

ROAR

Reflections on a Revolution

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Issue #5

Not This Time!

*First they came for the Muslims, and we said:
“Not this time, motherfuckers!”*

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Whirlwinds of Danger

Dark forces are stirring across the globe. A right-wing revolt rages, and everywhere the pillars of liberalism crumble. Demons once thought banished are resurfacing with a vengeance. As authoritarian strongmen maneuver into position and a motley crew of billionaires and unapologetic white supremacists take the reins of the most powerful state on the planet, an old word suddenly re-enters our political lexicon. Are we witnessing the resurgence of fascism in our times? If so, what can be done to stop it?

Coming to grips with the complexity of our present conjuncture requires us to confront both the old and the new. On the one hand, we must recognize the novelty of the situation and the enormity of the challenges that now lie before us. These are extraordinary times that will require extraordinary measures. The democratic resistance will need to be creative — the solutions of the past will no longer do. On the other hand, we must not lose sight of the continuities between the unfolding catastrophe and the liberal status quo that gave rise to it. Spiteful chauvinists spewing bigotry and hatred have long been a constitutive element of Western politics, and marginalized and historically oppressed groups bore the brunt of an incipient everyday fascism long before Brexit and Trump struck fear into the hearts of the establishment press. In many important ways, the neoliberal security state — whose anti-democratic machinations we picked apart in our previous issue — prefigured the racist, sexist and authoritarian turn represented by the nationalist far right. It is therefore in the struggles of the marginalized and the oppressed that we must look for answers.

One thing is clear. The liberal order that was established in the postwar decades after the defeat of historical fascism is reeling. Once again, the center cannot hold. Representative institutions long considered impervious to

change are rapidly fraying, as the capitalist world economy continues to spiral out of control. A new era of global disorder is upon us — and the rise of the extreme right will only hasten its arrival. Meanwhile, between Trumpist bigotry and Clintonite technocracy, the existing political system is manifestly incapable of offering a credible solution to its own existential crisis. It is plain for everyone to see: liberalism cannot defeat fascism. The latter lives in the former's bosom and thrives on its self-inflicted decay. What is urgently needed today is a radical alternative emerging from within society — a broad-based, inclusive and forward-looking anti-fascist mass movement led by the marginalized and oppressed and organized on the principles of solidarity, feminism, internationalism, anti-racism and anti-capitalism.

Just as fascism re-emerges from the shadows of the past, so the anti-fascist resistance must now rise to the occasion and claim center stage in a new cycle of struggles. This fifth issue of *ROAR Magazine* asks how we might begin to do that. It looks at the evolution of far-right movements in Europe and the US, considers important lessons from ongoing anti-fascist and anti-racist struggles in Rojava, Greece and Black America, and documents the failings and limits of liberalism across the board — from its implication in the rise of the far right to its deeply flawed opposition to Islamophobia and its problematic doctrine of nonviolence.

The bottom line is that we cannot look at fascism and the rise of the far right as isolated phenomena. As the contributions to this issue show, the resistance to fascism is intimately bound up with the struggle against patriarchy, ecocide, white supremacy, religious fundamentalism, capitalism, imperialism and the state. Only a radically democratic mass movement with a strategic vision on how to confront all the above can begin to make meaningful inroads against the fascist resurgence.

We have seen this movie before. We know what happens next. First they will come for the Muslims. It is up to us to stand firm and insist: “Not this time, motherfuckers!”

Jerome Roos


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SO MUCH
FOR THE
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WORKERS AGAINST FASCISM

RESISTANCE TO FASCISM HAS SO FAR
SOUGHT ONLY A RETURN TO LIBERALISM.
INSTEAD, A NEW WORKERS' MOVEMENT
MUST FIGHT FOR THE WORLD WE WANT.

Illustration by Istvan David

Erik Forman

FIGHT TO WIN



The question of the labor movement under fascism is the question of what to do when it is already too late. Racist vigilante attacks are intensifying, comrades are being indicted, workers are being deported, bosses are breaking labor law with even greater impunity, the press is under threat, civil liberties are disappearing, politicians are attempting to rule by diktat, police are even more out of control, war is on the horizon. Everywhere, the threadbare niceties of the state under liberalism have vanished.

We are not ready for this. The general strike seems like the only reasonable response, but the existing left and labor organizations are hard-pressed to mobilize for one. The working class is self-organizing, but success remains far from certain. What is this hell we are entering? How did we get here, and what role can the working class play in helping us find a way out?

ORIGINS OF FASCISM

Fascism did not start out as a pejorative term. The word originates from the Latin *fasces*, a term for a bundle of sticks bound together around an axe so that they could not be broken, a symbol of unity and power. In ancient Rome, the *fasces* were carried by *lictors*, the bodyguards of magistrates and other state officials. The sticks could be unbundled to mete out beatings as prescribed by magistrates. The axe was used for the death penalty.

Fasci first appeared in social movement usage not on the right, but on the Italian left in the late-nineteenth century as a symbol or term for “league” or “group” for various socialist and syndicalist organizations. It was in fact a former socialist who indelibly stamped fascist as an

adjective for the far right: Benito Mussolini. His politics were shaped by the conflicts of modernity: violent class struggle, a bourgeoisie attempting to build a nation and a national market, and war. For a young Mussolini, working-class power seemed to be the way forward. But after beginning his political career in the Italian Socialist Party, the failure of the socialist movement to prevent World War I, as well as the outpouring of patriotic feeling released by the war, catalyzed Mussolini’s conversion from class politics to a new brand of nationalism.

Mussolini promised to make Italy great again, to return to the golden age of the Roman Empire. In his view, this could only happen through a new cross-class national unity, a powerful state under the tutelage of a new elite of *Übermenschen*, and a march toward war. The first task of Mussolini’s fascism was the violent repression of workers’ and peasants’ movements in the wave of strikes and occupations that followed World War I, followed by the destruction of independent labor organizations once state power was attained.

The conditions of crisis that had led to Italian fascism soon gave rise to parallel movements in other countries. Perhaps because of the visibility of Nazism, in particular in US popular culture, the fascism of the 1930s serves as the primary reference point for analysis of the right-wing authoritarianism we face today. The fascists of Italy, Falangists of Spain, Nazis of Germany and their less well-known counterparts across the Western world believed their elite were destined to rule as autocrats because they had won out in the war of all against all — or must do so. The new elite would lead the nation in an imperialist project of gaining more *spazio vitale* (living space, or as the Nazis would call it, *Lebensraum*), seeking to displace British or American hegemony over the capitalist world-system and gain their people’s place under the sun.

Fascism cast culture as nature. It enforced and strengthened hierarchies based on ethnic or gender identities, claiming that some are meant to be masters and others to be slaves. Fascist governments replaced liberal guarantees of civil liberties and independent civil society organizations with a reimagining of the nation as a patriarchal family based on a racist conception of self and other, and corporatist organizations subordinated to the state. Corporatism here does not refer to corporations in the sense of a private company — it actually referred to the incorporation of bosses, workers and state bureaucrats in a single overarching organization that would supposedly reflect their common nationalist interests.

Fascists paid lip service to “socialism” for the *Volksgemeinschaft* (the Nazi concept of a racially pure “people’s community”), but they found their most willing partners in the project of rationalizing social, political and economic life in the bourgeoisie. Fascists in league with big capital subjected the working class to a redoubled divide-and-conquer strategy. Some sections of workers were included in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, bound up in corporatist schemes of labor-management compromise in exchange for loyalty necessary for war-making. But those who were not thought to belong to the “master race” were excluded from any form of representation or organization, and subjected to hyper-exploitation. Millions of Jews, Roma, Eastern Europeans and others deemed *Untermenschen* were subjected to persecution, forced labor and genocide.

For the working class, fascism is the bloody assertion of heteronormative, patriarchal capitalism without democracy.

For the working class, fascism is the bloody assertion of heteronormative, patriarchal capitalism without democracy. The mythologization of hierarchy and the nation, intensified oppression based on ethnic and gender identities, glorification of war, and violent repression of worker and social movement organizations were hallmarks of all the historical regimes we call fascism — Hitler’s National Socialists, Franco’s Falangists and others. Today, most of these characteristics are also present in the new wave of right-wing regimes taking power in the West, as well as in China, Russia, Turkey and other authoritarian capitalist states of the periphery.

CONTINUITIES WITH LIBERALISM

As participants in this unfolding catastrophe, we tend to emphasize its discontinuities with the postwar liberal order that preceded the current unraveling. But the continuities are in fact more alarming, and more important to understand if we want to eradicate fascism root and branch, once and for all. Fascism is possible not in spite of liberal capitalism, but because of it. Both historically and philosophically, fascism is rooted in the same Western tradition as liberalism. Fascism continually reemerges because its seeds are incubated in the contradictions of capitalism.

The capital-F Fascism of authoritarian government is possible because of the lower case-f fascism that thrives in everyday life under capitalism. The centralized state was an invention of the bourgeoisie, a business innovation necessary to manage its affairs. Its bureaucracy stands ready-made for takeover by fascist thugs. Eichmann-like obedience necessary for the Fascist political project is inculcated by the state and corporate bureaucracy built by the bourgeoisie. Fascists march to war down roads that were paved by centuries of European colonialism and imperialism. The fascist discourse of national greatness is nothing more than a continuation of the nationalism of the imagined community constructed by the bourgeoisie.

The fascist enforcement of gender norms is a grotesque exaggeration of the patriarchal

division of labor engendered by one form of capitalism. Fascism's celebration of hierarchy and legitimation of class society is an extreme form of the twin lies of liberalism: "meritocracy" (barely distinguishable as a concept from Social Darwinism) and racist essentialism. Racism itself was born of the Western project of colonialism, and given a stamp of legitimacy by Enlightenment science that sought to taxonomize all things, plants, animals and people.

Liberalism promises to keep its *Id* in check with guarantees of the rights of man, but this was always a promise more often broken than kept. The majority of our planet's inhabitants have already been living under a permanent state of exception. The test runs for the Nazi Holocaust were the late-Victorian holocausts of mass murder in Africa, and the genocidal colonization of the Americas and uncounted colonial massacres. In the capitalist core, millions have long lived their lives as what Giorgio Agamben termed *homo sacer* — a term from

ancient Rome signifying those who are deprived of rights by the state, and subject to extra-judicial violence by the George Zimmermans of the world. Across the capitalist core, immigrants and refugees live without the promise of any kind

of liberal human rights, facing possible deportation in any interaction with the authorities.

Clintonite cosmopolitan liberalism claims that these oppressions are atavisms of the past, even though they are renewed every day. It promises to unite the world Benetton-like in a multicultural global market, where everyone is equally free to exploit and be exploited.

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*Fascism is possible
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Liberalism will occasionally apologize for its racism, sexism and colonial massacres, and may make affirmative action reforms to stabilize its rule and rationalize production, or in the case of the US government's eventual concessions to the civil rights movement, to compete ideologically with the Soviet Union. But there is one place where it can never acknowledge illegitimate hierarchy: the workplace. And it is precisely here that the contradictions that propel the world toward fascism are rooted.

THE LIBERAL COMPROMISE

Fascism is not only a grotesque exaggeration of the worst elements of bourgeois society. As a popular tendency, it is a response to the same contradictions that generate left radicalism: poverty, powerlessness and alienation. It is the manufactured scarcity of capitalism that opens the door to a fascist solution.

As a form of government, fascism is not the bourgeoisie's first choice, of course. It is an unstable system prone to cronyism that places certain limits on the market. So, like the boss who wants you to try for a promotion rather than organizing a union, liberalism first tries to resolve its contradictions through expansion. This could mean economic growth through technological upgrading, or stimulation of new needs and desires to create new consumer markets, or it could mean capturing new markets through war and trade agreements. As long as the pie is getting bigger, tensions over who gets the biggest piece are diffused.

The contradiction of liberal capitalism played out in real historical time. To stabilize its own rule in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II, liberal capitalism accepted a degree of regulation, establishing norms

“Modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system.”

GIORGIO AGAMBEN

— *State of Exception*



**MAKE
ITALY
GREAT AGAIN!**

necessary for more-or-less long-term operation of a market, and setting up a system that could compete economically and ideologically with international socialism. This took the form of the New Deal and the Keynesian welfare state, a compromise that institutionalized class struggle to boost consumption.

In the United States, some — mostly white, mostly male — workers were granted some rights under the National Labor Relations Act. Domestic workers and farm laborers were excluded, a concession to white supremacist political factions. This was a far more soft-serve version of the inclusion/exclusion from representation that also characterized the fascist system of labor control of the same era. It was also premised on loyalty to the capitalist state. The leaders of the major union federations were granted seats at the table, in exchange for expelling Communists from their ranks and adopting a depoliticized approach to labor relations.

After World War II, the US exported this New Deal model of labor relations through its reconstruction efforts in Western Europe and East Asia. For around thirty years, workers were rewarded for their loyalty with wage increases that matched growth in productivity. For the most part, this resulted in an apolitical acquiescence to life under capitalism. By the end of the twentieth century, liberalism seemed to reign triumphant. Some

claimed that liberal capitalism was the End of History, that the age of extremes had definitively passed. Both socialism and fascism were consigned to the dustbin. Under the leadership of the WTO and the largest of the Western corporations, humanity was to march onward into a glorious consumerist future with McDonald's, Starbucks and Apple products for all.

How wrong they were.

POST-LIBERALISM

Everywhere, authoritarian regimes are winning out over centrist liberalism. The Chinese model of development — an authoritarian state with just enough market relations to fill the

pockets of a kleptocratic elite — has become the dominant development paradigm for much of Asia and Africa. Western corporate elites have watched jealously as mega-projects and mega-profits that would take years of political wrangling in the capitalist core get the green light in China. Nevertheless, most sectors of capital still seem to prefer Clintonite liberalism to Trumpian fascism, or certainly to Bernie Sanders'

social democracy. But increasingly, the centrist option is off the table, for reasons of the bourgeoisie's own doing.

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By the end of the twentieth century, liberalism seemed to reign triumphant. Some claimed that liberal capitalism was the End of History, that the age of extremes had definitively passed. How wrong they were.”

The triumph of liberalism in the 1990s belied its own decay. Since the 1970s, global capital has sought to dismantle the liberal welfare state and put more and more social goods (such as education, healthcare and what remains of public housing) on the market through “structural adjustment” and neoliberal austerity.

The decay of the liberal system is nowhere more evident than in labor relations. The stable system of collective bargaining put in place by the National Labor Relations Act was under attack from the far right since its inception — but has been most effectively undermined by the liberal center since 1981. In that year, Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers in the PATCO union, signaling open season on the labor movement. Workplace-level union-busting, the use of scabs to break strikes, automation and outsourcing all drove unionization rates in the United States down from around 30 percent in the 1950s, to barely 10 percent in 2017. Behind this evisceration is a shift in ruling-class strategy from grudging acceptance of unions in the system of labor control, to direct domination of each individual worker through “Human Resources Management.”

As a result, the standard of living in the capitalist core has undergone almost half a century of decline. This has paralleled the decline of the United States as the hegemonic power in the global political economy. As this decline continues, workers in the capitalist core of all

income levels have begun looking for alternatives to neoliberal politics. The mythology of the American Dream no longer works its magic of erasing class antagonisms.

Today, the body politic is afflicted with a dysphoria — a disconnect between the lived experiences of the working class, and the political and cultural representations with which hegemonic liberalism seeks to interpellate them. The Clintonite slogan “America Is Already Great” does not resonate with workers who see themselves making less money than their parents’ generation. The cultural disjuncture leads to a political rejection of corporate liberals.

A new political subject is waiting to be called into existence. The depoliticization of life that accompanied the postwar liberal settlement is over. The center cannot hold. Everyone is picking a side.

Neoliberalism promises more of the same, fascism promises “economic nationalism” and a return to a mythologized

past, a democratic socialist revival bids for a return to some form of social democracy. But once again, the discontinuities of these ideologies with liberalism are not as strong as their continuities. Both the fascist ideology of Trump and Brexit, and the social-democratic revivalism of Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn are *post-liberal*, in that they are symptomatic of the breakdown of the liberal order. But they are also *post-liberal*, in that they fail to break with the fundamentals of liberal capitalism: private ownership of the means of production, wage

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The depoliticization of life that accompanied the postwar liberal settlement is over. The center cannot hold. Everyone is picking a side.”

labor and markets as a means of distribution. It is these fundamentals of capitalism which brought us to the crisis of neoliberalism, and any movement that is unwilling to challenge these fundamentals will ultimately bring us more of the same.

In some cases, the post-liberal left wins or makes important gains in elections — Syriza and Podemos serving as the most prominent examples. But their victories tend to be short-lived. Without willingness to fundamentally break with neoliberal capitalism, it is not long before voters realize that they have elected a non-solution, and turn once again to the right. The failure of the left to offer an anti-systemic alternative is what brought the fascists right to power in the United States and threatens to do the same in other places across the world. Now we need to figure out what exactly to expect, and how to fight to win.

THE OTHER WORKERS' MOVEMENT

True to form as fascists, the Trump regime has set to work recasting the boundaries between self and other in the United States. It is a project of scapegoating, and of legitimizing the repression of labor and social movements. Unlike its 1930s antecedents in Germany, Italy or Spain, Trump's cartoonish fascism has not had to ban the unions and set up new ones under direct control of the state. There is no need for a new fascist system of labor control, because under neoliberalism the United States already has one.

Since the 1980s, most workers' organizations have already been liquidated. Most workers are subjects of a capitalist dictatorship in the workplace, and millions have long been excluded from even the most basic guarantees of liberalism: to be paid for your labor, to not be summarily executed by police, to be accorded due process rights. There is a new intensity and scale to these attacks, but the line of attack itself is not actually new.

The "official" workers' movement has largely failed to resist attacks old and new. Under Trump, the labor movement has gladly divided and conquered itself, with the heads of building trade unions meeting with Trump and sycophantically glowing over the "respect" he showed them, while he prepares orders to deport millions of immigrant workers and deprive millions more citizens of their rights. Many unions simply seem to be hoping for the best, while failing to prepare for the worst. Others refuse to publicly attack Trump in the hopes of cutting some sort of deal. But no matter how close some unions get to the boss, they cannot escape the fact that their organizations are in the crosshairs more



CHASE BANK & MORGAN BANK

Continued doing business from
their branches in Paris during
Nazi occupation

Oil and gas still flows freely between the territories controlled by Islamic State and the Assad regime in Syria. While the troops battle each other, their leaders enrich themselves. Enemies on the battlefields turn into partners in trade. During World War II the situation was no different: major American companies eagerly did business with the Nazi regime in Germany. It was the financial interests of German and American corporations – some of which are still around today – that kept the German war machine rolling, and even facilitated the attempted extermination of the Jews. The close relations between capitalism and fascism were never expressed more clearly than in Nazi Germany.

AND
CORPORA

IG FARBEN

Held Zyklon B patent and provided Luftwaffe with crucial gasoline additive

UNION BANKING CORPORATION

Sold German bonds on US financial markets, headed by grandfather Bush

STANDARD OIL

Provided Luftwaffe with gasoline additive without which planes couldn't fly, owned by Rockefeller

GENERAL MOTORS

Owner of Opel throughout the war, while Nazi government controlled production

IBM

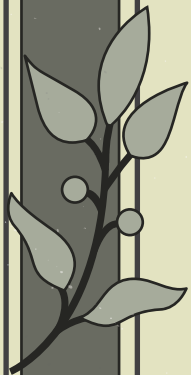
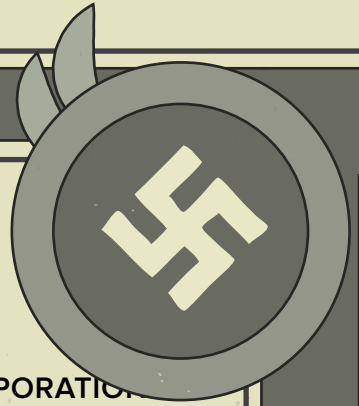
Developed punch card technology that helped to automate the Holocaust

COCA COLA COMPANY

Continued doing business in Nazi Germany, invented Fanta after Cola ingredients could no longer be imported

FORD

Henry Ford was a Nazi sympathizer, Ford subsidiaries used slave labor and built trucks for German military





PROTESTOR DEMANDING \$15 MINIMUM WAGE FOR FAST FOOD WORKERS IN THE U.S., NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2014. A KATZ / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

than ever. Trump's fascism seeks to finish off the legal framework of labor relations under postwar liberalism, dealing the *coup de grâce* to an institutional labor movement that has long been hemorrhaging members.

The resistance is therefore in the “other” workers’ movement — among those who never were included in the legal mechanisms of the compact of postwar liberalism in the first place, such as immigrant workers, the unwaged labor of women, and students. They are joined by a new “other” workers’ movement: the rebel rank-and-file of the institutional unions, such as teachers and public sector workers, and increasingly, self-organized groups of workers who have never belonged to a union. As the state falls under the sway of fascist control, the weapons of this resistance are increasingly extralegal: from protests to strikes, highway blockades and physical confrontations.

While increasingly bold in tactics, resistance to fascism is so far largely conservative, in the true sense of the word: it seeks to conserve the liberal order. Until now, its battles have been mostly defensive, and if they are won, will merely put liberals back in power. The real destruction of fascism can only be accomplished by a new workers’ movement, unencumbered by the sacred cows of the bureaucracies that grew up under corporate liberalism. It is in the “other” workers’ movement that a radicalism beyond liberal capitalism can be imagined, and it is with the forces that we build with our own hands that it can be won.

How do we win this fight? The tasks are largely the same as before, but with a new sense of urgency, and in conditions of heavier repression. As before, we must engage millions in the fight for a different future. No true revolution is possible without mass participation. We must build a vast network of workplace and

community-based organizing committees that make a general strike possible. We must also be prepared to go beyond a general strike, to build dual power through worker and community assemblies that will replace or transform the state with a true democracy. This is a struggle not just to restore the old world-system, but to build a new one. This is the time to be revolutionaries, to fight to win the world we actually want.

The real destruction of fascism can only be accomplished by a new workers' movement, unencumbered by the sacred cows of the bureaucracies that grew up under corporate liberalism.

Calamity of epic proportions awaits millions in the working class. Deportations, intensified exploitation at work, the destruction of our life-giving planet, vigilante attacks, refugee crisis, resurgent misogyny, transphobia and racism, and the threat of inter-state war. It is already too late to prevent much of this. But it has always already been too late. Untold tragedy is the legacy of liberalism, and of every return of fascism. That is why we fight for the future. That is why we fight to win. ★



ERIK FORMAN

Erik Forman is an educator and labor activist in New York City.



