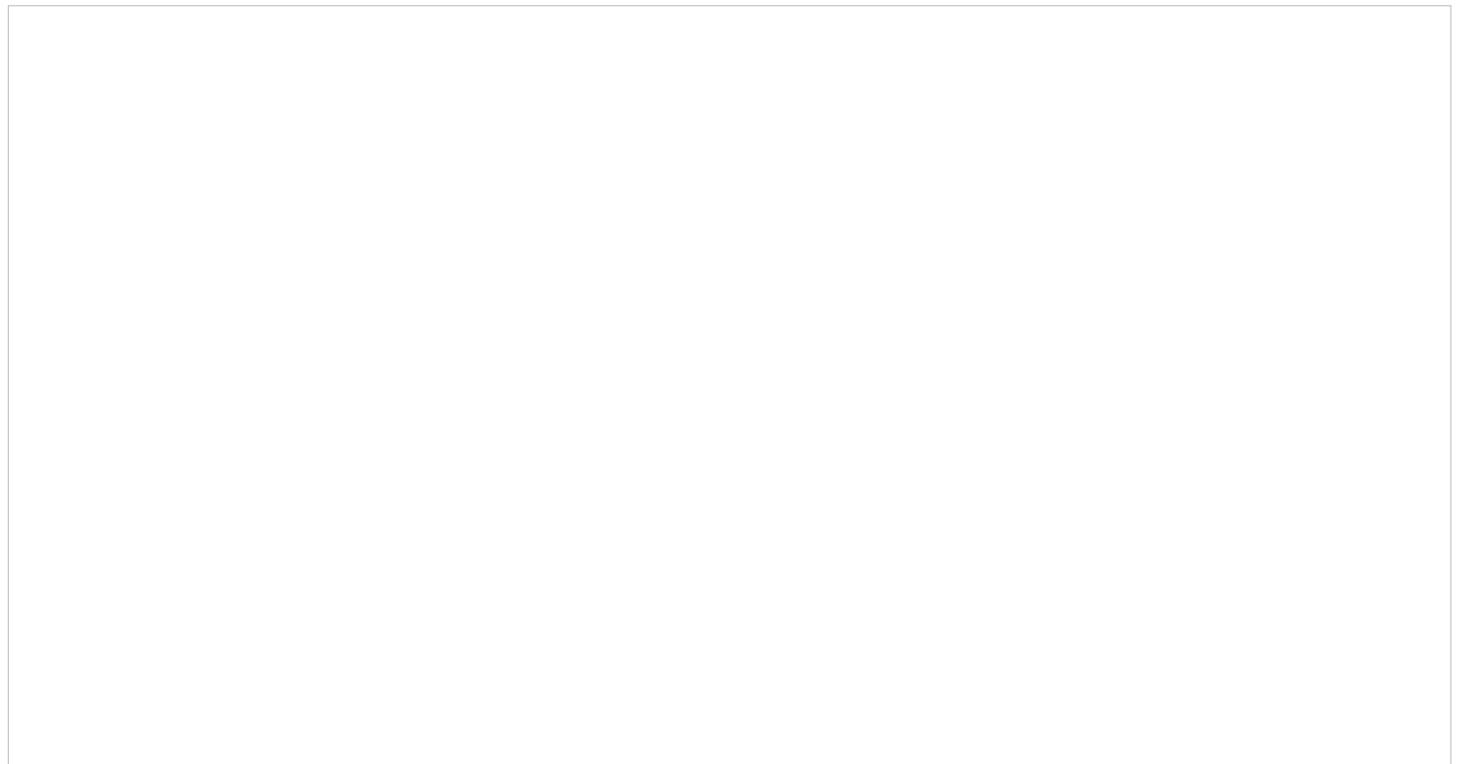
And so Tania summoned her curse on Renton's testosterone. She didn't care if it made him sick. Then she prayed.

“I was devastated and hyperventilating, and in shock, and I just started praying, and as I started praying, I was starting to *roar*,” Tania [recounted](#). “And I started screaming. I mean, I came out of that hour, and I had no voice because I was screaming in *war*, in warfare prayer. And I flat-out said to the devil, ‘You have messed with the wrong family. She has my DNA, and my DNA is already surrendered and linked to Jesus’s DNA because of my choices in life. And when I had her, I dedicated her to the Lord!’”

Finally, Tania received a vision. A prophecy.

“I do believe she’s gonna come home,” Tania said about Renton. “The Lord showed me her with a little girl, so I believe she’s gonna have a child someday. I don’t know how, and I don’t care. I saw it. The Lord showed it to me.”

A Second Home



From Left: Graham Fox Farris and Renton Sinclair are co-owners and chefs at a bar in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton Sinclair and Graham Fox Farris chat with co-workers in the kitchen.

Renton Sinclair and Graham Fox Farris chat with co-workers in the kitchen.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton remembers a particular morning not long after starting hormone replacement therapy.

“I woke up, I sat up and — I’m trying to even put into words — it was just waking up and not being in *pain*,” he said. “I woke up, and my head was quiet. And I was just like, oh, I’m calm, and I slept a full night. It was just a thing where I woke up, and I wasn’t panicking.”

He was able to stop taking antidepressants, and his anxiety all but evaporated. He remembers a doctor once explaining, very matter-of-factly, that yes, of course, this was how Renton’s body was responding to the testosterone. *That’s why doctors give trans men like Renton testosterone.*

“It just drastically improved my mental health more than anything I’ve ever done, and I’ve been on meds forever,” Renton said.

These days Renton co-owns a pub in Kansas City. He also works as the sous-chef there, spending upwards of 65 hours a week in a hot kitchen with chef and co-owner Graham Fox Farris, who is also Renton’s best friend.

Graham is a big straight cis dude with a long beard whose arms and hands are covered in tattoos. He used to powerlift weights, and although he never took testosterone himself, he knew plenty of straight cis guys at gyms who did — and who took a helluva lot more than Renton and other trans men ever do.

Looking back now, Graham recognizes the powerlifters' use of testosterone as a kind of gender-affirming care. "You're trying to alter your body with steroids. How is that any different from what he's doing?" he said, pointing at Renton. "It's almost encouraged, and it's expected for people like Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson to be an idol of the United States. I guarantee he'd admit he does steroids. Nobody looks like that." (The Rock has [admitted](#) to using steroids when he was younger.)

Graham has learned a lot about what it's like to be trans in America from Renton. Also, Graham would like you to know that he'll fuck you up if you mess with his friend.

The pair met while working at various places in the Kansas City food scene. The first time they hung out was at a mutual friend's hip-hop show across the state border in Kansas. While they were waiting in line, they noticed a guy pointing and laughing at them. Graham walked over and asked him what his problem was.

"Is that your girlfriend?" the guy asked, pointing at Renton.

"Nah, that's my *boyfriend*," Graham responded. (To be clear, Graham has never been Renton's boyfriend.) Some other words were exchanged before the guy punched Graham in the nose. As blood dripped down his chin, an unbothered Graham looked at the man, who was considerably shorter than him, and just laughed in his face, completely — for the lack of a better term — emasculating him. The venue's staff quickly kicked the guy out.

"It was the funniest fucking thing I've ever seen," Renton said.

Graham and Renton have been tight ever since. They like to mess with queerphobes, like the time they walked through the pub holding hands. “This guy at the bar was looking at us — you would have sworn that I kicked his dog. He was so pissed,” Graham said. “He didn’t say anything, though. I love to make someone like that feel uncomfortable.”

But that guy was an outlier at the pub, which has become a second home for Renton. They hire trans folks here, and if the state of Missouri were to pass one of those laws restricting who uses what bathroom, Renton and Graham wouldn’t give two shits about enforcing it.

