

Active Clubs

The Growing Threat of 'White Nationalism 3.0' Across the United States

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Cover art: Photos shared by Active Club channels on Telegram.

Active Clubs: The Growing Threat of ‘White Nationalism 3.0’ Across the United States

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Executive summary

The number of Active Clubs in the United States, Canada, and Europe is increasing, posing a threat to public safety. Active Clubs (“ACs”) are white nationalist extremist groups that emphasize physical fitness and hand-to-hand combat skills and have a [history](#) of violence. Though each “club” is autonomous, the groups frequently engage in coordinated activities offline, such as mixed martial arts (MMA) tournaments, protests, and physical training. In recent years, these clubs have used their social media profiles to encourage likeminded individuals to establish their own clubs in their respective locations. ISD’s research shows this strategy has been highly effective throughout the US.

This report identifies and analyzes the network of Active Clubs operating within the US along three themes: ideology, tactics, and targets. The research predominately focuses on the use of the messaging platform Telegram by Active Clubs and includes detailed data analysis exploring how this network uses Telegram to produce and promote white nationalist propaganda, expand the network of clubs, and facilitate on- and offline collaboration between members and groups.

ISD has chosen not to hyperlink directly to Active Club posts on social media (e.g., Telegram) or list specific Active Club names. We have also blurred images to redact names, logos, usernames, or hyperlinks.

Key findings

- **Active Clubs are white nationalist extremist groups that pose a threat to public safety and democracy.** Active Clubs view physical fitness and hand-to-hand combat training as central to their white nationalist beliefs. Since 2017, Active Clubs have used street violence, protests, propaganda distribution, and harassment to target their perceived enemies – most recently LGBTQ+ and Jewish communities, as well as local elected officials. Some clubs have recently encouraged and discussed plans for Active Club members to run for local positions, such as on school boards.
- **The number of Active Clubs is in the US is increasing.** ISD identified 53 Telegram channels owned by individual clubs. Of these channels, least 36 (67.9%) were created in 2023. These groups are using a combination of online propaganda and in-person trainings and events to support their goals of recruiting new members and influencing the creation of new clubs. An event in California in August 2022 likely spurred this effort. There is also evidence of transnational engagement and collaboration with Active Clubs in Canada and Europe.
- **The Pacific Northwest, New England^[1], and the Southeast likely have the highest concentrations of clubs in the United States.** The number of clubs active online and posts suggesting regional offline coordination indicate that these areas have the most clubs.
- **The volume of activity within existing Active Club channels on Telegram is increasing.** During the last six months of 2022, this network posted 20.7 total posts per day on average, compared to an average of 51.1 total posts per day during the first half of 2023. Between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, the 53 channels published a total of 14,351 posts.

¹ New England is comprised of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

I. Introduction: Origin of Active Clubs

Active Clubs have their origins in the [Rise Above Movement \(RAM\)](#), founded by [Robert Rundo](#) in early 2017, which was a Southern California-based street-fighting group active within the alt-right movement. RAM mixed interest in martial arts and street fighting with white nationalist “traditional Christian”^[2] values. As a result, RAM [attracted](#) affiliates of other violent extremist groups, such as [Hammerskin Nation](#).

In 2018, [Rundo and other members of RAM faced federal charges](#) for rioting, conspiracy, and engaging in violence; they were allegedly involved in “travelling to political rallies across California, where they violently attacked counter-protesters, journalists and a police officer.” The case was dismissed in 2019; however, a federal grand jury in Los Angeles issued a new indictment in January 2023. Rundo was later arrested in Romania and [extradited](#) to the US in August 2023.

[In addition to Rundo’s arrest three other RAM members were sentenced](#) in 2019 for violence related to the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. These sentences influenced Rundo to shift tactics from leading an organized group to promoting a decentralized network of white nationalists, today recognized as Active Clubs.

Shift to Active Clubs and “White Nationalism 3.0”

[In 2020, Rundo moved to Eastern Europe](#) and trained with various white supremacist groups in the region. The previously described arrests led to the disintegration of RAM, causing Rundo to pivot to the concept of a decentralized, horizontal white nationalist network that would ensure that any future arrests would not cause significant damage to the network.

² White nationalist groups have [used](#), and continue to use, a purported desire to protect “traditional Christian values” from perceived threats, such as immigration, to justify their beliefs and recruit.

