

# He's a gay 21-year-old, watching the RNC — and loving its critique of ‘identity politics’

“I see more intolerance from the LGBTQ community for being a Republican than I feel from the Republican community for being gay.”



Student Isaac Jacobson at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa.  
(Nick Oxford for The Washington Post)

By Andrea Eger

TULSA — The message on Monday night [that not all Republicans look the same](#) could not have had a more enthusiastic recipient than Isaac Jacobson.

He doesn't "check the boxes" for virtually any conservative stereotype.

"I am this adopted kid from Palestinian territories who speaks Hebrew and fell in love with Israel, who is a Republican, who has become pro-Palestine, who grew up in an interracial family," said Jacobson, 21. "And yes, I'm openly gay."

On Monday night, Jacobson watched a presidential nominating convention for the first time, with a couple of friends in a dormitory lounge at Oral Roberts University, where he is a senior. Jacobson wasn't quite 18 when Donald Trump was elected president. Back then, he had no interest in politics. The only issue that stood out to him in 2016 was third-trimester abortions, which came up in a TV debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee that year, that he remembers seeing.

"Being adopted and knowing adoption is the full solution to the need for abortion — with abortion, this generation loves to use very strategic language to downplay what is going on — but it's a life-or-death issue," Jacobson said.

Jacobson's adoptive White parents raised him in a devout Christian home with their three biological children and three other adopted children who are Black.

His gateway to American politics was tutoring other college students in Hebrew, which he became fluent in through his high school studies at a small, private Christian school in Tulsa. Those peers introduced him to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group, and he even traveled to Israel. This interest in foreign policy led him to American politics more generally.

He registered to vote for now-Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt in the 2018 gubernatorial election. Jacobson has since interned in the office of Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) and is vice president of ORU's College Republicans. He hopes to work in politics someday.

As he watched the convention on a laptop with his friends, Jacobson applauded the sentiments of Republican Kim Klacik, a Black woman who is running for Congress in a Democratic district in Maryland. "The Democrats still assume that Black people will vote for them," she said.

She was followed by Ronna McDaniel, chairman of the Republican National Committee, who said: "Unlike Joe Biden, President Trump didn't choose me because I'm a woman, he chose me because I was the best person for the job."

Their back-to-back comments about race and gender lit Jacobson's fuse. "One of my hot topics is identity politics," he said. "How you vote and your political ideology should never be determined by the color of your skin, your gender, your sexuality."

When Vernon Jones, a Democrat who serves in the Georgia House, said, "The Democratic Party does not want Black people to leave their mental plantation. ... We are free thinkers with free minds," Jacobson clutched his upper arms and told his friends, "I got chills!"

"The deeper issue they are getting at is being a free thinker and not simply subscribing to stereotypical norms, which I think is something the left pushes daily," Jacobson said. "It is something I have felt pressure to subscribe to because of my sexuality and my ethnicity, as well, but I know from personal experience that being an independent thinker is what is truly important."

"I see more intolerance from the LGBTQ community for being a Republican than I feel from the Republican community for being gay," he added.

Although Trump played only bit parts in Monday's convention, Jacobson said he was most heartened to hear how nurses and law enforcement officers and other average Americans have experienced the president's policies.

Especially because he had expected to be faced with an endless parade of politicians.

"I support Trump because of his patriotism, his love for America," Jacobson said. "It is so sad to hear other candidates talk about running to beat Donald Trump. That is just the biggest red flag to me — your entire desire to run is not so America can win, it's so Donald Trump can lose."

Jacobson acknowledged that he disapproves of Trump's new Israeli-Palestinian peace plan because he thinks corruption in Palestinian territories has left it in a distinctly unfair position. And he said he is occasionally "appalled" by Trump's Twitter takes.

"His Twitter composure, his Twitter diplomacy could be better. For example, he'll tweet something about Nancy Pelosi, and it will just be like 'Ugh! You don't need to be talking about women that way.' But at the end of the day, I believe it is hypocritical to blame people for their worst mistakes," Jacobson said. "I also think this area we are tiptoeing into is not appreciating the United States, and I think that is fuel to the fire that is going to divide us further."