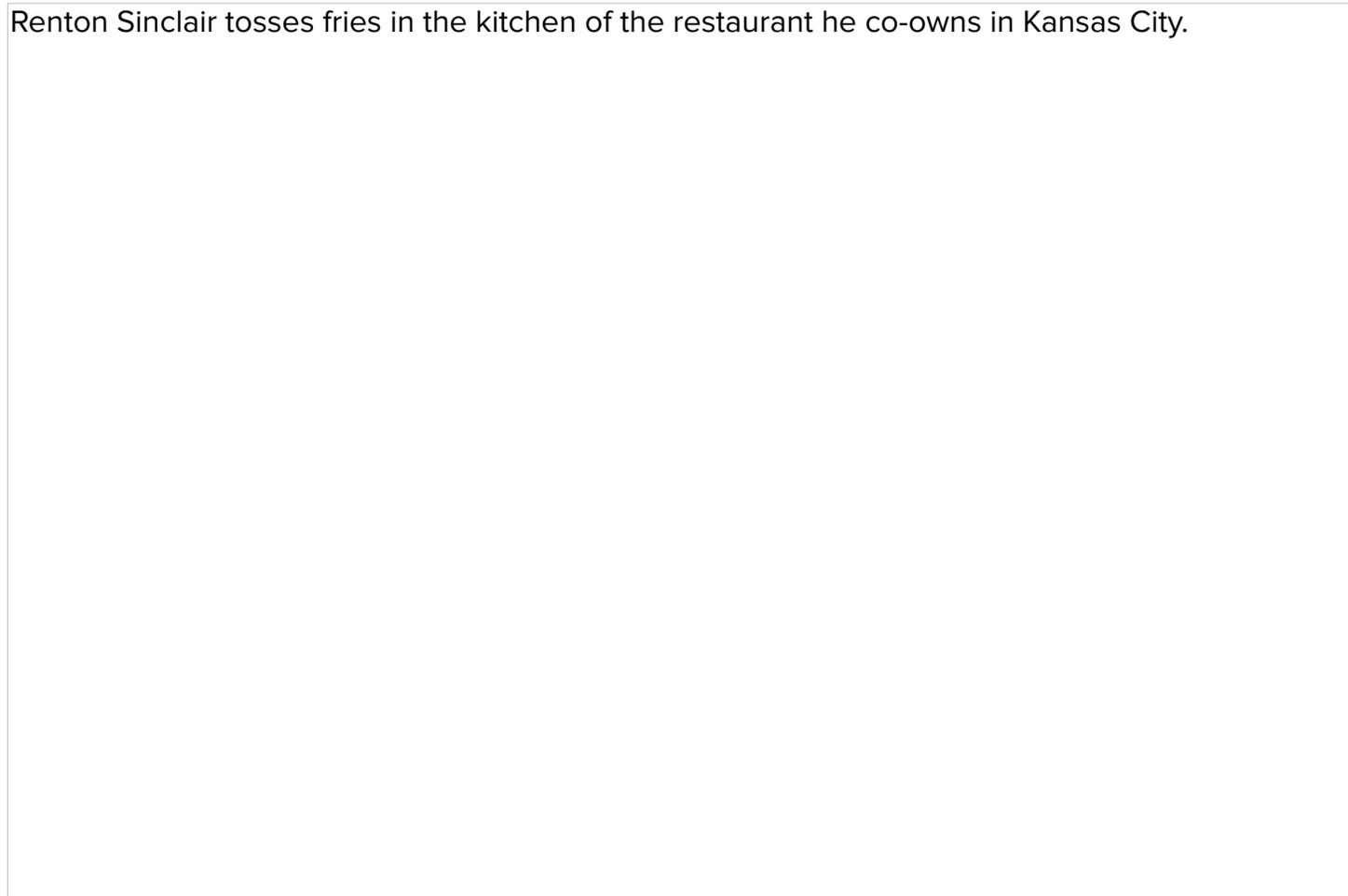
“All our regulars have your back, too,” Graham assured Renton, who agreed.

One of those regulars is Graham’s mom, Natalie Fox, a nice Christian woman from Olathe. Renton once told Natalie about Tania, about how she’d been Miss Illinois but now is an anti-trans influencer. Natalie got all worked up about it, assuring Renton that he is deserving of love. “You’re going through a beautiful transformation!” she told Renton.

Something about the phrase “beautiful transformation” really makes Graham and Renton laugh, and they’ll sometimes drop the phrase into a conversation as a little inside joke. “My mom loves Renton,” Graham said.

“I love her,” Renton replied. (Natalie told HuffPost that she is “so thankful that Renton is in our family’s life.”)

Renton Sinclair tosses fries in the kitchen of the restaurant he co-owns in Kansas City.



Renton Sinclair tosses fries in the kitchen of the restaurant he co-owns in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Graham knows Renton’s story well by now — about the conversion therapy and suicide attempt and the punk houses in Chicago, about eventually moving down to Kansas City with his dad, who was supportive and accepting, and about how Renton still stayed in the closet through high school and did too many drugs, but afterward, when he was 20, admitted to himself for the first time since he was 12 that he was a trans man.

Graham occasionally captures glimpses of Renton's past traumas and the everyday fears that permeate trans life in America.

Like the time Graham gave Renton shit for never drinking water. Renton laughed but then explained that it was a habit born out of anxiety around having to use public restrooms. *If you don't drink, you don't have to pee.*

"The reality for 90% of trans people is having a panic attack trying to decide like, is it worth getting my ass beat today to go to a bathroom?" Renton said.

Graham was floored. "That's actually how your brain thinks — society has put you into this place where you're even worrying about drinking water," he said.

It's so infuriating to Graham when he hears about the bullshit his best friend has to put up with. Graham is a live-and-let-live kinda guy. He's not really ideological — "I've got mild views on things," he says — so it's just perplexing to him that conservatives care so much about legislating trans lives out of existence. It's just so fundamentally *none of their business*.

"I just don't think anybody needs to be controlled in that manner?" he said. "It's like somebody telling me that I can't get tattoos like it's just something that's only affecting me. It's not affecting anybody else around me."

How To Manufacture A Moral Panic

Tania Joy Gibson speaks at the Great ReAwakening in Manheim, Pennsylvania, in October 2022.



Tania Joy Gibson speaks at the Great ReAwakening in Manheim, Pennsylvania, in October 2022.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS MCGONIGAL/HUFFPOST; PHOTO: FACEBOOK

So far this year, Republicans across the U.S. have [introduced](#) over 560 anti-trans bills — [more](#) than the number introduced in the last four years combined. Many states have banned gender-affirming care for minors; some have banned trans people from using the bathrooms that align with their gender identity; others have stripped transgender people of legal recognition; and still, more have banned trans women from competing in women's sports. In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is running for president, banned gender-affirming care for adults and youth and signed a law allowing the state to take a child away from their parents if they're caught receiving such care.

All told, the bills are an effort at mass, state-sanctioned conversion therapy — an attempt to permanently push trans people back in the closet, forcing almost 1% of the population to not live as themselves, and guaranteeing that many will dwell in the depression and suicidal ideation attendant to gender dysphoria.

Trans youth who receive gender-affirming care [are 60%](#) less likely to have depression and 73% less likely to experience suicidality. There is an overwhelming scientific consensus supporting the gender-affirming model of treatment, which is [endorsed](#) by the [American Medical Association](#), the [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#), the [American Psychological Association](#), the [American Psychiatric Association](#), the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#), and the [Endocrine Society](#).

But the GOP is uninterested in these endorsements. Their bills are often cookie-cutter pieces of legislation crafted by a coalition of Christian dominionists determined to reshape America according to a far-right, fundamentalist interpretation of scripture. Earlier this year, leaked emails [obtained](#) by Mother Jones showed groups like the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal powerhouse that has advocated sterilizing trans people, collaborating with Republican legislators to draft the bills currently sweeping through statehouses.

Although there has always been a strong current of transphobia in conservative American politics, it has intensified dramatically in recent years, with GOP strategists clearly coming to the consensus that manufacturing a moral panic about trans people will energize its evangelical base enough to retake the White House and the U.S. Senate.

Former President Donald Trump [acknowledged](#) the prefabricated nature of this anti-trans panic in a campaign speech earlier this month. After announcing that he would, if re-elected, issue an executive order stripping federal funding from schools that teach “transgender insanity,” the former president was bemused to receive a standing ovation.

“It’s amazing how strongly people feel about that. You see, if I’m talking about cutting taxes, people go like that,” Trump said, imitating a polite golf clap. “I talk about transgender, everyone goes crazy. Who would have thought? Five years ago, you didn’t know what the hell it was.” (Eleven years ago, according to interview footage recently [unearthed](#) by CNN, the former president repeatedly celebrated the inclusion of trans women in Miss USA, the pageant competition he owned.)

The standing ovation Trump witnessed was the result of a successful campaign by right-wing media to convince voters that “gender ideology” and “transgenderism” — euphemisms for actual living, breathing trans people — are the source of their problems. It’s messaging that bears an unnerving resemblance to historical fascist narratives: That the very existence of a vulnerable subgroup, this tiny minority, poses an existential threat to you, the Real American, the pure folk.

