

# Anatomy of an Outrage

*Twitter and the Kathy Griffin Story in Three Acts*



Aaron Beyer    [linkedin.com/in/aaron2](https://www.linkedin.com/in/aaron2)  
[github.com/adbey23](https://github.com/adbey23)



# Prelude: An Invitation to a Beheading

On May 30th, 2017 at 2:00pm, TMZ published a photo of Kathy Griffin holding a mask that look like Donald Trump's severed, bloody head.

Shortly after, the internet went crazy...

**GRAPHIC!!**

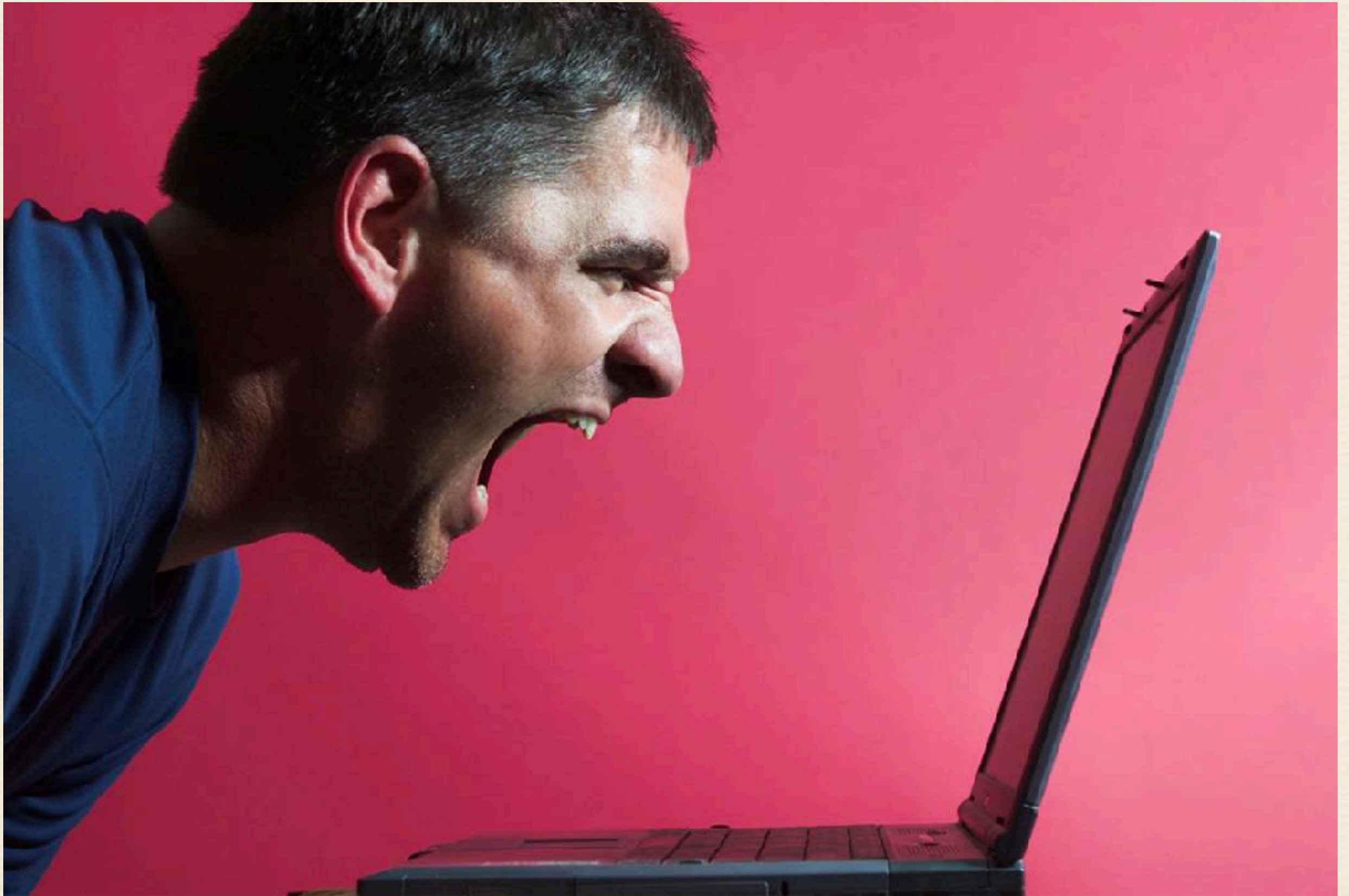


# Goals & Methods

- ❖ Use a “Case Study” to understand how people react to a controversial story
- ❖ Understand how a story goes viral
- ❖ Obtained 2.1 million tweets mentioning Kathy Griffin from May 30th to June 4th



