



**The Rise of Digital Media Radicalization: How
Social Media Encourages Users to Move from
Polarization to Extremism
(January 2021)**

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Introduction

On December 4th, 2016, Edgar Welch, a 28-year-old man from North Carolina, entered Comet Ping Pong Pizza and fired three shots. Welch claimed that he was there to rescue child sex slaves, who were part of a pedophile ring run out of the pizza shop and patronized by elite members of the Democratic Party. Welch didn't come to this theory on his own. Instead, he followed a clear path of radicalization via the alternative influence network. On October 29th, 2016, the day after James Comey announced it would be reopening an investigation into Hillary Clinton's email server, a post about the PizzaGate conspiracy was added to Facebook. This theory claimed a pedophilia ring linked to members of the Democratic Party was discovered through Anthony Weiner's emails and run out of a pizza shop in DC. From there, the story spread like wildfire on social media, aided by social media bots and everyday citizens who bought into the scandal. It was amplified by right-wing media which introduced the story to new audiences, especially when during an *InfoWars* broadcast Alex Jones embraced the theory and claimed that Hillary Clinton was sexually abusing children in satanic rituals as part of #PizzaGate. [Jones' broadcast](#) inspired Edgar Welch to drive to DC and investigate Comet Ping Pong himself, armed with an AR-15 rifle and styling himself as a savior of children. While Welch was arrested and sentenced to 4 years in prison, the PizzaGate story demonstrates the danger of when conspiracy theories go mainstream.

Veteran security officials and terrorism researchers warn we are in the wake of a [mass radicalization](#), with conspiracy-minded elected officials marching alongside armed extremists at rallies. According to a [June 2020 report](#) from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Between 1994 and 2020, there were 893 terrorist attacks and plots in the United States. Overall, right-wing terrorists perpetrated the majority—57 percent—of all attacks and plots during this period, compared to 25 percent committed

by left-wing terrorists, 15 percent by religious terrorists, 3 percent by ethnonationalists, and 0.7 percent by terrorists with other motives.” Right-wing terrorism has rapidly outpaced other forms of terrorism, both in terms of the number of incidents and deaths, and those numbers are expected to rise.

The erasure of confidence in the electoral process has impacted both political parties. According to a [Monmouth Poll](#), “Before the election, 55% of Republican voters expressed confidence in the process. That has dropped to just 22% now. In fact, a majority (61%) of Republicans are *not at all confident* in the election’s fairness and accuracy now. Only 13% expressed that sentiment in late September. Confidence in the election’s fairness went up among both independents (from 56% to 69%) and Democrats (from 68% to 90%) pre-election to post-election.” Support of the American electoral system has plummeted in the past 4 years and now is tied specifically to the success of one’s own political candidate. This cognitive dissonance of the electorate cannot be understated and will impact American elections for decades to come.

Since its founding, [Civic Health Project](#) has followed a course of “reducing toxic partisan polarization and enabling healthier public discourse and decision-making across our citizenry, politics, and media.” Through its grantees, Civic Health Project funds interventions to address affective polarization, or the increased vitriol towards those with different political beliefs (as opposed to issue polarization, which is related to policy outcomes). As vitriol and polarization increase between people on the left and right, the United States runs the risk of tipping into the next stage of radicalization: extremism. Extremism occurs when one’s beliefs become so fervent that violence is seen as a justified means to achieve the ends. As extremist messages spread on social media, those ideas radicalize additional users from the comfort of their couches. As opposed to armchair activists, we run the risk of creating armchair terrorists, all radicalized through digital media. But at what period does harmless curiosity lead to radicalization and ultimately extremist violence? And what interventions can serve as exit ramps to help someone leave the path of radicalization? This paper will examine types of extremism, common entry points to extremist ideologies, the role of digital media in spreading extremist messages, and interventions for addressing the rise in extremism.

Types of Extremism and Terminology

Extremism is not limited to one side of the political spectrum. From environmental terrorists on the left (which peaked in the early 2000s), to the white supremacy movement of the alt-right, radicalization is a cross-partisan issue. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are 940 hate groups currently operating in the United States.

Before diving deep into the role digital media plays in the radicalization of extremists, it is essential to draw attention to specific terminology and groups mentioned in this research:

National Socialist Movement: The National Sociality Movement is the largest neo-nazi group in America. Founded in 1994, the National Socialist Movement has its root in the American Nazi Party and subscribes to antisemitic beliefs and white nationalism.

Proud Boys: The Proud Boys is a far-right group founded on the belief that male identity and western culture is under attack. The Proud Boys describe themselves as white chauvinists who subscribe to an anti-political correctness agenda. The Proud Boys have a highly active social media presence.

Oath Keepers: Styling themselves as ‘Guardians of the Republic,’ the Oathkeepers are among the largest anti-government groups in the United States and boast a membership of [30,000 members](#). Many members of the Oathkeepers are said to be current and former military members, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders.

Three Percenters: The Three Percenters (also known as 3%ers) have a substantial amount of overlap with membership in the Oathkeepers. 3%ers specifically focus on any attempts to limit gun ownership in America.

Patriot Front: Founded 18 days after the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA, Patriot Front split off from Vanguard America. Patriot Front focuses on nativism, white supremacy, antisemitism, and fascist messages. Patriot Front has a highly active social media presence.

2042: 2042 is the year it the United States population will be 50% White, 50% Non-White. For the white nationalism movement, this is a point of no return from a 'white genocide.'

14 Words: 14 Words refers to the white supremacist slogan, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”

Incel: Incels, or involuntary celibates, are individuals who define themselves by their ability to access sexual relationships. Drawing heavily on eugenics and lookism theories, incels blame genetic factors and societal structures for the inability to access these relationships. While the incel community is not a membership-based group in the same way as the other groups mentioned, there has been a rise in radicalization and extremist actions committed by incels. Incels committed the Toronto Van Attack and the Santa Barbara Shooting as revenge for perceived rejections by women. Incels who perform acts of violence are regularly lionized as ‘Saints,’ and there has been a rise of extremist rhetoric on incel platforms in the last few years.

Blue Pill v. Red Pill: Taken from *The Matrix*, the Blue Pill represents mainstream beliefs in society and accepting social norms. Extremists describe their journey to radicalization as red pilling.

Points of Entry into Extremism

With mass radicalization on the rise, it is important to study the entry points that lead someone down a radicalization path. Extremist movements describe themselves as a form of counterculture, standing in opposition to tyrannical oppression (whether it be racial, environmental, or society). By seeing oneself as a righteous remnant, standing up for a cause, the brain releases oxytocin. When we see clashes between extremist groups and protestors or police, it triggers the amygdala and reinforces a cycle of fear, violence, and escalation.

As users move down the path from polarization into radicalization, users reject mainstream media, either through self-selection of seeking out reinforcing narratives or seeing the mainstream media as fake news and propaganda. In turn, conventional forms of dialogue and debate become more complicated as users enter into information silos. This creates of feedback loop of radicalization.

There are multiple reasons someone may find themselves drawn to extremist rhetoric, such as political disenfranchisement, a sense of belonging, or even boredom. As one former member of the Proud Boys in Canada [wrote](#), “I’ve been asked many times why I got involved, and the answer is a lot simpler than many would imagine. I got involved purely out of boredom and having nothing to do.” Joining a movement provided an excuse to expand his social circle. As he began to regularly participate in protests, he reinforced the idea of feeling like he was part of a righteous movement, stating,

“With those minuscule numbers, it was not difficult for the counter-protesters to always outnumber us. However, I have to admit that it felt empowering. Like we were standing for truth in a sea of opposition that was deluded, angry, and resentful, willing to destroy the Canadian system. Seeing so many people show up to counter 30 guys made us feel like underdogs who were fighting for the right cause, something that the rest of the world had not realized yet.”

Others join the movement as a response to political disenfranchisement. Ryan Lo’Ree, Former Vice President of the Rollingwood Skins (a Michigan-based offshoot of the National Socialist Movement) and current Interventionist working at the International Center for the Study of Violence Extremism, [wrote](#) in his piece, “[Coming to Grips with \(True\) Reality: My Story into and out of the Far-Right](#),”

“I had just returned from the Army jobless, homeless, and broke. Life seemed to have no avenues to a positive outcome. All of my friends were doing the same old things, either using drugs or hustling in the streets. I was in search of something but didn’t know what. I was angry at the government that promised to take care of me. [...] I was ready for anything that gave me that same feeling the Army did, a brotherhood, a team, an alliance.”

