



# Elon Musk continues to cater to far-right Twitter accounts promoting bigotry, extremism, and misinformation

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Twitter's new CEO Elon Musk has spent the first month and a half of his tenure catering to the far-right by reinstating and interacting with right-wing figures responsible for spreading bigotry and misinformation. Musk engaged with these types of accounts at least 170 times between October 27 and December 13, according to a Media Matters review.

Since gaining control of the platform on October 27, Musk has advanced his vision of Twitter becoming the "digital town square" by unilaterally reinstating over a dozen high-profile right-wing accounts and granting other previously suspended accounts that had spread misinformation "amnesty."

A month and a half of Musk at the helm of Twitter has also helped conspiracy theorists and toxic posters spread hateful or dangerous rhetoric. Musk himself has even used the platform to amplify multiple conspiracy theories and has employed common QAnon tactics like baselessly accusing a former Twitter executive of promoting pedophilia. Most recently, he tweeted a common QAnon phrase that has given QAnon figures a reason to believe that Musk potentially supports the conspiracy theory.

Media Matters previously found that Musk catered to the far-right by interacting with accounts known to push misinformation and bigotry at least 24 times in the first days of owning Twitter. In an updated review, Media Matters has found that Musk has continued to entertain these types of accounts, engaging with them at least 170 times between October 27 and December 13.

From decrying "wokeism" to sharing right-wing talking points about U.S. immigration policy, below are some examples of Musk interacting with known bad actors.

## Musk criticized COVID-19 mitigation efforts and praised an anti-vaccine misinformer

- Musk expressed support and admiration for anti-vaccine figure Dr. Jay Bhattacharya and his work.

In a four-part thread, Bhattacharya praised Musk for “promis[ing] access to help find out” why he was placed “on the blacklist on the first day” he joined Twitter, in August 2021. Musk responded, “Thank you for your rigorous adherence to science.”

- **In a thread mocking people concerned about COVID-19, Musk interacted with right-wing troll account Catturd and implicitly criticized pandemic lockdowns.**

**Elon Musk** ✓ @elonmusk · Dec 12  
The Branch Covidians are upset lol  
36.9K replies 57.8K retweets 497.1K likes

**Catturd**™ @catturd2 · Dec 12  
Replying to @elonmusk  
COVID cult.  
227 replies 1,022 retweets 18.5K likes

**Crystal Hope** ✓ @CrystalHope1979 · Dec 12  
Replying to @catturd2 and @elonmusk

I stand in the middle of room and point out the unvaxxed aren't dying and yet no one notices me.

201 replies 2,726 retweets 16.1K likes

**Elon Musk** ✓ @elonmusk  
Replying to @CrystalHope1979 and @catturd2  
Somehow, the nation of Sweden is fine  
9:36 AM · Dec 12, 2022  
2,349 Retweets 201 Quote Tweets 21.9K Likes

# Musk decried “wokeism,” pushed conspiracy theories, and criticized “the culture war” when interacting with right-wing accounts

- **After Musk tweeted an emoji of a bunny, an explicit nod to QAnon and far-right communities, he tweeted “Lmaooo” at a response from conservative stand-up comedians the “Hodgetwins” mocking a concerned response.** Right-wing personality Alex Lorusso – known as ALX – joined in and left a similarly sarcastic tweet, to which Musk responded, “Bunny emojis are hate speech!!”

**Caroline Orr Bueno, Ph.D** @RVAwonk · Dec 12  
 Elon Musk is now explicitly encouraging his 120 million followers to start following QAnon.  
 Put differently, Elon Musk is encouraging his 120 million followers to join a domestic terrorism movement.