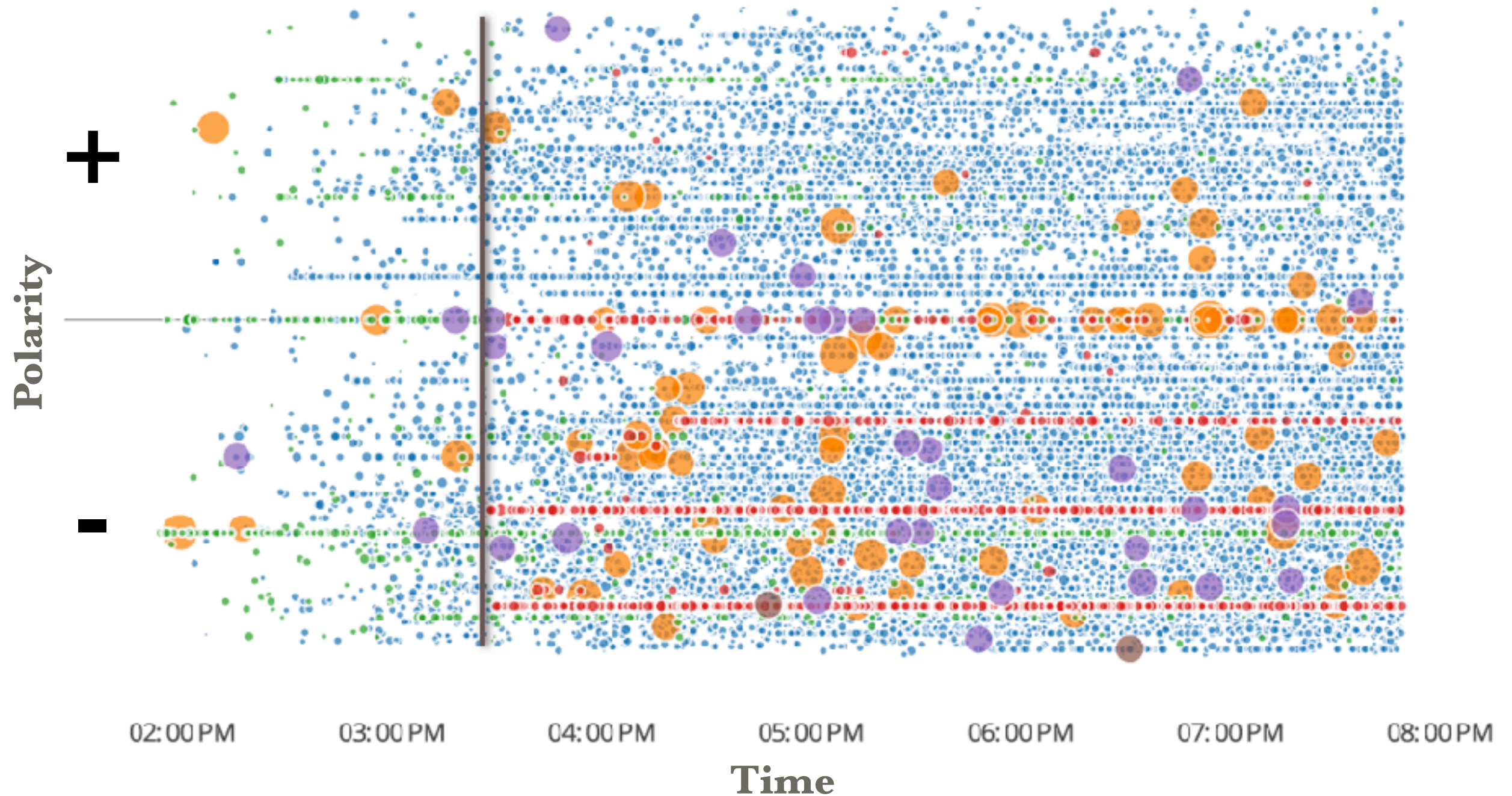
# Act I: Outbreak of Outrage





# Act I: Outbreak of Outrage

## First 100k Tweets by Type and Polarity





# Act I: Outbreak of Outrage

What were people talking about?

## Fire Kathy Griffin



Mark Dice

@MarkDice

Follow



Why hasn't @CNN announced Kathy Griffin will no longer host their New Years specials w/ @andersoncooper? Does CNN condone threats to Trump?

Show Host  
Advertiser  
Longer  
Year  
Immediately Special  
New  
Announce

# Act I: Outbreak of Outrage

What were people talking about?

## General Reporting



Alex Jones ✓

@RealAlexJones

Follow

Comedian Kathy Griffin posed for photos holding a bloody decapitated head made in the likeness of Donald #Trump

[infowars.com/cnn-contributo](https://infowars.com/cnn-contributo) ... #usa

Meltdown  
Celebrity  
Art  
Decapitate  
Conservative  
Pose  
Mockup  
Head  
Liberal



# Act I: Outbreak of Outrage

What were people talking about?

