

White Supremacists Step Up Off-Campus Propaganda Efforts in 2018



Under intensified public scrutiny, white supremacists are facing a Catch-22: As individuals, they want to remain anonymous and invisible, but they need to promote their organizations and ideology. Their solution: Increased propaganda efforts, which allow them to maximize media and online attention, while limiting the risk of individual exposure, negative media coverage, arrests and public backlash.

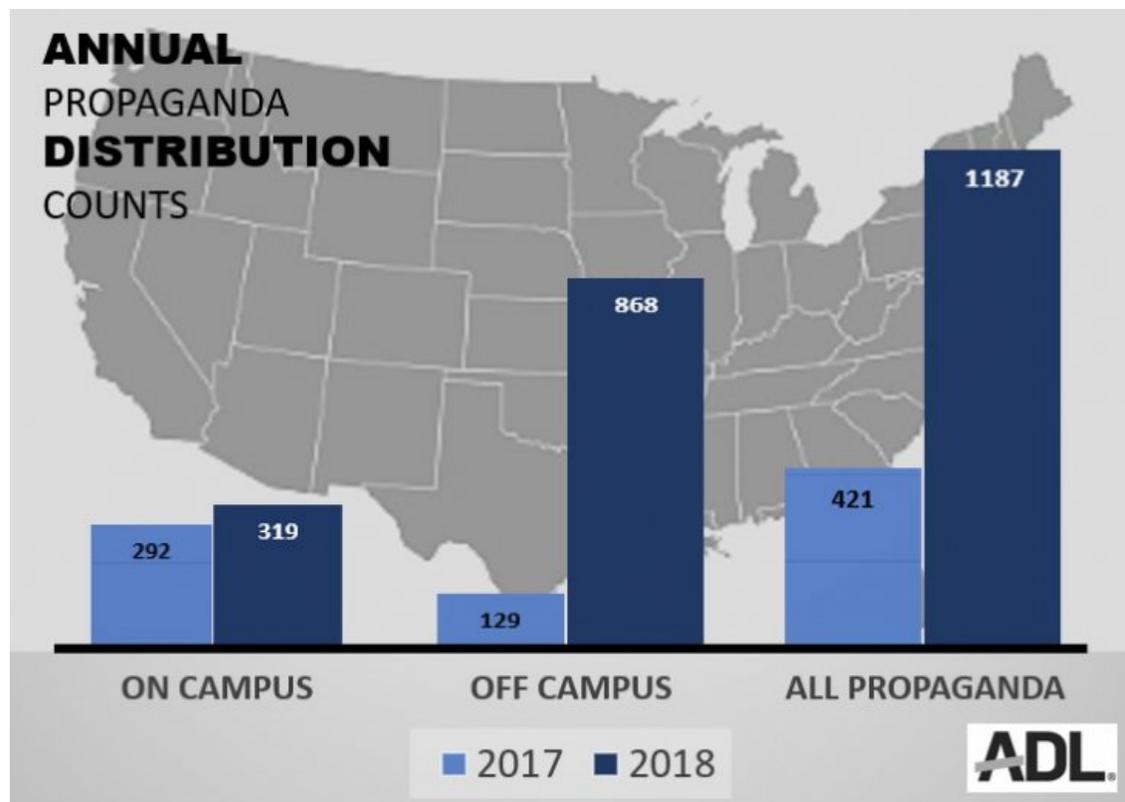
ADL's Center on Extremism (COE) continues to track an ever-growing number of white supremacist propaganda efforts, including the distribution of racist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic fliers, stickers, banners and posters. The 2018 data

shows a 182% increase of incidents from the previous year, with 1,187 cases reported, compared to 421 in 2017.

The propaganda, which includes everything from veiled white supremacist language to explicitly racist images and words, often features a recruitment element, and frequently targets minority groups, including Jews, Blacks, Muslims, non-white immigrants and the LGBTQ community.