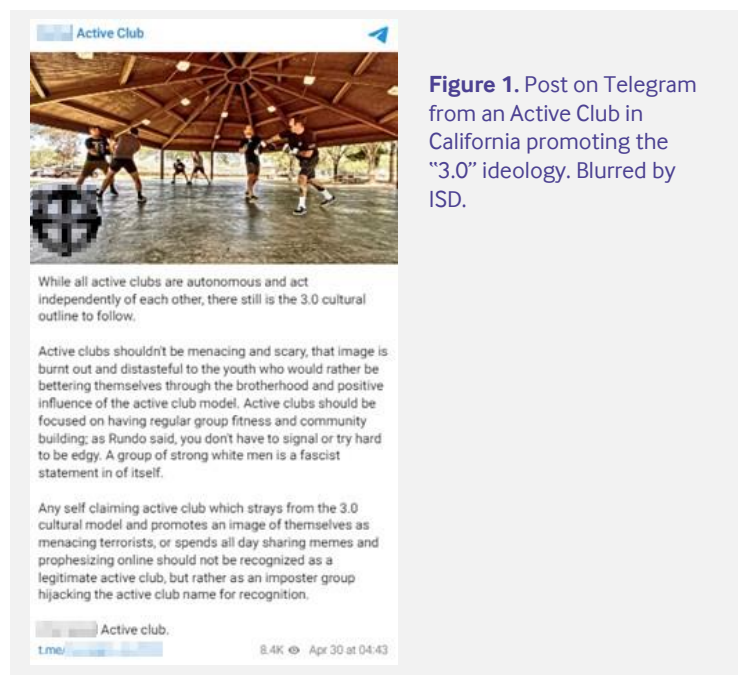


Figure 1. Post on Telegram from an Active Club in California promoting the “3.0” ideology. Blurred by ISD.

Rundo labelled this strategy “[white nationalism 3.0.](#)” In Rundo’s words, [skinhead](#) white nationalist culture was “1.0,” the [alt-right](#) movement of the 2010s was “2.0,” and this latest “3.0” iteration is an attempt to make white nationalism more palatable to the general public.

Rundo’s concept of Active Clubs, much like RAM, is a direct pitch to disaffected, young white men by combining physical activity, fitness, and mixed martial arts with white nationalist ideologies. Rundo’s strategy has been effective, and the growing network of Active Clubs have eagerly adopted the “3.0” ideology, as evident in online posts from newly formed Active Clubs. Today, in addition to the Telegram channels operated by individual clubs, there are at least two channels directly tied to RAM that continue to push “3.0” via propaganda and income-earning efforts, such as the sale of clothing. These channels also have a presence on other platforms, such as Gab and Odysee.

Posts have also recently been shared to Telegram listing existing Active Clubs.

II. Ideology

Active Clubs center around two primary principles: self-improvement through fitness and white nationalism.

Active Club members see themselves as warriors who are training in preparation for conflict against perceived enemies of white nationalism. They primarily take issue with people who they claim are actively threatening or weakening the white race, undermining white supremacist efforts to develop a mono-ethnic white society, or those who support multiculturalism and diversity, such as anti-fascists. Through these tenets, they seek to attract “like minded [s/c] white men” to their clubs.

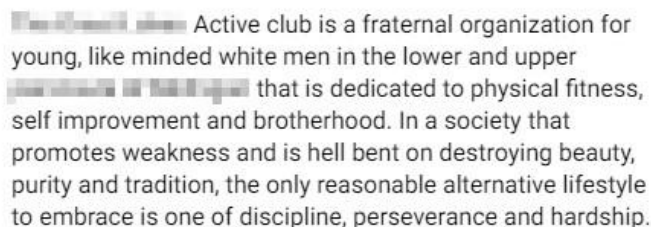
Self-improvement and fitness

Physical fitness and self-improvement are central to Active Club ideology and operations. The network believes increasing physical strength prepares members for violence; however, they also believe that physical training is necessary to promote their white nationalist beliefs, alleging it supports their ability to dispel weakness, embrace hypermasculine ideals, improve individual and collective discipline, and reinforce dedication to the white nationalist cause. In August 2022, for example, a RAM-linked Telegram channel stated the following in a post promoting a mixed martial arts (MMA) event in California:

“Not only are we awakening the warrior spirit [through the event], but we are demonstrating that we can organize on our own, outside of the mainstream structure. We are creating a counterculture of resistance ... to do battle for brotherhood and our shared goals.”

White nationalism

The overall goal of Active Clubs is to promote white nationalism. This is represented in their slogan: “white unity at every opportunity.” Improving physique, increasing physical strength, and acquiring hand-to-hand combat skills are shared group activities – or



Active club is a fraternal organization for young, like minded white men in the lower and upper [blurred] that is dedicated to physical fitness, self improvement and brotherhood. In a society that promotes weakness and is hell bent on destroying beauty, purity and tradition, the only reasonable alternative lifestyle to embrace is one of discipline, perseverance and hardship.

GET ACTIVE! You not only owe it to yourself, but your family, your people and your nation.

t.me/[blurred] 5.9K edited Apr 29 at 21:57

Figure 2. Post on Telegram from an Active Club in Michigan promoting itself to “young, like minded [s/c] white men.” Blurred by ISD.

rather, “opportunities” – that serve as connective tissue between clubs. This practice is core to how Rundo sought to differentiate RAM and its subsequent influence on Active Clubs from previous iterations of radical or “alt-right” groups that ultimately fractured due to doctrinal and operational differences. In an interview with information about starting an Active Club – and observed by ISD on Odysee³ – Rundo said, “it’s really important to have an activity that your crew [revolves around]” because “you feel like you’ve accomplished something.” Rundo also said that RAM “was an athletics club” with activities involving “hiking, weightlifting, training, [and] boxing,” which “brought a lot of guys from the online community to the real-world from this.” The focus on fitness and physical activities in group settings is a strategic tactic meant to strengthen the network and unite clubs.

- **This mentality is leveraged to encourage the creation of new Active Clubs.** For example, in their first post on Telegram in April 2023, an Active Club in Michigan posted the following on Telegram:

³ Odysee is a “YouTube-like video hosting platform.” Although it is “not inherently a platform for far-right or extremist content creators,” according to other scholars, it has become “an attractive option” for those “that have been banned [from] or demonetized” on YouTube.

