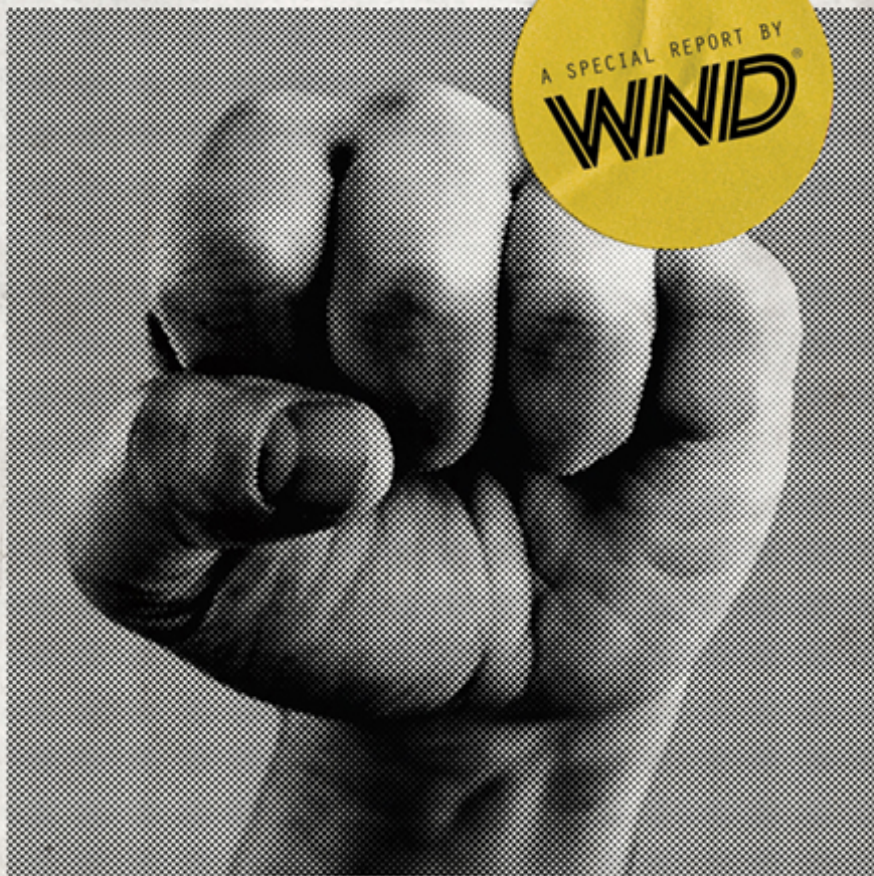


ANTIFA



WHAT AMERICANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ALT-LEFT

ANTIFA

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INTRODUCTION

Some called it the opening battle of America's second civil war. And it began with a fight about the meaning of the first.

From all over the country, members of the so-called Alt-Right had descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12, 2017. Liberal mayor Mike Signer had christened his city the “capital of the resistance” to President Donald Trump, giving the gathering – which included white supremacists and neo-Nazis – the feeling of an invasion.¹

The supposed purpose of the rally was to defend a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, which had been targeted by the city's vice-mayor. Yet this local conflict, fueled by social media and attention-seeking Alt-Right activists, turned the Unite the Right demonstration into what the media predicted would be the largest Far Right rally in a generation.

But the rally never took place. Before the event could even begin, police broke it up and arrested some of the participants and speakers, even though they had secured a permit. Confused rallygoers were driven by police out of the park and into the street, where hundreds of counter-protestors were waiting for them.

Although many of the counter-protestors wanted to peacefully demonstrate their opposition to white supremacists and

to the Civil War monument, others were just out for blood.

The result was epic, no-holds-barred street fighting at the home of one of the nation's most distinguished colleges, as Charlottesville, Virginia suddenly resembled the Weimar Republic. Police largely refrained from intervention and the nation watched in horror as armed formations battled it out in the streets. Dozens were injured by sticks, clubs and other weapons.

Finally, and inevitably, true tragedy struck. In circumstances yet to be fully explained, one of the "Unite The Right" rally attendees drove his car into a group of leftist protesters, resulting in the death of a young woman named Heather Heyer. Adding to the sorrow of the day, two policemen were also killed when the helicopter they were using to monitor the rally crashed.

The nation exploded in outrage. Rallies, marches, and memorials took place nationwide against the supposed rise of a resurgent neo-Nazi movement. Far Right websites, even those having nothing to do with the rally, were taken offline and individual activists saw themselves stripped of access to services like Uber or unable to raise money using companies such as Paypal. Statues of Confederate soldiers and generals were toppled. When President Trump called for national unity in an initial statement, he was largely ignored.

In the immediate aftermath, one group was hailed as heroes by the national media. They were saluted as the defenders of Charlottesville, toasted as the militant enemy of the "Nazis." Leftist academic Cornel West even claimed they had saved his life.²

This was "Antifa," a contraction of "anti-fascist," whose members claim the moral high ground of opposing fascism. Masked, clad in black, waving their characteristic black and

red banners, Antifa was credited with being the most dedicated opposition to what some reporters claimed was a vast and powerful neo-fascist and racist movement.

Yet this narrative did not last long. Within a few days, a visibly angry President Trump blasted the group as the “Alt-Left” and claimed it had been responsible for instigating much of the violence. As if seeking to confirm President Trump’s claim that they would not stop at Confederate statues, Antifa activists began targeting representations of the Founding Fathers or Revolutionary War heroes. And in the following days, ordinary Trump supporters, innocent passersby and even liberal journalists found themselves targeted by masked Antifa who launched unprovoked group attacks.

By the end of August 2017, ordinary Republicans were suddenly using “Antifa” as a slur for violent, unhinged left-wing extremists. Even Democrats and liberal reporters were condemning the group. And when President Trump called them out by name at an August 22 rally in Phoenix, many grassroots conservatives began awakening to the real nature of Antifa for the first time, especially as many of them were being attacked outside the very venue where the commander in chief was speaking to his supporters.

Yet there is nothing new about Antifa. Indeed, mainstream conservatives have been tangling with the masked radicals for years, often without truly understanding them. And while conservatives often label Antifa as fascists because of its members’ propensity for violence and intolerance of dissent, the truth is even more disturbing. Antifa didn’t arise in opposition to the fascists – Antifa was there first.

The story of Antifa is at least eighty years old. It goes back

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to the postwar days of communist revolution, organized street violence and class warfare in the cities of post-World War I Europe. It's a story of violence, murder and intimidation, a war which has been going on for almost a century.

Unfortunately for the world, all too often it appears only one side is fighting in this war. And far too many conservatives, including Republican leaders such as Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and former GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, take Antifa at their word when these radicals claim to be fighting against racism and fascism.

