

UNITED STATES

Charlie Kirk assassinated, conservative activist who sought open debate

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Charlie Kirk was murdered yesterday 10 September. At the moment of writing, his killer is still unknown and at large. Charlie Kirk, a Republican activist and the founder of Turning Point USA — one of the main movements which supports Trump, dedicated

mainly to high school and university students — was assassinated with a single rifle shot to the throat. The shot was fired from almost 200 metres away from the stage where he was speaking during an event at Utah Valley University. He leaves behind a wife and two children. He was only 31 years old and had spent the last 13 years promoting conservatism.

Turning Point USA was founded in 2012 by Kirk, who was 18 at the time, together with veteran Tea Party activist Bill Montgomery. The movement's early causes were typical of the modern Tea Party: lower taxes, less government and more freedom. However, when Kirk took the helm, bringing the movement to universities, its platform became increasingly conservative. It began to promote religious freedom and oppose abortion in all circumstances, as well as defending the historical memory of the US against any woke revisionism. Turning Point USA became a reference point for students opposed to Critical Race Theory — the idea that the US is inherently racist, and that racial conflict dominates history in the same way that class conflict dominates classical Marxism. Kirk tackled Marxism head on, denouncing its widespread presence in American academia.

Following Trump's entry onto the political scene in the 2016 elections, Turning Point USA joined his campaign. During the Republican president's first term, Kirk also served on the 1776 Commission, which opposed Project 1619 (an anti-racist historical reinterpretation which claims that the arrival of the first slaves from Africa marks the true beginning of America). The 1776 Commission set out to preserve the memory and values of the American Revolution — life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — and American exceptionalism, in the face of any reinterpretation.

During the most divisive events of 2020–21, Kirk was at the forefront of opposition to the most repressive pandemic measures. Having questioned the effectiveness of social distancing, he opposed mask mandates and vaccines, especially mandatory vaccinations for students, branding them “health apartheid”. This was added to his previous, equally infamous label of 'climate denier', as he opposed Obama's green revolution. He was hated even more by the left for 6 January, when he paid for a dozen buses to take activists to the Stop the Steal rally, which led to the storming of the Capitol. However, he bears no responsibility for this: the conservative students brought to Washington by Kirk did not participate in the most violent demonstrations. When defending himself against the Committee's accusations regarding 6 January, he stated that he believed the most violent demonstrators were not representative of the Stop the Steal movement. Furthermore, he argued that one could not speak of an “insurrection”,

let alone a “coup”, in relation to the assault on the legislature.

Despite the criticism and labels associating him with violent phenomena,

Charlie Kirk was not a violent man. On the contrary, he was a great lover of dialectics. 'Prove me wrong' was the format of his university debates; he was always ready to respond logically and calmly, even to the most fanatical students (and teachers). A week before he was killed, he participated in a debate where he was up against twenty liberal students. He was not afraid to contradict taboos and dominant ideas. He challenged feminists by stating that abortion is murder in all cases. More recently, he had challenged pro-Palestinian activists by arguing in favour of Israel's defence against terrorism, although he was an isolationist who opposed intervention in Iran and had always opposed military support for Ukraine.

Kirk was not afraid of fanatics; he did not fear confrontation. However, he was killed by an unknown assailant who chose bullets over words. In April, Kirk himself had warned about the growth of political violence on the left in an X post that has since become extraordinarily relevant. "The culture of assassination is spreading on the left. Forty-eight per cent of liberals believe that killing Elon Musk is at least partly justified. Fifty-five per cent expressed the same opinion about Donald Trump.' He concluded by observing, 'This is the natural result of the culture of protest prevalent on the left. It has tolerated violence and chaos for years. The cowardice of local prosecutors and school officials has turned the left into a ticking time bomb."