The rhetoric has, at times, sounded genocidal. Earlier this year, Daily Wire commentator Michael Knowles got big cheers at CPAC — the preeminent annual GOP gathering — when he [called](#) for “transgenderism” to be “eradicated from public life entirely.”

There's good money in dehumanizing trans people like this. Knowles and his fellow right-wing culture war entrepreneurs at the Daily Wire [claim](#) to rake in over \$100 million a year, thanks in no small part to producing viral [anti-trans content](#), like Matt Walsh's documentary "What Is A Woman?"

Chaya Raichik, the Brooklyn woman behind the anti-trans social media behemoth LibsOfTikTok, has thousands of paid subscribers on Substack, meaning she's earning anywhere from \$10,000 to \$45,000 a month, [per a Vice tally](#). (Raichik's rising star recently earned her a one-on-one dinner with Trump.)

Their propaganda has been so successful and lucrative, in part because it exploits the fact that many Americans do not know a trans person.

"There's enough anxiety and enough ignorance out there that people are kind of scared, and they're not sure what's going on," Evan Urquhart, the founder of [Assigned Media](#), which tracks anti-trans propaganda, told HuffPost. "And the loudest voice is telling a very simple story."

And so there's been a gold rush for anti-trans content, with many clout-chasing, wannabe Matt Walshes and Chaya Raichiks competing online to say the most vicious, outrageous things imaginable, all jostling for clicks, ad dollars, paid speaking gigs and maybe even a rich benefactor.



Tania Joy Gibson talks with Michael Flynn, a former White House national security adviser, at a Great ReAwakening event in Nashville.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS MCGONIGAL/HUFFPOST; PHOTO VIA RUMBLE

Tania joined this scrum of fledgling moral panic capitalists sometime during the pandemic. By January 2022, she'd lost her day job — a firing Tania has [said](#) stemmed not from her opposition to trans people but from statements she'd made against vaccine mandates and about the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. (Her LinkedIn says she worked as a Sr. Analyst for Operational Excellence for Lowe's, the national home improvement retail store chain. Lowe's did not respond to a request for comment.)

In need of money, Tania said she started “gigging,” singing with bands at local restaurants in suburban Chicago. “Well, then I got canceled at the restaurants, and local people who had heard my content, they were calling the restaurant and saying horrible things about me,” she recalled.

There often comes a pivotal point during radicalization when a person first faces the consequences of their extremism when they have to decide whether to make amends and reintegrate themselves into their communities or to double down, retreating further and further into a self-reinforcing universe of alternate facts and realities.

Tania doubled down. Leveraging her title as former Miss Illinois, she developed a show called “Beauty for Ashes” on Rumble, the video platform [bankrolled](#) by right-wing billionaire Peter Thiel and U.S. Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio). She quickly landed interviews with or found herself being interviewed by a murderer’s row of MAGA influencers, QAnon believers, fire-and-brimstone preachers and elected officials.

In many of these interviews, Tania has invoked the story of her “prodigal daughter,” rehashing how she lost Renton to “demonic” forces. It’s a savvy bit of branding.

Right-wing media is obsessed with the supposed plight of the anti-trans parent, often promoting dubious stories from non-affirming mothers or fathers. There were, for instance, the moms in [Maine](#) and [Southern California](#) who alleged teachers had encouraged their children to transition without their knowledge, and the mother in Missouri who spoke out — [against her child’s wishes](#) — against puberty blockers.

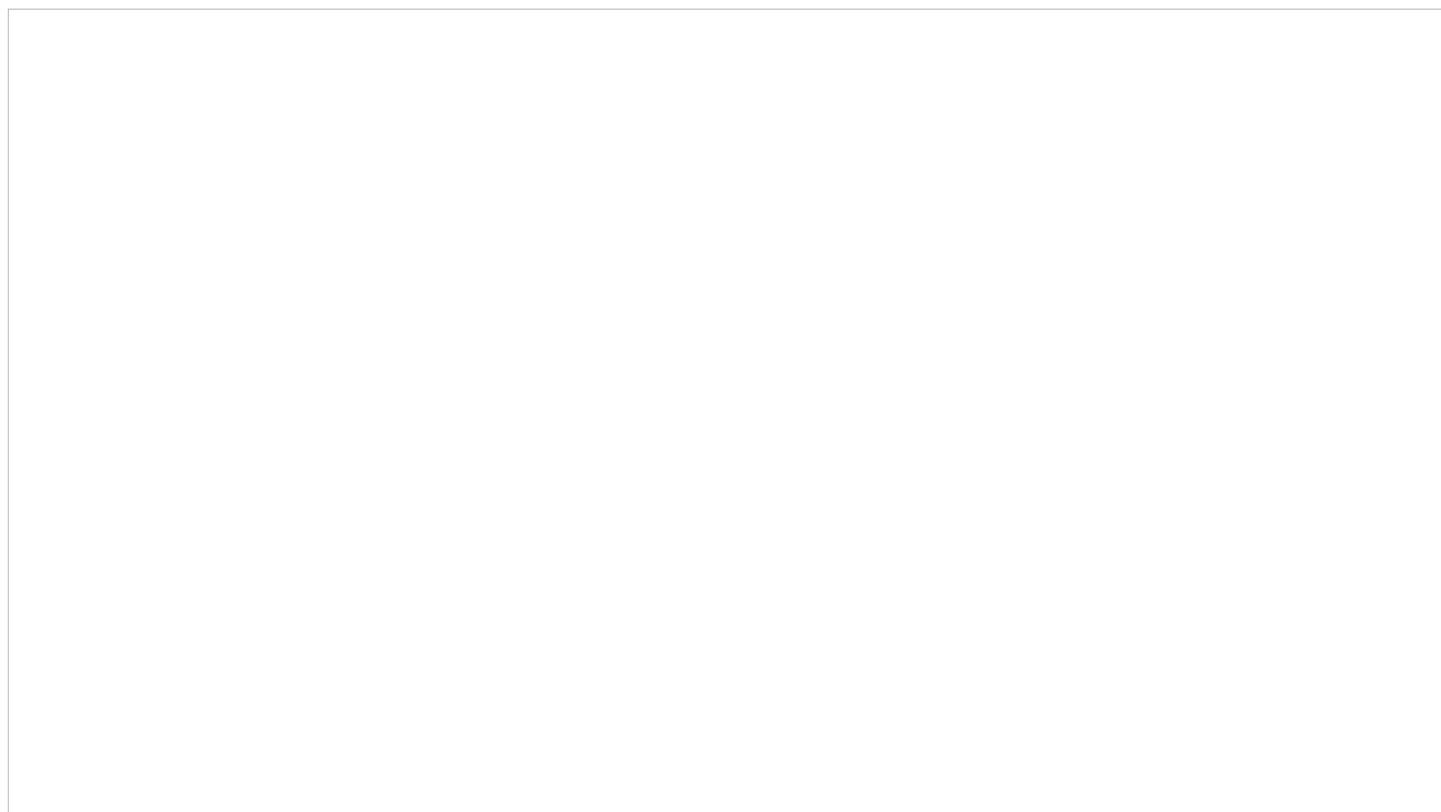
The “concerned parent” trope in news articles has emerged as one of the most pernicious forms of American anti-trans propaganda, according to Dr. Julia Serano, the famed trans writer and biologist.

“These pieces strike trans-unaware audiences as ‘fair and balanced’ because they

seem to show ‘all sides’ of the story,” Serano [wrote](#) recently in a piece about how even mainstream publications like The New York Times and The Atlantic have frequently elevated the voices of non-affirming parents while obscuring those parents’ ties to extremist anti-trans organizations.

“These articles make it seem as though these parents simply want what’s best for their child,” Serrano wrote, “when in actuality these parents are heavily invested in disaffirming and suppressing their child’s trans identity.”

‘Not Over My Dead Body, Are You My Son’



Tania Joy Gibson interviews Jeff Younger, whose refusal to affirm his child's gender identity led the governor of Texas to investigate gender-affirming parents for "child abuse."

