

Insane Extremist Katie Miller's Washington Rise Takes a Musk Detour

She is one half of a Trump-world power couple. But she's on Team Elon. It's gotten complicated.

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Katie Miller, a 33-year-old veteran of the first Trump administration, is a top lieutenant for Elon Musk and is married to Stephen Miller, President Trump's most powerful policy aide. Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images



By **Matt Flegenheimer**

June 18, 2025

It was the three-word gavel-bang heard across Washington — the conversation-ender meant to cow colleagues and cabinet secretaries, deployed daily by a slight woman with a big job:

“Elon wants this.”

For months, Katie Miller, the all-purpose operative for the world’s richest man, had been entrusted to help execute Elon Musk’s merry rampage through the federal government, conveying his priorities, his vision, his likes and dislikes with the tacit force of an executive order.

When she spoke, Ms. Miller implied to Trump acolytes high and low, they should proceed as if it were Mr. Musk’s mouth moving.

Where he walked, Ms. Miller invariably followed, sometimes trailing him straight into Oval Office meetings — and occasionally finding herself gently redirected back out of the room by White House staff, an administration official recalled.

Mr. Musk even held court regularly off the clock at the home Ms. Miller shares with Stephen Miller, President Trump’s most powerful policy aide, and their three young children, according to people familiar with the matter.

Now, [Mr. Musk is gone](#) — or out of Washington, anyway — in a spectacular, market-moving, mutually vicious fireball of a breakup with Mr. Trump.

And life in the home of Katie and Stephen Miller has gotten complicated.

Mr. Miller is the millennial avatar of all that MAGA loves and liberals loathe about the Trump agenda. His loyalty to the president is unquestioned. Ms. Miller, a 33-year-old veteran of the first Trump administration, is a top lieutenant for Mr. Trump’s friend-

turned-enemy-turned-who-knows-what-now. How and whether the present arrangement can be sustained is uncertain — and widely buzzed about in Washington, especially among the many Trump allies who do not entirely miss her.

For the moment, amid a fragile détente-ish between Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk, Ms. Miller stands as the human connective tissue between their camps — by turns an actor and a bystander in the most turbulent personal conflict of the president's second term.

A relentless operator often publicly defined by her relationships to others but long determined to leave her own mark on the capital, Ms. Miller finds herself buffeted by the flammable men who had empowered her in the first place.

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A Couple Figured They Couldn't Afford Upper Manhattan. They Just Had to Look in the Right Places.

When Mr. Musk announced he was leaving his Department of Government Efficiency last month, after his relationship with Mr. Trump had chilled but before it had collapsed, Ms. Miller intended to continue working for Mr. Musk in his private ventures, according to people familiar with her plans.



The couple met during the first Trump administration and married in February 2020 at the Trump International Hotel in Washington. Haiyun Jiang for The New York Times
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Since then, as Mr. Musk has openly savaged Mr. Trump's signature domestic legislation and Mr. Miller has vigorously defended it, Ms. Miller has stayed mostly quiet in public.

She declined to comment for this article.

Her [profile](#) on X reads simply, "wife of @stephenm." She has attacked [a since-ousted ABC News journalist, Terry Moran](#), who called her husband a "world-class hater." Her account's header photo is a Musk-coded rocket.

In many ways, Ms. Miller's arc is inextricable from the story of Mr. Trump's Washington for much of the last decade, where allegiances can shift with runaway escape velocity, where ideology matters but blunt-force communications can matter more, where proximity to power so often becomes power.

If the president's first term produced its share of gossipy refrains about ostensibly conflicted women — *What does Ivanka think of this? What's happening in the Conway household?* — the text chains of the Washington hyperconnected have convulsed most often lately with a new question: What will Katie do?

Even before all of this, Ms. Miller had been the subject of uncommon fascination for a certain class of political observer, in part because Mr. Trump's opponents find her husband, the chief architect of the administration's immigration crackdown, to be so personally and professionally objectionable.

Senior Republicans said that Ms. Miller's continued affiliation with Mr. Musk, who became close with both Millers before Mr. Trump retook office, had plainly placed Mr. Miller in an uneasy position as the feud with the president simmered.

In a statement emailed by the White House, Karoline Leavitt, Mr. Trump's press secretary, called Mr. Miller "one of President Trump's most trusted and longest serving aides for a reason — he delivers." Ms. Leavitt also praised Ms. Miller as "a critical reason DOGE was able to get off the ground."

Others in the administration have enjoyed a measure of schadenfreude at Ms. Miller's comedown, after months in which she rarely wore her authority lightly.

