

EXTREMIST TACTICS ON CAMPUS

An extremist is someone with a religious, social, or political belief system that exists substantially outside of those more broadly accepted in society (i.e., “mainstream” beliefs). Extremists often seek radical changes in the nature of government, religion, or society. The term can also be used to refer to an adherent of an extreme wing of a broader movement.

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Extremist Tactics on Campus

The Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Center on Extremism (COE) is a foremost authority on extremism and terrorism. The COE's team of investigators and analysts strategically monitors and exposes extremist movements and individuals, using cutting-edge technology to track real time developments and to provide actionable intelligence and data-based analysis to law enforcement, public officials, community leaders, and technology companies.

Extremism on Campus

Since 2016, COE has tracked a dramatic uptick in incidents of white supremacists targeting college campuses via the distribution of literature, speaking engagements, or trolling/harassment efforts. Emboldened by the current political climate, and moving their activities from the online realm to the real world, these groups are targeting young people for recruitment, and they see campuses as prime targets.

Colleges and universities are traditionally seen as bastions of free speech, and this is what white supremacists are counting on. They design their efforts and words, no matter how hateful, to fall under the umbrella of protected speech. When students or administrators resist those campaigns, calling out the white supremacists for racism or in some way attempting to mitigate the damage of the hateful words, the extremists respond by portraying themselves as victims, usually alleging that their right to free speech has been suppressed.

Below are a number of key tactics used by white supremacists to target college and university campuses:

Literature: Hate groups blanket campuses with extremist messages

Since September 1, 2016, ADL's Center on Extremism has recorded 346 incidents of white supremacists using fliers, stickers, banners, and posters to spread their hateful message. These incidents targeted 216 college campuses, from Ivy League schools to local community colleges, in 44 states and Washington, D.C.

During the fall semester of 2017 (Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, 2017), there were 147 such incidents, a staggering 258 percent increase over the 41 incidents that took place during the 2016 fall semester.

Three groups were behind the majority of the white supremacist fliers:

- . **Identity Evropa (IE)** is a white supremacist group founded in early 2016 by Nathan Damigo. This California-based alt-right group wants to preserve "white American culture" and to promote white European identity. The group is responsible for 158 of the 346 recorded flier incidents as part of their ongoing "Project Siege," an effort to speak directly to students on campus. IE had a strong presence at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. In the fall of 2017, IE stepped up their propaganda efforts, distributing fliers promoting a range of racist books
- . **Vanguard America**, created in 2016, is based in Southern California. The group was responsible for the majority of white supremacist fliers and events tracked during the 2016-2017 school year, including fliers that blanketed the University of Texas at Austin. James Fields, the man charged with murdering counter-protester Heather Heyer, marched in Charlottesville alongside Vanguard America members.
- . **Patriot Front** is a Texas-based alt right group led by 19-year-old Thomas Ryan Rousseau. The group split from Vanguard America in late August 2017. Since then, members have undertaken a very active campus flier effort, chalking up 37 incidents as of December 2017.

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The following are additional examples of extremist fliering incidents:

- In December 2017, five individuals associated with Vanguard America, a white supremacist group, tweeted photographs of themselves at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, giving Hitler salutes while posting the group's racist materials.
- In July 2017, white supremacist student body leader Andrew Joseph Oswalt was arrested on the Oregon State University campus and charged with carrying an illegally concealed knife. He was with a group of men, including white supremacist James Larry Marr (also known as Jimmy Marr), who were distributing white supremacist fliers around the campus.
- In the fall of 2017, college and high school students began seeing "It's Okay to be White" fliers, part of the latest trolling campaign to emerge from 4chan, an online message board known for its purposefully offensive members and its association with the white supremacist alt-right movement. One promoter encouraged a mass flier distribution on Halloween and predicted, "the media will go berserk." "Leftists [and] journalists hate white people, so they turn on them." This would "nuke" their credibility and would be a "massive victory for the right in the culture war." They also saw it as a useful recruitment tool, saying "many more /our guys/ [would be] spawned overnight."
- In January 2018, a new anti-immigrant campaign emerged on campuses. The effort appropriates "No Means No" and recasts "My Body My Choice" as "My Borders My Choice." Both are used in social media and fliering campaigns aimed at immigrants. The organizer, an anti-immigrant activist, urged followers to distribute fliers on the night of January 21 "on campuses [and] public spaces around the world," and encouraged people to place the fliers in "feminism [and] SJW ["Social Justice Warrior"] related areas: social science & psychology departments, women's [and] gender studies departments, office doors of feminist prof[essor]s, etc."

