JOHN KING: To American politics now and to this sad, sad but recurring reality: Donald Trump associates himself with conspiracy and hate and all but a few Republican leaders say nothing. The new episode? A two hour Trump dinner at Mar-a-Lago with the anti-Semite Ye, formerly Kanye West, and the Holocaust denier and white nationalist Nick Fuentes. Trump is not only a former President, but he is a declared candidate for the 2024 Republican nomination, yet silence from the Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, silence from the House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy. There are a few in the party, just a few willing to call this out.

GOVERNOR ASA HUTCHINSON (R-AR) [on CNN’s State of the Union, 11/27/22]: I don't think it's a good idea for a leader that's setting an example for the country or the party to meet with avowed racist or anti-Semite.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES COMER (R-KY) [on NBC’s Meet the Press, 11/27/22]: He certainly needs better judgments in who he dines with. [SCREEN WIPE] I would not take a meeting with — with that person. No, I wouldn't take a meeting with Kanye West, either, but that's — that's my opinion.

KING: To share their reporting and their insights, CNN’s Dana Bash, CNN’s Jeff Zeleny, and Tia Mitchell of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Why is this so hard? This is the company Donald Trump keeps and it's the company he has kept for years. Everyone is focusing on Nick Fuentes, who is a horrible reprehensible human being for what he says and advocates and question, Kanye West, also even currently world in anti-Semitism Trump won't apologize and they won't call him out. Why?

JEFF ZELENY: I think they're still afraid of Donald Trump. Republicans are still, you know, lacking a leader in their party other than Donald Trump and they are afraid of all of the blow back that comes with it. Kevin McCarthy most specifically, he is in the fight of his life now for the house speakership so he needs Donald Trump, he does not want to get cross ways with him, that's the simplest reason, they are simply afraid of him. The question is as more of these things happen it did you see feel like me like that different -- I know we've been here sooms before about Chris Christie is one of the few Republicans if only Republican speaking out it does seem like a different moment to me.

KING: Chris Christie says another example of an awful lack of judgment from Donald Trump which combined with past judgments make him untenable. General election candidate. Mike Pompeo says anti-Semitism is a cancer and talks about what he did as secretary of state, doesn't call out Donald Trump.

DANA BASH: No.
KING: Doesn't say he should be, you know, not allowed to win the nomination. Ronna McDaniel the party chairwoman as I have repeatedly white supremacist, neo-Nazism is disgusting do not have a home in the Republican Party. Where is the next sentence?

BASH: At least there's something there. You're right about Kevin McCarthy it's not an excuse but it is a political reality that if he says anything that will make Donald Trump combat him, attack him, he could very well lose the very, very small number of Republicans that are even there for him to become Speaker of the House. Mitch McConnell is a different story because my understanding before the election is that he didn't fight back against Donald Trump when Trump actually not only seemed to put out a hit on him but also said racist things about his own wife, the former Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao. He didn't do it because he wanted to stay focus on the issues and didn't want to distract before the election. The only excuse or reasoning that he could give right now is because there is still one more election in Georgia and he doesn't want to anger the Trump base before they go to the polls. Again, I am not excusing it, I'm just trying to explain it, but it —

KING: Power and politics over principle, period.

BASH: — right. But it speaks to what Asa Hutchinson said, what so many people who follow these issues say over and over again, silence is viewed as a green light for more hate and for even the speech to become more vicious, to become violent.

KING: If you do not criticize something this reprehensible, you are complicit in it. Just today, the suspect in the Buffalo shooting in the supermarket pled guilty and said that he sought that supermarket out so he could kill the most available black people in one place. He has also railed against Jews as well. If political leaders encourage such behavior, you cannot be shocked when you get it.

TIA MITCHELL: Yeah, we're seeing that time and again with political rhetoric, translating into violence in America and it's something that unfortunately sometimes our elected officials like to focus on the mental health or the red flag laws and not really talking about the root causes of bigotry and racism that contribute to events like Buffalo. To me with the Trump thing, yes, it's disturbing that other Republican officials haven't condemned it, but we also need to look again at the root of this. He is running for president and instead of meeting with someone who can raise him a lot of money or someone who is a policy leader or a political leader, he's meeting with a disgraced rapper and a known white supremacist and what does that say about the person who could become the leader of the free world in two years?

KING: And I just want to show you first I'm going to do -- give the control room a heads up a tweet that got ye kicked off of Twitter. He is now back on Twitter, he said he was sleepy but when he woke up he was going to go Defcon-3 on Jewish people. It comes on, I'm not going to read it. One of the things Donald Trump says is that he's unfamiliar with Nick Fuentes, that he was having dinner with a friend, his friend was on tough times, having dinner with ye and said he didn't know Nick Fuentes. In the time I'm going to finish this sentence, you can go to your search engine and do Nick Fuentes. If a stranger shows up to have dinner with Donald Trump who can
type in the words Nick Fuentes because then they would get this.

[FUENTES CLIPS]

KING: The — when you are a former president and a declared candidate for president, if you’re the CEO of a tiny company that's just -- that's -- I didn't know him is not a good excuse. You use a computer, you take five seconds.

BASH: And he's pretty deft at using his phone, knew how to get on Twitter easily. Here is the one thing to keep in mind, I worked on an hour special about anti-Semitism in America and the question about why the rise in hate, not just against Jews but against a lot of people of color and elsewhere, and the answer one of the key answers was -- and this is based on data, researchers looking at data and on the level of chatter online and more broadly in the country, when Donald Trump or other leaders said something or did something or acted in a certain way and did not then condemn it or come out and make clear that has not okay, it was very clear that anti-Semites, white supremacists who were laying back saw that as, oh, okay, it's time to act. That there is a very clear wink and a nod that goes on with these kinds of actions and the way that they are perceived.

KING: You invite people off the fringe, you invite people out of there, they think they better stay isolated because people will condemn them, instead you welcome them. Sadly a conversation that will continue.