The truth is that Antifa is fighting for communism. Its members are fighting for anarchy. And they always have been.

Antifa aren't the real fascists or the real racists. They aren't militant Hillary Clinton supporters or Nazis in disguise. Nor are they even anything new. They are simply the same leftists who have drowned the world in blood under the cover of egalitarian slogans since the days of Lenin.

To understand what happened in Charlottesville, what's happening in the United States today, and what is about to happen to our country in the near future, it's time for all Americans to see these violent extremists as they really are, in their own words.

This is the story of the masked radicals who think they have the right to tell you what you are allowed to say, hear, and think.

This is the story of the black-clad people who beat Trump supporters in the street for the "fascist" and "racist" act of loving their country.

This is the story of America's most dangerous domestic terrorist group.

It's the story of Antifa – The Rise of the Alt-Left.

ANTIFA IN ITS OWN WORDS

Antifa is not just an organization. Nor is anti-fascism simply a tactic. It is a worldview, indeed, a kind of way of life. And to be Antifa is to engage in a kind of eternal counterinsurgency against human nature itself.

According to Antifa, it exists to prevent fascists from organizing, attaining power, and using violence against marginalized communities. It is not a slur, nor a mischaracterization, to identify the movement as an outgrowth of the extreme Left.

Those identifying as Antifa are, almost without exception, communists, socialists or left-anarchists, and the movement grew out of communist and socialist organizations. The iconography used by Antifa today is the same as that used by German communists and socialists of the early 1930s; though Antifa will attack a swastika or other Far Right symbols on sight, the hammer and sickle or the red flag are commonly displayed during its demonstrations.

Yet Antifa usually is not simply an armed wing of a particular communist or socialist party. Though those calling themselves Antifa may indeed be members of a particular leftist organization, sometimes they are not. Indeed, the tensions between leftist parties seeking political power and the street fighters of

Antifa have often led to conflicts within organizations.

Nor can Antifa in any way be labeled “liberal.” In the American context, “liberal” is often a catch-all term for members of the political Left. However, throughout most of the world, liberalism refers to an ideology that embraces free market capitalism (either *laissez-faire* or restricted by a welfare state), property rights, and freedom of speech, assembly, and association. Furthermore, liberals accept the legitimacy of government to defend these rights and basic institutions and respect the rule of law.

Antifa would reject many of these concepts, and indeed “liberal” is a slur deployed by Antifa against the center-Left. American conservatives, wedded as they usually are to a vision of classical liberalism as midwived via John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, often sneer that Antifa acts like fascists by restricting free speech or denying peaceful groups, however extreme, the right to assemble.

Conservatives and liberals may equally quote Evelyn Beatrice Hall’s declaration (often attributed to Voltaire) that “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

In contrast, Mark Bray, a lecturer at Dartmouth College, sympathizer of the movement and the author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, declares, “At the heart of the anti-fascist outlook is a rejection of [this] classical liberal phrase.”¹

HOW ANTIFA DEFINES ITSELF

Bray defines anti-fascism as “an illiberal politics of social revolution applied to fighting the Far Right, not only literal fascists.”²

This definition captures several essential characteristics of the phenomenon.

1. It is a politics, meaning a set of values and principles, not just a tactical imperative.
2. It is not limited to simply fighting literal fascists, but anyone Antifa chooses to characterize as Far Right – something even harder to define than fascism.
3. It serves a purpose of social revolution, and is not simply limited to stopping racism or preventing fascists from coming to power.

The TORCH Network, successor to the Anti-Racist Action Network, is perhaps the best known and most widespread Antifa network in the United States. It lists Five Points of Unity defining its network.

1. **We disrupt fascist and far right organizing and activity.**
2. **We don't rely on the cops or courts to do our work for us.** This doesn't mean we never go to court, but the cops uphold white supremacy and the status quo. They attack us and everyone who resists oppression. We must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and stop the fascists.
1. **We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation.** We intend to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement of oppressed people centered on the working class against racism, sexism, nativism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest, and the most oppressed people. We support

abortion rights and reproductive freedom. We want a classless, free society. We intend to win!

2. **We hold ourselves accountable personally and collectively to live up to our ideals and values.**
3. **We not only support each other within the network, but we also support people outside the network who we believe have similar aims or principles.** An attack on one is an attack on all.³

These points of unity show Antifa, contrary to what some naïve conservatives might believe, are not simply opposed to racists or fascists, nor are the network's tactics restrained by the law. Indeed, in the network's view, the "cops uphold white supremacy" and are also racists and oppressors.⁴

Though socialism or anarchism are not defined as core values, the cry for a classless society shows support for these ideologies. They also justify attacking people with "moral failings" such as transphobia, homophobia, Islamophobia. Finally, there is also an explicit statement of support for abortion.

Antifa is often stereotyped as simply comprising violent thugs who physically attack people with whom they disagree.

However, its approach is usually far more sophisticated. M. Testa, described as an "undercover anti-fascist blogger" and member of the United Kingdom-based Anti-Fascist Network, emphasizes in *Militant Anti-Fascism: A Hundred Years of Resistance*, how Antifa use a variety of tactics.

He writes:

Anti-fascism can be proactive as well as defensive, and we have, with considerable help from militants past and present,

identified three of the successful elements in the century of struggle against fascism; physical resistance, political organization and propaganda ...

We do not advocate one form of action above another; people must use whatever tactics they see as appropriate. Militant anti-fascism also argues for a non-partisan approach wherever possible whilst recognizing that popular fronts have met with mixed success and that liberal anti-fascists cannot be relied on most of the time. Neither can the law.⁵

[Author's note: A "popular front" refers to a broad coalition of leftist forces similar to those that governed France and Spain for a time in the 1930s.]

To be Antifa does not require sophisticated political knowledge, nor even a political identity. It simply requires a willingness to militantly confront those you regard as the enemy. Not surprisingly, this also allows for those given to criminality, nihilism or cruelty to embrace the label of Antifa and so cloak their sociopathy in self-righteousness and justice.

But Americans should not simply dismiss most Antifa as mindless thugs. Those who adopt this label are not just political activists, but artists, musicians, workers, and students. And as Testa and his comrades maintain, it is not just about attacking political opponents in the street. It is about developing a certain model of culture that undermines "oppressive" social norms, promotes radically egalitarian or socialist politics, and refuses to accept the legitimacy of the capitalist system.

Resistance to "fascism" also takes non-violent forms, including gathering information on political opponents and releasing it to the public (known as "doxing" in the Internet age), using propaganda to build a social movement, hosting

concerts and artistic events, and participating in the electoral process when that is seen as advantageous.