**Elon Musk** @elonmusk  
 Follow 🐰  
 8:15 PM · 12/12/22 · Twitter for iPhone  
 6,815 Retweets 1,435 Quote Tweets 59.9K Likes

26.6K 12.1K 33.5K

**Hodgetwins** @hodgetwins · Dec 13  
 Replying to @RVAwonk  
 .@elonmusk: tweets an emoji of a rabbit  
 Crazyed leftist: “Elon is encouraging 120 million people to join a domestic terrorist group”  
 🤔🤔🤔  
 1,192 4,517 57.4K

**Elon Musk** @elonmusk · Dec 13  
 Replying to @hodgetwins and @RVAwonk  
 Lmaooo  
 1,859 3,731 76.9K

**ALX** @alx  
 Replying to @elonmusk @hodgetwins and @RVAwonk  
 How many hit pieces will there be tomorrow from NYT & WaPo like this:  
 “Rabbits are the New Symbol of Right Wing Hate — Here’s Why They’re Dangerous”  
 12:46 AM · Dec 13, 2022  
 1,457 Retweets 60 Quote Tweets 17.8K Likes

- **Musk agreed with the Hodgetwins and another user calling for people to “speak out” against wokeism.** Musk tweeted, “The woke mind virus is either defeated or nothing else matters,” to which the Hodgetwins commented, “Our future depends on more and more people waking up and speaking out on what’s happening to society. Stop being silent!” Another user added that public figures need to “take an open stand against wokism,” and Musk responded with “Yes.”
- **Musk expressed support for far-right commentator Ian Miles Cheong’s comment alleging that the media is suppressing “criticism of wokeness.”** Musk originally asked, “What do you think of the culture war?” and agreed with Cheong’s response: “A single ideology dominates and silences the rest, branding everything it disapproves of as ‘violence’ and a ‘threat to democracy.’ Criticism of wokeness is ‘stochastic terrorism.’ Only one narrative is allowed to prevail and it is promoted by the media. All dissent is quashed.”
- **After Musk tweeted a video of shirts saying “#StayWoke” that were found in a closet at Twitter’s headquarters, he agreed with comments made by right-wing figures who mocked or criticized the Black Lives Matter movement.** Cheong responded to this thread, “Black Lives Matter (now exposed as a scam, they bought millions of dollars in property and never gave back to the community) was built on a lie,” to which Musk said, “Troublesome.”
  - **Right-wing podcast host Chase Geiser** also responded to Musk’s initial video, saying, “You officially bought the world’s largest collection of #StayWoke merch.” Musk responded back to Geiser with two laughing emojis and “worth it.”
  - **Far-right grifter Andy Ngo** joined in on the thread, saying, “‘Hands up, don’t shoot’ is one of the biggest hoaxes to come from the American left in the last decade. That big lie has inspired many to become radicalized and militant.” Musk responded, “True.”

### **Engaging with right-wing accounts, Musk amplified attacks against former Twitter employees and commented on alleged content moderation decision from before his tenure**

- **Musk agreed with election denier Dinesh D’Souza’s baseless claim that Twitter before Musk’s leadership banned only conservative accounts.** Musk told D’Souza he was “correct” after he tweeted, “We don’t hear much about Democrats and leftists being let back on Twitter. Why? Because they were never kicked off in the first place. Their lies and misinformation simply escaped all scrutiny. Censorship has been deployed as a one-way operation against conservatives.”
- **In a thread initiated by Tim Young, contributor for far-right nationalist outlet American Greatness, Musk provided context to his decision to reinstate former President Donald Trump’s account.** Young tweeted that “the left can’t handle” Trump being back on Twitter. Musk responded to this tweet by saying the reinstatement was intended to “correct a grave mistake in banning his account” and sharing that he “reluctantly” voted for Biden over Trump. In the same thread, a MAGA account asked Musk if he would “support Ron DeSantis in 2024.” Musk said, “Yes,” before noting that “Twitter as a platform must be fair to all.”

- **Musk compounded the viral hate account Libs of TikTok's attack against a former Twitter employee.** Libs of TikTok posted screenshots of a former Twitter employee's tweets criticizing Musk for laying off Twitter's infrastructure team. Musk responded to the tweet, saying, "A tragic case of adult onset Tourette's."
- **Musk interacted with white nationalist Paul Ramsey and Andy Ngo in a thread about Antifa accounts on Twitter.** Ramsey tweeted, "Twitter is reportedly nuking pedo accounts. This is eliminating much of Antifa Twitter." In response, Musk expressed his dedication to "removing child exploitation." In the same thread, Musk responded twice to Ngo after Ngo claimed Antifa uses Twitter to organize violence.
- **Musk amplified QAnon-spouting conspiracy theorist and Fox News contributor Lara Logan's attack against former Twitter Trust and Safety Council member Anne Collier.**

 **Lara Logan** @laralogan · Dec 9

While you sat on that council, children were being trafficked & you knew it & - at best - did nothing. You should not just be able to walk away - you should be held accountable.