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS MCGONIGAL/HUFFPOST; PHOTO VIA RUMBLE

Earlier this year, Tania interviewed Jeff Younger, the Texas dad who became a right-wing cause celebre after publicly objecting to his ex-wife providing gender-affirming care for their child. (Younger's story helped [inspire](#) Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to issue an order requiring authorities to investigate some gender-affirming parents for "child abuse.") Younger told Tania that preventing children from receiving gender-affirming care should be the GOP's "hill to die on."

"Forty percent of the country believes my son is a girl," he lamented to Tania, referring to the [rates](#) of trans acceptance among the U.S. population. "That's a level of totalitarian propaganda control that the Chinese and Soviets never had."

Tania has talked with other anti-trans figures too, like Pastor Mark Burns, a former GOP congressional candidate and Trump's one-time spiritual adviser, who has [called](#) for gender-affirming parents of trans kids to be executed for "treason."

And she frequently talks to even more ridiculous, fringe figures — highlighting the big overlap between anti-trans activism and unhinged conspiracism.

She appeared on "The Charlie Ward Show," which has 180,000 subscribers on Rumble, agreeing with the eponymous host that human clones are walking among us.

(Ward is an anti-semite who once [shared](#) posts praising Adolf Hitler for “warning us” about Judaism.)

And one of Tania’s most frequent guests has been Tom Althouse, who she interviewed about his [lawsuit](#) alleging that the creators of “The Matrix” stole the idea for the movie from his Christian sci-fi script about the Second Coming of Christ.

Still, Tania has managed to land more influential — and by comparison, respectable — guests on her show, like [Robb Tadelman](#), a candidate for sheriff in McHenry County, Illinois, where Tania lives. “I appreciate what you’re doing. It’s great,” Tadelman told Tania months before he won the election and was sworn in as sheriff.

She interviewed former Arizona state Rep. [Mark Finchem](#) during his Trump-endorsed run for Arizona secretary of state last year. And this past January, she talked to former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn at a Great ReAwakening show in Nashville, with Flynn complimenting Tania on her “beautiful” national anthem performance that morning. “Maybe I can sing it when Trump gets inaugurated again,” Tania replied, winking.

Tania’s involvement with the Great ReAwakening — where she sings, speaks, and has a booth to promote her show — is perhaps her greatest success yet as an anti-trans influencer. The fundamentalist Christian confab, co-organized by Flynn, is a [carnival of conspiracy theories and anti-trans bigotry](#), attracting big-name GOP operatives to venues across the country.

Eric Trump, the former president's adult son, and his wife, Lara Trump, are regular speakers. So is Roger Stone, the former president's longtime adviser and ally. Charlie Kirk, the influential MAGA figure; Patrick Byrne, the millionaire founder of [Overstock.com](https://www.overstock.com); and Lara Logan, the former "60 Minutes" reporter, have all taken the stage at Great ReAwakening events.

"Happy Mother's Day from Trump Doral Miami!!" Tania captioned a photo on Instagram last month from the Great ReAwakening event hosted inside the hotel the former president owns.

"God made two genders, male and female, that is it!" she [told](#) some 4,000 people at another Great ReAwakening event in Manheim, Pennsylvania, where she pushed the [false claim](#) that trans people are becoming infertile en masse due to gender-affirming care.

"Where is that going to leave our nation or our world in 20 years?" Tania asked the crowd. "Who's gonna have children?! It's horrifying, and we must stop it!"

Leads crowd in song pic.twitter.com/SkDNWrAWeD
— Christopher Mathias (@letsgomathias) [October 21, 2022](#)

It was a talking point she'd rehearsed repeatedly on Rumble, and she has since incorporated it into her presentations at churches and conferences.

In February, Tania [spoke](#) to a congregation at The Glad Tidings Church in Live Oaks,

California. She had a PowerPoint presentation that began with the photo of her as a 19-year-old Miss Illinois next to an illustration of [the Biblical character of Esther](#), an Old Testament beauty pageant contestant who becomes queen and saves thousands of God's followers by instigating a mass slaughter of His enemies.

Tania told a rapt audience how God once told her she is a modern-day Queen Esther, destined to help save her fellow true believers from a government that wants to wipe them out.

She recalled how God told her to keep podcasting, an instruction that sent her on the journey she's on now, which landed her here, on this stage in this California church, warning all these nice people about the "demonic" transgender "ideology" taking the country by storm.

Tania told the congregation about reading Exodus 23:23, a verse that describes God killing the Amorites, the Hittites and the Jebusites. "And when I read that, I was like, 'Oh, that's great... I wonder who those people were,'" Tania said. "And so I looked it up. They were the people *just like the culture that we're seeing*. They were involved in horrible sexual immorality. They were pushing pornography. They were pushing pedophilia. They were pushing all the things that our current culture is doing."

Then Tania recounted the day Renton told her he's a son, not a daughter. "Not over my dead body, are you my son," Tania told the congregation, which cheered.

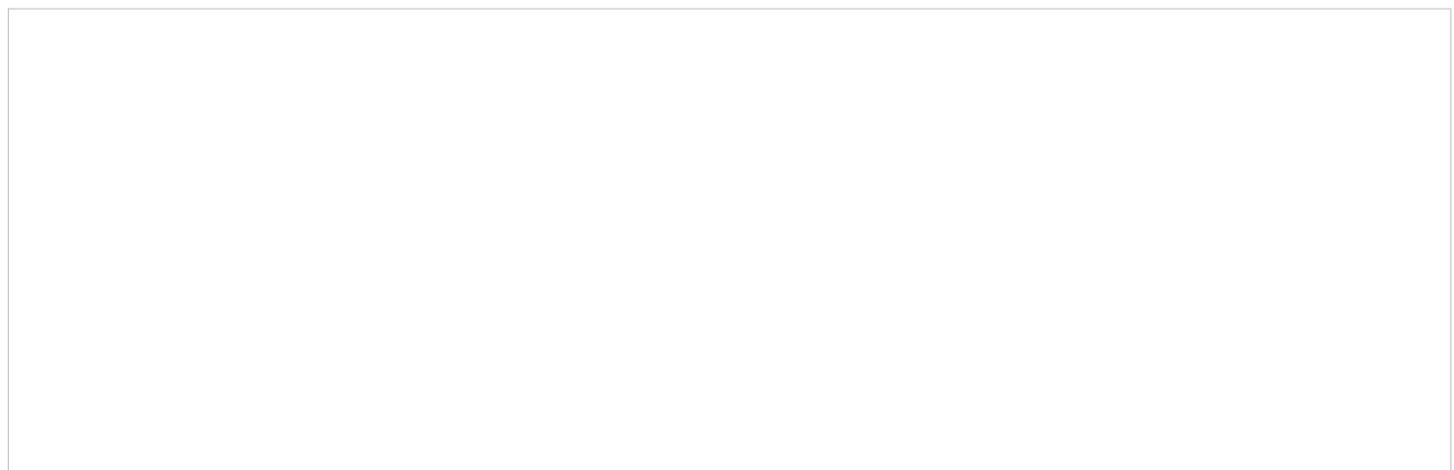
Tania said she and other good American Christians must abide by Luke 19:13, when

the Lord tells his disciples to “Occupy till I come.” Tania explained that “occupy” means “to take control of, to be in charge of, to have dominion over... the mountains of society. That includes Hollywood. That includes education. That includes the family. That includes the government...”

After Tania’s presentation, the church’s pastor, Dave, asked for all the “mama bears” in the audience, all the “serious lady prayer warriors,” to form a prayer circle around Tania. Dozens of women obliged, surrounding the former Miss Illinois before another pastor, Cheryl, broke into prayer.

“God, we thank you for this warrior queen that you created for such a time as this,” Pastor Cheryl said. “We thank You that You created her with words and wisdom to destroy the works of the enemy, and God.... we thank You for the sudden return of her daughter.”

