

# Charlie Kirk and Turning Point USA



*Bringing a  
Minor League  
Version of  
White Nationalism  
to Montana*



Montana Human  
Rights Network

P.O. Box 1509  
Helena, MT 59624

(406) 442-5506  
[network@mhrn.org](mailto:network@mhrn.org)  
<https://mhrn.org/>

*The Montana Human Rights Network is a grassroots, state-based human rights non-profit organization working to promote democratic values such as pluralism, equality and justice; challenge bigotry and intolerance; and organize communities to speak out in support of democratic principles and institutions. The Network uses a multi-faceted approach to expand the base for human rights in Montana, including pursuing progressive public policy, exposing the Far Right, and supporting local community organizing.*

*The Network has researched and reported on the activities of the Far Right for more than 25 years. To learn more about this work, please visit our website at <https://mhrn.org/right-wing-research/>. You can find more of the Network's reports and issue briefs here: <https://mhrn.org/resources/>.*



montana  
HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

Montana Human Rights Network  
P.O. Box 1509  
Helena, MT 59624  
(406) 442-5506  
[network@mhrn.org](mailto:network@mhrn.org)  
<https://mhrn.org/>

## **Table of Contents**

4	Introduction
5	The Backstory of Charlie Kirk and TPUSA
8	Candace Owens: TPUSA's Ousted Apologist & Conspiracy Theorist
11	Incidents of Racism & Anti-Semitism Plague TPUSA
15	TPUSA Chapters in Montana
19	Credibility Problems Make TPUSA Bad Choice for Students
20	Endnotes

## Introduction

Charlie Kirk, the founder of Turning Point USA (TPUSA), achieved celebrity pundit status with conservatives due to TPUSA's efforts organizing and providing right-wing political indoctrination to students on high school and college campuses across the country.

Not all conservatives, however, are sold on Kirk and TPUSA. Some question the accuracy of the number of chapters and activists claimed by TPUSA, along with complaining that Kirk and TPUSA take credit for work they haven't done.<sup>1</sup> Kirk is also the subject of critique by human rights supporters and the media for his inflammatory, biased, and exaggerated statements, in addition to TPUSA's cloaked involvement in politics. Nonetheless, Kirk will be the featured speaker for Republicans in Flathead and Yellowstone Counties this spring.

While leading TPUSA, Charlie Kirk is also a proud foot soldier and hype man for Trump's "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) views. Kirk has used his access to Trump to build his public profile and grow TPUSA. Through his current book, *The MAGA Doctrine*, Kirk says he hopes Trump's ideas will "positively ingratiate themselves into the conservative ethos" and last long after Trump's tenure.<sup>2</sup>

Kirk's and TPUSA's provocative style have attracted curious students. However, once recruited, students are exposed to questionable ideas and tactics. Kirk has built his public persona by distorting data and spreading misinformation. A former ally even claims Kirk has enhanced TPUSA membership totals by "boosting numbers with racists & Nazi sympathizers."<sup>3</sup>

The record clearly shows TPUSA attracts white nationalists, racists, and anti-Semites, both as staffers and campus members, to the point that Kirk continually has been forced to make statements denying it (see "Incidents of Racism and Anti-Semitism Plague TPUSA" on

### White Nationalism

White nationalism is a political and social movement that uses racism and anti-Semitism to promote an all-white ethno-state. Those in the movement espouse that the United States was founded by and for people of white European heritage. It promotes efforts to perpetuate and enshrine white privilege, white supremacy, and white dominance. This movement includes traditional white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, along with other entities and activists that use mainstream politics and academic-sounding language.

page 11 for more).

White nationalism is a political and social movement that uses racism and anti-Semitism to promote an all-white ethno-state. Those in the movement espouse that the United States was founded by and for people of white European heritage. It promotes efforts to perpetuate and enshrine white privilege, white supremacy, and white dominance. This movement includes traditional white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, along with other entities and activists that use mainstream politics and academic-sounding language. While hardcore white nationalists overtly advocate for creating a white ethno-state, those more toward the political mainstream pursue policies to expel or criminalize communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.

When it comes to TPUSA, former staffers and the group's history provide examples of its connections to racism and white nationalism. Chapter leaders and staffers have been fired for racist comments, downplayed the evils of Adolph Hitler, and made light of slavery. TPUSA leaders have also testified before Congress that white nationalism isn't a threat to this country, even as the [FBI treats white nationalism as a priority when it comes to national security](#).

## The Backstory of Charlie Kirk and TPUSA

Based in Illinois, Charlie Kirk formed TPUSA in 2012, just one day after graduating from high school.<sup>4</sup> TPUSA says its mission is to recruit and organize students to “promote the principles of freedom, free markets, and limited government.” TPUSA is better funded and offers more training and resources to campus conservatives than does the traditional College Republicans model.

It frequently holds and helps students attend national gatherings and trainings, including students from Montana (see “TPUSA Chapters in Montana” on page 15 for more). The group also supports Far-Right students running for leadership positions on campuses; however, TPUSA isn’t limited to just campuses.<sup>5</sup> Through Kirk’s close relationship with President Trump, he and TPUSA’s influence extends far and wide in the conservative movement.

One journalist described Kirk as:

“handsome and bronzed in the instantly recognizable style of the American frat boy, complete with a Ken Doll haircut. On stage, he wears a dress shirt and well-tailored suit pants, holding the attention of the audience with the swagger of a hedge fund manager.”<sup>6</sup>

Kirk grew up outside of Chicago and says he dreamed of attending West Point, but he claims he lost his slot because of affirmative action.<sup>7</sup> This feeds into an idea he and TPUSA repeat constantly – that white



Charlie Kirk  
Founder of TPUSA

people are the true victims of discrimination.

After failing to get into West Point, Kirk deferred college at Baylor University, took classes at a community college, and started recruiting donors to launch TPUSA.<sup>8</sup> Kirk likes to claim to be self-made, but it was a 70-year-old Tea Party acolyte who made it possible.<sup>9</sup> William Montgomery saw Kirk speak at an event and introduced him to prominent conservative donors, including Bruce Rauner (who would eventually be Illinois’ governor) and tech billionaire and current U.S. Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-MT), who provided seed funding for TPUSA.<sup>10</sup>

With the backing of right-wing millionaires, Kirk began building TPUSA to wage political warfare on campuses. TPUSA’s and Kirk’s profiles started to rise as they embraced Donald Trump. Tax records show TPUSA reporting modest contributions in 2012, totaling just under \$80,000. Following the 2016 presidential election cycle during which Kirk did social media outreach for the Trump campaign, TPUSA jumped to over \$8.2 million in contributions. By 2017, the number was over \$10.8 million, and TPUSA reported it had over 300 employees.

This growth in resources and public profile has resulted in Kirk being called “a rock star among millennial conservatives,” a “conservative boy wonder,” and “the future of conservative politics.”<sup>11</sup> President Trump has called him “a great warrior,” and he has become close with members of the Trump family.<sup>12</sup> This increased profile has led to increased scrutiny which has resulted in consistent claims that Kirk and TPUSA do their work in unethical and racist ways.

While dealing with the constant charges of racism and accusations from within the conservative movement, Charlie Kirk and TPUSA continue targeting campuses. Part of their strategy includes a website targeting professors and attempting to bring outside money into campus elections.

### Harassing Higher Ed with “Professor Watchlist”

TPUSA organizes conservative students on campus and helps Far-Right activists off campus put pressure on educators. TPUSA runs a “Professor Watchlist,” a website used to intimidate non-conservative professors. The site allows students to report professors who “advance a radical agenda in lecture halls.”<sup>13</sup> Launched in November 2016, the website quickly listed nearly 200 profes-

sors. Political Research Associates [notes](#) that this TPUSA venture fits with a broader campaign by the white nationalist “alt-right” to silence and intimidate academics. For professors, the real problems start when they get listed:

“Once a professor is on the Alt Right’s radar, trolls pounce quickly. Their attacks are personal and vicious and, for the period they last—anywhere from a few weeks to several months—unrelenting. Most attacks occur in cyberspace, but some bleed into real life.”<sup>14</sup>

About a month after the Watchlist went live, University of Montana Professor Tobin Miller Shearer found himself on it. The site claimed Shearer’s transgression was a lecture about the history of white privilege. While TPUSA says the Watchlist isn’t meant to be threatening, Shearer disagreed. “They can’t pretend that it’s not,” he said. “You’re responsible for the rhetoric and the people that you’re pointing out.”<sup>15</sup>

Kirk recently told *Voices of Montana* that most professors “have total and complete unfiltered venom for America.”<sup>16</sup> By implying professors are enemies of the state, TPUSA makes them targets for reprisal and facilitates harassment.

