



Atlanta Antifascists

Breakfast-Cereal Bigots: The “Proud Boys” Have Arrived in Atlanta

White supremacist and far-Right nationalist movements are nothing new, especially in the American South. Since Trump’s induction into the oval office, however, the US has seen these movements evolve into something younger and more contemporary.

Far from the stereotype of old, cantankerous Klanners, the [“Alt-Right”](#) and its organizations such as [Identity Evropa](#) advance their cause with approaches that are modern, polished, and deceptive. They use memes and retro aesthetics to make their hateful message more palatable. Prioritizing anonymity and information security, until recently the “Alt-Right” has relied on its internet presence combined with occasional public speaking events by white-collar “leaders” such as [Richard Spencer](#) to advance its cause. (The movement was also helped by the existence of the watered-down “Alt-Lite” and figures such as [Milo Yiannopoulos](#), which helped popularize Alt-Right themes without explicitly signing off on white nationalism.) For most of its existence, what the Alt-Right’s internet trolls and [“Identitarian”](#) white nationalists had in terms of propaganda reach, they lacked in street presence and physical interaction. This is where one of the Alt-Right/Alt-Lite’s strangest offshoots comes in—Cue [the “Proud Boys.”](#)



Proud Boys Georgia Twitter page

The brainchild of pink-slipped *Vice* co-founder [Gavin McInnes](#), at first glance the Proud Boys may look more like fraternity rejects than they do a cohesive political group. The Proud Boys are self-described “Western chauvinists,” who require that their members venerate the roles of “the entrepreneur” and “the housewife.” (Proud Boys celebration of “the housewife” is actually an embrace of [extreme anti-feminist and misogynist politics common on the Alt-Right](#).) Proud Boys also have less directly political requirements, such as not masturbating (except under very specific conditions). While they share the far-Right’s disdain for leftism and its anti-immigrant obsessions, their broader political circles often consider the Proud Boys an embarrassment. Some extreme right-wingers object to the Proud Boys because McInnes did not adequately address the “JQ” or “Jewish Question” — in other words, because he did express enough hatred towards and conspiracy beliefs about Jewish people. (McInnes went on to compensate for this perceived flaw by [publishing an antisemitic video](#), though he later backtracked on some comments.) Others simply don’t like the Proud Boys’ general cringe-worthiness, for example some of their initiation rituals.



Proud Boys second-degree initiation in Boston, MA, May 13 2017

Proud Boy membership comes in grades or degrees. For the first level, the initiate must simply declare himself a Proud Boy. For the second degree of membership, he must be pummeled by other members until he recites the names of five breakfast cereals. The third grade of Proud Boy participation involves getting a Proud Boys tattoo (and keeping the masturbatory restrictions.)

For all their quirks, the Proud Boys have no qualms about using violence and harassment against their perceived opponents. Indeed, the cultish vibe of their group likely facilitates such acts. In cities throughout the country, Proud Boys have [clashed with protesters and antifascists](#). For example, [this April, Proud Boys fought alongside and defended fascists in Berkeley, CA](#). The Proud Boys have now made their way into Atlanta. They have already made a minor stir in our city, when Proud Boys social media accounts organized trolling and threats against a local bar earlier this year.

The Proud Boys are useful to the far-Right because they serve as a convenient umbrella for those with reactionary, nationalist, and often explicitly racist viewpoints. As one person describes it:

ProudBoys is a fraternity of Western Chauvinists who are unapologetically pro-Western Culture and Civilization. Anti-feminist, anti-Egalitarian, anti-antifa, anti-anything that poses a threat to the greatest Culture and Civilization to ever bless the Earth. [1]

This is clearly a very broad mission. Within this broad scope, members/supporters of other far-Right groups — for example, “III%” militia types — may be able to set the tone regionally.

Clear-cut white nationalists exist within the Proud Boys, but it is also important to distinguish the Proud Boys’ professed “Western Chauvinism” from brazen white supremacy. “Western Chauvinism” is a belligerent group attitude based on an imagined “Western” ideal. For the Proud Boys, “Western identity” or “Western culture” are allegedly open to those of all races. On this basis, the Proud Boys have admitted anti-feminist and reactionary people of color within their crews (provided these members [“recognize that white men are not the problem”](#)). However, “Western identity” is a loaded term, with racial connotations. Despite occasional disavowals, “Western identity” is generally used indistinguishably from American conceptions of whiteness. The “Western identity” concept is blurry, so in the final analysis what matters are the feelings “Western identity” invokes, as well as the more free-floating associations the term possesses – those associations having developed over the course of a racist history.

Unsurprisingly, the Proud Boys attract white nationalists. When the Atlanta bar was harassed, one of the more vocal individuals within that campaign was Joshua Bates, a Georgia fascist influenced by [“4th Position”](#) ideology. Bates once tried to infiltrate the leftist Industrial Workers of the World in our region, and [later led an ill-fated “Identitarian” white nationalist project named Identity Vanguard](#). Bates most recently reappeared on twitter as “Jossur Surttrson” (@Surttrson), where he initially promoted the racist Southern Nationalists of Identity Dixie, and where he currently touts himself as a contributor to AltRight.com. (Bates also [documented his presence](#) at a recent [“pro-Confederate” rally of torch-wielding white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia](#).) Joshua Bates is the source of the earlier “anti-antifa, anti-anything” quote about the politics of the Proud Boys. However, Bates’ just-short-of-explicit-white-nationalism comment was never criticized by other Proud Boys,

because it is an accurate description of their group. Joshua Bates’ brother Tyler Bates is an official member of the Atlanta chapter of the Proud Boys.



Proud Boys member Tyler Bates

Despite all the above, some Proud Boys claim that clear-cut white nationalism makes them look bad, even as they promote an overall far-Right worldview. Gavin McInnes has made statements claiming that Proud Boys do not allow “Nazis” in their organization. Some people on the fringes of the Proud Boys may take these claims of non-racism seriously. At a recent protest of the [removal of Confederate monuments in New Orleans](#), a fight broke out between an “Alt-Lite”-style “patriot” and more hardened white nationalists within the crowd. The “patriot” involved in the scuffle complained afterward to a Proud Boys-linked Facebook page about the blatant white nationalists, likely believing that he would get a sympathetic hearing from the Proud Boys. The official website for the Proud Boys however denounced the [“patriot” in question as “Cuck of the Week” for getting in a confrontation with racists.](#)

The Alt-Right is moving beyond the conferences and internet shitposting that were its earlier hallmarks, into assembling a street force of its own. The Proud Boys are at

the forefront of this effort, having a history of assisting when the rest of the “Alt-Right” was unable to marshal adequate street force. In April, the Proud Boys were instrumental in forming the [“Fraternal Order of Alt Knights” \(FOAK\)](#), an anti-leftist, anti-anti-fascist fighting force which became the fourth-degree of Proud Boys membership. At the time of writing, it is unclear how the Proud Boys will maintain their posture of disliking “Nazis” while pursuing a street-fighting alliance with these same forces, denouncing whoever stands against white supremacists as a [“cuck.”](#)

Whatever happens, we should treat far-Right umbrella groupings such as the Proud Boys as potentially dangerous. If they build in our city or threaten members of the community, they must lose any foothold as soon as possible. As usual, the first steps are to stay informed and to stand together. We must strengthen our relationships as well as reaching out to greater numbers, since both elements are crucial if we are to meet the challenges ahead.

If you have any information on the Proud Boys or other far-Right organizing around the Atlanta metro region, please [contact us](#).

Note

[1] March 2017 Facebook post by Joshua Bates.

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