

WARNING: Nazi Symbols Are Saturating American Politics

ANTI-VAXXERS, GEORGIA POLITICIANS, AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS ARE NORMALIZING THE ABNORMAL IN THEIR QUEST FOR POLITICAL POWER

January 2022

This report is part of an American Jewish Congress initiative to combat domestic terrorism, including white supremacy and antisemitic extremism.

www.ajcongress.org | leadership@ajcongress.org | [@ajcongress](https://twitter.com/ajcongress) | 212-879-4500



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NAZI SYMBOLS ARE NOW PART OF AMERICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

As we approach *International Holocaust Remembrance Day*, Nazi symbols are being deplorably used in the political arena. If we don't change direction, it will only worsen, especially as we head into the 2022 election cycle. This report describes these dangerous trends and what must be done to reverse course.

The first major episode of a national political leader using Nazi-era symbols to gain political power occurred in May 2021, when Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) used a Jewish Star to claim that anti-vaxxers were being persecuted like Jews were persecuted under the Nazis. Under pressure, she was forced to apologize, but this sort of Holocaust distortion has continued to grow online.

Anti-vaxxers are not only comparing themselves to Jews in the Holocaust, but they are increasingly using the Nazi swastika in their online propaganda. As a result, far right politicians seeking anti-vaxxer political support fail to denounce this antisemitic activity, providing political legitimacy to the use of Nazi symbols.

As far-right extremists aim to take control of the anti-vaxxer movement and to recruit from it, the normalization of Nazi symbols, and the silence of political candidates in response to it, creates an opening for white supremacy and poses a threat to our democracy.

In this report, we expose this dire antisemitic threat to our democracy and call for urgent action to confront it. It is not normal for Nazi symbols to be used in American political discourse or public life, yet this antisemitic behavior is becoming normalized amongst the far-right, posing a direct danger to us all, regardless of one's political perspective. That's because once one hate symbol is deemed acceptable, then all hate symbols have an opening to be used. Our politics must not be consumed by such hate. Stopping the use of Nazi symbols is the remedy.

We therefore call on Members of Congress and candidates for office to commit to the following pledge:

"I stand against the use of Nazi symbols and the denial and distortion of the Holocaust. Nazi symbols and all symbols of hate have no place in American politics and are not welcome in my campaign. I will not campaign either in person or in online spaces where Nazis are welcome."

When one refuses to speak out about Holocaust distortion, and then courts the anti-vaxxer vote that is steeped in such distortion, hate speech and antisemitism in our politics grows. This is the moment to push back against allowing such hate symbols to become normalized in our politics. Once one hate symbol is deemed "acceptable," than all such hate symbols could be welcomed. This is not what American politics are all about.

It's time for us all to insist that our politicians and political candidates stop the use of antisemitism in our politics. It's time to return our politics to normal before it's too late.

GEORGIA TESTS AMERICAN POLITICAL RESOLVE

WILL NAZISM AND ANTISEMITISM REMAIN POLITICALLY TOXIC?

The engagement of elements of the Republican Party with the online platform *Gab* brings them closer to Nazis and those involved in online antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and distortion.

A growing intersection between Nazi activity and the anti-vaxxer movement is fueling the growth of modern Nazism. This is particularly visible on the minimally moderated social media platform *Gab*.

We have previously reported on Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) and her *Gab* based fundraising efforts, and the GOP of Texas *Gab* account which later became inactive. Now, the GOP of Douglas County in Georgia is embracing *Gab*. It is posting to *Gab* regularly and many of those engaging with its posts are also engaging with Holocaust distortion, QAnon conspiracy theories and other antisemitic content.

As with all Holocaust denial and distortion, such content is saturated with Nazi ideology. As politicians seek to draw more support from the



Figure 1 Douglas County, GA GOP engaging on Gab for an event with Greene

anti-vaxxer movement, they will increasingly encounter those for whom Nazi symbolism has been normalized. Last year, the organizer for a planned fundraiser for Georgia GOP Senate candidate Herschel Walker featured a swastika



make of syringes as her Twitter profile picture (see left). When questioned, the initial response from Walker's campaign minimized the importance of this swastika use of the swastika.

Walker's campaign described the image (shown left) as "an anti-mandatory vaccination graphic" and initially sought to excuse it. The fundraiser was cancelled as opposition grew.



Figure 2 Bettina Sofia Viviano-Langlais's Twitter profile

NAZIS MEET THE ANTI-VAXXERS ONLINE

AN INDOCTRINATION EFFORT IS NOW UNDERWAY

Nazi groups are becoming more organized and widespread. A growing intersection between Nazi activity and the anti-vaxxer movement is fueling the growth of modern Nazism. This is particularly visible on the minimally moderated social media platform *Gab*. Political engagement with this audience makes it far more likely that antisemitic discourse will spread into mainstream politics.