### Money and Electioneering On and Off Campus

TPUSA is set up as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, which means it cannot engage in partisan politics by endorsing candidates or working on campaigns. However, the organization has channeled money into elections on campuses without regard to rules around transparency.<sup>17</sup> *The New Yorker* noted this raises “the prospect that ‘dark money’ may now be shaping not just state and federal races but ones on campus.”<sup>18</sup>

At the University of Maryland and Ohio State, student candidates backed by TPUSA were forced to withdraw from elections for violating spending rules and hiding campaign support from TPUSA.<sup>19</sup> While TPUSA touts its success with campus elections, reporters have found some of the students backed by TPUSA flatly con-

demn the group.<sup>20</sup>

Outside of student elections, former TPUSA staffers allege the group assists Republican political campaigns, including the 2016 presidential runs by U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and U.S. Sen. Marc Rubio (R-FL).<sup>21</sup> An investigation by *The New Yorker* found TPUSA staffers outlining coordination between TPUSA leadership and the campaigns. This included giving the campaigns volunteer lists from TPUSA, and the campaigns sending TPUSA staffers signs to distribute.<sup>22</sup> *The New Yorker* also found e-mails between Charlie Kirk and a leader of a pro-Cruz PAC about sending students the PAC’s way.<sup>23</sup>

### Kirk’s Musings on Race

TPUSA has consistently attracted staffers, interns, and chapters that have espoused racist and anti-Semitic ideas (see “Incident of Racism and Anti-Semitism Plague TPUSA” on page 11 for more). While Kirk is careful when speaking in public, he frequently deploys dog whistle racism. Kirk criticizes black and brown communities regularly which, over time, sends a message that white people are superior. While overt white nationalists like [Richard Spencer](#) have also targeted campuses, Kirk’s approach, which relies on dog whistles rather than racist bullhorns, is much better received.

Kirk uses social media to push anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim messages.<sup>24</sup> He has also spoken at events sponsored by [ACT for America](#), the country’s largest anti-Muslim organization, which is designated a hate group. The group’s leader [Brigitte Gabriel](#) says all Muslims are terrorists out to destroy Western Civilization.<sup>25</sup> ACT featured Kirk as a speaker at its 2018 national conference. Gabriel tweeted, “We hope to partner with [TPUSA] for years to come!”<sup>26</sup>

Kirk and TPUSA amplify the misinformation and vitriol directed at immigrants. He’s used distorted data to falsely claim that undocumented immigrants are criminals and drains on government programs.<sup>27</sup> TPUSA also released a video titled *Build. The. Wall.* that features Kirk repeating Trump-type appeals for a wall along the southern border.<sup>28</sup>

During a presentation at Colorado State, Kirk called the concept of white privilege inherently racist. White



Charlie Kirk is a frequent speaker at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference.

privilege refers to the inherent advantages that white people have in a society where they are the largest demographic. “White privilege is a myth and a lie,” Kirk said. “It should be completely destroyed.”<sup>29</sup> Outside the event, the Neo-Nazi [Traditionalist Worker Party](#) skirmished with students who had shown up to protest Kirk’s appearance.<sup>30</sup>

Considering he dismisses white privilege and institutional racism, it’s not surprising that Kirk frequently relies on tried and true racist tropes when it comes to discussing black America. He’s claimed a “broken culture problem” with absent fathers in the black community causes gun violence.<sup>31</sup> He’s also minimized police brutality by blaming the black community for being violent.<sup>32</sup>

### **Fearmongering about the Campus Left**

While the conservative movement continues to spread conspiracy theories that Democrats are socialists out to destroy the country, Charlie Kirk and TPUSA focus their fearmongering more specifically on how left-wing ideologies have supposedly made campuses dangerous for conservative students. He tells conservative

audiences that the “future of western civilization will be won on college campuses.”<sup>33</sup>

Kirk spreads these views across the country, from local events like the upcoming ones in Kalispell and Yellowstone County to national venues, such as the Republican National Convention and the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). At the 2019 CPAC, Kirk claimed the political Left “has always hated America.” He raged against the notion that liberals are well intentioned and just misguided. “If you want to fundamentally transform and destroy this country from within, you do not mean well,” he seethed. “You [Democrats and liberals] do not have good intentions.”<sup>34</sup>

In his CPAC remarks, he reinforced why he thinks TPUSA is so important. He complained that young people aren’t learning conservative views. The socialist movement, he stated, is growing on campuses and creating “a generation that hates this country.”

Despite the challenges, Kirk said campuses can save and correct American culture. “What happens on campus,” he promised, “will eventually come to Congress.”<sup>35</sup> Kirk’s message is clear: TPUSA is dedicated to forcing popular culture to take a hard-right turn and political power will follow.

## Candace Owens: TPUSA's Ousted Apologist and Conspiracy Theorist

In examining TPUSA, Charlie Kirk isn't the only leader worth discussing. Former Communications Director Candace Owens also played a significant role in the group during her tenure, serving as TPUSA's most prominent spokesperson. Owens skyrocketed to fame as a conservative black political activist who, like Kirk, adamantly supports and defends President Trump. In 2019, the *Washington Post* called her "The New Face of Black Conservatism." She represents a small portion of black Americans. Only 8% of black voters identify as Republican, Trump's approval rating with black voters hovers around 10%, and only 4% of black women voted for Trump in 2016.

A media watchdog group has noted that, also like Kirk, Owens' "ascent to conservative fame" is based on "wildly inaccurate assertions."<sup>36</sup> Owens has made her name bashing the black community for supporting the Democratic Party. She's also claimed racism and white nationalism are no longer problems in the country. Along the way, Owens has been an apologist for Adolph Hitler, derailed Congressional hearings examining white nationalism, courted then been dissed by music mogul Kanye West, and created "Blexit," which is an effort to get black people to leave the Democratic Party.

### Backstory of Candace Owens

Candace Owens attended high school in Stamford, Connecticut. She studied journalism at the University of Rhode Island but dropped out after her junior year.<sup>37</sup> Later, while working at a private equity firm, Owens tried to launch a website that critics claimed would make it easy to dox people.<sup>38</sup> She decided her critics were liberals posing as Trump supporters who didn't want to be "unmasked."<sup>39</sup> She's said this was her "red pill moment," a reference to *The Matrix* used frequently by the alt-right to indicate that its followers "know the truth" about what is really going on in America.<sup>40</sup>

The only publication to write a story from her perspective was the alt-right Breitbart News.<sup>41</sup> "It changed everything for me," she said. Owens started reading the publication every day and went down the Far-Right rabbit hole.<sup>42</sup>

Owens started posting videos online with controversial titles that played into her emerging ideas – rac-

ism and white nationalism aren't problems and the black community should view Democrats/liberals as enemies. Titles of videos included "I Don't Care about Charlottesville, the KKK or White Supremacy" and "How to Escape the Democrat Plantation."<sup>43</sup>

Using the moniker "Red Pill Black," she appeared on Far-Right conspiracy monger [Alex Jones'](#) Infowars program.<sup>44</sup> After some of her videos went viral online, Owens spoke at a Far-Right event in Florida where Charlie Kirk saw her and hired her on the spot as Communications Director for TPUSA.<sup>45</sup> She worked for TPUSA from 2017-2019 and became, arguably, its most famous spokesperson, even more so than Charlie Kirk.

During her time with TPUSA, Candace Owens, like Kirk, was always ready to promote and defend President Trump, even calling him not "just the leader of the free world, but the savior of it as well."<sup>46</sup> As the Trump Administration continued to push policies long supported by white nationalists, Owens' voice was integral in trying to downplay concerns that the administration was stoking racial tensions.