[ADL's H.E.A.T. Map](#) provides a visual representation of the propaganda distribution efforts and helps highlight specific trends – showing, for example, that the 2018 propaganda incidents are predominantly concentrated in large metropolitan areas, with the highest activity levels in the states of California, Texas, Colorado, New York, Illinois, Florida and Virginia.

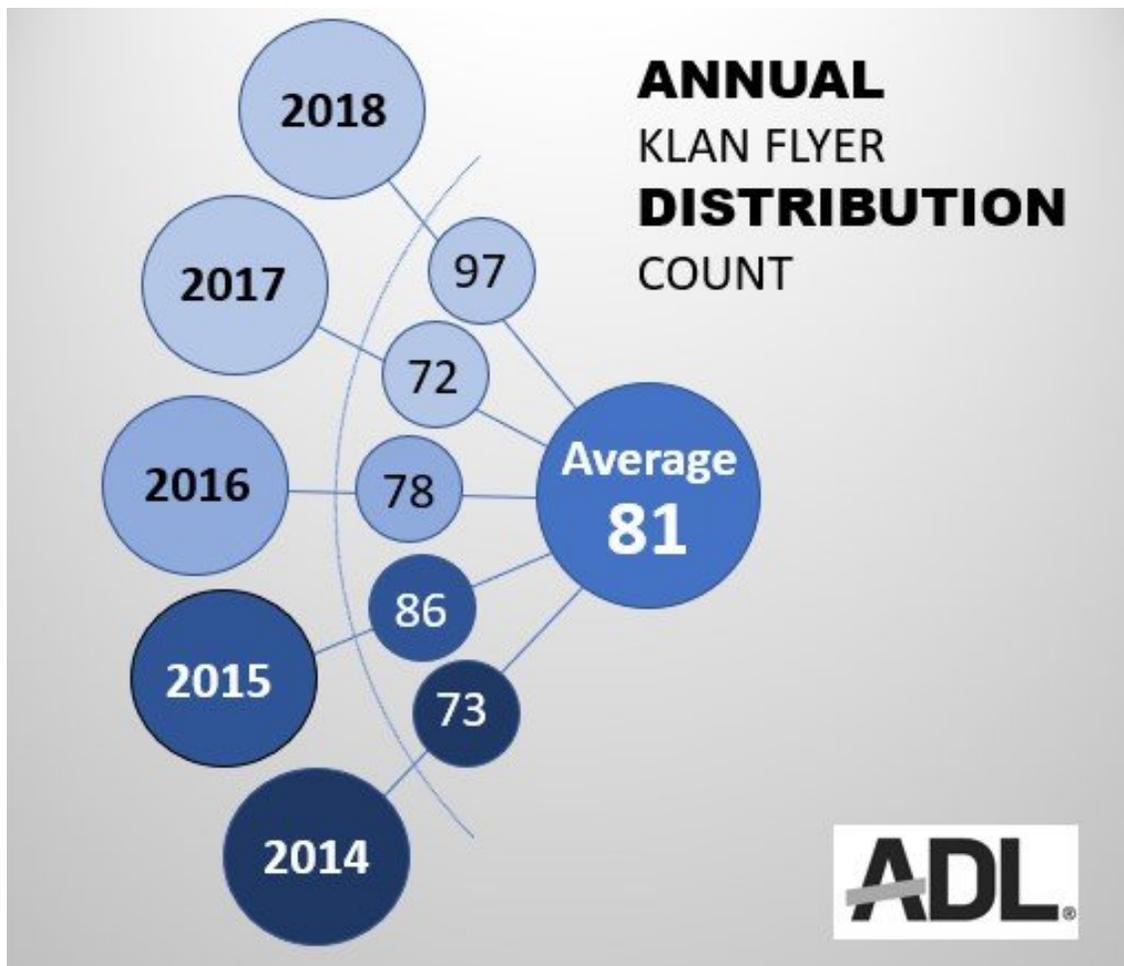
The 2018 numbers, which far exceed any previous annual propaganda distribution counts, also demonstrate that while white supremacist groups continued to target U.S. college campuses, the number of on-campus incidents increased only modestly (9%), compared to a huge (572%) jump in off-campus incidents.



