News



The U.S. flag and the California state flag are seen flying in Santa Barbara, California. (Unsplash/Tim Mossholder)



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In high school, Kyle Langford played on his varsity football team, served in student government and was the kind of high-achieving teenager who was profiled in his local newspaper as a "student all-star."

Less than a decade later, Langford, 24, is a longshot candidate for the Republican nomination for governor of California, where he is garnering the praise and support of avowed white supremacists, far-right online streamers and radical traditionalist Catholics.

"I know how to strike a nerve," Langford told the National Catholic Reporter.

Langford has stirred controversy and attracted national media attention in recent months for espousing extreme political views.

On July 25, Langford made international headlines — and condemnation — by posting an image of himself on social media in front of the infamous gates to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland.

The post, which had more than 733,000 views on X as of Aug. 4, suggests that the camp — where more than 1 million people were murdered by the Nazi regime — represents Langford's idea to deal with California's unemployed and homeless populations.

"My 0% unemployment plan," Langford wrote.

People who knew Langford in high school and college describe a shy and gentle young man who became increasingly angry and antisocial to the point that he was asked to leave his college fraternity. In his gubernatorial campaign, where he is polling in single digits, he espouses Christian nationalist views with a kind of traditional Catholic twist.

In an interview with NCR, Langford insists that he is just being himself.

"I've always been the same. There was no change, no radicalization, nothing. That's who I am," he said.

Raised in a Protestant family, Langford, who grew up attending a Christian school, converted to Catholicism and received the sacrament of confirmation in 2022. Langford often posts pictures of himself in churches and describes the Latin Mass as the "most pure way to worship."

Langford sells "Catholic California" gear, including a sticker of a rosary draped over a bridge, on his spartan campaign website. In posts and interviews, Langford has described his vision of making California an official Catholic state. He identifies as a Catholic integralist who believes that church and state should be integrated.

As governor, Langford said he would advocate for people to attend Mass and enroll in classes to learn about Catholicism. He sees no conflict between his Catholic faith and far-right political beliefs.

"Catholics need warriors. They need ferocious people on their side," he said.

In recent years, people with extremist views have been entering politics, usually unsuccessfully because most voters reject candidates who openly espouse white supremacist and antisemitic beliefs, said Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow and policy adviser for the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism.

"The good thing about extremists is that they tend to wear their views on their sleeves. It's hard for them to hide their views," Pitcavage told NCR.

In his advocacy for California's "Catholic foundations," Langford has made comments about Jewish people. In April, he wrote on X that Jews "need to become Catholic, worship Jesus and abandon the state of Israel." He told NCR that he believes the Holocaust to be "a narrative to guilt-trip" and shame people of European descent.

"The Holocaust has been used as a psychological weapon for Jewish supremacy," he said.

Langford is one of more than a dozen candidates running in California's 2026 gubernatorial primary. They include politicians with name recognition, such as former U.S. Rep. Katie Porter and former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, both Democrats. In April, Langford was polling at 2% in the crowded field.



A statue of a grizzly bear stands in front of doors to the governor's office in the California State Capitol building in Sacramento. (Dreamstime/Andreistanescu)

Though far behind in the polls, Langford, who has more than 15,000 followers on X, has built a robust online presence, driven in large part by engagement with far-right accounts that have captions such as "Christ is King" and Christian symbols in their profiles.

Langford's Auschwitz post went viral on social media, prompting media outlets such as The Jerusalem Post to cover the story. The official X account of the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial museum responded, calling Langford's post "an affront to the dignity" of Holocaust victims. The European Democratic Party condemned the post as "hatred in disguise."

Langford was unapologetic. He thanked the Auschwitz museum for "the massive shoutout," and said his German ancestors were smiling upon him. He described Auschwitz-Birkenau as a "beautiful work camp" and claimed he wasn't joking about sending the homeless and unemployed to a similar detention center.

Langford told NCR that he rejects the narrative that Auschwitz-Birkenau was a death camp. He also praised Nazi Germany for having an "orderly" society: "They had pride in who they were," he said.

Minimizing the Holocaust, posting antisemitic remarks on X, expressing fawning views of Nick Fuentes, a leading far-right activist who openly espouses antisemitism, would suggest that Langford has embarked upon a well-trodden and familiar path of online radicalization since graduating from Lake Oswego High School in 2019.

