

Fascist election denier wins race to be chair of Michigan Republican Party

Kevin Reed
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The evolution of the Republican Party into a fascist political organization reached a new level during the election for chair of the Michigan GOP at the party's state convention in Lansing on Saturday.

After three ballots, Kristina Karamo, who has refused to concede her 14-point loss for Michigan secretary of state in November 2022, defeated Matt DePerno, who had also lost his bid for state attorney general last year.

Karamo, the first African-American chair of the Michigan organization, won 58 percent against DePerno's 42 percent of the final ballot. The deciding ballot was cast after an 11-hour chaotic convention, described by the *Washington Post* as, "a rowdy standoff over voting procedures and 10 candidates who all ran under a pro-Trump banner."

Although both Karamo and DePerno are 2020 election deniers, the former appears to have benefited from the fact that the latter had the endorsement of Donald Trump. In a brief victory speech—cut short because the organization lacked the funds needed to extend rental of the convention hall beyond 8:00 p.m.—Karamo said, "I am nothing without Jesus. I am a nobody without Jesus. We will not betray you; we will not lie to you."

Even though she lacked Trump's support, Karamo made it clear that she represents those within the Michigan organization who are aligned with the Make America Great Again (MAGA) program of the former president, who attempted to remain in the White House through a coup plot and fascist assault on the congressional certification of the 2020 presidential election on January 6, 2021.

Karamo drew an enthusiastic response from the delegates when she said she had not conceded her own race for Michigan secretary of state while citing unspecified and unsubstantiated claims of election

fraud. Along with all those supporting Trump's lie of a stolen 2020 election, Karamo is calling for various undemocratic measures including restrictions on absentee balloting.

The 37-year-old Karamo is a former community college instructor who resides in the Detroit suburb of Oak Park, Michigan. She has known ties to the QAnon conspiracy movement and its assertions that the US government is run by a "deep state" cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles. In 2020, Karamo released a podcast where she claimed that "demonic possession" is real and can be transmitted through "intimate relationships."

She built her reputation after the 2020 election by appearing on Fox News as a "whistleblower" who said she witnessed fraud on Election Day while serving as a "poll challenger" at the TCF Center in Detroit. Karamo claimed without evidence that votes were incorrectly counted for Joe Biden and that "thousands" of ballots were dropped off in the middle of the night.

Karamo also distinguished herself during her 2022 campaign by referring to abortion as "child sacrifice." Following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court, a referendum appeared on the 2022 ballot upholding abortion rights in the state of Michigan and passed with more than 55 percent support of the electorate.

For his part, DePerno also rose to prominence in the Michigan Republican Party by claiming the 2020 election was stolen. He pursued a lawsuit in Antrim County that portrayed an error in the posting of unofficial county election results in 2020 as a conspiracy theory regarding the integrity of the voting machines.

The county is Republican-controlled, and the county official who posted and then corrected the results was a

Republican. In any case, the vote totals in the thinly populated rural county would not have affected the result statewide, which showed a Biden victory by more than 155,000 votes.

While DePerno's case was thrown out of court, his effort has subsequently under criminal investigation for his attempt to orchestrate illegal access to voting machines in the state.

On Friday, DePerno hosted a campaign rally at The Nuthouse bar and grill in Lansing at which he showed a video message from Donald Trump endorsing him for party chair. Mike Lindell, the MyPillow chief executive who continues pushing the 2020 stolen election lie, was also in attendance to endorse DePerno.

The outcome of the leadership vote in Michigan, after Republicans lost in 2022 every statewide office as well as control of the state legislature for the first time in 40 years, illustrates the deepening crisis of the GOP. Former leading figures and donors—such as Ron Weiser, the departing chairman, and the billionaire DeVos family—withdraw participation in the leadership campaign prior to the convention.

According to a report in the *Detroit News*, Meshawn Maddock, the departing co-chair and Trump supporter, “attributed Republican losses in the state to the lack of support from longstanding donors.” Maddock said in a private briefing in November that, “big donors would rather ‘lose this whole state’ than help the party’s candidates because they ‘hate’ Mr. Trump,” the report said.

A report in the *Detroit Free Press* said, “Dan Pero, a longtime Michigan Republican consultant who was campaign manager and chief of staff to former Michigan Gov. John Engler, was vacationing in South America on Saturday and one of many longtime GOP stalwarts who stayed away from the convention.”

Although some news reports, including an article entitled, “I spent a night at The Nuthouse and glimpsed the future of the Michigan Republican Party,” by M.L. Elrick of the *Detroit Free Press*, are treating the developments in Lansing as some kind of joke, the takeover of the GOP in Michigan by the extreme far-right is no laughing matter.

It is no accident that the fascist evolution of the Republican Party is taking place in a state where a conspiracy to kidnap and kill Democratic Party Governor Gretchen Whitmer by a fascist militia was

uncovered in the weeks prior the 2020 election.

Although seven men have been found guilty and are serving prison terms and five more have state trials pending, the full extent of the connections between the Michigan Republican Party, its donors and the Wolverine Watchmen and their plot to inspire a fascist “boogaloo” and civil war in the US to keep Donald Trump in office in 2020 have not been fully explored.



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