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/white-supremacist-propaganda-surges-on-campus>

<https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-on-campus-unprecedented-recruitment-efforts-underway>

Extremist Speakers: Hateful views, but protected speech

Extremist speakers polarize college campuses and present enormous challenges to administrators and faculty. But holding extremist viewpoints does not preclude anyone from speaking on campus.

Notorious alt right leader Richard Spencer, who helped coordinate the "Unite the Right" event in Charlottesville, is the most persistent and ubiquitous campus speaker at the moment, but he is not alone in his efforts. Matthew Heimbach, founder of the white supremacist Traditionalist Worker Party, launched his "National Socialism or Death" college speaking tour in mid-February. His first stop: the University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus.

Conservative campus groups often invite far-right speakers to visit, but sometimes the invitations to speak on campus come from people outside the university community. On December 6, 2016, to the delight of Texas-based white supremacists, Spencer brought his "America belongs to white men" rhetoric to the Texas A&M campus. It's notable that Spencer was not on campus as a guest of the university, but rather spoke in a private room rented by Preston Wiginton, a neo-Nazi and former racist skinhead.

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Richard Spencer

Spencer has held a number of public speaking engagements on college campuses since 2017. Spencer spoke at Texas A&M University in December 2016, Auburn University in April 2017, the University of Florida in October 2017, and Michigan State University in March 2018. In March 2018, Spencer announced he was suspending his campus tour in order to reassess his outreach and recruitment strategy. He blamed the suspension in part on the anti-fascists (or “Antifa”) who organized vociferous counter-protests at his events.

Each of Spencer’s proposed on-campus appearances has sparked arguments between his supporters, who say any attempt to stop the speech violates Spencer’s First Amendment rights, and those who believe Spencer’s presence increases the risk of violence on campus. In fact, following Spencer’s appearance at the University of Florida, three Texas men were arrested on charges of attempted homicide. The three men allegedly yelled, “Heil Hitler!” while driving by a group standing near a bus stop, leading to an altercation in which one of them reportedly fired a gun. All three men had attended previous white supremacist events. It is worth noting that as of the date of this publication, Spencer has been victorious in court.

Matthew Heimbach

Heimbach, the co-founder of the white supremacist Traditionalist Worker Party (TWP), kicked off his “National Socialism or Death” university tour at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in mid-February 2018. The tour is likely to be canceled, however, following Heimbach’s March 2018 arrest.

(Heimbach was arrested in March 2018 for domestic battery after allegedly assaulting his wife in front of their children. TWP is likely to re-brand itself without Heimbach at the helm. Two different factions are vying to maintain TWP’s members. One faction wants to continue promoting National Socialism, while the other wants to move towards a less extreme version of white supremacy.)

In 2012, before founding TWP, Heimbach created the White Student Union at Towson University in Maryland, where he was a student. He also headed a chapter of Youth for Western Civilization (YWC), a now-defunct group that straddled the line between mainstream conservatism and white nationalism.

TWP has been active on campuses for a number of years. Heimbach, who acted as security during Richard Spencer’s speech at the University of Auburn, organized events around the country and participated in events alongside groups such as the National Socialist Movement, League of the South, Shield Wall Network, and Vanguard America. TWP members have demonstrated against immigration, the LGBTQ community, women’s rights, and the removal of Confederate monuments, and have distributed their propaganda at universities in states including Colorado, Indiana, Tennessee, Georgia, and Kentucky.