For instance, after [Trump referred to African nations as "shithole countries,"](#) Owens said she didn't understand why people found the comment racist. "They are shitholes," she said.<sup>47</sup> She's defended Neo-Nazis and insisted President Trump hasn't proposed harmful policies or made offensive remarks toward the black community.<sup>48</sup> [When a Trump supporter sent bombs](#) to leading Democratic public figures in October 2018, Owens claimed it was a false flag operation. She tweeted "there is a 0% chance that these 'suspicious packages' were sent out by conservatives."<sup>49</sup> She claimed that leftists perpetrated the bomb scare as a midterm election strategy.<sup>50</sup>

### Distorting and Denying Racism

Owens routinely condemns the idea that the struggle for equality of all people is a worthy goal and denigrates individuals and organizations working for it. The following are a few of her thoughts in these areas:

- She compared believing in racism to thinking there is "some imaginary boogeyman."<sup>51</sup>



- She called the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement “embarrassing,” because it talks about how slavery, Jim Crow, and other historical oppression have created systemic racism. She described the movement as a “bunch of whiny toddlers, pretending to be oppressed for attention.”<sup>52</sup>
- She’s dismissed police brutality against the black community as a “tiny issue.”<sup>53</sup>

Her words have won praise from white nationalists, including the one [who killed 50 people](#) during shootings at two mosques in New Zealand. The shooter said Owens was “the person who has influenced me above all.”<sup>54</sup> Owens ridiculed the idea that she could have inspired the shooter, glibly tweeting “LOL!” and “HAHA” in response.<sup>55</sup>

### Owens Says Hitler Got a Bad Rap

While her comments on race frequently draw attention, perhaps no other situation caused Owens as much criticism as her comments in late 2018 about Hitler.<sup>56</sup> During a Q&A, Owens was asked for her thoughts on the future of nationalism.<sup>57</sup> She complained that Hitler gave nationalism a bad name, and that Hitler would’ve been fine if he had limited his efforts to making “Germany great and [having] things run well.”<sup>58</sup> She said Hitler’s problem was that he “wanted to globalize.”<sup>59</sup>

When video of her remarks surfaced, Owens faced criticism for implying Hitler’s role in murdering millions of Jews, LGBTQ+ people, and other German minorities wasn’t of concern. Horrified by the Hitler remarks, chapters in Nebraska, Ohio, and Colorado called for her removal from TPUSA, but they noted they received no “substantial response” from national staff.<sup>60</sup> Owens responded by blaming the media for not reporting her words in the correct context and said she thought Hitler was a “homicidal maniacal globalist.”<sup>61</sup>

### Minimizing White Nationalism, Derailing Congressional Hearing

In April 2019, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee held a hearing to examine the rise of white nationalism and associated violence. A panel featuring experts who study violent extremism’s impact in America assembled. For their contribution, committee Republicans invited Candace Owens to testify. While the experts attempted

to share information and potential solutions, Owens frequently derailed the hearing to criticize Democrats.<sup>62</sup>

Owens maintained that white nationalist-inspired crimes were not impacting communities of color, stating white nationalism wouldn’t make her list of the Top 100 things impacting minorities.<sup>63</sup>

She also denounced the Left for pointing out her link to the New Zealand shooting carnage, claiming the Left did so because it feared her “Blexit” campaign to get black people to leave the Democratic Party (see the section “Courting Then Losing Kanye West” below).<sup>64</sup> She also made the following statements:

- “White supremacy, racism, white nationalism, words that once held real meaning, have now become nothing more than [Democratic] election strategies.”<sup>65</sup>
- “The hearing today is not about white nationalism or hate crimes, it’s about fear-mongering, power and control. The goal here is to scare blacks, Hispanics, gays and Muslims, helping [Democrats] censor dissenting opinions.”<sup>66</sup>

As the *Washington Post* put it, “If Republicans were hoping to sabotage the Judiciary Committee’s hearing, they got what they wanted. Owens’s presence turned a serious inquiry...into a farce.”<sup>67</sup> The *Post* also noted Owens’ comments didn’t represent most Americans. It cited a recent study by Pew Research Centers showing that 65% of Americans believed that, since Trump became president, it’s more common to encounter racist or racially insensitive views. Black and Hispanic respondents were about 15% more likely to affirm the statement than white people.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, the Southern Poverty Law Center noted that, if people only heard Owens comments, they wouldn’t have learned that the vast majority of extremist murders committed in 2018 were carried out by white nationalist members of the Far Right.<sup>69</sup>

### Courting Then Losing Kanye West

Charlie Kirk and TPUSA put a major focus on conservatives needing to change popular culture. One of Owens’ missteps was a huge blunder in this area. Owens publicly courted, then lost, the support of media mogul Kanye West through her “Blexit” campaign.

Owens effort to get the black community to leave

the Democratic Party wasn't just a frequent talking point. She turned it into a campaign with a catchy name – "Blexit." Launched in late 2018, Blexit stands for "Black Exit" and is meant to "free" black Americans from being "mentally enslaved" on the plantation of the Democratic Party. She officially announced Blexit at TPUSA's "Young Black Leadership Summit" in October 2018.<sup>70</sup> That's when the drama between Owens and West exploded onto the national stage.

At the Summit, as Blexit merchandise was unveiled, Owens introduced her campaign and claimed her "dear friend and fellow superhero" Kanye West had designed the campaign's logo.<sup>71</sup> Initially, Owens' claim seemed possible. West had made headlines by meeting with and supporting President Trump.<sup>72</sup> He had also tweeted, "I love the way Candace Owens thinks."<sup>73</sup> However, Owens connecting West to Blexit backfired in



Photo from The Times

*Candace Owens (right) had a very public falling out with media mogul Kanye West (left) over her "Blexit" campaign.*

a huge way.

Within days, he said he "never wanted any association with Blexit," and he realized he was being "used to spread messages I don't believe in."<sup>74</sup> Additionally, he said he was "distancing myself from politics and completely focusing on being creative!!!"<sup>75</sup> Owens attempted damage control by saying that this was all her fault. She said West's tweets were aimed only at her, apologized to him, and admitted West didn't design the Blexit logo.<sup>76</sup>

By May 2019, Candace Owens had departed from TPUSA staff, but she continues to be a featured speaker at its events. Owens served an important role for Kirk and TPUSA. Kirk even used the defense of having a black conservative in a leadership and visible role to try and blunt charges of racist and white nationalist leanings. However, the actions of people associated with TPUSA make it a shallow argument.

## Incidents of Racism and Anti-Semitism Plague TPUSA

Given the dog whistle racism and offensive statements by TPUSA leadership like Kirk and Owens over the years, it's not surprising the group has attracted people who espouse overt white nationalist and anti-Semitic ideas. In fact, white nationalists like [Identity Evropa](#) (now called the American Identity Movement) have viewed TPUSA as fertile recruitment grounds.<sup>77</sup> The problem has plagued TPUSA since its founding.

A fellow conservative group, Young America's Foundation (YAF), has accused TPUSA of "boosting numbers with racists & Nazi sympathizers."<sup>78</sup> This was one reason that YAF encourages its student members to steer clear of TPUSA.<sup>79</sup>

When these racist incidents occur, a pattern has developed. TPUSA leadership, often Charlie Kirk, will issue a strong public denunciation of racism and anti-Semitism. However, former staffers and chapter leaders have leaked internal communications showing that, while publicly denouncing white nationalists happens, often back channel communications occur whereby TPUSA mends fences with the exact people being denounced. The public condemnations are done only for public relations purposes, not because of real disagreement with the ideas.

TPUSA keeps hiring staff that say racist things. Crystal Clanton served as TPUSA Field Director and acted as the group's hands-on boss during her tenure.<sup>80</sup> Charlie Kirk called her "the best hire we ever could have made" and said she basically served as TPUSA's Chief Operating Officer.<sup>81</sup> Clanton rewarded the praise by sending a text message to TPUSA employees stating, "I HATE BLACK PEOPLE. Like fuck them all...I hate blacks. End of story."<sup>82</sup> After the text messages were publicized, TPUSA fired Clanton or she resigned, depending on whose side of the story is believed.<sup>83</sup>

The person who replaced Clanton, Shialee Grooman, wasn't much better. Among many other racist comments, Grooman once tweeted about receiving sex only from black men using the n-word and has also stated, "I love making racist jokes."<sup>84</sup>

In a *New Yorker* article discussing the Clanton fiasco, a former employee, Gabrielle Fequiere, said TPUSA fostered an atmosphere hostile to minorities. Fequiere served a stint as TPUSA Field Director and said she was the only African American staffer when she worked there for three years.<sup>85</sup> She talked about how, when she recruited black students, they would be disinvited to

TPUSA events.<sup>86</sup> She also discussed how TPUSA events frequently featured speakers who maligned the black community.<sup>87</sup> "In looking back," she said, "I think it was racist."<sup>88</sup>

In October 2018, TPUSA had a public dustup with known anti-Semite Bryan Sharpe, who appears on white nationalist podcasts. He was asked to not attend an upcoming TPUSA event, because of the bad "optics" created by Sharpe's "anti-Semitic rhetoric." While TPUSA



Kyle Kashuv worked as TPUSA's Director of High School Outreach and was a prized speaker for many right-wing organizations, until the media began reporting on his use of racial slurs.

