

# As outrage grows over Jimmy Kimmel suspension, Trump administration threatens further free speech crackdown

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The censoring of Jimmy Kimmel at the behest of the fascist Trump administration has provoked outrage among large sections of the population. The longtime host of *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and frequent target of Donald Trump was suspended by the Disney corporation, which owns the ABC TV network, on Wednesday following right-wing outrage and government pressure over his Monday commentary on the Charlie Kirk assassination.

In his Monday monologue Kimmel correctly observed that the “MAGA gang” was trying to “characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and doing everything they can to score political points from it.”

On Tuesday, right-wing accounts on X immediately began a witch-hunt against Kimmel, calling for his firing. This call was seconded by Trump’s chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Brendan Carr, in a Wednesday appearance on Turning Point USA contributor Benny Johnson’s podcast.

On the program, Carr directly threatened the Disney corporation, saying, “We can do this the easy way or the hard way.” He called on the company to “change conduct, to take action, frankly, no Kimmel, or there’s going to be additional work for the FCC ahead.”

Within hours of Carr’s appearance on Johnson’s podcast, Disney confirmed it was suspending the program “indefinitely.”

Following Disney’s announcement, President Trump gloated on his social media platform:

Great News for America: The ratings-challenged Jimmy Kimmel Show is CANCELLED. Congratulations to ABC for finally having the courage to do what had to be done. Kimmel has ZERO talent, and worse ratings than even Colbert, if that’s possible.

Threatening to go after the two remaining late night hosts on NBC, Jimmy Fallon and Seth Myers (after the announced termination of Stephen Colbert by CBS, in addition to Kimmel on ABC), Trump wrote:

That leaves Jimmy and Seth, two total losers, on Fake News NBC. Their ratings are also horrible. Do it NBC!!! President DJT

In an interview on Air Force One, Trump made clear that he is using the full force of the government to go after people and organizations he does not like, not because they have violated any laws, but because they do not please the Führer:

Look, that is something that should be talked about for licensing too. When you have a network and you have evening shows and all they do is hit Trump, it’s all they do ... all they do is hit Trump. They’re licensed. They’re not allowed to do that. They are an arm of the Democrat Party.

In an appearance on CNBC Thursday, FCC Chairman Carr confirmed the administration would continue to leverage the power of the state to suppress speech:

We are in the midst of a massive shift in dynamics in the media ecosystem for lots of reasons. Again, including the permission structure that President Trump’s election has provided and I would simply say we are not done yet with seeing the consequences of that shift.

In addition to threats from Carr, Kimmel was suspended by Disney after two of the largest television broadcasting companies in the United States—Nexstar Media Group, which is awaiting regulatory approval from the FCC to acquire TEGNA for \$6.2 billion, and Sinclair Broadcast Group—released statements announcing they would suspend carrying *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* from their local ABC stations “indefinitely.”

In its statement, Sinclair added that in place of Kimmel’s show, it would air a tribute to fascist Charlie Kirk on Friday and again “across all Sinclair stations this weekend.” It continued, “In addition, Sinclair is offering the special to all ABC affiliates across the country.”

The company said it would not lift the suspension of Kimmel until “formal discussions are held” and Kimmel issues a “direct apology to the Kirk family” and makes “a meaningful personal donation to the Kirk Family” and his organization, Turning Point USA.

The Sinclair Broadcast Group began in 1971 with Julian Sinclair Smith, father to the Smith brothers. The Smith brothers, David, Fred, Duncan and Rob, own controlling shares in what is, under Sinclair, Inc., a publicly traded company.

On the company history section of its website, Sinclair hails the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 under the Clinton administration as “one of the industry’s biggest catalysts for change, providing for some deregulation and allowing us to make more acquisitions.”

The Smith family has over decades used Sinclair Broadcast Group not only as a media empire but as a political lever in favor of conservative and Republican causes. Campaign finance records show that their PAC and

individual donations overwhelmingly support Republican candidates—Robert E. Smith famously gave to Rep. Greg Gianforte (who assaulted a reporter), and many of the Smiths' contributions in the 2015-2018 cycles went to GOP officials.

In recent years, Sinclair has instituted “must-run” segments, such as “Bottom Line with Boris Epshteyn.” Epshteyn, a central operative in Trump's January 6, 2021 coup plot, helped coordinate legal and media strategies to overturn the 2020 election while serving as Sinclair's “chief political analyst.”

