

## Regional

# Why more hate groups target college campuses

In 1943, the U.S. War Department produced a 17-minute educational short titled "Don't Be a Sucker." The film portrays the rise of Nazism in Germany and alerts Americans against repeating the mistakes of intolerance made by the Nazis. It stresses that Americans will lose their country if they let themselves be turned into "suckers" by fanaticism and hatred. The film was produced to make the case for the desegregation of the United States armed forces by revealing the connection between prejudice and fascism.

The film became "viral" on YouTube after the events at Charlottesville, Va., because it teaches how to recognize and reject the propaganda used by the Nazis to promote to bigotry and intimidation. It shows how prejudice can be used to divide a nation to gain power but how such tactics can be neutralized by friendly persuasion and that protection of liberty is a unifying and practical way to live peacefully.

That hate groups chose the college town for the University of Virginia for their marches last August 11 and 12, is not surprising. The statue of the Robert E. Lee -at the center of the controversy- (located in Emancipation Park originally known as Lee Park), was erected in 1924 when the park was for whites only. This has been a location traditionally used to demonstrate "confederate pride." Further, in 1921, the KKK paid homage to the university that would go on to educate some of white supremacy's modern leaders by making a gift of \$1,000. But there is an even more important reason why hate groups are choosing state universities for their purposes: confrontation.

To understand that we must realize what their tactics and how they mirror the ones by the Nazis. These tactics can be summarized as follows: First, stage a

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very showy act that leads to physical confrontation. That is what the Nazis did during their ascension to power when battling communists and others in the streets of Germany. That gave the impression that they were very powerful and big.

Second, look well-organized and disciplined. Although the hate groups that showed up at Charlottesville did not wear the brown shirts of the SA (Sturmabteilung, or Storm Troopers, the paramilitary wing of the Nazi party), they wore khaki pants (which are brown) and white Polo shirts. We need to remember that Hugo Boss made its fortune by manufacturing uniforms for the Nazis. From one brand name to another.

Third, use chants that will resonate with bigots. Members of these hate groups were chanting Blut und Boden (blood and soil), a nineteenth century German idealization of a racially defined national body ("blood") united with a settlement area ("soil"). They were also chanting "Jews will not replace us." The SA played the main role in the Kristallnacht or Night of the Broken Glass of 9-10 November 1938 when 91 Jews were murdered together with widespread destruction of synagogues, Jewish businesses, and buildings.

Also, the hate groups at Charlottesville marched during the night of August 11 carrying torches. SA used torches at their night marches for visual effect to intimidate their enemies. The hate groups in Virginia

were carrying Tiki torches that because of being inspired by Polynesian culture it is hard to image having any connection with Aryan traditions. The manufacturer later stated "Tiki Brand is not associated in any way with the events that took place in Charlottesville and are deeply saddened and disappointed. We do not support their message or the use of our products in this way."

Finally, generate violence. Not only it is a very intimidating act but also by having one of your own killed you can use that as a propaganda tool by portraying martyrdom. In 1930 Horst Wessel, a SA member, was killed by communists after which he became a major propaganda symbol and the lyrics he wrote for a song (later known as Horst-Wessel-Lied or "Horst Wessel Song") became the official anthem for the Nazi party. Something similar was used by the Nazis after the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 when 16 Nazis were killed while trying the seize power in Munich after which Hitler was brought up to national attention. The Nazis later built a shrine in Munich to commemorate those "martyrs."

But how about universities? These hate groups have tried to provoke violence by going to the places they consider as "liberal nests" (colleges and universities) to provoke physical clashes with people more likely to fall into the trap of engaging into street fights with hate groups. Also, they see universities as places where they can demonstrate their anti-intellectualism. When the Nazis took power they not only expelled Jews and non-conservative intellectuals from positions in academia, but also engaged in the burning of books of university libraries. As Joseph Goebbels harangued in 1933 during a radio broadcast from Berlin's opera

square, one of the places where book burning ceremonies took place, "The German man of the future shall not be a man of books, but a man of will."

Hate groups today are following, step by step, the Nazi playbook in order to achieve notoriety and dreaming of conquering power. T

They felt emboldened after the elections of last November and their websites are reeling with joy on what they see as supporting statements from the president of the United States. After all, this is a man who, according to her former wife Ivana Trump, kept in a cabinet by his bed a copy of "My New Order," Hitler's collected speeches.

If you think all this should not concern you, remember the words of the Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller (an early supporter of the Nazis who later spent years in a concentration camp because of his opposition to Hitler):

"First, they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

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