Brad Galloway, a former white power skinhead, also notes how this disenfranchisement

and search for identity translated into his recruitment, [saying](#), “I was in search of an identity. He sold the white power skinhead ideology as the answer to my grievances, as to why I was not succeeding in life.”

While Lo'Ree found himself quickly promoted and leading an extremist organization, heading down the path of violence can often start in a much more subtle way. In her book, Blackout, Candace Owens draws attention to the political disenfranchisement of the right and how President Trump appealed to those voters. Owen's states,

“In his blunt, matter-of-fact way, Trump called attention to a reality that had gone unspoken for far too long: While Democrats have long acknowledged our struggles and the crimes enacted against us, they have done little to provide actual remedies or prepare us for a future that does not center on our brokenness. Trump’s speech was a call to action for anyone who dared to abandon the status quo in favor of real change. This moment—Trump’s simple question—forever altered me. I instantly felt a tide of urgency, because deep down I knew the answer to his question. Deep down we all know the answer to his question.”

Owen's describes the fight between the left and the right as one between “goodness” (representing the left), and “truth” representing the right. The fight over cancel-culture in the United States can be seen through this framing of goodness v. truth.

While right-wing extremism is a central component of this essay, extremists on the left often are drawn to extremist movements for the same reasons. Dan Weintraub wrote about what drew him into the left-wing extremist movement [stating](#),

“I was an extremist. Twice. Once when I had just graduated from college in 1985, and once when the economy tanked in 2008. I wasn’t a terrorist. I am afraid of violence. But I am convinced I could have become one if I had continued down the rabbit hole. [...]I became an extremist because I was in distress. On both occasions, my life had become unmanageable — a college graduate without direction, a young professional without a career. I was adrift, scared and confused, ashamed and defeated. And the feelings that these states of being precipitated were unbearable. [...]Enter extremism. It was a godsend. It gave me purpose and meaning. The certitude I felt, the communities I became connected to, changed my neurophysiology. I felt good again. I had a future. My nervous system was no longer jangly. I was saved!”

Jesse Morton, now known as America's first-ever former Jihadi extremist, [notes](#) that recruitment into extremist movements isn't simply believing in an organization's doctrine. Instead,

“Radicalization is a complex process. It encapsulates group and ideological dynamics, a sort of dance between individual and group psychology – where polarization, groupthink, and identity politics can transform what a rational individual would otherwise believe. Truth be told, it could happen to anyone seeking an outlet. [...] As scholar Olivier Roy has put it, [“terrorism does not arise from the radicalization of Islam, but from the Islamization of radicalism.”](#) Were I born a generation earlier, I would likely have been pamphleteering on factory

floors, mobilizing workers with the hammer and sickle. Were I born in rural America, I may have ended up a white nationalist or neo-Nazi."

Entry into extremist movements and radicalization is complex, especially since it tends to revolve more about individual psychology (boredom, loneliness, belonging, anger, disenfranchisement) instead of a specific doctrine. Acacia Deitz, a former digital expert and propagandist for the National Socialist Movement, has written extensively about how the far-right moves people from casual curiosity into radicalization and extremism. According to Deitz,

"The far-right's messaging is dangerous not just because of the ideas it spreads, but because they are able to make it appealing to people who are initially not racist or sectarian chauvinists. Many people arrive at the far-right's door simply looking for answers. Then efforts are no longer only about 'selling' a product (the ideology), but also about 'customer education,' 'targeting' an intended audience and 'evoking feelings.'"

Part of what makes extremist movements successful is their ability to present themselves as 'average joe's' standing up against tyrannical oppression and their skill at creating quick and "sticky" digital media content which resonates with users. The following section will look at the role of digital media in radicalization and the alternative influence network.

The Rise of Digital Media and the Alternative Influence Network

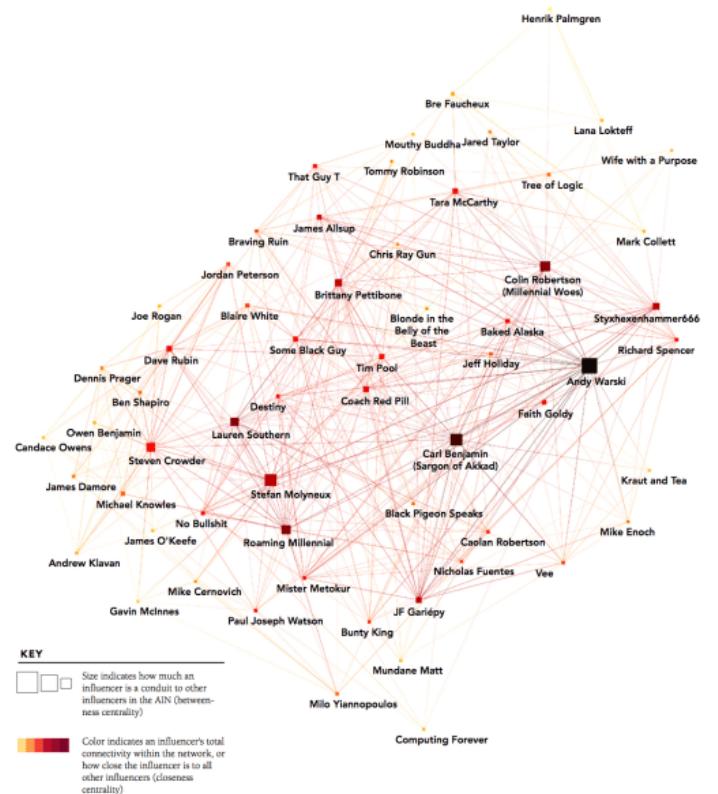
In the past decade, social media has become a primary vehicle for elected officials to communicate with their constituents. This is particularly true of the conservative movement. As Candace Owens said in Blackout, "Realizing that none of their ideas were being presented across the mainstream networks, conservatives began mining the Wild West of the early social media age and found success." But it isn't just mainstream ideologies that have found success of the digital frontier, but also more extreme ideologies.

In March of 2018, users of the white nationalist forum The Right Stuff (TRS) were asked the question, "What brought you into the movement?" The vast majority of users outlined how digital media, specifically the intersection of podcasts, YouTube channels, and blogs, ultimately led to their red pill experience. 23% of users specifically credited 4chan with helping lead them to TRS.

In the TRS forum, users described how alt-lite users (such as Joe Rogan and Ben Shapiro) were the first individuals who brought them down the pipeline from curiosity to active participation in the alt-right movement. The process of influencer radicalization is perhaps best outlined in the piece, "Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube." published by Rebecca Lewis of Data&Society in September 2018. The study identified 65 political influencers across 81 channels, which make up the

Alternative Influence Network (AIN). The AIN is "an assortment of scholars, media pundits, and internet celebrities who use YouTube to promote a range of political positions, from mainstream versions of libertarianism and conservatism, all the way to overt white nationalism. Content creators in the AIN claim to provide an alternative media source for news and political commentary. They function as political influencers who adopt the techniques of brand influencers to build audiences and "sell" them on far-right ideology."

The AIN markets itself very similar to mainstream brands on social media, creating a sense of credibility based on relatability, authenticity, and accountability. What makes the Alternative Influence Network effective is the AIN is not linked to one particular channel. It is an interconnected network of channels, from libertarian influencers to far-right radicals. As channels within the AIN often host each other, the degree of separation decreases and is ultimately reinforced by the YouTube algorithm. A graphic from the study showing the influencers which make up the Alternative Influence Network is listed below.



Since 2018, the AIN has only grown. For instance, while Joe Rogan has a relatively small level of connection in the 2018 study, his crossover level in the space has skyrocketed. One fan even created a site called [6 Degrees to Joe Rogan](#), showing how Joe Rogan intersects with thousands of individuals across the podcast network (both in

the AIN and outside of it).