“[Our] Active club is a fraternal organization for young, like-minded white men in the lower and upper peninsula of Michigan that is dedicated to physical fitness, self-improvement and brotherhood.” As seen in this message, fitness and white unity are described as central tenets of the group.

- **Physical training sessions and in-person events also serve as propaganda and recruitment content for the network.** For example, posts on Telegram channels for Active Clubs in Michigan, Montana, Texas, and Wyoming frame self-improvement and physical fitness as central to promoting and spreading white nationalism (see Figure 3). These clubs regularly post images of their real-world activities, promoting the idea of a white brotherhood. This illustrates that these groups are physically meeting in person and are not strictly online, which may be appealing to potential recruits – particularly those interested in the social component of Active Clubs.
- **The Active Club media networks also widely promote and distribute white nationalist propaganda from other sources.** Active Clubs regularly share white nationalist propaganda from other extremist groups and figures, and vice versa. For example, in January 2023, Active Clubs in the Pacific Northwest promoted a post from a channel on Telegram, which has been reported to be run by former Proud Boys. The post celebrated growing ties between Active Clubs in the region and praised Active Clubs in the southern states for conducting an anti-LGBTQ protest against “drag queen groomers.” The post ends: “The seeds of White Unity we’ve been planting over the last few years are beginning to grow. White Unity at every opportunity.” Similar posts by [Thomas Sewell](#), an Australian neo-Nazi, were shared on Telegram by US-based Active Clubs.



Figure 3. Post from the Great Lakes Active Club promoting a training and fitness session. Blurred by ISD.



Figure 4. Posts on Telegram from different Active Clubs promoting the phrase, “white unity at every opportunity,” and sharing posts from other extremists. Blurred by ISD.

III. On- and offline tactics influence rapid growth

Active Clubs are using a combination of online propaganda and in-person trainings and events to support their goals of recruiting new members, influencing the creation of new clubs, and improving members' physical fitness and hand-to-hand combat skills. While it is difficult to determine how formidable they are as a white supremacist "army," their outreach efforts and branding have been successful, resulting in a significant increase in the number of Active Clubs.

To better understand the dynamics underpinning the growth of Active Clubs in the US, ISD identified and collected data from 53 Telegram channels associated with US-based Active Clubs. Within this data, ISD found several types of content that were repeatedly observed: calls for the formation of new Active Clubs, ideological propaganda, and posts featuring footage from offline activities often involving multi-group collaboration.

Increase in number of Active Clubs on Telegram

The increase in the number of groups was likely in part driven by an in-person Active Club event in August 2022. Of the 53 Telegram channels identified by ISD, at least 36 (67.9%) of these channels were created since September 2022 following an Active Club event in California. On August 20, 2022, several Active Clubs traveled to San Diego from various locations in the US to take part in a fight night event organized by a Southern California-based Active Club and Patriot Front.

The event, called "Birth of a New Frontier," only attracted approximately 50 individuals but was immediately praised as an influential event for white nationalists in the US and was used to promote Active Clubs. For example, a RAM-linked channel on Telegram described the gathering as one that would "launch" the movement, stating the following:

"our 3.0 style of pushing physical fitness and lifting ourselves to higher standards ... have reached a milestone within our unified movement. ... Not only are we awakening the warrior spirit, but we are demonstrating that we can organize on our own, outside of the main stream [sic] structure. ... This model will serve as the foundation for what we are building and launch us towards a future of continuous expansion."

Following this event, prominent Active Clubs issued calls to action for interested parties to join Active Clubs in their area or create their own in a move to spread the "3.0" white nationalist ideology across the US.

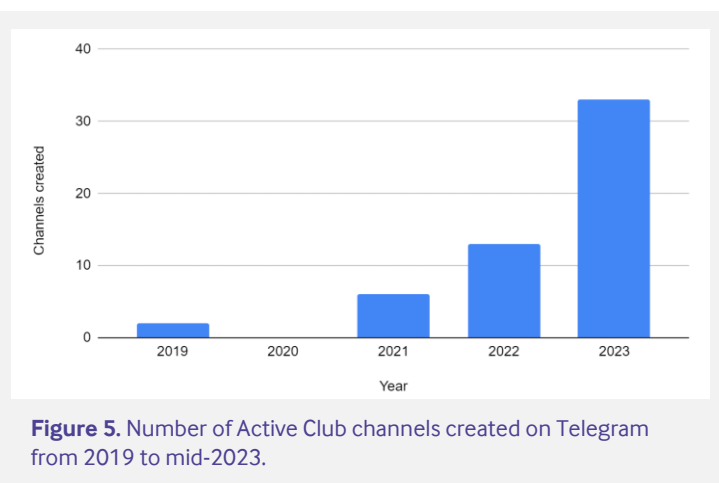


Figure 5. Number of Active Club channels created on Telegram from 2019 to mid-2023.

In addition to new channels joining the Active Club network, the number of posts to Telegram channels is increasing. Between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, the 53 channels published a total of 14,351 posts. The graph below in Figure 5 illustrates this increase over time. During the first six months of 2022, this network of Active Clubs posted a daily average of 7.2 posts. This increased significantly in the second half of 2022 with 20.7 daily average posts. During the first six months of 2023, they posted an average of 51.1 daily posts.