Milo Yiannopoulos

“Alt lite” provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos launched his “Dangerous Faggot” tour in 2016, visiting college campuses across the country to rail against issues including feminism, “political correctness,” transgender rights, and “Black Lives Matter” activists. His appearances have caused tremendous controversy and, in some cases, have led to violence. In January 2017, a man was shot during a protest of Yiannopoulos’ talk at the University of Washington in Seattle. A week earlier, protests shut down his talk at the University of California, Davis. In early February 2017, violent protests also caused his talk at the University of California, Berkeley, to be canceled.

<https://www.adl.org/blog/richard-spencer-to-speak-at-the-university-of-florida>

<https://www.adl.org/blog/three-texas-men-arrested-following-richard-spencers-university-speech>

<https://www.adl.org/blog/free-speech-week-fizzles-at-uc-berkeley-milo-vows-to-return>

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Trolling: Individuals targeted maliciously online

Trolling is the practice of targeting a person or group with a deluge of online hate in an attempt to silence or intimidate them. It is a go-to harassment technique for extremists. It's a cheap, effective, and (usually) anonymous tactic that can have an outsized effect on campus populations, including professors. Trolling efforts often accompany extremist appearances on campus. For example, when Richard Spencer spoke at the University of Florida in 2017, the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer website encouraged its followers to troll Gainesville's black and Jewish institutions.

In May 2017, soon after American University elected the first black female student body president, racist vandalism began to appear on campus, including several bananas with racist messages hanging from nooses around campus. When the new president, Taylor Dumpson, spoke out, she was immediately targeted by prolific neo-Nazi troll and Daily Stormer founder Andrew Anglin, who urged his supporters to "reach out" to Dumpson via social media. The ensuing wave of vitriol and hate prompted American University administrators and campus law enforcement officials to hire a security detail to ensure Dumpson's safety.

Trolling is now also a go-to tactic of the alt right. Materials encouraging online attacks (often accompanied by explicit instructions on how to do so effectively) are popular weapons in the white supremacist arsenal. As someone posted to the white supremacist Stormfront message board in January 2017: "We're at war against the Left. All weapons should be at our disposal—including doxxing. It's not illegal . . . Leftists should therefore be doxxed." (Doxxing is the practice of publishing an enemy or opponent's personal information, which can range from an email address to family members' names and photographs.)

In March 2017, a Massachusetts rabbi wrote a blog piece musing about the dangerous effects of online trolling, identifying Anglin's Daily Stormer as a chief perpetrator. A Daily Stormer writer immediately pounced, providing the rabbi's Twitter handle and encouraging readers to troll her "to thank her for spreading degeneracy among the Jews, or for helping spread our fame to her congregation."

Unfortunately, the rabbi was only the latest victim of white supremacists' virtual attacks; online targeting and harassment has reached a fever pitch. Just ask the thousands of Jewish journalists who were relentlessly attacked on Twitter throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, or members of the Jewish community in Whitefish, Montana, who were targeted by a hateful campaign of online harassment spearheaded by Anglin.

Employees and patrons of the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria in Washington, D.C. experienced similar harassment and threats after conspiracy theorists promulgated a fabricated scandal about a child trafficking ring being run out of the restaurant's basement. These threats ultimately culminated in a violent incident in which a gunman, convinced he was "saving children," ran into the restaurant and fired his weapon. Luckily, no one was injured.

<https://www.adl.org/blog/online-harassment-extremists-ramp-up-trolling-doxxing-efforts>

<https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-target-two-anti-racist-intellectuals>

<https://www.adl.org/news/article/andrew-anglin-five-things-to-know>

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Hacking and Forging: Turning printers and email into extremist tools

Hacking, like fliering, is a way for white supremacists and other extremists to have an “on-the-ground” impact on college campuses. Hacking incidents can create considerable anxiety and fear, confronting students, faculty, and staff with hateful messages while they are in the midst of everyday tasks like printing or distributing materials. Extremists spread their messages by hacking into university printers and using them to print their own fliers.

Throughout the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, ADL received a number of complaints about racist and anti-Semitic fliers appearing on university printers. Many of the fliers were signed by Weev, an alias used by hacker (and unabashed racist and anti-Semite) Andrew Auernheimer.