In his podcast, [It Could Happen Here](#) Robert Evans outlines how America is careening towards a second civil war. In Episode 4, "How to Save America," Evans describes the danger of the AIN, specifically Joe Rogan stating, "

"Many primetime television journalists hacks think the way to do this is to provide a platform to hate-mongering nationalists like Candace Owens, others think debate is the salve for all of our wounds. [...] I think some of the most dangerous people in society right now, the people lurching us to closer to a bloody bullet-riddled calamity are fools with large platforms who provide a bullhorn for the most hateful among us and justify it by saying they are just having conversations. [...] Joe Rogan and Logan Paul come most immediately to mind. Both men recently hosted Alex Jones on their popular podcast and YouTube channel, respectively. Rogan has continued to platform Jones after the latter repeatedly threatened to expose and destroy him in a series of unhinged *InfoWars* rants. Joe Rogan does this because he considered Alex Jones a friend and because he has built a career off of hosting unhinged conspiracy theorists. Rogan paints himself as just a simple, open-minded guy willing to listen to anyone. I think if he were here right now he would say he doesn't see the harm in just talking to someone with different opinions."

Since the initial 5-hour podcast conversation between Joe Rogan and Alex Jones, this conversation has been viewed more than 25 million times on YouTube alone. Many of these users will ultimately follow Jones back to *InfoWars*. As noted in the introduction to this essay, it is the reporting of Alex Jones on *InfoWars* that ultimately led Edgar Welch to take an AR-15 into Comet Ping Pong Pizza.

But the YouTube Alternative Influence Network is not limited to Joe Rogan. In the [TRS forum](#) of red pill narratives, users mentioned 20 different YouTube personalities that lead them to the forum. The most cited YouTube Channel in TRS thread was Red Ice, a far-right news program run by husband and wife team Henrik Palmgren and Lana Lokteff. Founded in 2003, [Red Ice](#) bills itself as "an alternative to the mainstream, covering politics, entertainment, and current events from a pro-European perspective." Lokteff has been particularly influential in bringing women into the far-right ecosystem and promoting the importance of traditional gender roles. A major focus on the channel in the past few years has been antisemitism, white nationalism, and the white genocide. In 2019, Red Ice YouTube banned Red Ice due to its extremist messaging. At the time, they had 333,000 subscribers and were receiving roughly 1 million views per month on their YouTube content.

It is a growing number of young YouTube personalities that are helping to grow the alt-right digital ecosystem at an exponential rate. Millennial Woes, run by Scottish YouTuber Colin Robertson, has introduced a younger audience to narratives of white supremacy and antisemitism. James Allsup, a former president of the College Republicans at Washington State University and former campus ambassador for Students for Trump, rose to national prominence during the 2016 Election and is a popular alt-right YouTube personality. Photographed at the Unite the Right Rally in

Charlottesville and a regular guest on other platforms in the Alternative News Network, Allsup and Robertson represent a new generation of alt-right influencers indoctrinating younger and younger audiences into the white nationalism movement.

And it isn't just the content that helps drive users from alt-lite content (Joe Rogan, Ben Shapiro) down a pathway of increasingly radicalized content (Red Ice, Millennial Woes), but the algorithms built into the social media sites themselves. The YouTube algorithm uses previously viewed videos to recommend new videos in the sidebar and use an autoplay feature immediately after one video finishes. This algorithm has historically been problematic. In 2017, the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) on the problems of the YouTube algorithm saying,

"For instance, alongside a CBS News video of an interview with the brother of Las Vegas shooter Stephen Paddock, YouTube recommended a video titled "Stephen Paddock Las Vegas Gunman Was Set Up By The Illuminati CIA Occult?" Similarly, next to a Fox News video about mothers criticizing the NFL anthem protests, YouTube suggested a video titled "SHOCKING Discovery! Brother of Shooter Don't Add Up INSIDE JOB.""

The problem that YouTube faces is that the algorithm recommends content which is "sticky" and encourages users to stay on the site for longer. This because YouTube receives ad revenue from ads that run before and after each video, so the algorithm is engineered to keep users on the site for longer. As one YouTube engineer [explained](#), "The algorithm doesn't seek out extreme videos [...] but looks for clips that data shows are already drawing high traffic and keeping people on the site. Those videos often tend to be sensationalist and on the extreme fringe." YouTube began to crack down on extremist content throughout 2018 and 2020, by removing monetization opportunities for users engaging in hate speech. However, even with these new changes, the Alternative News Network plays an active role in radicalizing users on YouTube.

The reality is, YouTube is only one component of the AIN. There is an entire ecosystem of extremism online, including white supremacist dating sites, like [WASP Love](#). The algorithms of other social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok also reward content with high engagement levels. This creates a monetization of outrage. The angrier a user is, the more likely they will engage with a particular piece of content, which rewards stakeholders with monetary value. Even Google searches help radicalize young Americans. When Dylan Roof murdered unarmed parishioners in the Charleston Church Shooting, he stated, "The Trayvon Martin Case prompted me to type in the words 'black on white crime' into Google, and I have never been the same since that day." 9 parishioners ultimately lost their lives because a Google Search eventually led to their murder by a white supremacist. [Moonshot CVE](#) identified [20,500 google searches](#) in the week following the Unite the Right Rally expressing the desire to get involved in violent groups (a 400% increase over previous weeks. In addition, they discovered an 8,000% increase in searches related to joining or donating to the KKK. Even more disturbing was the significant increase in inquiries related to the desire to kill ethnic minorities. These search traffic trends were also found after the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, with a "182% increase in Google searches indicating interest in killing ethnic minorities, and a 92% overall increase in search traffic indicating

support for right-wing extremism."