Legal methods (such as filing lawsuits to stop a “fascist” group from holding a protest) and illegal methods (directly attacking a protest) are used depending on circumstances and often in tandem. And being Antifa does not preclude working with other leftist organizations. A member of the Democratic Socialists of America could be working to elect a progressive candidate during the day and donning a mask to “bash the fash” at night.

TENSIONS WITHIN ANTIFASCISM

All this leads to a certain tension within Anti-fascism, as the core principle of confronting the Far Right sometimes conflicts with the need for leftists to organize for political victory. Simply beating down political enemies is not the same thing as advancing a positive agenda. Furthermore, the violent tactics and reputation of Antifa are often viewed as counter-productive by leftists, even extreme leftists, who don’t want to be accused of deploying a paramilitary wing when they are trying to win elections or obtain favorable press.

Even Nancy Pelosi was ultimately forced to denounce Antifa after an August 2017 riot, disavowing the radical group even as Republicans such as Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney remained silent.⁶ (Of course, any self-respecting Antifa member would dismiss Pelosi as simply a “liberal” anyway, which in their parlance is someone too far to the *right*.)

Anti-fascists themselves claim that denying fascists or the far right the ability to politically organize is a necessary step to building a thriving leftist movement. Indeed, implicit in Antifa

writings about fascism is a lurking fear that if it is given the slightest opportunity to gain any amount of strength, it will sweep all before it.

As befits socialists and anarchists, Antifa often deride liberal opposition to direct action and violence as simply an outgrowth of middle-class politics, reflecting the squeamishness of those who do not truly understand the politics of the street or the need for revolution, not just reform.

Dave Hann and Steve Tilzey, who fought the British far right as part of organized Antifa groups while occasionally participating in socialist party politics, write in “No Retreat”:

The argument put across by the middle-class left was that we substituted political violence for political activity, but the truth is that we always tried to do both. We saw the use of violence as essentially tactical and episodic, a short-term answer to a long-term problem. We saw it as a stop-gap solution to blunt the cutting-edge of fascism and to curb their ambitions until such time as an effective political opposition to them could be put in place in whatever areas they were operating.⁷

Yet building this long solution is often frustrating for Antifa. Denying the streets to marching Klansmen, uniformed Nazis or even soccer hooligans who sympathize with the Far Right is one thing. However, Antifa members are equally opposed to fascist or Far Right groupings that operate in electoral politics, which creates the now familiar spectacle of black-masked activists smashing windows, spraying mace at passersby, and setting trash cans on fire all to prevent people from listening to a mainstream conservative speaker on a college campus or a speech by President Donald Trump.

LIBERATING TOLERANCE

The Antifa approach to regulating speech rests upon the idea that certain speech is inherently violent and threatening.

The most influential thinker to advance this idea was the Marxist Herbert Marcuse, perhaps the most important political philosopher of the New Left. In *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, first published in 1965, he declared the “whole post-fascist period is one of clear and present danger.” He argued that “democratic tolerance,” by allowing even those opposed to democracy to speak, can ultimately lead to its own destruction.

For that reason, Marcuse urged limiting the freedom of speech of fascist and National Socialist movements. More expansively, he also argued that the liberal tradition ultimately serves the cause of domination. “[W]hat is proclaimed and practiced as tolerance today, is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression.”

Marcuse advocated what he called Liberating Tolerance. And he was quite blunt about what this would entail:

Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance: ... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda, of deed as well as of word. The traditional criterion of clear and present danger seems no longer adequate to a stage where the whole society is in the situation of the theater audience when somebody cries: “fire.” It is a situation in which the total catastrophe could be triggered off any moment, not only by a technical error, but also by a rational miscalculation of risks, or by a rash speech of one of the leaders. In past and different circumstances, the

speeches of the Fascist and Nazi leaders were the immediate prologue to the massacre. The distance between the propaganda and the action, between the organization and its release on the people had become too short. But the spreading of the word could have been stopped before it was too late: if democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War.⁸

Antifa may not cite Marcuse directly, but it is employing his ideas.

Though it is less well established, the development of the concept of “white privilege” is also an important influence on Antifa. White people, according to this view, automatically benefit from a system that is inherently racist. This is why leftist academics, activists and reporters argue it is impossible to be racist against white people, because white people automatically have power and privilege under this system.⁹

Thus, white people are in the position of being considered “racist” if they are not actively doing something anti-racist. Because of ideas like this, on college campuses and at leftist protests, it is now not uncommon to see the progressive stack, in which marginalized individuals speak first and privileged individuals (white men) speak last.

Of course, Marcuse’s concept of “repressive tolerance” and the practice of devaluing speech from certain groups is ultimately irreconcilable with the classical liberal tradition.

ANTIFA AS VOLUNTEER SPEECH POLICE

In November 2006, the late Christopher Hitchens spoke of

the right of free speech at a debating club in Toronto. While not referencing Marcuse, he appealed to the “great tradition of English liberty” and cited John Milton, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill. Claiming to summarize the work of these authors, Hitchens argued that free speech entails not just the right of the speaker to speak, but the right of the audience to listen.

Therefore, declaring unpopular views deserving of “extra protection,” Hitchens even went so far as to declare his defense of the controversial British historian and Holocaust denier David Irving’s right to speak as one of his “proudest moments.”

Hitchens, who spent most of his life as a socialist and participated in many anti-racism demonstrations as a college activist, argued against any legal restrictions on free speech on the grounds that there is no one qualified to decide what people should be allowed to say or hear.

“To whom would you give the job of deciding *for you*, relieve you of the responsibility of hearing what you might have to hear?” he asked rhetorically. “Do you know anyone — hands up — do you know anyone to whom you’d give this job? Does *anyone* have a nominee?”¹⁰

Antifa are the volunteers.

The Antifa conception of violence is a kind of funhouse mirror where speech becomes violence and attacking speakers becomes community defense. Yet this is not simply hypocrisy. There is a theory behind it that Americans should engage with on its own terms.

Antifa doesn’t see itself as shutting down “fascists” simply out of aggression. Though the Antifa label can provide cover for sociopaths, Antifa argues that fascist speech is fundamentally different from other forms of speech because it is, by its

very nature, exclusionary.

For example, if a National Socialist gives a speech on the need to remove Jews from the nation, Antifa would argue this constitutes a threat and a clear danger to Jews. Thus, they are justified in preventing this hypothetical speech and even attacking the speaker because the speech itself is an act of violence. Shutting down fascists, even by the pre-emptive use of violence, is therefore, in their view, an act of community self-defense.