The Prophecies Of Renton Sinclair

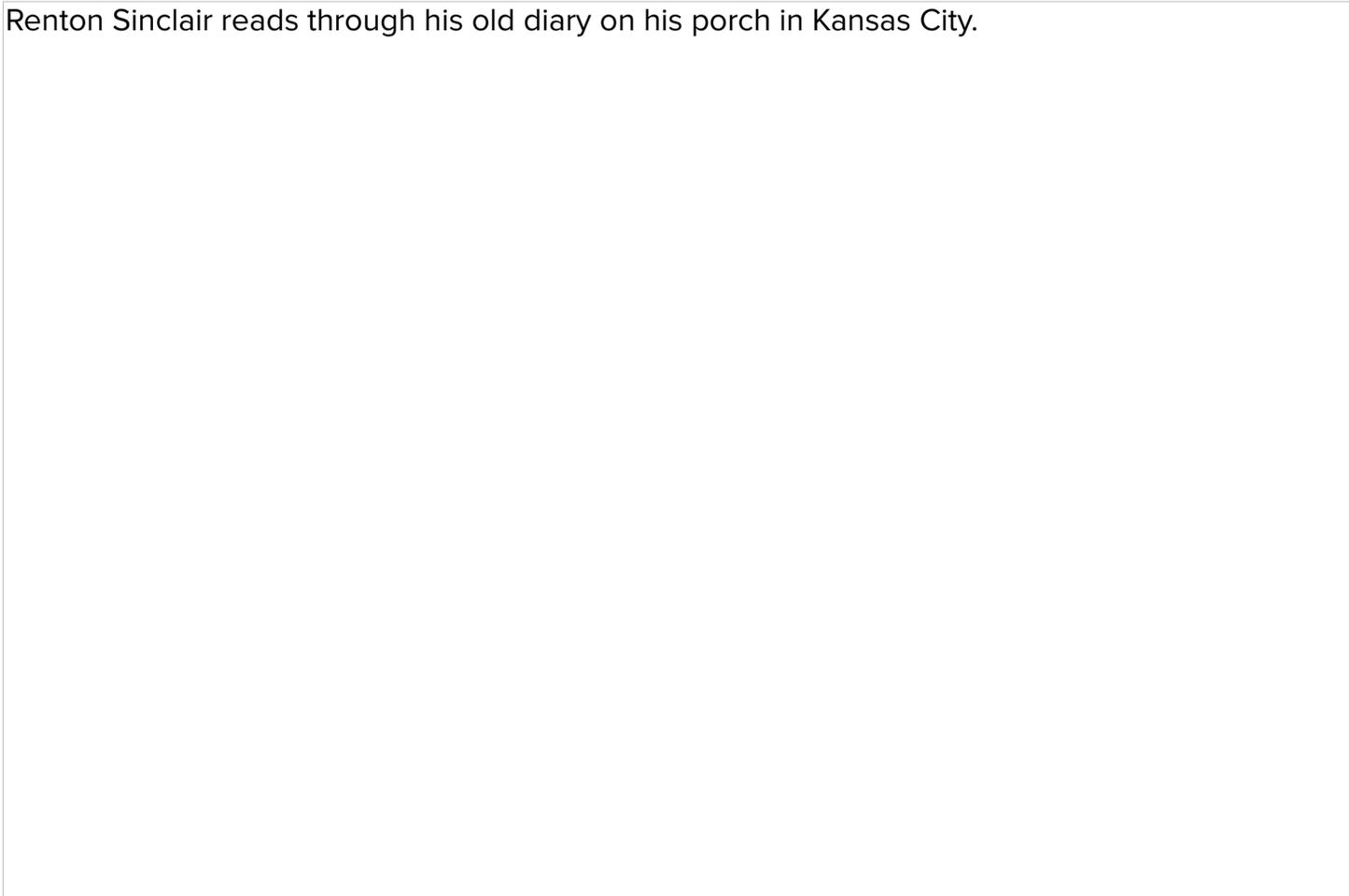




Renton Sinclair holds a vial of testosterone at his home in Kansas City. Renton has been forced to seek the drug on the grey market as new Missouri legislation makes it difficult to get the drugs.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton Sinclair reads through his old diary on his porch in Kansas City.



Renton Sinclair reads through his old diary on his porch in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

While his mom is engaging in spiritual warfare in the End Times, Renton is rolling a joint as the sun sets on his porch in Kansas City, his dog, a pit-lab mix named Tiberius, at his feet, and his partner Greg at his side. Pots of new plants are scattered about — sunflowers, sage and eggplant — which they'll plant soon in the yard.

Renton is covered in tattoos — permanent ink his mom has called “evil” in her speeches — including a drawing of a white rabbit on his arm. It's a reference to a character's tattoo in “The Matrix,” the 1999 film Renton watched obsessively as a kid, years before the film's creators would reveal that it's an allegory about being trans.

In Renton's lap is the journal he kept as a kid and teen, a time capsule of angst and hopelessness that he turns over now from page to page, laughing and making self-deprecating jokes. It's all so fucking emo, he says.

Dear God, the journey he's been on to get to this place, where he can laugh at these pages. The relative distance from all that pain and the relative safety he has here now, on this porch with a partner and pets he loves, that lets him laugh.

What makes him angry is that the pain in these pages — their chronicles of depression and confusion, an overdose, and wanting deeply every day to die — is what so many

politicians across the country want to inflict on trans people. To codify that cruelty he experienced, that sheer *unkindness*, into law. Like his mom, these legislators are uninterested in listening to trans people like Renton. To listen to them would mean seeing them as something besides a convenient wedge issue — the latest scapegoat to be sacrificed in a cynical ploy for votes and clout. To listen to them would mean to know the people they're trying to disappear.

Renton first contacted HuffPost after watching a video I posted of his mom speaking at the Great ReAwakening. “Hey, maybe this is weird, but this is my mom,” he wrote in a Twitter DM. “I’m trans.”

Seeing his mom on that stage made him realize it was time to speak up, to take back his story. “Just being in a position now where I’m like, OK, I can actually fucking stand up for myself, and I don’t just have to sit and just take this bullshit forever, and I can actually like have a say in it, that is cool,” he said.

Renton Sinclair and his partner Greg Hyatt pet one of their dogs, Tiberias, on their porch in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton Sinclair shows his white rabbit tattoo on his porch in Kansas City.

Renton Sinclair shows his white rabbit tattoo on his porch in Kansas City.

CHASE CASTOR FOR HUFFPOST

Renton is watching the GOP enact his mom's agenda across the country, including in his home state. When I visited him in Kansas City in May, Missouri's Republican attorney general had just issued an emergency rule that would've made it effectively impossible for both trans kids and adults to receive gender-affirming care. Renton was scrambling, trying to sort out how he would procure his testosterone. He'd heard of trans men who bought the drug on the black market or learned how to use crypto to buy it on bodybuilding message boards. It was exasperating.

The attorney general, likely fearing a court battle, has since terminated the rule, but the Republican governor has signed a law banning gender-affirming care for minors.

If Renton believed in curses, he'd summon one to make these politicians experience the pain he felt as a trans kid forced to hate himself. "I just wish — I wish there was a way for them to just really feel like the *weight* of what they're doing," he says. "Like just 30 fucking minutes. It doesn't even need to be a day, but just feel what it's like for 30 fucking minutes..."

In a tense text exchange with his mom about transitioning, he remembers asking her, "Would you like a dead kid or a trans one?" It's a question that has emerged as a refrain among trans activists during debates about giving trans adolescents puberty blockers or hormones.

“Like even as an adult, the idea of having this shit taken away, it’s literally life-altering, and it’s a life-saving medication, and it’s life-saving care,” Renton says. “And it’s just — I don’t know, it’s like having a fucking cure for cancer and like knowing you can fix things and just not caring. It’s just a level of inhumane that — like, I don’t even know how you fix that.”

Renton made it out alive, and he’d like trans kids out there to know that they can too. He doesn’t necessarily have a rosy “it gets better” message. It *will* get better, he said, but it might get a whole fucking lot worse before then. His promise to trans kids dealing with that hell now? *It’s not your fault.*

“If there’s adults in your life or if there’s people in your life or friends or whoever the fuck that you love, that you’re worried about losing over this, and if you’re like... ‘if I come out this person might abandon me,’ that’s their decision that they’re making,” Renton says. “That is 100% not on you. It doesn’t mean you’re fucking bad. It doesn’t mean you’re wrong. It doesn’t mean there’s something broken with you. That is someone else being fucked up.”

“Ultimately, community will find you, and you will find community, whether it feels impossible or not,” he says. “We’re not going anywhere.”

The sun has set over Renton’s porch when he stumbles across a lone hopeful passage in his journal. A passage he has forgotten about, a prophecy of sorts, that he reads aloud.

“I was gonna quit writing, but I won’t,” a young Renton had written. “One day, this will mean something. I’ll laugh at it. And my worries will be locked in his book.”

