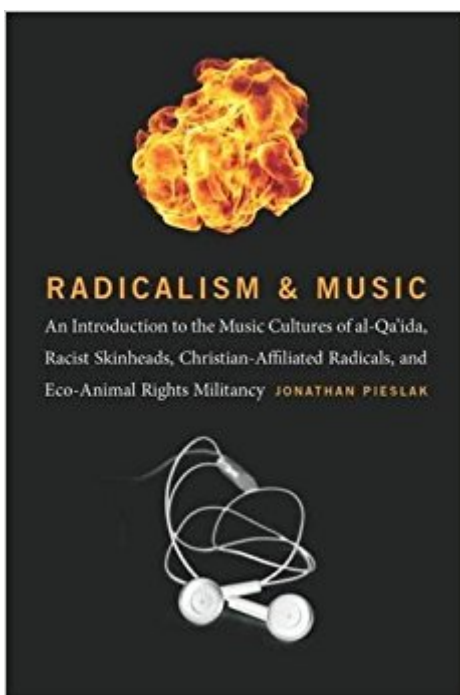


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# Radicalism And Music: An Introduction To The Music Cultures Of Al-Qa'ida, Racist Skinheads, Christian-Affiliated Radicals, And Eco-Animal Rights Militants



## Synopsis

Radicalism and Music offers a convincing argument for music's transformational impact on the radicalization, reinforcement, and motivational techniques of violent political activists. It makes a case for the careful examination of music's roles in radical cultures, roles that have serious impacts, as evidenced by the actions of the Frankfurt Airport shooter Arid Uka, Sikh Temple murderer Wade Page, white supremacist Matthew Hale, and animal-rights activist Walter Bond, among others. Such cases bring up difficult questions about how those involved in radical groups can be stirred to feel or act under the influence of music. Radicalism and Music is based on interviews, email correspondence, concerts, and videos. As a "sound strategy," music is exploited to its fullest potential as a tool for recruiting and retaining members by members of al-Qaeda, the Hammerskin Nation, Christian Identity, Kids in Ministry International, Earth First!, and Vegan Straight Edge. But, as the book points out, the coercive use of music is not isolated to radical cultures, but in political propaganda, sporting events, and popular music as well. Ultimately, Radicalism and Music shows how music affects us through our emotions, and how it triggers violence and enables hateful ideology.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In recruiting members to radical groups, you lead with culture and social bonding and then ideology comes to sink in," says Jonathan Pieslak, an associate professor of

theory and composition at the City College of New York. His forthcoming book, *Radicalism and Music*, examines the music cultures of Al Qaeda, racist skinheads, Christian-affiliated radicals, and eco/animal-rights militants.

• Ursula Lindsey, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, interviewed for the article "The Ties that Bind Jihadists" "Espousing of violence is common to many. Pieslak shows how music helps create what political scientist Benedict Anderson called an "imagined community." Pieslak concludes that music can be dangerous, as evidenced by its influence over such extremists as Arid Uka, Anders Breivik, and Wade Page.

• S. Zuhur, *Choice* "One thing Al Qaeda, neo-Nazi skinheads and animal-rights extremists share: a love of music. In *Radicalism & Music*, City College of New York professor Jonathan Pieslak explores Islamist, skinhead, Christian Identity and militant environmentalist subcultures and finds music was often pivotal in the radicalization of adherents. He investigates the links between Wade Page, Milwaukee's Sikh Temple of Wisconsin shooter, and the racist hardcore punk scene. Pieslak's point is that music's power to rouse emotion at the expense of reason drives many dangerous ideas.

• David Luhrssen, *Shepherd Express*

"*Radicalism and Music* is a compelling read, rigorously researched and accessible to the interested reader. Pieslak is to be commended for his neutral approach: he comes across as intellectually intimate with his subjects without being committed to their respective agenda or passing judgment.

(Nelly Lahoud, author of *The Jihadist's Path to Self-Destruction*) "Radicalism and Music is a well-argued foil to the notion that music is a universal language that brings people together. The subtheme of music and its relationship to the Internet provides important groundwork for thinking of music as a particular information technology without divorcing it from its ritual function.

(Benjamin J. Harbert, co-editor of *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*) "Pieslak's work reveals uses of music that are questionable and discomfiting and thus rarely studied. By skillfully comparing music's role in a range of extremist cultures, Pieslak remaps the bounds of human musicality, showing how music's social and emotional power can inspire violence as much as community, cultivate hatred as much as beauty.

(Daniel Cavicchi, author of *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum*) "Jonathan Pieslak, apart from being a wonderful composer and teacher and thinker, invented a new genre of musicology for *Radicalism and Music*, a method that involves equal parts deep knowledge and derring-do: to explore the meaning of music to either al-Qa'ida or the Westboro Baptist Church, and to then walk

'across the aisle' and compare them to the most extreme animal rights activists takes a heroic amount of sangfroid. His bravado is our gain, as we all try to understand the complexities of our world that can seldom, if ever, be easily explained. (Daniel Felsenfeld, composer)

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