

The Inappropriate And Political Persecution of New Bedford Ward 3 Councilor Shawn Oliver

As the dust settles and the non-emotional jumping to conclusions ends, it's very clear that newly elected New Bedford Ward 3 Councilor Shawn Oliver is the victim of partisan political persecution that borders on the harassment of an elected official. A night that should have been a proud moment for Shawn, his family, friends, and supporters, turned into a smear campaign and I'm sure a miserable night and weekend because some people can't lose an election gracefully.

During his swearing-in ceremony day last Friday, New Bedford High School students protested in front of their school.

I'm generally supportive of anyone protesting, especially young adults, if they are organic protests, meaning they are started without outside influence. But high school students rarely protest without adult influence. Regardless, the New Bedford High School students mostly had a good message until they started to push anti-white men messages. I was personally attacked on our social media accounts as a middle-aged white man for even posting these videos.

It's a confusing message. If you are organizing a protest against "hate" you shouldn't preach hate. The students were protesting some Facebook posts on a personal account that they had to actively search out. Then one of the students through a microphone asked, "Can I get a screw white men?" to a gleeful crowd who shouted it back. Hate is hate and one has to wonder where they get this hate from. The media? School? Social

media? Also, what does this have to do with Black Lives Matter?

Later that evening, Shawn was confronted by protestors led by Rhode Island Democratic Women's Caucus Chair Reverend Donnie Anderson who is a transgender woman and Pastor at Pilgrim United Church of Christ in New Bedford.

The confrontation was inappropriate for many reasons.

First, Reverend Anderson was aggressive with an angry look and tone. Not something I usually see from a Reverend. In the video, you can see the Reverend holding Councilor Oliver's hand and not letting go. This is a power move meant to intimidate and is inappropriate when dealing with an elected official.

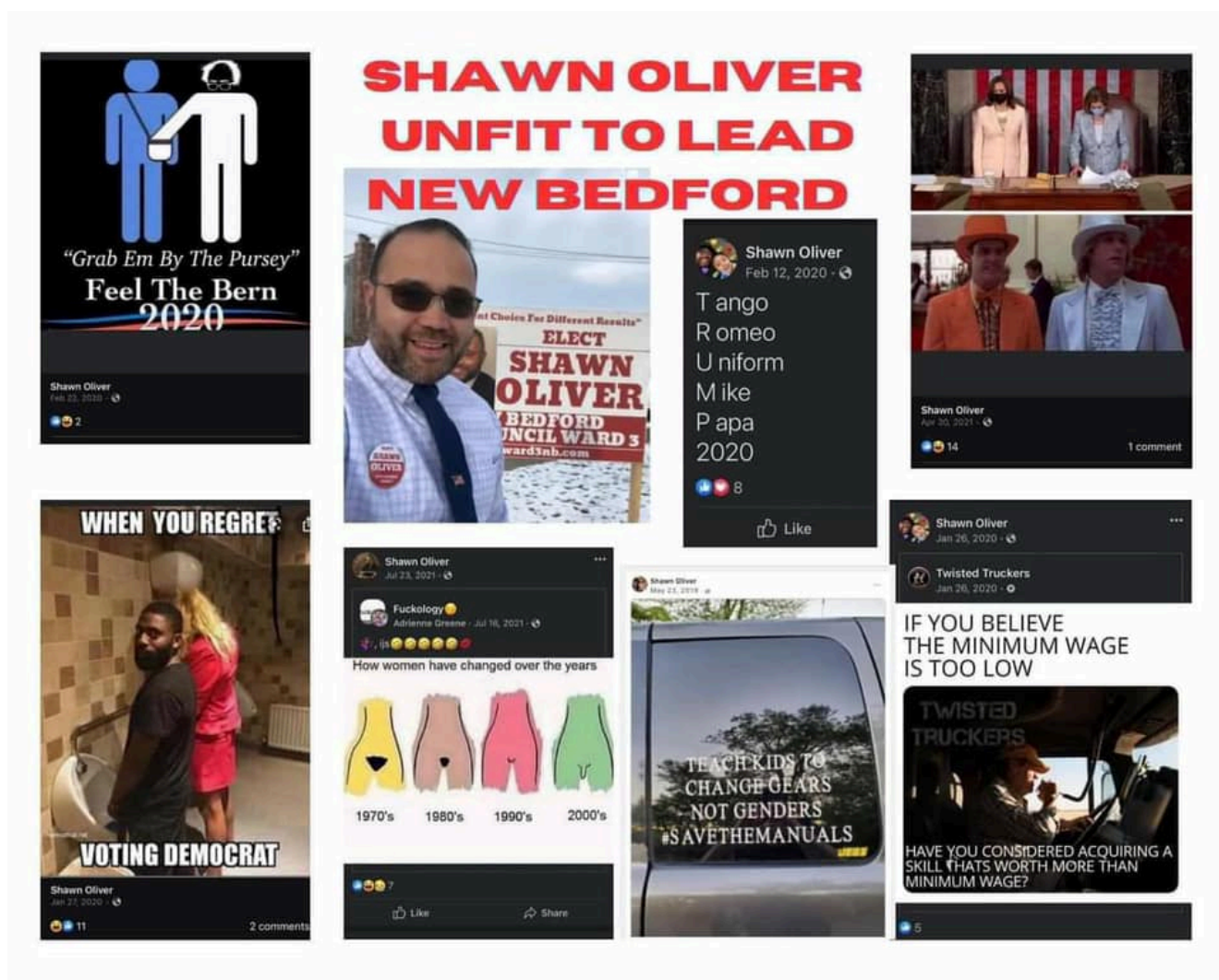
Second, Reverend Anderson states "your attitude will cause the death of children." If you've ever touched your toes in politics, the first thing you learn is if you want to get your way, just accuse the other side of not caring about the children, or even worse, you are killing children. I've seen a Republican Governor in Nebraska state that if a medical marijuana program is passed, "children will die." It's ridiculous and a way to paint your opponent as evil and to end the debate. It also sets up Reverend Anderson's follow on statement "You get on your hands and knees and ask for their forgiveness for the horrible things you've done by posting what you posted." This is a clear case of elected official intimidation.