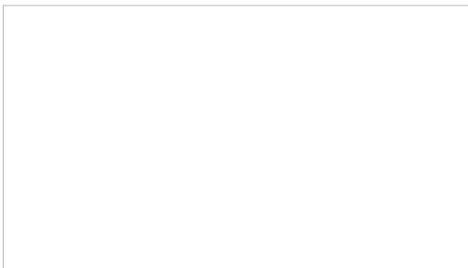
If you or someone you know needs help, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org for mental health support. Additionally, you can find local mental health and crisis resources at dontcallthepolice.com. Outside of the U.S., please visit the [International Association for Suicide Prevention](https://www.international-suicideprevention.org/).

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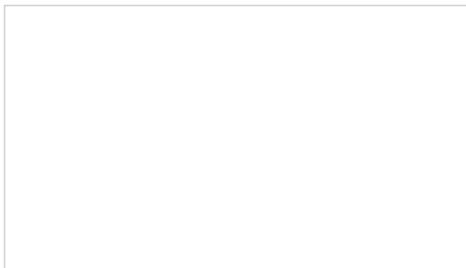
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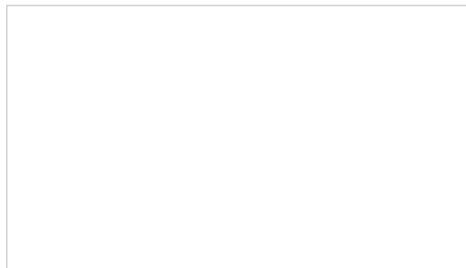
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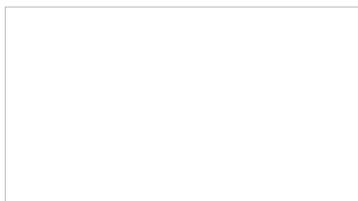
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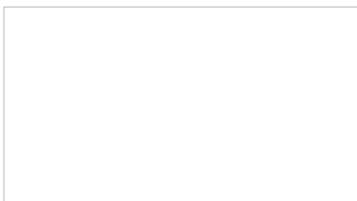
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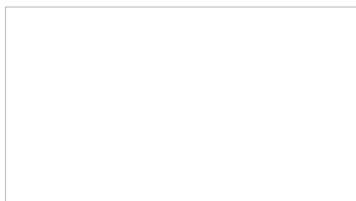
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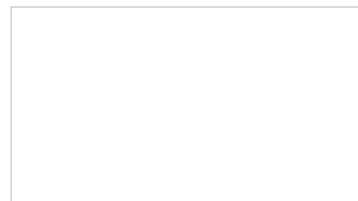
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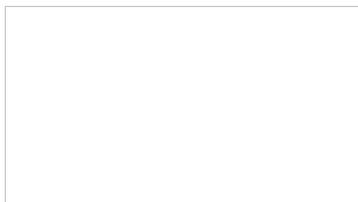


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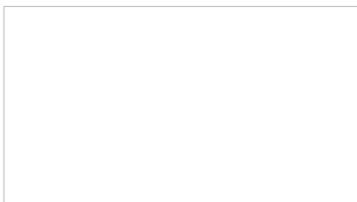


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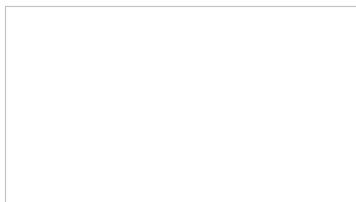
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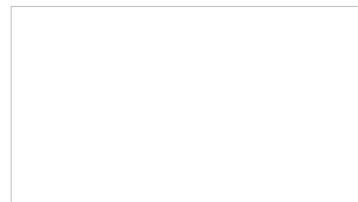
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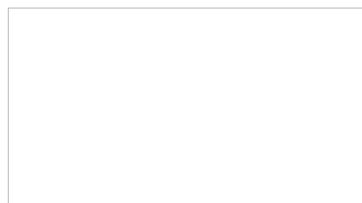
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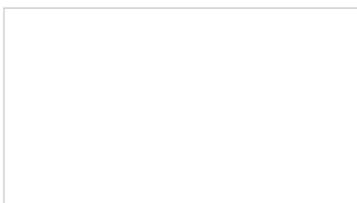
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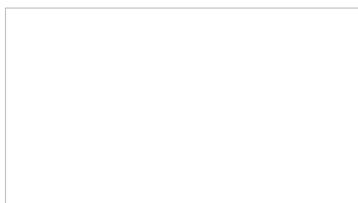
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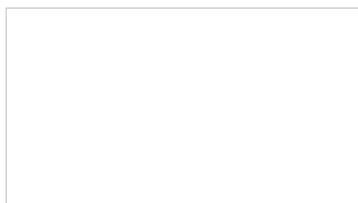
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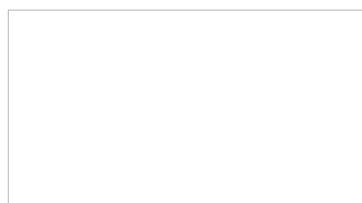
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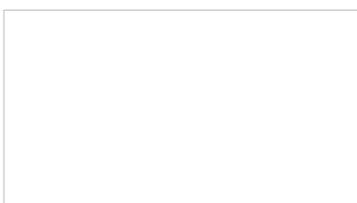
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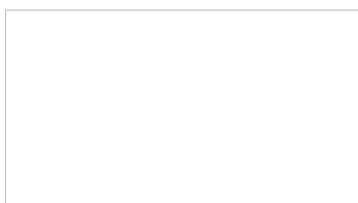
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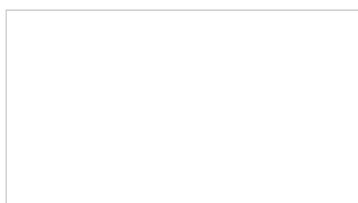
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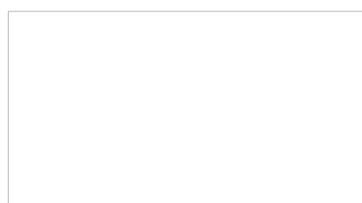
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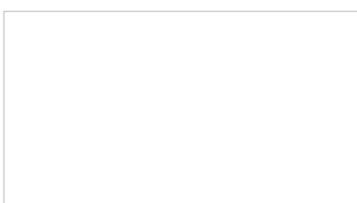
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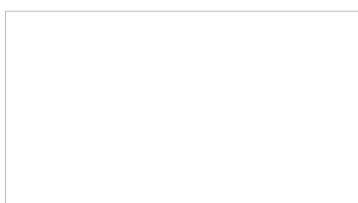
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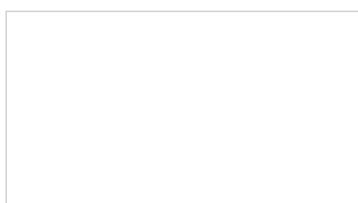
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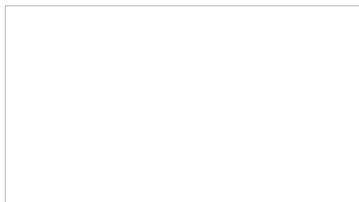
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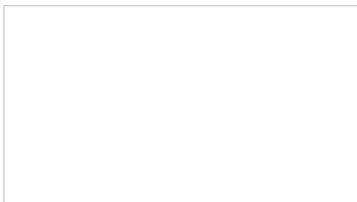
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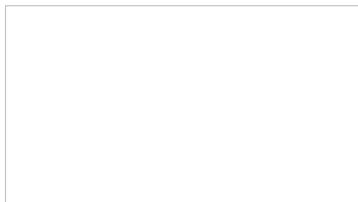
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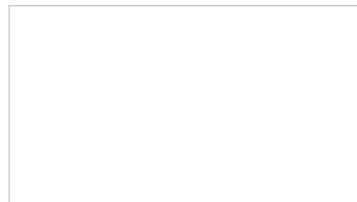
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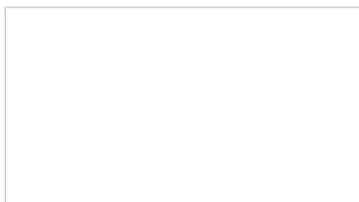
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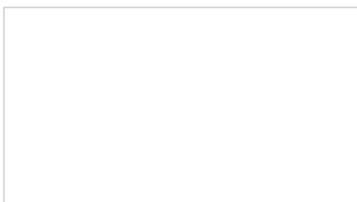
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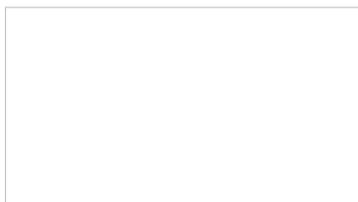
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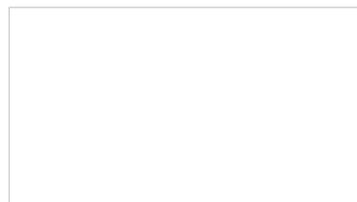
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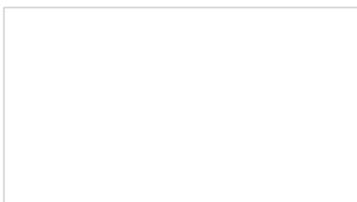
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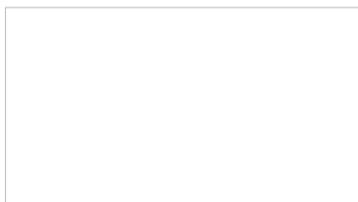
Chris Christie Vows To Shame Trump Into GOP Debates