THE FASCIST CREEP

Anti-Fascism and Revolution

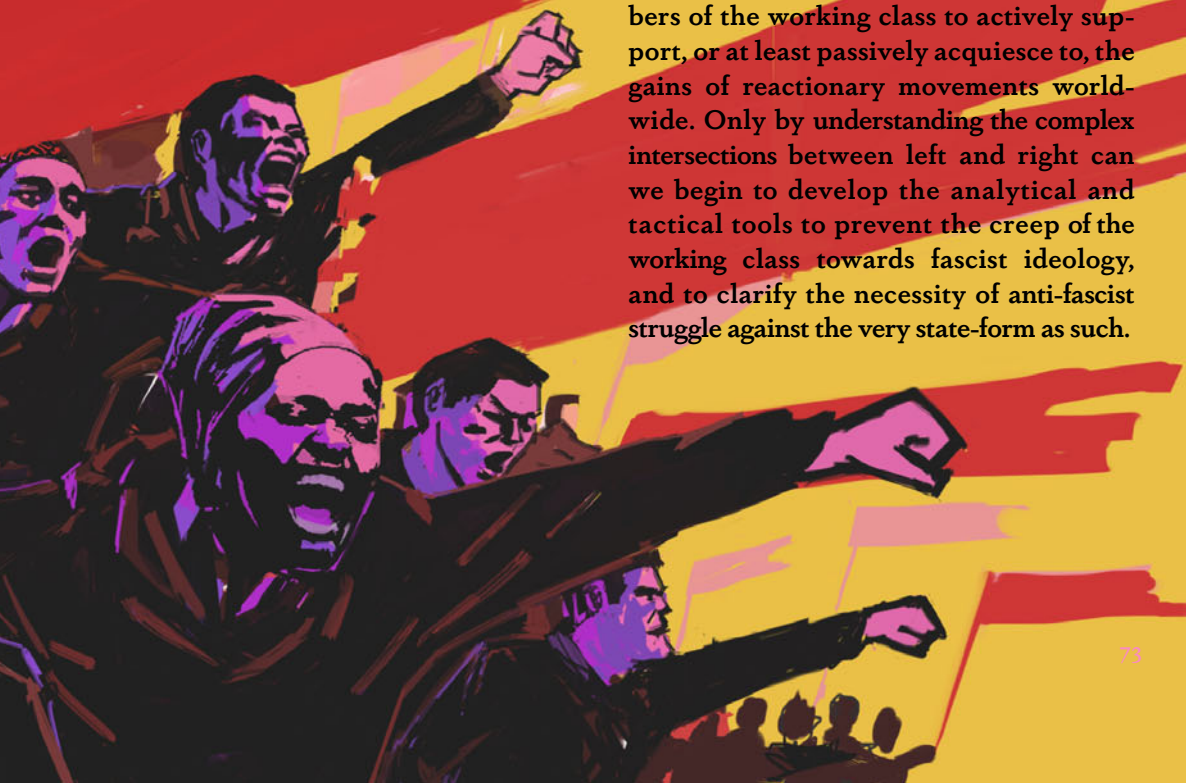
Illustration by Mirko Rastić

**FIGHTING FASCISM
REQUIRES FIRST AND
FOREMOST THAT WE
RECOGNIZE THE
COMPLEX WAYS IN
WHICH THE FAR RIGHT
HAS TAKEN UP
LEFT-WING TACTICS
AND IDEAS.**

Alexander Reid Ross

Does anti-fascism bear revolutionary potential? This question lingers in today's tense climes — yet the precise meaning of “revolution” remains unclear. At the Conservative Political Action Conference in the United States this year, former UKIP leader Nigel Farage identified the successes of Brexit and Donald Trump as the beginnings of a “great global revolution.” Either Trump and Farage have joined the revolutionary left — or reality is far more complicated.

To understand the rise of Trump and Brexit, we would do well to return to the notion of the “national revolution,” which has over the years led many members of the working class to actively support, or at least passively acquiesce to, the gains of reactionary movements worldwide. Only by understanding the complex intersections between left and right can we begin to develop the analytical and tactical tools to prevent the creep of the working class towards fascist ideology, and to clarify the necessity of anti-fascist struggle against the very state-form as such.



THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

The antecedents of the fascist creep go back to the 1920s and 1930s. Before Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, his second in command, Gregor Strasser, led a powerful tendency in the Nazi Party that stressed affiliation neither with capitalism nor with communism, but with a “national revolution” favoring a United States of Europe — with workers’ syndicates functioning under a corporatist state within the ambit of national solidarity.

After the destruction of the Third Reich in 1945, the notion of the “national revolution” re-emerged as a dominant narrative of fascist ideology. Led in particular by Otto Strasser, Gregor’s brother, the so-called “Third Position” line held that Hitler had failed, but Nazism had not. For these so-called Strasserists, the leading fight of the postwar decades would be against NATO, which stood for the occupation of Europe by the United States and its ideology of liberal multiculturalism.

As national liberation movements fought to gain independence from Europe’s colonial states around the world, members of Strasser’s coterie created a European Liberation Front, which would deploy direct action against NATO to “liberate” the continent from what they saw as a Jewish conspiracy against the racial purity of Europe. The discourse of anti-imperialism and “revolutionary traditionalism” became es-

sential. Nazi war criminals joined Perón in Argentina and Gamal Nasser in Egypt, producing anti-Semitic propaganda and brokering arms deals. In 1956, Nasser reassured them by expelling some 25,000 Jews (half of Egypt’s Jewish community), and Ben Bella followed up on this after Algerian independence, forcing around 95 percent of Algerian Jews — some 130,000 people — into exile.

“
*In the postwar period,
a network of fascists
adopted national
liberation as a guiding
principle and began to
infiltrate leftist networks
across Europe.*

The network of fascists that adopted national liberation as a guiding principle then began to infiltrate leftist networks and commit terrorist attacks against innocent civilians across Europe. They bragged that Maoist groups were easiest to infiltrate, due to their “impatience and zeal.” After May

1968, fascist ideologues adapted to the anti-authoritarian ethos of the new social movements, deploying Gramscian theories of cultural hegemony in the service of an ethno-centric movement that combined right-wing ideas with left-wing ones. More specifically, they insisted on the breakdown of modern nation-states into ethno-states federated under a “spiritual empire.”

WHITE NATIONALISM AND THE LIBERAL APPEAL

The impact of the mix between Third Position ideology and anti-imperialism found a reflection in the name of the American Nazi Party’s 1960s youth group, the North American Liberation Front, as well as the working-class rhetoric of its

leading advocate, a young college student at Louisiana State University named David Duke. Attracting crowds to his regular white supremacist rants on campus, Duke garnered widespread media attention through controversial assertions of racial inequality and the need for authoritarian leadership. His media strategy worked: he would play the polite white guy, making appeals to common sense and reason amid fascist tirades designed to offend on more subtle registers. When leftists and non-whites intervened, he accused them of being “the real authoritarians.”

Duke’s style charmed reporters, but he soon realized the limits of open Nazism in US culture. Switching to the more American tradition of the Ku Klux Klan, Duke embraced the rhetoric of “white nationalism.” Rather than agitating for a Nazi overthrow of the US government, he seamlessly joined fascism with Klan-bred Americanism in an appeal to the public for “white rights.” White nationalism became the politically correct term for the “Klanazi” hybrid and its public discourse. For Duke, invoking democratic principles to forge a white ethno-state did not contain any contradictions, and too many liberals could accept the violent implications if the public presentation seemed respectable.

Relegating racism to the back burner and cloaking anti-Semitism in conspiracy theories, fascists used the nascent militia movement as a breeding ground for ambiguous white nationalist politics aimed particularly against immigrants.

Over the next decades, former participants in Duke’s new Klan would develop the four pivotal strategic points for the modern fascist movement: “white nationalism,” “national revolution,” “leaderless resistance,” and social networks like *Stormfront*. These positions were first tested as fascists worked to conscript working-class subcultures like skinheads into the “frontline soldiers” of the “national revolution,” but the unpopularity of militant fascism led them to a strategy of infiltrating the right using the nascent militia movement as their host.

Relegating racism to the back burner and cloaking anti-Semitism in conspiracy theories, fascists used the militias as a breeding ground for ambiguous white nationalist politics aimed particularly against immigrants. Terms like “racially aware” came into use as white nationalists called their enemies “the real racists.” The rhetorical pattern



KKK RALLY IN GEORGIA, U.S., 2009.
CRAIG O'NEAL / FLICKR

of reversal served fascists' attempts to call on liberals to denounce the left on the merits of universal applications of rights like free speech and assembly. Using the "I'm rubber, you're glue" defense, fascists could even label their opposition "the real fascists" — and confused audiences would often agree.

THE CURRENT STRUGGLE AGAINST "GLOBALISM"

After the defeat of the Soviet Union, the fascist movement around the world set its sights on "globalism" and the New World Order (NWO). For fascists, "globalism" combines liberal multiculturalism, sexual permissiveness and religious tolerance. Their hatred of globalism drove US fascist leaders to express admiration for the famous anti-WTO riots in Seattle in 1999, and they ironically supported, at least in part, the 9/11 attacks as bold strikes against the New World Order.

By tying "globalism" in with capitalism through the critique of globalization, the far right entered the largely left-wing anti-globalization movement. Fascists infiltrated anti-globalization groups like Campo Anti-imperialista and joined online networks utilized by the left like Indymedia, leading to an influx of conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism masquerading as "anti-Zionism." At the same time, the far right in the US boosted fascist infrastructure by supporting Islamophobic "experts" and a network of groups like Stop the Islamization of America, Stop the Islamization of Europe, and Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of Germany (Pegida). Thus, anti-globalism fused the rejection of globalization with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and the hatred of migrants in order to continue the "national revolutionary" struggle against NATO into the post-Soviet era.



Through the strategy of “leaderless resistance,” fascist networks became increasingly decentralized, joining Islamophobic marches and increasingly deploying predominantly left-wing tactics like black blocs against anti-fascists and police.

Moreover, through the strategy of “leaderless resistance,” fascist networks became increasingly decentralized, joining Islamophobic marches and increasingly deploying predominantly left-wing tactics like black blocs against anti-fascists and police. After the financial crisis, such formations increasingly aligned with Putin’s Russia and against the European Union and NATO, blaming the EU for the combination of increased immigration and fiscal austerity. Because they reject the EU and NATO for similar reasons, a number of radicals, liberals and leftists have chosen to join the side of Islamophobic groups or aid the “anti-globalist” movement. We will see how these unfortunate marriages take shape with the help of a just a few brief examples.

— 1. ANTI-IMPERIALISM

It is now rather well known that, in December 2014, two left-wing groups from the US — United National Antiwar Coalition and the International Action Center — joined a host of far-right and fascist separatist groups in Moscow for an anti-imperialist “Multipolar World” conference. Whether or not they knew about the convergence of fascist and leftist Euroscepticism at the conference ahead of time, these groups participated in the same spirit as those Labour Party voters who supported Brexit.

Left-wing formations like the Workers World Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation, and

Battle of Cable Street, major clash in London's East End between the British Union of Fascists and thousands of local anti-fascists determined to stop the fascist march.

1936



Many anti-fascist groups formed in Spain, among them the Antifascist Worker and Peasant Militias, the International Brigades and the Friends of Durruti

1930s



Founding of *Arditi del Popolo*, or "The People's Daring Ones", an Italian militant anti-fascist group.

1921

1931

Iron Front, an anti-Nazi paramilitary organization formed in the Weimar Republic by the German Social Democratic Party

1935-'36

Resistance against Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, inspiring a large scale anti-fascist and solidarity movement in the US

1939-'45

The Polish Home Army, part of the Polish Underground State, was an alliance of anti-Nazi armed resistance groups that would rescue more Jews than any other organization or government.

1897

BUND, Jewish socialist party organizing self-defense groups to protect against pogroms



1927

TIGR, a Slovene and Croat anti-fascist resistance movement founded in reaction to Italian annexation.





1941

Anti-Nazi February strike in the Netherlands in solidarity with the Jews.

Manolis Glezos tears down the swastika from the Acropolis in Athens.



A history of anti-fascist organizing

Under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito the Yugoslav Partisans became Europe's most effective anti-Nazi resistance movement.

1941-45

Polish Jews resist against the Nazi-led deportations to the Treblinka death camp during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

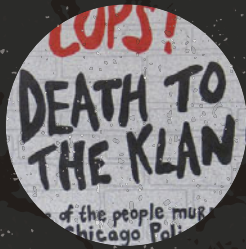
1943

Years of Lead, recurring clashes between left-wing and right-wing groups in Italy which saw the birth of the Red Brigades and the neo-fascist bombing of Bologna's railway station, killing 85 people.

1968-1982

1962

62 Group, a Jewish-led anti-fascist coalition of militant groups in London, working in alliance with Irish and Black activists.



John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, a militant left-wing anti-fascist organization that released the quarterly paper *Death to the Klan*, later called *No KKK, No Fascist USA*.

1978

1985

Anti-Fascist Action founded in the UK. They booked a resounding victory against British fascists at the 1992 "Battle of Waterloo".

1970's - 1980's

Emergence of the *autonomen* in Germany, who were the first to use black bloc tactics in their direct actions and clashes with fascists and the police



Founding of Anti-Racist Action in Minneapolis by anti-fascist skinheads.

1988

2012

Creation of Black Lives Matter movement in response to the racist murder of Trayvon Martin.

the Workers Party have similarly thrown their support behind Bashar Al-Assad's authoritarian regime in Syria, in support of Russia's interests in the region as opposed to America's "deep state." This illiberal reasoning that "an enemy of my enemy is my friend" puts these groups in an awkward place with regards to fascists' coeval support for the Kremlin and Assad.

— 2. DECOLONIZATION

In another exposition of solidarity among separatists, the French-Algerian decolonial thinker Houria Bouteldja recently encouraged her supporters to observe the ideological proximity between anti-Semitic comedian Dieudonné, fascist Alain Soral and immigrants. "[I]f we were to consider the political offer that Dieudonné and Soral embody," she wrote, "it is currently the one that best conforms to the existential malaise of the second and third generations of post-colonial immigrants: it recognizes full and complete citizenship within the nation-state, it respects the Muslim character within the limits and conditions put forth by Soral. It also designates an enemy: the Jew as a Jew, and the Jew as a Zionist, as an embodiment of imperialism, but also because of the Jew's privileged position."

Rejecting left and right and designating feminism as Eurocentric imperialism, Bouteldja — who is published by the left-wing *Fabriques* and whose work has appeared in the American socialist magazine *Jacobin* — ascribes a certain affinity with fascists to immigrants, or "*indigènes*," that trumps the extant mainstream left. While clearly not representative of the broad spectrum of decolonial thought, Bouteldja's position expresses the tendency of some to join with fascists in the struggle against liberalism, rather than acknowledge fascism as a common enemy.

— 3. EUROCOMMUNISM

During the most pivotal period of the Syrian refugee crisis, the left could not muster a united rejection of Islamophobia, reminding many of the tragic history of revisionist Eurocommunism in the 1970s and 80s. As Communist Parties in Western Europe failed to adapt to deindustrialization and the counter-cultures of the 1960s, they developed "Eurocommunism," which insisted on preserving presumed "authentic European values" like parliamentarianism against the Soviet Union's encroachment. Many within this movement became virulently hostile to immigrants. On one notorious occasion, the Communist Mayor of Vitry in France led a large protest against immigrants, driving a bulldozer into a guest worker asylum. Coupled with neoliberal reforms under the Socialist Party in the 1980s, Eurocommunism signaled the decline of the left and the rise of the radical right populist party, the Front National.

Particularly reminiscent of this trend in 2016 was the attitude of leftist thinkers like Slavoj Žižek, who insisted that "European values" associated with the Enlightenment must be protected against unassimilated Muslims and Syrian refugees. Rather than just advocating the superiority of European civilization, however, Žižek insists that "I don't think too much integration is good... I want polite ignorance." For Žižek, Muslim "lower classes" actually envy European civilization and must be "educated (by others and by themselves) into their freedom." According to Žižek, the "only consequent truly leftist position" is more forceful imposition of Eurocentrism alongside "a degree of distance" between Muslims and non-Muslims. True to form as one of the world's leading contrarians, Žižek applies liberal thought toward utterly illiberal conclusions.

While Žižek joins the far right in presenting the unintegrated Muslim migrant as an immediate threat to the European Enlightenment, Bouteldja ascribes far more dignity to the unassimilated. However, both link unassimilated migrants to fascism. While Bouteldja suggests the ultimate shattering of Eurocentric universalism in league with anti-Semitic reaction, Žižek asserts Eurocentric universalism against Muslims. Both, however, capitulate to one degree or another to the “ethno-differentialism” advocated by fascists who — as with Soral’s link to Bouteldja and Žižek’s “degree of distance” — hope to maintain geographical and cultural boundaries separating “European culture” from non-white obtrusion.

Rather than attempting a synthesis of Žižek and Bouteldja, anarchists and anti-authoritarians would do better to put both aside, insisting instead on an internationalism that overcomes ethnocentrism as well as the racist, colonial and imperialist tendencies of the EU.

Rather than attempting a synthesis of Žižek’s critical liberalism and Bouteldja’s anti-Enlightenment tradition, which would likely take the form of something approximating white nationalism, anarchists and anti-authoritarians would do better to put both aside, insisting instead on an internationalism that overcomes ethnocentrism as well as the racist, colonial and imperialist tendencies of the EU.

THE RISE OF THE ALT-RIGHT

It was amid these intersections between left and right that the American neo-Nazi Richard Spencer created the alt-right movement and took over the paleo-conservative National Policy Institute. Seeing himself as a pioneering “hipster-whisperer,” Spencer gave old white nationalism a makeover by deploying the same tropes composed by the aforementioned leftists, radicals and liberals. He argued for white identitarianism, assuring people like Bouteldja’s *indigènes* a certain place within the anti-liberal ethnocentric reconfiguration of the world. He asserted that unassimilated Muslims pose an essential threat to superior European values and wrote that “Slavoj Žižek is my favorite leftist. He has more to teach the alt-right than



Fighting fascism through top-heavy efforts will only repeat the errors of authoritarian self-destruction. Fascism can be overcome through militant organization, autonomous self-activity, everyday resistance, community organizing and international coalition building.

a million American conservative douches.” He also openly supported Putin’s Russia and used anti-imperialist rhetoric to advocate “multipolar” Euroscepticism. Spencer’s alt-right was thus placed at the intersection of illiberal sentiment while paradoxically deploying the usual universalist reversals to encourage disgruntled liberals to join in.

Generating a quasi-mass movement through internet memes, message boards and podcasts that produced networks with other traditionalists, white supremacists, Men’s Rights activists and neo-reactionaries from Silicon Valley, Spencer led his constituents

into a hegemonic bloc with Trump supporters, suffusing radical-right populism with a new fascist synthesis. Using Trump as a figurehead, Spencer centralized the basics of fascism within the US far right while encouraging people to appreciate left-right syncretic understandings. Though Trump appeared to turn against the alt-right, it would appear he has only normalized much of it.

Trump’s chief strategist, Breitbart founder Stephen Bannon, endorses Catholic traditionalism developed in relation to the thought of fascists like Julius Evola and Alexander Dugin. Together with his admission

of a Leninist desire for revolution, Bannon's ideology bears the markings of a "revolutionary traditionalism" that would feel at home on *Stormfront*. Other Trump affiliates are linked to the white nationalist Tanton Network. Yet the Trump administration seems weak in many places — not only with regards to inquiries into its suspicious dealings with Russia but also in light of the recent women's march and strike, and the mass protests against his Muslim bans. In general, hegemonic white nationalism seems unstable and increasingly susceptible to challenges from below.

The struggle against Trumpism is commensurate with the struggle against fascism and the struggle against the state. There is a need for the left to exploit the weaknesses of Trumpism, assemble into autonomous groups and determine clear positions against fascism as well as localized strategies of building power through a grassroots countermovement to the encroachment of the far right. Fighting fascism through top-heavy efforts will only repeat the errors of authoritarian self-destruction. Yet if Trump is unseated through impeachment or whatever means, anarchists and anti-authoritarians will have a better opportunity to expose the crisis of the state-form and help create spaces based on principles rather than statism.

Fascism can be overcome through militant organization, through autonomous self-activity and everyday resistance, through community organizing and international coalition building, through artistic and cultural praxis, and through the persistent enfranchisement of freedom and equality at all levels of society. Let no ground be ceded to the fascist creep! ★



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THE EUROPEAN REACTION



A Dozen Shades of Far Right

Illustration by Kaan Bağcı



**THE GROWING
THREAT OF
AUTHORITARIANISM
DEMANDS MASS
MOVEMENTS AND
BROAD-BASED
ANTI-FASCIST ACTION
ON THE BASIS OF
INTERNATIONALISM
AND GENUINE
SOLIDARITY.**

Maik Fielitz and
Laura Lotte Laloire

Earlier this year, a site in the German city of Dresden that had originally been designated for a refugee shelter was turned into a court room. Ironically, it now hosts a terror trial against eight members of the far-right Freital Group, who are accused of carrying out a series of bomb attacks against migrants and anti-fascists in Germany.

In recent years, the Saxon city of Freital gained notoriety for its anti-refugee mobilizations, its racist vigilance and its clandestinely coordinated right-wing militancy. Within spitting distance of the town, the Pegida movement has been mobilizing against the “Islamization of the West” every Monday for more than two years now. The situation in Saxony epitomizes an ongoing surge of far-right activity not only in East Germany and the entire Republic, where over 3,500 attacks on migrants took place in 2016 alone, but all over the European continent.

THE RISE OF THE EUROPEAN FAR RIGHT

Across Europe, far-right parties are steadily gaining the organizational capacity and electoral support needed to take control of democratic institutions. At the same time, extreme-right militias are attempting to reclaim the streets, while New Right “intellectual” circles have been pursuing a long-term strategy of setting the cultural stage for an authoritarian transformation of European societies. These multifaceted manifestations of the shift to the right all find their *moment suprême* in the confluence of the economic crisis and the so-called refugee crisis.

Most anti-fascist analyses therefore draw a direct line between the outbreak of the global financial crisis and the rise of the far right.

“Capitalist crisis breeds fascism,” goes the oft-repeated battle cry — especially in countries that have borne the brunt of brutal austerity measures in recent years. There is indeed little doubt that the temporal acceleration and parallel appearance of similar right-wing phenomena should be considered within its appropriate economic context. Yet in the effort to detect the root causes of the far right’s ascendance, we should avoid falling back on overly simplistic explanatory schemes.

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While the crisis has undoubtedly catalyzed far-right mobilization, the growing popularity of right-wing parties and movements ultimately rests on widespread racist attitudes and petit-bourgeois anxieties about social status that have existed at all times and places.