## Obama/Leftists' Violence



**Ben Shapiro** ✓

@benshapiro

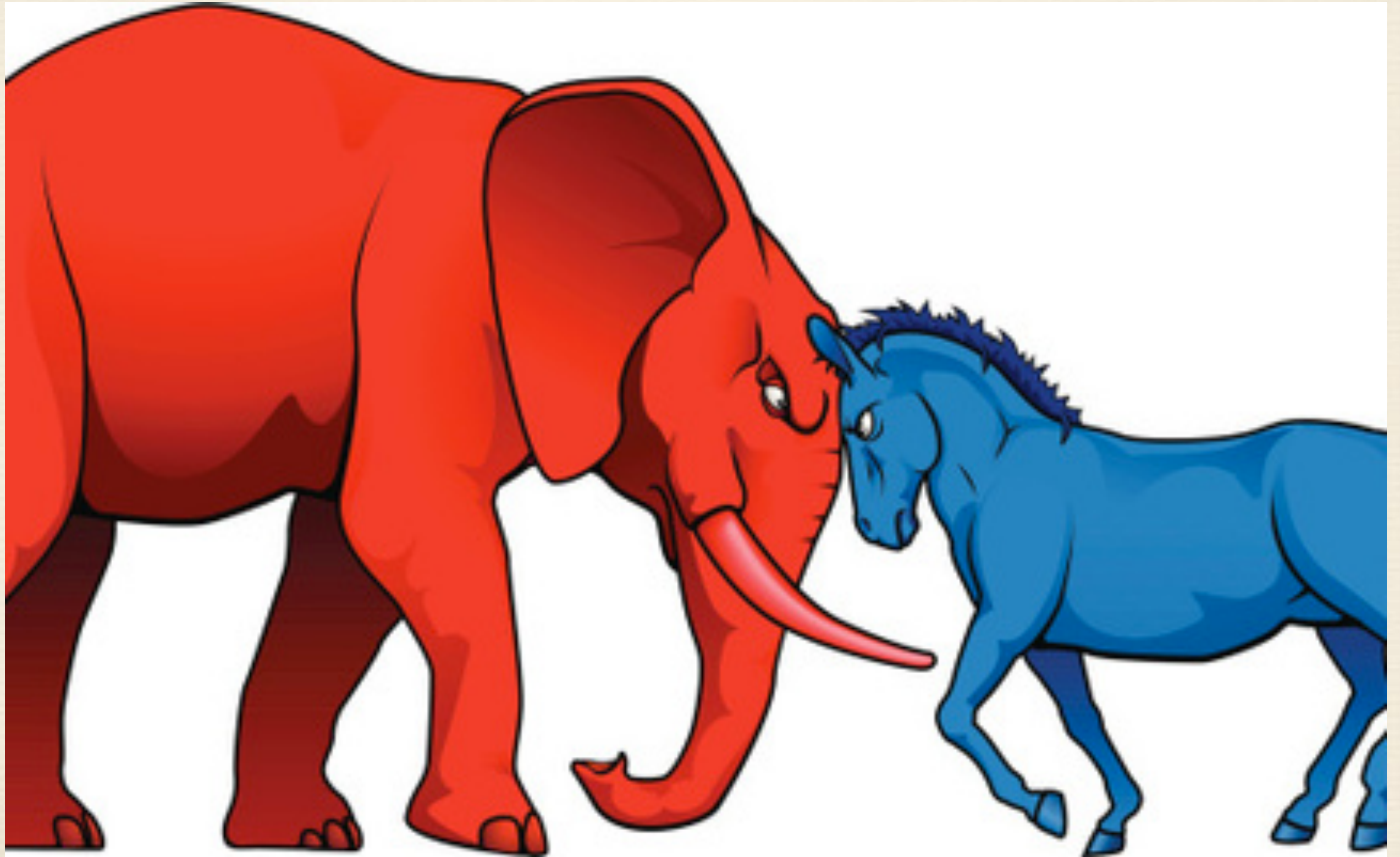
Follow

I'm old enough to remember when leftists got a rodeo clown fired for wearing an Obama mask

Rodeo Era  
Violent  
Leftish  
Clown  
Language  
Fire Obama  
Usher



# Act II: Take Sides!





# Act II: Take Sides!

How have the topics changed?

## Fired from CNN

A word cloud centered around the CNN logo. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the 'CNN' text. The words include: Obama, Appear, Clinton, Fire, Host, Career, Invite, Terminate, Year, Agreement, New, Kill, Hold, Threaten, Program, and Thing.

## Comparisons to Obama

A word cloud containing terms related to comparisons with Obama. The words are arranged in a circular pattern. The words include: Nugent, Free, Invite, Dead, Remember, Obama, Hang, Harmful, Mannequin, Ted, Left, Mad, Speech, Apparently, and GOP.

## Apology/Bullying

A word cloud containing terms related to apologies and bullying. The words are arranged in a circular pattern. The words include: misstep, ample, misspeak, reflection, bloody, photoshoot, apologize, beheading, condemn, disgust, president, and bully.



# Act II: Take Sides!

## Most Retweeted



**Donald J. Trump** ✓

@realDonaldTrump

Follow



Kathy Griffin should be ashamed of herself.  
My children, especially my 11 year old son,  
Barron, are having a hard time with this. Sick!



# Act II: Take Sides!

## Most Retweeted



**Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

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**Ricky Gervais** ✓  
@rickygervais

Follow

I hope these sensitive souls are feeling better about that awful Kathy Griffin photo. ➡



**Melissa Stetten** ✓ @MelissaStetten · May 31

Trump: My children are having a hard time with Kathy Griffin's photo.

His children:





# Act II: Take Sides!

## Most Retweeted



**Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

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**Ricky Gervais** ✓  
@rickygervais

Follow

I hope these sensitive souls are feeling better about that awful Kathy Griffin photo. ➡



**Judd Apatow** ✓  
@JuddApatow

Follow

Kathy Griffin is a great person who made an error in comedic judgment. She is not a climate denier trying to take away people's healthcare.



