

The Delray Democrat

Trump the Grifter, DeSantis the Opportunist¹

June Sandra Neal

Given Donald Trump's precarious legal status headlining this issue, many Republicans are looking at Governor Ron DeSantis as the better choice for their party's presidential nomination. After all, he's more disciplined, appears more controlled, and he can complete a sentence.

But where it counts, the two share the same fatal flaw: A Messiah Complex. Remember Trump, looking at the sky: "I am the chosen [one](#)..."

And DeSantis' shameless "God Made a Fighter" ad, with a Morgan Freeman-like voice claiming DeSantis to be just what the Lord [ordered](#).

And neither man holds fealty to any ethos or ethic.

"Trump's political party affiliation has changed numerous times. He registered as a Republican in Manhattan in 1987, switched to the Reform Party in 1999, the Democratic Party in 2001, and back to the Republican Party in [2009](#).

"Trump in '04: 'I probably identify more as [Democrat](#)'" headlined CNN.

DeSantis was always a Republican, but, like Trump, he governs by windmill, to the dominant political breeze. (Connecticut's former, twice-convicted, Republican Governor John Rowland did the same so often that cartoonists drew him wearing a beanie with a little propeller on top.)

Both Trump and DeSantis are anti-science. When Trump's panel of Covid-19 experts threw his ignorance into high relief, he discredited them and instead played Pin the Tail on the Virus, blindly stabbing at anything rumored to help, even when the scientists warned his recommendations were dangerous.

During the greatest public health crisis in our time, DeSantis governed according to Republican decibel levels. "Initially, as the virus began spreading in Florida, DeSantis had ordered a statewide lockdown, in accordance with Dr. Anthony Fauci's recommendations. Three weeks later, he changed his mind. 'We will never do any of these lockdowns again.' 'Any public distrust of this administration has been well-earned,' the Miami *Herald* editorial board wrote. 'We can't trust the governor with our [lives](#).'"

DeSantis wouldn't tell us whether he'd been vaccinated. (Bet he had.)

Both men espouse a dangerous nationalism, the same kind of isolationist philosophy that kept the

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, April 2023, page 2.

United States from entering World War II. This time, the world is inextricably interwoven.

Both are rabidly anti-immigration. Trump called Mexicans rapists and wanted a ban on Muslim immigration. DeSantis tricked asylum-seeking Venezuelans by offering them jobs in Florida, then inhumanely dropping them in Martha's Vineyard to prove he was tough on immigration, thus further afflicting the already afflicted.

Trump's racism runs so deep he's never stopped questioning President Obama's American citizenship, never let off accusing the Central Park Five, even after they were exonerated, never apologized for having called for their execution. DeSantis has made his opposition to teaching Critical Race Theory a religious calling, even though CRT is not and has never been taught in any public Florida school. He's purged the Florida school curriculum of all traces of true Black history and boasts about his war against "Wokeism" (which is no threat to anyone), threatening Florida teachers with felonies if they go a step beyond his censorship.

Warning: Color within the lines.

Both believe the law is what they decide it is. Trump tried everything to steal the election, by removing postal center mail sorters, eliminating drop boxes, and strongarming election officials to change their vote counts. DeSantis did all he could to disenfranchise Black and Brown people by restricting mail-in balloting, gerrymandering, even bragging at a press conference [held](#) in August, 2020, that the FL police arrested more than a dozen people of voting illegally in the election. (They didn't.)

Each refuses to oppose White Supremacists. Remember Trump to the Proud Boys after Charlottesville: "Stand back and stand [by](#)"? And when neo-Nazis in Orlando, FL waved flags and shouted antisemitic comments, DeSantis did nothing while his press secretary [tweeted](#) "Do we even know they're Nazis?"

While our other great public health crisis, slaughter by guns, is raging, DeSantis bragged that Florida will [soon](#) be a no-permit, open carry state. DeSantis made good on that pledge – as of July 1, 2023, anyone who can legally own a gun in Florida will be able to carry a concealed gun in public without any training or background check. Floridians opposed the law by nearly a four-to-one margin (77% versus 21%) in a recent [poll](#), but with a supermajority of his minions in the legislature, DeSantis governs by fiat.

Trump made it easier for people with outstanding arrest warrants to buy guns by eliminating nearly 500,000 names from the FBI's "fugitives from justice" [program](#). And he rescinded a rule which would have allowed the Social Security Administration to submit the names of individuals suffering from severe mental illness.

Of course, DeSantis is smarter than Trump (who isn't?) but academic knowledge is no substitute for wisdom or emotional intelligence or fidelity to the Constitution and our democratic values. Neither man can pass the test.