Democrats Shift Gears To Student Loan Plan B



Biden Vows To Use 'Every Tool' For Student Debt Relief



Biden: SCOTUS Ruling On Same-Sex Couple Discrimination 'Weakens Long-Standing Laws'



Man Who Attacked Muslim Lawmaker Tried To Kiss Her, Made Lewd Comments, Police Say





SCOTUS Agrees To Hear Controversial Case That Would Protect Abusers' Guns



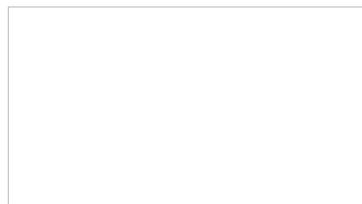
Supreme Court Overturns Joe Biden's Student Loan Debt Forgiveness Plan



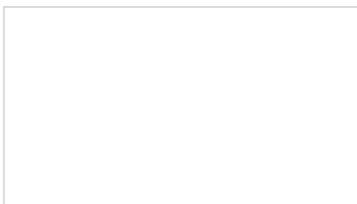
Supreme Court OKs Discrimination Against Same-Sex Couples In Phony Case



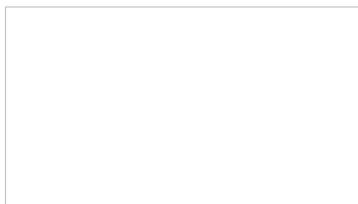
Looks Like Trump's 'Standing Order' To Declassify Documents Was Not A Thing



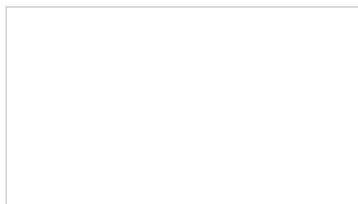
Ron DeSantis Signs 'Radioactive Roads' Bill Allowing Mining Waste In New Highways



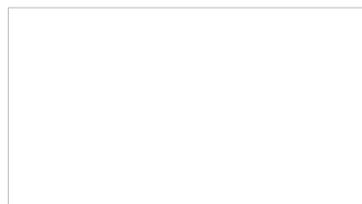
NAACP President Name-Drops Clarence Thomas In Brutal Dig Over Affirmative Action



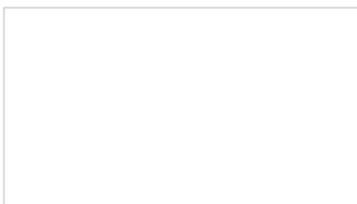
Mike Pence Roasted For Extremely Weird Take On Affirmative Action



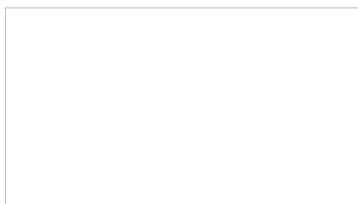
Jesse Watters' Tasteless Kamala Harris Joke Sparked Walkout At Conference: CNN



Marjorie Taylor Greene Ripped For 'Encouraging' Violence In 'Outrageous' New Image



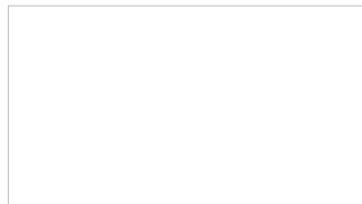
Gavin Newsom Drops Warning About Supreme Court Decision Ending Affirmative Action



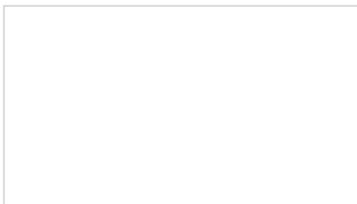
Trump Drags DeSantis To 'Hell' With New Attack On Plunging Poll Numbers



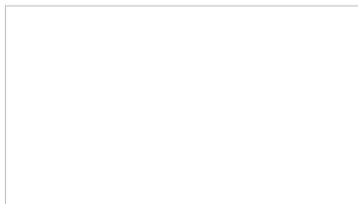
Biden Bashes Trump For Past Criticism Of 'Hero' John McCain



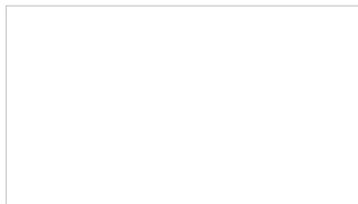
Judge Says Trump Can't Claim Presidential Immunity To Dismiss Defamation Suit



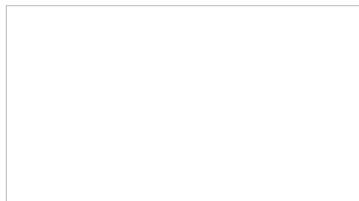
In Ending Affirmative Action, Clarence Thomas Finally Gets What He Wanted



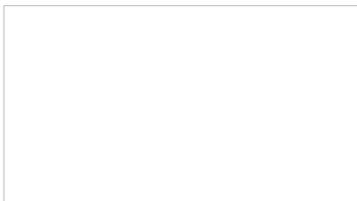
Geraldo Rivera Says He's Quitting Fox News Altogether After 'The Five' Ouster



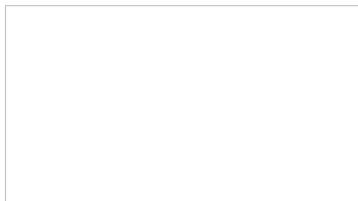
Democrats Take Aim At Legacy Admissions After Court Rulings



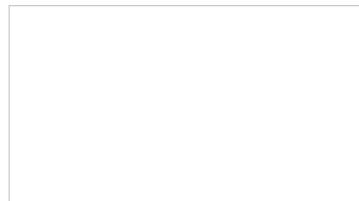
Mike Pence Says His Kids Are Somehow Proof Affirmative Action Is No Longer Needed



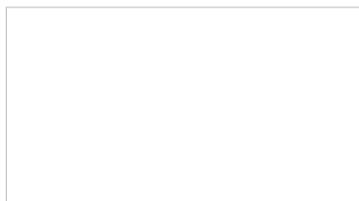
Twitter Users Notice Something Weird In Resurfaced Ron DeSantis Beach Pic



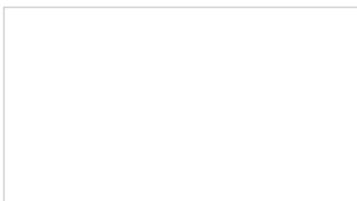
Ukraine Is Becoming A Dividing Line For GOP Presidential Hopefuls In Wake Of Russian Commander's Mutiny



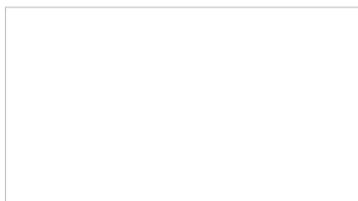
'The Bunker, Not The Boardroom': Supreme Court Ruling Permits Affirmative Action For Military Academies



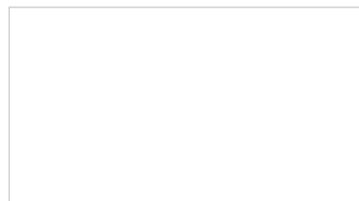
Mississippi Prosecutor Who Excluded Black Jurors Resigns After 3 Decades



