



# TikTok Astroturf

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According to sociologist [Jacques Ellul](#), [propaganda is not rhetoric](#); it's not you and me expressing our opinions and trying to persuade others; it's not our letters to editors of newspapers or the "memes" we share online. Propaganda is the coordination of many forms of social influence, of many media. States are usually involved, or political parties (wannabe states) or huge interest groups (which can be bigger than many states).

If, however, you secretly get paid to push a message in a specific way, you may be a propagandist.

Take [TikTok](#).

This is the video-sharing social media site so popular with young people. It's been controversial; I've [discussed it before](#). But I'm no expert. Still, I was not surprised to learn that Democrats have been paying "social influencers" on that platform to serve up the Democratic Party line.

A TikToker named [Madeline Pendleton](#) made a [video](#) about how the Democrats offered "nearly \$15,000" to talk about "how awesome the Democratic Party is." She found the idea ridiculous, characterizing the offer as a way to distract attention from the party's "genocide." But she recognizes that it can be effective. Many of her "mutuals" on TikTok are indeed spouting the same lines that she was "pitched" by Democrats, and they did so within 48 hours of her receiving the offer.

She went on to say that she received two offers: one to make ongoing videos up to the election, and the other to scarily promote Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, which she is no fan of, but thinks is not that big a deal.

"You guys should be aware that that when you see videos like that, the Democrats are actively paying people to talk about how awesome the Democrats are."

Awesome propagandists, anyway.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.