The use of Telegram as an effective propaganda tool

has been key to broadening the Active Club network across the United States. ISD observed that popular Active Club channels on Telegram share content from regional, often newly created, Active Club channels. These popular channels often have large follower counts, increasing the reach of local and regional Active Club content.

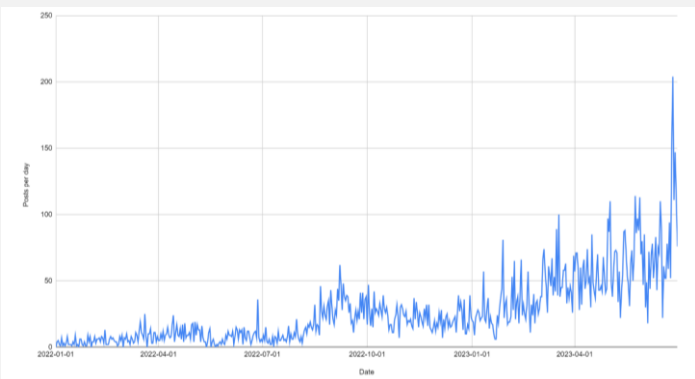


Figure 6. Active Club post activity on Telegram from January 2022 to June 2023.

Offline activities unify clubs and members

Active Clubs frequently engage in offline activities that involve either a single group or are collaborative with other clubs. The slogan “white unity at every opportunity” is reflected in the frequency of which clubs engage in offline activities together. While Active Clubs are designed to be autonomous entities largely independent of each other, joint operations, meetings, and offline activities are common. Not only are these events used as opportunities for trainings, public sticker or flier campaigns, vandalism, and other physical activities (e.g., group hikes), but they also provide marketing, recruitment, and propaganda opportunities that present Active Clubs as collaborative, widespread, and socially fulfilling. In April 2023, an Active Club in Ohio shared a post on Telegram from an Active Club in Tennessee featuring footage from a joint training session with the [Vinland Rebels](#). Similarly, in May 2023, an Active Club in Michigan posted a photo from a joint training session with members of [Patriot Front](#). In the same month, an Active Club in Tennessee posted a partially blurred photo showing its leader, [Sean Kauffmann](#), with the leader of a Texas-based Active Club at an event in Washington, DC.



Figure 7. Post on Telegram from an Active Club in Texas forwarded by an Active Club in Tennessee sharing news of a recent meeting between the groups. Blurred by ISD.

In addition to training, Active Clubs and other groups have collaborated for protests and propaganda campaigns. In December 2022, members of the New Jersey European Heritage Association ([NJEHA](#)), a local group associated with White Lives Matter (WLM) and Active Clubs, held a joint demonstration in New Jersey to demand justice for all victims of “anti-White violence.”⁴ In February 2023, members of Active Clubs in the Pacific Northwest organized a joint banner drop in Portland, Oregon, and in April 2023, members of Patriot Front and an Active Club conducted a stickering campaign in San Antonio, Texas.

Recruitment

On- and offline recruitment media including social media posts, flyers, and stickers typically include a statement from the Active Club, an email address, a URL to their presence on Telegram or another

⁴ Extremist groups frequently use individual incidents of violence where the victim is white to justify their belief systems.

social media platform, and instructions on applying. If an interested party lives in an area without a nearby Active Club, they are encouraged to start one. This form of decentralized network expansion means any man interested in Active Clubs can get involved without permission from a central leadership team or equivalent figure.

- **In posts analyzed by ISD, the absence of an Active Club in an area was cited by other channels as motivation for likeminded individuals to create one.** For example, an Active Club in Maryland was launched just two weeks after the previously described San Diego event in 2022. In one of its first posts on Telegram, the Maryland-based Active Club forwarded a post from an Active Club in Arizona that demonstrated how the founder of the Maryland-based Active Club was encouraged

to start their own club. The post tagged the Maryland-based Active Club and stated the following:

“Had a guy in our chat yesterday, looking for a club in his area. Now he has started his own and already linked up with a few guys. Show initiative like him and good things happen. And all of us are here to support you, no matter the distance.”

- **Posts aimed at recruiting likeminded individuals in specific locations were observed.** For example, in April 2023, an Active Club from North and South Dakota published a post featuring images of stickers placed in public locations with the following comment: “Get active, Get involved. Join the vetting chat today!” Similarly, a post by an Active Club in Southern California from May 2022 was captioned with “join the pack” and included an email address.



IV. Active Club presence in the United States

ISD identified Active Clubs in 37 states with larger concentrations in three distinct regions: the Pacific Northwest, New England, and the Southeast (see Figure 10). Telegram channels tied to specific states in each of these regions posted about frequent offline interactions involving Active Clubs in their areas. Additionally, in each of these regions, there are also regional network channels that focus on amplifying content from the various groups in their areas. These channels, which tend to be older and more established, essentially act as Active Club influencers.