In 2018, the ADL recorded 319 incidents of white supremacist propaganda on 212 college and university campuses in 37 states and the District of Columbia. The two most active alt right groups, [Identity Evropa](#) and [Patriot Front](#), are responsible for the bulk of the campus incidents.

Identity Evropa adherents are responsible for 191 such incidents, while members of Patriot Front contributed another 51. [Andrew Anglin](#) supporters known as the [Daily Stormer Book Clubs \(DSBC\)](#) targeted campuses with 29 flouting incidents. Neo-Nazi groups such as [Vanguard America](#) and the National Socialist Legion, as well as the now-defunct [Traditionalist Worker Party](#), also participated in a few incidents.

While 2018 campus propaganda incidents modestly beat 2017's count, the number of off-campus propaganda distributions skyrocketed from 129 in 2017 to 868 in 2018. Off-campus propaganda distribution is a tactic long favored by neo-Nazis, Klan groups and other white supremacists, but in 2018, alt right groups were responsible for most of these efforts. Patriot Front led the way with 324 distributions, while 312 incidents were linked to Identity Evropa. Daily Stormer followers were responsible for 34.



Even the declining Klan movement noticeably increased their propaganda efforts in 2018. In the past year, ADL’s COE counted 97 incidents in which Klan fliers were left on doorsteps or driveways in neighborhoods around the country, a 20% increase from their preceding four-year average of 77 annual incidents. Though eleven different Klan groups took part in this activity, the majority (78) of the 97 incidents were attributed to the North Carolina-based [Loyal White Knights \(LWK\)](#), a Nazified Klan group best known for their vitriolic and often anti-Semitic propaganda. Though the group’s fliers do occasionally appear in more far-flung states, the LWK is best categorized as a regional Klan. In 2018, an overwhelming majority of its fliering incidents targeted the mid-Atlantic region, with most of the incidents concentrated in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Neo-Nazi groups such as Atomwaffen Division, National Alliance, National Socialist Legion, National Socialist Movement and Vanguard America were responsible for approximately 5% of off-campus flier distributions.

