

Fascist Steve Bannon denounces teachers as “terrorists” in tribute to Charlie Kirk

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At Charlie Kirk’s public funeral in Glendale, Arizona, this past Sunday, longtime Trump advisor Steve Bannon launched into a furious condemnation of America’s educators. He denounced them as “terrorists” and signaled a new phase in the war against teachers and freedom of speech in the United States.

Bannon—a raving fascist who gave a Nazi salute at this year’s Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)—declared Sunday that “a third of teachers are terrorists,” casting educators as enemies of the family and the nation for encouraging independent thinking among youth.

Bannon’s grotesque accusation was uncritically echoed by co-host Gina Loudon, on the right-wing network Real America’s Voice. “That’s right” she said in reply to Bannon.

The criminalization and demonization of teachers is part of a calculated attempt by the ruling class to justify the ongoing destruction of public education, destroy the right to freedom of speech, and initiate a broad push for “patriotic education.”

Workers across the country, especially educators, are facing firing, suspensions and “investigations” over their comments, primarily on private posts in social media, following the state-orchestrated deification of the late fascist Charlie Kirk.

School districts have imposed disciplinary actions against school workers in at least 28 states and the District of Columbia. That includes: Texas (over 280 complaints being investigated in K-12 schools, with the state demanding the suspension of teaching licenses of those disciplined), Georgia (in Cobb County alone two educators were terminated, with as many as 15 placed on leave), Florida, South Carolina (multiple educators fired), Iowa, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Maryland, Michigan, Oregon, Wisconsin, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, California and Pennsylvania.

Additionally, the American Association of University Professors reported retaliation against about 60 professors and teachers in connection with critical comments they made about Kirk or people mourning him.

The outright trampling on the First Amendment is demonstrated by the vague pretexts being utilized to victimize teachers. In the Klein School District in Texas, a teacher was fired for “senseless and completely unacceptable remarks.” In

Tennessee, a university staff member was fired “effective immediately” for “inappropriate and callous comments.” In Massachusetts, a special education teacher was placed on leave for filming herself singing “God Bless America” next to Kirk’s death newscast.

This blatant attack on the First Amendment and the purging of oppositional voices directly conflicts with the US Supreme Court decision in *Pickering v. Board of Education* (1968), which confirmed that public employees do not lose their First Amendment rights when accepting government jobs. It also affirms that teachers have the right to speak on “matters of public concern” without facing dismissal.

Bannon’s attacks on teachers and the Trump administration’s drive for a “MAGA” curriculum follow the Nazi playbook, which targeted youth and imposed state control over education. The aim was to indoctrinate children with nationalism, obedience, racial “purity,” xenophobia and militarism, while purging dissident teachers and erasing history.

On September 17, the “America 250 Civics Education Coalition” was launched by the Department of Education, in partnership with 40 right-wing organizations, to implement a new “patriotic” civics curriculum for K-12 schools. The coalition, stocked with Republicans and Trump loyalists, was handed \$160 million by the Trump administration, which abruptly issued “non-continuation” notices for dozens of existing programs centered around American history and the arts, services to children with disabilities, and projects preparing students for college.

“America 250 Civics Education” will write curricula, tour nationally, sponsor competitions, and provide speakers, all curated by extreme right-wing and overtly fascist groups, Christian nationalist zealots and opponents of public education. Among them are: Kirk’s Turning Point USA, Hillsdale College (a long-time mouthpiece for intellectual fascism), Pat Robertson’s American Center for Law & Justice, the 1776 Project Foundation, Priests for Life, Catholic Vote, the Claremont Institute, the Heritage Foundation and Moms for Liberty.

The educational approach is based on America First Policy Institute’s (AFPI) “Civics Course Act,” which prohibits “defamatory history of America’s founding,” bans discussing

“systemic racism” or “gender fluidity,” and emphasizes “unifying and uplifting” the nation. It follows Trump’s Executive Order “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling” in January. The current chair of the board of the AFPI is Trump’s Secretary of Education Linda McMahon.

Coalition partner PragerU is providing video content that portrays slavery as a “compromise,” “better than being killed,” and praises Confederate generals. Frederick Douglass is maligned as an advocate of “gradual change”! The coalition will provide “Patriotic Teacher Training” programs to ensure educators align with the approved curricula, and a number of Republican-controlled states have passed laws requiring teachers to avoid controversial topics, effectively mandating ideological compliance.

The following day, September 18, 2025, the Trump Department of Education announced that grant money would follow the new federal guidelines prioritizing “patriotic education.” In other words, the DOE will fund only grants that are based on this Christian nationalist and pro-capitalist propaganda.

The rule issued by the Education Secretary, wrestling billionaire Linda McMahon, states, “Citizens must understand why our free-market economy is a highly evolved system of cooperation fostered by our constitutional republic, and how it functions to secure the blessings of liberty for all Americans ... This priority focuses grant funds on programs that promote a patriotic education that cultivates citizen competency and informed patriotism among and communicates the American political tradition to students at all levels, including activities and programs accessible to students with special needs.”

This propaganda offensive aims to offset the growing opposition of millions of Americans to the “free market.” This is especially true among young people. A recent poll showed that less than half of young adults view capitalism positively, with record numbers identifying as socialist.

The Trump administration has cut or frozen billions from public education this year, setting the stage to blackmail schools facing severe cuts by making right-wing curriculum revisions the only way to secure grant money. According to the Federal Register, future grant requests should include topics like “the role of faith” and “a clear examination of how the United States has admirably grown closer to its noble principles throughout its history.”

These measures follow Trump’s demand for censorship at the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum dedicated to history, education and research, the closing down of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and a review of all interpretive signage at the US National Parks to remove details of slavery and Native American displacement, supposedly as “anti-American ideology.”

As the WSWS has emphasized, this is the American version of *Gleichschaltung*—the Nazi regime’s “synchronization” of every aspect of intellectual and cultural life with state ideology.

In Germany, *Gleichschaltung* meant the destruction of independent unions and political parties, and the conversion of the school system into a propaganda arm for the regime.

This attack on K-12 education follows the widespread capitulation by leading universities, including Columbia University, to Trump’s demands—such as implementing broad censorship and personnel purges—in exchange for renewed federal funding and behind-the-scenes political favors.

The role of the teachers’ unions has been to suppress the resistance of educators, as Trump froze funding, imposed cuts, and is weaponizing the Department of Education against teachers and students. Both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) issued statements decrying violence in response to Kirk’s death without mentioning his fascist politics, his diehard opposition to public education, or his political “enemies list” in the form of Turning Point’s “Professor Watchlist” and “School Board Watchlist.” Instead, AFT President Randi Weingarten used the occasion to promote her new book.

Neither union has tried to rally its members to strike in defense of the hundreds of educators facing retaliation for opposing the canonization of Kirk as a national “hero” and the open promotion of bigotry, racism and fascism by the Trump administration. In fact, the Democratic Party, to which the unions are completely subservient, has joined with the Republicans in honoring the fascist Kirk.

History, however, has not been lived in vain, and teachers have a long history of fighting for their rights and historical truth. But there is nothing to be complacent about. The march to a police state dictatorship can only be halted through the mass, organized resistance of educators, students and the working class, independent of pro-capitalist unions, the Democrats and Republicans.

This fight requires the formation of rank-and-file committees to break the stranglehold of the trade union bureaucracies and create new centers of coordinated social power upon which the defense of democracy throughout the country can be based. They must draw on the lessons of history and the principles of genuine socialist internationalism to unify all sections of the working class. This is the work of the Educators Rank-and-File Committee in alliance with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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