M. Testa writes in *Militant Anti Fascism*: “Militants are often criticized by liberal anti-fascists for ‘being as bad as the fascists,’ and we do not deny our support for the use of violence, but only when necessary and as a tactic along with the dissemination of information, organization inside the workplace and outside, and the defense of our communities from the divisive actions of the far right.”¹¹

Similarly, street fighters Dave Hann and Steve Tilzey argue fascism is fundamentally illegitimate.

“Many people have argued that we were as bad as the fascists ourselves, because we denied them the freedom of speech,” they write. “We fully accept that freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, but one that shouldn’t be abused. If you argue that you should be allowed the freedom of speech to promote policies that deny the very same right to people purely on the basis of skin colour or nationality, then actually no, we don’t believe that you have a legitimate complaint when someone hits you over the head with your megaphone.”¹²

The socialist authors argue fascism is fundamentally illegitimate because it “feeds on the discontent and anger felt by whole sections of the working class,” but “divides people by racial lines”

instead of “directing that anger against the politicians and bosses who have caused all the misery in the first place.”

Violence, the authors suggest, is a legitimate weapon in the battle for social revolution. “We recognize of course that there is more than one way to skin a cat, wouldn’t dream of suggesting that violent confrontation is the only way to defeat fascism, but is an essential weapon in the anti-fascist armory, a weapon that all too often anti-racists and anti-Nazis refused to pick up,” they assert.¹³

The slogan defining this approach is “No Platform,” a concept that declares “fascists” should not be able to organize or speak. The Far-Left website LibCom declares such an approach is valid for two reasons. First, “the aim of no platform isn’t actually to censor the ideas of the far-right but to prevent them from being put into practice.” Secondly, because fascist ideology is “built upon violence,” organizations must be crushed while they are small or they will lead to attacks on vulnerable groups.¹⁴

The premise that letting a “fascist” speak will lead to uniformed goons instantly springing from the ground suggests a lack of faith in democracy by Antifa members, as well as a lack of faith in their own socialist or anarchist ideology. The founder of the American Nazi Party, former U.S. Navy Commander George Lincoln Rockwell, regularly spoke on American college campuses during the 1960s, at a time when there was far more racial division and civil unrest than in the America of 2017. Yet Rockwell’s speeches did not transform American campuses into bastions of National Socialism, as Antifa would predict.

Yet the larger problem is, as Hitchens described, any policy of censorship presupposes the existence of a censor. As Antifa derive almost entirely from the radical Left, fascists are defined

not simply as members of a particular political movement, but as *anyone* who expresses any kind of right-of-center belief.

For example, the question of Israel, which divides both the Left and Antifa themselves, sparked furious debate within the British Left when a Zionist speaker was de-platformed at a British University.

Sarah Ditung, writing for the leftist New Statesman, declared:

Intimidation is at the core of no platform – both the arguments for it and, increasingly, its practice. Why should a woman speaking for feminism, or a man speaking for Zionism, be deemed such a threat that they have to be shouted down, condemned as “vile,” or told to “fu** off?” ... No platform now uses the pretext of opposing hate speech to justify outrageously dehumanising language, and sets up an ideal of “safe spaces” within which certain individuals can be harassed. A tool that was once intended to protect democracy from undemocratic movements has become a weapon used by the undemocratic against democracy.¹⁵

THE BLACK BLOC – RATIONALE AND CRITIQUE

One of the most important tactics of Antifa, perhaps its best known, is that of the “black bloc.” This refers to a group of protesters who wear black clothing, hats, sunglasses, goggles, and other material to conceal their identity. It enables the black bloc to serve as a kind of vanguard of a larger protest, attacking police, conservatives, property, or whatever other targets present themselves without fear of retribution.

“The rationale for the black bloc is simple: In an era of constant surveillance, militant tactics require some level of

anonymity,” writes Bray. “While masking up and wearing uniformly black clothing do not always conceal one’s identity, failing to do so drastically increases the odds of being identified by the police and/or fascists.”¹⁶

Of course, such a tactic makes no sense unless the entire intent is to commit crimes and get away with acts of violence. From a public relations standpoint, a group of photogenic protesters peacefully holding signs tends to win more support than black-masked vigilantes looking like ISIS executioners burning down cities and attacking people seemingly at random. Tactics like this show the Antifa label is often a means for the aggressive, the sociopathic and the nihilistic to commit violence for its own sake, rather than to serve any political end.

Liberal journalists worry that black bloc tactics ultimately create more harm than good. Leighton Woodhouse, a liberal journalist who sympathizes with the aims of Antifa, nonetheless condemns the black bloc tactic as both morally wrong and politically stupid.

She wrote:

The revulsion to violence on the part of most people on the left, from liberal to radical, is not born of naïveté over the scale of the right-wing threat. It’s the expression of basic moral principle, as well as a pragmatic political understanding that random mob violence by masked vigilantes on the left isn’t going to defeat the Alt Right.

Similarly, German Lopez contended at Vox that the violent tactics of Antifa were unnecessary because of the “repeated success of peaceful protests.”

Instead of resorting to force to work out differences, the American ideal is to demonstrate and head to the voting booth to affect change. America hasn't always lived up to this standard — particularly during the Civil War and Jim Crow era of anti-black violence — but it's the concept enshrined in First Amendment protections for free speech and for the right to peaceably assemble.

It's effective too. US history shows that ... University of Denver researcher Erica Chenoweth, in her work on violent and nonviolent demonstrations worldwide, found nonviolent campaigns succeed much more often than violent ones.¹⁷

Yet liberals who criticize the black bloc as counter-productive miss the point. As Bray explains, the goal of Antifa is not simply to oppose President Trump, Republicans or conservatives, but to implement radical social change and further the cause of revolution.

Furthermore, the strategic imperative of Antifa is not necessarily to shut down the most dedicated fascists or Far-Right organizers. It is to increase the costs of casual involvement for new recruits, friends of Far Right activists, or people who might show up to a march or a protest. By creating a real danger that someone will be physically hurt, socially ostracized or economically punished simply by being around a Far-Right event, Antifa succeeds in preventing far right movements from moving to the mainstream.

Thus, black bloc tactics and militant confrontation are often viewed by Antifa not as a standalone weapon, but as a tactic to be used in conjunction with other strategies. “[I]nstead of assessing the public reception of violence and nonviolence in

binary terms, it makes more sense to think in terms of a contextually shifting spectrum of sympathy that must be weighted against specific movement goals,” writes Bray.¹⁸

As he notes, militant tactics have the effect of shifting the Overton Window by making less extreme protest tactics seem moderate. The riots in Ferguson and Baltimore, for example, drew attention to the Black Lives Matter movement and made less violent but still illegal protest tactics – like blocking traffic – seem almost benign.