This is a perfect storm of online political extremism:

- Anti-vaxxers use inappropriate Holocaust analogies to oppose public health efforts, creating high levels of Holocaust distortion.
- Nazi groups use Holocaust distortion to engage anti-vaxxer groups and see it as an opening to flood these groups with Nazi glorification, Holocaust denial, and antisemitism.
- Nazi groups absorb anti-vaxxer messaging and spread versions of it, with more overt antisemitism, within their own groups.



Figure 3 From the Gab National Socialism group on October 16, 2021: "The White Man's Retribution" is "Coming Soon To a City Near You".

Nazi symbols are integrated into posts in online *Gab* anti-vaxxer groups, which normalizes the use of the Nazi swastika and contributes to Holocaust distortion.

Nazis themselves post material that is both anti-vaxxer and antisemitic into online *Gab* groups like "Hardcore Conservative Patriots for Donald Trump," and other far-right political groups, to spread antisemitic conspiracies.

These efforts aim to normalize antisemitic discourse in online communities, particularly anti-vaxxer groups, making it more acceptable in society at large.

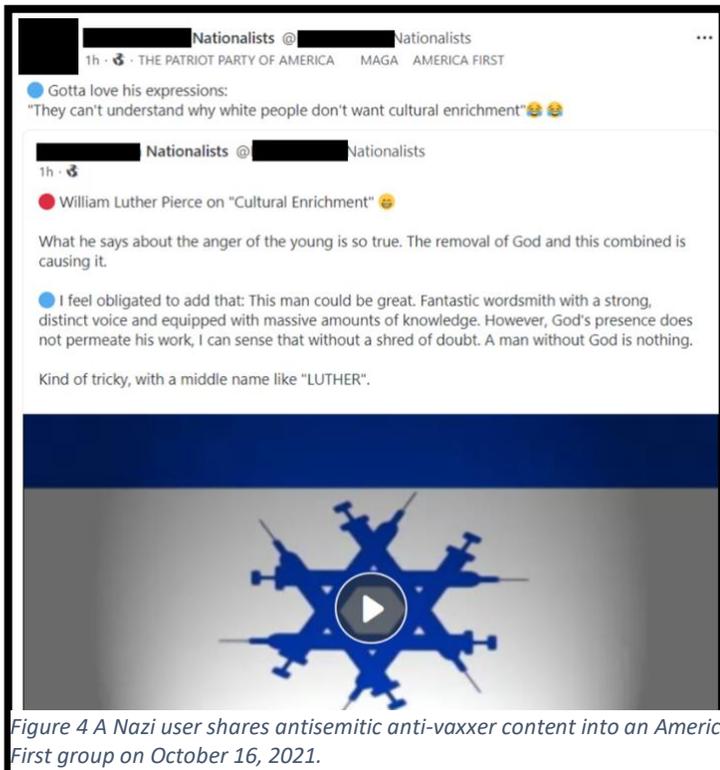


Figure 4 A Nazi user shares antisemitic anti-vaxxer content into an America First group on October 16, 2021.

EXTREMISM IN THE POLITICAL PIPELINE

EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO TAKE CONTROL AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Oath Keepers are a far-right group the FBI has described as an anti-government militia movement.¹ In an affidavit, an FBI Special Agent explained that “what differentiates them from other anti-government groups is their explicit focus on recruiting current and former military, law enforcement and first responder personnel.”² The Oath Keepers were at the center of the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, giving a live play by play report as they entered the Congress. So far, two dozen people associated with the Oath Keepers have been charged in relation to January 6th.



Figure 5 One of the main Oath Keepers groups on Gab

Just like the online Nazi engagement with the anti-vaxxers movement, the Oath Keepers are engaging in-person at rallies and protests. The Oath Keepers, who are not a Nazis group, have for years provided security to neo-Nazi rallies. They create safe spaces for Nazis and anti-vaxxers to mingle. With their own radical anti-government ideology, and standing side by side with Nazis, they serve as a connector in the pipeline to further radicalization.

The in-person influence of the Oath Keepers also extends online, as they have a strong presence on Gab. Their main account, created in October 2018, has 2,348 followers. There is also a group with 432 members, and a second group with 150 members. There are 29 additional Oath Keeper groups on Gab, many with just one member but which have been created as placeholders for local chapters.



Figure 6 A post to an Oath Keepers group on Gab inciting a "war against globalists" (often used as code for Jews)

Recent analysis based on hacked membership data from the Oath Keepers indicates that at least 28 elected officials, mostly at the local level, are members of the Oath Keepers.³ The pipeline of anti-government extremists is not just protesting at rallies but has already entered state and national politics and is getting ready to enter public office in the future.