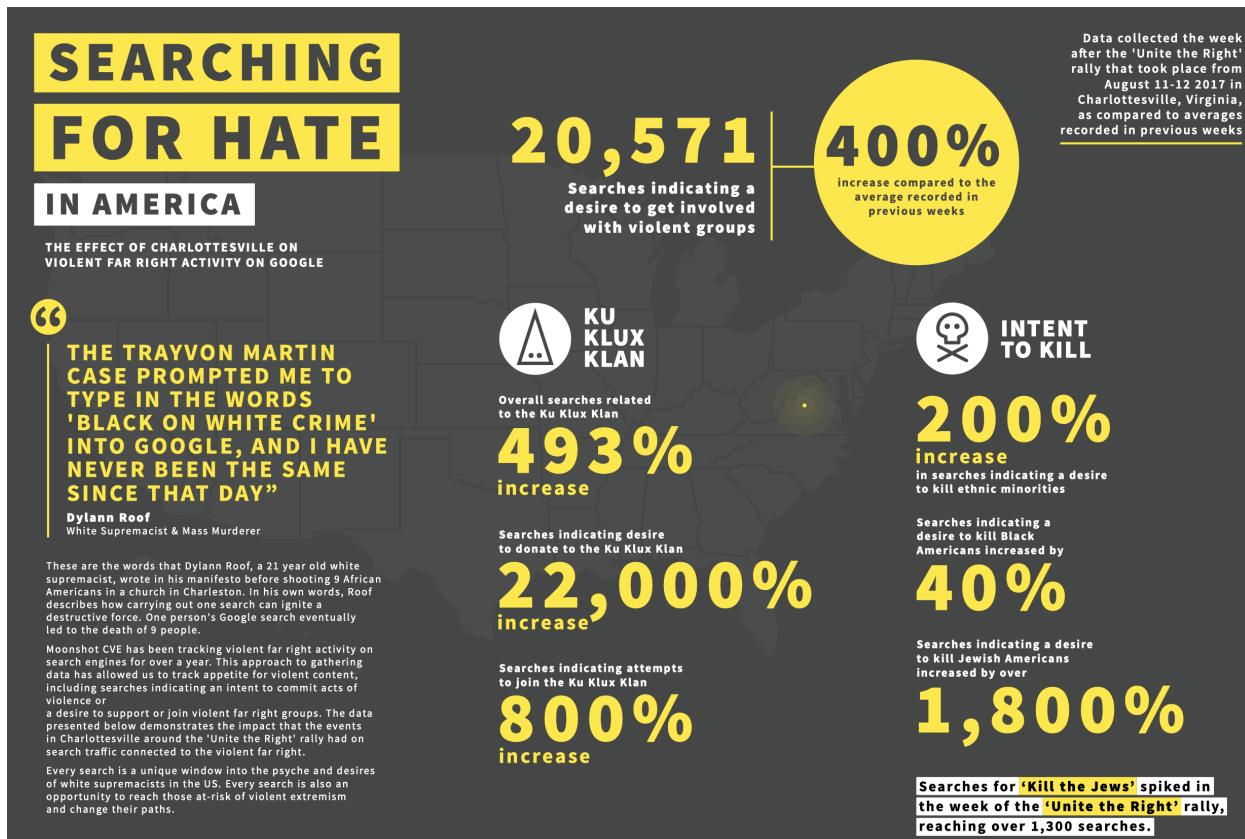


Image from Moonshot CVE, Charlottesville: The Aftermath

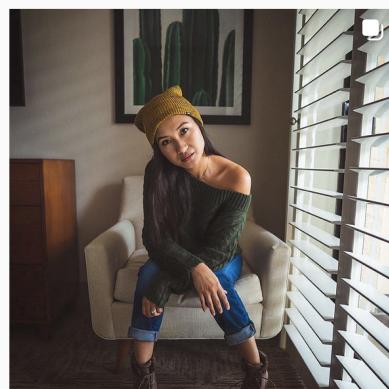
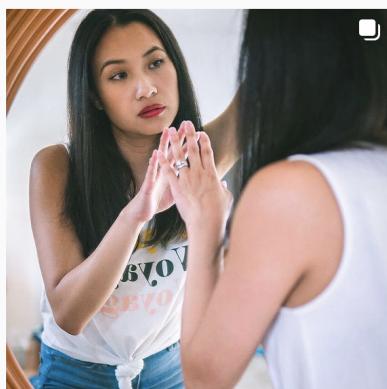
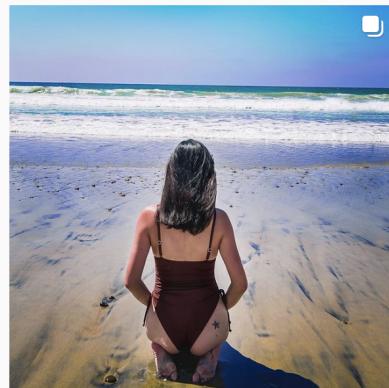
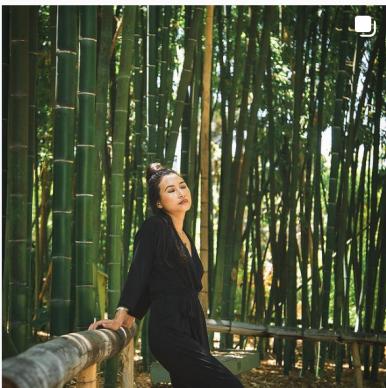
Even though Instagram is usually seen as a visual platform for wanderlust, sunset photos, and influencers, Instagram has also plays a role in radicalization. Huffington Post recently described how Instagram influencers are promoting coronavirus conspiracy theories, [saying](#),

“Kim Cohen’s Instagram page chronicles her bikini-clad adventures around the world, along with the occasional inspirational quote and photo of her Yorkie, Peanut — standard content for a travel blogger and influencer like herself. But in mid-March, as much of the world awoke to the severity of the COVID-19 crisis, Cohen’s more than 100,000 followers noticed a drastic change in her feed: The 34-year-old abruptly pivoted from sharing filtered beach selfies to blasting out terrifying coronavirus conspiracy theories. In lieu of her typical brand-sponsored posts, Cohen has spent the past two months railing against supposed collusion between the media and a cabal of “deep state” actors, trying to discredit Dr. Anthony Fauci and other public health officials, championing bogus science and amplifying falsehoods about the purported health effects caused by 5G technology. Her social media channels have morphed into open fan pages for [QAnon](#), a violent conspiracy movement [that falsely](#)

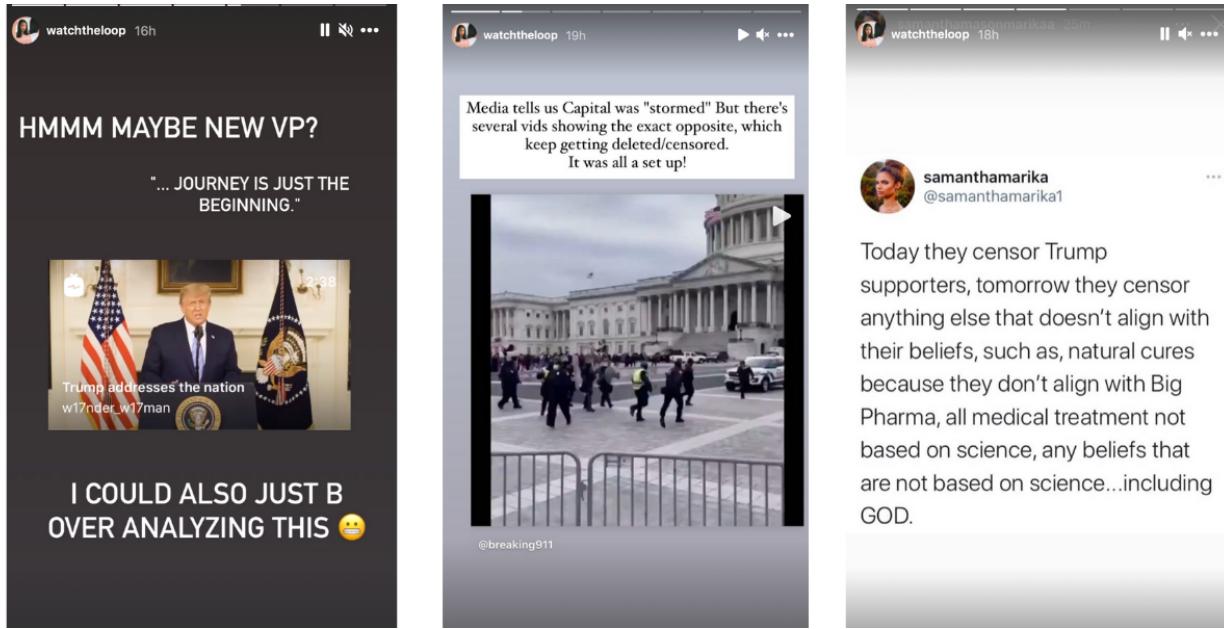
[claims](#) the virus is a lab-engineered bioweapon.”

But Cohen is only one example of an Instagram influencer promoting conspiracy theories to their audience. Below you can see the difference between ‘Jennifer’s’ Instagram feed and conspiracy theories she shares in her Instagram Stories.

Instagram Feed



Instagram Stories



Influencers on various social media platforms are some of the most impactful ways users become involved in extremist movements. Influencer marketing is a multibillion-dollar industry, not just because influencers help get products in front of new audiences, but because of the perceived level of trust and credibility of those influencers. These pseudo-friendships that influencers create with their followers online give them a significant amount of influence over their audience, a phenomenon known as “parasocial interaction.” Described by Leslie Rasmussen in her piece *Parasocial Interaction in the Digital Age*,

“Over time, audiences develop intimate bonds that mirror real-life social interactions, which are intensified when viewers gain information regarding the personal lives of celebrities. According to Schmid and Klimmt (2011), parasocial interactions are the immediate psychological response at the moment of exposure. Multiple exposures can intensify and transform parasocial interactions into parasocial relationships. More frequent interactions and viewer perception of celebrity disclosure increases perception of intimacy.”

Even if a user has never interacted offline with a particular influencer, these one-way relationships raise the influencer's sense of credibility and authenticity. When a influencer shares conspiracy theories, these opinions may be trusted more than mainstream news outlets due to the relationship building and trust that has been developed by the influencer over time.

The reality is often users who find themselves moving down a path of radicalization initially find their way into the movement through casual lurking on social media channels. Many users who describe their ‘red pill’ narratives describe looking for answers online and then ultimately following down the path to increasingly radical ideas (or opening their eyes to the truth, as it is often described). In the [TRS thread](#), multiple users initially finding their way to 4chan in the mid-2000s by looking at memes. From there, they eventually found the politically incorrect thread /pol/. [Southern Poverty Law](#)

[Center](#) states,

"Others noted they "ironically" looked at /pol/, or they were led there by the more absurdist "random" board, /b/. One wrote that their friend, who they specified was not right-wing, told them to "surf /pol/ for fun." "Humor is a powerful drug," explained a poster who came for the political discussions but "stayed for the racist memes."