- **Pacific Northwest:** An Active Club channel for the Pacific Northwest, with 1K subscribers on Telegram,

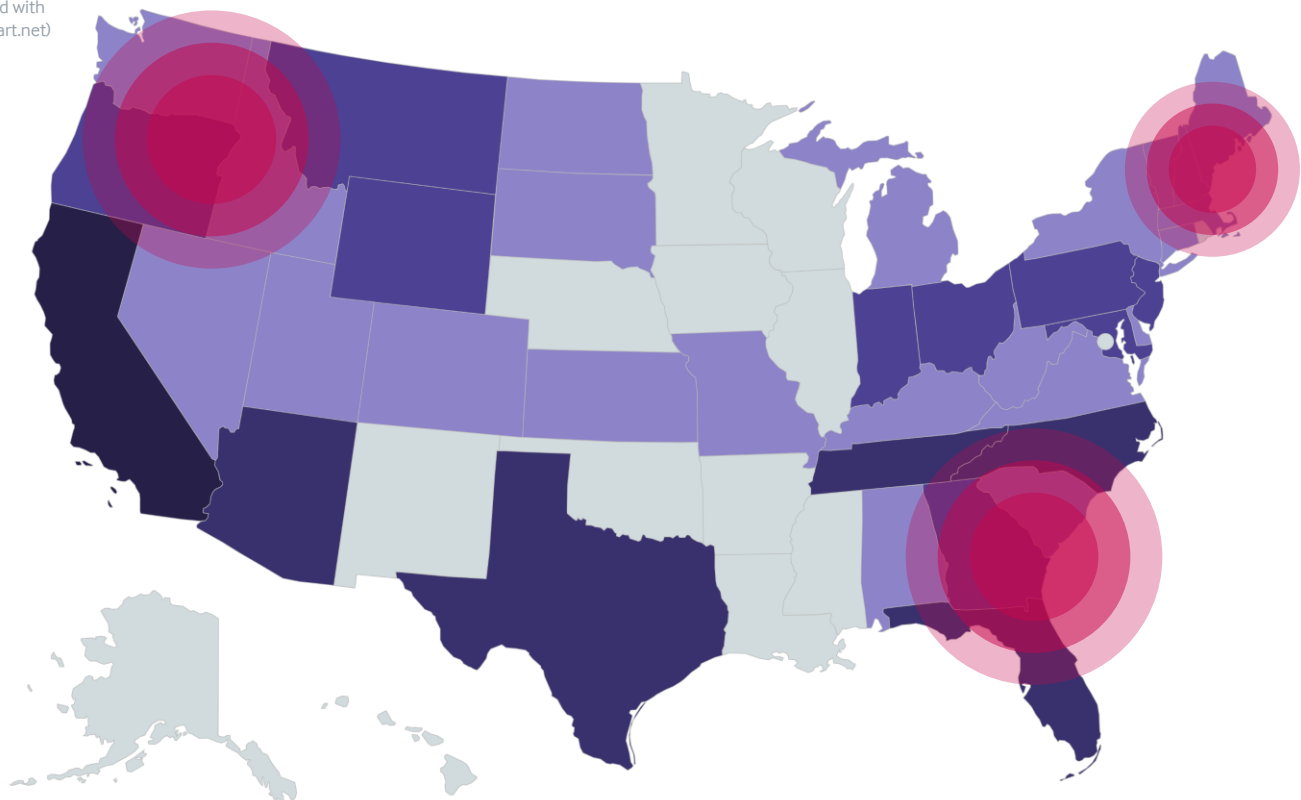
includes six Active Clubs in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

- **New England:** The regional channel for New England is the largest of the regional channels with 6.3K subscribers and encompasses six states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- **Southeast:** The regional channel for the Southeast on Telegram serves as a network hub for at least seven groups in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Figure 10. Spread of Active Clubs across 37 states in the US.



(Created with mapchart.net)



V. Targets

Active Clubs target groups and institutions that they consider as enemies of the white nationalist movement, such as racial, ethnic, and other minority groups. Based on online posts and offline activities, the LGBTQ+ community has recently been the most frequent target of Active Clubs and other far-right extremist groups looking to boost their notoriety amidst [increasing](#) intimidation and hostility towards LGBTQ+ people and their perceived allies. In addition to LGBTQ+ communities, Active Clubs have discussed plans to target democratic institutions to intimidate critics and install supporters in local positions.

LGBTQ+ community

Protests and aggressive or violent activities targeting the LGBTQ+ community [have become increasingly common](#) among [extremists in the United States](#). These disruptive and intimidating tactics are part of a national effort by violent extremists to capitalize on the shared contempt that disparate far-right groups and members of the public have for LGBTQ+ people. This tactic has proven effective. Anti-LGBTQ+ activities have served as unifying opportunity for local and regional extremist groups while also attracting protesters unaffiliated with any groups.

ISD identified 19 protests at LGBTQ+ drag-related events between September 2022 and June 2023 that Active Clubs organized and/or participated in. Common narratives used to slander drag queens and those who support drag queen events, such as [businesses](#), librarians, and parents, included [false allegations](#) that all members of the LGBTQ+ community are “pedophiles” or “groomers.” These protests served as opportunities for “white unity” while appealing to more mainstream audiences under the guise of “protecting” children. Other groups, such as the Proud Boys, have been frequent participants and organizers of anti-LGBTQ+ protests involving Active Clubs. While untangling and identifying who is leading or even present at a protest can be challenging, a [separate ISD report](#) from June 2023 explored the

proliferation of anti-drag mobilization efforts targeting LGBTQ+ people.

