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Speaker Johnson wrote foreword for book filled with conspiracy theories and homophobic insults

By [Andrew Kaczynski](#) and [Em Steck](#), CNN

5 minute read

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House Speaker Mike Johnson speaks to media during a press conference with House Republican Leadership, at the US Capitol, in Washington, DC, on Tuesday, November 14.

Graeme Sloan/Sipa USA/Reuters

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Speaker of the House Mike Johnson wrote the foreword and publicly promoted a 2022 book that spread baseless and discredited conspiracy theories and used derogatory homophobic insults.

Written by Scott McKay, a local Louisiana politics blogger, the book, “The Revivalist Manifesto,” gives credence to unfounded conspiracy theories often embraced by the far-right – including the “Pizzagate” hoax, which falsely claimed top Democratic officials were involved in a pedophile ring, among other conspiracies.

The book also propagates baseless and inaccurate claims, implying that Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts was subjected to blackmail and connected to the disgraced underage sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

Other sections of the book defend podcaster Joe Rogan from racism charges after it was revealed he used the N-word, which Rogan later apologized for. The book also disparages poor voters as “unsophisticated and susceptible to government dependency” and easy to manipulate with “Black Lives Matter ‘defund the police’ pandering.”

“Scott McKay presents a valuable and timely contribution with The Revivalist Manifesto because he has managed here to articulate well what millions of conscientious, freedom-loving Americans are sensing,” Johnson writes in his 300-word foreword.

Johnson’s endorsement of the book extends beyond the foreword: In 2022, he actively promoted the book on his public social media platforms and even dedicated an episode of his podcast he co-hosts with his wife to hosting McKay.

[During the podcast episode](#), Johnson expressed his belief in the book, stating, “I obviously believe in the product, or I wouldn’t have written the foreword. So I endorse the work.” He also referred to McKay as a “dear friend” and highlighted that the book “really could make some waves.” Over the years, Johnson [had written opinion](#) pieces for McKay’s blog, the Hayride, and [engaged with](#) the author on public platforms like Facebook.

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Since he was [elevated to the speakership](#) in October, Johnson's views from his time as a socially conservative attorney, state lawmaker and Louisiana congressman have come under increased scrutiny – particularly his views on homosexuality which [he has called](#) an “inherently unnatural” and “dangerous” lifestyle and even blamed it, in part, for the fall of the Roman Empire.

Following publication of this story, a spokesman for Johnson told CNN he did not read passages of McKay's book highlighted by CNN and said he strongly disagreed with them.

“The Speaker had never read the passages highlighted in the CNN story which he strongly disagrees with. He wrote the foreword as a favor to a friend, supportive of the general theme of the book but not as an endorsement of all the opinions expressed.”

CNN reached out to McKay, who called the story a “hit piece” on social media.

Reviving Pizzagate

In his book, McKay insinuates that hacked emails from Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign chairman John Podesta contained coded references hinting involvement in “child sex trafficking” because of “unexplained references” to “hot dogs and pizza,” resembling alleged code words used by pedophiles.

“The Pizzagate scandal was born, and though some of the most outlandish allegations made in it were clearly disproven, other elements were not; the whole thing just seemed to be dismissed as debunked, and no explanation was ever given,” he writes.

While McKay remains ambiguous in his book regarding the elements he asserts weren't disproven, he explicitly writes on his public Facebook page that the conspiracy related to code words was [not debunked](#) and goes as far as labeling Podesta as [a pedophile](#).

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Despite framing conspiracy theories as inquiries in his book, McKay often [openly endorses these claims on his](#) public social media platforms.

Jared Holt, an expert on right wing conspiracy theories at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think-tank that studies disinformation, told CNN that Johnson's promotion of the book raised questions about the new House speaker's judgment.

The book contains "the lurid daydreams of certain online far-right sentiments," said Holt. "His leadership may open the door for those unpopular fringes to wield disproportionate political power."

Homophobic slurs and disparaging poor voters

The book repeatedly disparages Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, calling the former mayor a "queer choice" for the Cabinet position and saying he had "queer sanctimony" and was "openly, and obnoxiously, gay." At one point, the book labels him "Gay Mayor Pete Buttigieg."

Another section takes aim at poor voters, who the author calls, "unsophisticated and susceptible to government dependency" and says they are easily manipulated with "bowdlerizing old monuments, or midnight basketball, or Black Lives Matter 'defund the police' pandering."

While McKay's reference was to poor voters nationwide, Louisiana often ranks among the poorest states in the United States when measured by the share of citizens living below the poverty line.

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Midnight basketball refers to late-night basketball leagues designed to steer young people away from potential involvement in crime by offering engagement during peak crime hours.

McKay's book also shares other unfounded conspiracy theories, including the debunked claim that the Democratic National Committee's emails in 2016 were not hacked but leaked by a staffer named Seth Rich. In 2020, Rich's parents settled a lawsuit with Fox News, stemming from the network's publication of a retracted story connecting their son's murder to right-wing conspiracy theories. The book denies that carbon dioxide is linked to climate change and frequently mocks the climate crisis as "hysteria."

The book also spreads a conspiracy theory that the Biden administration deliberately allowed undocumented immigrants into the country to turn them into voters.

The book targets and taunts prominent Democratic officials, including calling Interior Secretary Deb Haaland "half oppressed" because her mother is Native American and father is of Norwegian descent and writes that former President Barack Obama's "chief selling point was that he was black."

McKay also adds that the late Arizona Sen. John McCain, a frequent foe of Donald Trump, used his time as a prisoner of war in Vietnam "as a political get-out-of-jail-free card."

This story has been updated with additional details