SA staff worried Sharpe's presence could result in bad press, they told Sharpe that "none of us have a problem with you - we want you here. It's the optics. The media." In other words, the anti-Semitism and white nationalist beliefs weren't a problem. Only bad media coverage was a concern. As if this wasn't bad enough, Candace Owens also reached out to Sharpe to smooth things over.<sup>89</sup>

Leading up to its "Student Action Summit" in 2018, TPUSA received more negative coverage when the social media site Gab was listed as a sponsor of the event. [Gab](#) is a platform favored by white nationalists, anti-Semites, and other Far-Right activists. TPUSA was forced to pull Gab as a sponsor.<sup>90</sup>

Following the tragic shooting in February 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, many surviving students emerged as national spokespeople on gun issues. While other students became

leading supporters of gun control, Kyle Kashuv became a hero to the right wing as an outspoken gun-rights supporter. He used that distinction to get a position as Director of High School Outreach with TPUSA and often appeared at events with Charlie Kirk.<sup>91</sup>

Kashuv was a darling of the Right, until his history of using racist language was exposed. Leaked emails and text messages found Kashuv repeatedly using anti-black slurs and other inflammatory language.<sup>92</sup> Soon after the materials were publicized, he announced he was leaving TPUSA but claimed it wasn't related to the controversy.<sup>93</sup>

Other examples of racist incidents involving TPUSA:

- TPUSA Midwest Regional Manager Timon Prax made racist jokes in text messages and on Twitter that “made fun of black people and referred to them as slaves.”<sup>94</sup>
- A TPUSA ambassador was photographed at dinner with well-known white nationalists and anti-Semites.<sup>95</sup>
- The leader of the [Proud Boys](#) attended TPUSA's party at the 2019 CPAC.<sup>96</sup> Designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Proud Boys operate as the street fighters for the alt-right.
- Charlie Kirk and others with TPUSA have promoted and worked with supporters of the [“Q-Anon”](#) conspiracy theory, which the FBI has cited as a potential domestic terrorism threat.<sup>97</sup> Q-Anon is an updated version of longtime anti-Semitic conspiracy theories claiming that a Jewish cabal controls and is trying to undermine American government.

With all the instances where TPUSA staff have made racist comments and worked with white nationalists, it's not hard to understand why the alt-right views it as a recruiting ground. It also gives permission to campus chapters to engage in similar behavior, and there is no shortage of examples.

At Florida Atlantic University, the adviser for the TPUSA chapter was a documented white nationalist. Professor Marshall DeRosa wrote essays posted on a website affiliated

with the white nationalist [League of the South](#).<sup>98</sup> Instead of renouncing DeRosa's views, TPUSA defended him and attempted to explain away his racist statements.<sup>99</sup> A few other examples from chapters include:

- Riley Grisar, then president of the University of Nevada chapter, praised white supremacy, saying, “We're going to rule the country! White power!” and used the n-word in a video.<sup>100</sup>
- The University of Akron chapter co-sponsored a presentation by ACT for America, the nation's largest anti-Muslim hate group.<sup>101</sup>
- Members of the Florida International University chapter joked about hating Jewish people and talked about white nationalist [Richard Spencer](#).<sup>102</sup>
- Leaked social media chats found TPUSA chapter members joking about Muslim refugees raping people and discussing how they should dress up as ICE agents and assault Latina women.”<sup>103</sup>

As one media outlet noted, leaked internal TPUSA chats make “its members sound more like the alt-right than a mainstream conservative group.”<sup>104</sup>

In 2018, TPUSA's chapter at the University of Iowa disavowed Candace Owens in the wake of their fellow student, Mollie Tibbetts, being murdered. Right-wing media and political activists seized on and politicized



*Chapter leadership at Kent State University complained that national TPUSA staff were nowhere to be found after the chapter held its widely mocked event where students dressed up in diapers and pretended to be babies.*

Tibbetts' murder allegedly at the hands of an undocumented immigrant. Tibbetts' family condemned the right wing's anti-immigrant messages and cautioned against such racist reactions. TPUSA's field director "insisted" the Iowa chapter host an event featuring Owens.<sup>105</sup> The chapter board disbanded rather than do it, saying the Tibbetts family deserved respect and sympathy not "public harassment" by Owens.<sup>106</sup>

Local chapters have also complained that national TPUSA is nowhere to be found if events backfire. One of TPUSA's most infamous campus events was students at Kent State University dressing up in adult diapers to poke fun at "crybaby liberals."<sup>107</sup> They looked ridiculous and are constantly ridiculed online for the stunt.<sup>108</sup>

The chapter president at the time, Kaitlin Bennet, ended up resigning. She said TPUSA was comprised of "some of the most incompetent, lazy, and downright dishonest people I have ever encountered."<sup>109</sup> She blasted TPUSA's leadership for taking "zero responsibility" in the aftermath of the diaper event.<sup>110</sup>

Chapters follow the example set by national TPUSA when it comes to expressing racist ideas and working with white nationalists. However, some have begun distancing themselves from the national organization and criticizing the national group for not supporting local chapters.

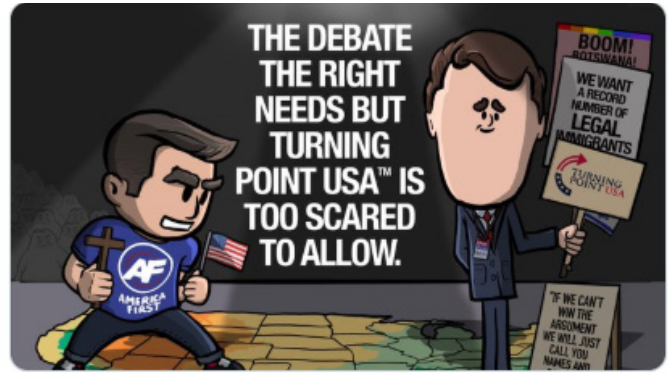
### When Dog Whistle Racism Isn't Enough

As TPUSA history shows, it plays a game of footsy with hardcore white nationalists, and some white nationalists praise Kirk and TPUSA for pushing their issues (building the Border Wall, deporting immigrants, ending affirmative action, etc.).<sup>111</sup>

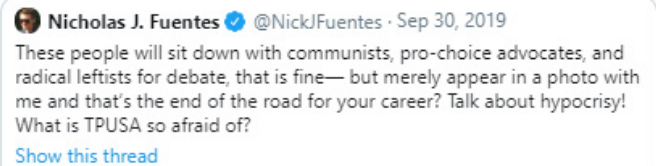
These white nationalists view TPUSA as a vehicle to introduce young people to racist concepts who can then be moved to harder white nationalist platforms.<sup>112</sup> However, other hardcore white nationalists have started to rebel against the "softer" and coded language used by Charlie Kirk and TPUSA on campuses.

Starting in October 2019, these white nationalists started turning up at TPUSA events and disrupting them. Leading the charge is racist and anti-Semitic podcaster Nicholas Fuentes, who was upset about perceived slights from Kirk and TPUSA.<sup>113</sup>

Fuentes supporters have dubbed themselves the "Groyper Army," which refers to a meme depicting a racist version of the "[Pepe the Frog](#)" character hijacked by the alt-right a few years ago.<sup>114</sup> The Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights describes the Groyper Army this way:



Nicholas J. Fuentes and Charlie Kirk



*Nicholas Fuentes and his Groyper Army have started trolling TPUSA both at events and on social media for peddling a toned down version of white nationalism.*

"Like the 'alt-right' before it, the 'groyper' mobilization is not a new social movement, but rather a flashpoint in the latest mainstreaming strategy deployed by white nationalists. If the 'alt-right' strategy most associated with Richard Spencer sought to pull disaffected reactionaries and misogynists outside the Republican Party into the white nationalist fold, the 'groyper war' is aimed at pressing Donald Trump and Trump-backing conservatives to adopt the core issues and political framings of white nationalists in the lead-up to the 2020 election and beyond."<sup>115</sup>

Groypers have shown up at TPUSA events and tried to takeover Q&A sessions to deploy Far-Right talking points and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in the form of questions to the speakers.<sup>116</sup> As TPUSA started telling speakers to either not answer questions, or not hold Q&A sessions, the Groypers position themselves as the "legitimate conservatives" who are truly carrying Trump's mantle.<sup>117</sup> If speakers denounce white nationalism and anti-Semitism, the Groypers claim the person is really part of the political Left.<sup>118</sup> The result, as Right Wing Watch describes it, is:

"...white nationalist organizers can si-

phon impressionable young people out of more establishment-aligned groups and into the hate movement.”<sup>119</sup>

TPUSA has lost some campus chapter leaders to Fuentes in the fight, including Jaden McNeil at Kansas State.<sup>120</sup> McNeil announced he was leaving TPUSA and forming a new campus organization called “America First Students.”<sup>121</sup> McNeil said TPUSA no longer reflected his views and blasted TPUSA for telling chapters that certain topics were off limit.<sup>122</sup>

As the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights notes:

“Turning Point USA’s problems are in many ways endemic to its own politics – that is, it is difficult to engage in racist politics without attracting a variety of racists. Consequently, as TPUSA rose in stature, the group caught the attention of white nationalists as a potential front for cultural organizing.”<sup>123</sup>

## TPUSA Chapters in Montana

Way back in 2013, Charlie Kirk spoke at the Montana Republican Party Convention. He warned Republicans they were “blowing it” with young voters and had ceded campus work to President Obama and the Left.<sup>124</sup> Within a couple years, TPUSA had chapters on a few Montana campuses of higher education.