While the crisis has undoubtedly catalyzed far-right mobilization, the growing popularity of right-wing parties and movements ultimately rests on widespread racist attitudes and petit-bourgeois anxieties about social status that have existed at all times and places. Examples like Portugal and Spain show that crisis-ridden

societies do not automatically drift to the right. Some far-right actors have been more successful than others in transforming socio-economic grievances into ethnic tensions. Beyond the structural dynamics driving the authoritarian turn of capitalist democracies, we should therefore also pay close attention to the differential capacities, mobilization strategies and immediate crisis responses of the far right, which have fundamentally changed in recent years.

It goes without saying that far-right politics are not a new phenomenon. Anti-fascists from all over Europe have been struggling for years to expose, contain and subvert neo-fascist tendencies through a variety of means. The threat of a far-right resurgence long lured at the margins of the electorate, but today various far-right forces are establishing themselves in different strata of society. This is a trend that no one was really prepared for.

NEW FORMS OF FAR-RIGHT ACTIVISM

The far right was once relatively easy to detect. Most organizations and activists gravitated around one political party that unified different tendencies during election time and that acted as representative of a broader far-right field. Despite existing frictions between different currents, open conflict was usually avoided. Nowadays, by contrast, far-right activism is extremely diversified, decentralized and internally divided in terms of strategy and practices. Moreover, due to personal and political disputes, the European far right has been characterized by multiple schisms.

In recent years, stagnating popularity, inflexible hierarchies and unoriginal policy ideas caused many on the far right to look towards new forms of activism as well as the integra-

tion of ideological fragments that were once alien to the right. As a result, the modes of interaction between different players tend to oscillate between conflicting priorities. At the one end, there is the inevitable competition for scarce resources, including money, facilities, labor and adherents. At the other, there is a division of labor that obliterates differences in ideological and organizational matters. Moreover, by blurring the boundaries between (and within) different far-right organizations, the latter manage to deliberately sow confusion about the core of far-right ideology and action.

One striking example of this phenomenon is the Identitarian Bloc that emerged in France in 2012 and subsequently spread to other European countries. Their direct action approach and spectacular interventions against the symbols of Islam and the political establishment are hardly compatible with the more serious political style of the Front National. Nevertheless, as their respective discursive tendencies and personal collaborations attest, even these two organizations are in close contact with one another, and it is obvious that there is a certain degree of coordination between them.

There are other hybrid actors that act simultaneously in different arenas. When looking at Golden Dawn in Greece, for instance, we can see how quickly a tiny neo-Nazi association managed to advance to become the country's third strongest party. Against its many opponents, Golden Dawn succeeded in integrating different forms of nationalist activism into its ranks and ultimately gaining hegemony in a heterogeneous far-right field. Beside close relationships with state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, this locally based activism provided the basis for the party's penetration into mainstream segments of society — without abandoning its more militant adherents.



Another important notion when discussing the contemporary far right is that of “populism.” Leaning on a strong element of polarization between a “pure” native people and a corrupt establishment, right-wing populism capitalizes on the public’s deep-rooted mistrust of political elites and representative institutions. Presenting themselves as the incarnation of “the people,” far-right parties have managed to accumulate more votes and legitimacy. However, the use of populist elements is neither a new strategy nor a useful criterion to distinguish more dangerous right-wing actors from less dangerous ones. In fact, it is precisely where right-wing populists are in power — as in Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States — that neo-fascist forces have been on the rise. The propensity to downplay the dangers of right-wing “populists” in the media and academia is inevitably connected with the changing relationship between the far right and the mainstream.

THE FAR RIGHT (AND THE) MAINSTREAM

It is no secret that mainstream and far-right politics are somehow connected. For a long time, the political mainstream at least drew a clear discursive line between “acceptable” forms of claims-making and far-right propaganda. Today, it is controversial to what extent such a “cordon sanitaire” ever really existed — or if it was always just a bourgeois self-legitimation myth.

Taking the Austrian coalition of the conservative ÖVP and the far-right FPÖ in the early 2000s as an example we can see that this figurative firewall between the far right and the mainstream has always been porous. More recent political constellations in Denmark, Norway and Switzerland could be invoked here as well. The power calculations of the ruling class most often outweigh moral considerations about far-right actions and ideas.



Today, far-right parties like Alternative for Germany reap the fruits of earlier taboo-breaking on Islam by representatives of the political mainstream.

This rightward shift in mainstream politics was to a certain degree self-induced. Representatives of the political center voluntarily opened Pandora's box with unnecessary discursive transgressions. The German social democrat Thilo Sarrazin is a case in point. In his bestselling book of 2010, Sarrazin complained about the fertility of Muslims in Germany, which he claimed lowered average intelligence levels and created a migrant underclass completely dependent on the welfare state. Back then, surveys revealed that more than 20 percent of the population would vote for a party championing his position. Today, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party reaps the fruits of this earlier taboo-breaking by representatives of the political mainstream.

Nevertheless, the far-right perspective on the political mainstream remains ambiguous. The constant maneuvering between a blatantly racist dialogue among cadres and subdued outward messaging to potential voters portends a two-fold strategy: on the one hand, far-right actors try to assume ownership over contentious issues that are broadly discussed and accepted, hence taking a dissident position to set themselves apart from the "systemic" parties of the "establishment." On the other hand, they aspire to be accepted as a legitimate alternative to the established right-wing parties, touting for the same political support structures and longing for positive feedback from the media.

THREE OVERARCHING CURRENTS

So what mobilizes voters and supporters of the far right? In today's political constellation, at least three classical conservative themes can be identified that are prone to being radicalized by the far right.

First, a strong *anti-feminist* current is apparent in the attempt to roll back recent advances in women's and LGBTQ emancipation and bring about a return towards traditional gender roles. Under the umbrella of broad campaigns like the *manifests pour tous* in France, different currents of the far right converge with conservative adherents to build coalitions that transgress traditional boundaries between the socially acceptable and far-right ideology. It is debatable to what extent this effect is strategically calculated and perhaps the principal intention behind these mobilizations.

Oftentimes, religious fundamentalists fulfill the role of a transmission belt in this intermediation between the far right and conservatives. Lamenting the debauched norms of modern society, they advocate a spiritual return to a more hierarchical form of community that supposedly protects believers from external dangers. As the smallest cell of the nation, the family is propagated as the prototype of cohabitation, safeguarding the members of an imagined autochthonous community. Sexism is an inherent element of many forms of nationalism, including the more left-wing varieties.

Women's social role is mostly confined to reproducing the body of the nation — by bearing, raising and educating its children.

Directly intertwined with this is the absurd idea, which existed long before the most recent arrival of refugees in Europe, that ethnic minorities endanger this homogeneous body of the nation. The fear of mingling between different races and the extinction of the "autochthonous people" as a supposed consequence reveals the obsession with ethnic purity that all far-right actors have in common. Marginalized communities like the Roma, for instance, are presented as scapegoats for their supposed criminality or refusal of work. Targeted as an "enemy within," marginalized communities serve to project petit-bourgeois fears of a loss of social status amidst the vagaries of the market.

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The alleged "Islamization" of Europe rounds up the two aforementioned patterns with a strong anti-Muslim component. The idea of a "healthy nation," connected with conspiracy theories about its decay, is again at the center of concern here. New Right thinker Renaud Camus presents a theory of "the Great Replacement" that received widespread attention among different far-right currents. The idea is that the "colonization" of Europe by Muslims is a deliberate political project pursued by the establishment to consolidate its power by uprooting national consciousness.

With the first Pegida demonstration in Germany in late 2014, the far right's Islamophobic ideas were transformed into a platform for open hatred against Muslims, and eventually served as a paragon for anti-Islamic mobilizations across Europe. Animated by the so-called refugee crisis that took off in earnest in 2015, the far right joined forces to radicalize public discourse on Islam and migration. Islam, in all its varieties and complexities, is presented as one coherent and fundamentally violent political ideology, and Muslims are accused of aspiring for world dominance. This anti-Muslim rhetoric clearly features key elements of the classical anti-Semitic narrative structure. At the same time, assaults on Jews continue to regularly take place across Europe. In fact, the far right's ideological flexibility allows for anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim prejudices to exist side by side.

NATIONALISTS ORGANIZING TRANSNATIONALLY

In contrast to their foundational nativism, far-right politics do not stop at the borders of the nation-state. In fact, the supposedly nationalist far right needs to be conceived of as a transnational challenge to notions of social emancipation. Although it is certainly rooted within a national context, it can hardly be understood without its continental European — and even global — dynamics.

Far-right groups mostly build upon a common ethno-pluralistic concept that envisions a kind of “global apartheid” based on the spatial segregation of national cultures that deny the existence of any internal factions or class divides. The identification of common enemies, the opposition to the technocratic EU bureaucracy, and the framing of social conflict in ethnic

terms all go back to the shared principles of nativism and authoritarianism, which create a mutual framework for far-right discourse and action across national boundaries.

Transnational cooperation among different far-right group can take a variety of forms. Formal party alliances can be observed in the European Parliament, for instance, like in the case of the European People's Party, where German conservatives from CDU/CSU work together with the Hungarian Fidesz of Viktor Orbán. Beyond such obvious surface manifestations, however, far-right activists have maintained strong underground ties for decades. In terms of street-based action, a new surge of international travel is supposed to generate greater coherence between far-right groups in different countries. Meetings crystallize around large-scale demonstrations in Sofia and Athens or commemoration gatherings in Rome, Paris and Riga, which are part and parcel of the agenda of European nationalists and neo-Nazis.

As a festival in Switzerland with more than 5,000 participants affiliated to the Blood and Honour network illustrates, we should not neglect the recovery of subcultural forms of cross-border exchange either. The revelation of the German National Socialist Underground, responsible for the targeted killing of nine migrants, underlines that militant splinter groups like Combat 18, which initially operated in Britain, still serve as important organizational blueprints for clandestine activism.

Another role model that received growing attention from European nationalists are vigilante groups operating on a semi-legal level and sometimes even in close cooperation with the police. The Soldiers of Odin, for instance, were among the most visible formations harassing Muslim populations in Finland, and received broad popular support to patrol the streets of

Right-wing populist parties in Europe

Across Europe, far-right parties are steadily gaining the organizational capacity and electoral support needed to take control of democratic institutions.

PARTY FOR FREEDOM (PVV)

13,0 % (2017) - 20/150
Netherlands

ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND (AFD)

4.7% (2013) - 0/631
Germany

NATIONAL FRONT (FN)

13.6% (2012) - 2/577
France

GOLDEN DAWN (XA)

6.99% (2015) - 18/300
Greece

NORTH LEAGUE (LN)

4.08% (2013) - 18/630
Italy

FLEMISH INTEREST (VB)

3,7% (2014) - 3/150
Belgium

JOBBIK

20.2% (2014) - 23/199
Hungary

SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SD)

12.9% (2014) - 49/349
Sweden

DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (DF)

21.1% (2015) - 37/179
Denmark

FINNS PARTY (PS)

17.7% (2015) - 38/200
Finland

SLOVAK NATIONAL PARTY (SNS)

8.64% (2016) - 15/150
Slovakia

FREEDOM PARTY AUSTRIA (FPÖ)

20.5% (2013) - 40/183
Austria

SWISS PEOPLE'S PARTY (SVP)

29.4% (2015) - 65/200
Switzerland

UK INDEPENDANCE PARTY (UKIP)

12.6% (2015) - 1/650
United Kingdom

SVOBODA

4.7% (2014) - 7/450
Ukraine



Helsinki. Spin-offs in other Scandinavian and Central European countries soon followed, and won even greater approval following the hotly debated sexual assaults against women in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016.

Similarly, vigilante groups in Hungary and Bulgaria are taking action to “protect” their countries’ borders against migrants and refugees. These transnational interactions proceed on a more subtle level because there are no direct connections between the different actors, making it more difficult to see how the ideas of far-right activists in one place can inspire the actions of their counterparts in another, how new practices are learned and discourses adopted, and how certain symbols and codes diffuse across borders and contribute to a communal spirit of belonging among various nationalist groups.

It is remarkable, in this respect, how far-right actors build on developments in other countries to construct a far-right success story. The likelihood of more and more parties making gains in national elections and even taking state power contributes to the notion of a far-right winning streak. The growing discursive overlap and mutual exchange of strategies between different groups demand a European analytical framework. It also requires an internationalist response by anti-fascists.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-FASCIST PRAXIS

As increasing state repression coalesces with the resurgence of the far right, anti-fascists in Europe and the United States struggle to get a grip on the situation. In some countries, new anti-fascist groups and mobilization patterns are emerging. In others, they stagnate or collapse. There is certainly no overarching tem-

plate on how to confront the various challenges we now face.

In concrete terms, there is no way to circumvent a physical confrontation with the far right’s appropriation of space at the local level. Anti-fascists have a broad repertoire of direct action methods to prevent the establishment of “no-go areas” for migrants and refugees and to defend spaces against far-right invasion. In the same vein, specific tactics like anti-fascist motorcycle rallies have proven a useful means to break far-right hegemony over core districts in cities like Athens. Such event-based anti-fascist mobilizations will now have to merge with everyday practices and action. This means that social (infra-)structure must be built on the local level to generate quick response capacity. Social centers and other self-organized activities need to evolve as points of convergence for activists and, more importantly than ever, as attractive spaces for non-activists — allowing the anti-fascist resistance to engage with a broader public in the neighborhoods.

Once the far right crosses a certain threshold of relevance, however, intervention becomes more and more difficult, and the potential leverage points for intervention begin to shift. The concentration of votes and supporters gives far-right parties a certain legitimacy in the public sphere. Given their self-identification as the “discriminated outsiders” or the “victims” of a decadent system, the unilateral targeting of far-right groups may end up backfiring. Anti-fascists need to consider this very carefully. They certainly cannot succeed without tackling the broader political order that is responsible for the far right’s recent resurgence.

An anti-fascist critique is a critique of the whole. It is about building a counter-hegemony based on class solidarity and mutual aid, in strong opposition to any form of racism, sexism

and authoritarianism, including oppressive ideologies like Jihadism. Reactionary politics have to be contested regardless of who propagates the respective ideas. We need to articulate our ideas and thoughts in ways that offer people concrete alternatives to cope with everyday economic misery and social alienation. Anti-fascism always requires a positive vision of the social, and cannot just react to external threats alone. Resistance must begin at the grassroots, involving direct action in our workplaces, schools and universities, but also conversations with our families and neighbors.

An anti-fascist critique is a critique of the whole. It is about building a counter-hegemony based on class solidarity and mutual aid, in strong opposition to any form of racism, sexism and authoritarianism.

All too often, anti-fascism remains within the sphere of a closed activist scene, with its own particular subcultures and sporadic mobilizations. The growing threat of an authoritarian transformation of our societies now demands mass movements and broad-based anti-fascist action — diverse and transnational in nature, but always on the basis of genuine solidarity. ★

MAIK FIELITZ



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ROJAVA RISING

Radical Democracy
THE FIRST LI
AGAINST FAS

Dilar Dirik

Illustration by Javier De Riba



**THE KURDISH
RESISTANCE TO ISIS
DEMONSTRATES
THAT ANTI-FASCISM
CANNOT BE
SEPARATED FROM
THE WIDER STRUGGLE
AGAINST CAPITALISM,
PATRIARCHY AND
THE STATE.**

It was in the fall of 2014, only months after the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) made massive territorial gains inside Syria and Iraq, committing genocidal and feminicidal massacres, that a powerful, revolutionary silver lining rose from the horizon of the little-known town of Kobane. After having overrun Mosul, Tel Afar and Sinjar in Iraq, as well as a vast expanse of territories inside Syria since 2013, ISIS prepared to launch an attack on the north of Syria, known by Kurds as Rojava. What it did not anticipate in Kobane was to encounter an enemy of a different kind — an organized, political community that was ready to defend itself courageously by all means, and with a worldview that turns ISIS' rapist, fascist, murderous ideology of death on its head.

It was Arîn Mîrkan, a young, revolutionary, free Kurdish woman, who would become the symbol of Kobane's victory — the city that broke the myth of the undefeatable fascism of ISIS. A fighter of the Women's Defense Units (YPJ), Arîn Mîrkan detonated herself in October 2014 near the strategically critical Mishtenur Hill to rescue her comrades and to capture the position from ISIS. This event-

**NE
SCISM**

ally shifted the battle in favor of the People's Defense Forces (YPG/YPJ) and other cooperating armed groups, pushing ISIS onto the defensive. Eventually, after months of tireless fighting, which moved the US-led coalition to provide aerial military support, Kobane was free.

Almost every day, videos emerge of villagers celebrating their liberation from the grip of ISIS: people dance and smoke their cigarettes for the first time again, men shave their beards with tears of joy, women burn and step on their black veils and chant cries of freedom. In the eyes of the fighters and the organized community in the region, especially women, this epic war was perceived not as an ethnic or religious conflict, but as a historic battle between the concentrated evil of male-dominated statist, capitalist modernity — embodied by the rapist gangs of ISIS — and the alternative of a free life personified by the liberated woman in struggle.

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The victory of revolutionary Kobane practically illustrated that the fight against ISIS did not consist merely of weapons, but of a radical rupture with fascism and the underlying frameworks that make it possible. This in turn necessitates radical democratic and autonomous social, political and economic institu-

tions, especially women's structures that position themselves in flat opposition to the state system of class, hierarchy and domination. In order to liberate society from a mentality and system like ISIS', anti-fascist self-defense must occupy all areas of social life — from the family to education to the wider economy.

A PRODUCT OF CAPITALIST MODERNITY

There have been many attempts to explain the phenomenon of ISIS and its appeal to thousands of young people, especially considering the brutality of the organization's methods. Many came to the conclusion that those who live under ISIS often serve the group because of fear or economic rewards. But clearly thousands of people worldwide voluntarily joined the atrocious group not despite, but precisely because of its ability to commit the most unthinkable evils. It seems

that it is not religion, but a cruel, merciless sense of power — even at the cost of death — radiating from ISIS that attracts people across the globe to the extremist group.

Single-factor theories fail to consider the regional and international political, economic,

social setting that enables an anti-life doctrine like that of ISIS to emerge. One must acknowledge ISIS' appeal to young men, deprived of the chance to be adequate, decent human beings, without justifying the group's mind-blowing rapist, genocidal agenda or removing the agency and accountability of individuals who commit these crimes against humanity. It is crucial to contextualize the sense of instant gratification in the form of authoritarian power, money and sex that ISIS offers in a cancerous society under patriarchal capitalism, which renders life meaningless, empty and hopeless.

Pathologizing the appeal of ISIS behind the backdrop of the so-called "war on terror," instead of situating it in the context of wider institutions of power and violence which in interplay generate entire systems of authoritarianism, will not allow us to begin to understand what drives "good boys" from Germany to travel to the Middle East to become slaughterers. And yet ISIS is only the most extreme manifestation of a seemingly apocalyptic global trend. With the recent shift towards authoritarian right-wing politics worldwide, one word — once considered banished from human society forever — has re-entered our everyday lives and our political lexicon: *fascism*.

Fascism strongly relies on the complete lack of decision-making agency within the broader community. It is nourished by a climate in which the community is stripped of its ability to initiate direct action, express creativity and develop its own alternatives.

Clearly, there are immense differences between the contexts, features and methods of various fascist movements. But when it comes to its hierarchical organization, authoritarian thought process, extreme sexism, populist terminology, and clever recruitment patterns, capitalizing on perceived needs, fears or desires among vulnerable social groups, ISIS in many ways mirrors its international counterparts. Perhaps one can think of fascism as a spectrum, in which established states on top of the capitalist world-system have the means to reproduce their authority through certain political institutions, economic policies, arms trade, media and cultural hegemony, while others, in reaction, rely on more "primitive" forms of fascism, such as seemingly random extremist violence. There are clear parallels in how fascists

everywhere rely on a regime of paranoia, mistrust and fear to strengthen the strong hand of the state. Those who challenge their enemies are labelled “terrorists” or “enemies of God” — any action to destroy them is permissible.

Fascism strongly relies on the complete lack of decision-making agency within the broader community. It is nourished by a climate in which the community is stripped of its ability to initiate direct action, express creativity and develop its own alternatives. Any form of solidarity and any loyalty directed at anything or anyone other than the state must be systematically eradicated, so that the isolated, individualized citizen is dependent on the state and its policing institutions and knowledge systems. That is why one of the most critical pillars of fascism is capitalism, as an economic system, ideology and form of social interaction. In the value system of capitalist modernity, human relations need to be reduced to mere economic interactions, calculable and measurable by interest and profit. It is easy to see capitalism’s ability to dispose of life in the name of larger interests as running parallel to ISIS’ wasting of lives for the sake of its pseudo-caliphate of rape, pillage and murder.

THE OLDEST COLONY OF ALL

Perhaps most crucially, fascism could never emerge if not for the enslavement of the oldest colony of all: women. Of all oppressed and brutalized groups, women have been subjected to the most ancient forms of institutionalized violence. The view of women as war spoils, as tools in the service of men, as objects of sexual gratification and sites to assert ultimate power persists in every single fascist manifesto. The emergence of the

state, together with the fetishization of private property, was enabled above all by the submission of women.

Indeed, it is impossible to assert control over entire populations or create deep-cutting social divisions without the oppression and marginalization of women, promoted in male-dominated history-writing, theory production, meaning-giving practices, and economic and political administration. The state is modelled after the patriarchal family and vice versa. All forms of social domination are at some level replications of the most comprehensive, intimate, direct and harmful form of slavery, which is the sexual subjugation of women in all spheres of life.

Different structures and institutions of violence and hierarchy — such as capitalism or patriarchy — have distinct features, but fascism constitutes the concentrated, inter-related, systematized collaboration between them. And this is where fascism and capitalism, together with the most ancient form of human domination — patriarchy — find their most monopolized, systematic expressions in the modern nation-state. Previous regimes over the course of history had despotic characters, but always relied on moral codes, religious theologies and divine or spiritual institutions to be seen as legitimate by the population. It is a particularity of capitalist modernity that it sheds all pretensions and claims to morality in relation to law and order, and exposes its obscenely destructive systems for the sake of nothing but the state itself.

Without the hierarchical, hegemonic nature of the state, which monopolizes the use of force, the economy, official ideology, information and culture; without the omnipresent security apparatuses that pen-

Armed against oppression

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KURDISTAN



YJA STAR

- Free Women's Units
- *Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star*
- Kurdish
- Kurdistan

A selection of the armed women's movements currently active in Kurdistan and the occupying states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Most of the groups are predominantly Kurdish, but women of other ethnic backgrounds can be found among their ranks as well, especially within the YPJ and HPC-Jin. Syriac and Yezidi women have set up their own defense units.



