

How the media made Nick Fuentes

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5–7 minutes

Nicholas Joseph Fuentes is [an American political commentator](#), far-right white nationalist, activist and livestreamer. He hosts America First, a YouTube livestream. Like most of the far-right crowd, he specialises in provocation. [One source](#) reports a few choice examples of his rage-bait: describing Hitler as “awesome” is one, while calling interracial marriage “degenerate” is another, as is claiming marital rape is “impossible”. Also, describing women as “fundamentally lower” in intelligence and insisting that Jim Crow segregation benefitted black Americans.

His misogyny is pathological. In May 2023, he said that he wanted a 16-year-old wife when he is 30, [“when the milk is fresh”](#). In November 2024, immediately after Donald Trump’s victory, he tweeted “Your body, my choice. Forever” on X, mocking the pro-choice slogan “My body, my choice” adopted by protesters before (and after) the US supreme court’s reversal of Roe v Wade in June 2022. Predictably, [it went viral](#) with 100m-plus views.

Basically, then, Fuentes is an equal-opportunity dog-whistler, so much so that many social media platforms have excluded him (but YouTube has had no qualms about hosting America First). His big break came in 2024, when Elon Musk let him back on X, where he now has more than 1 million followers.

Given the number of rightwing fanatics on X, you’d have thought that just adding one more might not be such a big deal. Big mistake. Fuentes is suddenly ubiquitous in American political discourse. He started popping up in the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, Politico and other respectable outlets. He has also spawned a large group of followers called [“groypers”](#), after a cartoon amphibian named Groyper, which is a variant of the internet meme [Pepe the Frog](#). Groyper is depicted as a rotund, green, frog-like creature, often sitting with its chin resting on interlocked fingers.

Under cover of this gormless image, groypers are attempting to infect the mainstream Republican party with homophobic, racist, nativist, fascist, sexist, antisemitic and Islamophobic ideas. It has previously [been reported in](#) *Vice* and *Haaretz* that a number of [Republican aides](#) in Congress are groypers. Think of the movement as entryism with a froggy face. Whether that project works out remains to be seen, but it’s being taken seriously by the mainstream media because of Fuentes’s meteoric rise on X. This

got him a friendly interview on former Fox News host Tucker Carlson's podcast, which garnered 17m views on X and 5m on YouTube.

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How did Fuentes morph from being a fringe figure into an apparently influential voice in American political discourse? Answer: two factors. The first was his exceedingly skilled manipulation of X; the second is the clueless credulity of US mainstream media in covering social media.

Let's take manipulation first. The Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI), an independent cybersocial science research agency, did a [deep dive](#) into Fuentes's rapid ascension to online fandom. The researchers found abundant evidence of "abnormal engagement patterns". Fuentes had a dramatically higher early retweet velocity than comparable accounts, including Musk's own. Within the first 30 minutes of posting, Fuentes consistently outperformed accounts with between 10 and 100 times more followers.

They also discovered evidence of "coordinated behaviour"; 61% of early retweets (within the first 30 minutes) came from accounts that retweeted multiple posts in that same timeframe. Meanwhile, 92% of repeat early retweeters were fully anonymous (with no identifiable personal information) and a majority were single-purpose groyper or America First accounts dedicated to amplifying Fuentes. Furthermore, the NCRI found lots of signs of "foreign bot farm activity"; half of retweets on viral posts came from accounts concentrated in India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Malaysia and Indonesia – countries that have no organic connection to Fuentes's politics but do match known bot farm locations.

And the mainstream media's role in covering Fuentes? Media coverage of him has tripled since September 2025. What the report calls "high-status descriptions" of the creep have increased by 59.6%. Visual treatments, in turn, have become more polished, with studio-grade portraits and professional lighting. And editorial framing has positioned him as a "consequential political figure".

If you wanted a case study in dereliction of professional duty, this story would be hard to beat. Detecting what the NCRI researchers found – the deliberate "amplification" of status by online manipulation – is not that difficult. No rocket science is needed. It just requires a sceptical, inquiring mind and a willingness to sort through masses of dull stuff. But there seems to have been nobody around who had these qualities – or the time – to do the work. And the result? A profession charged with speaking truth to power instead elevated a misogynistic reactionary into a figure of consequence. It's enough to make you weep. But since it's Christmas, I won't.

What I'm reading

On the money

[For Every Winner a Loser](#) is a fabulous criticism of two texts on the finance industry by John Lanchester in the *London Review of Books*.

Perfectly Frank

Big bird

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