

The Delray Democrat

From “Little Ronnie Reagan” to Little Ronnie DeSantis¹

Michael K. Cantwell

“I used to think of him as ‘little Ronnie Reagan, not because he was short, he wasn’t, he was tall and well-built. The ‘little’ was for his acting talent.”

Bette Davis

As much damage as Trump has done to American democracy and discourse, no president has been worse for American workers than Ronald Reagan.

Reagan opened his 1980 campaign with a dog whistle appeal to state’s rights in the Mississippi county where Goodman, Schwerner, and Cheney were brutally murdered.

His presidency was littered with racist tropes of “Cadillac-driving welfare queens” and “strapping bucks using food stamps to buy T-bone steaks.” He may have been a grade B movie star, but a grade B movie star is still a better shill than most politicians.

Reagan used racism to get the white working class to trade the New Deal for his Raw Deal. They have yet to recover, nor has America.

Like Reagan, Trump is tall but hardly “well-built” and was only a grade B reality tv star (perhaps reflecting the devolution of American culture). Trump traded Reagan’s dog whistle for a bullhorn through which to spew his racism, much to the delight of those I refuse to call “deplorables” because that would insult truly deplorable people.

Unlike Reagan and Trump, Ron DeSantis is not tall, at least judged against past American presidents. He is the same 5 feet, 9 inches as the man Trump dubbed “Little Marco Rubio.”

Harry Truman was also 5'9" but before him you have to go back to 1850 and Millard Fillmore to find a president as short as DeSantis would be. But even were he as tall as Trump, the judgment pronounced by J.K. Rowling on Trump would apply with equal force to DeSantis: “You tiny, tiny, tiny little man.”

And if you look at his recent photos, DeSantis is getting a little fat. Not as fat as Chris Christie, but if there’s one thing Americans like less than short, it’s fat. DeSantis may think he’s eating the “radical Left,” but it looks as if he’s been eating too many pizzas and drinking too much Kool-Aid.

DeSantis may not himself be a racist, but as Andrew Gillum once pithily observed, “racists believe he’s a racist” (which is actually worse). Like Reagan and Trump, DeSantis will ride that racism

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straight to the White House unless we stop him. And a good place to start is with ridicule. Practice saying the name: Little Ronnie DeSantis.