Therefore, even though some Antifa might occasionally denounce violence in the abstract, they will almost never condemn the violent actions of their comrades. This gives the radical Left a huge advantage, as few leftists are ever condemned because of their association with extreme tactics or extreme ideologies.

For example, the Washington Post’s Dave Weigel, though a critic of the black bloc tactic, said Antifa itself is still a good thing, crediting Daryle Lamont Jenkins of the Antifa organization called One People’s Project as an exemplar because of his focus on gathering intelligence rather than attacking fascists.¹⁹ However, as even liberal reporters have noted, “Jenkins makes no apologies for Antifa’s aggressive stance, which he describes in conservative-sounding terms of community self-defense.”²⁰ He’s also noted for gloating with a declaration of “Rot In Hell” when a well-known conservative activist dies, sneering that he only refrained when the late Phyllis Schlafly passed because his site had recently been the subject of an article from the mainstream press.²¹

THE WAR ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ACAB

As outlined in the Torch Network's Points of Unity, the police are despised by Antifa, who believe cops are upholding a system that is inherently fascist and racist. Anarchist Antifa members also hate the police on principle, especially as it is the police who will interfere with squatter settlements or other Antifa hotbeds.

On a more tactical level, law enforcement is often faulted for supposedly protecting fascists and the Far Right, as standard procedure during a demonstration is for police to form a line separating right-wingers from Far-Left counter demonstrators. (This approach was notably absent in Charlottesville, with violent and tragic results.)

Two slogans are commonly used by Antifa to illustrate these beliefs. The first is "Cops and Klan, hand in hand." This operates on two levels. First, the police prevent Antifa from attacking those whom they consider the Klan. Second, police are faulted as upholding a justice system they believe disproportionately arrests blacks and Hispanics, not because these groups disproportionately commit more crime, but because police are racist.

Of course, the job of the police is not to side with either Antifa or the Klan, but to secure the First Amendment rights of all Americans and allow everyone to peacefully demonstrate, regardless of their extreme views.

Nor have leftists fared well in situations when the police were absent from the scene. In 1979, four members of the Communist Workers' Party and one other person were killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party in what became known as the "Greensboro Massacre." Local police were ultimately held responsible in a civil suit.²² Needless to say, in this case police were then faulted for *not doing enough*

to intervene and protect the communists.

Another slogan is “All Cops Are Bastards,” commonly shortened to A.C.A.B. These four letters are often spray painted or plastered in areas where Antifa is known to operate or prominently featured on buttons or clothing. Chanting this slogan, of course, tends to embarrass Antifa’s more moderate cousins on the Left.²³

Thus, especially after the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, Antifa has increasingly targeted law enforcement, even when police are not “protecting” any “fascists.” Antifa recently participated in a protest in Nashville, Tennessee, against the Fraternal Order of Police, whom it claims supports “killer cops.”²⁴ The Base, a self-described “anarchist political center” dedicated to the dissemination of “revolutionary left and anarchist ideas and organizing,” has hosted workshops describing the need to “abolish the police” because they are “racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist pigs.”²⁵ An armed Antifa group known as the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement, which takes inspiration from convicted cop-killer and Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, has been hosting anti-police workshops titled “Our Enemies In Blue,” with its activities promoted by key Antifa websites such as “It’s Going Down.”²⁶

THE CORE OF ANTIFA

Antifa has no central command or supreme leader. Like the terrorist group ISIS, it is best described as a *brand*, with those adopting it sharing certain basic tenets. And as illustrated above, Antifa members, in their own words, believe in something far more than just opposition to fascism or racism.

Antifa members:

- Fundamentally reject the (classical) liberal guarantee of freedom of speech and assembly, taking it upon themselves to determine what people are allowed to say and hear. However, this is handled by Antifa itself, not by an appeal to the state.
- See opposition to fascism as a necessary but not sufficient step towards the larger goal of social and political revolution, be it a revolution in the name of left-anarchism or state socialism.
- Do not respect the law as such and consider the police oppressors, with many openly stating their desire to abolish the institution.
- Regard violence as a legitimate tool with which to defeat political opponents. The use of pre-emptive violence is redefined as “community self-defense.”
- Are not just opposed to “fascism” in the sense of actual members of an explicitly fascist or National Socialist political organization, but to anyone who is expressing or defending “oppressive” ideas.

And this last characteristic is the most pressing concern for most Americans when it comes to addressing the phenomenon of Antifa.

Many conservatives or libertarians, when they first hear the term “anti-fascism,” may be tempted to pledge their support. After all, few Republicans would consider themselves fascist – indeed most would characterize the fascist policies of a strong

ANTIFA

central government, extensive regulation of the economy, and a merger between corporate and government power as antithetical to what most American conservatives and libertarians believe.

But Republicans, libertarians, conservatives and capitalists are among the Antifa's most frequent targets. Certainly, Antifa does not consider supporters of limited government or the free market as anti-fascist. So what exactly does Antifa consider fascist anyway?

WHO DOES ANTIFA CONSIDER FASCIST?

“More than perhaps any other mode of politics, fascism is notoriously difficult to pin down,” confesses Mark Bray, a startling admission from someone who belongs to a movement dedicated to crushing “fascism” by any means necessary, including through violence.

The Torch Network, rather than providing a definition, settles for providing a list of characteristics:

Fascism is an ultra-nationalist ideology that mobilizes around and glorifies a national or perceived racial identity, valuing this identity above all other interests (for example gender or class). Fascism is marked by its hostility towards reason and human solidarity, by its dehumanization and scapegoating of marginalized or oppressed groups, by its use of violence or threats of violence to impose its views on others, and by its rejection of supposedly “effeminate” or “soft” values in favor of “manliness.” Anti-Semitism and racism are primary facets of National Socialism and most other varieties of fascism. Fascism aims at a militarized society, and organizes along military or

quasi-military lines, usually with an authoritarian structure revolving around a single, charismatic leader. Fascist groups may have the facade of an efficient and dynamic organization, but in reality, power structures are arbitrary and ruthless. Fascists use anti-elitist rhetoric to appeal to the common man, coupled with internal elitism and willingness to accept support from existing elites. Fascism glorifies a mythologized past as justification for its present ideological stances, and as a basis for future organization of society.¹

Bray adopts historian Robert Paxton's clunky definition of fascism, which recognizes some of these same characteristics. Fascism is defined as:

a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.²

Such a definition is at once too narrow to justify Antifa's tactics (or even existence) and yet can be interpreted so broadly as to justify violence against almost everyone.

For example, many political opponents of President Donald Trump call him a fascist. Of course, as there is also not one Democrat, reporter or Establishment Republican in America who has any fear of abusing the president or his family in the most insulting terms, it's doubtful many people really believe this.