YPJ

- Women's Defense Units
- *Yekîneyên Parastina Jin*
- Kurdish / multi-ethnic
- Syria / Rojava



HPJ

- Women's Defense Forces / PJAK
- *Hêzên Parastina Jin*
- Iran / Rojhelat



YJÊ

- Êzîdxan Women's Units
- *Yekîneyên Jinên Êzîdxan*
- Yezidi
- Iraq / Bashur



BETHNARAIN

- Bethnahrain Women's Protection Forces
- Syriac
- Syria / Rojava



YPS-JIN

- Civil Protection Units – Women
- *Yekîneyên Parastina Sivîl a Jin*
- Kurdish
- Turkey / Bakur



HPC-JIN

- Women's Social Defense Forces
- *Hêzên Parastina Cewherî – Jin*
- Multi-ethnic
- Syria / Rojava



AIR STRIKE BY US-LED COALITION ON ISIS IN KOBANE, SYRIA, OCTOBER 2014. ORLOK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

etrate all aspects of life, from the media to the bedroom; without the disciplinary hand of the state as God on Earth, no system of exploitation or violence could survive. ISIS is a direct product of both: ancient models of hierarchy and violence, as well as capitalist modernity with its particular mindset, economy and culture. Understanding ISIS — and fascism more generally — means understanding the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism and the state.

RADICAL DEMOCRACY VERSUS TOTALITARIAN EXTREMISM

If the fascist enemy is one that combines patriarchy, capitalism, nationalism, sectarianism and authoritarian statism in its methods and practices, it is clear that a meaningfully anti-fascist struggle must necessarily employ a mentality and ethics that fundamentally opposes the pillars of such systems of violence. The self-defense forces of Rojava attempt to do just that. Since the liberation of Kobane, the YPG/YPJ have been strengthened in both qualitative and quantitative terms, enabling the fighters to connect two of the three cantons, Jazira and Kobane. In the initial stages of the war, the overwhelming majority of the forces were Kurdish, but the ethnic make-up has changed immensely over time.

In October 2015, the YPG/YPJ joined with a great number of regional forces to create a multi-ethnic coalition. The newly formed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) includes Kurds, Arabs, Syrians, Assyrians, Chechens, Turkmen, Circassians and Armenians, dedicated to a se-cular, democratic, federal Syria that will neither accept the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad, nor foreign-appointed undemocratic



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oppositions. Although constantly under attack by ISIS and a variety of other enemies — including various Islamist militias, the Syrian Army, the Free Syrian Army and the Turkish state — the SDF successfully liberated ISIS strongholds such as Manbij and Shaddadeh, and currently leads the operation to liberate the so-called capital of ISIS, Raqqa. It controls almost the entire border region south of Turkey, which previously constituted the main supply route for ISIS in terms of logistics, ammunition, finance and manpower.

Turkey has since made it its mission to train Turkmen militias with allegiance to the Turkish state in particular, as well as Sunni forces more generally. The US army constantly stresses that its support for the SDF is for Arabs.

Meanwhile, Kurdish forces of the ENKS, close to the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq, led by Massoud Barzanî, attempt to build up a Kurdish army in their own image. Thus, the SDF's cross-cultural make-up upsets not only forces hostile to Kurdish self-determination, but also narrow Kurdish nationalist projects.

While fighting several fascist enemies at the same time, the SDF merely constitute the physical self-defense system of a wider project to defend society against the statist, capitalist, patriarchal order. Since revolution was declared in Rojava in 2012, tireless efforts have been dedicated to creating a realistic, viable alternative to guarantee a meaningful life for the different communities and groups in the

region. The system of Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria was adopted by a large collective of people from all communities in the region and proposes a model for a secular, democratic, gender-egalitarian, federal Syria, while the local population is mobilizing at the grassroots in the form of radical democratic structures, starting from small street communes.



The Kurdish self-defense forces underline that the most direct way of smashing capitalist modernity, religiously-colored fascism, statism and other forms of authoritarianism is women's liberation.

Through Abdullah Öcalan's proposed model of Democratic Autonomy, as a practice of direct action in a system of Democratic Confederalism, everyday life in Rojava is organized through the transformation of politics into a vital affair of each inhabitant. By creating alternative forms of social organization through direct self-management and solidarity, safeguarded by autonomous women's and youth structures, thousands of people have been turned into active, self-determining agents of their own lives. Radical democracy thus strengthens the ties of solidarity that capitalism tries so aggressively to sever in order to produce the individualized selfish persons it needs for its profit-oriented agenda. Through direct and communal participation in all spheres of life, local people — organized in autonomous, non-statist structures — attain more meaningful senses of self, the wider community and the links between democracy and identity.

In Rojava, there is an intrinsic link between radical democracy and concepts of belonging and identity that take democratic and ethical values as reference points rather than abstract concepts of nationalist myths, on which fascism relies. With the paradigm of the Democratic Nation as an antidote to the nationalism of the state, the protagonists of the revolution in Rojava attempt to formulate an identity around principles rather than ethnicity. This still accommodates the different identities to diversify and secure the democracy of the new unit of belonging. Only such strong communities, based on ethics and politics — a “moral-political society,” in Abdullah Öcalan's terms — rather than on the meaningless concepts of national identities, can defend themselves against the mental and physical attacks of the fascist enemy.

Radical democracy must therefore necessarily be internationalist in its perspective, while giving all identities the necessary room to organize

and democratize themselves. The creation of the SDF as the self-defense of all components of the region stems from the realization that the time of the nation-state is over and that a free life cannot be constructed by nationalist mindsets if these have been among the causes of the bloodshed. Moreover, the very presence of an autonomous women's army — unapologetically committed to the liberation of women from all manifestations of male domination — in a sea of militarist, patriarchal violence constitutes the most liberationist, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist element in Rojava. The principles that motivate a woman in a conservative, patriarchal society to be a militant for a just and beautiful world require an immense mental, emotional and physical effort.

It is in fact quite subversive to pick on the ruling symbol of the man in order to smash patriarchy anywhere. But these moves must be accompanied by a broader social revolution. By organizing in cooperatives, communes, assemblies and academies, women managed to become the most vibrant, revolutionary force in Rojava — the guarantors of freedom. While male domination has still not been overcome, women have already established a general political culture that no longer normalizes patriarchy and that unconditionally respects autonomous women's decision-making mechanisms.

The YPJ underlines that the most direct way of smashing capitalist modernity, religiously-colored fascism, statism and other forms of authoritarianism is women's liberation. The Wrath of the Euphrates operation to liberate Raqqa, where ISIS still holds thousands of women as sex slaves, is led by none other than a Kurdish woman named Rojda Felat. The scenes of YPJ fighters being hugged and kissed by women who were forced to live under ISIS rule for years, have come to define the history of the twenty-first-century Middle East.

Jineoloji — a primer



Ideas, theories and knowledge are rarely neutral. When produced under the guidance of male-dominated statist elites — particularly under capitalism — these have contributed to the worst types of fascism, domination and exploitation. Kurdish women are among the numerous victims of this paradigm that has facilitated genocide and femicide, along with many other crimes.

This reality, shaped by patriarchal history-writing, nation-state ideologies and profit-oriented science production, has prepared the ground for a deeply intersectional resistance culture. Firmly embedded in the different freedom struggles of present-day Kurdistan, *jineoloji* was developed in 2011 as the science of women and life. It is an attempt at theorizing liberationist politics by challenging hegemonic history-writing, science and thought.

Jineoloji tries to play an interventionist role in deconstructing the mental foundations of the collaborative systems of colonialism, capitalism, nationalism, religionism, statism, racism and sexism. It combines pre-existing discussions in women's struggles, social movements, and radical politics and thought with the experience of women in Kurdistan. Beyond mere theory-production, *jineoloji* aims at proposing practical solutions for a free and more beautiful life.

ANTI-FASCISM IS INTERNATIONALISM

The public image of the armed forces of Rojava shifted abruptly in the eyes of sections of the left after the liberation of Kobane. While this was undeniably a historic battle, won by an organized community and the power of free women, the widespread sympathy crumbled the very moment that forces on the ground received aerial support from the US-led coalition. Having long been among the most aggrieved victims of imperialism in the Middle East, the Kurds and their neighbors did not require any further enlightenment about the evils of empire. The genocides and massacres committed against them through collaborations of imperialist forces are still in living memory. Dogmatic, binary worldviews and narrow-minded criticisms do not propose any viable alternatives for people fighting for their lives on the ground. More importantly, they do not save lives.

For the people whose families were being massacred by ISIS, the ease with which Western leftists seemed to advocate for the rejection of military aid in favor of romantic notions of revolutionary purity, were incomprehensible to say the least. Advocacy of unconditional anti-imperialism, detached from real human existence and concrete realities, is a luxury that those far removed from the trauma of war can afford. Well-aware of the dangers of being instrumentalized only to be abandoned by great powers like the US and Russia, but stuck between a rock and a hard place, the priority of the SDF was — and remains — to first of all survive and eliminate the most immediate threats to the existence of hundreds of thousands of people across the vast stretches of territory it controls.

While some in the West adopted a realistic attitude of complex, principled solidarity with the SDF, which understands the dimensions on the ground and works within contradictions, others took the alleged “collaboration with imperialism” as a pretext to refuse any form of acknowledgment of positive elements that the revolution in Rojava could propose in a context of war and chaos. Of course, no revolutionary undertaking in the past centuries has been pure or perfect. And the fact that the SDF cannot only fight such a battle but is also held to higher moral grounds than any of the other armed units in the Syrian war is an important check on their war conduct. But the sectarian dogmatism in which much of the Western left remains embroiled — over the question of Syria in general and Rojava in particular — tells us more about the state of the Western left than about the actual realities of the anti-fascist resistance on the ground.

It is easy to reject any form of authority and power when these are far away from the reach of revolutionaries. But it is inescapable to conceptualize revolutionary power — and when necessary, authority — in order to protect millions. It requires bravery and risk-taking to attempt to institutionalize a liberationist system without falling into the traps of authoritarianism. As long as revolutionary undertakings do not eliminate the danger of home-grown authoritarianism, imperialist co-optation and betrayal, hierarchical mentalities, corruption and abuse will prevail.

The governments involved in the war against ISIS contributed to the chaos through their own policies, warfare and arms trade, and they ultimately share a similar mentality to the one that animates ISIS. They can never be the ones to defeat it. ISIS’ main enemies are precisely those who face it with a radically different way of conceiving of life. Defeating authoritarian

extremism is only possible through radical democracy and women's liberation. Within this context, the SDF constitutes one of the most important anti-fascist struggles of our time. It must be supported.

Defeating authoritarian extremism is only possible through radical democracy and women's liberation. Within this context, the SDF constitutes one of the most important anti-fascist struggles of our time. It must be supported.

Arîn Mîrkan's heroic death was a hymn to life, to freedom, to women's emancipation. Her selfless action out of solidarity with her people and the freedom of women in particular was a heavy blow not only to ISIS, but to the very mentality that underpins global capitalism's profit-fetishizing individualism. In a world that sexualizes and objectifies the woman, Arîn Mîrkan used her body as a final frontline against fascism.

The battle for Kobane excited the creative imaginary of people worldwide. It illustrated that a politically conscious, organized society — even one with limited means — can defeat the heaviest of weapons, the darkest of ideologies and the most terrifying of enemies. The task of anti-fascists today must be to never surrender the means of resistance to statist and authoritarian institutions, and to reclaim the means of organizing and defending the community. In order to pay tribute to heroic revolutionaries like Arîn Mîrkan, the anti-fascist struggle must mobilize in all areas of life and say:

Êdî bes e — ja basta — enough!

Not this time! ★

DILAR DIRIK



Dilar Dirik is an activist of the Kurdish women's movement and regularly writes on the freedom struggles in Kurdistan for an international audience.

PAVLOS VIVE!





The Night that Changed Everything

Leonidas Oikonomakis

*HOW THE
MURDER OF A
GREEK RAPPER BY
NEO-NAZI THUGS
SPARKED AN
ANTI-FASCIST
BACKLASH THAT
EVENTUALLY
LED TO GOLDEN
DAWN'S DEFEAT IN
THE STREETS.*

Illustration by **Pavlos Fyssas**

Looking back, the night of September 17, 2013, the night during which the anti-fascist Greek rapper Pavlos Fyssas was assassinated by members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, was the night that changed everything. Not only for us, Pavlos' friends, but for the wider socio-political landscape in Greece as well.

Back in 2013, after many years of lingering in social and political obscurity, Golden Dawn was at the very height of its popularity. Following the transformation of their movement into a party in the early 1990s, the neo-Nazis only had political offices in two Greek cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, and won just 0.1 percent of the vote in the 1996 elections. But the Greek debt crisis gave the party a shot in the arm, bringing it to the forefront of national politics and allowing it to enter parliament. Meanwhile, the party's members developed a strong social presence in Greece's main cities and, most importantly, in the streets of its poorest neighborhoods.

Until the night of September 17, 2013, that is.

THE RISE OF GOLDEN DAWN

By 2013, Golden Dawn had managed to open 70 offices all over Greece, with most main cities now hosting at least one party office. From the beginning of 2012 onwards, several popular media outlets also started promoting Golden Dawn's political positions, offering them air-time and visibility, rapidly transforming the party into an almost hype-like phenomenon. Golden Dawn was now the emerging social force and "the dynamic party" — the new faces on the Greek political scene.

It should not be forgotten that at that time the country was — and still is — facing its most severe political, social and economic crisis since World War II. The Greek population was disillusioned by the political system and by representative democracy in general, with its corrupt political establishment and unpopular neo-liberal policies and austerity measures. Within this context, Golden Dawn arose

as the "nationalist" answer to the rising left-wing and anarchist movements that led a spectacular cycle of struggles starting in 2010.

Golden Dawn's increased visibility was soon translated into unprecedented electoral victories. In 2012, they received 6.97 percent of the vote and elected 18 MPs to Parliament,

making them the sixth-largest political force in the country. In 2013, they also started publishing a second, weekend-only newspaper called *Empros* ("Ahead"), with the aim of reaching a wider audience than they could with the first one (*Golden Dawn*), which was clearly associated with the party and less "moderate" in its positions. In August 2013, *Empros* was selling roughly 7,500 pieces per week.

At the same time, Golden Dawn's mobilizational capacity also increased, with more and more members joining the party's ranks and hundreds of attacks against immigrants and trade

unionists taking place between 2011 and 2013, including the brutal assassination of a young Pakistani immigrant, Shehzad Luqman, while he was on his way to his work. Golden Dawn activists also made their presence strongly felt during national holidays, while racist pogroms in immigrant neighborhoods became an increasingly common phenomenon.

The judicial system turned a blind eye to all of this, and the

government led by right-wing Prime Minister Antonis Samaras was not particularly eager to act against Golden Dawn either. Quite the contrary: the neo-Nazis were rather useful to them. First of all, in light of the decreasing popularity of the governing New Democracy party and the conservative establishment's ideological proximity to Golden Dawn, with

“
Golden Dawn was useful to the government: its thugs helped to distract the attention and divide the organizational resources of the social movements that had become the main source of opposition to austerity in the streets.”

both holding strong nationalist and anti-immigrant positions, New Democracy MPs and close advisors to the prime minister refused to exclude the possibility of a future coalition with the neo-Nazis — some were even openly suggesting it.

Golden Dawn was also useful to the government in a different way: its thugs helped to distract the attention and divide the organizational resources of the anarchist and left-wing movements that had become the main source of opposition to austerity in the streets. With Golden Dawn active in working-class and immigrant neighborhoods, the movements were forced to also develop some action plan in that direction, withdrawing resources from more direct confrontations with the state and from the construction of grassroots alternatives on the ground.

In short, the rise of Golden Dawn forced the movements to devote much more time and attention to anti-fascist actions and organizing. They did so by means of Antifa parades (both on motorcycle and on foot) through the immigrant neighborhoods where Golden Dawn was active, as well as by organizing anti-racist festivals, counter-marches and oppositional events whenever and wherever Golden Dawn also happened to be organizing one. The movements also tried to make their Antifa actions and anti-racist arguments visible in public discourse as much as possible. Nevertheless, the problem remained: Golden Dawn continued to enjoy considerable popularity within Greek society, both in social and in electoral terms.

Until that night of September 17, 2013. The night that changed everything.

THE MURDER OF PAVLOS FYSSAS

On the night that changed everything, Pavlos Fyssas — a.k.a. Killah P — went to a local café in his working-class suburb of Piraeus, the port city next to Athens, to watch a football game of Olympiakos, his favorite team. Pavlos was a politically engaged rapper from a working-class suburb that had been transformed into a Golden Dawn stronghold. Just like the other suburbs of Piraeus, his neighborhood was originally founded as a refugee settlement for those who came to Greece following the population exchange with Turkey in 1923. The refugees set up their slums, and being poor people, many of them joined the ranks of the biggest working-class organization of the early-twentieth century: the Communist Party.

Much time has passed since then, but not much has changed in those suburbs: their residents are still poor, some of the poorest in Athens, and

they are still working-class people — increasingly joining the ranks of the unemployed with the decline of the shipyards. Lately, however, Golden Dawn has managed to spread its lethal influence in these neighborhoods, some of which became the party's working-class bastion. And that was something Pavlos could not accept.

As the neo-Nazis gained strength in the area, Pavlos started speaking out against Golden Dawn and its violent actions — and even if he was not very well-known as a rapper nationwide, he certainly was within his own neighborhood. He began to openly challenge the Nazis' cultural hegemony and monopoly of power in the neighborhood he lived in. That was enough to put him on Golden Dawn's blacklist.

So that damned night, the café where Pavlos and his friends were watching the game was full of Golden Dawn members. And by the time the game was over, more of them were waiting for him outside, armed to the teeth with knives and clubs. It turns out that Pavlos was recognized by one of the Nazi thugs, who sent a message to their local leader. Since Golden Dawn operates according to a highly authoritarian structure, it is very probable that a series of calls and messages went up all the way to the top of the party hierarchy. The order was given from above: take him out!

Pavlos told his friends and girlfriend to run while he held his ground to delay the Nazis. He fought two of them — Pavlos was a strong guy — but more arrived, encircling him and holding him back, until one Golden Dawn member named Giorgos Roupakias drove up in a car, took out a knife and stabbed Pavlos in the heart.

None of us will ever forget where exactly we were when we heard the news of Pavlos' assassination. It was the night that changed everything. Including our lives.

THE ANTI-FASCIST BACKLASH

Pavlos' assassination was what social movement scholars would call a *transformative event* — a turning point, both for the Antifa movement and for Greek society more generally. Eventually, it became one for Golden Dawn as well. It marked the intensification of anti-fascist actions across Athens and the rest of the country, and the political delegitimation and widespread social disapproval of Golden Dawn. It was like a wake-up call for many, having unfortunately only become so for one reason: because this time the Nazis had crossed a line — they had killed a Greek.

Of course Golden Dawn was already a murderous organization long before Pavlos' assassination. It had attacked hundreds of immigrants and trade unionists, the country's Medical Unions were screaming about it, it had even murdered a young Pakistani immigrant. In 2012, Golden Dawn thugs attacked the house of four immigrants, Egyptian fishermen, who were living in another suburb of Piraeus, seriously injuring one of them. A year later, they also attacked and injured a number of trade unionist of the Communist Party in the same neighborhood, in an action intended to mark their political dominance in the working-class movement — the symbolic “change of guards.”

According to the Racist Violence Records Network, the year 2011 witnessed 63 cases of racist violence in Greece. This number rose to 154 in 2012, and 166 a year later. In one way or another, Golden Dawn was involved in many of these. Nevertheless, nothing happened: except for the Antifa movement, nobody seemed interested. Neither was the government or the judicial system.

After Pavlos' murder, however, massive protests erupted all over Greece. The Antifa movement and Greek society as a whole demanded justice



Π.Ο.Ε.-Ο.Τ.Α.



ΞΕΛΟΙ ΝΕΟΝΑΖΙ

**ΑΠΟ ΤΑ ΣΥΝΔΙΚΑΤΑ
ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΧΩΡΟΥΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ**

and the punishment of the perpetrators. Golden Dawn initially denied all responsibility, but it was later forced to admit, in the words of party leader Nikos Michaloliakos, that they carried “political responsibility” for the crime. Eventually the reluctant judiciary was compelled to act — on the orders of the right-wing government — and started a prosecution case against the neo-Nazis on charges of running a criminal gang.

At first, Parliament had to vote for the immunity of Golden Dawn’s MPs to be lifted. Then, a suitable place for the trial had to be found. The Golden Dawn MPs, including their leader Michaloliakos, were eventually arrested, along with 65 of their members and the killer Roupakias. A long time has passed since then, and the slow-moving trial is still ongoing. In fact, such a long time has passed that the Golden Dawn MPs had to be released, and Roupakias cannot be held captive in prison anymore without a verdict — meaning he is now only under house arrest.

The only positive thing to have emerged from this outrageous situation is the fact that Golden Dawn was almost completely delegitimized in the eyes of the Greek people. This delegitimation was itself mostly a result of the rapid response of the Antifa movement in the wake of the assassination, not of the snail-paced trial or the government’s opportunistic response. Even though two Golden Dawn members were also assassinated in a mafia-style execution shortly after Pavlos’ death, in an operation that was supposedly carried out by an anarchist group that no one had ever heard of before nor heard from again later, Golden Dawn’s social standing was irreversibly affected in the wake of September 17.

Today, four years later, Golden Dawn is still electorally strong, winning 6.99 percent in the last elections — but clearly statistics do not tell the whole story. The party undoubtedly lost the momentum it enjoyed back in 2013, when it polled

at 15-18 percent for some time. Even in electoral terms, Golden Dawn received 60,000 votes less in 2015 than it had in 2012. They maintain the same percentages only because of vast abstention in the latest elections (44 percent), which is itself a consequence of the country’s deep political crisis and of citizens’ disillusionment with Syriza’s neo-liberal turn after the referendum of 2015.

GOLDEN DAWN’S SOCIAL DEFEAT

Most importantly, however, Golden Dawn’s organizational capacities have been severely weakened in the wake of Pavlos’ murder. Some 40 percent of the party’s offices have since been shut down, their newspapers are selling less and less issues (readership of *Emporos* is down to about 1,000), and social mobilizations and public appearances are rare and visibly weaker. According to the polls, Michaloliakos is by far the least popular leader in the Greek political landscape — which is an impressive achievement given the fierce competition. The mass media now appears to find Golden Dawn’s positions unacceptable, and the popularity and visibility it once enjoyed with the press are long gone.

Even during the long summer of migration in 2015, when more than a million people passed through Greece on their way from Turkey, with some 70,000 still trapped in the country today, solidarity with refugees was the dominant theme. Golden Dawn did not manage to capitalize on the events. It tried — visiting the islands of the Northern Aegean, for instance — but even there the Antifa movement was present to cancel their plans with militant counter-marches. Even the Golden Dawn office in Mytilene, on Lesbos, at the very front-lines of the so-called “refugee crisis,” was forced to shut down at the time of writing.

