

Bonus - Racist Recruitment Through YouTube

In this bonus episode, we hear from Coalition for Human Dignity veteran Devin Burghart, now Executive Director of left wing think tank Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights. Burghart talks about the role of YouTube personalities in the effective radicalization of white nationalists, especially younger viewers.

YouTube Algorithm is a form of artificial intelligence, or ‘machine learning’ that is modeled on the human neural net to stimulate the human limbic system into an addictive relationship with YouTube. The longer a viewer engages with the site, the more money YouTube makes. The algorithm is [designed to keep viewers online as long as possible](#) by automatically starting another video when the viewer-selected video ends.

Abstract: [The YouTube algorithm](#) is a combination of programmed directives from engineers along with learned behaviors that have evolved through the opaque process of machine learning which makes the algorithm’s directives and programming hard to understand. Independent tests to replicate the algorithm have shown that the algorithm has a strong bias towards right-leaning politics videos, including those racist views expressed by the alt-right community. While the algorithm seems to be pushing users towards the alt-right video content merely in an attempt to keep users in a cycle of video watching, the end result makes YouTube a powerful recruiting tool for Neo-Nazis and the alt-right. The filter bubble effect that this creates pushes users into a loop that reinforces radicalism instead of level-headed factual resources.

Black Metal is a genre of extreme music that originated in Norway in the late 80’s and early 90’s. Known for its harshly distorted guitars, shrieking vocal style and themes of darkness, sorrow, occultism and misanthropy, the movement gained international attention after members of several prominent bands were linked to the arson of over 40 churches. The musicians openly took credit for the fires, calling them acts of pagan retribution against Christendom, in protest of the churches being deliberately sited atop ancient Norse burial mounds. Consequently, [black metal](#) became known for its fanaticism as much as for its music.

National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) emerged in the early 1990s as a subsidiary genre of the broader black metal movement. NSBM is racist. The vocals promote white supremacy and ethnic European paganism, and antisemitic conspiracy theories, and opposes Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

PewDiePie is the YouTube name for Felix Kjellberg, a Swedish YouTube celebrity born in 1989. Kjellberg holds the ‘title’ for the second most-subscribed channel on YouTube, and the most subscribed channel for an individual. He holds enormous influence over his millions of extremely loyal fans, many of whom are teenagers. His content features vlogs, formatted shows, comedy shorts, music videos, and other commentary. Kjellberg is notorious for inserting anti-Semitic comments and references—both overt and dog whistles—into his stream, as well as racial slurs, anti-feminism and mentions of rape culture, and then backing away from it, later editing it out of the videos, citing that it was meant as a joke, or satire, [or an ‘oopsie.’](#) He has repeatedly uplifted channels whose express intent is to convert viewers to Nazism or fascist ideology.

Destiny & Others [Destiny](#) is the online name for 32-year-old YouTube/Twitch streamer Steven Kenneth Bunnell II. Bunnell plays video games and debates right wing political commentators. Natalie Wynn streams online under the channel [ContraPoints](#), releasing left wing content featuring highly stylized sets and research-based presentations with factual citation. Abigail Thorn hosts [PhilosophyTube](#), where she posts about traditional philosophical ideas and debunks racist theory along the way. All are part of a loose group of streamers called [BreadTube](#), after Peter Kropotkin’s *The Conquest of Bread*. The core of BreadTube activism is a kind of algorithmic hijacking, where [creators mimic right-wing video creators and content](#), and occasionally respond directly to right wing content, in order to get the YouTube algorithm to expose viewers to their videos and stem the tide of online white supremacy that targets and seduces a demographic vulnerable to hate messaging by creating a sense of inclusion.

Identity Evropa started in March 2016 and ended in March 2019. It was a hate group focused on ‘American Identity’ as being rooted in white supremacy. They spread propaganda over the internet and distribute fliers, stickers, banners, and posters, especially on college campuses. They had a strong presence at the now-infamous ‘[Unite the Right’ rally in Charlottesville](#), Virginia with their slogan ‘You Will Not Replace Us.’ Their recruitment depended on hiding the deep roots of their racist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-feminist agendas; their explicit strategy was to present a cleaner image of white supremacy, using euphemisms like ‘identitarian’ in place of ‘white nationalist.’ In March of 2019, left wing nonprofit media group Unicorn Riot revealed clear evidence of unabashed racism by [leaking 770,000 messages](#) sent between September 2017 and February 2019. Making these messages public destroyed Identity Evropa’s facade and exposed their anti-semitism, their support for the murderer of

[Heather Heyer](#), and their white supremacist views. White nationalist Patrick Casey, leader at the time, then rebranded the group as ‘AIM,’ the [American Identity Movement](#), with the goal of infiltrating Republican politics to eventually co-opt the GOP. AIM was disbanded in November 2020 as Casey got involved with Nick Fuentes and the Groyper Army.

Groypers, Groyper Army [Groypers](#) are a loose group of young alt-right supporters of white supremacist ‘America First’ podcaster Nick Fuentes, who basically hold the same ideals as self-identified white supremacist ideologues but style themselves as ‘Christian conservatives’ interested in preserving an ‘American identity’ with ‘traditional values.’ These words have become code for all things anti-Black, anti-Semitic, anti-feminist, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ—basically any time someone who is not a white cis heteronormative male Christian asserts a right to equality or civil respect. Groypers rely on Christian language around issues of marriage and family and may associate with the ‘America First’ movement, which is anti-globalist. (News stories abound citing that the term [‘globalist’ has become code for ‘Jewish’](#) despite continued protests by politicians that they are not engaging in dog-whistling.) Groypers want to confront mainstream conservatives about positions and policies they see as not in the best interests of whites. They consider mainstream conservatives as responsible as liberals for destroying what they see as ‘white America.’ Groypers have disrupted and heckled speakers at conservative events in Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, New Hampshire, Ohio, Colorado, Florida and California, focusing especially on Charlie Kirk and the reactionary conservative group Turning Point USA. Groypers disagree with Kirk’s actions like inviting gay or Black conservatives to speak at TPUSA events and take issue with Kirk’s support of Israel.

Nick Fuentes, born in 1998, is a podcaster and former YouTuber who has been banned across many platforms for hate speech expressed on his ‘America First’ podcast. He launched the Groyper Wars in 2019 with Patrick Casey, former leader of Identity Evropa. While Fuentes is an avowed white supremacist, stating frequently that immigration is eroding America’s ‘white demographic core,’ he also acknowledges that he is descended from Mexican immigrants and sometimes self-identifies as Latino. [In a Chicago Tribune article](#) citing [a report from Devin Burghart and Charles Tanner](#) of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, Burghart describes Fuentes: “Fuentes very much strikes me as the Zoomer generation’s David Duke in terms of moving this stuff to a large audience and making it more politically viable — which, given the racism and anti-Semitism and genocidal fantasies that come along with it, is utterly terrifying.” It is notable that [Fred Hampton](#), revolutionary Marxist and leader of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, whose focus was on feeding

children, community health and education, was murdered at age 21 in his bed by Chicago police while the 22-year-old Fuentes—who is from Chicago’s western suburbs—is still allotted space to spew his hate.