There is no secret police rounding up dissidents, there is no crackdown on dissent, there is no plan for annexing new territory (only a plan to build a wall to save the territory America already has), and the policy President Trump has been most actively trying to get through Congress is a series of tax cuts, rather than an updated version of the Nuremberg Race Laws. In most major cities, wearing a Make America Great Again hat will put you at risk for physical attack, hardly the sign of a dictatorship which is forcing the masses to bow to the Great Leader.

And yet, a sufficiently hysterical leftist could claim Donald Trump and Republicans in general have the “obsessive preoccupation with community decline” or “humiliation” described in Paxton’s definition of “fascism” above. After all, the fall from a supposed Golden Age is presupposed in the president’s slogan of “Make America Great Again,” or for that matter, Ronald Reagan’s original slogan of “Let’s Make America Great Again.”

A cheering crowd at a Trump rally could be smeared as a “compensatory cult,” his fans wearing red hats as a “mass-based party of committed nationalist militants,” and Trump’s love-hate relationship with Wall Street and the GOP bosses as an “uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites.” And as the Torch Antifa network takes for granted that even police are oppressors, President Trump’s statements of support for law enforcement could be spun by an especially extreme anarchist as an abandonment of liberties or even an endorsement of violence.

Such rhetorical games may seem absurd or even insane. But the greatest danger of Antifa is that its definition of “fascism” and “racism” are so broad that almost everyone can be included.

For example, Bray argues that even those views expressed by the president of the United States should be marginalized,

and makes an implied physical threat against his voters. “Our goal should be that in twenty years those who voted for Trump are too uncomfortable to share that fact in public,” he sneers. “We may not always be able to change someone’s beliefs, but we sure as hell can it make it politically, socially, economically, and sometimes physically costly to articulate them.”³

To take another example, Testa declares there are many fascisms. He identifies several general characteristics most have adopted, including a belief in a Fuhrer Principle, exclusionism, the desire for a Golden Age, the control of the mass media, censorship of the arts, “a hard line on crime and punishment ... but only for certain criminals,” and other policies.

Yet some of these supposed characteristics of “fascism” are ideas most people simply take for granted. For example: “Heterosexuality is normalized” and “the family unit is seen as sacred” are among the kinds of exclusionism by which he defines fascism.⁴

Needless to say, any kind of biblical view of morality or sexuality is thus defined as proto-fascist, and thus, violence is legitimized against Christians – as indeed it was against Catholic clergy by some of the original Antifa during the Spanish Civil War. (It is worth noting in passing that though many Antifa groups specifically denounce Islamophobia or anti-Semitism, not one seen by this writer has specifically denounced anti-Christian prejudice).

According to the Antifa definition of what constitutes fascist or oppressive ideas, the vast majority of all human beings everywhere, at all times and throughout all history, are rendered proto-fascists.

“Racism” is another word meaning one thing to Antifa and

something entirely different to almost everyone else. Most Americans, liberal or conservatives, would say they oppose racism. If asked to define “racism,” they might say it is hating people because of their ethnic or racial origin, believing certain groups are inherently inferior, or acting cruelly towards others because they are different from you.

However, in the eyes of Antifa and those who practice Critical Race Theory at American universities, “racism” means failing to support a sweeping program of social revolution to dismantle Western Civilization itself.

For example, Bray screeches in the *Antifa Handbook*:

[W]hile many European and American commentators saw the Holocaust and the rise of fascism as a lamentable deviation from the Enlightenment traditions of ‘Western Civilization’ [Author note: Notice the scare quotes around Western Civilization], Aimé Césaire rightly concluded that “*Europe is indefensible*” [italics in original]. So too must we add that, as a modern identity forged through slavery and class rule, *whiteness is indefensible*.

The only long-term solution to the fascist menace is to undermine its pillars of strength in society grounded not only in white supremacy but also in ableism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, nationalism, transphobia, class rule, and many others. This long-term goal points to the tensions that exist in defining anti-fascism, because at a certain point destroying fascism is really about promoting a revolutionary socialist alternative (in my opinion one that is antiauthoritarian and nonhierarchical) to a world of crisis, poverty, famine, and war that breeds fascist reaction.⁵

WHAT AMERICANS NEED TO UNDERSTAND

Here, Bray gives the game away. Three critical points must be understood by all Americans.

- First, “anti-fascism” exists to pave the way for a “revolutionary socialist alternative,” and those who believe it is simply about stopping “racism” so that liberal democracy can function smoothly are deluding themselves.
- Second, there is an implied hatred of all white people as “racists,” against whom violence is justified. Though Critical Race Theory defines “whiteness” as a term of power and class rather than biology, it is difficult to imagine any other group not noticing the implied physical threat presupposed by the deconstruction of their identity. If Jews, blacks, or Muslims or were similarly denounced as collectively illegitimate, they would be right to fear the consequences. The history of leftist movements is also replete with genocides and persecutions unleashed once certain groups (like Stalin’s “Kulaks” or Pol Pot’s “Depositees”) were deemed to be obstacles to equality because of their membership in whatever “class” or “social construct” communists had invented.

Thus, white conservatives or libertarians who believe they will avoid attack by saying things like “I don’t see color,” “I love everyone” or “I don’t care that I’m white” are fooling themselves. All whites benefit from “white privilege” and are therefore racist unless they actively work to dismantle the System which supposedly benefits them – as defined by the far Left. Whites, or indeed everyone who does not believe in dismantling capitalism or traditional

American culture, are thus racist, even if they deny having any kind of racial consciousness or attaching any importance at all to racial identity. After all, it's stated quite plainly: if you don't want to abolish Western Civilization, you're a fascist.

The logical conclusion, of course, is that even non-whites who defend Donald Trump, the Confederate flag, police officers, the United States, or whatever other person or institution is deemed problematic are actually more "racist" than white Antifa. And, not surprisingly, nonwhite Trump supporters have indeed been attacked by Antifa.⁶ Though it may seem absurd, there is a theory behind it, ridiculous if viewed from the outside, but internally consistent if seen from within.

- Third, and perhaps most importantly for Americans to internalize, the process of continuous social revolution has no limits. Average citizens may say they are opposed to "racism," but as noted above, that word is being continuously redefined so that almost everyone who is not actually Antifa is a "racist," and therefore a target. Words such as "ableism," "heteronormativity," or "transphobia" would have drawn confused stares from the vast majority of the population even a few years ago. Today, they are seen as grounds to get someone fired from his or her job or attack him or her in the street.

Even if center-right America acquiesces to accepting the Left's moral frame and ritualistically denounce "heteronormativity" or whatever other newly invented sin, something else will be created. Society will never be perfectly "equal," and new

scapegoats must always be found to explain “oppression.”

Thus, adopting egalitarianism as the supreme virtue leads not to a society of equals, but a society endlessly divided by newly invented labels, at war with itself and constantly seeking new enemies to blame for its failure to realize an impossibility.

Antifa, by insisting on this vision and asserting the right to attack anyone who disagrees with it, is thus assured of a permanent existence, even if there wasn’t one actual “fascist” or National Socialist anywhere in the world. Antifa is thus inherently totalitarian.

EVERYDAY ANTIFASCISM AND THE CULTURE WAR

Perhaps the defining characteristic of Anti-fascism is paranoia. As actual fascists are few and far between and most of those whom Antifa accuses of being fascists deny the charge because it’s false, Antifa is on a constant search for individuals and movements it believes will lead to fascism. Antifa is based upon the premise that the Far Right, if given even the slightest opening, will rise to power through a gradual process.

In a recent book widely promoted by the Antifa community, Alexander Reid writes:

Perhaps the most important strategy of fascism is what scholar Stephen D. Shenfield calls “a gradual or creeping coup, accomplished by means of the steady penetration of state and social structures and the accumulation of military and economic potential. Such an analysis can also be applied to the insinuation of fascism into and out of the US conservative movement.”⁷

This fear of the “fascist creep” is what underlies the refusal of the Antifa to allow anything “far right” to gain a toehold, not just in a political movement, but in music scenes, ideological subcultures such as environmentalism, and various fandoms.

Most ordinary Americans who encounter Antifa will probably see it not at a political rally or on a college campus, but at a concert venue or festival.

Preventing Far Right bands or individuals from performing or denying Far Right artists or authors an opportunity to sell their work are common activities of Antifa.

Sometimes this takes the form of violence against people who are accused of being members of the Far Right, but more often takes the form of less extreme confrontations. These tactics include providing opposition research to liberal journalists to generate hit pieces, calling (and possibly threatening) venues scheduled to host concerts or conferences, or confronting Far Right individuals and demanding they abandon their political activities and/or provide information about their Far Right comrades.

The threat of violence is always credible, but ideally Antifa is able to achieve its ends without putting its participants in physical or legal jeopardy by actually committing violence. Their goal is simply to prevent their enemies from gaining professional or political legitimacy and thus “creeping” into the mainstream.

As Bray writes:

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.

[T]he 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.⁸

WHERE DOES THE WHITE WORKING CLASS FIT IN?

One of the most prominent Antifa groups to emerge since the election of Donald Trump is Redneck Revolt, a “pro-worker, anti-racist organization that focuses on working class liberation from the oppressive systems that dominate our lives.”⁹

The group has achieved notoriety because of its practice of staging armed protests against right wingers, featuring the open carry of rifles and their signature red bandanas around their necks. Its armed formations are called John Brown Gun Clubs, after the militant abolitionist who murdered slavery supporters in the years before the Civil War and who ultimately was executed for treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia after the famous raid he led on the arsenal at Harper’s Ferry in an attempt to start a slave uprising.

Like other Antifa groups, Redneck Revolt is opposed, at a fundamental level, to the existence of the United States itself.

“We stand against the nation-state and its forces which protect the bosses and the rich,” it declares in its statement of principles, claiming the “nation-state project came into existence to protect the properties class and keep us working people poor and without power.”¹⁰ The group also lumps the U.S. Armed Forces in with the Ku Klux Klan as something that “has undermined the struggle for freedom among all people.”

Of course, in actuality the nation-state project, as exemplified in the nationalist revolutions of Europe in 1848, was largely directed against the transnational elite of the time – what many populists would consider akin to the globalists or European Union bureaucrats of today. Indeed, historically, nationalism has been as a step toward securing political power for workers.

As Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini put it:

Without Country you have neither name, token, voice, nor rights, no admission as brothers into the fellowship of the Peoples. You are the bastards of Humanity. Soldiers without a banner, Israelites among the nations, you will find neither faith nor protection; none will be sureties for you. Do not beguile yourselves with the hope of emancipation from unjust social conditions if you do not first conquer a country for yourselves.¹¹

Yet despite its challenge to traditional conceptions of patriotism and national identity and questionable historical claims, Redneck Revolt represents one of the few attempts by the modern left to appeal to the white working class. It claims “white supremacy” is actually holding back white workers themselves and that racial identity is a kind of trick pushed by the capitalist bosses.

As Redneck Revolt puts it:

At moments that white working people have looked beyond their skin color and have worked alongside movements of poor and working class people of other races, the power of the ruling elite has become the most threatened. It is when the white working class has started to view itself in terms of class and not race, that liberation has waited just around the corner.

White supremacy is a system that white working people have helped protect, but it is also a tool against us all. Allegiance to a politics of white racism has allowed the rich to continue to hold onto power.¹²

From a traditional American perspective, the group's analysis is limited for three important reasons.

First, though it claims "white racism" is a tactic used by the bosses to divide the working class, it does not explain why it is the capitalist elite itself which pushes mass immigration from the Third World, multiculturalism and leftist cultural policies groups like Redneck Revolt are sworn to defend.

Second, though the group says the white working-class gains nothing from "white supremacy," the group does not address anti-white racial discrimination by the government, media or the education system. Indeed, though the group is largely targeted at the white working class, it follows the familiar leftist protocol of decrying white Identitarian movements, while celebrating Identitarian movements by non-whites.

Third, though the group rejects being "manipulated to be the ones who are the buffer between the rich white elite at the top and the poor marginalized folks at the bottom," this claim to be the "buffer class" ignores the collapse of the American

middle class over the past forty years, as well as the increasingly anti-white perspective of the American upper class. Aside from vague appeals to revolution, how exactly the American middle class, of all groups, is supposed to benefit from opposing their program is left unexplained. "Private property rights are not the basis of liberty," claims the group, raising the unanswered question of who then will take over the property Redneck Revolt so heroically volunteers to confiscate.¹³

Yet, Redneck Revolt and the John Brown Gun Clubs represent an innovative effort by Antifa and the Far Left to appeal to white working class activists in rural areas. They draw inspiration from the Young Patriots Organization, a group that grew out of Far-Left Students for a Democratic Society and formed partnerships with groups such as the Puerto Rican Young Lords and the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. The YPO famously used a Confederate flag as its insignia, showing how recently the battle flag of the South was perceived as non-racist, not just by leftists but by self-styled anti-racists.

Redneck Revolt pins the blame for the struggles of the white working class squarely on the shoulders of rich urban liberals, thus drawing a critical distinction between the stereotypical Democrat-supporting urban hipster and the heirs of mine workers who engaged in violent strikes during the early twentieth century.

