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BLACK POLITICAL CULTIVATION AZ OPINION: This is what happens when Black politicians rise to power in Arizona

The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer. Black Political Cultivation AZ is a electoral organization based in Phoenix, Arizona and is not acting on behalf of any person or entity.

PHOENIX, AZ- Secretary of State Candidate Reginald Bolding was under attack for his attempts to restore ethical elections and voter rights to Arizonans. What's sad is that in this climate, we expect no less from our broken government: it's what happens when people, especially Black people, who don't support the conservative agenda rise to power. The hidden arms of White Supremacy continue to fund and operate our state without consequence behind the facade of a democratic and equitable electoral system. Bolding, having won three consecutive elections for House Representative, ran for higher office. In Arizona, our Secretaries of State have been white since Statehood and have been held by Republicans for almost 25 consecutive years (Katie Hobbs (D) took office in 2019).

A supporter of Bolding's opposition in the race for office asked the Attorney General to investigate Bolding on counts of criminal political bribery. And not just Bolding – Jevin Hodge and Kiana Sears were called into question too. In case you were wondering, both Hodge and Sears are both Black. Jevin Hodge, like Bolding, is a textbook example of Black Excellence with a long list of accomplishments and qualifications that should carry him through the election and into the position of U.S. House Representative for Arizona's 1st Congressional District. Kiana Sears, co-author of AZ's Safe Baby Haven Law, served as a Water & Wastewater Executive Consultant for the Arizona Corporation Commission. In 2018 she ran for Corporation Commission, and along with Jevin, she met and worked with Reginald Bolding.

More often than not, the people who run for public office are business owners that hold LLC's, 501 c3's, 501 c4's and are hired as consultants for the like. It's not uncommon for those who engage in public service to play significant roles in organizations that support what they believe in. Bolding believes in fair access to ballot boxes for all Arizonans and uplifting the visibility, needs, and voices of BIPOC populations and that is exactly what his non-profit Our Voice Our Vote and the AZ Coalition for Change work toward.

Additionally, complaints were filed with the IRS and Federal Elections Commission claiming that Bolding's non-profit OVOV directly coordinated with him to offer financial support, even though Bolding provided documentation of the firewall in place which prevents coordination between the organization and himself during his candidacy. In the political world it is common knowledge that 501c4 organizations cannot coordinate with candidates directly, but are of course free to work in support or opposition of them however they see fit. Isn't it common sense that the organization he founded would support his campaign without being told to?

When candidates such as Karrin Taylor Robson, the late John McCain, and even former President Donald Trump engage in clearly unethical campaign practices, the eyes of the law conveniently look the other way. When candidates with clean track records and outstanding accomplishments who happen to be Black run for office, it becomes acceptable for their opposition to throw around unfounded claims about completely legal activities. This is why the complaints leveled against Reginald Bolding were harmful, anti-Black, and why he lost his election.