

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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JOY REID: We begin *The ReidOut* with a renewed effort by the American right to make sure Covid is here to stay. First, they came for the schools. Now, it's the businesses. An astonishing 180 for the party that once claimed it stood for limited government, free enterprise, and protecting corporate America from burdensome regulation. These days, the once grand ol' party stands for nothing other than the quest for absolute power, which they intend to achieve by embracing a foaming at the mouth brand of conservatism that includes worshipping the disgraced former president, dismantling democracy, and forcing businesses — forcing them to operate on their terms, which happen to include opening the doors to the pandemic with the worst of them associating the killer virus with freedom itself. They've also launched a new national pastime empowering anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers to mob up and scream at, spit on, and attack workers who have to mask up to work. When they're not harassing teachers and health care professionals or moms walking their kids to school for masking up to prevent Covid, a life does need variation. And we now have abortion bounty hunt Governor Greg Abbott of Texas banning any entity in his state, including private businesses from mandating Covid vaccinations for their workers or their customers. He's denouncing vaccine mandates as federal overreach while his Covid-loving sidekick Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is making good on his promise to punish local governments for taking steps to protect workers because Covid must be let in. Otherwise, how would one market his top donor's remedy at fancy popup clinics? Florida's Leon County is now facing a \$3.5 million fine for requiring proof of vaccination as Baby MAGA is exploring options to legally block vaccine related terminations in the private sector. If leadership could kill. Oh, wait, it can. This comes as other Republicans and MAGA minions double down on their anti-vax talking points. Ohio Congressman Jim Jordan tweeting that we “should ban all vaccine mandates.” Period. A move that would allow polio, measles, and hepatitis to flourish in our schools because why not. Charlie Kirk of the right-wing student group Turning Point USA got the Covid party started, tweeting: Reject tyranny, catch the #FreedomFlu,” despite the fact that Kirk's colleague, the co-founder at Turning Point, died of covid last year. Conservatives are also turning NBA star Kyrie Irving into an anti-vax martyr. The Brooklyn nets guard is forbidden from playing or practicing with his teammates fully eligible under New York's Covid-19 vaccination guidelines, promoting Donald Trump's number fail son to once again tweet about actually talented people, this time claiming he actually cares about Black people, saying: “Kyrie just sacrificed more than Kaepernick ever did.” Narrator: He doesn't care about black people. [INTRODUCES PANEL] Tim, I have been, you know, searching for the rationality in the idea of embracing Covid as a thing and saying Covid is king, let it in, let it in your business, let it in your schools, feed it to your kids with their breakfast cereal. Covid, Covid, Covid, right? This love of Covid makes no sense to me except that they also want to market cures for Covid, right? They want you to buy some hydroxychloroquine or go buy you some ivermectin. Maybe there's some sort of financial incentive to it. So, maybe that's it. Maybe they just want popup clinics with their favorite remedies. Okay, maybe that's it. But this thing about bossing businesses around, that seems, to me, even harder to explain with the Republican brand. Can you explain it?

TIM MILLER: Yeah, I want to give you a more simple answer than that, Joy. I think that the explanation is this is simple contrarianism, anti-elitism, and just, you know, just populism gone awry. It's as simple as that. Look, these guys think everything that Joy Reid is for, that Dr. Fauci is for, that the elites on the coast are for, they have to be against and if that means letting unnecessarily their own citizens die, they're going to let their own citizens die. Look at the state of Texas. In the last two months, while we have a life-saving vaccine, 16,000 people have died in Texas of the novel coronavirus. Greg Abbott, during that two months, supported private businesses having the right to have a vaccine mandate. He looked at the 16,000 deaths and, rather thinking the solution is what can I do as somebody that has influence with many of these people who are not getting vaccinated, what can I do to help encourage them to get vaccinated, he's doing the opposite. He's saying anybody that's telling you to get vaccinated, do not comply. Texas Representative Chip Roy tweeted this week, do not comply, even though you know Chip is vaccinated. I think that what these guys are doing is absolutely unconscionable. It's all about positioning. It's all about negative partisanship all the way down. It has nothing to do with leading their state obviously or caring about their citizens, all that stuff is way — is way — has gone by the wayside and I just — I don't know there are words to describe how unconscionable the move that Greg Abbott made in Texas is.

REID: Right. I mean, these are the same people who are screaming, “go back to work” but then also screaming, “catch the Covid flu or the freedom flu and don't go to work if you have to get vaccinated.” That means you're not going to work, which is the thing you demanded that they not do. You're saying go to work now, but you're saying don't go to work. None of it is coherent.

MILLER: Yeah.

REID: Don, I mean the other thing about it is —

MILLER: Bake me a cake.

REID: — right, exactly. You know, Don, the other piece of it is the elitism — the sort of fake anti-elitism. The people who are screaming this the loudest — hello, Tucker Carlson, etc. — these people are vaccinated or work at places that require vaccinations. Fox News has the strictest requirements to be vaccinated and to report your vaccination status to them. It's the strictest in the media business. So, these are vaccinated elite people and then they are doing this thing where they're trying to, like, cosplay as if they're the black people during the civil rights movement, right? They're like “no, see, if you really look at history, like, the real victims and the people who are getting fire hosed on them, well, that would be us: like, elite rich white people. Like, we're really the ones who were in those pictures. And we were really the ones.” And to do that, you need a couple Black people, so that you can say see? Segregation! Look at that Black guy. And so, now, we enter Kyrie Irving, another person elite because the NBA has elite opportunity to get yourself the vaccine if you want it, right? They get tested. They get everything. He's refusing to do it. He's now got people who are trying to say, “oh, no, no, no he's upholding a huge principle. He's being principled. This is sort of a puff piece in The Athletic, saying, no, no, no, he thinks it's a principle people shouldn't lose their jobs and they're claiming that it's not about him being anti-vax. We have an expert, Ben Collins, who does this for a living, and says

that is exactly what anti-vaxxers say. They say, “oh, I'm not anti-science. I'm not anti-vax. I just believe in a principle.” Your thoughts on all of that?