¹ Sharyn Alfonsi, “Oath Keepers: How a militia group mobilized in plain sight for the assault on the Capitol”, *60 Minutes*, June 20, 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-capitol-riots-oath-keepers-2021-06-20/>

² Affidavit in *United States v. Thomas Edward Caldwell* <https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1356326/download>

³ Jessica Garrison, Ken Bensinger, and Jeremy Singer-Vine, “Leaked Oath Keepers Data Shows At Least 28 Elected Officials Have Ties To The Group”, *BuzzFeed News*, Oct. 20, 2021. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/jessicagarrison/oath-keepers-data-elected-officials>

THE GABTIVIST THREAT

SILOED, RADICALIZED, AND READY FOR ACTION

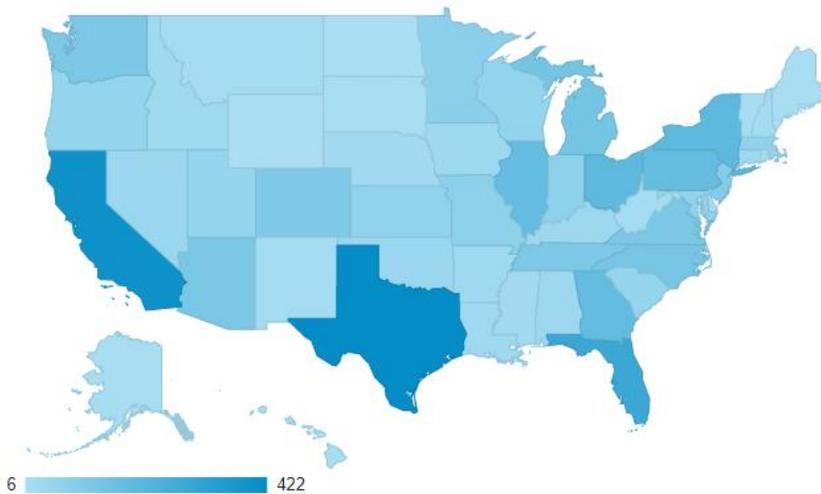
The combination of online radicalization on platforms like *Gab* with in-person engagement, as seen with the Oath Keepers, is part of a broader trend encouraged on *Gab* for radicalized individuals to run for office.

Activists on *Gab* – i.e. Gabtivists - are working actively to form their own closed society. They engage less with mainstream social media platforms and dismiss information and reporting from mainstream media. This creates a siloed community with its own culture. That culture on *Gab* contains substantial antisemitism and glorification of Nazism,⁴ which leads to the normalization of Nazi symbols on the platform, and which readily spills beyond *Gab*. This effect is exacerbated when Gabtivists engage in coordinated action, and it is directly contributing to the saturation of Nazi symbols in our politics.

In April 2021 we examined the states of 4,964 U.S.-based *Gab* users who responded to a “call to action” promoted on *Gab* by its founder Andrew Torba. The Gabtivists were located across the United States but had a stronger presence in certain parts of the country.

The largest community of Gabtivists was found in Texas. Starting in January, the Texas GOP actively encouraged supporters to join them on *Gab*. After Governor Greg Abbott spoke out against the antisemitism that pervades *Gab*, saying it had “no place in Texas,” the State Republican Executive Committee voted 35 to 25 to abandon the platform. The account has been inactive since the vote in late March.

Georgia, where Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) is an active *Gab* user, has the 6th highest Gabtivist base in absolute terms. It has the third highest Gabtivist presence (behind Colorado and Arizona) on a per capita basis.



⁴ A recent report from the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) which examined content across 4chan/pol/, Gab, Reddit, and Twitter found that almost half (49.6%) of the posts expressing hostility to Jews or negative stereotypes of Jews were from Gab. <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--5198--SE>

SPECIAL REPORTS

The American Jewish Congress' initiative to combat domestic terrorism, including white supremacy and antisemitic extremism, has produced the following reports:

Report 1

[Capitol Storming:
Neo-Nazi, QAnon & Antisemitic Online Chatter](#)

Report 2

[Radicalization's Exodus:
White Supremacists Use Holocaust Denial to Radicalize QAnon and MAGA](#)

Report 3

[The New White Supremacist Politics:
How Marjorie Taylor Greene Uses Gab's Online Antisemitic Extremism to Fuel Her Political Power](#)

Report 4

[90 Days of White Supremacist Radicalization:
Extremism's Evolution in a Post-January 6th America](#)

Report 5

[Jews Are Not A Prop:
Politicians Are Using Antisemitism as a Tool to Mobilize Extremism for Their Own Political Power](#)

Report 6

WARNING: Nazi Symbols Are Saturating American Politics:
Anti-vaxxers, Georgia Politicians, And White Supremacists Are Normalizing The Abnormal In Their Quest For
Political Power



AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS SPECIAL REPORT

*The American Jewish Congress is an independent voice
fighting for Jewish rights, interests, and values.*

*Founded in 1918 by leaders like Justice Louis Brandeis,
Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, we
shape the Jewish voice of tomorrow by defending Jewish
interests at home and abroad through public policy advocacy,*

www.ajcongress.org | leadership@ajcongress.org | [@ajcongress](https://twitter.com/ajcongress) | 212-879-4500