**Melissa Stetten** ✓ @MelissaStetten · May 31

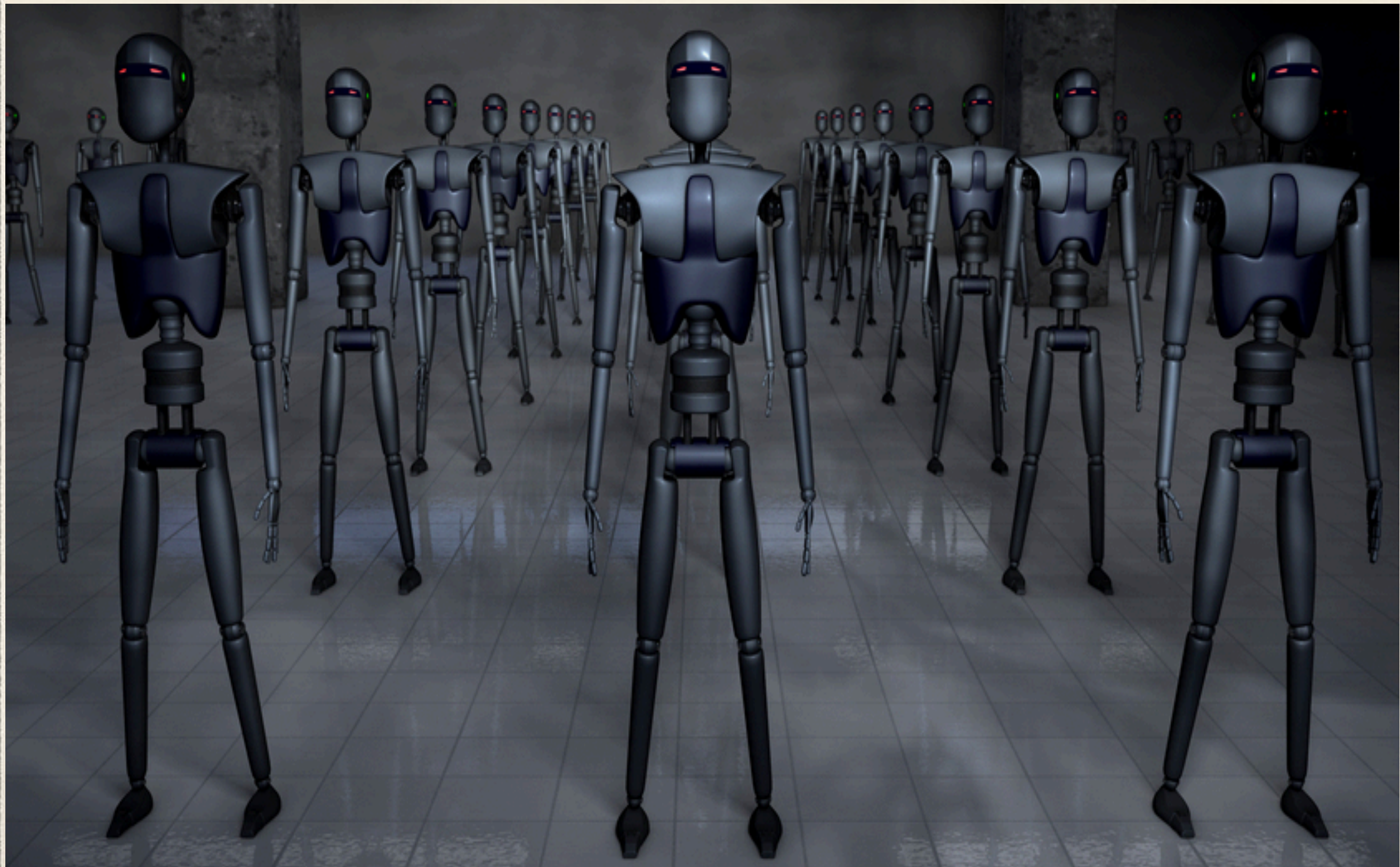
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His children:





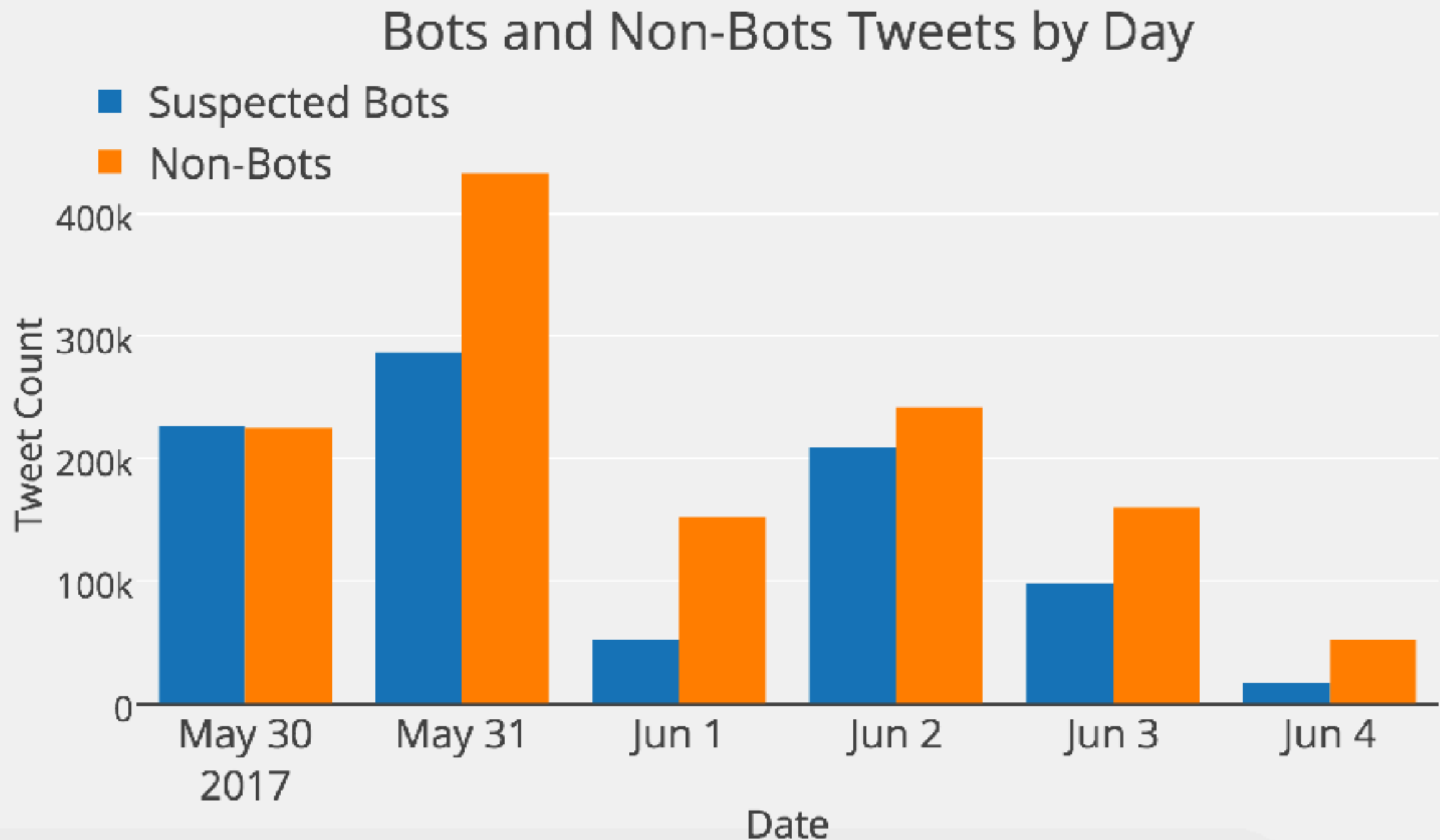
# Act III: Rise of the Bots





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Labeled around 900,000 of 2.1 million tweets as bots.