On one occasion, when Mr. Musk's team struggled to facilitate a meeting for him with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Ms. Miller grew frustrated and contacted Mr. Hegseth's wife, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter. (Asked about the episode, a Pentagon spokeswoman, Kingsley Wilson, said in an email that "Secretary Hegseth has welcomed DOGE to the Department of Defense" and believes broadly in efficient spending.)



Before Mr. Musk's time in Washington came to an abrupt end, Ms. Miller served as his guide to the capital. She intends to continue working for him in his private ventures. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

By the spring, some senior officials began to wonder if Ms. Miller was always authentically representing Mr. Musk's position, especially around personnel decisions, or if she was sometimes weaponizing his nominal blessing for her own ends, bludgeoning those she disfavored.

But then, is that not the shared instinct of her most famous bosses, past and present?

"I thank God she's managing that insane asylum," Stephen K. Bannon, a fierce critic of Mr. Musk, said warmly of Ms. Miller. "Everything that happened is not her fault. It's Elon's."

At minimum, Ms. Miller has a canny ability to channel her principals. She has alluded on X to the cable news coverage of "MSDNC," a preferred Trumpism, and talked up raw milk as a Miller family staple after assisting in the confirmation process of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for health secretary.

She has suggested that Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota is a "retard," a favored word of Mr. Musk's, and reposted a quote from the super-billionaire about their work: "DOGE is a way of life, like Buddhism."

Many who know Ms. Miller have described her as more of a chameleonic aide than a consistent ideologue in the Stephen Miller mold — the sort of figure most comfortable speaking with the cover of someone else's voice.

Or maybe, some now wonder, that is just what Katie Miller sounds like.

A loyal partisan

In February 2012, Ms. Miller was a 20-year-old student government fixture at the University of Florida when her political allies received some unwelcome news: The head football coach, perhaps the ranking authority on any Southern campus, was endorsing against their preferred vice-presidential candidate.

But voters could not know what they did not see.

So around 9 a.m. one Monday, according to eyewitnesses at the time, Ms. Miller and a colleague from their “Unite Party” swiped 268 copies of the student newspaper chronicling the endorsement and deposited them in the trash.

When confronted, Ms. Miller denied any involvement, even amid follow-up coverage from the student paper and an eventual apology letter from her peer that named Ms. Miller and placed her at the scene.

Before the controversy, Ms. Miller had subsisted in relative anonymity, known to her adversaries as a behind-the-scenes partisan so dedicated to her side that she once stood in the doorway of her sorority house to prevent a rival student politician from campaigning there. “I don’t want to use the word henchman,” that rival, Ford Dwyer, recalled. “But she was always sort of under the wing of a much more dynamic, charismatic person.”

Now, as the newspaper scandal reverberated across campus, Ms. Miller was suddenly infamous — and unfazed as fellow students questioned her at a meeting weeks later.

“I thought I acted very responsibly,” she said then, allowing that she had been present for the newspaper purge but insisting that she had tried to stop it.

Cassia Laham, a schoolmate who was also involved in student government, remembered Ms. Miller appearing almost bored with the proceedings. “She wasn’t distraught,” Ms. Laham said. “She wasn’t frazzled. It was just, ‘When can we get this over with?’”

Before long, Ms. Miller arrived in Washington, likewise distinguishing herself as a party functionary willing to sacrifice for the cause.

In 2014, as a junior aide with the National Republican Senatorial Committee, she gained notice for hauling an oversize birthday cake through Senate security to troll a vulnerable Democratic incumbent, as documented in a BuzzFeed article by Benny Johnson, now a pro-Trump influencer. (The cake’s icing reflected the senator’s pro-Obama voting record.) She later worked for Senator Steve Daines, Republican of Montana, advocating for her boss with rat-a-tat zeal in all-hours phone calls to reporters. “She just kind of hit you with this sort of machine-gun cadence,” said Tom Lutey, a veteran Montana journalist. “She was pretty amped up.”



In 2017, Ms. Miller was working for Senator Steve Daines, a Montana Republican. She and other Washington colleagues dressed as cows to celebrate Halloween. Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call, via Associated Press

By late 2017, Ms. Miller had joined the Trump administration, initially with the Department of Homeland Security, becoming the sort of staff member about whom counterparts snipe and superiors often say nice things: untiring, brusque, adept at managing up.

“She is not a wallflower,” said Jonathan Hoffman, who helped hire Ms. Miller at D.H.S., adding that she “knew more about some of the border security programs we were working than the people running them.”