@elonmusk

 **annecollier** @annecollier · Dec 8

Three of us resigned from Twitter's Trust & Safety Council today: @eirliani @podesta\_lesley and me. Here's why [netfamilynews.org/members-of-twi...](https://netfamilynews.org/members-of-twi...)

**RESIGNED BY: EIRLIANI ABDUL RAHMAN, ANNE COLLIER, LESLEY PODESTA**  
**In Protest Against Elon Musk's 'Safety' Messages to Date**

We are announcing our resignation from Twitter's Trust and Safety Council because it is clear from research evidence that, contrary to claims by Elon Musk, the safety and wellbeing of Twitter's users are on the decline. The question has been on our minds: Should Musk be allowed to define digital safety as he has freedom of expression? Our answer is a categorical "no."

Eirliani Abdul Rahman and Anne Collier have been members of Twitter's Trust & Safety Council since its inception in 2016. Eirliani was the first female representative from Asia and had served on the Council's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Prevention advisory group. Anne has been working with social media platforms on youth digital safety for more than 20 years and served on the Twitter Council's Online Safety and Harassment Prevention group.

We know that, even after the resignations and dismissals of thousands of employees, there are people working at Twitter who care about reducing hate speech and protecting users on the platform. We are deeply saddened by this decision because Twitter has been a place of joy in many ways: our work with fellow Council members,

content moderation. Algorithmic systems can only go so far in protecting users from ever evolving abuse and hate speech before detectable patterns have developed.

Anne: "Having followed the research on youth online risk since 1999, I know how hard it is for platforms to get it right, honoring young users' rights of protection, participation and privacy simultaneously. But some progress has been made in the industry. Tragically, the research shows that Twitter is going in the opposite direction, and I can no longer find a reason to stay in tacit support of what Twitter has become."

Eirliani: "I have watched with, dare I say, trepidation, the negotiations over Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter. I had pressed and advocated for the protection of users as well as dedicated resources. This is in no way a disavowal of our friends who remain on the Council. They choose to do so for their own reasons, including continued safeguarding and the hope that reason will prevail."

Eirliani Abdul Rahman  
 Co-Founder  
 YAKIN (Youth, Adult survivors & Kin In Need)  
 Email: [eirliani@gmail.com](mailto:eirliani@gmail.com)  
 Twitter: @eirliani  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/eirliani-abdul-rahman>

1,985 12.3K 60.4K

 **Elon Musk** @elonmusk

Replying to @laralogan

**Indeed. Shame on them!**

6:20 PM · Dec 9, 2022

7,840 Retweets 204 Quote Tweets 83.3K Likes

## **Musk interjected in Twitter threads about U.S. political issues initiated by right-wing accounts**

- **Musk interacted with Fox News reporter Bill Melugin, who reports on and promotes fearmongering around southern border immigration.** Melugin tweeted about a migrant caravan passing through El Paso, Texas, claiming it was “the largest single group we have ever seen,” to which Musk responded, “Wow.”
- **Musk responded to Melugin and provocateur Kim Dotcom about people crossing the U.S. southern border.** After Melugin tweeted a video of migrants crossing the southern border allegedly without authorization, Musk responded twice, saying, “Seems bizarre that it’s so easy enter illegally, but so hard to get a legal work visa.” After Kim Dotcom joined the conversation, sharing an article about “Dems voter farming strategy,” Musk responded, “Behavior follows the incentives for political power.”
- **Musk interacted with right-wing satirical outlet The Babylon Bee’s account multiple times, once about Hunter Biden and another about the 2022 midterm elections.** Both times he agreed with the right-wing outlet and commented with laughing emojis.
- **Musk responded to a tweet from failed Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake even though it contained election misinformation.** Lake asked Musk why Twitter was “still suppressing election criticism & news,” along with a screenshot of a right-wing reporter’s baseless claims of election fraud. Musk said, “Reasonable criticism of elections and judicial challenges are, of course, lawful. That seems to be the case here. Clear incitement to violence will result in suspension and significant deception should result in a @CommunityNotes correction.”