TPUSA currently lists three Montana chapters on its website: Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC), Montana State University (MSU), and University of Montana (UM). MHRN confirmed with FVCC that TPUSA doesn’t currently have a chapter at the school. The chapters at the two major universities in the state have had varying levels of activity.

The information listed for these chapters on the TPUSA website seems outdated, as some of the students have graduated. Regardless of the status of the chapters and the students listed on TPUSA’s website, it’s worth looking at their activism, as many have attended national TPUSA events and supported divisive efforts on campuses and in the communities where they live. It also demonstrates the presence TPUSA has on campuses in Montana.

### Flathead Valley Community College

In February 2020, MHRN confirmed with FVCC that TPUSA is not a recognized student group on campus, even though it is listed as one on the TPUSA website. TPUSA lists one student, Braxton Mitchell, as holding all the officer positions for the chapter. While he did attend FVCC in the past, Mitchell is no longer enrolled and has told community members he left because the school was too liberal. Mitchell is well-known in recent years to the gun rights movement in Montana, and he epitomizes the type of young person TPUSA wants to recruit and develop.

Braxton Mitchell is 19 years old and currently running for the Montana House of Representatives. His Face-

book campaign page says he’s a “true conservative.”<sup>125</sup> Sounding like Charlie Kirk, he plans to fight against “the socialism brewing in America” and touts himself as a capitalist who believes in free markets.<sup>126</sup> However, with Mitchell, it always comes back to guns. He was Montana’s version of Kyle Kashuv, the Florida student who made his name supporting gun rights. In fact, Mitchell had the chance to meet Kashuv at a TPUSA event.<sup>127</sup>

In March 2018, students across the country planned to raise awareness about gun violence in schools and to memorialize the students killed during the shooting at Florida’s Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. At Columbia Falls High School, Mitchell had a different

idea. He organized about 50 students to stand on the opposite side of the street from his classmates with signs and hats supporting President Trump and gun rights.<sup>128</sup>

“We realize that the walkout to memorize the victims is also a promotion of gun control,” said Mitchell.<sup>129</sup> The photo of Mitchell and his group decked out in their MAGA gear spread quickly across social media. Online, Mitchell said, “People are pissed at us, but people worldwide are for us.”<sup>130</sup>

The walkout wasn’t the end of Mitchell’s gun activism. In March 2018, he attended a gun rights

rally held outside the Helena Capitol wearing a T-shirt reading, “Pro-Life, Pro-God, Pro-Gun.”<sup>131</sup> By April 2018, Mitchell had organized the “Rally for Our Rights” in Kalispell, which was part of a national day of action supporting gun rights.<sup>132</sup> He secured the militia “news” outlet Northwest Liberty News to record the event and the support of the militia-based [Oath Keepers](#).<sup>133</sup>

At the rally, Mitchell said his activism was standing up to “an attack on our God-given freedom.”<sup>134</sup> Also speaking at the rally was Joey Chester, who had been involved with the MSU chapter of TPUSA.<sup>135</sup>



*Braxton Mitchell became very active with TPUSA. He attended the Student Action Summit as a “Special Guest” and would later become an official ambassador for the group.*

In May 2018, Mitchell organized another walkout at Columbia Falls High School to support gun rights.<sup>136</sup> He dubbed the event the “Stand for the Second” walkout, which was part of another national day of action.<sup>137</sup> The national events were backed by the Tea Party Patriots, a group that has historically harbored many anti-immigrant and racist activists.<sup>138</sup>

In 2019, he organized a pro-Trump protest at the local Women’s March, and he also attended national TPUSA events.<sup>139</sup> In May, he announced that the “Teen Student Action Summit” would be the third TPUSA event he had attended. He said Charlie Kirk is “doing amazing things” and that the “American Youth are not falling for the Left’s far-left Socialist Agenda!”<sup>140</sup> Mitchell would join about 700 students, including some others from Montana, at the event.<sup>141</sup>

The Student Summit was framed as providing tools needed to organize and recruit on campuses with the bonus of hearing from President Trump and conservative leaders. Charlie Kirk told attendees they were rejecting the stereotype that all young people are liberal, and Trump reinforced the notion, saying, “You are the only real rebels left in this country.”<sup>142</sup>

The Summit made headlines because, during a presentation by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, the students started chanting, “Lock Her Up!,” a favorite chorus at Trump rallies directed at former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.<sup>143</sup> Sessions faced criticism for responding to the chant by laughing.<sup>144</sup> Kirk defended the students, saying the chant was part of fighting the “culture war.”<sup>145</sup>

By the end of May 2019, Mitchell announced he had “officially signed” on with TPUSA as an ambassador, and that he would be attending TPUSA’s “Young Women’s Leadership Summit” in Dallas as a “Special Guest.”<sup>146</sup> The Women’s Leadership event also made headlines for controversy. Shortly before the Summit, Candace Owens declared that the anti-sexual harassment movement #MeToo was based on the idea that “women are stupid, weak & inconsequential.”<sup>147</sup> She blamed #MeToo for making men more reluctant to hire women.

While many saw it as Owens trying to drum up interest in her Summit speech, the remarks caused an immediate backlash, even

in the conservative movement.<sup>148</sup> Instead of addressing the offensive comments, Charlie Kirk did what TPUSA always does – tried to prevent bad optics at the event. He urged members to keep their disagreements with Owens private.<sup>149</sup> “Don’t publicly go after allies,” Kirk urged. “You are free to do whatever you wish obviously but don’t do walk outs or boo.”<sup>150</sup>

Mitchell would see Trump speak at another TPUSA event in December 2019, once again attending as a “Special Guest.”<sup>151</sup> Mitchell represented the TPUSA





ideal recruit by attending national events and receiving the group's version of political education. He engaged in controversial and divisive organizing in his community and engaged in the political process. And he did it all before he turned 20 years old.

### Montana State University

The biggest moment for the MSU chapter of TPUSA came in May 2019 when Bozeman hosted "Campus Clash," a roadshow featuring Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens.<sup>152</sup> Kyle Kashuv, the Florida student and gun rights activist, was also on the speaking bill.<sup>153</sup>

U.S. Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) and U.S. Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-MT) gave glowing introductions for Kirk.<sup>154</sup> However, Anne Helen Petersen of *Buzzfeed* wrote the event didn't come alive until Owens joined Kirk onstage. At that point, the event "morphed into something not unlike a practiced comedy set...[where] the punchlines, again and again, were clueless liberals."<sup>155</sup>

At the Clash and before, Owens and Kirk talked about how persecuted they are by the Left. Owens claimed the duo had to "sneak through kitchens and basements" to reach venues, because they always faced protestors. She claimed they had received threats that bricks would be thrown at them at the Bozeman event. Earlier in the day, Kirk told a local radio show that the "radical Bozeman left" would show up with weapons at their MSU event. Unsurprisingly, no protestors showed up, but as Petersen points out, "The perception of persecution is essential to the TPUSA narrative."<sup>156</sup>

Campus Clash didn't just bring Kirk and Owens to Bozeman. TPUSA's former Leadership Director and current Big Sky Field Representative Brad Fox, who lives in Spokane, WA, tabled at the event.<sup>157</sup> Fox, whose Facebook profile picture features he and his girlfriend (they met through TPUSA) sporting assault rifles, said it was difficult to find faculty advisers for TPUSA chapters.<sup>158</sup> At the Clash, an MSU student said the MSU chapter didn't have much of a presence on campus beyond tabling and giving out stickers and other swag in an effort to troll other students and create a negative reaction.<sup>159</sup>

The president listed by TPUSA's website for the MSU chapter, Courtney Stutheit, had a much lower profile than Braxton Mitchell. Stutheit lost a run for president of the Associated Students of Montana State University in 2019.<sup>160</sup> On Facebook, she's promoted right-wing articles claiming that many college professors are "in cahoots" with Communist China, along with a notion favored by the militia movement that America isn't a democracy but a republic.<sup>161</sup>

The MSU student who appears to have been most active with TPUSA is Joey Chester. Chester helped the chapter try to find a faculty adviser, while he also served as the Secretary for the College Republicans of MSU.<sup>162</sup> In December 2018, Chester attended TPUSA's "Student Action Summit" held in Florida where he posed for a picture with Donald Trump Jr.<sup>163</sup> Afterwards, he announced on Facebook that he had been wondering what to do after his failed campaign for a Montana House seat. He wrote he had "prayed about this and God is pulling at me" to engage in activism with TPUSA.<sup>164</sup>

Earlier in 2018, Chester joined Braxton Mitchell at a couple of the gun rights rallies in Montana. He spoke at the rally held at the Helena Capitol in March 2018. At



*Taylor Powell, president of TPUSA's UM chapter, is pictured at the TPUSA Women's Leadership Summit.*

the rally, he called for arming teachers in schools and advocated for being able to carry weapons on college campuses.<sup>165</sup> The following month, Chester spoke at the rally Mitchell organized in Kalispell.