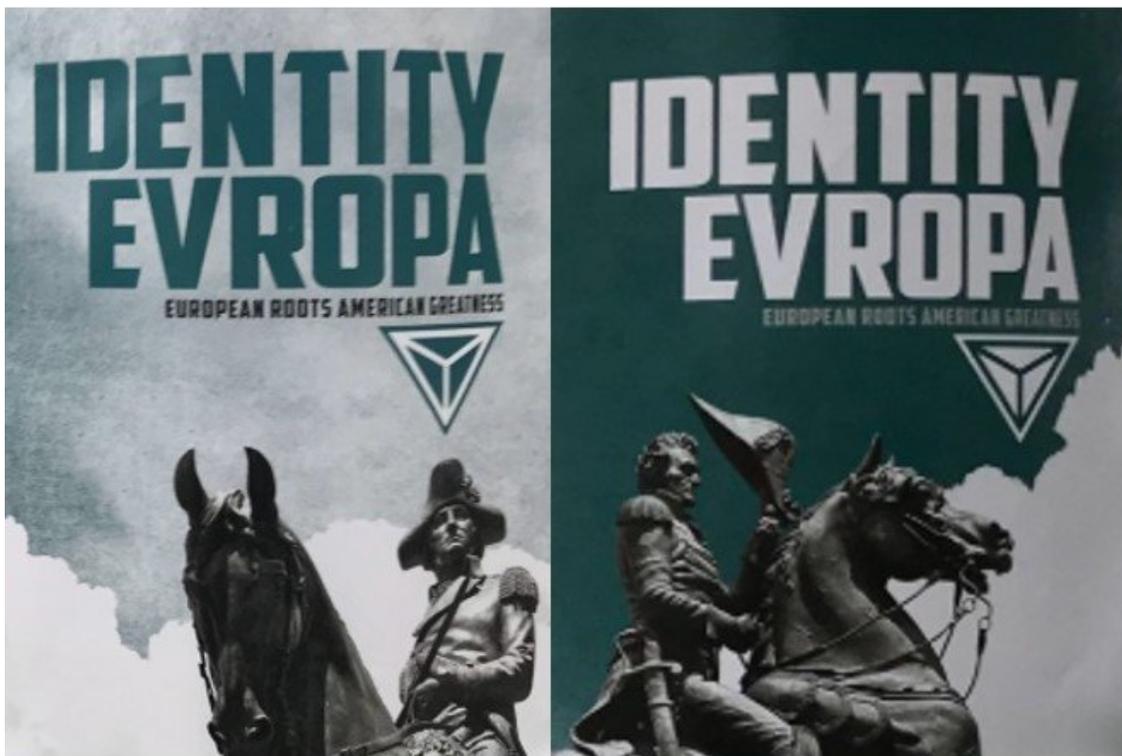
Additional Propaganda Tactics

The alt right continues to use banners to promote their message. In 2018, the COE counted 32 instances of white supremacists hanging banners in highly visible locations like highway overpasses, a count significantly lower than the unprecedented proliferation of banner use the COE identified [between May 2017 to March 2018](#). During this 10-month time span, white supremacists used banners an average of seven times per month.

Texas-based Patriot Front, the country's second-largest alt right group, used banners the most in 2018, deploying banners 21 times, while Identity Evropa used banners nine times. Most of the banners delivered an anti-immigration message. One notable exception: A banner, attributed to a Virginia-based Daily Stormer Book Club, draped over a church sign in Arrington, Virginia, declaring, "[James Fields](#) did nothing wrong." Fields was convicted of murdering Heather Heyer when he drove his car into a group of counter-protesters at the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017.

[These](#) groups have also placed their propaganda in books at libraries, bookstores and community book exchange boxes. They often choose books related to their ideology; at the Gloversville, New York, public library, a Loyal White Knights recruitment flier was discovered inside a book about slavery.

Identity Evropa



Identity Evropa, the country's largest alt right group, was responsible for nearly half (503 of 1187) of the propaganda distributions in 2018. The group refrains from using recognizable white supremacist imagery and language, preferring subtler white supremacist messages. Their latest fliers, featuring George Washington or Andrew Jackson, read, "European roots American greatness."

Some of the group's 2018 propaganda targeted public figures. Since September, the group has distributed fliers accusing New York Governor Andrew Cuomo of stifling free speech. In Atlanta, they posted similarly styled fliers accusing Atlanta Mayor Keisha Bottoms of "putting illegal aliens first." As part of their ongoing efforts to appear as conventional conservatives they also used propaganda with mainstream messages like "Merry Christmas" and "Thank you veterans."

Patriot Front



Over the course of the year, Patriot Front was responsible for approximately one third (375 of 1187) of propaganda distributions. Patriot Front followed Identity Evropa's lead and attempted to normalize or mainstream their public presence. In April 2018, the group discontinued their use of anti-Semitic propaganda. By October, they'd launched new propaganda featuring a web address using the group's name in place of their previous (right-wing nationalist) slogan, "blood and soil." In spite of these changes, members have continued to chant "blood and soil" during demonstrations, and to use their propaganda to target Jews and other perceived enemies.

In 2018, Patriot Front propaganda was found at multiple synagogues, an African American church in Florida, an LGBTQ community center in Washington, an Immigration and Human rights Law Firm in Virginia and on a sign promoting a Ramadan event. The group also posted stickers reading, "FAKE NEWS DON'T BUY IT!" at news media offices and on newspaper dispensers. After writing articles about Patriot Front, a number of journalists, their families, and other activists and researchers received Patriot Front cards (mailed to their home addresses) that read, "PATRIOTISM WITH TEETH."