Thanks to the militant marches and motorcycle parades around immigrant neighborhood, the Athenian squats that prioritized Antifa actions as a response to the rise of Golden Dawn, as well as the occupation of new buildings by the Refugee Solidarity Movement to host undocumented migrants and refugees all over Athens, the anti-fascist resistance managed to reconquer much of the terrain previously lost to the neo-Nazis, and is currently winning the struggle for control over the streets.

The most important lesson we can draw from the Greek experience, therefore, is that Golden Dawn was not defeated in the court rooms or on the terrain of electoral politics. Their trial is still dragging on, and they continue to win a relatively large share of the national vote. Despite these political and judicial setbacks, however, the neo-Nazis were certainly defeated on the streets and in the political consciousness of Greek society, which now largely considers their actions and ideas unacceptable.

The most important lesson we can draw from the Greek experience is that Golden Dawn was not defeated in the court rooms or on the terrain of electoral politics, but on the streets.

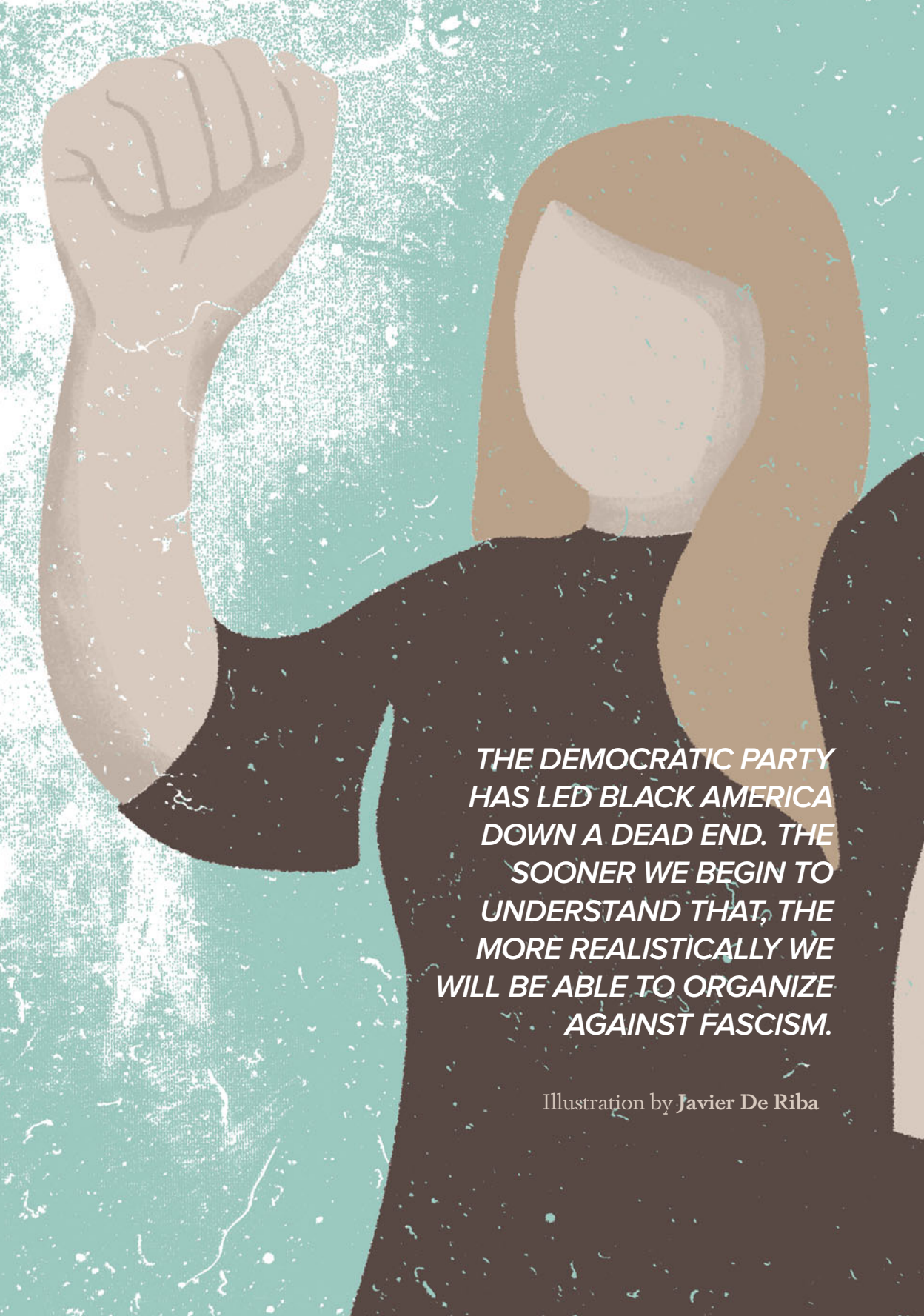


It is thanks to the militant direct action and solidarity work of the Antifa movement that Golden Dawn's social legitimacy has been seriously undermined, while their organizational capacity has also seriously diminished in the process. The Greek experience therefore shows how important it is not to lose political ground to the extreme right, to establish a firm anti-fascist cultural hegemony, and to regain social movement control over the streets and neighborhoods more than anything. ★

LEONIDAS OIKONOMAKIS

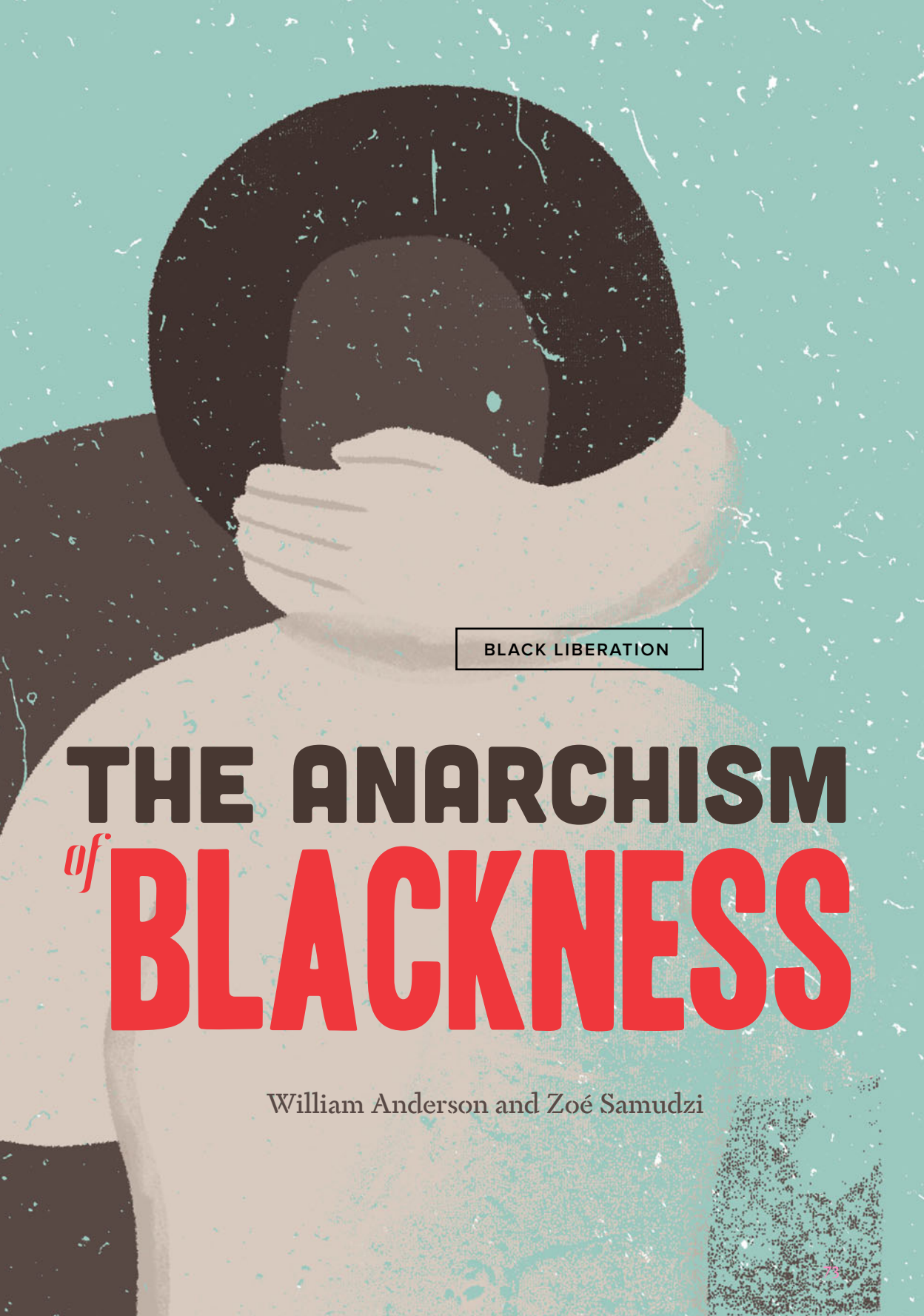


Leonidas Oikonomakis is a rapper with the Greek hip-hop formation Social Waste, and a member of the editorial collective of ROAR Magazine. He holds a PhD in Social and Political Sciences from the European University Institute, and is currently a researcher at the Center on Social Movement Studies (COS-MOS) at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. He used to be a friend of Pavlos.



***THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
HAS LED BLACK AMERICA
DOWN A DEAD END. THE
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AGAINST FASCISM.***

Illustration by **Javier De Riba**



BLACK LIBERATION

THE ANARCHISM
of **BLACKNESS**

William Anderson and Zoé Samudzi

Present incarnations of an unfazed and empowered far right increasingly demand the presence of a real, radical left. In the coming months and years, the left and left-leaning constituencies of the United States will need to make clear distinctions between potentially counterproductive symbolic progress, and actual material progress. Liberalism and party politics have failed a public attempting to bring about real change — but there are solutions.

The Black liberation struggle, in particular, has long provided a blueprint for transformative social change within the boundaries of this empire, and it has done so due to its positioning as an inherently radical social formation — a product of the virulent and foundational nature of anti-Blackness in American society. Understanding the significance of this struggle, we can proceed through examinations of the past, present and future to build new movements, a strong and radical left, and political power that generates and inspires rather than disappoints.

THE FAILINGS OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM

The United States' self-ascribed democratic traits have long been filtered through oppressive forms that the state insists are necessary. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are measured by the success of a capitalist system that only truly benefits a few. Meanwhile, every-one else is told to believe that our supposedly meritocratic chance at being one of those few beneficiaries is what makes us “free.” True, unfiltered freedom and deep democracy are far too revolutionary for this state, so radical and

revolutionary critiques of systemic limitations are often dismissed as overly idealistic or a utopian fantasy. But it is in the midst of the real-life nightmare that is the Trump administration that we should now — more than ever — be dreaming and striving to achieve something better.

For many years now, American liberalism has been a bitter disappointment to many of those who somehow maintained faith in the democratic integrity of the two-party system. The Democratic Party has seemingly been the only choice for those who consider themselves progressives working for a better society, but the notion that social inequities will be solved through the electoral process was always naïve at best. The entrails of this system are lined with the far-right fascism that is currently rising and has been bubbling under the façade of liberal democracy at the expense of non-whites in a white supremacist society. A system predicated on the over-emphasis of “order” and “security” is primed for authoritarianism.

Genocide, enslavement and other forms of violence the empire inflicts have grown more tepid in their bluntness since this nation's birth. Over time, the violence has been displaced and restructured by more insidious and invisible modalities of community destruction. The reservation, the prison system and austerity policies are just some of the negotiable forms of violence that liberalism has facilitated over time.

Over the past few decades, the United States has seen a shift in liberal politics leaving the Democratic Party in a completely compromised position. The emergence of the Tea Party, a populist surge in the Republican Party, alienated the more “moderate” establishment Republicans in favor of a more explicitly articulated bigoted takeover. The

lack of a real response to this moment further enabled the rightward shift as a shaken liberal establishment only sought and attempted bipartisan negotiations with the more extreme elements commandeering the party. Instead of moving left, the Democratic Party pandered to the alienated “moderate” right as it had been for years, and facilitated this conservative shift with nearly every waking opportunity.

BIPARTISAN DELUSIONS

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The entrails of this system are lined with the far-right fascism that is currently rising and has been bubbling under the façade of liberal democracy for decades. A system predicated on the over-emphasis of “order” and “security” is primed for authoritarianism.

Liberal support for the Iraq War, post-9/11 domestic policy and the foreign policy extensions of the War on Terror made clear the position of the Democratic Party. For “millennials” in particular, our generation has come of political age watching perpetual disappointments to this end. There has been no true left in the United States because the positioning of the Democratic Party is not one of stark opposition to the right. The messaging that suggests we should meet conservatives halfway and work on “both sides of the aisle” has comfortably consolidated a giant right-wing apparatus.

It seems fitting that at the end of the Obama era we would see a white supremacist Trump presidency, and that immediately following a Black president whose cabinet was outspoken about diversity and inclusion we would see a spike in right-wing hate group enrollment. And through the transition of administrations and the first wave of antagonistic legislation, there was neither sustained nor

sustainable protection being planned by the party purporting to defend progress. That quiet has now manifested itself in a Trump administration filled to the brim with the worst of the worst: the absence of a real left has left so many vulnerable populations exposed and at the mercy of a plutocratic tyrant hell-bent on destruction.

After a spate of extrajudicial police killings, hate crimes and domestic terror incidents, the country is reeling. Black America has been reminded again and again that we are seen as a monolithic group of feeble-minded children to be chastised by the state for our own disenfranchisement and community disadvantage. If there is nothing to be offered that addresses the reparations Black America is owed on several fronts, then we should seek to secure these things ourselves through action.

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The absence of a real left has left so many vulnerable populations exposed and at the mercy of a plutocratic tyrant hell-bent on destruction. Liberalism and Democratic Party politics are simply not working for Black people.”

tractually because they have never been a part of a given social contract and never will be; or they are ejected from a contract they were previously a part of and are only able to enjoy a conditional inclusion at best.

Black Americans are the former: they are residents in a settler colony predicated upon the genocide of indigenous people and the enslavement of the Africans from whom they are descendants. Residents in the United States, as opposed to citizens of. Despite a Constitution laden with European Enlighten-

ment values, and a document of independence declaring egalitarianism and inalienable rights as the law of the land, Black existence was that of private property. The Black American condition is perpetual relegation to the afterlife of slavery, and as long as the United States continues to exist as an ongoing settler project, in this afterlife Black people will remain.

Liberalism and Democratic Party politics are simply not working for Black people. The agenda of the liberal establishment is frequently not one that is in line with the everyday material needs of Black America. Despite the optics of change and the promises of a new day and the moral victories of “going high,” an old sun is rising on a white horizon. At this point Black people and all people of color across the United States will have to decide between securing real change and bargaining with bigotry for compromise.

BLACKNESS AND THE ZONE OF NON-CITIZENSHIP

Societal fascism describes the process and political logics of state formation wherein entire populations are either excluded or ejected from the social contract. They are excluded pre-con-

As Hortense Spillers makes clear in her seminal work, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Story,” Blackness was indelibly marked and transformed through the Transatlantic chattel trade. European colonialism and the subsequent process of African enslavement — both as a profit-maximizing economic institution and an un-humanizing institution — can be regarded as “high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding.”

John Horse and the Black Seminoles

THE BIGGEST SLAVE REVOLT IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

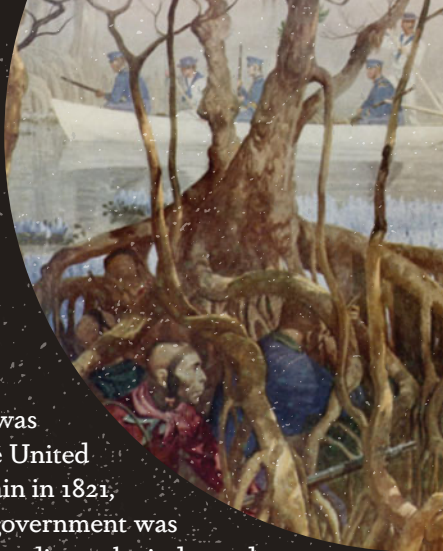
The biggest slave revolt in the history of the United States is one that to this day has largely gone unnoticed. The slave uprising that took place in Florida in the context of the Second Seminole War (1834-1842) is not only historically important because of its size, but also because it was one of the rare instances in which maroons, slaves and Native Americans joined forces in resisting white colonial oppression.

In the decades prior to the uprising, runaway slaves as well as native Seminoles had been escaping southwards to the Everglades in Spanish Florida, where they could live free from the terror of the slavers and colonists. After many years of fighting, living and surviving together, the two communities slowly merged and the maroons became known as the Black Seminoles.

When Florida was acquired by the United States from Spain in 1821, the American government was determined to eradicate the independent Black Seminole communities because of the hope and shelter they had offered to escaped plantation slaves. The two Seminole Wars were attempts by the US government to pacify the region.

During the war, hundreds of plantation slaves rebelled and with the help of maroons and Seminole Indians nearly two dozen sugar plantations were burned to the ground. One of the leaders who emerged from the rebellion was John Horse, a Black Seminole of mixed descent.

It was John Horse who would, together with his Seminole ally, Chief Wild Cat, eventually broker a peace between the rebels and the US army. Afterwards they led hundreds of their people to freedom in the Indian territories today known as Oklahoma. The freedom of the Black Seminoles as well as the escaped slaves was recognized in the peace deal of 1838. But when the US government claimed ten years later that it did not have the legal authority to actually recognize the escaped slaves' claim to freedom, John Horse led his people on one last odyssey across the border into Mexico. They established the settlement of Nacimiento, where the descendants of the Black Seminoles still live today.



Crimes against the flesh are not simply crimes against the corporeal self: the wounded flesh, rather, was the personhood and social positionality of the African. The wounding is the process of blackening and necessarily of subjugation, a wound from which Black people and “Blackness” writ large have yet to recover. Black exclusion from the social contract is existence within a heavily surveilled and heavily regulated state of subjection. We are carriers of the coveted blue passport still trapped in the zone of citizen non-being. We are simultaneously subjugated and teased with promises of liberation via individualized neoliberal self-betterment and swallowing of a long-soured American Dream whilst choking back dissonances and forcibly reconciling irreconcilable double consciousnesses.

Whiteness has long sought to grapple with the existential threat posed by Black freedom. Black repatriation to Africa, or “colonization,” has long been floated as one potential solution. Founded in 1816 and driven by a variety of ultimately complementary motivations, the American Colonization Society helped to found the colony of Liberia in 1822. The abolitionist contingents within the society believed that because of the insurmountable discriminations free-born Black people and freedmen and their families experienced, Black people would fare far better organizing themselves in their African “homelands.”

Slaveholders within American society were concerned that the presence of free Blacks would inspire enslaved Blacks to revolt and thus compromise the stability (both economic stability and the stability of the anti-Black racial order) of the southern slaveocracy, and other openly racist members outright refused Black people the opportunity to integrate into American society. Others still were concerned that Black families would burden state welfare systems and that interracial labor competition would ultimately compromise wages for white workers.

A lesser known proponent of colonization was the “Great Emancipator” himself, Abraham Lincoln, who entertained a far lesser known and quickly abandoned plan for Black colonization in Panama — one decried by Frederick Douglass as “ridiculous” — which would also play a role in the expansion of American trade influence in the Caribbean. The “Back to Africa” project was subsequently taken up by Black thinkers like Marcus Garvey in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries following the failures of Reconstruction in the South, the first attempt to meaningfully extend citizenship to newly emancipated Blacks, to protect them from white supremacist violence and also the social and political disillusionment of Blacks who had migrated to northern states. It is no coincidence that interest in repatriation peaked during the period.

The major problem with both historical and contemporary repatriation-colonization programs is the means by which they fail to both provide reparation for historic violence and answer the perennial question of Black citizenship in the United States. Many or most Black people, including many descendants of enslaved Africans trafficked from the continent centuries ago, have no desire to return to an Africa that has never been their home in any material sense. Given plans to remain, Black people have organized in myriad ways to affect change and actualize varying conceptions of liberation in the United States. But as history has demonstrated, some vehicles for change and political advancement are more fickle than others.

THE ANARCHISM OF BLACKNESS

Make no mistake: progress has been secured by Black people’s mobilization as opposed to a single political party. We are the ones who have achieved much of the progress that changed

the nation for the better for *everyone*. Those gains were not a product of any illusion of American exceptionalism or melting pots, but rather through blood, sweat and community self-defense. Our organization can be as effective now as it has been in the past, serving every locality and community based on their needs and determinations. This much can be achieved through disassociating ourselves from party politics that fail to serve us as Black freedoms cannot truly be secured in any given election. Our political energy is valuable and should not all be drained by political cycles that feed into one another as well as our own detriment.

While bound to the laws of the land, Black America can be understood as an extra-state entity because of Black exclusion from the liberal social contract. Due to this extra-state location, Blackness is, in so many ways, anarchistic. African-Americans, as an ethno-social identity comprised of descendants from enslaved Africans, have innovated new cultures and social organizations much like anarchism would require us to do outside of state structures. Black radical formations are themselves fundamentally anti-fascist despite functioning outside of “conventional” Antifa spaces, and Black people have engaged in anarchistic resistances since our very arrival in the Americas.

From slave ship and plantation rebellions during enslavement to post-Emancipation labor and prison camps, to Harriet Tubman’s removal of enslaved peoples from the custody of their owners, to the creation of maroon societies in the American South, to combatting the historic (and present) collusion between state law enforcement and the Ku Klux Klan — assertions of Black personhood, humanity and liberation have necessarily

called into question both the foundations and legitimacy of the American state.

So given this history, why do we understand Black political formations as squarely entrenched within liberalism or as almost synonymous with supporting for the Democratic Party? The reality of the afterlife of slavery shows that the updated terms of Black citizenship are still inextricably linked to the original sins levied against us from the moment of this nation’s incep-

tion. We are not able to escape a cage that has never been fully removed, though liberal fantasy would have you think we will have a dream or dignifiedly protest out of harm’s way.

The simple and increasingly realized reality is that mass protests, petitions and the over-exhausted respectable methods liberals tout as sole solutions have a purpose, but do not stop bullets — that is why Dr. King and many of their favorite sanitized “non-violent” protesters of yesteryear carried weapons to defend themselves.

