

After fascists assault Jewish college student in weekend rampage

# **Governor Ron DeSantis refuses to denounce Florida Nazis, attacks Democrats instead**

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In a press conference Monday, Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis, a possible 2024 presidential candidate, refused to denounce violent Nazis and instead accused Democrats of elevating “anti-Semites.”

DeSantis’ remarks came after Nazis were permitted this past weekend in central Florida to assault a Jewish college student. In a video prior to Saturday’s assault, the Nazis can be heard yelling, “Heil Hitler for what he did,” and “White Power!” At another point a Nazi yells, “He’s a Jew, look at him! Guess where you’re going back to?”

The following day, pictures taken from motorists show the Nazis hanging pro-Trump Nazi flags over Interstate 4 between Disney World and downtown Orlando, Florida. One banner featured swastikas and the words, “Let’s Go Brandon,” a pro-Trump slogan that is code for “F--k Joe Biden.”

The disturbing incidents occurred one week after fascist propaganda was distributed in Miami and Fort Lauderdale claiming that the coronavirus pandemic is a Jewish conspiracy. According to [jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org), as of 2020 over 657,000 Jews lived in Florida, behind only California and New York.

Despite both incidents being widely reported on social media in real time, provoking international outrage from workers and students of all backgrounds, as of this writing, no arrests have been made.

On Wednesday, Orange County Sheriff John Mina said charges “are forthcoming” on “several people involved in that incident,” referring to the assault on the college student.

David Newstat, the victim of the Nazi assault, is a University of Central Florida college student. He explained to Fox 35 that he was driving by a popular mall in Orlando when he came to a stop in front of the Nazi rally on Saturday.

“I’m trying to go to the store, to Target, and I’m coming back home, and I’m being berated by Nazis,” Newstat told Fox 35. “My grandfather was a survivor. Other members of

my family were survivors of the Holocaust and migrated to the US after. It’s very sad to see people like this can be so ignorant and can have so much hatred built up in their hearts.”

One of the Nazis saw an Israeli flag on Newstat’s car, and spat on him. After that, Newstat said he briefly got out of his car to record the group with his cellphone, whereupon he was spat on again and assaulted. Cell phone video shows the Nazis, in a frenzy, surrounding and punching Newstat.

“I’m literally Jewish and I got attacked, assaulted, pepper-sprayed, spit on, you name it,” Newstat recalled.

While several Florida Democratic and Republican politicians churned out statements condemning the Nazi members of the microscopic National Socialist Movement, Governor DeSantis remained silent over the weekend.

In fact, the first mention someone from the DeSantis administration made concerning the incidents was on Sunday evening, when his press secretary, Christina Pushaw, in a since-deleted tweet questioned if the Nazis, who were wearing all-black paramilitary uniforms with swastika arm patches, carrying Nazi flags, hailing Adolf Hitler and threatening to exterminate Jews, were, in fact, Nazis.

“Do we even know they’re Nazis?” questioned Pushaw. “Or is this a stunt like the ‘white nationalists’ who crashed the Youngkin rally in Charlottesville and turned out to be Dem staffers? I trust Florida law enforcement to investigate and am awaiting their conclusions.”

Questioned by reporters on Monday to respond to the fascist rampage, DeSantis refused to condemn the Nazis and instead blamed the Democrats for allegedly trying to smear him.

“So what I’m going to say is these people, these Democrats who are trying to use this as some type of political issue to try to smear me as if I had something to do with it, we’re not playing their game.”

He continued, “I’m not going to have people try to smear me who belong to a political party that has elevated antisemites to the halls of Congress,” singling out Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar, one of only three practicing Muslims serving in Congress, and, not incidentally, a frequent target of Republican fascistic incitement.

As the Republicans and their police allies court and abet fascists, the Democrats continue to seek an accommodation with their Republican “colleagues,” while downplaying the growing threat, seeking to blind the working class to the dangers.

This was expressed in a January 31 interview on the Rachel Maddow show. While Democratic Florida State Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith was able to condemn the Nazis, he sought to obscure the transformation of the Republican Party into a fascist movement.

“Somehow some of these extremists and white supremacists are getting the message that it is OK for them to be public with their hatred and anti-Semitism,” said Guillermo Smith (emphasis added).

Reiterating a version of Biden’s incessant pleas for “unity” with Trump’s party of fascists and insurrectionists, Guillermo Smith said it was “incumbent upon all politicians, Republican and Democrat, to unequivocally condemn this type of hatred and ask, ‘Why are individuals feeling empowered, these neo-Nazis, to come out from the shadows, and why has Florida become such a haven for white supremacists and extremists?’”

The return of fascism is an international phenomenon rooted in the advanced decay of the capitalist system. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in yesterday’s perspective, “Far-right ‘Freedom Convoy’ besieges Canada’s parliament—an inflection point in the breakdown of Canadian democracy”:

Unprecedented levels of social inequality, great-power conflict and imperialist war, and the murderous policy of herd immunity are incompatible with democratic forms of rule.

This is why ruling elites in all the major capitalist countries have systematically brought forward far-right and outright fascist forces.

In his refusal to condemn the Nazis, DeSantis is simply following the footsteps of Trump. Prior to inciting fascists,

white supremacists and far-right militia members to storm the Capitol on January 6, 2021 in an attempt to overthrow the election of Joe Biden, Trump infamously declared that there were “very fine people on both sides” of the August 2017 fascist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which 32-year-old anti-racist activist Heather Heyer was murdered by a Nazi.

Trump’s former White House adviser Steve Bannon and Trump’s coup lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, traded fascist talking points on Bannon’s “War Room Pandemic” podcast earlier this week.

After agreeing that there was “massive fraud” in 2020 election, with Bannon calling for “2.6 million ballots” in Pennsylvania to be thrown out, Giuliani and Bannon took turns inciting fascist violence against Holocaust survivor and Jewish billionaire George Soros.

“This guy [Soros] has taken over almost every major city. And in almost every single one of them, the proof is in the pudding. They set records for murder last year. Do you realize how much Soros money has been used to get people killed? Mostly African-American kids,” said the former mayor of New York City.

“Understand what Soros, the reign of terror,” hissed Bannon. “It’s a reign of terror brought on you by these globalist billionaires trying to destroy this country.”

In an interview with CNN, Oren Segal, vice president at the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism, noted the recent increase in fascist activity. “The reality is, these incidents that have been occurring around the country, are happening at a time of historically high numbers of anti-Semitic incidents... The last four years have been amongst the highest we have ever recorded in 40 years.”

Last year, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported 2,204 anti-Semitic incidents, a slight increase from the year prior and the third highest ever recorded since 1979, the first year ADL began tracking incidents.



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