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By: Safiya Ahmed

#WalkAway

(reject the Democrat party)

“Once upon a time I was a liberal,” Brandon Straka, a self-described gay conservative hairdresser says to the camera, in a slickly-produced [YouTube video](#) that now has over 700,000 views.

“The left has been allowed to reinforce the narrative that everybody on the right is a bigot, a racist, a homophobe, a misogynist,” he continues, describing his transition from a typical Manhattan liberal to the leader of a conservative political movement.

“I reject racism of all kinds. I reject tyrannical group think. I reject a system that allows a misinformed and dogmatic mob to oppress free speech, spread false narratives and apathetically steam roll over the truth,” he continues. “These are the reasons why I became a liberal, and these are the same reasons why I am walking away.”

Brandon Straka is the leader of #WalkAway, a growing movement of self-described former liberals who assert that the mainstream media does not acknowledge conservative people of color, and other minorities. Like Straka, they are “walking away” from the Democratic Party, which they blame for manipulating identity politics to push false narratives and mobilize votes without any concrete promises to serve their communities.

It isn't a fringe movement, either. A [Rasmussen poll](#) showed that Donald Trump's approval ratings among Black Americans have increased to [36 percent](#), nearly doubling in the past year. According to a [WSJ opinion piece](#), 23% of Black men and 11% of Black women approve of Trump's performance in 2017, an increase from the year before, which has been largely attributed to the rise in Black employment figures.

Still, US media outlets have almost ignored how at least a subsection of minority voters have had a change of heart—or may have been conservative all along. Ahead of the midterm elections, a #WalkAway rally of more than 1,000 hardly got any media coverage compared to the White nationalist Unite the Right rally of only two dozen. Afterwards, many media outlets heralded the victories of Democratic women of color, such as Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Ilhan Omar but ignored Republican Young Kim's victory even though she made history as the first Korean-American woman in Congress.

“I went to the White House—there were between three to four hundred Black conservatives there,” says Will Johnson, another self-described former liberal who attended the march. Johnson now lives in California, where he hopes to address the “divisive” ways that the Democratic party uses while trying to mobilize votes from people of color.

For many in the #WalkAway movement, the media's willful blindness towards a diversity of political opinion among minorities is proof that they are more interested in generating ratings through combative discourse than in starting conversations about real issues impacting their communities.

Many have also pointed out that while CNN and other “left-leaning” outlets cover white supremacy or racist attacks extensively, they rarely pay attention to other issues, such as high unemployment and crime rates in communities of color. Consequently, some in the #WalkAway

movement credit Trump and the Republican party for lowering Black and Latino unemployment in the past year, and support the call for more policing because minorities are more affected by crime.

No matter how one feels about the Walk Away movement, it is clear that many major US media outlets are ignoring diversity of political opinions within communities of color. This is dangerous from many perspectives. First, it weakens trust in the media as an institution to fairly represent and accurately inform the public. Second, it causes many to disengage from media and politics altogether, a phenomenon which is manifesting itself in the United States as an “exhausted majority” that is fed up with polarization, and does not feel that their interests are represented by party politics, or the media that is meant to fight for them as a neutral arbiter.

Now, the vacuum left behind by liberal media outlets is being filled by YouTube channels and social media posts by disaffected former liberals. It is time for professional journalists to acknowledge these voices, broaden diversity beyond tokenism, and re-energize the exhausted majority by ensuring that the range of people and political opinions that make up our world is heard.