There are also academic challenges to studying these extremist ideologies on digital media platforms. For instance, in 2019, academics at King's College London held a workshop to discuss how academics could study 4chan. Unbeknownst to the authors and speakers, a participant, and 4chan user, posted live about the seminar on the /pol/ board. The [responses to the thread](#) by the 4chan community ended up reinforcing the findings of the researchers, who ended up studying the archived thread. Some of the challenges they noted for studying communities like 4chan include: 1) Fast evolving language and image use on the site; 2) Active attempts of 4chan users to manipulate research findings, 3) Difficulty of differentiating genuine and ironic content ([Phillips and Milner, 2016](#)), and the 4) Design of 4chan and related platforms which make it difficult to identify users.

As users transition from more mainstream social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), to more fringe ones (Gab, Telegram, Parler, 4chan), radical ideologies come to the surface. Parler, one of the platforms most identified with the alt-right, is one particular example [Note: Since this paper was written, Recently, a Moderator for ParlerWatch, a subreddit dedicated to monitoring Parler content for extremist rhetoric, issued a warning to the users titled, [YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE TO PROPAGANDA](#). The statement read,

"No matter how distasteful, vile, or horrifying the content of the screenshots is you are viewing and how much it disgusts you, *this material was designed to influence the opinions of other, normal people and convert them to be members of the Alt-Right.* The process of being red-pilled is initially slow and very different for everyone but even exposing yourself for the sake of shock, dismay, and concern is one of the ways they can pull you in. [...]

By viewing these posts on a semi-daily or daily basis, you can begin to normalize some of the things they say and rationalize that, "a lot of people are saying these things so this must be somewhat mainstream." This sounds like a huge jump but it's a slow process, like developing a habit. The Alt-Right is *designed* (well, more evolved since it was kind of a, 'throw stuff at the wall to see what sticks' situation) to hijack the algorithms of online forums (including Reddit) and the psycho-social inner workings of the human mind."

"Many, many people (relatively speaking, the Alt-Right is a very small group-larger than they should be but still small, that's important to remember) start joining reactionary groups and taking red pills by 'merely lurking' around on sites where this material is found. While we might feel like we have a degree of separation because we're just viewing screenshots with comments full of shock,

anger, and links to the FBI tip page, **We are doing the same thing that they want potential recruits to be doing by simply viewing and interacting with the content."**

Whether due to social isolation, spending more time online, or disenfranchisement from the political mainstream, have seen the role of digital media and radicalization grow even more extreme during COVID. According to [Moonshot CVE](#), there was a significant increase in white supremacist search traffic (13%) in the week following the announcement of the national stay-at-home order on March 30th, 2020. In addition, over the past two years, [Zignal Labs](#), a misinformation-tracking firm, noted that the number of misinformation-related terms posted on Twitter surged more than 200% in a single year. While a portion of these terms come from specific events, such as addressing claims of voter fraud and COVID misinformation, far more common is how users have taken to dismissing facts that they find challenging as misinformation and #FAKENEWS.

So what happens when this online radicalization translates into real-world violence? In 2018, the [Sri Lankan Government](#) accused Facebook of failing to respond to hate speech on their platform, which resulted in anti-Muslim riots. Facebook was used by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority to whip up hate against the Muslim minority population, and multiple Muslim businesses were destroyed in the riots. In addition, these riots left three people dead and numerous individuals injured.

The January 6th attack on the Capitol by armed extremists also shows how social media was used to drive the attack. A case study of screenshots is listed below.

Inciting Incident

President Trump Endorses the January 6th Event (Also known as Wild Day)



Citizens from around the United States Prepare to Travel to DC, and organize caravans online

All Groups > Patriot Caravans for 45



Patriot Caravans for 45

5603 members 2580 posts

This group is a place to organize Peaceful Protests in support of President Trump, and Election Integrity.

- Organize ride sharing to DC for January 6th protest
- Organize protests at your State Capital and Local City Halls
- List Rides Available, and Rides Needed and what city you are in.
- Keep it peaceful, but let your voices be heard.

To **Search** choose under topics your **state** and either "**Have Extra Space**" or "**Need a Ride**"

We encourage you to report inappropriate posts.

Recent Activity ▾ All Types ▾



Honeysuckle liked 21 minutes ago

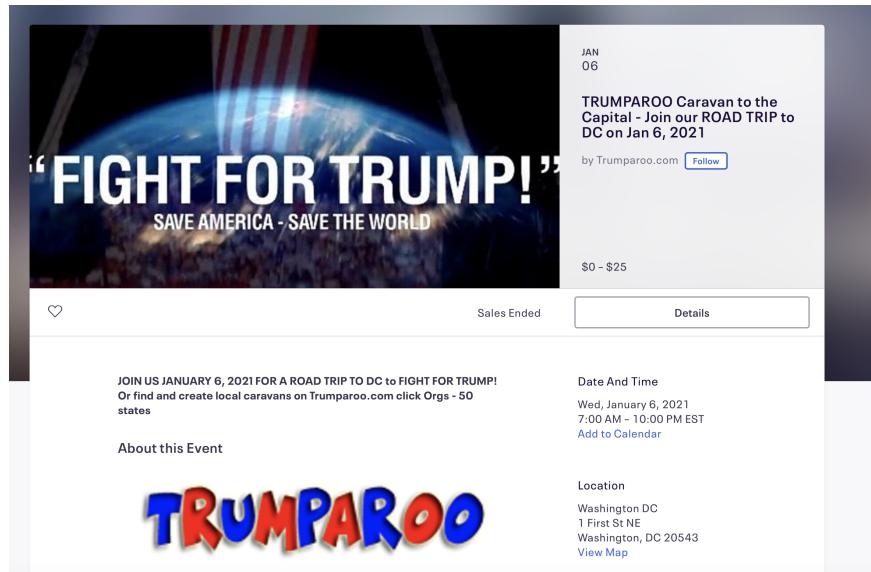
Post • 📌 Pinned • 🚗 Rideshare



Jeff Brain • Founder, CEO of CloutHub

Posted 18 days ago

Welcome... list your location and indicate if you need or can offer a ride and for how many.
Add your state from the add topics option. Then you can search by state. Report Anyone
posting in appropriate content or discussion... ([More](#))



Senator Josh Hawley Cheers on Protestors before the Riot



Live Responses and Coverage

10:31 ⓘ

< Tweet

ELIJAH SCHAFFER ✅
@ElijahSchaffer

...

BREAKING: Trump supporters have breached the Capitol building, tearing down 4 layers of security fencing and are attempting to occupy the building — fighting federal police who are overrun

This is the craziest thing I've ever seen in my life. Thousands, police can't stop them



0:00

877K views

Tweet your reply

House Search Bell Mail

11:14 4G 5G

< Tweet

Retweeted by Jennifer Jacobs

Alayna Treene • Verified
@alaynatreene

...

Staff in the Senate Press gallery staff just informed reporters sitting at their desks that if protestors storm the Capitol building they will usher us all into the Senate chamber and lock the door

11:03 AM · 1/6/21 · Twitter Web App

1,768 Retweets 468 Quote Tweets 2,885 Likes

Reply Retweet Like Share

Tweet your reply

Home Search Notifications Direct messages

11:12 ↗ 5G ⚡

Thread

 Burgess Everett ✅ @burgessev ...

Audio message plays in Capitol building: Stay away from windows and doors. Kind of unsettling

11:04 AM · 1/6/21 · TweetDeck

806 Retweets 74 Quote Tweets 2,404 Likes

 Burgess Everett ✅ @burgessev · 1m ...
Replying to @burgessev
Luckily I sit in a windowless room

   35 

 Ryan Herra @RyanHerra · 1m ...
Replying to @burgessev and @jaketapper
I said when I died that I'd come back
If you believe in ghosts then you're on the right track
I'm out of the grove and roaming the moors
If you wanna be safe you'd better lock all the windows and screens

 Tweet your reply

Calls for Pence's Execution



LLinWood @linwood

6 mins ago • 190k

They let them in.