Now, let's start from the beginning and review Councilor Oliver's "hate" posts on social media.

Last November, **Ward 3 City Councilor Hugh Dunn announced that he was stepping down on December 1st**, forcing a final special election last Friday. Generally, Ward elections are small elections and the **New Bedford Ward 3 election had 721 people**

turn out. Shawn Oliver defeated Carmen Amaral 414 to 311. Based on most available information, most of the protestors supported Carmen Amaral. To be clear, city councilors have no executive power and earn less than \$30,000 a year. This is not something to attempt to destroy another person's life over, but this smear campaign is the worst case of poor losing I've ever seen in local elections.

Opponents of Shawn Oliver dug up some of his own personal Facebook posts going back many years in an attempt to slander him before the election and then used them in the protests after Oliver won. This is a collage of some of his posts pushed by his opponents on social media, so let's assume they are the worse of his posts. I'll go through each one then individually.



First, Councilor Oliver dared to post a meme that compared the

Dumb and Dumber duo with former Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Harris. If you've spent 10 seconds on Facebook or Twitter, you'll know that these memes are common, from both sides of the political spectrum. Nancy Pelosi and VP Harris have some of the lowest approval ratings of anyone in politics. **Only 1 out of 10 people view VP Harris as "very favorable" while 4 out of 10 view her as "Very Unfavorable."** Pelosi is even less liked. I'm not sure how this is hate or something to protest over. It's just a common political meme.



Next Councilor Oliver dared to post a pro-Trump meme three years ago. Are we noticing a theme? Councilor Oliver is likely a Republican and that's a major "no-no" in New Bedford. Current City Council President Linda Morad learned that the hard way when she ran against Jon Mitchell and Tony Cabral for mayor a decade ago.



Next, a meme that plays on famous Trump and Bernie Sanders statements, this one saying "Grab them in the Pursey – Feel The Burn 2020." Not really getting this one, but I'm guessing no children will be harmed by it.



The next meme basically says if you want to earn more than minimum wage get a skill that pays more than minimum wage. Isn't that why we go to trade schools or college? Not sure how this targets children or the LGBTQ community. Again, clearly a Republican-themed message and that's really what this protest is about, a progressive candidate lost to a more middle-of-the-road or right-leaning candidate.



Next is a more highly debated topic: teachers and adults influencing our youth regarding transgender surgery. Across the country, there is a major spike in transgender youth and many hospitals are medically transitioning children at a very young age. Whether you agree with it or not, it's an appropriate debate whether teachers should be stepping out of academics to introduce transgender and sexual topics to young children or adults on social media influencing kids on the topic. Regardless, the meme appears to say we should teach driving instead of gender. Yes, a hot political potato but far from anti-LGBTQ or hate.



Now for what are likely the two most controversial memes:

First, is the meme that takes on the bathroom debate. Across the country, Democrat legislators have passed legislation that allows people to choose the bathroom or locker room that they identify with the most. This is controversial as not everyone is comfortable with people who appear to be the opposite sex using their bathroom or locker rooms. Even some public schools are putting feminine hygiene products like tampons in men's restrooms and urinals in women's restrooms. Some states and national organizations also allow transgender athletes to compete in the gender sport of their choice. For this meme, I could see why some of the transgender community see it as inappropriate, but this debate is far from settled.



Finally, this meme appears to joke about how women have transitioned over the decades. While some may consider it inappropriate, I don't know how anyone could consider this or any of the memes shared as a threat to children's lives or considered hate speech. Spend a few minutes on any social media app and these are more common than not, especially during Presidential or congressional elections when many of

these memes appear to be shared around.



If you find any of the memes inappropriate, then don't search out the memes. I have a saying, "don't look into the sun for an hour and blame the sun for your blindness." We only see what we want to see on social media and if something creeps into your feed that you don't like, unfollow, hide, report, or scroll past the content. It's that simple. In the case of New Bedford Ward 3 Councilor Shawn Oliver, it's blatantly clear that his opponents actively searched out this content to create a monster, and when they lost, they decided to attempt to destroy someone who shared mildly inappropriate memes, in most cases years before he ran for office. I'd also ask, what have you posted on social media since you started your account? Should you be judged forever?

In the last 24 hours, **Councilor Oliver released a statement apologizing for his Facebook posts.** It's the politically correct thing to do and his opponents should accept his apology and move on. Time to judge the councilor on his city council actions and move on from some silly memes that only impact you if you let them.