

What is Gab, the social network gaining popularity among conservatives?

January 11 2021, by Brett Molina



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As Apple and Google crack down on the social media app Parler, conservatives appear to be flocking to another app that claims to "champion free speech."

Gab first launched in 2016, and has remained online despite efforts to shut it down in 2018 after it was discovered the suspected gunman in the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting that killed 11 people posted on the platform.

In a Saturday tweet, Gab said it was gaining more than 10,000 [users](#) an hour after Apple and Google pulled Parler from their app stores.

Amazon Web Services suspended Parler from its web hosting at midnight Sunday. Amazon cited Parler posts that "encourage and incite violence" for pulling hosting services.

So what is Gab? Here's what you should know:

How did it start?

Gab was launched as an alternative to traditional platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. During that time, Twitter had suspended several accounts associated with the "alt-right" movement on the same day it vowed a crackdown on hate speech.

The suspensions pushed many people to Gab, which has fewer content restrictions compared to Facebook, Twitter and other [social media platforms](#).

"We believe that the future of online publishing is decentralized and open," reads a description on its website. "We believe that users of social networks should be able to control their social media experience on their own terms, rather than the terms set down by Big Tech."

Like Parler, users turned to Gab in part due to concerns larger platforms like Twitter were censoring conservative opinions. However, the relaxed rules opened the door for content such as [conspiracy theories](#) and

misinformation.

In August 2018, Microsoft had threatened to drop web hosting for Gab over two anti-Semitic posts which were since removed, reported The Verge.

The Pittsburgh shooting

An account that appeared to belong to accused gunman Robert Bowers featured this message: "I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics. I'm going in."

His profile featured multiple anti-Semitic comments and conspiracy theories, including one referenced in his last post claiming the organization HIAS, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, was bringing "invaders in to kill our people."

In a statement, Gab condemned the attack and said it had suspended the account. "Gab took swift and proactive action to contact [law enforcement](#) immediately," read their statement from 2018.

Efforts to shut Gab down

PayPal confirmed in 2018 it had canceled Gab's account following the shooting. In November, Gab was briefly knocked offline after providers pulled their services.

But Gab was able to quickly find a new service provider. "We are back online," said Gab in a tweet after the site returned online. "We grow stronger by the hour."

Since the crackdown on Parler, Gab says it's seen a surge in users, saying

it saw 40 million visits this week and "more users in the past 2 days than we did in our first two years of existing."

The service has also shown sympathy for Parler amid the suspensions. "We went through this ourselves three years ago. It's not fun," wrote Gab on its Twitter feed. "Here's to hoping they can figure something out. It won't be easy, but it can be done and Gab is proof of that."

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