"This is not the Kyle Langford I saw here, and it certainly doesn't even resemble the Kyle Langford I knew as a teenager in Lake Oswego," said Joe Buck, the mayor of Lake Oswego, Oregon.

A newspaper write-up that profiled Langford as a "student all-star" in 2018 presents the image of an all-American teen who played on his high school varsity football team, served on his school's Associated Student Body and dreamed of attending law school at Stanford University.

"He likes promoting equality and making sure everyone is recognized in some way," the write-up said of Langford.

Buck also remembered Langford as one of several high school students who served on the city's Youth Leadership Council, a committee that helps local youth to become active in local politics. Buck described Langford then as a "very nice, kind-hearted, even shy young man." Buck said he found Langford's recent statements to be "disturbing."

"It's honestly horrifying to see his language. It's shocking," Buck said. "It makes me wonder what happened to Kyle after he left the community here to go to [college]."

Pitcavage, of the Anti-Defamation League, told NCR that the phenomenon of young people, especially white young men, being radicalized into political extremism is in part a consequence of the rise of the alt-right movement in the mid-2010s, which over the last 10 years merged with a white supremacist subculture that is very active online.

"All that persisted and still continues to recruit people, especially young white males, into far-right extremism," Pitcavage said, adding that several online platforms exist, including X, that give extremists venues to spread their message.

"There are all sorts of rooftops from which people like Nick Fuentes, but hardly limited to Nick Fuentes, from which they can shout their racist, antisemitic, extreme and hateful ideas, and there are going to be people who are going to be receptive to that," Pitcavage said.

In 2019, Langford was a freshman at the University of Oregon, where he was planning to major in economics and environmental science, according to a Facebook post from that year. As a freshman, he joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity on campus, but was asked to leave the fraternity in his first year as a member.

Five former fraternity members who spoke to NCR, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid online harassment, described Langford in college as an awkward student who was full of angst and anger, and often had difficulty getting along with other members. They said Langford once had to be physically removed from a Halloween function for making belligerent and disrespectful comments to women. For a time, they said, Langford was not allowed to attend the fraternity's social events.

Two former members told NCR that the fraternity's rules committee in 2020 asked Langford to voluntarily leave or risk being voted out. One member shared a meeting agenda from 2020 that indicated the fraternity had accused Langford of "multiple" violations of "integrity, responsible conduct, and trust."

Asked about the fraternity, Langford told NCR: "I didn't like them. There were a couple of guys I got along with great, but there were a lot of guys I didn't get along with."

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Mike Lewis, a former communications official with the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference who founded the Where Peter Is blog, told National Catholic Reporter that he was not surprised at Langford's blend of extremist politics and hardline Catholic views.

"In general, it seems to me that a lot of political extremists on the right are using Catholicism as a vehicle to introduce these extreme ideologies into the national discourse," said Lewis, who has studied and written about political extremism on the Catholic right, especially in radical traditionalist communities.

Lewis suggested that society and church leaders have not done enough to form the consciences of young men to help them develop mature outlooks on faith and life.

Pitcavage added that Fuentes, who is Catholic, often promotes Catholicism as part of his belief system.

"Fuentes integrates that with his antisemitism, with his white supremacy, and with his antidemocratic beliefs, so it's not surprising that many of his followers would say the same kind of thing," Pitcavage said.

Asked if he was a "Groyper," a label used to describe adherents of Fuentes' far-right movement, Langford told NCR: "If Groyper means Catholic integralism, American independence, American sovereignty and if it means pushing a nationalist message, then yes."

During a YouTube interview in February, Langford said he left the University of Oregon during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. His LinkedIn profile indicates that he has held a variety of jobs in the construction industry since dropping out of college. Langford says he is now a construction manager in the Los Angeles area.

In August 2023, according to his LinkedIn profile, Langford became the president of California First Political Action Committee, which has a stated mission of "electing California First candidates."

In filling out a questionnaire for Ballotpedia, Langford described his political philosophy as "Christian eco-nationalism," which he described as blending a "moral framework and law-and-order pragmatism with a unique Californian identity."

"Rooted in my love and belief in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, I'd lead with a mission to protect and uplift," Langford wrote.

While speaking to an online streamer in March, Langford said he leans authoritarian in his politics because he wants the government to foster social cohesion.

"I have the truth on my side," Langford said. "And I'm fighting for the Catholic Church."

Editor's note: *This story was updated Nov. 2, 2026, to note that Kyle Langford disputes this article's characterization of him, including its headline, and rejects the label it applies to him.*