While none of the MSU chapter activists did as much organizing in their community as Braxton Mitchell, they did help bring a major TPUSA event, the Campus Clash, to Bozeman. They also had a consistent presence tabling on campus and had members who ran for office.

### University of Montana Chapter

The UM chapter formed in November 2018 and is

an officially recognized student club with about 40 students engaged.<sup>166</sup> Members of the chapter attended the Campus Clash event in Bozeman.<sup>167</sup> The leadership of the chapter has trended more towards controversy, like Braxton Mitchell, than their MSU counterparts.

Chapter President Taylor Powell transferred to UM from the University of North Dakota, served as a senator for the Associated Students of the University of Montana, and was active with the College Republicans. After she transferred to UM, she contacted TPUSA Big Sky Field Representative Brad Fox who invited her to start the TPUSA chapter at UM. Powell said it felt good to have a larger conservative presence on campus.<sup>168</sup>

Powell took to heart the disgust of professors vocalized by Charlie Kirk and symbolized by TPUSA's Professor Watchlist. In February 2019, she filed a discrimination complaint with UM claiming a professor instructed students to harass Powell while she was tabling for TPUSA.<sup>169</sup> She said that students got "very aggressive" and started attacking her on a personal level.<sup>170</sup> Powell filed a formal complaint against Professor G.G. Weix with UM's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action office, saying she had experienced discrimination based on her political beliefs.<sup>171</sup>

Weix responded that there was a field component to her anthropology class, which focuses on the description of people and cultures. She broke the class into groups of three and sent them to the University Center to observe and gather information for 10-15 minutes. The assignment was designed to help students develop note taking skills. Students were instructed to be polite and respectful.

After Powell filed the complaint, the *Montana Kaimin* ran an article about a recording it had obtained that

cast doubt on Powell's story. It featured students asking Powell questions about TPUSA and her responding. There was nothing controversial about the interaction, which was confirmed by a student in a different group from the class. Weix noted there was no evidence to support Powell's claims. However, she stated, if any students had ever argued with Powell, she condemned such behavior.<sup>172</sup>

Powell's action caught the attention of national TPUSA and the White House. In March 2019, she was one of about 100 students from around the country invited to the White House to be part of President Trump signing an executive order about free speech on campuses.<sup>173</sup> She even got her picture taken with Charlie Kirk at the event.<sup>174</sup> Both Powell and Chapter Treasurer Mykaila Berry attended the Women's Summit in 2019.<sup>175</sup> The UM pair also attended another TPUSA event in 2019, while Powell went to a meeting of chapter leaders in August 2019.<sup>176</sup>

While the information posted on TPUSA chapters in Montana may be outdated, there's no question that the chapters and their students have pushed the group's ideology in Montana. Their activity has ranged from targeting professors to pushing the narrative that campuses are hostile to conservatives. They've worked with College Republicans and attended various national TPUSA events to further their supposed political education. Some of the students have also taken Charlie Kirk's advice to engage directly in electoral politics. Braxton Mitchell is running for the Montana Legislature. Joey Chester may have failed to win his legislative campaign, but he ended up taking a job with Al Olszewski's gubernatorial campaign.<sup>177</sup> Likewise, Taylor Powell is working for Troy Downing's campaign for Montana Auditor.<sup>178</sup>

## Credibility Problems Make TPUSA Bad Choice for Students

Charlie Kirk found a niche focusing on conservative campus organizing and then hitched his cart to President Trump. Whether Trump remains in office or not, Kirk is working on continuing Trump's legacy. In a recent Montana radio interview, he talked about how his new book examines how Trump's ideology and practices should become a blueprint for conservatives and the Republican Party going forward.<sup>179</sup> Kirk acknowledges that there will be a struggle in the Republican Party, with some pushing to go back to a GOP that embraced open borders, endless wars, "American weakness abroad," etc.<sup>180</sup> It's clear which side of the struggle Kirk supports.

During the radio interview, Kirk used many of his standard talking points. He described liberals as the "arbiters of chaos" and warned that we need to recognize there is "a true socialist insurgency in our country" that could elect the president in 2020.<sup>181</sup> This notion of fearing a "[socialist menace](#)" is likely to be heard over and over again during the 2020 election cycle. Listening to Kirk reinforces Anne Helen Petersen's observation during the Campus Clash event in Bozeman: "The perception of persecution is essential to the TPUSA narrative."<sup>182</sup> For Kirk and TPUSA, socialism is sold as the potential destroyer of everything great about America. It's always coming for conservatives, and they are the ones always persecuted. Without that narrative, Kirk has absolutely nothing to say.

Kirk and TPUSA don't just face challenges from the Left. Organizations that have been their allies are now starting to question, and sometimes outright condemn, Kirk's operating style. YAF has called out Kirk and TPUSA for taking credit for work they haven't done. YAF also noted that Kirk's "focus has always been on building his own brand, not strengthening the Conservative Movement."<sup>183</sup> Media Matters picked up on this same idea, describing Kirk as running TPUSA as a "profitable grift."<sup>184</sup>

YAF flat out told its student followers to avoid getting involved with TPUSA.<sup>185</sup> Reporters have also found that some of the students TPUSA touts as backing in elections have outright condemned TPUSA. Former campus chapter leaders have complained that TPUSA doesn't

provide enough support. The group had a big, public falling out with music mogul Kanye West. One opinion writer warned, "The right shouldn't let Kirk's brand of ahistorical sycophancy tarnish it further."<sup>186</sup> Clearly, Kirk and TPUSA have a growing credibility problem.

YAF also surfaced that Kirk and TPUSA boost membership numbers by including "racists & Nazi sympathizers."<sup>187</sup> TPUSA has a long history getting in trouble for working with white nationalists and anti-Semites, along with people expressing racist sentiments. This isn't surprising given the line Kirk and TPUSA are trying to walk.

The group is a great example of the "alt-lite." As opposed to the overt white nationalist alt-right, alt-lite groups don't openly advocate for a white ethno-state and try to not engage in overt racism and anti-Semitism. TPUSA, and other alt-lite groups, do push ideas and policies that are anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, support getting rid of affirmative action, etc., and represent a "softer" version of white nationalism. However, white nationalists recognize that TPUSA offers an entry point of indoctrination and hopes to move recruits to harder white nationalist groups. That's why groups like Identity Evropa and others have targeted TPUSA members on college campuses. If TPUSA continues to operate as an "alt-lite" group, it will continue to have problems. Its repeated denunciations of racism and anti-Semitism mean little when it acts as a minor league program for hardcore white nationalism.

TPUSA capitalizes on the political curiosity of young people on college campuses. Those who join and buy into the program merely learn how to use dog whistle racism and conspiracy theories to drive political discord on campuses. It's important to realize that discord doesn't stay bound to classrooms or campuses. The young people receiving this "political education" from TPUSA then take its divisive content out into the wider community. Charlie Kirk and TPUSA ultimately seek to divide us into warring camps where winning political points is more important than building healthy communities.