“She was unintimidated by the role,” said Marc Short, the former chief of staff of Vice President Mike Pence, for whom Ms. Miller served as press secretary beginning in 2019.

“It’s uncommon. I think many people are intimidated.”

Several people who interacted with Ms. Miller in both jobs said they sometimes tried to prevent her from attending decision-making meetings, concerned that she might overstep or sow chaos.

But in public and in private, Ms. Miller was largely a warrior for Mr. Trump's positions, defending the administration's separations of migrant families at the Southern border and internally downplaying the seriousness of the coronavirus, peers recalled, until she got it herself while pregnant. ("Guys, this is no joke," she told them afterward.)

Co-workers said Ms. Miller was also secure in the knowledge that she had fans in high places in the West Wing.

Once, a colleague recalled, Ms. Miller entered a meeting where placards had been placed on chairs for more senior officials, finding no spot for herself.

She removed someone else's placard and took her seat.

A MAGA-blessed union

Along the way, Ms. Miller met someone.

He was brilliant, she told friends. "He's so cute with me," she gushed. Not-so-furtive looks were exchanged on the White House grounds.

A former colleague who disdains Mr. Miller recalled, almost fondly, that his workplace encounters with Ms. Miller were the only times he ever smiled.

Mr. Miller has described the origins of the union more clinically.

“It’s very on brand, the relationship,” he told Lara Trump in a recent Fox News interview, “because we were on conference calls every day on border security.”

The pair did have much in common. Both emerged from largely liberal areas (Mr. Miller from Southern California; Ms. Miller from Weston, Fla., an affluent patch of Broward County) as proud conservative exceptions. Both took unglamorous jobs on Capitol Hill before rising quickly in Mr. Trump’s ranks, where establishment Republican credentials were not required.

And both seemed to embrace the status and validation that could flow from belonging to a Trump-blessed power couple.

They wed in February 2020 at the Trump International Hotel. The rabbi was a senior adviser to the United States ambassador to Israel. Attendees included Mr. Trump and an Elvis impersonator.

“The most perfect day, the most perfect man surrounded with more love than we both could have ever dreamed,” Ms. Miller posted on X. “Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Miller.”

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The Millers at a White House state dinner in 2019. A former colleague of Mr. Miller's recalled that workplace encounters with Ms. Miller were the only times he ever smiled. Paul Morigi/Getty Images

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Some who know Ms. Miller describe her life in two phases: “B.S. and A.S.,” before and after Stephen. Their first child was born in November 2020. Her social media output has often doubled as a rolling tribute to her husband, as a father and as an intellect.

Outside Mr. Trump and his kin, the two became perhaps the most conspicuous and ascendant first family of MAGA-dom — and the most reviled by Mr. Trump’s detractors, a status that could amuse and sustain them both, those who know them said.

“Keeping Up With the Millers,” read a [2020 headline in Vanity Fair](#), which revealed that Ms. Miller had a “YOLO” tattoo (short for “You Only Live Once”) inside her lip. “Stephen Miller and His Wife, Katie, Found Love in a Hateful Place.”

“Great couple,” Mr. Bannon said in an interview. “There’s not two tougher people I think I’ve ever met.”

Mr. Trump’s loss in 2020 scrambled the Millers’ ambitions. Their respective bosses, the outgoing president and vice president, had fallen out over Mr. Pence’s refusal to perpetuate Mr. Trump’s election lies on Jan. 6, 2021. (Ms. Miller was on maternity leave that day.)

Initially, Ms. Miller stayed on Mr. Pence’s post-tenure payroll — in part, according to Mr. Short, Mr. Pence’s former chief of staff, so that she could continue receiving health care benefits.

Ms. Miller was later fired, she has said publicly, because Mr. Miller was still working with Mr. Trump.

Last January, after Mr. Pence opposed Mr. Kennedy’s nomination for health secretary, Ms. Miller accused the former vice president of cutting ties with her when her daughter

was an infant. (Noting her fervor in support of Mr. Kennedy, friends said Ms. Miller had in recent years become an avowed “crunchy mom” and a proponent of the emerging Make America Healthy Again movement.)

She said on X that Mr. Pence was a selective practitioner of “family values” and “a footnote of American history.” Mr. Short called her remarks “unfair and unfounded.”

As with many veterans of the first Trump administration, the post-2020 interregnum became something of a wilderness period for the Millers. Mr. Trump’s political fate looked uncertain. They positioned themselves for whatever the Republican future might hold.