Get the firing squads ready. Pence goes FIRST.

 **Fox 18 KLJB** ✅ @YourFox18 · 1h ...
Capitol mob built gallows and chanted 'Hang Mike Pence'



Capitol mob built gallows and chanted 'Hang Mike Pence'
They were never a natural fit, the straight-laced evangelical and the brash reality TV star. But for more than four years, President Donald ...
🔗 ourquadcities.com

言论图标 | 分享图标 | 喜欢图标 | 上升图标



Jim Bourg @jimbourg

...

I heard at least 3 different rioters at the Capitol say that they hoped to find Vice President Mike Pence and execute him by hanging him from a Capitol Hill tree as a traitor. It was a common line being repeated. Many more were just talking about how the VP should be executed.



Andrew Feinberg @AndrewFeinberg · Jan 8

There are multiple photographs of pro-Trump rioters carrying law enforcement-style flex-cuffs.

Rioters went looking for @VP, @SpeakerPelosi, @SenSchumer.

It raises the question of whether there was an organized plan to take hostages.
twitter.com/lukerussert/st...

[Show this thread](#)

7:01 AM · Jan 8, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

18.7K Retweets **3K Quote Tweets** **39.9K Likes**

11:16 5G

< Tweet

 Jake Sherman ✅ @JakeSherman ...

Yes. Capitol is now in complete chaos.
Pence has been pulled from the
senate chamber.

 Burgess Everett ✅ @burgessev · 1m
Oh my goodness we are sheltering in place in
the Senate
[Show this thread](#)

11:15 AM · 1/6/21 · Twitter for iPhone

145 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 167 Likes

 Ben Kacmarcik @benjkacmarcik · 2s ...
Replying to @JakeSherman and
@anniekarni
#LawAndOrder "president..." don't
remember any #BlackLivesMatter 🙌
people trying to overtake the government...
also @senatemajldr is trying to wash his
hands of @realDonaldTrump bro better

 Tweet your reply

Members of Congress Reactions

Eliza Orlins replied

 Grace Meng ✅
@Grace4NY

After 5 hours I've been rescued from my hiding place.
Now i can show you my DIY barricade and gas masks.
Protestors were right outside the door chanting 'USA USA' it was scary but i am ok! Thanks all for your prayers.



3:52 PM · Jan 6, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

12:24 ↗

5G



Tweet



Jimmy Gomez ✅
@JimmyGomezCA

...

Got stuck in the gallery, which is above
the House Floor for some time
because people were trying to get in.
Had to lay on the floor with about
30-50 of my colleagues. With gas
mask in hand.

But I'm safe.

Big Thank you to the Capitol Police.



Tweet your reply



12:25 ↗ 5G

Thread

 **Craig Gilbert** • @WisVoter ...

just talked to @RepGallagher (R-WI) who is sheltered in his office. "I mean, this is banana republic s--t. that's where we are."

"It is beyond shocking. This is the type of the stuff I saw in Iraq when I deployed" (he served in Iraq, USMC)

1/2

12:06 PM · 1/6/21 · Twitter Web App

361 Retweets 37 Quote Tweets 760 Likes

 **Craig Gilbert** • @WisVoter · 15m ...
Replying to @WisVoter

Gallagher said this "undermines the argument that there is no cost to having this debate" when objections were doomed to fail yet 1000s were told election could be overturned and now people storming

 Tweet your reply

 **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**  @AOC · 2h

...

They wore Auschwitz shirts, erected gallows, and tried to hang the Vice President.

Your continued excusal and denial of Wednesday's Neo-Nazi presence is abhorrent and dangerous.

The most healing and unifying thing *you* can do is take responsibility for your actions and resign.

 **Ted Cruz**  @tedcruz · 21h

Really sad. At a time of deep national division, President-elect Biden's choice to call his political opponents literal Nazis does nothing to bring us together or promote healing.

This kind of vicious partisan rhetoric only tears our country apart.
[twitter.com/jameshohmann/s...](https://twitter.com/jameshohmann/status/1444311181030023104)

4K

33.8K

207.6K



 **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**  @AOC · 2h

...

Your GOP colleague in the House praised Hitler this week. A Confederate flag was hung outside the Museum of Jewish Heritage. Yet you continue to deny this clear connection in the aftermath of Wednesday's violence.

You disgrace yourself and your office further every day. Resign.

1.4K

12.5K

124.9K



1:36 ↗ 5G

< Tweet

 **Congresswoman Cori Bush** ✅
@RepCori

...

I believe the Republican members of Congress who have incited this domestic terror attack through their attempts to overturn the election must face consequences. They have broken their sacred Oath of Office.

I will be introducing a resolution calling for their expulsion.

G:\M\17\BUSH\BUSH_001.XML [Discussion Draft]

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]
JANUARY 5, 2021

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION H. RES.

Directing the Committee on House Administration and the Committee on Ethics to investigate, and issue a report on, whether those Members of the House who have sought to overturn the 2020 Presidential election have violated their oath of office to uphold the Constitution or the Rules of the House of Representatives, and should face sanction, including removal from the House of Representatives.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

 Tweet your reply

Home Search Notifications Mail

Additional Reactions

4:47 1 5G

< Tweet

Amanda Litman ✅ @amandalitman ...

In 2021, even a coup has merch.

Will Jennings @willjennings80 · 2h
Journalists still asking if this was planned or it just "happened" somehow.
[Show this thread](#)



4:46 PM · 1/6/21 · Twitter for iPhone

3 Retweets 20 Likes

Reply Retweet Like Share

Joseph Goulette @JosephGoulet... · 22s ...
Dont do this again

Tweet your reply

Home Search Notifications Mail



Paul McLeod [@pdmcleod](#)

...

Replying to [@pdmcleod](#)

A bunch of Associated Press equipment had to be abandoned and a crowd is trashing it. "We are the news now!" a man yells. Looks like they're going to try to light it on fire.



2:05 PM · Jan 6, 2021 · Twitter for Android

5.3K Retweets **1.2K** Quote Tweets **6.9K** Likes

- ▲ **Captain_Trips** 5 points 1 hour ago +5 / -0
▼ The gunfire is about to begin
[permalink](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Learnbeforespeaking** 11 points 1 hour ago +11 / -0
▼ I really really wish this were true, but it seems the only people willing to fire is the Democrats and their goons.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Corona** 3 points 47 minutes ago +3 / -0
▼ Unorganized resistance is useless. That's why I didn't go today. Like so many others, I am ready to die for this, but I'm not about to lose my life in some sort of riotous melee. Post the coordinates for the organized front line and the name of who controls the command structure, and I will be there.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **GeraltOf1776** 113 points 19 hours ago +121 / -8
▼ If you see the media, rush them. Take their equipment and show the people what's really going on.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **A_Little_White_Duck** 14 points 11 hours ago +14 / -0
▼ Can a contingent of protesters take over CNN to end the propaganda lock by the American MSM?
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Kraznaya** 6 points 9 hours ago +6 / -0
▼ They must be treated like the enemy combatants they are
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **bratt** 2 points 8 hours ago +2 / -0
▼ Remember who are friends in the media. OAN, NTD, RSBN, Epoc, others? But CNN, ABC, NBC, + more like them, yeah fuck them up
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Plotrsama** 1 point 9 hours ago +1 / -0
▼ If you catch them doing a live segment, then you do the "anti fake-news maneuver".
A coordinated action by 2 or more persons. One gets their camera while other get the microphone from the "journalist". (maybe more required to make sure they don't grab them back).
Then the cameraman shows what they are hiding, and the one with the micro tell the real news.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Captain_Trips** -18 points 14 hours ago +9 / -27
▼ yes, strong arm robbery is always the solution
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **GeraltOf1776** 29 points 14 hours ago +30 / -1
▼ I didn't say take it home. I'm not a jogger. But go ahead and be nice and peaceful to the media.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Captain_Trips** -11 points 11 hours ago +1 / -12
▼ be nice and peaceful like the constitution says so?
what a concept
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **MightyBright** 6 points 9 hours ago +6 / -0
▼ This is not a protest, it's a rebellion.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Mr-J** 16 points 12 hours ago +16 / -0
▼ lol media has no right to property, after all they say we dont.
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)
- ▲ **Captain_Trips** -11 points 11 hours ago +1 / -12
▼ so we are going to stand by Trump and defend the constitution by violating one of its most basic precepts
[permalink](#) [parent](#) [save](#) [report](#) [block](#) [reply](#)

Banning on Social Media and Exodus to Parler



Twitter Safety  @TwitterSafety · 5m

...