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MOVE

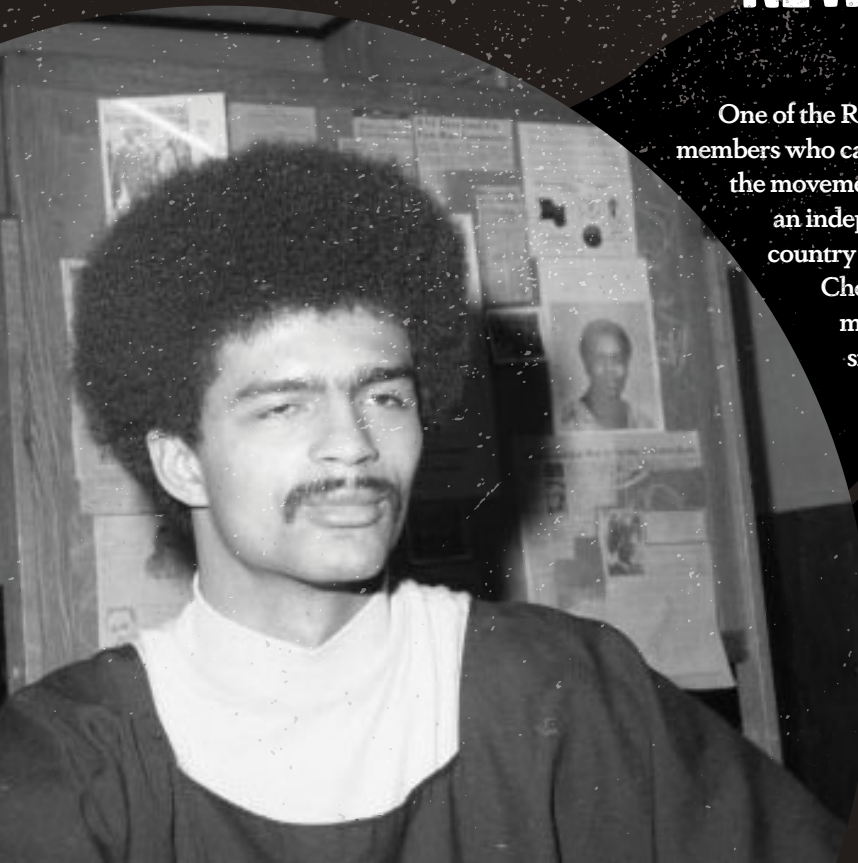
*“Revolution is not a philosophy,
it’s an activity”*

MOVE was founded in 1972 by John Africa, a black visionary and revolutionary. MOVE’s ideology was rooted in a firm belief in the sacredness of all life. They were vegans, animal rights’ activists and stood up against social injustice and discrimination. In 1985 their communal home in a Philadelphia suburb was bombed by the police. Eleven MOVE members, five of whom children, died in the ensuing fire.

*“Educate, motivate,
organize.”*

REPUBLIC OF NEW AFRIKA

One of the Republic of New Afrika’s members who came closest to achieving the movement’s goal of establishing an independent Black-majority country in the southern US was Chokwe Lumumba. As the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, Lumumba worked closely together with the Malcom X Grassroots Movement to introduce participatory democracy and create worker-run co-operatives.





Contemporary

Black Autonomy

“Black Power!”

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC)



Despite including the very term “nonviolent” in their organization’s name, many local organizers aligned with the SNCC realized that self-defense was to be an essential part of their activism.

Refusing to rely on the security provided either by the state or their white allies, Black activists of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization were among the first to carry arms while campaigning for Black voters’ rights in some of the most heavily pro-Klan districts in Alabama.

RESPONDING TO THIS NEO-FASCIST MOMENT

Liberalism cannot defeat fascism, it can only engage it through symbolic political rigmarole. The triteness of electoral politics that has been superimposed onto Black life in the United States positions Black people as an indelible mule for much of this nation's social progression. Our hyper-visible struggle is a fight for all people's freedom and we die only to realize that everything gained can be reversed with the quick flick of a pen. While liberalism takes up the burden of protecting "free speech" and the rights of those who would annihilate all non-whites, Black people and other people of color assume all of the risks and harms.

The symbolic battles the Democratic Party and its liberal constituents engage in pose direct existential threats to Black people because they protect esteemed ideals of a constitution that has never guaranteed Black people safety or security. The idealistic gestures with which liberalism defines itself are made at the expense of Black people who are not protected by such ideals in the ways institutional whiteness and even articulations of white supremacy are protected.

Constitutional amendments are contorted based on the state's historical disregard for sustaining an active antagonism towards Black life. The First Amendment has been repeatedly trampled by militarized police trotting through Black neighborhoods. The Second Amendment has been shot down by countless state enforcers who have extra-judicially murdered Black people based merely on the suspicion they might have a weapon. The Thirteenth Amendment legitimized enslavement through mass incarceration and extended the practice

into a new form of white supremacist rationalization and an old capitalist labor politic that still tortures us to this day. This fascist moment is neither ideologically new nor temporally surprising. It is an inevitability.

Anti-fascist organizing must be bold. The mechanisms working against us do not entertain our humanity: they are hyper-violent. They deal death and destruction in countless numbers across the non-Western world while turning domestic Black and Brown neighborhoods into proxies for how to treat sub-citizen "others." The militarization of police, border regimes, stop-and-frisk and ICE are clear examples of how the state regards the communities it targets and brutalizes. At the very least, a conversation on self-defense that does not mistreat our survival as a form of violence is deeply needed. And it would be even better if such a conversation normalized anti-fascist organizing that prepared people for the possibility of a fight, instead of simply hoping that that day never comes and respectably clutching proverbial pearls at those currently fighting in the streets.

Everyone has a stake in the fight against fascism. It cannot be defeated with bargaining, petitioning, pleading, "civilized" dialogue, or any other mode of response we were taught was best. Fascists have no respect for "othered" humanities. Regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, religion, physical ability or nationality, there is a place for all of us in this struggle. We are always fighting against the odds because there is no respite in a perpetually abusive state. It can only function through this abuse, so we can only prevail through organizing grounded in radical love and solidarity.

Our solidarity must prioritize accountability, and it must be authentic. Strategic organizing of this sort, organizing where we understand

the inextricable linkedness of our respective struggles, is our means of bolstering the makings of a cohesive left in the United States. The time wasted on dogma and sectarianism, prejudice and incoherence among leftists is over.

Fascism cannot be defeated with bargaining, petitioning, pleading, “civilized” dialogue, or any other mode of response we were taught was best. It can only function through abuse, so we can only prevail through organizing grounded in radical love and solidarity.



The sooner Black America in particular begins to understand our position as an inherently anarchistic element of the United States, the more realistically we will be able to organize. Moving beyond the misnomer of chaos, the elements that make us such are the very tools we should utilize to achieve our liberation. This burning house cannot be reformed to appropriately include us, nor should we want to share a painful death perishing in the flames. A better society has to be written through our inalienable self-determinations, and that will only happen when we realize we are holding the pen. ★

WILLIAM ANDERSON



William Anderson is William C. Anderson is a freelance writer. His work has been published by the Guardian, MTV and Pitchfork among others. Many of his writings can be found at Truthout or at the Praxis Center for Kalamazoo College, where he is a contributing editor covering race, class and immigration.

ZOÉ SAMUDZI



Zoé Samudzi is a Black feminist writer and PhD student in Medical Sociology at the University of California, San Francisco. Her current research is focused on critical race theory and biomedicalization.

DEEPENING OUR ANALYSIS

THE PROBLEM WITH LIBERAL OPPOSITION TO ISLAMOPHOBIA

Azeezah Kanji and S.K. Hussan

***MANY PROGRESSIVES
WHO CLAIM TO OPPOSE
ISLAMOPHOBIA
ACTUALLY UPHOLD THE
SECURITY STATE'S
FRAMING OF KEY
ISSUES, KEEPING
ITS OPPRESSIVE
FRAMEWORK IN PLACE.***

Illustration by Kaan Bağcı





Between Donald Trump's Muslim ban and the murder of six Muslim men in a mosque in Québec City, the debate around Islamophobia has again taken center stage in North American politics. On the other side of the Atlantic, anti-Islam groups like Pegida, the Front National and Wilders' Freedom Party are gaining growing public support. Central to all of this is the rise of a militant xenophobia, with hatred of Muslims as one of its cardinal principles. At the same time, anti-racist organizers are also coming together — building our analysis, fortifying our ability to defend ourselves in the face of increasing and rampant bigotry, and mobilizing to turn the tide.

Unfortunately, however, many of the arguments against Islamophobia in anti-racist circles turn out to replicate rather than subvert the underlying logics that attack, demonize and dehumanize Muslims. Challenging the Islamophobic far-right cannot simply be about upholding the same capitalist and imperialist — even if slightly less racist — stances that have destabilized much of the Global South in recent decades, furthering war and displacing Muslims who have travelled to Europe's shores only to be met with an explosion of nativist hatred.

With the departure of Barack Obama from the White House, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has become a global icon of this supposedly progressive anti-racist politics. A self-professed feminist who flew in 25,000 Syrian refugees and greeted them with hugs and winter coats at the airport, Trudeau is often perceived as being emblematic of everything that fascists are not. Yet even under his government, many of the same anti-social policies

that brought Donald Trump to power in the United States are now being intensified, while anti-immigrant measures remain on the books.

For this reason, it is crucial to critically assess some of the liberal arguments against Islamophobia that are often put forward by people like Trudeau, as well as by many activists who would situate themselves to the left of him. Many of these arguments, while appearing to be anti-Islamophobic, actually uphold the national security state's framing of issues. In doing so, the dominant economic and social framework that underlies Islamophobic laws and policies, and the racist ideas incorporated within it, remains in place — thereby impeding our ability to move beyond it.

— ARGUMENT 1

“Counter-Radicalization is More Effective than Harsh Counter-Terrorism”

When the previous Conservative government in Canada introduced a wide-ranging surveillance and policing bill — Bill C-51, the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015* — the public outcry was swift. Bill C-51 was dubbed the Secret Police Act, and hundreds of thousands of people signed multiple petitions against it. Central to the outcry was the argument that the bill was “ineffective.” The “more effective” strategy being proposed in Canada, and across Western Europe and the United States, would involve “counter-radicalization” or “counter-extremist” programs. Such supposedly pragmatic calls for counter-radicalization have gained increasing support — including by the Canadian Liberals under Trudeau — without any critical reflection on the deeper problems with such programs.

In a report released last February, the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights Ben Emmerson criticized the prevailing approach towards counter-radicalization as conceptually flawed and ineffective, noting that “states have tended to focus on those [areas] that are most appealing to them, shying away from the more complex issues, including political issues such as foreign policy and transnational conflicts,” preferring instead to emphasize “religious ideology as the driver of terrorism and extremism.” The American Civil Liberties Union, Article 19, and the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University pointed out similar objections in a joint letter to Ben Emmerson, writing that counter-radicalization “initiatives in the United States and Europe focus overwhelmingly on Muslim communities, with the discriminatory impact of stigmatizing them as inherently suspicious and in need of special monitoring.”

Counter-radicalization programs have long subjected Muslims to disproportionate attention, even if this was not always as explicit prior to Trump’s ascent to power.

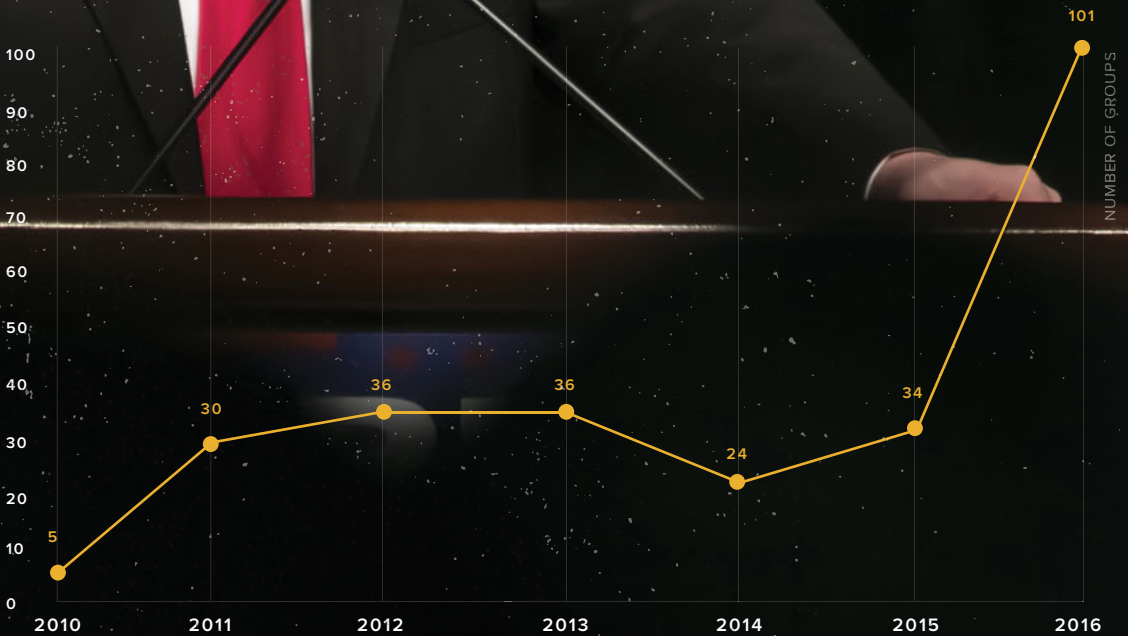


Donald Trump’s announcement that counter-radicalization programs in the US will now exclusively target “Islamist extremism” elicited a fair amount of outrage — but the reality is that such programs have long subjected Muslims to disproportionate attention, even if this was not always as explicit prior to Trump’s ascent to power. For instance, 68 percent of the 1,747 children and teenagers referred to the UK’s counter-radicalization program, Channel, between March 2014 and March 2016 were Muslim, while Muslims constitute only 8 percent of the population. Last March, a four-year-old Muslim boy was sent to Channel when his drawing of a cucumber was misconstrued as a cooker-bomb.

Central to the assertions that counter-radicalization is a more effective mode of counter-terrorism is the assumption that there is in fact an existential threat to Western societies from groups of individuals wishing to cause it harm, many if not all of whom are considered Muslim. Terrorism as a concept itself remains unquestioned, and the state-sponsored project of defending “us” against “them” is legitimized — although using an ostensibly softer touch than the

"I THINK
ISLAM
HATES US!"

- President Donald J. Trump



ANTI-MUSLIM GROUPS 2010-2016 IN THE US

SOURCE: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

PHOTO BY ACTION SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY / SHUTTERSTOCK.

hard violence of war and criminalization. Instead of developing community-based or individual-focused programs to counter radicalization, the Islamophobic laws, policies and imaginaries that represent Muslims as a fundamental threat to Western society must be dismantled.

ARGUMENT 2

“Inclusion Is the Answer”

Greater inclusion of Muslims in white-normative societies is often posited as the solution to Islamophobia — and, from a national security perspective, to the alienation that supposedly produces the radicalization of young Muslims. Social inclusion is widely seen as a counterpoint to the exclusionary nativist rhetoric of Islamophobes and fascists. For example, the recent decision by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to permit women wearing the hijab to join the federal police force has been hailed as a positive move against the exclusion of Muslims. Similar examples of Muslims taking on roles in policing agencies are heralded the world over.

Such arguments for greater inclusion, however, often fail to challenge or transform

the problematic dynamics of the entities within which inclusion for Muslims is being sought. The RCMP, for instance, has its roots in the North West Mounted Police, the settler-colonial police force developed to surveil and attack indigenous communities. Racial and gendered violence continues to pervade the everyday practice of the RCMP, and the presence of Muslims did not dampen the force’s deep-seated Islamophobia, but was actually exploited to entrap vulnerable Muslims in false terrorist plots staged by undercover agents presenting themselves as Islamic authorities. This experience parallels the FBI’s use of Muslim informants to build its surveillance dragnet of Muslim communities.

Inclusion of Muslims, then, does not necessarily eliminate or reduce Islamophobia.

On the contrary, inclusion may perpetuate institutional racism by recruiting Muslims into existing structures of power — while at the same time making it more difficult to detect, since there is no overt exclusion involved. Instead of aiming for inclusion in existing power structures and institutions, the fight against Islamophobia must aim to dismantle institutions that

sustain themselves through practices of racialized surveillance and criminalization.

“
Arguments for greater inclusion of Muslims often fail to challenge or transform the fundamentally oppressive dynamics of the institutions within which inclusion is being sought.”

— ARGUMENT 3

“Islamophobia Plays into the Hands of ISIS”

A common refrain heard in recent arguments against Islamophobic policies and anti-Muslim polemics is that the latter “play into the hands of the terrorists.” It is widely claimed, for instance, that the hateful rhetoric espoused by Islamophobic populists like Donald Trump and Geert Wilders actually reinforces ISIS’ narrative of a Manichean world divided between Islam and the West — a world in which there are no gray zones where Muslims can live harmoniously with non-Muslims.

In this framing, Islamophobia is considered objectionable mainly because of how ISIS might exploit it, rather than for its own intrinsic violence. Islamophobic statements are represented as the trigger or pretext for Muslims’ violence, rather than as something that is itself a source of violence — like illegal and aggressive wars, extrajudicial drone killings, torture, secret detention, hate crimes, invasive state surveillance, and so on). While Islamophobia may be the immediate object of critique, it is still Muslims and their supposedly terroristic propensities that feature as the fundamental, underlying problem in such narratives.

As a result, the argument re-directs attention away from Islamophobia and back towards Muslim violence, even while claiming to do the opposite. Our gaze ends up being diverted away from the structural racism woven into the warp and woof of Western liberal democracies — a racism that has already undergirded the destruction of many Muslim societies in the name of fighting terrorism.

— ARGUMENT 4

“#NotAllMuslims — Islam is Peace”

In response to prevailing stereotypes that Islam is fundamentally a religion of violence, promulgated by extremist far-right ideologues, Muslims and anti-Islamophobic allies often insist that Islam is a religion of peace. Both sides of the argument — Islam means violence versus Islam means peace — cite portions of Islamic religious texts, particularly the Quran, to demonstrate some authentic true nature of Islam and Muslims.

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Instead of propagating essentializing constructions to rehabilitate the image of Islam and Muslims, an anti-Islamophobic stance should focus on critiquing the state policies and public discourses that have made such rehabilitation efforts seem necessary in the first place.

The problem with such readings is that they perpetuate the orientalist assumption that all actions performed by Muslims are somehow determined by scripture — a reductionist conceptualization of Islam that does not reflect

how Muslims have actually engaged with religious texts for centuries, through rich and diverse interpretive traditions. Theological and intellectual debates about interpretation that have gone on for 1,500 years are thus roundly ignored, and the vast cultural, political and social history of over a billion people that shapes Islam is subsumed in limited translations of particular verses.

Instead of propagating essentializing constructions to rehabilitate the image of Islam and Muslims, an anti-Islamophobic stance should focus on critiquing the state policies and public discourses that have made such rehabilitation efforts seem necessary in the first place: policies and discourses that criminalize, incarcerate and wage war against Muslims, while providing a cover for civilian attacks like the shooting at the Muslim community centre in Québec City.

— ARGUMENT 5

“Non-Muslims Are Also Terrorists”

To counteract the overwhelming tendency by fascists and other right-wing extremists to equate the concept of terrorism with acts of violence committed by Muslims, it is essential to point out that significant amounts of political violence in both North America and Europe are committed by non-Muslims, in the name of causes like white supremacy, anti-immigrant activism and nationalism. However, the assertion that all these various forms of violence should also be labelled terrorism, as Prime Minister Trudeau recently did for the Québec mosque attack carried out by a self-avowed white supremacist, fails to challenge the legitimacy and cogency of terrorism as a concept.

This is undesirable for at least two reasons. First, because certain types of violence against civilians — most importantly, violence committed by states — still tend to be excluded from or marginalized in the definition of terrorism. The primary focus remains on non-state actors, even though states are the most significant purveyors of violence in our world. Second, it is undesirable because many governments have claimed that the existential threat posed by terrorism requires the expansion of their own powers: through implementation of emergency laws, for example, and deterioration of the rights of individuals, through measures like preventive arrests and detentions. Broadening the category of “the terrorist” may therefore serve states — from the American to the Syrian — seeking to rationalize their own violence as necessary for fighting terrorism.

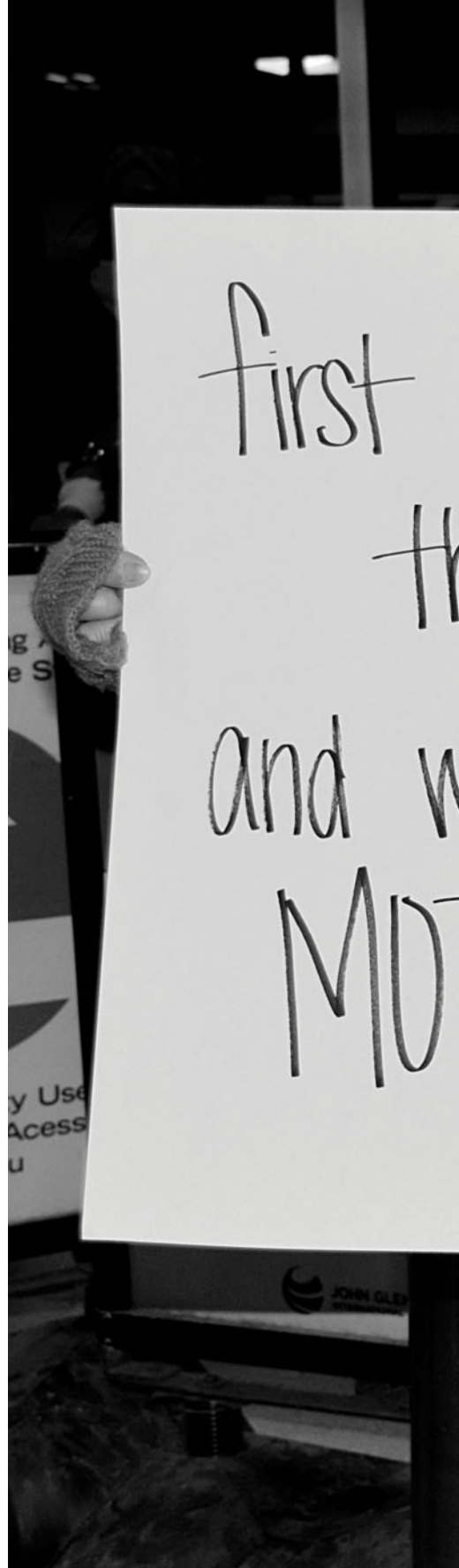
Instead of widening the scope of who is considered a terrorist to include white supremacists and fascists, the notion of terrorism must be deconstructed altogether: to demonstrate that the term depends on spurious criteria to distinguish some forms of violence (delegitimized as terrorism) from other, equally terrorizing forms of violence (legitimized as counterterrorism).