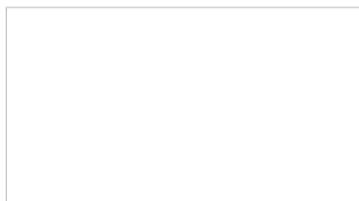
Ron DeSantis Forces Major Pole-Dancing Organization To Cancel Event



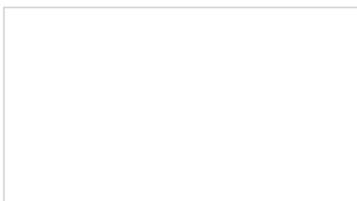
Democrats Rip 'Radical' Supreme Court Decision Axing Affirmative Action In Education



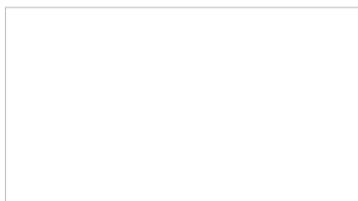
The Most Blistering Lines From The Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Dissents



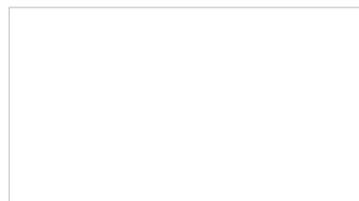
Michelle Obama: 'My Heart Breaks' After SCOTUS' Affirmative Action Ruling



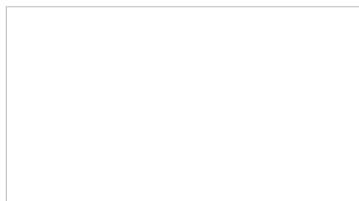
'Not A Normal Court': Joe Biden Slams Affirmative Action Ruling



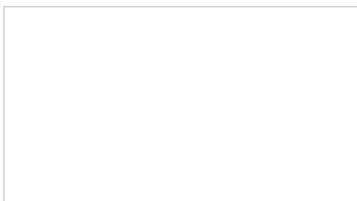
Tim Scott, Other 2024 GOP Hopefuls Applaud End of Affirmative Action



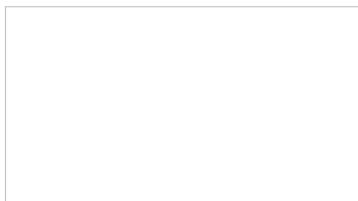
George Conway Picks Apart Trump's Newest Excuse: 'I Think He's Run Out Of Lies'



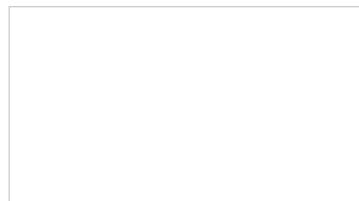
'Was He Alive That Day?': Chris Christie



Jamie Raskin Releases Transcript Of Ukrainian

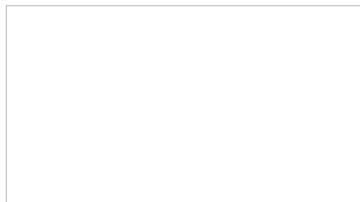


Connecticut State Rep Suffers Violent Attack

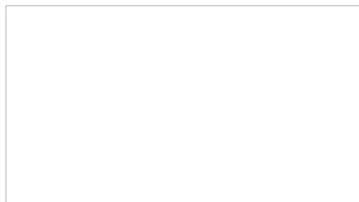


Supreme Court Ends Affirmative Action In

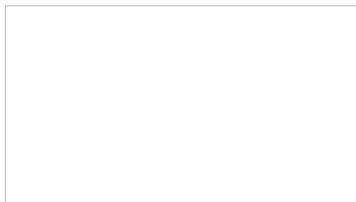
Slams Ron DeSantis Over 'Ridiculous' Jan. 6 Excuse



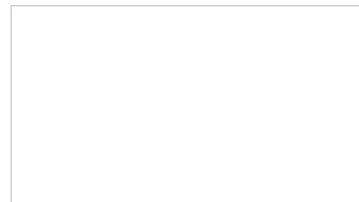
Oligarch Denying He Talked To Joe Biden



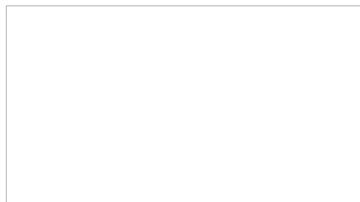
Following Eid Al-Adha Service



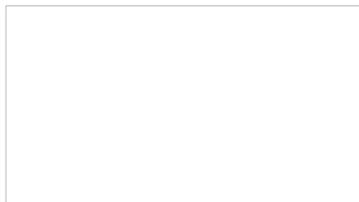
Education



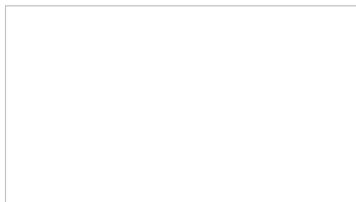
Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Says He's 'Proud' That Trump Likes Him — And That's Not All



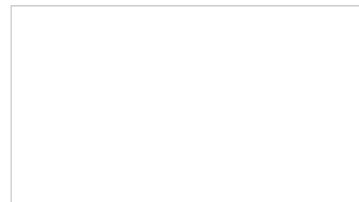
RNC Will Only Seek Loyalty Pledge From Candidates Qualifying For Debate



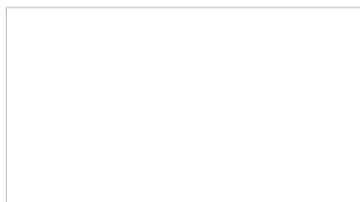
Bob Woodward's Ominous Reaction To Trump Tape: 'Never Seen Anything Like This'



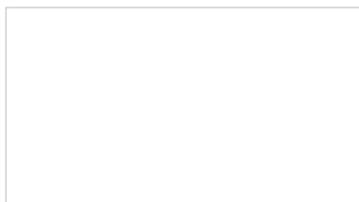
Jesse Watters Tries To Mock Joe Biden's Mistake And It Goes Laughably Wrong



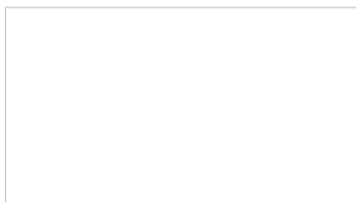
Biden's Brother: President Is 'Very Open-Minded' About Psychedelics For Medical Treatment



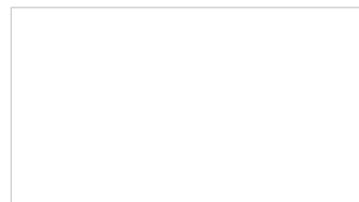
The Biden Administration Is Dragging Its Feet On A Key Climate Solution



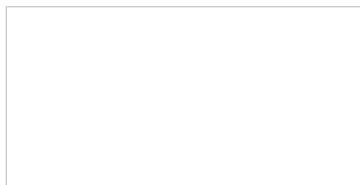
Chris Christie Has 'Stupid' Yet Believable Theory On Why Trump Kept Secret Docs



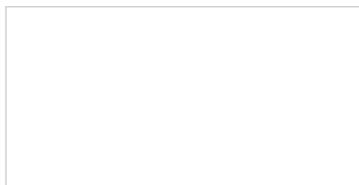
White House Explains Why Joe Biden Has Marks On His Face



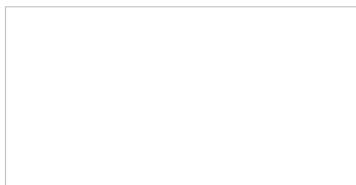
Ari Melber Shows Why Trump Should Be Very Worried About Rudy Giuliani



Michigan Lawmakers Vote To Ban Conversion Therapy For Minors



Lauren Boebert's Most Glaring Hypocrisy Yet Called Out On Twitter



DeSantis Unveils Plan to Eliminate 4 Federal Agencies



Chris Christie Shreds 'Grifting' Trump Family, Especially Jared Kushner

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Posts (And Deletes) Campaign Photo Possibly Taken In Russia

Federal Judges Block Parts Of Trans Care Bans In 2 States

Ron DeSantis Wants Disney Trial Pushed Back To After 2024 Election



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