As a result of the unprecedented and ongoing violent situation in Washington, D.C., we have required the removal of three @realDonaldTrump Tweets that were posted earlier today for repeated and severe violations of our Civic Integrity policy.



Civic integrity policy

You may not use Twitter's services for the purpose of manipulating or interfering in elections or other ...
help.twitter.com

386

4.2K

7.4K



Twitter Safety  @TwitterSafety

...

Replying to @TwitterSafety

This means that the account of @realDonaldTrump will be locked for 12 hours following the removal of these Tweets. If the Tweets are not removed, the account will remain locked.

4:02 PM · Jan 6, 2021 · Twitter Web App

4.1K Retweets **1.9K** Quote Tweets **8.6K** Likes

3:56 1 5G

< Tweet

 **Mark R. Levin** • @marklevinshow ...

I have suspended my own Twitter account in protest against Twitter's fascism. I ask all my followers to join me now on Parler and Rumble.
parler.com/profile/Markle...
rumble.com/MarkLevinShow

3:50 PM · 1/8/21 · Twitter for Android

882 Retweets 302 Quote Tweets 3,953 Likes

Reply Retweet Like Share

 **Molly Jong-Fast** • @MollyJo... · 3m ...
Replying to @marklevinshow
Sycophants gotta sycophant
4 6 273

 **Molly Jong-Fast** • @MollyJo... · 2m ...
But promise you'll actually leave?
5 4 207

 Tweet your reply

Home Search Notifications Direct messages

Lin Wood just said on Parler that he has been suspended from twitter for 12 hours.

The screenshot shows Lin Wood's profile on the Parler mobile application. At the top, there is a green header bar with the Parler logo and a search bar containing the name "Lin". Below the header, a summary card displays the following statistics: 639k Followers, 79 Following, 1 Comments, and 0 Votes. Two buttons are present: one for "603 Parleys" and another for "169 Media". The main post, made by Lin Wood (@linwood) 15 minutes ago, contains the following text:
I have been suspended from Twitter for 12 hours. Please let my Twitter Followers know that I am fine.
The bad actors may be after the President & his supporters. So be wise, have discernment, & be careful.
Pray for our country. 🙏❤️🇺🇸
A "read less" link is visible below the text. At the bottom of the post, engagement metrics are shown: 806 comments, 2.3k likes, and 5.7k shares. There are also icons for reporting and sharing the post.



Ellie Brown @EllieBOfficial

2 mins ago • 2.2k



CAUTION.

- Lots of infiltrators have arrived.
- Many infiltrators were already placed in the MAGA movement as we saw January 6th.
- Be VERY careful who you follow and what you believe. Use discernment.
- If I am in error, I delete.
- Disinformation is at an all-time high.
- This is no time to feed the trolls.



Candace... @Candace ▾

15 hrs ago • 2.4m

What is happening in America
is serious.

The Left is implementing a
totalitarian state, and they are
doing it much faster than
anyone could have ever
imagined.

We need to organize and stay in
constant contact with one
another. They are trying to
make conservatives obsolete.



P PARLER



GenFlynn · @GenFlynn

5 hours ago · 3296696

Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

[Special Message to the Congress on the Internal Security of the United States, August 8, 1950]

Harry S. Truman

5084

39781

80056

Show Comments



GenFlynn · @GenFlynn

6 hours ago · 3117605

What happened is not just a purge of conservative voices, it is an effort to shutdown dissent. In our free society that is the beginning of the end. Our voices must be heard, our voices must be clear, our voices must be strong. God Bless America 🙏🇺🇸

6980

41589

101826

It isn't Over Yet

In the days since the January 6th Capitol Riots, Parler is now being used to orchestrate a similar event on the upcoming day before Inauguration, January 19th.

Parler post from MAGA wingnut threatens armed attack in DC on January 19

984 14930 13438

ColonelTPerez (Ret) · @Colonel007
1 day ago · 60926

Today, January 6, 2021, We Patriots by the millions, have arrived in Washington, D.C., carrying banners of support for the greatest President the world has ever known.

Bit if We must...

Many of Us will return on January 19, 2021, carrying Our weapons, in support of Our nation's resolve, to which the world will never forget!!!

We will come in numbers that no standing army or police agency can match. However, the police are NOT Our enemy, unless they choose to be!

All who will not stand with the American Patriots... or who cannot stand with Us.. then, that would be a good time for YOU to take a few vacation days.

The American Patriot

184 449 1044

In response to the January 6th attack on the Capitol, on January 8th Twitter banned the following Twitter accounts associated with the Trump Campaign: Donald J Trump (President), Lin Wood (Pro-Trump Lawyer), Michael Flynn (Former NSA), Ron Watkins (8kun Admin), Sidney Powell (Trump Lawyer), Gary Coby (Trump Team Digital Director), Team Trump (Trump Campaign Twitter). In addition a tweet from President Trump was removed from the @POTUS twitter account. This has caused a mass exodus of conservatives from Twitter to Parler (which has not been taken offline as well). Only time will tell how having a siloed and private social media channel, especially one known for radicalized language, will impact the growth of extremism in the future. Other Platforms, including Facebook and Instagram have also instituted bans.

What are the Exit Ramps?

Throughout this piece, we have examined some of the various ways people find themselves drawn to extremist movements, particularly the role digital media plays in radicalization. According to research from the [Washington Post](#) into “radical partisanship,” 15% of respondents stated, “it is justified for [their own party] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days.” This is consistent for both Democrats and Republicans. So what are the exit ramps, and how can organizations and communities help prevent individuals from moving from affective polarization to extremist violence.

The reality is, leaving extremist movements is a difficult process. According to [Acacia Dietz](#), “Those who become involved in these movements are people too, just more often than not they are lost and need to be shown a better way. This cannot be done if one is constantly demonizing and dehumanizing. The deplatforming and dehumanization just reinforces their fears of being silenced and marginalized.” Once someone decides to exit an extremist movement, there is very little assistance currently available to help them assimilate back into society. While some may argue that this a good thing (“What should we let them back in after they did [insert horrible thing]?”), this isolation further reinforces the sense of community within extremist groups. Dietz describes why she delayed leaving the National Socialist Movement, even as she felt herself disagreeing with the ideology, “Essentially, I did my best to become a ghost in hopes that if I was doxxed my family would be protected from any of the fallout. My entire life revolved around the movement. The more involved I became in the NSM, the more I isolated myself from the outside world. Leaving the movement meant completely starting over - alone.”

In my research regarding why individuals chose to leave extremist movements, it rarely is a simple one-off moment of intervention. Brad Galloway stated about leaving [Volksfront](#), “It took many years of witnessing movement infighting and violence, losing friends to related factors such as prison, overdose and murder and finally finding solace in the idea of marriage, children, and education to remove myself from the movement and heal from hate.” For one user who left the [Proud Boys](#), the moment he left was watching the reaction of other Proud Boys to finding out an activist on the other side had died by suicide. The disgust he felt in their celebration of an opponent’s suicide is what caused him to leave. For [Ryan Lo’Ree](#), who left the Rolling Wood Skins (a white supremacist organization), his moment of reckoning came when a black man interrupted him being jumped in prison. The common trend of all these stories? None of these are experiences that can be manufactured to help end the mass radicalization of American citizens.

The following will look at some of the ways different groups and organizations help create exit ramps to radicalization and address extremism in America.

Helping People Leave Extremist Movements

Two groups that are making significant headway in helping individuals leave extremist groups are [Light Upon Light](#) and [Life After Hate](#). Both groups work with former extremists (known as Formers) to provide interventions and help individuals leave Hate Groups.

