

Trump, Vance turn Kirk funeral into Christian-fascist rally

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In a spectacle that was a toxic stew of Christian fundamentalism with American nationalism, President Donald Trump and his top aides transformed a memorial ceremony in Glendale, Arizona, for Charlie Kirk, the leader of the far-right student group Turning Point USA, killed earlier this month, into a fascist rally.

The clear aim of Trump and other top officials—which included Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller—was to use Kirk’s death as the basis for building a fascist movement in America.

They and other speakers, including evangelical preachers and officers of Turning Point USA, hailed Kirk as a martyr for religion-based politics, depicting him as a Christ-like figure, despite his well-established advocacy of racism, sexism, homophobia and thinly disguised support for political violence.

The entire tenor of the event was deranged and violent. Speaker after speaker proclaimed Christ as the most important figure in their lives, and that the United States could only succeed to the extent that it embraced that conception.

This prescription for a theocratic state is profoundly at odds with the reality of modern America, where nearly 40 percent of the population profess either no religion (31 percent) or a faith other than Christianity (7 percent), and where two-thirds of self-identified Christians say they rarely attend church or that religion is not of great importance in their lives.

At the Glendale rally, in front of 60,000 people in the football stadium as well as a nationwide cable television audience, speakers hailed Kirk’s supposed devotion to “debate” and “free speech,” although he was the initiator of a censorship campaign against

supposedly left-wing and “woke” teachers who were to be harassed, blacklisted and driven from their jobs on college campuses.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has seized on the killing of Kirk to launch a sweeping assault on democratic rights and freedom of speech.

Four days before the funeral, Trump’s FCC chair engineered the dismissal of ABC late-night host Jimmy Kimmel for mocking Republican attempts to profit politically from Kirk’s death. Trump has demanded the licenses of any critical broadcast networks be revoked, and fired a US attorney for refusing to fabricate charges against political opponents.

The lineup of speakers was an indication of the authoritarian character of the regime Trump is establishing. While a half-dozen cabinet members spoke, as well as Trump and Vance, there were no prominent senators or congressmen, even though House Speaker Mike Johnson and many other leaders of the Republican-controlled Congress were in attendance. Congress has been reduced to a rubber stamp, and that was evident at the rally.

A prominent slot was given to Jack Posobiec, a close Trump ally and longtime promoter of fascist and white nationalist politics. Denouncing “the left, the Democrats and the media,” Posobiec proclaimed that the “sacrifice” of Kirk would become a “pivotal moment” in the “saving of Western civilization” by “returning the people to almighty God.”

In a call for violence, Posobiec shouted, “Are you ready to fight back? Are you ready to put on the full armor of God and face the evil in high places and the spiritual warfare before us?” Posobiec, notorious for playing a leading role in the January 6, 2021 attempted coup, has extensive ties to white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations and individuals.

Miller, Trump's deputy chief of staff and the administration's leading fascist ideologue, delivered one of the most menacing addresses, treating Kirk's death as a call to arms. He vowed that the killing had "made him a martyr," urged the crowd to embrace a "righteous fury that our enemies cannot comprehend or understand," and cast the moment as the opening salvo in a war to "save the West."

Miller explicitly invoked the slogan "We are the storm"—a phrase associated with the QAnon fascist movement—recasting a far-right rallying cry as official White House rhetoric.

Vance declared, "The evil murderer who took Charlie from us expected us to have a funeral today, and instead, my friends, we have had a revival in celebration of Charlie Kirk and his Lord Jesus Christ." He continued, "It is better to be persecuted for your faith than to deny the kingship of Christ."

Hegseth, a leading fascist within the administration and head of the newly renamed "Department of War," repeated Posobeic's reference to a "spiritual war" within the United States. He referred to Kirk as a "a warrior for country, a warrior for Christ."

Trump made few religious references in his 40-minute closing address, focusing instead on denouncing the "radical left," claiming in one of his most brazen lies that most political violence in the United States comes from the left. In reality, figures compiled by the Anti-Defamation League and every credible study show that more than 80 percent of political violence is carried out by fascist, racist, neo-Nazi and other ultra-right groups.

Trump used Kirk's death as a springboard for a renewed call to unleash the National Guard against the American population. Citing what he claimed were Kirk's "last words"—"Please, sir, save Chicago"—Trump promised to send federal troops into that city and others. He framed the deployment of military forces as necessary to confront "radical left violence," blaming left-wing organizations, without evidence, for Kirk's killing.

At the same time, Trump promised new measures that combine political repression with the promotion of ignorance and superstition. He pre-announced that the Department of Health and Human Services would release Monday an assessment of the causes of rising incidence of autism. This is expected to indict vaccines,

in keeping with the anti-vax propaganda long promoted by Kennedy and other anti-science charlatans.

Trump repeated his own "Big Lie" about the 2020 election, claiming the Democrats "cheated like dogs," and credited Kirk and other far-right operatives with paving the way for his return to power in 2024.

Trump only drew one distinction between his own political views and those of Kirk. "I hate my opponent," Trump said, claiming (falsely) that, unlike himself, Kirk "wasn't interested in demonizing anyone."

The Trump administration and the coterie of fascists and reactionaries speaking in Arizona are exploiting Kirk's killing to criminalize dissent and prepare the violent suppression of the working class. The Glendale rally made clear that Kirk is being transformed into a martyr of the MAGA movement, and his death is being weaponized to accelerate the construction of a police state in the United States.



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