**Kari Lake** ✓ @KariLake · Dec 11

Is Twitter still suppressing election criticism & news?

Notice how the Retweet/Comment/Like features are disabled on the tweet about my Election Lawsuit?

@elonmusk what's up with this??



2,059 9,184 32.4K



**Elon Musk** ✓ @elonmusk

Replying to @KariLake

Reasonable criticism of elections and judicial challenges are, of course, lawful. That seems to be the case here.

Clear incitement to violence will result in suspension and significant deception should result in a @CommunityNotes correction.

8:13 PM · Dec 11, 2022

4,354 Retweets 218 Quote Tweets 44.5K Likes



## Musk agreed with right-wing attacks on mainstream media

- **Musk expressed support for Ian Miles Cheong's belief that mainstream media outlets are actively upset about Twitter's new direction under Musk's leadership.** Musk agreed with Cheong's claims that the "establishment media is angry" because Twitter no longer controls "the establishment and its activist allies," and because the public "can now openly question the narrative."
- **Musk agreed with Tim Young that CBS – and the mainstream media more generally – is biased.** Young called CBS biased for briefly not engaging on Twitter, to which Musk said, "So you say 'mainstream media' is biased? Hmm, will have to fact-check that with mainstream media. Nope, they say everything is cool!"
- **Musk agreed with Breitbart alum Raheem J. Kassam's claim that mainstream media are intent on "destroying" Twitter.** Kassam tweeted that mainstream media is engaging in a "co-ordinated attempt to destroy Twitter," and Musk responded, "They just can't stop writing about Twitter, which is driving usage through roof lmao."
- **Musk and Cheong exchanged similar views on supposed censorship by the mainstream media.** On November 11, Musk tweeted, "As Twitter pursues the goal of elevating citizen journalism, media elite will try everything to stop that from happening." Cheong replied, "The media elite wants a monopoly on the truth, and citizen journalism threatens their narrative. Can't have that, so they bully corporations and social media companies into doing their censoring for them by calling it all 'disinformation.'" Musk replied, "True."

## Musk interacted with right-wing accounts that praised the publication of the Twitter Files

- **Musk agreed with the Hodgetwins' baseless claim that the media covered up the Twitter files.** After part of the Twitter Files were published, the Hodgetwins claimed the "media is silent" about "one of the biggest political scandals in modern American history" because "the damn media was in on the scandal." Musk responded with a bullseye emoji.
- **Musk interacted with Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton multiple times about the Twitter files.** Musk agreed with Fitton that the Twitter Files provided "damning evidence" that the platform censored Trump leading up to the 2020 election and said more information was "coming soon" about Twitter's treatment of former President Donald Trump.
- **Musk amplified attacks launched against former Twitter executive Yoel Roth by right-wing commentator Glenn Greenwald.** In response to a tweet revealing information about how Twitter chose to label information about the 2020 election, Greenwald attacked Roth and "his little censorship minions," claiming they turned Twitter into a "full-on Democratic Party activist machine" to interfere in the 2020 presidential election. Musk agreed, saying "...there is no question that Twitter operated as a Democratic Party activist machine."

- **Musk endorsed ALX's opinion that the public is entitled to know how Twitter made previous content moderation decisions.**



The screenshot shows a Twitter thread. At the top is a tweet from user **ALX** (@alx) dated Nov 23. The tweet text reads: "Raise your hand if you think @ElonMusk should make public all internal discussions about the decision to censor the @NYPost's story on Hunter Biden's laptop before the 2020 Election in the interest of Transparency." Below the text are icons for replies (6,029), retweets (18.5K), likes (152.3K), and a share icon. Below this is a reply from **Elon Musk** (@elonmusk) with a blue checkmark. The reply text is "This is necessary to restore public trust" and is timestamped "11:38 PM · Nov 23, 2022". Below the reply are statistics: "16.6K Retweets", "1,072 Quote Tweets", and "201.8K Likes". At the bottom of the screenshot are icons for reply, retweet, like, and share.