DON CALLOWAY: Well, I just first, you know, the House Republican party has staffers, many of whom are 25 to 35 years old. Those young staffers have become aware of the Twitter and other forms of the social media and that's why you see people like Ted Cruz standing with the Kyrie Irvings who, six months ago, there's no way in the world you're standing with Kyrie Irving as he rocks Black Lives Matter and I Am Built By Black History t-shirts on the court, right? So, there's this selective, performative trophy thing of aligning yourself of social media influence otherwise known as clout chasing. I'm going to leave you with that, Joy Reid. You can use it at your — at your leisure. But the thing about — so, so, that's a performative thing that we're seeing amongst the Republican caucus to get attention for themselves, but it's so fundamental bereft of any intellectualism. When you talk about the egalitarianism and the contrarianism that Tom [sic] talked about a moment ago, that leads us to one place and it's anti-intellectualism. One of the two major political parties in this country has so — so — so aggressively adopted anti-intellectualism that they don't see it as inconsistent to say — to pass Texas abortion ban based in some specious theory of bodily autonomy and not have a problem with the inconsistency between that and raging against people not wanting to get vaccinated or some same theory of bodily autonomy. I know that was muddled. My point is they don't recognize that these things are inconsistent and that is a problem. They don't recognize it because they've probably embraced the same anti-intellectualism, which is not only keeping them from getting vaccinated, but also keeping them from admitting they're hurting us all by not being vaccinated.

REID: But the thing is — and the people doing it, Tim — they went to Harvard. That's where I'm — so — I has [sic] Harvard shame. Cause that's where — that's where he went to school. These people are Harvard, Yale, Princeton — these are — these are Ivy League rich people who are being like, “I stand with the common man. Okay, Ted Cruz. if Ted Cruz saw Kyrie Irving in his neighborhood, he would call the police on him. He would be like, “you're in the wrong neighborhood.” 911. He would call the cops on him. That's the truth, okay? But the other piece of this too is, on the business front, if they claim they care about business to stay open, to be viable economically, these businesses have to do that. Look at all these businesses that are based in Texas. AT&T, Halliburton, Hewlett-Packard, ExxonMobil, but I'm really thinking about Southwest and American Airlines. The airlines — in order to thrive, they need these vaccine mandates so that people will feel safe getting in the plane. 7-Eleven. They — they need it. And so, I wonder if, at some point, the business community pushes back and says, “you can't do this to us.”

MILLER: Yeah, that classic woke, liberal corporation Halliburton. They're suffering down there, Joy.

REID: So woke.

MILLER: Look, I mean, look at this, I want to go even a step lower than that. Think about if you're a nursing home — right — and if you're a nursing home in Texas and you have a lot of, you know, obviously, elderly people there who may be vaccinated, but they — they have

comorbidities. They have other reasons why they're — they, you know, could have breakthrough cases, you — I think everyone who has their mom or aunt or uncle or grandparent in a nursing home would want that place to have a vaccine mandate, right? Like, who wouldn't want that? In Texas, Greg Abbott is banning nursing homes from being able to have a vaccine mandate, so you could have an unvaccinated nurse coming in and there's nothing that you can do it legally in the state. It's absolute madness. Obviously, this is also the case for 7-Elevens and the Southwests of the world, but I think that, you know, if you think about these niche examples, they're extreme examples to just show how ridiculous and unsafe it is. I do want to have just one small disagreement with Don on the Kyrie thing. Look, if Kyrie wants to be a voice, if all of these guys that want to be a voice for the voiceless want to quit their job, all these millionaires, I hope — I hope the Ted Cruzs of the world stand with them. It would be great for Ted Cruz and Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham to all do what Kyrie is doing. They should walk away, as well. They're in vaccine-mandated workplaces. I think that, if they want to be a voice with the voices with Kyrie, they all should stand shoulder to shoulder and do their —

REID: And quit their jobs.

MILLER: — cosplay together. I think that'd be great for the country.

REID: But, by the way, when he's not working anymore, you know how they're going to think about Kyrie, a black man who quit his job and ain't working? Yeah, they're going to really stand with him. Don Jr. Is going to be right there with him, with a fist in the air like — like Hawley — like Josh Hawley, right? No, he's not. He gonna call the police on him. Don, the other issue is, I think, for the Democrats, at some point, do you start to gather the vaccinated, the pro-science, the rational, and start to try to make them into a political force? Because it feels like the people who don't want their grandmothers to die in a nursing home in Texas might actually be a useful voting block.

COLLOWAY: Yeah, absolutely and we hope that is at least a — that that tactic is partially taken away from us as we move into the midterms next year because if Democrats can't — can't run for office being the House and Senate of the vaccinated, of the sensible, then that means it's been taken away because Covid has gone away. So, I would rather have Covid go away than to be able to use it as a — therefore, to last long enough that it could be organized into a politically organizing principle such that we would see the results pay off electorally. So we hope that Covid —

REID: Yeah.

COLLOWAY: — goes away before it can ever get to that. So the other side is that, like you said at the beginning of this, I don't think that Republicans would have it go away because they have — they are not above the moral shitshow of them being able to use it as a political cudgel.