

Trump administration venerates fascist Charlie Kirk with massive banner over D.C. Department of Education building

David Rye
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In the latest fascist provocation from the Trump administration, earlier this week massive banners were draped over a Department of Education building in Washington D.C. to honor Charlie Kirk, fascist ideologue and Turning Point USA founder. The banner featuring Kirk, was draped alongside those of Martin Luther King Jr. and Booker T. Washington.

The juxtaposition of those who fought to expand democratic rights to marginalized sections of the population with someone who argued the Civil Rights acts were a “mistake” quickly drew outrage. The banner demonstrates the Trump regime’s campaign against education and for an American version of *Gleichschaltung*, the Nazi term for the ideological alignment of institutions of education with the dictates of the regime.

Five months have passed since the murder of Kirk at a Utah university campus. In the months since Kirk’s death, hundreds of workers across the country have been fired from their jobs, and several international workers had their visas revoked, for publicly criticizing the government-sponsored campaign of veneration for the deceased fascist provocateur.

Workers and young people, rightly disgusted by his openly bigoted, far-right political views, have rejected the attempt by the ruling class to put Kirk’s name and memory beyond reproach. This included protests at Michigan high schools rejecting the formation of Turning Point USA chapters on their campuses.

The aim of the Trump administration, and large sections of the American ruling class, is to fuse Christian-nationalist ideology, militarism and reactionary social policy into the ideological architecture of the state in preparation for imperialist

war and intensified political repression. The regime went on the offensive in their campaign to suppress dissent, comparable to the Nazi campaign in honor of Horst Wessel, a storm trooper killed in a street fight.

The late Kirk, who never completed a college degree, frequently voiced his hatred of public and higher education through a national Turning Point USA (TPUSA) campaign arguing that attending college is a “scam.” Kirk’s invective against education did not concern the deterioration of job prospects of those with advanced degrees or the inaccessibility of higher education to those who can not afford growing tuition costs, nor did he criticize the student loan racket.

The argument Kirk made against colleges and universities was that they supposedly “discriminated” against right-wing students and “indoctrinated” students with “Marxist thought.” The placing of his image prominently on the headquarters of the Department of Education is an outward expression of the elevation of Kirk’s anti-intellectual propaganda to the level of state policy.

In Tennessee, a bill is moving through the state’s legislature demanding all state universities’ campuses build a “Charlie Kirk plaza.” The bill purports to honor “Free Speech,” but it represents the opposite: the elevation of fascist thought, the compulsory introduction of retrograde ideas and far-right bigotry into the political culture of the campuses. The bill also mandates that the plazas contain a plaque with the Biblical Ten Commandments, in violation of the US Constitution.

A second bill proposed in the Tennessee state legislature, called the “Charlie Kirk Act,” is aimed at enabling far right students and organizations to sue

universities on the basis of “ideological discrimination.” In other words, the bill will allow evangelical creationists to sue universities for teaching the scientific theories of the origins of the universe or evolutionary biology, or for fascist provocateurs to sue universities when the student body rejects their politics or a professor gives an unfavorable grade.

It would create a state-sanctioned mechanism to dismantle academic freedom, subordinate campuses to reactionary social forces, and integrate universities into the ruling class’s broader offensive against democratic rights and public education. If the bill were to pass it would create a chilling effect across campuses. Administrations, fearing costly litigation, criminal investigations, and political reprisal, would preemptively suppress contentious debate, cancel courses, and narrow curricula to avoid “controversy.” This logic is at work with Texas A&M University’s syllabus reviews and course cancellations after political policing of “race and gender ideology” produced mass course flagging and firings .

Right-wing groups would use litigation as a tool of harassment to flood campuses with lawsuits to bankrupt departments, intimidate faculty, and force administrations to adopt “neutrality” policies that equate criticism of reactionary politics with unlawful discrimination. This is the strategy behind federal interventions that have already targeted universities—most notably the Trump DOJ’s assault on UCLA, which weaponized civil-rights law to punish campus protest and strip funding. The “Charlie Kirk act” would be the legal equivalent of a loaded gun handed directly to reactionary forces and their backers.

Building monuments and plazas and draping federal buildings with banners are an attempt to compel declarations of loyalty, intimidate dissenters, and normalize fascist politics. They are a part of the critical preparations of the Trump regime on the home front of the imperialist war against Iran.

Trump and his gangsters have launched a war without any popularity and no legal justification. To carry out this war the ruling class requires the subordination of all aspects of political and cultural life, including and especially higher education, to the aims and imperatives of the war.

The drive to criminalize campus dissent and to enshrine reactionary memorials is inseparable from the

ruling class’s efforts to suppress resistance to the US-Israeli assault on Iran and the broader preparations for great-power confrontation. Defending democratic rights must therefore be welded to the fight against imperialist war.

Students, youth and workers must fight for the program that links defence of academic freedom with anti-war demands:

Stop the criminal US-Israeli war on Iran

- End all use of university resources for intelligence and military purposes

- Repeal gag rules and punitive funding threats, and restore any cuts which have already been carried out

Defend the right to protest

- Build rank-and-file committees both on and off campus to prepare strikes and mobilize working class action capable of shutting down the war machine.

The Socialist Equality Party and its youth sections are organizing to lead this fight. If you want to turn outrage into organized resistance, join and get involved. Only by linking the struggle for democratic rights in education to the working class’s struggle against imperialism can we defeat the authoritarian offensive and stop war in its tracks.



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