



NATIONAL JOURNAL

Trumpworld's favorite fashion designer is still making statements

Andre Soriano says he has gotten requests to dress local GOP leaders for Glenn Youngkin's inauguration.



Fashion designer Andre Soriano (right), with comedian Dustin Gold and singer Joy Villa, at a March 2017 rally on the National Mall organized by the North Carolina-based group Gays for Trump. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

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🕒 Dec. 16, 2021, 6:23 p.m.

If someone is getting canceled while wearing a dress, there's a good chance Andre Soriano made it.

Like Donald Trump himself, the fashion designer, who became famous for designing a "Make America Great Again" gown that singer-songwriter Joy Villa wore to the Grammys in 2017, has kept himself relevant on the Right in the year since Joe Biden's inauguration.

Last month, Rep. Lauren Boebert wore one of his dresses to a meeting with the former president at Mar-a-Lago, inflaming the internet. The scarlet, off-the-shoulder number was printed with the phrase, "Let's Go Brandon," a coded dig at Biden. Earlier in the fall, Anna Paulina Luna, a Trump-backed candidate for a Florida congressional seat, also put in a request. In the days after Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wore a Met Gala gown that demanded America "Tax the Rich," Luna asked for one that read "Socialism Kills."

"She called me," Soriano recalls. "Can you make me a dress? But you only have 24 hours.' I'm like, 'One moment, please.' I'm like, 'Girl!' ... I told her I was expecting like a week—a week or two weeks is my normal turnaround. ... 'OK, fine, I'll do what I can with my schedule. So just send me the measurements.'"

Soriano's past political designs drew heavily on the Trump name. He said he made Villa's dress, which is now [on display](https://www.rockhall.com/exhibitions/louder-words-rock-power-politics) in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, using a flag he took down from his front porch. In 2018, he made a whole collection for a [Virginia Women for Trump event](https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2018/06/203054/andre-soriano-trump-)

[fashion-designer](#)). The next year, he again made headlines for creating [the wedding gown](#) (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/couple-throws-maga-wedding-paying-tribute-to-president-trump/>) worn by the bride at a MAGA-themed wedding.

Soriano plays coy about what he's working on next. He talks up his wedding collection. He says he doesn't see himself as part of the "MAGA movement" but as part of the "American movement." He emphasizes that he partners with makeup artists and hair stylists who are Democrats and liberals, but he admits he's filling orders from people in the world of politics—they're just "top secret" for now. Some are more discreet than the billboard gowns that have become his best-known designs. Some clients don't want their looks associated with his name.

When pressed, Soriano does reveal that he's designing for some women at the helm of Virginia county Republican parties. They need gowns for Gov.-elect Glenn Youngkin's January inauguration, to which he, now a resident of the Old Dominion, has also been invited.

As the GOP revamps its image as the party of old white men, Soriano's potential clientele stands to grow. This year, a [record number of Republican women are serving in Congress](#) (<https://www.newsweek.com/2021/02/19/record-number-gop-women-congress-didnt-come-compromise-1569025.html>). Several have become famous—or infamous—for making contentious statements. Soriano gushes about firebrands like Boebert and 26-year-old Rep. Madison Cawthorn, whose photos stud his Instagram page. He is effusive in his praise of young conservatives, who make up some of the most incendiary critics of the Republican establishment.

The designer is an ambassador for Turning Point USA, the organization led by Charlie Kirk that [mobilizes young conservatives](#) (<https://apnews.com/article/charlie-kirk-right-wing-provocateur-gen-z-race-5b57b4178fec39f3of3caad77b93c087>). It's a role Soriano says

he's held for a few years, since a Turning Point representative reached out on behalf of Kirk to offer him the role. Soriano's Twitter profile is now decked out in neon red, white, and blue for the organization's AmericaFest, a conference in Phoenix this weekend billed as the "biggest event in the conservative movement."

Turning Point's website advertises AmericaFest as a party, complete with flashing lights, booming music, and fist-pumping teens and 20-somethings. It promises not just speeches from several of the most right-wing members of Congress, but also special musical guests. Soriano, who landed in Arizona just before talking to *National Journal*, said, "They take care of you as an ambassador. They fly you—just all the red-carpet royal treatment."

That's just one of the ways his continued embrace of the American Right has benefited his career since he made Villa's MAGA dress.


"Hollywood and L.A. killed my career and then [conservatives] revived it," he said. "I lost all the liberals, including family members and a lot of friends in the fashion industry."

Soriano previously thought about running for mayor of Occoquan, Virginia, but he suggested that his own say-anything attitude does not match most politicians' approach.

He expresses disappointment over the divisiveness of politics; the Villa dress was born from his feelings about celebrities who seemed unwilling to give the former president a chance when his term began. Four years later, he was among those who attended the D.C. rally protesting the 2020 election results on Jan. 6.

Asked about the controversies surrounding the members of Congress he is so excited about, as well as figures like Kyle Rittenhouse, who is slated to speak at AmericaFest, he says there is divisiveness in both parties.



 Andre Soriano ANDRE SORIANO

Over the course of an hour-long phone interview, culture-war issues animate Soriano. On Black Lives Matter: “We all matter. What about yellow? Hello?” On trans girls participating in girls' sports: “Of course they're going to win on the swim team.” On “handouts”: “My Democrat friends—if they could get the gown for free, they would do it. The conservatives—no, they respect what you do and if you tell them what the price is, they say, ‘OK, Andre.’ But with the Democrats, no way.”

Exiting a cab at his hotel, Soriano wishes the driver “Merry Christmas.” There are a few moments of silence over the phone and some muffled noises.

“Oh, my God,” he confesses some seconds later. “I said ‘Merry Christmas’ and he’s a Muslim. Can you say ‘Merry Christmas’ to a Muslim driver?”

As he recounts his flight to Arizona, he begins to sob. After he took off his mask to eat, he said, a woman interrupted his conversation to tell him he needed to put it back on to avoid spreading COVID-19.

“People are losing touch,” he said. “It’s like they’re robots.”

Soriano, who has [trumpeted the “Plandemic” conspiracy theory](#)

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CXRkaHuvVxI/>), laments the effect of coronavirus, especially on his poorer family members back in the Philippines. His identity as an immigrant and a gay man has made him a subject of media fascination. But as an Obama-Trump voter—who says he supported the first Black president with hopes of ending racism—he is yet another point of proof that demographics is not destiny.

He acknowledges that being gay has sometimes caused friction among “hardcore conservatives,” mentioning malicious comments he received about a photo he had taken with a group of boys. Some people have told him they can’t associate with him because of his identity. But on the whole, he says he feels accepted on the Right and heartened by gay conservative kids who look up to him.

“Uncle Andre,' they say, 'you are such an inspiration.’”