

Hip hop celebrity, millionaire Kanye West emerges as full-blown anti-Semite

Nick Barrickman
28 October 2022

Hip hop celebrity and multi-millionaire Kanye West has revealed himself to be a full-blown anti-Semite and fascist over the past few weeks, producing widespread outrage.

The furor erupted when West premiered a line of clothing at his Yeezy Paris Fashion Week show in early October, featuring the phrase “White Lives Matter” emblazoned on it. The phrase is widely associated with neo-Nazi circles. The clothing drew swift condemnation.

This episode did not stop West, who then posted an October 8 screed on Twitter declaring he would go “death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE,” making use of a military term (“defcon 3”) meaning “force readiness increased above normal levels.”

The rapper then asserted that Jews “have toyed with me and tried to black ball anyone who opposes your agenda.” These comments resulted in West being barred from his accounts on Twitter and Instagram, where he had posted similar comments.

West doubled down a week later on the Drink Champs podcast, blaming “Jewish Zionists” for the media backlash. “Jewish people have owned the Black voice,” he ranted on the podcast. “Either it’s through us wearing the Ralph Lauren shirt, or it’s all of us being signed to a record label, or having a Jewish manager, or being signed to a Jewish basketball team, or doing a movie on a Jewish platform like Disney.” Despite this, West claimed that he, “as the blood of Christ,” could not be considered an anti-Semite.

West also referenced the views of far-right propagandist and personal friend Candace Owens on the podcast, falsely claiming the 2020 police murder of George Floyd was caused by the presence of drugs in his system rather than by brutal, deadly force on the part of law enforcement.

West has received support from and emboldened ultra-right elements. On Saturday, a group of neo-Nazis hung a banner from an I-405 freeway overpass in Los Angeles

proclaiming “Kanye is right about the Jews.” They were photographed giving the Nazi salute. What precedent is there for a major American entertainer to be celebrated by fascist trash?

CNN reported Thursday that “[s]everal people who were once close to” West revealed the celebrity had “long been fascinated” by the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

CNN cited an unnamed business executive who had broken ties with West due to his “obsession” with the fascist leader. “He would praise Hitler by saying how incredible it was that he was able to accumulate so much power and would talk about all the great things he and the Nazi Party achieved for the German people,” the individual alleged.

Various businesses have severed links to West. In the past week, shoe designer Balenciaga, *Vogue*, the Creative Artists Agency (CAA), the MRC Entertainment studio, Amazon, Adidas and Gap have cut ties with the 45-year-old rapper. According to *Forbes*, the loss of West’s Adidas partnership cost him over \$1 billion, capping “a stunning, self-induced downfall for one of the brashest and most volatile personalities to have graced *Forbes*’ pages.”

This followed a statement by media entertainment CEO Ari Emanuel, published in the *Financial Times*, calling on businesses to separate themselves from West.

Music streaming platform Spotify declared it would not remove West’s music. According to Spotify executive Daniel Ek, the de-platforming of West’s music, which has 51 million listeners on the service, was “up to his label,” and that the rapper’s songs violated no policy. West’s former label, Def Jam, ended its contract with him in 2021, and the rapper’s current label G.O.O.D. Music is self-owned.

West’s behavior is the latest in a series of inflammatory outbursts over the years. The rapper’s fame and wealth, reaching far beyond his actual talent, has played a central

and negative role here.

In 2018, the *World Socialist Web Site* commented on West's promotion of President Donald Trump and his description on TMZ Live of American slavery as "a choice" that black people had personally made. Former TMZ staff member Van Lathan recently noted on a podcast that West had also made pro-Nazi remarks during his slavery rant at the publication.

"He said something like, 'I love Hitler, I love Nazis.' Something to that effect when he was there," Lathan said to the "Higher Learning" podcast. He added, "they took it out of the interview for whatever reason. It wasn't my decision."

In 2013, the rapper wore a jacket adorned with the Confederate flag, famously remarking that "It's my flag now." The rapper-producer's music has contained various affronts, including sampling the famous anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit" for a paranoid, narcissistic song about partying, drug usage and other trivial subjects (2013's "Blood on the Leaves"). West has made innumerable self-aggrandizing statements and gestures since the beginning of his career.

Prior to his embrace of the far-right, West's public displays of backwardness and money worship were celebrated and encouraged by the media, "left" publications included. For these types, such behavior was entirely excusable, when carried out under the banner of racial politics.

As the *Socialist Worker*, speaking for the entire middle class left, proclaimed in 2009:

It can never be forgotten that Kanye is indeed a Black man living in a white man's world. He is a performer in an industry that is greatly dominated by exploitation and oppression. As LBoogie over at Democracy and Hip-Hop Project explains: "Kanye's arrogance, his braggadocio, his loud-mouth interventions are scattered pieces of an anti-racist sentiment that historically has been a rallying cry for people of color to reclaim what is rightfully ours."

As recently as six months ago, *Jacobin* magazine was defending West, asserting that his "turbulent antics and generalized disorder" were "an essential piece of the remarkable—and remarkably chaotic—career he has built."

His former champions are embarrassed now that West,

still possessed of over \$400 million in personal wealth despite his falling out with his corporate sponsors, has openly made common cause with far-right and fascistic elements.

The advocates of identity politics have continued to make excuses for West in light of the recent developments. "[I]t's all very well to cancel Ye, but as a Black purveyor of anti-Blackness and antisemitism, he was low-hanging fruit," writes the *Washington Post*'s Karen Attiah. The critic demands that blacks be given the "structural power" to "cancel the rabidly racist White men in our culture and politics, just as we've done for an ignorant Black rapper who makes really ugly shoes."

Apologists for West attribute his anti-Semitic rants to mental problems. Fascist demagogues have not generally been known for their psychological stability, but West's outburst is hardly an isolated event. The WSWS only 11 days ago took note of a rant by Donald Trump and the overall growth of anti-Semitism in the US.

The WSWS perspective pointed out that anti-Jewish propaganda has invariably been used in the modern era as "a weapon of the capitalist class aimed at diverting class tensions and providing a convenient scapegoat for mass anger over deteriorating social conditions" and that "anti-Semitism assumes a particularly toxic character during times of extreme social and economic crisis, emerging in explosions of violence."

West comes from a middle-class background. His mother was the head of a college department. He is quite conscious about what he is doing, or as conscious as such a person can be.

Many media publications have sought to separate West's crude comments from his supposedly "genius" musical persona, in the hopes that he might recover his reputation (and money-making powers). "Eventually, he finds some way to make a comeback, be it via apologizing or releasing a game-changing album," speculates a commentary in the *Washington Post*.

Whatever West's individual fate, a Rubicon has been crossed. A popular cultural icon has openly embraced fascist ideology. Elements in the upper-middle class and ruling elite are reviving all the political filth of the 20th century as the capitalist system enters into terminal crisis.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact