



Ye vs the People

Publish Date:

October 2018

One of the world's most influential rap musicians, Kanye West is notorious for his colourful and often outlandish public persona. But nothing in West's career of some 20 years has been as controversial as his revelation that he is – *quelle horreur* – a Trump supporter.

West's support for the president came to light shortly after the 2016 election, with the enigmatic rapper telling an audience that, 'If I would've voted, I'd have voted for Trump'. Earlier this year, West posted a series of tweets praising not just Trump, but also prominent conservatives like Candace Owens and Scott Adams.

Predictably, a black celebrity's apparent support for a 'racist' president triggered a media firestorm. Many commentators tried to rationalise West's foray into politics, attributing it to everything from characteristic attention-seeking to opioid addiction and even mental health issues. For others, West's newfound conservatism was more sinister – a deliberate and callous betrayal of the black community. One largely unintelligible piece in *The Atlantic*, for example, accused West of championing 'a white freedom, freedom to be proud and ignorant, freedom to profit off a

people in one moment and abandon them in the next'. Elsewhere, Rolling Stone slammed West's 'open support of a president doing the work of white supremacy'.

In response, West has recently released a new rap track: *[Kanye]Ye v the People*. In it, West engages in a back-and-forth with fellow rapper T.I., whose lines are typical of West's critics. On one level, the track is a catchy rejection of political correctness and identity politics; but on another, it is emblematic of a broader cultural phenomenon: the mass desertion of former Democrats, disillusioned by the authoritarian left. As West has said:

'You don't have to agree with Trump but the mob can't make me not love him. I don't agree with everything everyone does. That's what makes us individuals. And we have the right to independent thought.'



(this article appeared in the [August 2018 edition](#) of the IPA Review. It is a companion piece to '[Dragon Energy](#)'.)