- **Active Clubs have also engaged in anti-LGBTQ+ activities at schools.** For example, in May 2023, one of the leading Telegram channels in the Active Club network, shared a post from an Arizona-focused channel featuring an “urgent call to action” for “patriots” in the Phoenix area to attend a demonstration at a school district administrative building (listing its address in the post) to protest transgender policy.



Figure 11. Poster shared by a leading Active Club channel on Telegram promoting an anti-LGBTQ+ protest in Arizona. Blurred by ISD.

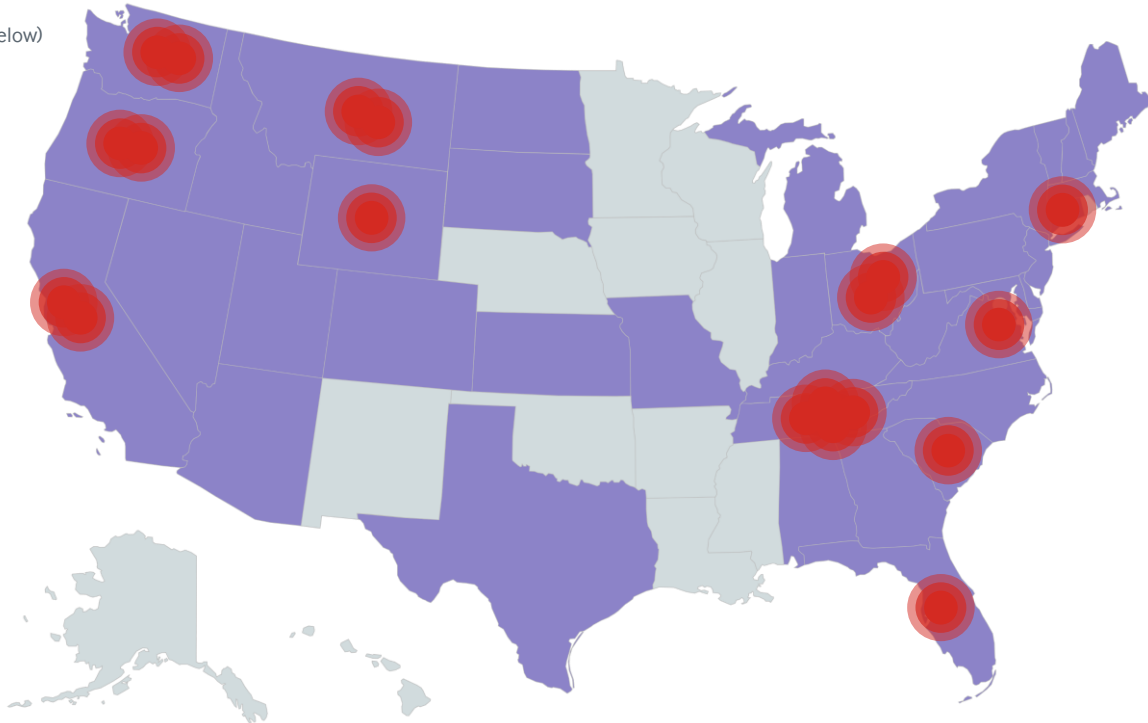
Jewish community and institutions

Given that Active Clubs are a white nationalist movement, antisemitism is a constant presence within the network. However, the tactics used to target the Jewish community differ from those used to target LGBTQ+ people. They are focused primarily on

Figure 12. Active Clubs have targeted 19 LGBTQ+ events in 11 states from September 2022 to June 2023.

● LGBTQ+ event targeted (see table below)

(Created with mapchart.net)



Date	Location	Event type	Groups involved in protest
Sep. 18, 2022	Florence, SC	Drag brunch	South Carolina ("AC"); Proud Boys
Oct. 16, 2022	Centralia, WA	Pride event	Washington AC
Oct. 23, 2022	Eugene, OR	Story hour	Oregon AC; Proud Boys
Nov. 13, 2022	Chattanooga, TN	Drag brunch	Tennessee AC; League of the South; Patriot Front
Nov. 25, 2022	Maryville, TN	Drag show	Tennessee AC; RAM; WLM
Dec. 03, 2022	Lakeland, FL	Drag show	NatSoc Florida; Proud Boys
Jan. 14, 2023	Taunton, MA	Story hour	NSC-131
Jan. 22, 2023	Cookeville, TN	Drag show	Tennessee AC; Patriot Front; Proud Boys; Vinland Rebels
Feb. 12, 2023	Dickson, TN	Drag show	Tennessee AC
Mar. 09, 2023	Richmond, VA	Drag bingo	Virginia AC
Mar. 11, 2023	Wadsworth, OH	Story hour	Blood Tribe; Protect the Children Now; Proud Boys; WLM
Mar. 12, 2023	Sacramento, CA	Story hour	California AC; Proud Boys
Apr. 05, 2023	Pasco, WA	Drag show	Washington AC; Rose City Nationalist Club
Apr. 16, 2023	Sacramento, CA	Story hour	NorCal AC; Proud Boys
Apr. 29, 2023	Columbus, OH	Drag brunch	Blood Tribe
Apr. 29, 2023	Florence, OR	Drag show	Evergreen AC; Oregon AC; Vinland Rebels
May 20, 2023	Livingston, MT	Drag show	Montana AC; Washington AC; 3N Network including WLM; Vinland Rebels
May 20, 2023	Bozeman, MT	Drag show	Montana AC; Washington AC; 3N Network including WLM; Vinland Rebels
Jun. 17, 2023	Lander, WY	Drag show	Montana AC; Wyoming AC; Patriot Front

harassment and banner drops instead of protests. Much of this antisemitic sentiment is expressed in the support and promotion of a conspiracy [theory](#) alleging that Jewish people have undue influence over politics, media, financial, and cultural institutions globally.

