

Flagging DeSantis campaign lays off dozens of staff, including neo-Nazi communications aide

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Late Tuesday night, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' flagging presidential campaign confirmed that it had laid off more than one third of its staff, 38 people, over the previous week. The most notable of these terminations was the sacking of 25-year-old communications staffer Nate Hochman, a neo-Nazi.

The catalyst for Hochman's firing was his central role in the creation and distribution of DeSantis' latest fascistic advertisement. Like previous DeSantis campaign ads, the latest video sought to out-Führer ex-president Donald Trump by juxtaposing news headlines and right-wing memes of DeSantis' murderous immigration, COVID-19 and LGBTQ policies with Trump's.

On July 23, "@desantiscams," a small pro-DeSantis account followed by many (now former) DeSantis campaign staff, tweeted, and then quickly deleted, the one minute-plus video. The account has previously featured images comparing DeSantis with Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

The latest video, set to an electronic music soundtrack, featured a boogaloo-style paramilitary gleeful at the idea of a fascist DeSantis presidency. The video ended with the Florida governor's visage in front of a glowing and spinning Sonnenrad superimposed on the state flag of Florida and flanked by columns of marching soldiers.

Anonymous DeSantis campaign sources speaking to *Axios* claimed (conveniently) that the video was the sole creation of Hochman, and that it was his decision to share it through the pro-DeSantis Twitter account. After the video was posted by @desantiscams, Hochman's Twitter account quickly retweeted the

video as well, before deleting it.

In a terse statement to *Axios* on the firing of Hochman, the DeSantis campaign said, "Nate Hochman is no longer with the campaign. And we will not be commenting on him further."

On Saturday, the *New York Times* reported that a homophobic DeSantis video released last month in the same style as Saturday's video was created by the campaign. However, it was unclear if Hochman was behind that video as well.

The Sonnenrad, or black sun, is a pagan symbol that was adopted by the Nazis in the lead-up to World War II. In 1933, Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, acquired the Wewelsburg castle in Westphalia, Germany. Seeking to transform the castle into a leadership academy for SS officers, Himmler remodeled it to feature Nazi-inspired architecture and runes, including a "Black Sun" in the Obergruppenführersaal, or SS Generals' Hall.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, neo-Nazis have used the Sonnenrad as a stand-in for the more well-known Nazi swastika. Dozens of Sonnenrad flags were carried by the fascists who gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia for the deadly "Unite the Right" rally in 2017. Fascist killers—from Christchurch mass murderer Brenton Tarrant, to Buffalo mass shooter Payton Gendron, to the Azov Battalion in Ukraine—have likewise adopted the symbol.

Hochman, a rising "intellectual" in the Republican Party, was previously a staff writer with the *National Review*. Last year, he penned a 4,000-word opinion column for the *New York Times*.

His pieces have also appeared in *The Conservative*, *City Journal* and the *Claremont Review of Books*. In 2021, he was the Publius Fellow at the Claremont Institute. Claremont “scholars” regularly collaborate with Republican fascists and arch-reactionaries, including Trump, DeSantis, Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

There is no question that Hochman was specifically brought onto the DeSantis campaign because of his fascist politics, which were well known to the Florida governor prior to Hochman’s hiring this past March. More than six months before he was hired by the campaign, *The Dispatch* reported about a December 2021 Twitter Spaces conversation Hochman had with neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes.

The Dispatch reported that in his conversation with Fuentes, Hochman praised the Holocaust-denying Hitler lover as a good “influence” on “kids.”

“We were just talking about your influence and we were saying, like, you’ve gotten a lot of kids ‘based,’ and we respect that, for sure,” Hochman told Fuentes.

He added, “But the fact that you have said super-edgy things means that there’s a pretty strong ceiling to what you can actually accomplish in politics. Is that something that you’re actually thinking about?”

Agreeing with Fuentes that women “should have no authority over men” and “have no business in politics,” Hochman declared, “When the man’s right, he’s right.”

Speaking with conservative commentator and Fox News regular guest Clay Travis on Wednesday, DeSantis again said that if he was elected president he would consider pardoning Trump.



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