Daily Stormer Book Clubs

While they generated far fewer propaganda incidents (63 of 1187) in 2018, the Daily Stormer Book Clubs (SBC) did hold several coordinated anti-Semitic fliering campaigns throughout the year. On the weekend of March 21, 2018, they organized “Operation Gun Grabbing Kikes” a fliering campaign that targeted college campuses and sporting goods stores in more than ten states. In August, an SBC fliering campaign blamed Jews for censoring free speech after right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones was de-platformed from multiple social media sites. These fliers were found at churches, on college campuses and at Jewish institutions in multiple states. This was followed by a spate of fliers in October blaming Jews for the allegations of misconduct against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. An October 7 post to the Daily Stormer website claimed, “the anti-Kavanaugh movement was almost entirely Jewish in nature.”



White Supremacist Groups Rethink Pre-Announced Rallies

[ADL's H.E.A.T. Map](#) provides a visual representation of the 91 white supremacist events tracked by the Center on Extremism in 2018 and highlights a number of trends – most notably, that white supremacist groups moved away from pre-announcing events to the public.

A review of 2018's events reveals a white supremacist movement focused on tactics designed to circumvent intensified public scrutiny. This meant fewer pre-announced events and more unannounced flash demonstrations, allowing them to promote their own narratives while limiting the risk of individual exposure, negative media coverage, arrests and public backlash.

In 2018, there were very few pre-announced white supremacist events, and those that did occur suffered from low attendance and faced heavy opposition. The tone was set early in the year when Michigan State University rejected alt right leader [Richard Spencer's](#) plans to speak there, relenting only after Spencer's attorney, fellow white supremacist Kyle Bristow, filed a First Amendment lawsuit against the school.

Even then, the university attempted to minimize Spencer's impact by agreeing to an event date during the school's spring break and by holding the event at their somewhat isolated Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education. Spencer's March 5th event was poorly attended, due in part to the efforts of antifa activists who physically prevented a number of Spencer's supporters from reaching the Pavilion. That weekend, East Lansing also saw the collapse of an alt right conference organized by Bristow and his Foundation of Marketplace of Ideas, after several local businesses withdrew as event venues upon learning about Bristow's group. The event's fate was sealed when Bristow abruptly resigned from his position as executive director of the Foundation for Marketplace of Ideas and announced he would not be attending Spencer's event. After the Michigan State fiasco, Spencer, with a nod to antifa, decided to cancel his college speaking tour, and said he would try to find other ways to reach the public.

Richard Spencer wasn't the only alt right personality whose events fared poorly in 2018: While it was the year's second largest public event, Jason Kessler's [Unite the Right 2](#) gathering failed to draw significant support from the alt right. The heavily protested event drew a motley group of about 30 right-wing speakers and activists.

Fewer pre-announced events, fewer attendees

2018's largest pre-announced public white supremacist event took place in April, when approximately 40 white supremacists gathered in Newnan, Georgia, for a rally organized by the neo-Nazi [National Socialist Movement \(NSM\)](#). The annual rally, which coincides with Hitler's birthday, was much smaller than the previous year's event, when approximately 125 white supremacists rallied in Pikeville, Kentucky. Overall, 2018 was a challenging year for NSM and their [Nationalist Front](#) allies. In April, the [Traditionalist Worker Party](#) dissolved into chaos after co-founder and leader [Matthew Heimbach](#) was arrested for domestic battery, and in August, the [League of the South \(LoS\)](#) abruptly announced they would no longer partner with the Nationalist Front. As a result, the NSM's fall rally in Little Rock, Arkansas, drew just 20 people. This was a dismal turnout compared to the 200 or so participants who showed up for the group's fall 2017 rally in Shelbyville, Tennessee.

The League of the South, a white supremacist group that advocates for southern succession, pulled off the third largest pre-announced public event in 2018; in January, approximately 28 of their members and supporters participated in a rally at Florida's Old Capitol building in Tallahassee. A very heavy law enforcement presence maintained a barrier between the LoS and counter protesters – who outnumbered the white supremacists six to one.

Nine months later, the LoS attempted to hold a pre-announced rally at Sycamore Shoals State Park in northeastern Tennessee. In late August, the group began openly promoting their plan to rally against the “destruction of Confederate monuments.” However, just days before the scheduled September 29 rally, LoS leader Michael Hill canceled the event, saying he had received word from Tennessee authorities that the group would have to purchase insurance for the event and cover the cost of security at the park.

The “flash demonstration” option

In lieu of the cancelled rally, LoS privately planned an unannounced flash demonstration more than 60 miles away in Newport, Tennessee. Despite the secrecy, the event faced its own obstacles. When approximately 30 individuals associated with the LoS and the [Shield Wall Network](#) assembled in front of the Cocke County courthouse, local authorities advised them they were in violation of a city ordinance and asked them to leave. Later, a post appeared on the League's website describing a successful event that lasted more than two and a half hours.

LoS leader Hill similarly manipulated the narrative after the group's June flash demonstration held at 6:00 a.m. on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. He wrote on the group's website that two dozen LoS members had "occupied" the iconic civil rights memorial where in 1965 black voting rights activists were brutally attacked by law enforcement. Noting the value of "photographic propaganda," Hill included an image of the group assembled on the bridge.



Flash demonstrations – unannounced, quickly disbanded gatherings -- proved a viable alternative to pre-announced events, especially for the two most active alt right groups, [Identity Evropa](#) and [Patriot Front](#), which were responsible for more than 30 flash demonstrations.

While two-thirds of these events were quite small, with fewer than ten participants, these two groups were also responsible for 2018's two largest white supremacist flash demonstrations.

In March, while in Tennessee for their first national conference (a private event), approximately 50 members of Identity Evropa took part in a flash demonstration at the Parthenon in Nashville's Centennial Park. And in December, approximately 50 Patriot Front members, led by Thomas Rousseau, held a flash demonstration in Washington D.C. During a January 2019 podcast hosted by Richard Spencer, Rousseau said that his group's D.C. demonstration was evidence that Patriot Front can "create solutions" and find ways to spread their message "unhindered" and "completely unmolested by any antifa."



Most of the alt right's 2018 flash demonstrations focused on immigration issues; attendees protested sanctuary cities and held demonstrations at the Mexican-American border and at Mexican consulates. Patriot Front also targeted left-wing events, disrupting an anarchist bookfair at Boston University and a "Bingo against borders" event at a Houston bar, and sabotaging an "Occupy ICE" event in San Antonio.

Small, collaborative groups of white supremacists focused on staging small counter-demonstrations in and around Arkansas and Tennessee. These assemblies often included members of the Traditionalist Worker Party, Shield Wall Network, League of the South, National Socialist Movement and the Knights Party, an Arkansas-based Klan group. Over the course of 2018, they protested women's marches, gay pride events, a rally by the Satanic Temple, an anti-gun "March For Our Lives," and a group that opposed Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Private events draw larger crowds

Unsurprisingly, private white supremacist events are currently the movement's best-attended gatherings. Hammerfest, an annual hate rock concert and racist skinhead convention, was by far the largest white supremacist event of 2018. The gathering, hosted by the West Coast chapter of the Hammerskin Nation, was also a celebration of the group's 30th anniversary, and brought more than 150 attendees to San Diego, California.

Private conferences held in 2018 by suit-and-tie white supremacists were also well attended. Groups such as Identity Evropa, [American Renaissance](#), American Freedom Party, and the [Council of Conservative Citizens](#) typically drew between 50 and 100 individuals to their conferences. These events were all held at the Montgomery Bell State Park in Burns, Tennessee, a location that has become a favorite as white supremacists are forced out of private venues. Tennessee state parks are required by law to allow any group – regardless of ideology – to rent their facilities.