## Endnotes

- 1) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.
- 2) Northern Broadcasting Network, *Voices of Montana*, Feb. 28, 2020.
- 3) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.
- 4) Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018.
- 5) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About the Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) *New Yorker*, "A Conservative Nonprofit That Seeks to Transform College Campuses Faces Allegations of Racial Bias and Illegal Campaign Activity," Dec. 21, 2017; Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018.
- 8) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About the Owns," May 1, 2019; *Washington Post*, "New Conservative 'Watch List' Targets Professors for Advancing 'Leftist Propaganda,'" Dec. 1, 2016.
- 9) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About the Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018.
- 12) Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018; *New York Times*, "In Remarks to Young Supporters, Trump Falsely Calls Elections a 'Rigged Deal,'" July 23, 2019.
- 13) *New York Times*, "Professor Watchlist is Seen as Threat to Academic Freedom," Nov. 28, 2016.
- 14) Political Research Associates, "War on the Ivory Tower," May 17, 2018.
- 15) *Montana Kaimin*, "Inside the Political Classroom," March 1, 2017.
- 16) Northern Broadcasting Network, *Voices of Montana*, Feb. 28, 2020.
- 17) Political Research Associates, "Profile on the Right: Turning Point USA (TPUSA)," May 7, 2018.
- 18) *New Yorker*, "A Conservative Nonprofit That Seeks to Transform College Campuses Faces Allegations of Racial Bias and Illegal Campaign Activity," Dec. 21, 2017.
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018.
- 21) Political Research Associates, "Profile on the Right: Turning Point USA (TPUSA)," May 7, 2018.
- 22) *New Yorker*, "A Conservative Nonprofit That Seeks to Transform College Campuses Faces Allegations of Racial Bias and Illegal Campaign Activity," Dec. 21, 2017.
- 23) Ibid.
- 24) Media Matters, "Here are the Extremist Figures Going to the White House Social Media Summit," July 9, 2019.
- 25) See more about Gabriel and ACT for America here: Montana Human Rights Network, [ACTing for Islamophobia](#), 2017.
- 26) Southern Poverty Law Center, "ACT for America to Again Descend on Nation's Capital for Annual Anti-Muslim Conference," Aug. 31, 2018.
- 27) *Washington Post*, "Most Immigrants are in the U.S. Legally, Something Most Americans Don't Know," June 28, 2018.
- 28) Turning Point USA, *Build. The Wall*, Oct 9, 2018.
- 29) Politico, "Trump's Man on Campus," April 6, 2018.
- 30) Political Research Associates, "Profile on the Right: Turning Point USA (TPUSA)," May 7, 2018; *USA Today*, "Charlie Kirk Speech at Colorado State Turns Violent, Nazi Slogan Heard," Feb. 3, 2018.
- 31) Media Matters, "Charlie Kirk Blames Chicago Gun Violence on 'A Lack of Father Problem in the Black Community,'" Aug. 9, 2018.
- 32) Media Matters, "A Short History of Turning Point USA's Racism," May 10, 2019.
- 33) *Washington Post*, "Conservatives Battle the Left, Without a Clear Foe," Feb. 22, 2018.
- 34) American Conservative Union, "CPAC 2019 – Charlie Kirk," Feb. 28, 2019.
- 35) Ibid.
- 36) Media Matters, "Even Conservative Women are Shredding Candace Owens' Attack on the #MeToo Movement," June 12, 2018.
- 37) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 38) Ibid.
- 39) *Connecticut Post*, "Candace Owens: From Stamford High 'Victim' to Conservative Firebrand," Sept. 15, 2018
- 40) Ibid.
- 41) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 42) Ibid.
- 43) *Connecticut Post*, "Candace Owens: From Stamford High 'Victim' to Conservative Firebrand," Sept. 15, 2018
- 44) Right Wing Watch, "Candace Owens Departs Turning Point USA," May 2, 2019.
- 45) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 46) *Washington Post*, "Kanye West's Embrace of a Black Trump Supporter Not Well-Received," April 22, 2018.
- 47) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 48) *Buzzfeed*, "Meet Candace Owens, Kanye West's Toxic Far-Right Consigliere," May 9, 2018.
- 49) Southern Poverty Law Center, "Mail-Bomber 'False Flag' Theories Overwhelm Discourse on Terrorism," Oct. 27, 2018.
- 50) *New York Times*, "'False Flag' Theory on Pipe Bombs Zooms from Right-Wing Fringe to Mainstream," Oct. 25, 2018.
- 51) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 52) *Washington Post*, "Kanye West's Embrace of a Black Trump Supporter Not Well-Received," April 22, 2018.
- 53) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens's Presence Turned a Serious Inquiry into a Farce," April 9, 2019.
- 54) Right Wing Watch, "Candace Owens: Conservatives Must Take Over Culture, As We Did During the Renaissance," March 1, 2019.
- 55) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019; Right Wing Watch, "Candace Owens: Conservatives Must Take Over Culture, As We Did During the Renaissance," March 1, 2019.
- 56) The Daily Beast, "Candace Owens: Hitler Was 'OK' Until He Tried to Go Global," Feb. 8, 2019.
- 57) Ibid.
- 58) *Washington Post*, "One of Trump's Most Vocal Black Supporters Seemed to Defend Hitler in a Recent Speech," Feb. 8, 2019.
- 59) Ibid.
- 60) Right Wing Watch, "Turning Point USA Chapters Call for Candace Owens' Expulsion," Feb. 21, 2019.
- 61) The Daily Beast, "Candace Owens: Hitler Was 'OK' Until He Tried to Go Global," Feb. 8, 2019.
- 62) Right Wing Watch, "At House Hearing, the Right Still Isn't Ready to Talk About White Nationalism," April 9, 2019.
- 63) The Hill, "Candace Owens Tells Congress White Nationalism not a Problem for Minorities in U.S." Sept. 20, 2019.
- 64) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens's Presence Turned a Serious Inquiry into a Farce," April 9, 2019.
- 65) The Hill, "Candace Owens Blasts Hearing on White Nationalism in