- **Active Clubs have encouraged and promoted the antisemitic harassment of Jewish people and public figures.** For example, multiple posts shared by various Active Clubs highlighted the actions of [Ryan Messano](#), a man who has interrupted several city council meetings in Sacramento, California, in 2023 to express homophobic and antisemitic remarks. In May 2023, the Telegram channel for an Active Club in Northern California shared videos of Messano and praised him for attending the meetings “to name the Jews” and specifically direct his antisemitic tirades at the “Jewish mayor of Sacramento,” Darrell Steinberg.
- **Active Clubs have used public propaganda stunts, such as banner drops, to push antisemitic beliefs.** In November 2022, an Active Club channel on Telegram for the Southeast shared a photo of a banner placed on a bridge that read, “KANYE’S RIGHT ABOUT JEWS,” which was purportedly hung by Active Club members in Pennsylvania. This incident followed antisemitic statements [made](#) by the rapper Kanye West. Antisemitic narratives are also pushed online by Active Clubs. In May 2023, for example, an Active Club in Michigan forwarded a post on Telegram describing Jewish people as “jew enemies.” Relatedly, in April 2023, an Active Club in Florida published a lengthy post on its Telegram channel expressing a desire for Jewish people to feel unsafe in Florida:

“It’s my hope that within one year, Florida will no longer be a state that Jews wish to exist in. We will avenge all our people who got chewed up and destroyed in pointless wars that served Jewish interests.”

School boards and local offices

Active Clubs have recently taken an interest in local politics and issues. While they appear aware that there is insufficient support among the general

public to run Active Club members for office in federal or state elections, school boards and other local offices are considered viable options for members. Participation in local politics is also promoted as a means of mobilizing white women and older white males who may be unable or not interested in physical fitness. Additionally, community outreach efforts are promoted as palatable tactics by the public to promote their beliefs to support future political endeavours.

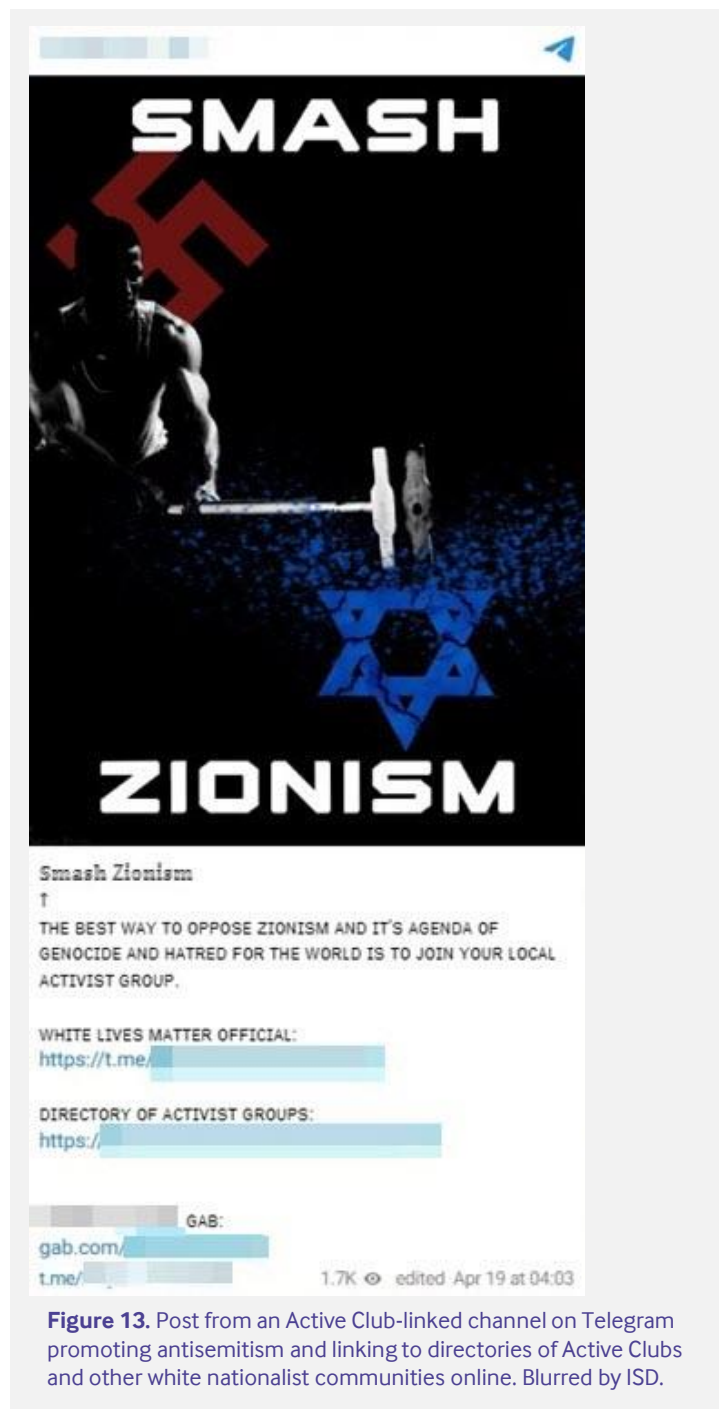


Figure 13. Post from an Active Club-linked channel on Telegram promoting antisemitism and linking to directories of Active Clubs and other white nationalist communities online. Blurred by ISD.