— ARGUMENT 6

“Muslim Women Are Not Oppressed — They Choose How To Dress”

In North America, as in several European countries, Muslim women’s attire has become a primary focus for Islamophobic attacks — by the state as well as by individuals. In Canada, for example, the Conservative federal government that preceded Trudeau’s issued a policy manual in 2011 preventing women wearing the niqab from swearing the oath of citizenship (this policy was eventually overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal). And there have been several efforts in the province of Québec to pass legislation barring women in niqab from receiving or delivering public services. In these initiatives, the niqab and hijab are represented as inherently oppressive pieces of clothing imposed on Muslim women by religion, community and/or family. State prohibition is pitched as an attempt to save Muslim women from sartorial subjugation.

In response, arguments against niqab and hijab bans often emphasize that Muslim women actually choose to veil. In doing so, they reaffirm the problematic premise that the value and legitimacy of a person’s actions should be judged by whether they are an expression of free choice: choice exercised without any



they came for
the MUSLIMS,
we said NOT THIS TIME
THERFUCKERS.



MUSLIM GIRL PROTESTING AGAINST TRUMP'S MUSLIM BAN, TORONTO, FEBRUARY 2017. ARINDAM BANERJEE / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

limitations or restrictions. But choice — all choice — is of course fraught: the ability to see choices and pick between them is always constrained by one's upbringing and social context. Individuals never have full information or full agency. Choice also changes, and can be misconstrued.

Furthermore, the ideology of free choice has often been allied with imperial projects of violence. From the French colonization of Algeria to the American invasion of Afghanistan, multiple wars have been waged around the world in the name of bringing choice to Muslim women. But individual choice is not necessarily seen in all places and times as the central organizing principle of human life, as it is within liberal states. As Lila Abu-Lughod, Professor of Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies at Columbia University, appropriately asks: "Might other desires be more meaningful for different groups of people? Living in close families? Living in a godly way? Living without war?"

Responses to anti-hijab laws and rhetoric cannot begin and end by valorizing choice. Rather, they must be about limiting the power of the state to withdraw benefits and services from its constituents as punishment for living lives that may not accord with liberal norms and priorities.

— ARGUMENT 7

"Muslims Are Citizens Too"

The assertion that Islamophobic counterterrorism measures violate the rights of Muslim citizens of Western liberal democracies — who should be treated equally, without any discrimination on the basis of race or religion — is a popular theme in organizing against such measures. However, it is inadequate to simply defend the rights of citizens while ignoring



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the situation of those who are not citizens of the state, but made subject to its power and violence in the name of national security. As University of Toronto law professor Audrey Macklin observes, Canadians have long tolerated serious abrogations of rights and freedoms for non-citizens that would likely be considered unacceptable against citizens. The same is true in the United States and across Europe.

In Canada, for instance, many cases involving terrorism have not been tried using criminal law, but dispatched with using immigration law, enabling the deportation or indefinite detention of suspects under a lower standard of proof and without many of the procedural safeguards (such as they exist) of criminal trials. The argument that Muslim citizens should

not have to suffer Islamophobic laws and policies because they are citizens perpetuates the disadvantage and vulnerability of non-citizens.

Furthermore, in settler colonial states like Canada and the United States, the institution of citizenship is built on a foundation of indigenous genocide and dispossession. In these contexts, the quest for inclusion in citizenship risks normalizing the colonization of indigenous nations. Upholding citizenship as the ultimate source of rights, freedom and belonging tends to prevent critique of the violence and exclusion embedded within citizenship: against indigenous peoples and against migrants. The struggle ahead must be about collective liberation beyond inclusion in liberal frameworks of citizenship.

ARGUMENT 8

“Obviously Innocent Collateral Damage”

Cases of white progressive activists monitored as national security threats are frequently cited to demonstrate the absurd overreach of counter-terrorism. The injustice involved in these cases is meant to be apparent and inarguable. The protagonists are represented as obviously innocent collateral damage of counter-terrorism, and their entrapment in the expansive net of national security as a manifest wrong.

Such examples are considered persuasive because the victims are not generally regarded as legitimate objects of suspicion. This is in stark contrast to Muslim, South Asian, Black and Arab men, who are consistently demonized as national security threats, and who have suffered extreme state abuse because of this — extraordinary rendition, torture, secret and/or indefinite imprisonment, and so on. The innocence of this demographic is not taken as obvious, but must be proven time and time again against a default presumption of guilt. Unlike the targeting of “obviously innocent collateral damage,” the state’s surveillance and securitization of brown- and black-skinned men is not widely treated as *inherently* irrational.

For example, Professors Deepa Kumar and Arun Kundnani observe that while the exposure of the National Security Agency’s massive warrantless data collection program generated widespread condemnation, the revelation that Muslims were specifically targeted for surveillance attracted far less attention and outrage. While many objected to the US government collecting private data on ordinary citizens, Muslims tend to be seen as reasonable targets of exceptional surveillance — simply because they are Muslim.

Arguments invoking the obvious innocence of certain victims of national security entrench the problematic distinction between those who do not deserve to be treated with suspicion. They perpetuate the state’s normalized suspicion of precisely those groups that are most vulnerable to the violence of counter-terrorism.

MOVING BEYOND LIBERAL ANTI-ISLAMOPHOBIA

Critiquing common liberal arguments like these can help organizers imagine and articulate other types of responses to Islamophobia: responses that do not merely shift the position of Muslims in the state’s existing racial landscape, but upheave and re-make this terrain altogether. Doing so is particularly important in our present political moment, when the ostentatious Islamophobia of far-right organizations and the Trump administration is often understood as exceptional — occluding continuities and similarities with the Islamophobia of liberal governments like Obama’s or Trudeau’s. This in turn perpetuates the dangerous illusion that liberal politics are a refuge from right-wing racism, when the truth is that they are constructed of many of the same components.

Of course, opposition to Islamophobia should not remain limited to the discursive field. It should also include — and in fact prioritize — building and organizing within racialized communities to assert dignity, power and freedom. Examples of such organizing abound. For instance, the first iteration of Trump’s Muslim ban was met by a general strike by the primarily Muslim New York Taxi Workers Alliance, whose inspiring actions set off a spate of airport shutdowns that were crucial to defeating the administration’s first set of executive orders. Similarly, hours after the Québec shooting, Muslim

organizers and their allies issued a call for days of action across Canada against Islamophobia, white supremacy and deportations.

The ostentatious Islamophobia of far-right organizations and the Trump administration is often understood as exceptional – occluding continuities and similarities with the Islamophobia of liberal governments like Obama’s or Trudeau’s. Deepening our analysis would be a critical first step in building towards the worlds we want to live in.

Deconstructing widespread liberal fallacies is therefore by no means a comprehensive or sufficient approach to a genuinely anti-Islamophobic politics. What it may do, however, is strengthen and further our collective struggle against the intertwined scaffolding of racism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism upon which the Islamophobia of the neoliberal security state and the neo-fascist right continues to rest. Deepening our analysis in the days to come, when it may seem easier not to, would be a critical first step in building towards the worlds we want to live in. ★

AZEEZAH KANJI



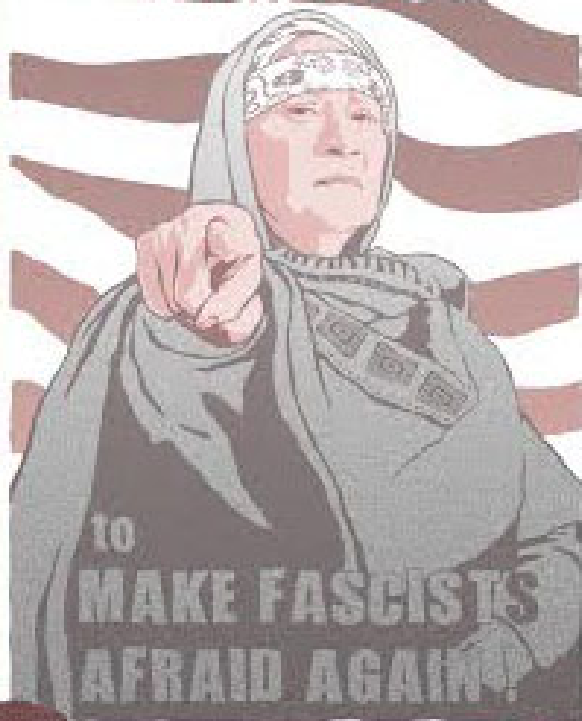
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S.K. HUSSAN



S.K. Hussan is a researcher, writer and campaigner based in Toronto. He organizes as part of and alongside migrant and undocumented communities, including those targeted by the national security state.

I WANT YOU



NEVER
AGAIN

2017

RAISING THE STAKES

WE MAY NOT ALWAYS BE ABLE TO
CHANGE SOMEONE'S OPPRESSIVE
BELIEFS, BUT WE SURE AS HELL CAN
MAKE IT SOCIALLY COSTLY TO
ARTICULATE THEM IN PUBLIC.

Mark Bray



EVERYDAY
ANTI FASCISM

in the Era of Trump

Illustration by Istvan David

From Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan* and Brad Pitt in *Inglourious Basterds* to Indiana Jones, nothing seems to delight American movie-goers more than killing Nazis. As the epitome of historical evil, seemingly any form of punishment unleashed upon the fascist body — whether baseball bats to the head from Tarantino’s “Bear Jew” or airplane propellers slicing up a German mechanic in the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* — elicits a cathartic delight at the unleashing of vengeful justice at a very safe chronological and spatial distance. Since World War II is the least controversial war in American history, few dispute the legitimacy of fighting Nazis in the late 1930s and 1940s.

But here is a question movie-goers are rarely, if ever, asked: was it also heroic to fight Nazis before the outbreak of war, while Hitler’s regime was building camps and ghettos? Or before Hitler even took power in 1933? How would Americans respond to a cinematic depiction of Communist and Social Democratic paramilitary organizations, such as the Red Front Fighters’ League, the Iron Front for Resistance Against Fascism, and *Antifaschistische Aktion* when they were organized to fight the Nazi Sturmabteilung in the 1920s and 1930s? Still, most Americans would probably sympathize with these militant formations because they know that the story ultimately ends in the gas chambers.

So why then are so many Americans allergic to not only the prospect of physically confronting fascists and white supremacists, but even non-violently disrupting their speeches in favor of a Fourth Reich? There appear to be two main reasons.

THE BANKRUPTCY OF “LIBERAL ANTI-FASCISM”

First, American liberalism has long promoted the notion that the key to combatting “extremism” is to trust in the allegedly meritocratic essence of the public sphere. If all are allowed their say, then the good ideas will float to the top while the bad will sink to the bottom, like live-action Reddit. “Extremism” (a seemingly innocuous term that centrists use to conflate Nazis with anarchists, Jihadists with communists) arises when this “natural” process of discursive exchange is impeded.

The conclusion is that the one who disrupts a fascist speaker brings us closer to “fascism” than the aggrieved orator who is actually advocating for fascism. Liberal opposition to fascists amounts to faith in reasoned debate to counteract their ideas, in the police to counteract their violent deeds, and in the institutions of the republic to counteract their potential attempts to seize power.

Yet these three facets failed the Weimar Republic in the 1930s. Like Trumpism, both fascism and Nazism emerged as emotional, anti-rational appeals grounded in masculine promises of renewed national vigor. No matter how many think-pieces liberals pen about the need to combat fascism through reasoned debate, no argument can win over one whose belief system is predicated on eschewing rationality.

This is not to say that there is no value in political argumentation at all. The attraction of far-right ideology often glistens the brightest when the left fails to win the victories necessary to address popular needs and promote its own ideological perspectives. Resisting fascism requires not only anti-fascist organizing, but organizing on all fronts. Yet anti-fascist argumentation is only useful for those who might be sympathetic toward fascism — its potential popular base — rather than ideologues who have nothing but disdain for the very terms of debate. They require a different kind of convincing.

Moreover, we can count on the fact that, as fascistic and far-right politics gain prominence, they will win over more than their fair share of police. In recent elections in Greece and France, for instance, very high percentages of police voted for Golden Dawn and the Front National. In the United States, it is clear that many police welcomed Trump as a “Blue Lives Matter” candidate who would allow law enforcement to continue its harassment and murder of communities of color unimpeded.

Recently it was revealed that the FBI has been investigating alarmingly (though not surprisingly) high levels of white supremacist infiltration into law enforcement for decades. Moreover, regardless of the composition of the American police force, the fact that it developed out of southern slave patrols and opposition to the labor movement gives us insight into its role in orchestrating the white supremacist prison system. This is supposed to be the societal bulwark against racist violence?

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*Resisting fascism
requires not only
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but organizing
on all fronts.*”

That finally brings us to the republic: the supposedly impartial referee in a game that all political tendencies are invited to play. Certainly, the referee would never allow any of the players to cheat! Yet, if we look at the history of fascism, we see that there is

no need for cheating. There has never been a successful fascist “revolution”: all fascists have come to power through playing by the rules. Is it any longer hard to imagine a situation where Trump and his supporters used the full range of entirely legal options at their disposal to centralize power under emergency edicts in response to some sort of “crisis”?

“ALL OR NOTHING” FASCISM

The second reason why American liberals are opposed to disrupting and confronting fascism is that, despite all of the hand-wringing about “Trump the fascist” from center-left commentators and enraged Clinton supporters, very few really believe that there is any serious chance of a fascistic regime ever materializing in America.



Regardless of the exact form that the Trump regime will take, we already have to resist widespread white supremacist, Islamophobic, misogynistic, transphobic, ableist and other forms of violence that have been exacerbated by Trump's victory.

Since most people tacitly conceive of fascism exclusively in terms of entire “totalitarian” regimes, the prospect of fascism becomes an “all or nothing” proposition. In the absence of impending fear, this often becomes “nothing.”

While this skepticism toward the imminent potential of an explicitly fascist government in the United States is probably justified, we should first of all always remember that few took seriously the small bands of followers around Mussolini and Hitler when they started their fascist ascent, and therefore remain vigilant against any and every manifestation of fascistic politics. Secondly, we should not forget that the probability of a full-fledged fascist government is actually beside the point in terms of everyday organizing. Fascist violence is not an all-or-nothing proposi-

tion. Even in relatively small doses it deserves to be taken seriously.

In discussing the question of anti-fascist violence, we must not allow the conversation to devolve into a purely analytical, ahistorical reflection on the nature of free speech. We must remember that when anti-fascism first emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, and then established itself in its current form in the 1980s, its main *raison d'être* was everyday self-defense and survival. For example, in Germany between 1990 and 1994, neo-Nazis committed more than eighty murders, and in 1993 alone more than 23,000 right-wing hate crimes were reported. In this context, anti-fascists allied with Turkish youth to defend themselves and put a brake on a neo-Nazi revival. In other words, in different times

and places fascism has given many no choice but militant anti-fascism.

Therefore, regardless of the exact form that the Trump regime will take, we already have to resist widespread white supremacist, Islamophobic, misogynistic, transphobic, ableist and other forms of violence that have been exacerbated by Trump's victory. More than 867 "cases of hateful harassment or intimidation" were reported within the first ten days after the election. Trump has pledged to lock up and then deport millions of people simply because they lack the proper papers. That is more than enough reason to ring the alarm bells now, regardless of what may or may not come, and organize militant anti-fascist resistance.

Anti-fascists realize that far-right violence develops directly out of fascist or "alt-right" speeches, arguments, media and social media. White men who terrorize Muslim families and Latino immigrants develop their ideas and the resolve to carry through on them from these and other sources. Although the alt-right makes a lot of noise, those who self-identify with that rather new label are few. Yet, as Trump rose to power, their ideas filtered through the campaign to ignite reactionary passion among many white Americans who felt alienated about the loss of their "place in the sun."

In this context, the alt-right have made Trump their figurehead in the movement to push back waves of progress (albeit incomplete) that American social movements have made in establishing societal taboos against explicit manifestations of racism, sexism and other oppressive behaviors that have been dismissed as "political correctness."

If left unchecked, the mainstreaming of alt-right views will have immediate, tangible effects on those that they target. To resist this growing

ANTI-FASCISM THEN...

The Edelweiss Pirates



Many have heard of the Hitler Youth, but only few are familiar with their ideological counterpoles: the Edelweiss Pirates. They were a loose coalition of autonomous local groups in the 1930s, formed by working-class youths who refused to submit to the authoritarian rule of the Hitler Youth.

They started with acts of passive resistance and non-compliance with the increasingly repressive Nazi regime. But as the war progressed, the Edelweiss Pirates soon found themselves engaged in street battles with the Hitler Youth, planning bomb attacks on Gestapo headquarters, engaging in acts of sabotage, supporting the resistance and hiding escaped prisoners from the labor and concentration camps.

The Pirates were boys and girls between 14-17 years old. They could be recognized by their metal edelweiss pins on their hats and collars. There were probably around 5,000 Pirates active during the war. Because of their anti-establishment attitudes, they were little loved even after the war, and it took until 2005 before they were officially recognized as resistance fighters rather than the petty thieves and criminals the Nazis had labelled them.

reality, we need a comprehensive anti-fascist strategy that includes explicitly anti-fascist organizing and a recognition of how ultimately the bases of support for both fascism and anti-fascism are formed by the societal norms of political and ethical behavior that develop over generations of struggle. With that in mind, we can orient our resistance against both capital-F Fascists and the “everyday fascists” that empower them, feed off of their hateful energy, and all too often carry out the violent deeds that ideologues advocate.

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

The anti-fascist movement stretches back to the very start of fascism itself, but can be dated in its modern incarnation largely to the 1980s, with the creation of Anti-Fascist Action groups in Britain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and Anti-Racist Action groups in the USA, developed in opposition to liberal proposals for combatting the far right.

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Considering the importance that masculinity and the fetishism of violence play in the fascist ethos, successfully beating up Nazis plays an important part in humiliating them and undermining their core tenets of power.

Antifa is a network of groups of revolutionary socialists of all stripes who view the police and the capitalist republic as enemies who often enable fascists. Their politics revolve around denying fascists a platform in society to promote their politics. This can be done by physically confronting them when they mass in public, by pressuring venues to cancel their events, by shutting down their websites, stealing their newspapers, and so on. At the heart of the anti-fascist outlook is a rejection of the classical liberal notion adopted from Voltaire that “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” After Auschwitz and Treblinka, anti-fascists committed themselves to fighting to the death to stomp on the right of Nazis to say anything.

Some carry out the work of depriving Nazis of a platform for promoting genocide without resorting to violence. Despite the liberal

proclivity to characterize disrupting speech as a form of violence, it is quite possible to shut down a speaker non-violently. In order to develop a broad, powerful anti-fascist movement we must allow space for a diversity of tactics and avoid the kind of macho culture that potentially threatens any political milieu that promotes violence. Anyone can be

an anti-fascist, whether they feel comfortable physically confronting a Klansman or not.

Yet, although many will refrain from physical confrontation, a good number will risk their personal well-being and liberty to increase the physical cost of publicly disseminating white supremacy and authoritarianism. This plank of the anti-fascist struggle has become essential in decades of organizing across a variety of regional contexts. Considering the importance that masculinity and the fetishism of violence play in the fascist ethos, successfully beating up Nazis plays an important part in humiliating them and undermining their core tenets of power.

Thoughtful pacifists — those who are consistent in their opposition to violence by rejecting not only revolutionary violence but also that of the police and the state — have legitimate contributions to make to such debates, though the argument, which some make, that the self-defense of death camp inmates was immoral is unconscionably repulsive and inhumane. This argument, however, is addressed to those who cheer the “Bear Jew” when he goes “Ted Williams” on a Nazi’s head, and Indiana Jones when he hurls a Nazi off a cliff, but object when anti-fascists fight living, breathing white supremacists who have devoted their entire existences to terrorizing people of color, Muslims, Jews, immigrants, queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people and others that do not fit into their dystopian nightmare of an ideology.

Do we need to wait until the swastikas are unfurled from government buildings before we defend ourselves? How bad does it have to get before we fight back? Whose lives hang in the balance if we wait? Militant anti-fascism is not a light switch that can be flicked on in a moment of crisis. It must be developed over the course of generations to become powerful enough to

... AND NOW!

Anti-Racist Action

In the late 1980s a small, diverse group of anti-racist skinheads formed on the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota. They called themselves the Baldies. At the time, the punk scene in the US was being infiltrated by racists and white supremacists; Nazi skinheads who quickly focused the eye of the media upon themselves giving skins a bad reputation. One particular group, the White Knights, was known for their violent attacks against people of color, anti-racists and gays.

The Baldies believed it was their responsibility to organize and protect themselves and those around them, and to refuse the racists a platform to spew their hatred. In the words of one of the original Baldies: “We felt a moral obligation to meet violence with violence at the time.”

The next year, the Baldies had cleaned the streets of Minneapolis from Nazis, but other cities across the US still suffered from a wave of racist skinhead violence. In response, the Baldies invited groups from throughout the Midwest to Minneapolis to organize a collective front, a network of anti-racist groups that would physically confront the Nazi hydra wherever it reared its ugly head. This was the beginning of Anti-Racist Action.



A photograph of a diverse group of young people, mostly in their late teens or early twenties, gathered for a protest. They are dressed in casual, contemporary clothing like hoodies and t-shirts. The crowd is dense, and many individuals are looking towards the right side of the frame with serious or determined expressions. The background is slightly blurred, showing more people and some greenery, suggesting an outdoor urban setting.

*The goal of everyday anti-fascism
is to increase the social cost of
oppressive behavior to such a point
that those who promote it see no option
but for their views to recede into hiding.*



actually make good on the promise of the 1948 Genocide Convention: “Never Again.”

EVERYDAY ANTI-FASCISM

The exceptional spectacle of anti-fascist organizers confronting Nazis is not enough to stem the tide of Trumpism. Moreover, even the success of such physical militancy relies on its public reception. Therefore, we must pair our focus on the flashiness of organized anti-fascism with an understanding of a deeper, more profound everyday anti-fascism that dictates the terrain upon which such struggles occur.

In order to understand everyday anti-fascism, we must bear in mind that the fascist regimes of the past could not have survived without a broad layer of societal support. Over the years, historical research has demonstrated that the process of demonizing the marginalized required the privileging of the favored, making many the explicit or implicit allies of Mussolini, Hitler and other leaders. If fascism required societal support for the destruction of “artificial,” “bourgeois” norms such as the “rights of man” in developing its hyper-nationalism, then today we must be alert to the ongoing campaign to delegitimize the ethical and political standards that we have at our disposal to fight back.

After Trump’s victory, we have a dangerous mix of mainstream conservatives who do not want to appear racist, and alt-right “race realists” who all accuse the “left” of so over-using the term that it is rendered meaningless — in other words, no one is racist anymore (or we are all racist now?). There is a major difference between the previous paradigm, where the left accused the right of being racist, and then the right accused the left of being the real racists because they focused so much on race, and a developing paradigm where the alt-right and

those they have influenced try to drain the power of the accusation.

