

Jason Aldean’s “Try That in a Small Town” promotes racism and vigilante violence against protesters

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On Wednesday, the music video of the song, “Try That in a Small Town,” performed by country artist Jason Aldean was quietly edited by his record label and several images of anti-police violence protests were removed.

The official YouTube video was made six seconds shorter than the original which was released July 14. The official video no longer contains footage from Fox 5 Atlanta of protests that took place in 2020. Among the clips removed is one with a Fox chyron that reads, “State of emergency declared in Georgia.”

According to a report in the *Washington Post* on Wednesday, Aldean’s record label, BBR Music Group, claimed in a statement that “the video footage was edited due to third party copyright clearance issues.” The *Post* report said attempts to confirm this information with Fox 5 Atlanta went unanswered.

Whoever made the decision to modify the video, the changes are no doubt the result of a significant public backlash against the song, its performer, the setting of the music video and the fascistic message it projects.

The *Post* article asserts it was unclear exactly when the video was edited, but that “numerous changes appear to have been made” after the song was widely criticized for juxtaposing images of protesters against lyrics like, “Try that in a small town / See how far ya make it down the road / Around here, we take care of our own.” The lyrics continue with a threat, “You cross that line, it won’t take long for you to find out, I recommend that you don’t.”

Aldean, 46, is a country music singer who has released 12 studio albums and had 27 hit singles that reached number one on the country music charts since 2005. The credits for writing “Try That in a Small

Town” are attributed to Kelley Lovelace, Neil Thrasher, Tully Kennedy and Kurt Allison.

The content of the music video makes it clear that it is intended to stoke racial and social hatreds. It presents law-abiding and armed “good ol’ boys, raised up right,” in opposition to minority protesters and others in urban centers who “stomp on the flag and light it up.”

Interspersed between shots of Aldean singing in front of a microphone and band members playing their instruments are clips of acts of vandalism and demonstrators confronting police in riot gear. The song depicts the anti-police violence protesters as violent criminals.

To drive home its purpose, the music video was filmed outside the Maury County Courthouse in Columbia, Tennessee, where in 1927 an 18-year-old black man, Henry Choate, was lynched after he was falsely accused of raping a 16-year-old white girl.

An American flag hangs between the building’s columns in the background. The video then cuts to someone lighting a Molotov cocktail, while Aldean sings, “carjack an old lady,” “cuss out a cop,” “stomp on the flag,” and, later, “Well, that shit might fly in the city.”

The overwhelming opposition to the song was such that Country Music Television (CMT) was forced to pull the music video from its programming within three days of its release. CMT gave no explanation for its decision.

Replying to the public response to the video, Aldean tried to turn the provocation back on those who have denounced it. He said he was not “pro-lynching,” and such an interpretation of the song “goes too far” and is “dangerous.” He also posted on Twitter, “There is not a

single lyric in the song that references race or points to it.”

He referred to comments he made when the song was originally released, claiming it refers to “the feeling of a community that I had growing up, where we took care of our neighbors, regardless of differences of background or belief.”

Aldean’s video production company, Tacklebox, defended the musician, asserting that it had picked “a popular filming location outside of Nashville,” which had been used on numerous other music video productions. “Any alternative narrative suggesting the music video’s location decision is false,” Tacklebox said in a statement, adding that Aldean was not responsible for selecting the location.

However, Aldean has a history of racist and right-wing political activity. In 2015, he made headlines for wearing black face, wearing dreadlocks and dressing up as rapper Lil Wayne as a Halloween costume. He is a supporter of Donald Trump, with whom he has golfed and to whom he has given performances at the former president’s Mar-a-Lago resort.

Recognizing the opportunity to embolden his fascist support base, Trump immediately backed the video and defended Aldean with a post on his Truth Social platform that said, “Jason Aldean is a fantastic guy who just came out with a great new song. Support Jason all the way. MAGA!!!”

Fascistic Republican Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis also defended Aldean, tweeting, “When the media attacks you, you’re doing something right. @Jason_Aldean has nothing to apologize for.”

While the corporate media seeks to portray the issues involved in Aldean’s song as mere “controversy,” or part of what are increasingly referred to as “culture wars,” the reality is that the promotion of a song such as “Try That in a Small Town” is connected to the drive by a section of the establishment to glorify and legitimize fascist influences and tendencies within American society.

By portraying the peaceful mass protests in the spring and summer of 2020—which erupted following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by former police officer Derek Chauvin—as criminal activity, Aldean and his record and video production companies are identifying with the likes of vigilante gunman Kyle Rittenhouse, who shot and killed three protesters in

Kenosha, Wisconsin, in August of that year. Rittenhouse, who was hailed by the far right as a hero, was subsequently acquitted at trial in a travesty of justice.

Meanwhile, the presentation of American society as a conflict between “lawless” inner-city populations and “law-abiding” citizens of small towns across the US is not only a blatant appeal to racism: It is an entirely false depiction of the political and social reality facing the urban, suburban and rural working class—white, black and immigrant—entering struggles for fundamental rights wherever they live.

The protests that erupted in 2020 against police violence took place in thousands of small towns across the US, as well as major metropolitan areas, and the demonstrations were thoroughly multi-racial, multi-ethnic in character. Ultimately, Aldean’s “Try That in a Small Town” is directed against the growing awareness within the working class of the need for a united struggle against every form of oppression and capitalist society as a whole. It is a filthy and retrograde effort.



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