Ms. Miller at a Trump campaign event in November. Friends say that Ms. Miller has become an avowed “crunchy mom” and a proponent of the emerging Make America Healthy Again movement. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Mr. Miller led a new conservative nonprofit group, America First Legal, retaining his status as a Trump associate in good standing while cementing connections to others across the political right.

Ms. Miller worked for P2 Public Affairs, a firm with ties to Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, who became Mr. Trump's chief rival for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

It was not lost on others in Mr. Trump's circle that the Miller family seemed well hedged for any outcome.

At the same time, Mr. Musk — an early admirer of Mr. DeSantis's who had shown a growing interest in American politics — began leaning on Mr. Miller as he immersed himself in the ways of the Republican Party. Among other tasks, Mr. Miller helped guide Mr. Musk on his political spending.

When Mr. Musk assumed a more active role in the Trump 2024 campaign last year, Ms. Miller became a liaison between the candidate's operation and its most attention-getting new supporter.

After Mr. Trump won — and Mr. Musk imagined an expansive role for himself in Washington — the landing spot for Ms. Miller seemed intuitive enough.

"Katie Miller will soon be joining DOGE!" Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social in December.

"She has been a loyal supporter of mine for many years."

The president-elect offered his congratulations to "Stephen and Katie," in that order.

An unsettling feud

Managing Mr. Musk is something of a contradictory job description.

Like Mr. Trump, he seems perpetually volatile as a matter of course as much as strategy.

There was also the nontrivial fact that no one in Washington, including its new stewards, quite knew what DOGE was, or would be, or how long Mr. Musk might be around to decide.

At first, some in the White House hoped Ms. Miller might be a useful early warning system for them. Officially designated a “special government employee,” the same as Mr. Musk, Ms. Miller would not be expected to corral him in full — no one could — but she might at least give her old friends a heads-up when he seemed likely to detonate one bureaucratic land mine or another. (She also continued to advise private clients with business before the government; the firm she had joined before Mr. Trump’s election said she was taking a leave in February after The Wall Street Journal [reported](#) on her dual work.)

As much as anything, those who know Ms. Miller said, she seemed to relish the whirling chaos — the urgent calls, the people needing to know what she knew — across a professional portfolio all her own.

Ms. Miller did not threaten, exactly, according to people who worked with her, but she had a way of communicating her boss’s wishes ominously.

Elon will not like that if he finds out.

That is not what Elon had in mind.

Elon might be calling you.

She (and Mr. Musk) clashed especially with the presidential personnel office and its director, Sergio Gor, sparring over staffing decisions across the government and over the proper scope and latitude of DOGE's mandate.



Ms. Miller at a confirmation hearing on Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s nomination as health Secretary. After assisting in that confirmation process, she talked up raw milk as a Miller family staple. Haiyun Jiang for The New York Times

The [ultimate fissure](#) between Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk owed at least in part to tensions over Jared Isaacman, the [since-withdrawn nominee](#) to run NASA and a close associate of Mr. Musk's. Mr. Musk and his allies have blamed Mr. Gor for tanking the selection.

For an administration that has prided itself on curtailing the daily public backbiting of Mr. Trump's first term, the Musk denouement delivered some unwanted nostalgia,

producing a hail of charges, countercharges, threats to end government contracts and invocations of the Jeffrey Epstein files.

For Ms. Miller, it amounted to a professional crisis.

Since the inauguration, she had achieved something of a Washington dream, her agenda and clout in tidy alignment.

Those who have worked with both Millers say they are duly supportive of each other's careers. "I always sensed boundaries there," Mr. Short said of the first-term dynamic. "I think Stephen respected the job that Katie had to do and vice versa."

But what has become clear in recent weeks is that any ostensible choice between Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk is probably no choice at all, if deep influence in the capital remains the aim.

It has always been Mr. Trump's Washington — for the Millers, for Mr. Musk, for anyone who wishes to be anyone in modern Republican politics.

Since their blowup, Mr. Musk has set off on an almost-apology tour, [saying](#) he regretted "some" of his posts about Mr. Trump and expressing an openness to reconciliation.

If that day comes, people close to Mr. Trump said, Ms. Miller might be able to continue working with Mr. Musk without major incident, for herself or for her husband.

If a rupture endures, they added, she is not likely to have a top White House job waiting for her on the other side.

In the interim, Ms. Miller has retained some executive privileges.

Last week, she posted a picture to her private Instagram, showing the Millers and their children behind the Resolute Desk, where Mr. Trump smiled from his seat.

“A day with dad at the office,” her caption read.

Matt Flegenheimer is a correspondent for The Times focusing on in-depth profiles of powerful figures.