Carr's FCC has no issue with Epshteyn's one-sided commentary or Fox News host Brian Kilmeade's comments last week calling for a Nazi-like eugenics program to kill homeless people. By refusing to act against Sinclair's broadcasting of coup conspirator Epshteyn or Fox host Kilmeade's open call for mass murder, Carr's FCC has shown that it does not serve the “public interest.” It serves the interests of Trump and his coterie of political thugs like Charlie Kirk and Stephen Miller, who are promoting fascist political conceptions to preserve capitalist rule amid deepening social crisis.

It is unclear if Kimmel's show will ever return. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Thursday that Disney “saw a path to the show potentially returning in the next several days, according to a person familiar with the situation.”

The *Journal* also reported that sources confirmed the decision to pull Kimmel was made by “senior leadership,” including “Chief Executive Bob Iger and co-chairman of Disney Entertainment Dan Walden.” The paper said Nexstar's decision to stop airing the program “influenced Disney's decision given the large number of ABC affiliates the company operates.”

Kimmel's suspension is part of the ongoing suppression and subordination of all cultural, educational and intellectual endeavors to the dictates of the financial oligarchy. Following Columbia University's capitulation to Trump earlier this year, WWSW International Editorial Board Chairman David North observed:

An American Trumpian version of what the Nazis called *Gleichschaltung*—the official subordination of intellectual and cultural life to Nazi ideology—is being implemented by leading “liberal” American universities.

This subordination and Kimmel's suspension have provoked widespread outrage among large sections of the population. Until Wednesday, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* was the longest running late-night television show in the history of ABC and the flagship program in its late-night lineup. The show has received numerous Emmy nominations, including at the most recent awards show. Kimmel himself has hosted the Emmy Awards three times (2012, 2016, 2020) and the Academy Awards four times (2017, 2018, 2023, 2024).

In the wake of his suspension, Kimmel's monologue has continued to garner a mass viewership, crossing 3 million views on YouTube. The top comment with over 10,000 “likes” is Martin Niemöller's famous post-World War II poem “First They Came...”

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.

Artists, comedians and workers are speaking out against this latest attack on democratic rights in the United States. Asked about Kimmel's suspension at *The Atlantic Festival* by Jeffrey Goldberg, longtime former late-night host David Letterman replied:

Well this is a misery ... in the world of somebody who is an authoritarian, maybe a dictatorship, sooner or later everyone is going to be touched. But this is me for 30 years I did this for a living. So I see this happen, they took care of Colbert, that was rude, that was inexcusable, the man deserves a great deal of credit. He is in the Hall of Fame nine times and to be manipulated like that because the Ellison family didn't want to trouble Donald Trump with this move so they got rid of him. Not only got rid of him, got rid of the whole franchise. You are not going to have to worry about anything Larry [Ellison] it is all gone. It's fine. Good night.

And then, my good friend Jimmy Kimmel. I feel bad about this because, we all see where this is going, correct? It's managed media. It's no good. It's silly, its ridiculous and you can't go around firing somebody because you are fearful or trying to suck up to an authoritarian, criminal administration in the Oval Office, that's just not how this works.

Letterman continued:

But the other thing is, the FCC this guy Brendan Carr, so this guy at the FCC “We can do things the easy way or the hard way,” who is hiring these goons? Mario Puzo? [American novelist and screenwriter, author of the *The Godfather*]

In a TikTok video, comedian and podcaster Marc Maron warned:

It's happening. Jimmy Kimmel has been muzzled and taken off the air by his network ABC. ... This is government censorship, this is the Trump administration coming after people who speak out against him. This is the end of it. If you have any concern of relief in real freedom, or a Constitution and free speech, this is it.

This is a deciding moment. This is what authoritarianism looks like right now in this country, it's happening.

The House Democratic leadership issued a pathetic statement in response to Kimmel's suspension. The Democrats called on Carr to resign and threatened “the relentless unleashing of congressional subpoena power.” This is an empty threat, as Republicans control the House.

Only the power of the international working class can halt the Trump administration's drive toward dictatorship. The defense of democratic rights, including the right to free speech, cannot be entrusted to the Democrats, the courts or any faction of the capitalist state, all of which are complicit in the destruction of basic liberties, from the squashing of anti-genocide protests to the backing of Trump's mass deportation operation.

What is required is the mobilization of workers in every industry through mass political strikes to shut down production, paralyze the financial arteries of capitalism, and reassert democratic control over

society. On this basis, the working class must fight for a workers' government—of, by and for the people—which will expropriate the billionaires and place the vast resources of society under democratic control to meet human needs, not private profit.



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