# Act III: Rise of the Bots

## Top Hashtags:

KathyGriffin

MAGA

Trump

TCOT

FakeNews

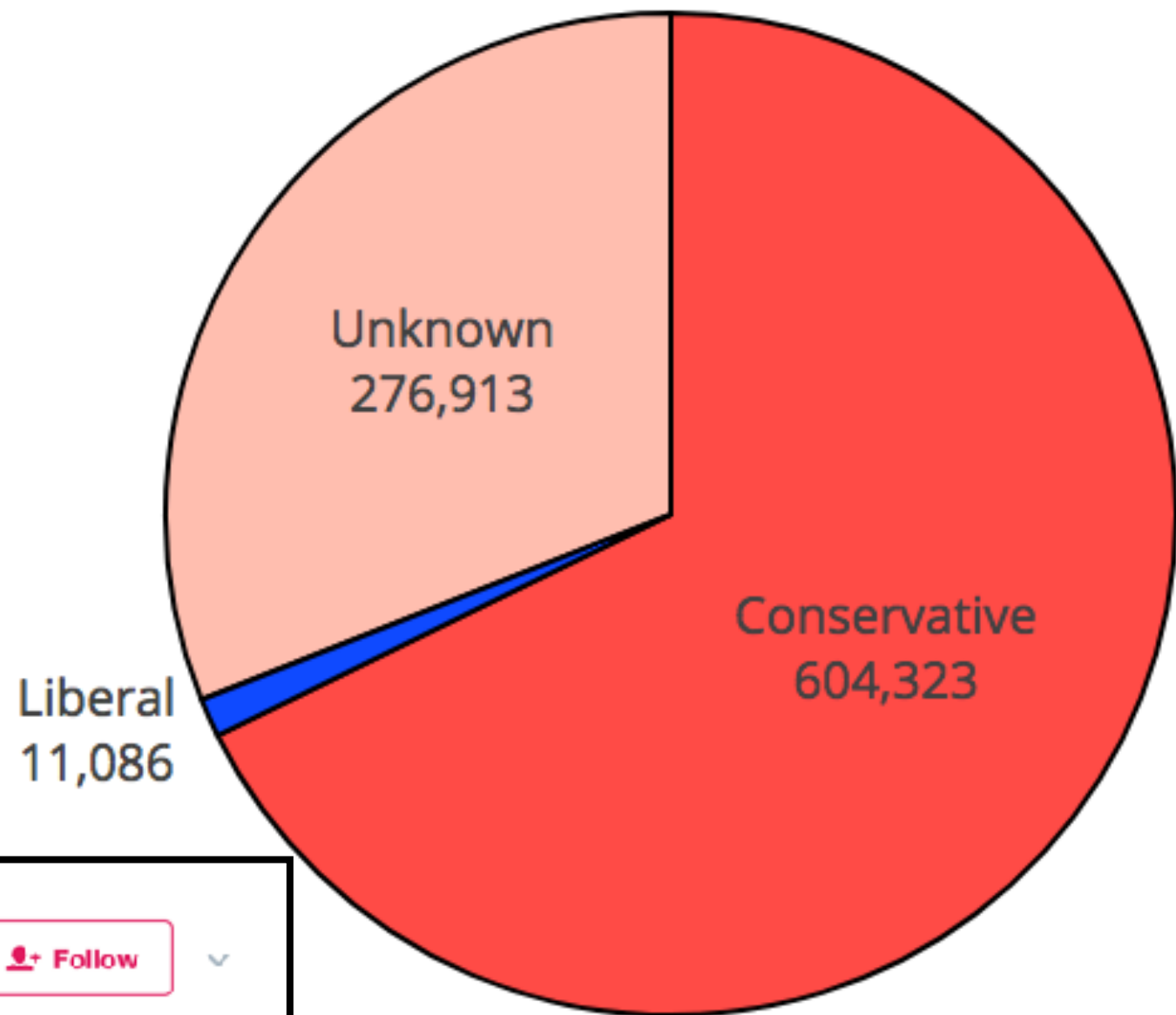
Covfefe

SethRich

CNNisISIS

Hannity

## Bot Tweets by Probable Political Affiliation



deplorable heather

@wildteenager4u

Follow

Kathy Griffin Beheads Donald Trump in Shocking Photo Shoot (PHOTO)

[tmz.com/2017/05/30/kat](http://tmz.com/2017/05/30/kat) ... @FBIIndianapolis  
@FBISanFrancisco @SecretService

# Epilogue

- ❖ Viral stories are chaotic and stay viral when they are multi-faceted
- ❖ Bots are a huge chunk of traffic and may be affecting story reach



# That's All Folks

Find out more about the story at:

[github.com/adbeyer23](https://github.com/adbeyer23)

**Aaron Beyer**    [linkedin.com/in/aaron2](https://www.linkedin.com/in/aaron2)

**Tools:**



pandas  
 $y_i t = \beta' x_{it} + \mu_i + \epsilon_{it}$