Auernheimer claimed to have exploited 50,000 printers to distribute one flier. The message, which starts with two swastikas and the title “samiz.dat,” calls for violence against anyone he does not consider white, referring to “hordes of subhuman nonwhite animals in black, Muslim, and Mexican form.” The flier also calls for “the white community” to stop relying on “methods which are peaceful and do not scare anyone.”

Auernheimer explains, “I unequivocally support the killing of children. I believe that our enemies need such a level of atrocity inflicted upon them . . . So the hordes of our enemies from the blacks to the Jews to the federal agents are deserving of fates of violence so extreme that there is no limit to the acts by which can be done upon them in defense of the white race.” He goes on to call on white people to persist in this goal “until far after their daughters are raped in front of them . . . the eyes of their sons are gouged out before them . . . until the cries of their infants are silenced by boots stomping their brains out onto the pavement.”

Forging, or spoofing, involves making an email look as though it originated from a sender who actually had nothing to do with the message. In February 2017, several email groups at the University of Michigan’s School of Engineering received anti-Semitic and racist email messages, which appeared (falsely) to have been sent by a faculty member and a doctoral student. The faculty member may have been targeted because he suggested that voting machines were susceptible to hacking. The FBI was called in to investigate the case.

<https://www.adl.org/blog/hacker-claims-credit-for-anti-semitic-flyer-sent-to-college-campuses>

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Fearmongering: Attempting to make the community feel “on edge”

The most dramatic and public example of on-campus fearmongering in recent history took place in August 2017, when approximately 200 individuals marched across the University of Virginia campus while chanting white supremacist slogans such as “blood and soil,” “white lives matter,” and “Jews will not replace us.”

Since then, additional incidents have occurred:

Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus, Miami, Florida, August 2017: Six members of Identity Evropa disrupted a pro-immigration forum by going onstage and unfurling an IE banner that read, “Secure our Border Secure our Future.”

The University of California, San Diego, January 2018: Members of IE disrupted an ethnic studies class, coming into the classroom after the class had begun, announcing they were there to “observe,” and visibly using their phones before flashing their IE “badges” and leaving. Next, they reportedly visited the campus Black Resource Center (part of the Student Center).

The University of Texas at Austin, Texas, November 2017: Approximately 25 Patriot Front members and associates, wearing masks and carrying burning torches, demonstrated in front of the George Washington statue. After campus police ordered them to leave, the group reportedly departed without further incident.

These overt, provocative, public appearances by extremist groups are relatively new, but their desire to establish a presence on campus is not. For years, white supremacists—including Matthew Heimbach, when he was a student at Towson University—have attempted to establish White Student Unions in a blatant effort to stoke anxiety and fear among minority students. While this tactic seems to have fallen out of favor recently, it’s certainly something administrators should be aware of—and a possibility for which campuses should prepare.

In 2013, Georgia State University student Patrick Sharp founded a white student union. In an interview with the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Sharp argued that as whites inevitably become a minority in the United States, they should not back away from expressing pride in their white race and white heritage. His statement echoes the views of a number of American white supremacists.

In April 2017, W.A.R. E.A.G.L.E.—Whites of the Alt-Right Educating Auburn Gentiles for Liberation and Empowerment—distributed anti-Semitic fliers on Auburn University’s campus. The fliers also promoted the Auburn White Student Union (AWSU).

The AWSU website reads, in part: “Finally! A student union dedicated to serving students of European ancestry at Auburn University. . . . First, we aim to debunk anti-White literature and talking points. Second, we provide educational materials to discredit Marxist and anti-White literature. Third, we positively affirm our White identity.”

Auburn University immediately released a statement distancing itself from the AWSU, emphasizing that it was not an official university organization, and highlighting the school’s support for free speech.

<https://www.adl.org/blog/former-youth-for-western-civilization-leader-promotes-white-student-union-at-towson>

<https://www.adl.org/blog/founder-of-white-student-union-at-georgia-state-has-history-of-espousing-extreme-views>

For further information about ADL resources and programs, contact your local ADL office or CampusDirector@adl.org

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