



# Speak Out Now

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## The Celebration of Kirk – The Goal is to Divide Us

The killing of Charlie Kirk, founder and organizer of the right-wing group Turning Point USA, provided the organized right-wing with an opportunity to falsely present itself as the protector of freedom for U.S. citizens.

The memorial gathering for Kirk at the Arizona Cardinals' stadium was a spectacle. More than 70,000 attended, including Trump, most of his cabinet, members of Kirk's organization, and others. It was broadcast for hours on major television stations and many streaming services. During the gathering, Kirk was portrayed as a Christian martyr and a key part of Trump's MAGA movement.

The goal of the memorial was to build Kirk's organization. It was wrapped in a religious mantle, like other movements that use religion as a vehicle to put a message of hate and division into action. The presence of Trump and much of his cabinet made it obvious that the government supported the gathering, and many of the speeches were clearly giving warning to those who would oppose their MAGA movement.

Kirk is being portrayed as a defender of freedom of speech and a seeker of truth. In reality, he was a man who fostered divisions and hatred for people who didn't fit into the narrow mold of white Christian nationalism. Opposition to Kirk's hate doesn't mean support for his assassination. We can recognize that turning someone into a martyr only strengthens their cause. But much of the corporate media reported on the event uncritically. They had been taught a lesson with the cancelation of Stephen Colbert's show. Then political comedian Jimmy Kimmel's show was canceled due to his remark about Kirk's killing. The head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which licenses public airwaves, warned ABC, "We can do this the easy way or the hard way." Now, due to public pressure, Kimmel's show may be back on. But it might not be broadcast widely by two big communication companies with right-wing owners.

These are clear declarations that discussing and challenging the beliefs Kirk held is not allowed. But we must challenge views that are racist, sexist, anti-gay and anti-trans, anti-Muslim, anti-anything that didn't fit into Kirk's view

of the world. Although Kirk engaged young people on campuses in debate, his real goals were clear – to dictate what should be taught on college campuses. His organization maintains a "Watch List" of educators that they deem dangerous because they expose students to a wide range of ideas, challenge them to think, and not to just accept one perspective.

University faculty across the country on Turning Point's "Watch List" are now fearful of being attacked. Recently, the administration at the University of California, Berkeley sent the federal government information on more than 150 students, faculty, and staff for alleged "antisemitic" activity. This so-called antisemitic activity was simply opposition to the U.S.-backed war on the people of Palestine.

Speaking out against the genocidal war against more than two million people, a war that has already killed more than 500,000 people and is starving them to death by preventing food and water from entering northern Gaza, is not antisemitic! The suffering of Palestinians is recognized as a genocide by every major humanitarian organization and the United Nations, but both Democrats and Republicans have used our tax dollars to support it, and they want to silence anyone who decides to speak out against it.

We cannot accept to have the current situation or the past hidden. The U.S. is made up of people from many parts of the world, with different histories. And those histories need to be understood and recognized. They include genocide, slavery, and mass incarceration, as well as powerful movements for freedom.

This is the reality that those in power want to distort or erase. The attempt to build a MAGA movement is just one representation of this. All those in power seek to undermine the possibilities of our unity. They offer us false promises of salvation through picking up the sword of MAGA or through elections. They don't want us to see ourselves as a class – a working class with diverse origins and diverse talents and enormous possibilities.

Together we are the ones who make this society function. We are the ones who do the work. We all have similar hopes for ourselves and our children. We have the ability and power to determine our own future.