

Tim Miller Hopes to Use His Voice to Make A Difference Outside of the GOP

By: Charlie Bickham

On Jan. 6 2020, thousands of Trump supporters gathered on the steps of the capitol to challenge the election. In the days that followed, members of the Republican Party had to decide whether to follow their party or take a stand against former President Trump. Tim Miller, on the other hand, had left the party three weeks earlier.

Miller, a political analyst and writer, spent more than a decade working within the GOP for governors, presidential candidates, and other Republican groups. He believed the party shared his views of fighting for equality, compassion, and democracy. He was confident candidates like John McCain and Mitt Romney had the potential for moderate conservatism that Miller believed in.

The Trump presidency led Miller to leave the party in 2020; however, his goal to fight authoritarianism and support democracy keeps him in the political arena as a writer for the Bulwark, an analyst for MSNBC, and the host of a political podcast called The Next Level.

Miller always enjoyed working in politics. “To be honest, I like the competition. There’s an earnest part of me that likes politics, but I also really like the competition,” he said. “It’s high stakes. It’s winning and losing. It’s a drama.”

The Republican Party went through a lot of change before 2020. More moderate Republicans like John McCain and Mitt Romney, and even the more traditional, very conservative Republicans like Liz Cheney now have a smaller impact than more extreme voices like Donald Trump and Mike Johnson.

“The party has become almost entirely Trump's party,” said Sarah Longwell, one of Miller’s podcast co-hosts, a political strategist, publisher for the Bulwark, and founder of the Never

Trump movement. “It no longer stands for limited government, personal responsibility, and American leadership in the world. It now stands for what Trump stands for.”

Longwell explains that the new values of the Republican Party are restrictive immigration policies, protectionist trade, and a willingness to engage in anti-constitutional practices. Miller originally joined the political arena because he was passionate about the traditional conservative values Longwell discussed.

Miller worked for John McCain as the communications director in Iowa in 2007. He resigned not long after because McCain suffered a severe hit in the polls, and at the time, it didn’t look like his campaign would be successful.

Looking back on his early days in the Republican Party, Miller believes he sacrificed his integrity and identity to cater to his party: “If you’re feeling like you’re not being honest with yourself, that is a bad place to be. I feel like that was where I was at, both being in the closet and by working for some candidates that I didn’t like because I wanted to get ahead in my political career.”

The process of Miller’s political change began after leaving McCain’s campaign, “The good side of that choice was moving back to D.C., getting out of politics gave me the little bit of distance I needed to come out of the closet,” Miller said.

From 2007 to 2016, Miller worked for the GOP as a strategist for various D.C.-based companies. He was a director at the Republican National Committee, a founder of a GOP super PAC, and did communications for multiple presidential campaigns. Trump’s successful election began to alienate Miller from his party.

Before the Trump presidency, Miller believed his party would stick to its values of personal responsibility and compassionate conservatism and move away from Trump. “I used to have this saying in 2015 where I would say, you might as well be Never Trump with me because if you aren’t today, you will be tomorrow,” Miller said. “I never even imagined people would storm the Capitol and still get around him.”

Miller became a founding member of the Never Trump movement. His outspoken view against the former president earned him national recognition from news outlets and politicians.

During Trump's presidency, he still believed the party would return to its roots of following the Constitution. Miller hoped to use his voice to pull the Republican base away from Trump.

"Tim has a really unique perspective as somebody who worked to help elect Republican politicians, as somebody who started an opposition research firm to go after Democrats, who began to use those skills and that perspective to fight Trump," said Longwell.

In 2020, Miller came to the conclusion that the Republican Party he had known was gone. The shock of his Republican colleagues continuing to stick with Trump was a breaking point, "I washed my hands of them. I tried. I feel like I put up a pretty good fight," he said.

Miller recalls that by the time he left the party, he thought, "This is a fight that I cannot win within the party. These people have lost their minds and should go screw themselves, and I'm filled with rage that they allowed it to get this far."

Many Republicans still believe the election was stolen by President Biden. According to [a 2023 poll by Monmouth University](#), 30% of Americans believe there was election fraud that led to a Biden victory in the 2020 election.

"If you thought that Donald Trump should be a dictator, that's not a fit for me, which is an understatement," Miller said. "That pretty much prevents me from being able to work within the party because pretty much everyone was complicit."

The GOP has changed too much to fit Miller's current values, but he still wants to use his voice to fight Trump. "When Trump came along, that really shook me...the negative consequences of Trump and the Trump movement are so great I'm motivated to stay involved," Miller said.

Despite a growing resentment towards the Republican Party and distaste for politics, he's still passionate about his ability to make change. "I feel very grossed out by politics, and I get tired of it, and it can be depressing. At the same time, I'm finding a lot more internal validation from doing this work right now because it's work that I can feel good about," Miller said.

After his exit from the party, Miller began writing for the Bulwark, an anti-Trump center-right political news source. Bill Kristol, an editor at The Bulwark and a former chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle, works with Miller to fight another Trump presidency.

“We both reject authoritarianism. We both believe in tolerance, pluralism, the rule of law, and freedom,” said Kristol. “Tim is one of the most important voices in America today explaining the tendency toward authoritarianism and fighting it.”

The Bulwark also produces the Next Level Podcast, an opportunity for Miller and his co-hosts to share their unfiltered views of the Republican Party without the restrictions of actually working in that party.

“The Next Level is three people who love politics and are deeply concerned about the country and about where politics are headed,” said Longwell. “I think we try to offer some of our thoughts about how we think the best avenues are for defeating Trump.”

A lot of people are worried the country is “doomed.” Only four percent of Americans feel like the political system is working very well, [according to the Pew Research Center's national poll of Americans 18 to 29 years old](#). The study also found that 64% of young Americans have more fear than hope about the future of democracy in America.

“I’m alarmed, but I do not feel doomed,” Miller said. “I think we have some very acute threats from Trump. Hopefully, we can avoid that. Hopefully, people will rally next year and do the right thing to prevent us from having to suffer through another Trump term.”

According to Miller, the opportunity for Americans is far greater in 2023 than at any other time in history. The political environment for women, African Americans, and people in the LGBTQ+ community is a lot more accepting than when he started in politics. “If you would’ve told 2004 Tim that in four years they would elect a Black president, his middle name Hussein, or that in 20 years I would be in a gay marriage with my kid and it’d be legal and fine, I would’ve been like, that’s crazy!” Miller said.

Working as a voice instead of a politician, Miller wants to be able to stick to his values. He doesn’t want to compromise his beliefs for the good of a political party. “I regret not being honest with myself...I’m trying to go forward by only doing things that I feel are within my integrity, within what I actually care about, and what actually means something to me.”