

Why you shouldn't believe Trump missed a guy chanting 'white power' in the video he shared

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On Sunday morning -- before making the 271st visit to one of his golf courses during his presidency -- Donald Trump retweeted a video he said is from the Villages, a retirement community in Florida, in which a man driving a golf cart with Trump campaign posters is seen and heard yelling "white power."

"Thank you to the great people of The Villages," wrote Trump in the since-deleted tweet. So, yeah.

Amid immediate condemnation of the tweet -- including by Sen. Tim Scott, the lone black Republican in the Senate -- the tweet was deleted and this explanation was offered by deputy White House press secretary Judd Deere: "President Trump is a big fan of the Villages. He did not hear the one statement made on the video. What he did see was tremendous enthusiasm from his many supporters."

If you believe that, I've got a burgeoning video rental business called Blockbuster that you might be interested in.

Why shouldn't you believe the idea that Trump simply missed a guy chanting "white power" in the first few seconds of a video that he shared with his 82.5 million supporters on Twitter? Because, well, history -- both recent and not-so-recent. From a housing discrimination lawsuit in the 1970s to his comments about the "Central Park 5" to his assertion that "both sides" were to blame for white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 -- and dozens of smaller moments in between -- Trump has again and again showed he simply does not get it when it comes to America's ongoing racial problems. Or, seen through another lens, that he gets it all too well. And, of late, with his political fortunes flagging badly, Trump has leaned more and more heavily into barely-coded appeals to racist sentiment in the country.

"The left-wing mob is trying to demolish our heritage so they can replace it with a new repressive regime that they alone control," Trump told a conservative student group in Phoenix late last week.

"We will win the Election against Corrupt Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, and Schumer," tweeted Trump on Saturday. "We will save the Supreme Court, your 2nd Amendment, permanent damage from the ridiculous Green New Deal, and you from massive Tax Hikes. Also, our Heritage, History and LAW & ORDER!"

Trump has also taken to referring to Covid-19 as the "Kung Flu" -- a term even members of his own administration have previously admitted is racist and xenophobic.

As the New York Times summed it all up in a piece last week:

"Over the last few days the president has tweeted context-free videos of random incidents involving black people attacking white people and baselessly argued that President Barack Obama, the country's first black leader, committed 'treason'... ..Answering to his own instincts and what he thinks "my people" want, as he often puts it to advisers, the president is exploiting racial divisions in a way that appeals to

only a segment of his party."

It's through that history that Trump's Sunday morning tweet needs to be seen. And what that history says is that Trump doesn't get the benefit of the doubt. He hasn't earned it.

In fact, the ways in which he has worked to weaponize race and exploit racial divisions for his own personal political gain suggests that all Trump did on Sunday morning was say out loud what he has been saying slightly more quietly and subtly for years.

"'White power' isn't a dog whistle," tweeted Soraya Nadia McDonald, the culture critic at The Undeclared. "It's an air horn."

Deleting the tweet and insisting that Trump didn't see the guy yelling "white power" allows the President to accomplish exactly what he wants: Push out a message of clear and blatant racism -- and then insist that he wasn't doing that and he, the self-described "least racist person you have ever met," is deeply offended by anyone suggesting otherwise.

To believe that, you have to willingly ignore everything Trump has said and done on race for, well, his entire adult life. When you consider the way Trump has treated race -- as a cudgel to be used when it serves his purposes -- it's simply impossible to conclude that he retweeted the video without knowing there was a guy chanting "white power" in it.

The opposite is in fact true; he retweeted at least in part *because* there was a guy chanting "white power" in it.