[Life After hate](#) was founded in 2011 and specializes in helping people leave white supremacist groups. Since its founding, Life After Hate has helped more than 500 individuals and their families leave extremist movements and has provided training and resources for thousands of supporters who want to confront extremism in their communities. A central component of the Life After Hate model is making sure no former starts a new life alone. They do this through four main programs: ExitUSA, Formers Anonymous, Against Violent Extremism Network, and the Strong Cities Network. With more than 50 formers actively involved, the ExitUSA program is an online support group for individuals in different stages of deradicalization to share resources. This is supplemented by Formers Anonymous, a group of men and women who have identified a problematic attachment to “street life” and need a support system to help them stay away from “the life.” The [Against Violent Extremism Network](#) is a collaborative global network of formers and survivors of violent extremism who work together to push back against extremist narratives and prevent the recruitment of at-risk youths. Finally, the [Strong Cities Network](#), founded at the United Nations in 2015, provides guidance for mayors, municipal-level policy makers, and practitioners dedicated to tackling polarization, violence, and extremism in communities worldwide.

A second group working to help individuals leave extremist movements is [Light Upon Light](#). Light Upon Light serves as a digital ecosystem for combatting polarization, hate, and extremism. While Life After Hate focuses on individuals leaving the white supremacy movement, Light Upon Light works with anyone looking to leave an extremist group. Through their SHIFT-Hate program, Light Upon Light runs a 24/7 helpline, anonymous and independent from law-enforcement, for individuals who are going down the path of extremism. The helpline is also available for families, professionals, and teachers who identify warning signs as well. After an initial assessment call, depending on the area of radicalization, an individual is referred to a former (gang member, extremist, or jihadist) for one-on-one interventions. They can also receive family and group counseling services. Many of the personal narratives of individuals leaving extremist movements in this paper came from the Light on Light website.

Addressing the Culture

Perhaps the biggest challenge to helping people leave extremist groups is addressing the reasons individuals join in the first place. As we noted earlier, many people did not come to the movement purely because of the ideology but to address boredom, disenfranchisement, and anger, or through casually lurking on social media platforms.

A problem that too often tends to show up in liberal communities is the idea of 'preaching to the choir.' Daryl Davis, a black musician, has spent a lot of time with the KKK, talking one-on-one with its members and ultimately causing more than 200 Klan members to give up their hoods. As one profile [states](#), "Davis argues that conversing about race is *most* useful in extreme cases. 'There are a lot of well meaning white liberals. And a lot of well meaning black liberals. But you know what? When all they do is sit around and preach to the choir it does absolutely no good. If you're not a racist it doesn't do any good for me to meet with you and sit around and well-meaning how bad racism is."

Not every person is equipped to sit down with members of the KKK, but Davis' point stands.

The reality is the best time to address radicalization is before it happens. Society needs to find ways to water the seeds of collaboration, community, and civics to interrupt the pathways to radicalization. This is particularly important for youth, who are especially vulnerable to radicalization if there are no opportunities for programming and mentoring in their communities.

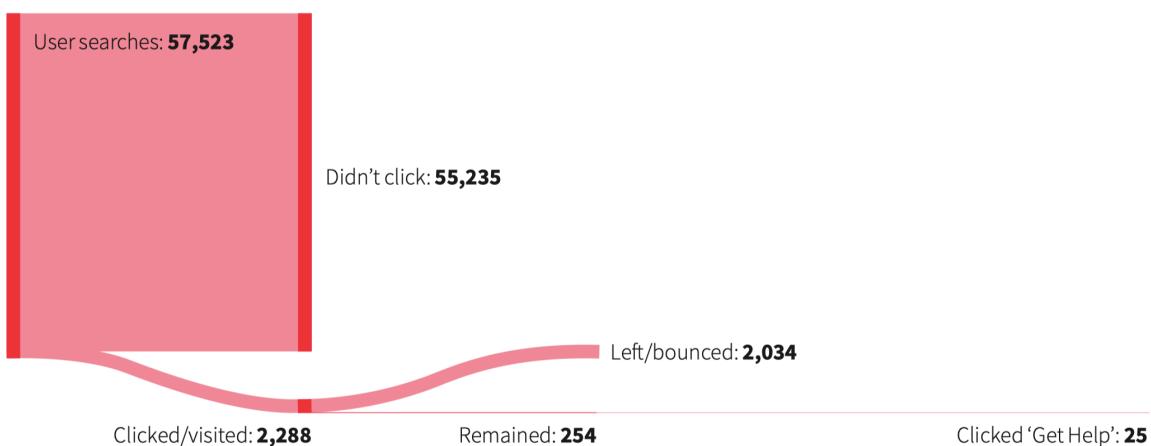
Community, Connection, and Civics Programming

- Community:
 - Community programs are those that provide mentorship and community access points, which can be important to intercepting vulnerable youth before polarization. The Weaving Community campaign works in this area.
- Connection:
 - Connect programs provide an opportunity to connect with others from a different background. These programs include work done by groups such as Living Room Conversations, US Convo Project, and Braver Angels
 - Connect programs also disrupt siloed narratives, and provide an opportunity to hear new perspectives in media. Examples include AllSides and the CHP Playbook
- Civics:
 - Civics programs include groups such as AEP, Bridge USA, and iCivics, which provide opportunities for civic engagement across the political divide for youth audiences.

Digital Interventions

Another area that organizations are experimenting with is digital interventions for people currently being radicalized. While there is often a whiplash approach to wanting to shut down hate speech and extremist groups on the internet, this feeds into the cancel culture narrative promoted by the Alternative News Network. Also, when this content is taken off of mainstream platforms and moved to anonymous or private forums, the content becomes even more extreme (and harder to monitor from a law enforcement perspective).

One promising digital intervention is the [Facebook Redirect Programme](#) (FRP), which was a pilot program developed by Moonshot CVE in order to test what would happen if individuals who were searching for white supremacist and/or neo-Nazi communities on Facebook were instead offered authentic, meaningful and impactful support off-platform. Created in collaboration with [Life After Hate](#) and [Exit Australia](#), this program ran for three months in 2019. When a Facebook user typed in a predetermined keyword to the search bar, users would see a safety module saying, “These keywords may be associated with dangerous groups and individuals. Facebook works with organizations that help prevent the spread of hate and violent extremism. [Learn More].” By clicking “Learn More,” users were directed to the service provider (Life After Hate or Exit Australia) in their geographic region.



Over the course of the pilot, more than 57,000 individuals on Facebook saw the safety module message while searching for extremist content on the platform. Of these users, 2,288 users navigated away from Facebook to view the Light Upon Light and Exit Australia service provider pages. This translated into 25 users ultimately seeking to ‘Get Help’ from the service provider and leave the radicalization pipeline. While the pilot did have high bounce rates, these interventions can still be part of the radicalization process. In the evaluation report for the [Facebook Redirect Programme](#), the report noted

“Disengagement is a complex process which, in this context, may begin with the user simply being made aware of the existence of either delivery partner. That their first visit may not have resulted in their first outreach is not evidence of failure. The data show that the FRP is, at the very least, successfully introducing potentially vulnerable individuals to tailored support services, even if most are not immediately engaging. [...] In total, 25 individuals who initially sought to engage with violent extremism on Facebook ended up receiving some form of support from one of the delivery partners.” The report offers numerous opportunities for expanding these digital interventions in the future, including expanding the keyword list, testing different module language, customizing the microsites of the service delivery platforms, and dedicated a Facebook

staff member.

Conclusion

All in all, the process by which someone chooses an ‘exit ramp’ from an extremist group is complicated and often part of a series of interventions that take place over time. The reality is, for many organizations in the depolarization space, you may never see the results of your labor, as you are one touchpoint on someone’s depolarization journey. Seeking to address affective polarization is one pathway to interrupting the radicalization pipeline, especially when looking at programs that foster connection, community, and civic engagement. By working with our grantees and outside organizations, Civic Health Project is already working to address some of the intervention areas to keep people from moving from polarization to radicalization.

About the Author

[Cambria Findley-Grubb](#) is Civic Health Project’s Social Media and Web Marketing Manager. Cambria has an MA in Mass Communication with an emphasis in Political Communication from the University of Florida.