- **Participation in local politics is promoted as a means of mobilizing white women and older white males who may be unable to engage in, or are not interested in, physical fitness.** The network recognizes that white women and older men could still advance the network’s white nationalist agenda without participating in physical training. A post on Telegram from May 2023 shared in channels associated with Active Clubs in North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia illustrates how these clubs seek to engage in local politics to support their goals. The post states that “we need to start taking power” and “start making inroads” in politics. The post suggests targeting school board seats and similar local positions because “many of these positions ... go uncontested or even unfilled.” The post also describes how this strategy might be an effective way to mobilize people “who do not fit the Active Club/street activist style,” stating that these local positions could be filled by “WN [white nationalist] woman and our older Male WNs” who could then push their agenda. The message was endorsed by Active Clubs within this network.

- **More ambitious political plans involving community outreach have also been discussed.** In April 2023, an Active Club in New England announced the formation of its “grassroots” organization ... which seeks to establish a White ethnostate in New England. The group said that the grassroots organization will paint a “vivid picture for our [white] people of what our future could look like.” Plans include political activism and community outreach efforts such as food drives, park clean-ups, workshops, and running members for local office to appeal to the public. These tactics are meant to strategically promote their white nationalist beliefs in a way that is more palatable to the general public, despite Active Clubs’ open desire to enact extremist policies. Posts about the initiative have garnered significant reach online. While the Telegram channel has 6.3K subscribers, the post announcing the initiative has been viewed over 18K times.



Figure 14. Post on Telegram forwarded by an Active Club. Blurred by ISD.

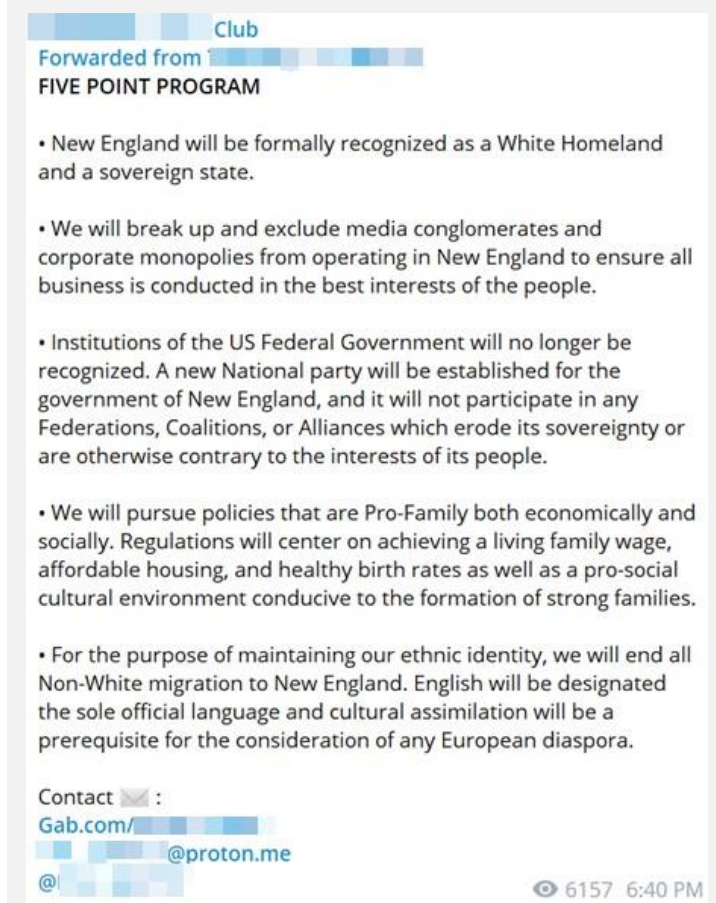


Figure 15. Post on Telegram from an Active Club in New England referencing the policies the group seeks to promote if members are elected to local positions. Blurred by ISD.

VI. Conclusion

Active Clubs are currently undergoing a rapid expansion in the United States. On Telegram, the level of activity within the network has surged – both in the number of groups active and the amount of content published online. The successful growth of this network is a direct result of the decentralized model of strategic propaganda dissemination and repeated invitations for interested parties to seek out, join, or create their own Active Clubs.

These tactics also have implications beyond the United States. Active Clubs have been observed expanding across Europe in Estonia, Finland, and France. Additionally, ongoing networking and collaboration within the network and with other extremist groups,

such as Patriot Front, indicates that expansion will continue. This poses a risk to public safety and specific groups, such as LGBTQ+ and Jewish communities, which are perceived as enemies by Active Clubs and other extremist groups. Notably, clubs have also recently turned to using local politics to support their goals and garner public support for their extremist beliefs.

Looking towards the future, it is unknown whether Active Clubs will have long-term success in unifying white nationalists; however, this network warrants immediate proactive monitoring and countermeasures to deter and prevent the various threats they pose – particularly as the United States enters a potentially volatile election cycle in 2024.



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