

Democrat Brown failed to follow her own advice

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

When Sally Boynton Brown, the executive director of Idaho's Democratic Party, announced she would seek the national party chairmanship, she could not offer a record of success.

Idaho Democrats have not won the governor's office since 1990. They haven't elected a U.S. senator since 1974. And no Democrat has won the state's presidential vote since 1964.

Even worse, the party suffered the loss of four more legislative seats last fall.

What Brown could provide the Democratic National Committee was an insight into how and why people much like those in her own Western state - middle and working class, white and conservative - would vote in sufficient numbers in just the right precincts to hand the White House to Donald Trump along with the House and Senate to the GOP.

Brown has first-hand knowledge about people who feel abandoned by the political elites; who feel mocked for their culture, their religion and their reverence for the Second Amendment.

That set her apart from most of her competitors, including Congressman Keith Ellison, D-Minn., Fox News personality Jehmu Green, South Carolina Democratic Chairman Jaime Harrison, former Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, New Hampshire Democratic Chairman Raymond Buckley and South Bend, Ind., Mayor Peter Pete Buttigieg.

All of which makes Brown's comments to a gathering of Democrats last week inexplicable.

Appearing with her fellow candidates at George Washington University for a DNC forum focused on responding to the Black Lives Matter movement, Brown said:

" ... My job is to listen and be a voice and my job is to shut other white people down when they want to interrupt. My job is to shut other white people down when they want to say, 'Oh, no, I'm not prejudiced. I'm a Democrat. I'm accepting.' My job is to make sure that they get that they have privilege and until we shut our mouths and we listen to those people who don't and we lift our people up so that we all have equity in this country, so that we're all fighting alongside each other, so that we are all on the same page and we clearly get where we're going, we're not going to break through this. ...

"So please, please, please, please, this is a conversation I want to have and I am from Idaho. We are so white. So white. Right? Like I've been reaching out and trying to connect to anybody of color that I can find to be honest with me. ...

"I need schooling and I depend on you and the people around our community to do that so that I can go school the other white people."

Brown did not say: Shut up, white America. She merely said people can't listen while they're busy talking.

Too bad she didn't take her own advice.

Within minutes, she was the toast of Breitbart news and Rush Limbaugh - who gleefully accused the Idahoan of urging Democrats to undergo training in muzzling white voters.

An audience untrained in the realm of the alt-right and alternative facts might not see through the apocalyptic spin.

But for Brown, there's no getting around the defining feature of her gaffe. Her case in brief is supposed to be giving voice to her own constituents - and people who share their values in the

West, the South and the Rust Belt - who have become alienated from and forgotten by the larger Democratic Party.

Instead, she was caught pandering to the very identity politics of the DNC that so many of her would-be base of supporters find so toxic.

Time for Brown to come and explain herself. - M.T.