- House Testimony," April 9, 2019.
- 66) Ibid.
- 67) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens's Presence Turned a Serious Inquiry into a Farce," April 9, 2019.
- 68) *Washington Post*, "Most Americans Disagree with Candace Owens," April 9, 2019.
- 69) Southern Poverty Law Center, "Accusations in a Mirror: How the Radical Right Blames Rising Political Violence on the Left," June 11, 2019.
- 70) *Washington Post*, "Candace Owens is the New Face of Black Conservatism," March 6, 2019.
- 71) Ibid.
- 72) *New York Times*, "'I've Been Used': Kanye West Says He's Taking a Break from Politics. We'll See," Oct. 31, 2018.
- 73) Right Wing Watch, "Candace Owens Departs Turning Point USA," May 2, 2019.
- 74) *Washington Post*, "'Candace Owens Says Kanye West 'Was Right to Feel Used' Over 'Blexit,'" Oct. 31, 2018.
- 75) Ibid.
- 76) *New York Times*, "'I've Been Used': Kanye West Says He's Taking a Break from Politics. We'll See," Oct. 31, 2018; *Washington Post*, "'Candace Owens Says Kanye West 'Was Right to Feel Used' Over 'Blexit,'" Oct. 31, 2018.
- 77) Right Wing Watch, "Conservative Campus Orgs Struggle to Grapple with Swarms of White Nationalists," Nov. 18, 2019.
- 78) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.
- 79) Ibid.
- 80) *New Yorker*, "A Conservative Nonprofit That Seeks to Transform College Campuses Faces Allegations of Racial Bias and Illegal Campaign Activity," Dec. 21, 2017.
- 81) Ibid.
- 82) Ibid.
- 83) Ibid; The Hill, "Clarence Thomas' Wife Hired Ex-Turning Point USA Staffer Who Once Said 'I Hate Blacks,'" Sept. 6, 2018.
- 84) Huffington Post, "Turning Point USA Keeps Accidentally Hiring Racists," April 25, 2018; Media Matters, "'We Want You Here:' Turning Point USA Bans Anti-Semitic YouTuber from Event Only Because of 'the Optics,'" Oct. 26, 2018.
- 85) *New Yorker*, "A Conservative Nonprofit That Seeks to Transform College Campuses Faces Allegations of Racial Bias and Illegal Campaign Activity," Dec. 21, 2017.
- 86) Ibid.
- 87) Ibid.
- 88) Ibid.
- 89) Media Matters, "'We Want You Here:' Turning Point USA Bans Anti-Semitic YouTuber from Event Only Because of 'the Optics,'" Oct. 26, 2018.
- 90) Right Wing Watch, "Gab and TPUSA Broke Up (But Don't Want to Talk About It)," Dec. 19, 2018.
- 91) *New York Times*, "Racist Comments Cost Conservative Parkland Student a Place at Harvard," June 17, 2019; *Buzzfeed*, "Pro-Gun Parkland Teen Kyle Kashuv Apologizes for 'Inflammatory' Racial Comments," June 17, 2019.
- 92) The Daily Dot, "Conservative Rising Star Kyle Kashuv Busted Using the N-Word a Whole Bunch," May 23, 2019; *Buzzfeed*, "Pro-Gun Parkland Teen Kyle Kashuv Apologizes for 'Inflammatory' Racial Comments," June 17, 2019.
- 93) *New York Times*, "Racist Comments Cost Conservative Parkland Student a Place at Harvard," June 17, 2019.
- 94) Media Matters, "A Short History of Turning Point USA's Racism," May 10, 2019.
- 95) Right Wing Watch, "TPUSA Cuts Ties With 'Brand Ambassador' Photographed with White Nationalists," Sept. 30, 2019.
- 96) Right Wing Watch, "Turning Point USA Parties with President's Adult Son, Proud Boys," March 1, 2019.
- 97) Media Matters, "Here are the Extremist Figures Going to the White House Social Media Summit," July 9, 2019; Media Matters, "Shortly Before Talking about the 'Jewish Question,' QAnon Supporter Says Turning Point USA Offered Him an Ambassadorship," Sept. 12, 2019; Right Wing Watch, "A New Wave Of 'QAnon' Activists Emerge From The Cult Of MAGA," July 9, 2018.
- 98) Media Matters, "Turning Point USA and Campus Reform are Defending a Florida Professor with Ties to a White Nationalist Group," April 12, 2018.
- 99) Ibid.
- 100) Media Matters, "A Short History of Turning Point USA's Racism," May 10, 2019.
- 101) Southern Poverty Law Center, "ACT for America Sets Its Sights on College Campuses with Upcoming Speaking Tour," Oct. 9, 2018.
- 102) *Miami New Times*, "IU Professors: Kick TPUSA Off Campus for Racist Comments, Rape Jokes," Oct. 17, 2018.
- 103) Ibid.
- 104) *Buzzfeed*, "CPAC 2019: Turning Point USA's Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens Are the New King and Queen of the GOP Ball," March 1, 2019.
- 105) Ibid.
- 106) Ibid.
- 107) *Miami New Times*, "IU Professors: Kick TPUSA Off Campus for Racist Comments, Rape Jokes," Oct. 17, 2018.
- 108) Ibid.
- 109) Talking Points Memo, "Kent State Activist Quits Turning PointUSA, Calls It A 'Sh\*thole Organization,'" Feb. 12, 2018.
- 110) Ibid.
- 111) Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *From Alt-Right to Groypers*, 2020.
- 112) Ibid.
- 113) *Washington Post*, "Donald Trump Jr. Event at U.C.L.A. Disrupted by Far-Right Group," Nov. 11, 2019; The Hill, "Conservatives Seek to Stifle New 'Alt-Right' Movement Steeped in Anti-Semitism," Nov. 17, 2019.
- 114) Right Wing Watch, "Conservative Campus Orgs Struggle to Grapple with Swarms of White Nationalists," Nov. 18, 2019.
- 115) Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *From Alt-Right to Groypers*, 2020.
- 116) Right Wing Watch, "Conservative Campus Orgs Struggle to Grapple with Swarms of White Nationalists," Nov. 18, 2019.
- 117) Ibid; The Hill, "Conservatives Seek to Stifle New 'Alt-Right' Movement Steeped in Anti-Semitism," Nov. 17, 2019.
- 118) Right Wing Watch, "Conservative Campus Orgs Struggle to Grapple with Swarms of White Nationalists," Nov. 18, 2019.
- 119) Ibid.
- 120) *Buzzfeed*, "Racist 'Groypers' Step up Attacks on Campus Conservative Groups," Dec. 11, 2019; Gateway Pundit, "Former TPUSA Chapter President Jaden McNeil Launches New 'America First' Student Organization," Jan. 21, 2020.
- 121) Ibid.
- 122) Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *From Alt-Right to Groypers*, 2020; Gateway Pundit, "Former TPUSA Chapter President Jaden McNeil Launches New 'America First' Student Organization," Jan. 21, 2020.
- 123) Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *From Alt-Right to Groypers*, 2020.
- 124) *Missoulian*, "GOP Organizer: Republicans Need 'Honest Autopsy' of 2012 Election," June 10, 2013.
- 125) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, Feb. 13, 2020.
- 126) Braxton for Montana, Feb. 13, 2020; *Hungry Horse News*, "Braxton

- Mitchell Files for House District 3 Seat," Jan. 15, 2020.
- 127) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, July 25, 2018.
- 128) *Hungry Horse News*, "Walk Out Part Protest, Part Memorial," March 14, 2018.
- 129) Ibid.
- 130) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, March 15, 2018.
- 131) Reuters, Photo of Braxton Mitchell, March 24, 2018; *Daily Interlake*, "Student Protests, Counter Protests Held in Montana, Wyoming," March 24, 2018.
- 132) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, April 14, 2018.
- 133) Montana Public Radio, "Pro-Gun Rally Scheduled for Kalispell Saturday," April 9, 2018; Northwest Liberty News, "Rally for Our Rights in Kalispell, MT - Braxton Shewalter," April 14, 2018.
- 134) Northwest Liberty News, "Rally for Our Rights in Kalispell, MT - Braxton Shewalter," April 14, 2018.
- 135) *Daily Interlake*, "Local Students Organize Pro-Gun Rally," April 12, 2018.
- 136) Montana Public Radio, "Columbia Falls Students Plan 'Stand For The Second' Walkout Wednesday," May 1, 2018.
- 137) Ibid.
- 138) Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *Tea Party Nationalism*, Fall 2010.
- 139) *Daily Interlake*, "Contrasting Rallies Held in Downtown Kalispell," Jan. 19, 2019.
- 140) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, May 16, 2019.
- 141) *New York Times*, "'I'm Not the Only Young Conservative,'" July 26, 2018.
- 142) *New York Times*, "A Place Where Conservative Teenagers Feel Free to Be Themselves," July 25, 2018.
- 143) Ibid.
- 144) The Hill, "Conservative Activist Defends 'Lock Her Up' Chant at Event," July 27, 2018.
- 145) Ibid.
- 146) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, May 27, 2019.
- 147) Media Matters, "Even Conservative Women are Shredding Candace Owens' Attack on the #MeToo Movement," June 12, 2018.
- 148) Ibid.
- 149) The Daily Beast, "Conservatives Turn on Candace Owens, Kanye West's Favorite Republican," June 13, 2018.
- 150) Ibid.
- 151) Braxton Mitchell, Facebook, Oct. 28, 2019; Braxton Mitchell, Dec. 21, 2019.
- 152) Turning Point USA – Montana State, Facebook, April 12, 2019.
- 153) Ibid.
- 154) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 155) Ibid.
- 156) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 157) Brad Fox, Facebook, Feb. 12, 2020; *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019; Turning Point – Montana State University, Facebook, Feb. 7, 2019; Brad Fox, LinkedIn, Feb. 12, 2020.
- 158) Brad Fox, Facebook, Feb. 12, 2020; *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019; Emma Wiley, Facebook, Sept. 15, 2019; Emma Wiley, Facebook, Aug. 5, 2019.
- 159) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 160) *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, "MSU Students Reelect Blossom, Error Forces Special Election," April 11, 2019.
- 161) Courtney Stutheit, Facebook, Feb. 11, 2020; Courtney Stutheit, Facebook, Feb. 10, 2020.
- 162) MSU Office of Student Engagement, Feb. 12, 2020; *Exponent*, "College Republicans Host Debate," April 5, 2018.
- 163) Joey Chester, Facebook, Dec. 23, 2018.
- 164) Ibid.
- 165) *Great Falls Tribune*, "Gun, Violence Rallies Trigger Emotions in Montana," March 24, 2018.
- 166) *Montana Kaimin*, "22 New Student Groups Recognized by ASUM This Year," Feb. 19, 2019.
- 167) Turning Point USA at University of Montana, Facebook, April 20, 2019.
- 168) *Montana Kaimin*, "Student Visits White House for Signing of Executive Order," April 10, 2019.
- 169) Ibid.
- 170) Ibid.
- 171) Ibid.
- 172) *Montana Kaimin*, "Audio Disputes Harassment Claim," Feb. 27, 2019.
- 173) *Montana Kaimin*, "Student Visits White House for Signing of Executive Order," April 10, 2019.
- 174) Turning Point USA at University of Montana, Facebook, March 24, 2019.
- 175) Mykaila Berry, Facebook, June 8, 2019; Turning Point USA at University of Montana, Facebook, June 27, 2019.
- 176) Turning Point USA at University of Montana, Facebook, Aug. 26, 2019.
- 177) Joey Chester, Facebook, June 29, 2019.
- 178) Taylor Powell, LinkedIn, Feb. 12, 2020.
- 179) Northern Broadcasting Network, *Voices of Montana*, Feb. 28, 2020.
- 180) Ibid.
- 181) Ibid.
- 182) *Buzzfeed*, "Charlie Kirk And Candace Owens' Campus Tour Is All About The Owns," May 1, 2019.
- 183) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.
- 184) Media Matters, "A Short History of Turning Point USA's Racism," May 10, 2019.
- 185) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.
- 186) *USA Today*, "Charlie Kirk, Founder of TPUSA, Regularly Distorts the Truth," February 3, 2020.
- 187) Young America's Foundation, Memo, May 25, 2018.