The everyday fascists are the ardent Trump supporters who “tell it like it is” by actively trying to dismantle the taboos against oppression that the movements for feminism, black liberation, queer liberation and others have given their sweat, tears and all too often blood to establish as admittedly shoddy, and far too easily manipulatable, bulwarks against outright fascism. These social norms are constantly contested and are unfortunately subject to re-signification in oppressive directions, such as when George W. Bush sold the war in Afghanistan as a crusade for women’s rights. Yet the fact that politicians have felt the need to engage on the plains that popular resistance movements have established means that they left themselves open to political attacks on grounds that they at least tacitly acknowledged. A major concern with Trump and the alt-right, however, is that they hope to drain these standards of their meaning.

Liberals tend to examine issues of sexism or racism in terms of the question of belief, or what is “in one’s heart.” What is often overlooked in such conversations is that what one truly believes is sometimes much less important than what social constraints allow that person to articulate or act upon. This issue is at the center of questions of social progress or regression. Its contours are established through the seemingly infinite networks of human interactions that compose our society.

While one should always be wary about painting large groups of people with a broad brush, it is clear that ardent Trump supporters voted for their candidate either because of or despite his misogyny, racism, ableism, Islamophobia and many more hateful traits. There is certainly a significant difference between “because of” and “despite” in this context, and sensitivity to the

difference should attune us to the importance of mass organizing that can divert potential fascist-sympathizers away from the far right. It is always important to distinguish between ideologues and their capricious followers, yet we cannot overlook how these popular bases of support create the foundations for fascism to manifest itself.

Everyday anti-fascism applies an anti-fascist outlook to any kind of interaction with fascists, everyday or otherwise. It refuses to accept the dangerous notion that homophobia is just someone’s “opinion” to which they are entitled. It refuses to accept opposition to the basic proposal that “Black Lives Matter” as a simple political disagreement. An anti-fascist outlook has no tolerance for “intolerance.” It will not “agree to disagree.” To those who argue that this would make us no better than Nazis, we must point out that our critique is not against violence, incivility, discrimination or disrupting speeches in the abstract, but against those who do so in the service of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, class oppression and genocide. The point here is not tactics; it is politics.

RAISING THE COSTS OF OPPRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

If the goal of normal anti-fascist politics is to make it so that Nazis cannot appear uncontested in public, then the goal of everyday anti-fascism is to increase the social cost of oppressive behavior to such a point that those who promote it see no option but for their views to recede into hiding. Certainly this goal had not been fully accomplished by a long shot prior to the rise of Trump, but his election and the growth of the alt-right (at least on the web) has made this task all the more pressing.

To clarify, changing hearts and minds is ideal and it *can* happen. One striking example oc-

curred with the case of Derek Black, the son of the founder of the Nazi *Stormfront* site who disavowed white supremacy through conversations with friends at the New College of Florida. But apart from the rareness of this development, one point should be remembered: that Derek Black's white supremacist ideas and the anti-racist ideas of the New College students did not meet each other on an equal playing field. Black was embarrassed about being a neo-Nazi and that fact only came out once others publicized it.

Why was he embarrassed? Because Nazism has been so thoroughly discredited that he felt like he was in a tiny minority at odds with everyone around him. In other words, the anti-racist movements of the past constructed the high social cost that white supremacist views carried, thereby paving the way for someone like Derek Black to open himself up to an anti-racist outlook. Hearts and minds are never changed in a vacuum; they are products of the worlds around them and the structures of discourse that give them meaning.

Any time someone takes action against a transphobic, racist bigot — from calling them out to boycotting their business, to shaming them for their oppressive beliefs, to ending a friendship unless someone shapes up — they are putting an anti-fascist outlook into practice to contribute to a broader everyday anti-fascism necessary to push back the tide against the alt-right, Trump and his loyal supporters. Our goal should be that in twenty years those who voted for Trump are too uncomfortable to share that fact in public.

We may not always be able to change someone's beliefs, but we sure as hell can make it politically, socially, economically and sometimes physically costly to articulate them. ★

MARK BRAY



Mark Bray is a political organizer, historian and the author of Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook (Melville House, forthcoming), Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street (Zero, 2013), and the co-editor of Anarchist Education and the Modern School: A Francisco Ferrer Reader (PM Press, forthcoming). He is a currently a Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College.

STRATEGIC THINKING

BEYOND

WIKI



The background features a dark, textured illustration of tactical equipment. At the top, a pair of goggles with a clear lens and black frame is prominent. Below it, a black tactical mask with a mesh filter is visible. To the left, a hand is shown in silhouette, gripping a surface. The overall aesthetic is gritty and industrial, with a mix of black, grey, and red tones.

FASCISM

AND NONVIOLENCE

*THE RISE OF FASCISM HAS
INJECTED NEW VENOM
INTO AN OLD DEBATE,
PREVENTING ACTIVISTS
FROM SEEING MOVEMENT
STRATEGY CLEARLY.*

Ben Case

Illustration by Istvan David

The argument over violence and nonviolence — one of the oldest and most divisive on the left — is back. Broken windows, mass arrests and one well-timed punch marked Donald Trump's inauguration alongside massive nonviolent marches. In the weeks since, demonstrators converged on international airports, adding weight to a heated judicial fight over a sweeping ban on refugees and immigrants from seven countries, and fiery protests outside a famed hate-monger's talk at Berkeley cancelled the event and forced the speaker to flee under police escort.

Against the backdrop of a renascent fascist menace, the mix of tactical approaches has brought renewed fervor to the violence-vs-nonviolence debate. The dispute has been calcified into fixed positions, where it becomes less about persuading others to a strategic position and more about winning a point for one's team.

Despite claims to the contrary, the current arguments over violence and nonviolence are based more in personal belief than in strategy. It is perfectly reasonable for an individual to dislike, be frightened of, or not want to participate in violent actions. To others, violent resistance on the part of the oppressed is inherently virtuous — and given social realities, the desire to break and burn things is understandable. But these personal positions should not be confused with strategic logic. In this debate, it does immense harm to the movement to represent personal sentiments as empirical fact.

Lucid strategic thinking is crucial in the present moment, and this type of quarrel is extremely destructive. It is time for movements to update frameworks for understanding disruptive actions, and that means thinking beyond the archaic violence-nonviolence dichotomy.

NONVIOLENCE AND CIVIL RESISTANCE

The violence-nonviolence framework as we know it emerged from a twentieth-century context in which the paradigm for political revolution was armed struggle. Whether drawing inspiration from ideologically Maoist and Guevarist guerrilla strategies or theories of decolonization, revolutionaries took up arms and went to war with the state.

Original adherents to the doctrine of nonviolence, mostly pacifists, objected to acts of violence on a moral and historically religious basis. Gandhi's philosophy of *satyagraha*, often translated as "adherence to Truth" or "truth force," which means social change through and as the

practice of nonviolence, was deeply influential for pacifists as an alternative to the dominant model of guerrilla warfare. In this view, nonviolence is valued over political victory, since enacting violence in order to achieve a material goal would not be victory at all.

The field of civil resistance studies changed the approach of “nonviolentism.” Gene Sharp, the founder of the field, separated Gandhi’s theory of nonviolent organizing from his theory of nonviolent spirituality. This new approach of “strategic nonviolence” argues for the use of nonviolent action as a political tool based on its superior strategic efficacy. Strategic nonviolentists distinguish themselves from “moral” or “principled” nonviolentists, who argue for nonviolence based on its inherent virtue. Here the value is placed on political victory, with nonviolent action understood to be the most effective method of achieving it.

Civil resistance studies has identified social and political dynamics that mass movements use to create material leverage in wildly lopsided power struggles with authoritarian regimes. The idea is to locate the “pillars of support” — the systemically loadbearing institutions — for a regime and to strategically dismantle them, focusing on the importance of mass non-cooperation, polarizing populations through dramatic actions, and the backfiring effect of police repression.

In a moment when strategic thinking is desperately needed, the civil resistance framework is a powerful one. But the strategic nonviolent approach lags behind contemporary realities.

The twentieth-century image of a revolutionary was the guerrilla unit facing off against the army; today it is the crowd facing off against lines of riot police. Of course, leftist armed struggle still exists, but it is increasingly framed as armed self-defense rather than armed conquest of the state, as in the Rojava Revolution and the Zapatista movement.

When guerrilla war was the prevailing method of revolutionary struggle, broadly distinguishing between violent and nonviolent strategy made more sense, because the strategic orientation of street protests was so dissimilar from that of warfare. In the emerging paradigm of revolutionary mass protest movements, whether or not any property is destroyed in a specific action is an entirely different issue, and far less consequential.

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The strategic nonviolent approach lags behind contemporary realities.”

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

The use of low-level violent actions such as rioting and property destruction is often termed “diversity of tactics.” Like nonviolence, the defense of violent tactics can have both strategic and moral sides to it, and they can be equally difficult to separate.

Despite the objection that nonviolence depends on morality, arguments for the use of diversity of tactics frequently center on moral claims as well. For example, a common refrain is that the violence of breaking windows pales in comparison to the violence perpetrated by the state. While this is manifestly true, it does

not constitute a strategic argument. A violent action being morally justifiable as a reaction to or defense from institutional violence does not mean that that type of action most effectively counters the institutional violence.

Malcolm X's famous statement that "we want freedom by any means necessary" is frequently referenced to defend the use of diversity of tactics, classically juxtaposed to King's nonviolence. However, the last word in Malcolm X's sentence receives less attention than it should. The word "necessary" implies a strategic logic — by whichever means are *required* to achieve a particular goal — but in and of itself this approach does not point to a strategy. (It is worth noting that Malcolm X did not engage in any political violence himself.) Arguments for diversity of tactics might convince an activist that violence can be necessary, but questions of how and when those actions are strategically applied remain.

On the other hand, the study of civil resistance has focused on how and when certain tactics are most effective, but the field's vestigial attachment to a totalizing concept of nonviolence limits its usefulness. Nonviolence is marketed as not only the most effective but the only viable method of political struggle. This position demands strict adherence to nonviolent discipline, as any act that can be reasonably perceived as violent is understood to help the enemy. Since violent actions nearly always occur at some point in large-scale social movements, a great deal of energy is wasted on hand-wringing over how these actions are hurting nonviolent efforts.

FOCUSING ON WHAT WORKS

The single most important study in civil resistance is published in Erica Chenoweth

and Maria Stephan's 2011 book *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Their claim is striking: nonviolent movements are almost twice as likely as violent ones to achieve "maximalist" political goals (overthrowing a leader, ousting a foreign occupation or seceding from a territory). This work has become the centerpiece of the assertion that nonviolence is more effective than violence.

Chenoweth and Stephan's argument is based on a global dataset, *Nonviolent and Violent Conflicts and Outcomes* (NAVCO), which catalogues and compares uprisings between 1900 and 2006 based on whether or not the primary method was violent or nonviolent. The problem is that this study ignores riots and property destruction.

In fact, Chenoweth and Stephan's study does not compare violence with nonviolence in the way those terms are used in movements today — it compares warfare to mass protests. According to the authors, NAVCO's "violent" category comprises civil wars, while the nonviolent category is composed of campaigns that do not harm or threaten to harm opponents. Movements are ultimately categorized based on a campaign's primary method of struggle, and the data contains no variables for any type of violent action that falls below the threshold for war.

NAVCO does include a variable for the "radical flank effect," which in this case means an armed struggle being waged in the same country as a civilian protest movement. For example, during the civilian anti-Marcos protests in the Philippines in the 1980s, there was a separate armed insurgency going on at the same time elsewhere in the country — that is a radical flank in NAVCO data. This has nothing to do with the effect of protesters breaking windows or scuffling with police.

Indeed, campaigns in NAVCO's nonviolent category contain prominent acts of violence. For example, the First Palestinian Intifada, iconically associated with people throwing rocks at soldiers, is listed as nonviolent because the movement was *primarily* nonviolent. The "Bulldozer Revolution" in Serbia, so named because activists used a bulldozer to break through police barricades at a crucial moment during climactic protests, allowing crowds to storm and burn government buildings, is also classified as nonviolent.

For the most part, activists today do not seriously discuss taking up arms and going to the mountains to wage guerilla warfare. Instead,

contemporary arguments over nonviolent discipline center around activities like smashing windows, throwing projectiles at police and punching neo-Nazis. To date, Chenoweth's research does not address these actions whatsoever. Unfortunately, it is misrepresented as being directly relevant to the diversity of tactics debate, including by the researchers themselves, and has become the go-to reference for advocates of strict nonviolent discipline.

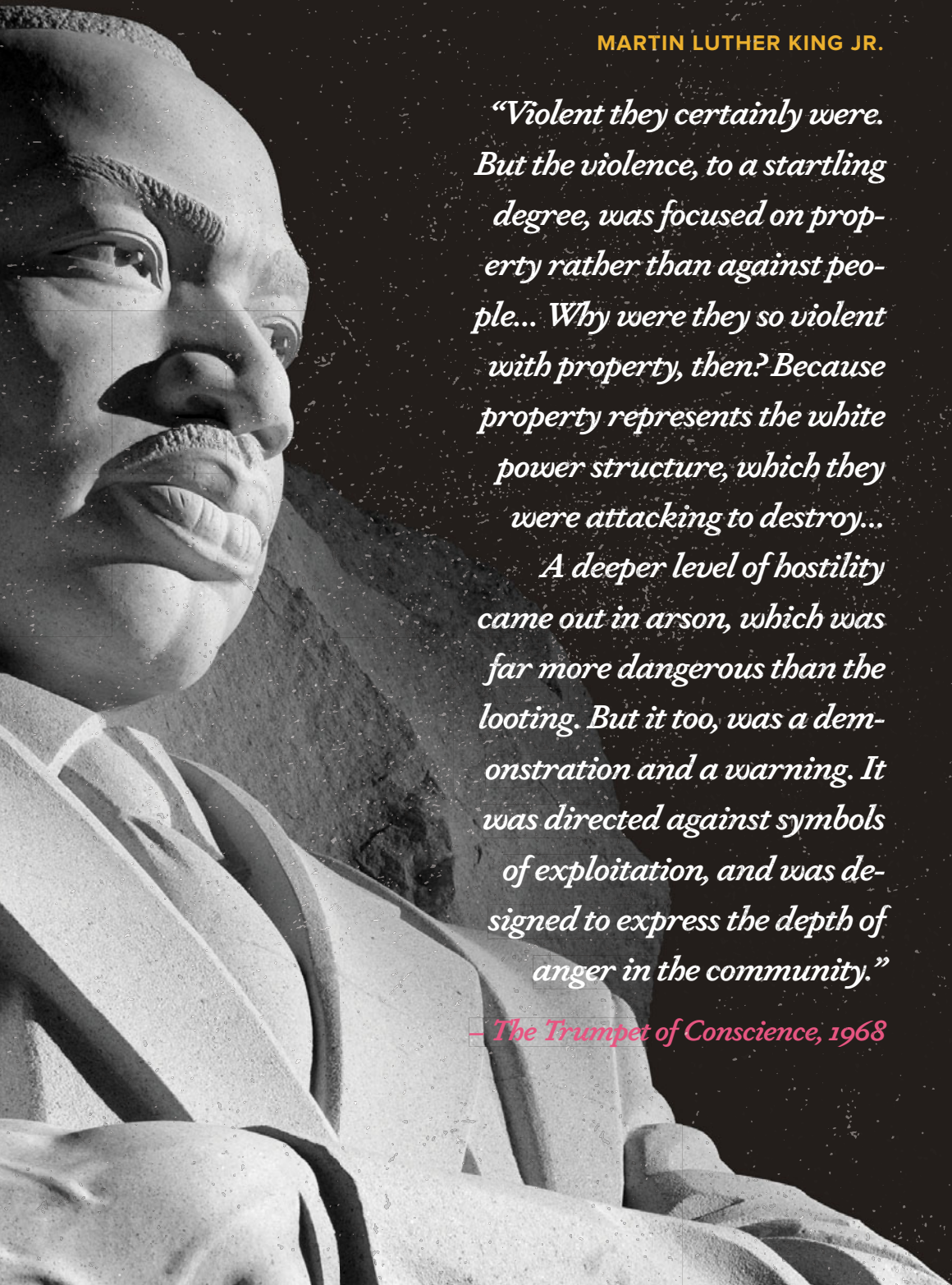
The gap between Chenoweth and Stephan's findings and how they are presented is symptomatic of structural problems in the civil resistance field at large. The prevailing trend has been to ignore the types of actions that do not fit the theory. When violent actions occur, they are not investigated with the balanced, systematic analysis given to nonviolent actions, but are brushed off as random or unfortunate breaks from nonviolent discipline.

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Arguments for diversity of tactics might convince an activist that violence can be necessary, but questions of how and when those actions are strategically applied remain.

off as random or unfortunate breaks from nonviolent discipline.

BETWEEN “STRATEGIC” AND “NONVIOLENCE”

Though civil resistance studies claims to investigate which strategies are most effective for achieving a movement's objectives, its conceptual framework ultimately emerged from a Gandhian view of political struggle. Sharp explained Gandhi's movement in terms of its strategic approach and eventually abandoned the moral pacifism, but the foundational core of the field is still based on a theory of change constructed around the practice of spiritual nonviolence.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

“Violent they certainly were. But the violence, to a startling degree, was focused on property rather than against people... Why were they so violent with property, then? Because property represents the white power structure, which they were attacking to destroy..

A deeper level of hostility came out in arson, which was far more dangerous than the looting. But it too, was a demonstration and a warning. It was directed against symbols of exploitation, and was designed to express the depth of anger in the community.”

— The Trumpet of Conscience, 1968

MAHATMA GANDHI

“I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence.”

*– “The Doctrine of the Sword”,
Young India, August 11, 1920*



The term “strategic nonviolence” contains the contradiction within itself. A strategy that begins by assuming that a certain approach is correct is not actually a strategy but a belief. Civil resistance theorists claim to be motivated purely by the effectiveness of their approach, but if effectiveness is truly the goal, then one must be open to all possibilities that might prove to be effective in a given circumstance. If one rejects *a priori* all possibilities that are not nonviolence, then what is called strategy is actually selective evidence to support a pre-existing conclusion.

While pacifism was never fully purged from strategic nonviolence, the attempt to abandon the moral foundation of nonviolence has had troubling consequences. Without a guiding ideology, that which is deemed to be most strategic can come to stand in for that which is just and correct. In other words, focusing exclusively on how movements win the next battle can obscure the meaning of the war. Ironically, moral nonviolentists like Gandhi and King were far more sympathetic to violent actions that were understood to be on the side of justice than strategic nonviolentists are to a broken bank window.

Rather than taking cues from Gandhi and King, who humanized and allied themselves with all resistance to oppression even when they disagreed with the methods, today’s strategic nonviolentists are quick to deride,

abandon and even incriminate activists engaging in property destruction or self-defense. The loss of principle may have allowed strategic nonviolentists to pursue valuable research on effective tactics, but it has also led to a callous attitude towards fellow activists — one that is distinctly un-strategic in its approach to polarizing public opinion around systemic oppression.

STRATEGIC THINKING BEYOND VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

Like Chenoweth’s research, the field of civil resistance claims to do a lot more than it does — but what it does do is significant. The articulation of simple, user-friendly approaches

for dismantling institutional targets using creative nonviolent disruption is important and needed. Research that illuminates how social movements effectively create widespread social and political change is one of the best uses of academic resources.

Unsurprisingly, there is evidence that violent actions generate greater police repression. At least one study suggests

that mainstream tolerance for police repression of protests, especially violent ones, is quite high. These are important factors for activists to anticipate and strategize around, but this

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Ironically, moral nonviolentists like Gandhi and King were far more sympathetic to violent actions that were understood to be on the side of justice than strategic nonviolentists are to a broken bank window.

type of backlash does not necessarily undermine movements. In fact, state repression and polarizing public opinions are part of the cycle of disruption that is required for radical social change.

There are also many reasons to believe that use of limited violence, especially property destruction and community self-defense, might enhance a movement's power. In addition to sometimes being strategic tools, acts of violence as collective resistance can be important components of consciousness-building and radicalization for many people, an effect that is sometimes overlooked by more clinical studies based on political outcomes. And far from being insulated from one another, there are often fluid interactions between more and less violent elements of movements — and those who participate in them.

Any tactic, whether or not it involves violence, has potential benefits and costs. Just as a riot might damage some people's perception of a movement, it might galvanize others. A permitted demonstration led by liberal figureheads could play well on TV, but might also suck resources without challenging power. And of course there are differences in tactical impact between shorter term and broader strategic goals. The point is, violence is not necessarily the deciding factor in whether or not an action is strategic.

It is not about which team wins symbolic points in the violence-nonviolence debate; it is about how different groups' tactical approaches can work in harmony to build power. In the context of today's movements, the broad argument over violence and nonviolence is at best a distraction. At worst, it promotes a good protester/bad protester narrative that helps the state divide and conquer movements. We need a fresh approach.

Key principles of civil resistance such as non-cooperation, mass participation, polarization and the backfiring effect are important and useful. If the blanket exclusion of all violent action is left aside, these principles are theoretically open to a much broader range of strategies and tactics than strict nonviolence currently admits.

Movement strategist Frances Fox Piven sees riots as a form of noncooperation in the routines of civic life. Riots can also dramatize and bring mass attention to serious issues in precisely the way civil resistance advocates. And it might turn out that the backfiring effect has more to do with disproportionate repression than the complete lack of violence on the part of protesters. For example, riots in Ferguson brought police militarization into national focus.

Importantly, these possibilities do *not* imply an inversion of nonviolent discipline, like some kind of violent discipline. Certainly there are many circumstances in which non-violent actions are appropriate and effective. Contrary to what some diversity of tactics advocates claim, more violence does not necessarily indicate a more successful movement. But neither necessarily does less violence. We need dynamic strategic models — rooted in principles of solidarity, autonomy and equity — that can accommodate a spectrum of disruptive and prefigurative action.

The rhetoric and meanings of violence can and should be debated, but those meanings are no longer attached to distinct forms of political struggle. It does not make analytical sense to categorize movements or actions into two artificial, opposing categories based on whether or not activists do anything that can be called violence. The civil resistance playbook says that when there is protester vio-

violence, nonviolent groups should try to enforce nonviolent discipline or distance themselves. But this response is based less in strategic logic than in a stubborn and unfounded belief that any violence at all is necessarily a movement-stopper.

In terms of strategy, the violence-nonviolence dichotomy has outlived its usefulness. Organizers should evaluate actions based on their potential to disrupt oppressive systems, build power and win victories.

The moment is urgent. In terms of strategy, the violence-nonviolence dichotomy has outlived its usefulness. Organizers should not evaluate actions based on whether or not there is anything that could be interpreted as violence, but rather based on the potential of those actions to disrupt oppressive systems, build power and win short-term goals that can lead to long-term victory.★

BEN CASE



Ben Case is an organizer from New Jersey. He is a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, where he studies social movement strategy, and is a member of Organization for a Free Society.

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