The group declares:

Today, the term redneck has taken on a demeaning connotation, primarily among upper class urban liberals who have gone out of their way to dehumanize working class and poor people. Terms like 'white trash' and 'hillbilly' have come

to signify the view among these same upper class liberals of poor rural folks.

To us, the term redneck is a term that signifies a pride in our class as well as a pride in resistance to bosses, politicians, and all those that protect domination and tyranny.¹⁴

While Redneck Revolt's ideological limitations and racial contradictions (deconstruction of racial identity for whites, celebration of identity politics for everyone else) suggest it will never win back most rural white workers from the Left, it should nonetheless be taken seriously. It represents the first attempt since the late 1960s by Antifa to seriously appeal to the white working class and Appalachia, the bedrock of the Donald Trump coalition. And the John Brown Gun Clubs suggest that if the simmering cultural cold war between Left and Right ever turns hot, Redneck Revolt will be in the forefront.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF UNLIMITED EGALITARIANISM

Antifa itself claims the right to determine what constitutes "oppressive" behavior, accepts no restrictions on who or what it is allowed to attack, and does not respect the law. Indeed, as we've seen, its participants regard the police as just as much an enemy (or perhaps the identical enemy) as the "fascists." And even those uninterested in politics who simply want to go to a concert, attend a festival, show support for a friend, or satisfy their curiosity about a certain speaker or idea may find themselves a target of Antifa, who determines they also are "fascists."

The irony is that for all the talk of revolution and a glorious victory in the years ahead, "fascism" is defined so broadly by Antifa that it can never truly be defeated. Demonizing concepts

such as “heteronormativity” or conventional patriotism creates a system in which almost *everyone in the world* is guilty of the invented sins of racism, homophobia and fascism. The list of enemies to be slaughtered and killed grows inevitably from members of actual fascist parties to supporters of the current president of the United States or people who don’t support mass Third World immigration. By definition, Antifa *must* have enemies that can be dehumanized as evil and dangerous; otherwise they lose their entire reason for existence.

Thus, Antifa members are in a position of waging a never-ending war against the overwhelming majority of their own fellow citizens, a counter-insurgency that will last until the End of Days. Even if the Far Right is completely crushed, new enemies will be invented, new targets for violence and self-righteous retribution. After all, Antifa claims the right not only to tell people what they can say, listen to, or even think, but also who they are allowed to associate with or have as friends.

The center-left will not be exempt from Antifa’s totalitarian impulse. The same leftist pattern goes back to the French Revolution, when even those who supported the overthrow of the monarchy found themselves fed to the guillotine if they were judged insufficiently radical to be good citizens of the Republic. As Antifa graffiti found after a violent protest against Milo Yiannopoulos put it, “Liberals get the bullet too.”¹⁵

Only one side needs to declare a war for it to begin. And the war for America’s future is already raging – but only the left is fighting. But this war goes beyond America. It’s been raging outside America’s borders for many years now. And researching the history of Antifa tells us a great deal about what the future may hold for the world’s left-wing terrorists.

THE ORIGINS OF ANTIFA

“Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic by its opponents in power?” asked Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*. “Where is the opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?”

Someone today could write the same of fascism.

Conservatives, libertarians and others are invariably smeared as fascists by leftists. In response, authors such as Jonah Goldberg and Dinesh D’Souza say it is actually the Left that comprises the “real fascists,” as documented in Goldberg’s *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* and D’Souza’s *The Big Lie: Exposing the Nazi Roots of the American Left*.

Since Antifa itself, fiercely dedicated to opposing fascism, has a very hard time defining fascism, perhaps the best way to shed light on this elusive term is to examine how it first emerged in history.

FASCISM AS A RESPONSE TO SOCIALISM IN THEORY

Marx never predicted fascism.

Core to Karl Marx's doctrine of "scientific socialism" was the inevitability of the *communist revolution*, as the historical dialectic worked itself out to its logical conclusion. To be communist was to join a movement whose victory was foreordained, as the ascendant bourgeois created the very class that would ultimately displace itself in the form of the proletariat. The Revolution was inevitable.

But it seemed to keep being postponed. Proto-fascism largely developed out of dissident socialist currents, a creation of intellectuals and activists frustrated with orthodox Marxism's inability to really provide answers to the crises of the age.

In *Against the Fascist Creep*, Reid identifies the nineteenth-century Frenchman Antoine de Vallombrosa, Marquis de Morés et de Montemaggiore, as the first "so called national socialist ever to walk the earth." His participation in the "anti-Semitic riots of the Dreyfus Affair" and efforts to equip street toughs presaged later developments in Italy and Germany.¹ A friend of de Morés, Maurice Barrés, is credited by Reid with actually coining the term "national socialism" to "define an ideology that incorporated the working class into national solidarity."

Georges Sorel's advocacy of a powerful myth as the basis for revolution and political action (the General Strike), the efforts to unite Italy under the *Risorgimento*, and the work of the French monarchist and counter-revolutionary theorist Charles Maurras were also important influences. Maurras has received recent attention because he was reportedly cited as an influence by none other than Steve Bannon.)² The rise of Georges Boulanger, a French military leader who combined support

from both urban workers and rural, traditionalist workers, is also sometimes seen as a proto-fascist movement.³

Several important ideas come out of these complicated and sometimes contradictory intellectual currents.

- Instead of class warfare, there is a belief in the organic national community and patriotic solidarity – contra the Marxists, workers should care about their country and their country should care about them.
- The old elite (the aristocracy and the big businessmen) are failing the workers and religion is no longer binding the people together as it once did. New ideas are needed, new myths to bind together the national community and preserve the best elements of the national past.
- Socialism does not necessarily mean egalitarianism – there is a natural hierarchy, and society should be led by the best.
- “Scientific” socialism is too dogmatic and stale – what is needed is a cult of action and heroism.
- Society is decadent and weak and parliamentary leaders are too feeble to stand up to Marxist revolutionaries. It will take hard men to stand up to the communists and renew the nation.

Fascism never had a core doctrine or defining texts the same way Marxism does. These vague concepts can’t really be called a political philosophy. Instead, fascism really emerged on the ground, as a response to revolutionary unrest and as a challenge to the socialist movement.

FASCISM AS A RESPONSE TO COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

Fascism could not have existed without the experience of World War I and the millions of veterans who suddenly found themselves turned out onto the streets of Europe following demobilization. And while it is a stretch to say men like Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler were “socialists” in the same way as Rosa Luxemburg or Antonio Gramsci, they certainly were not conservatives in the American sense, nor the “throne and altar” conservatives of Old Europe.

When the Great War broke out, many socialists hoped the working classes would reject the demands of their governments and join with their working-class brethren in other nations. Instead, at least in 1914, most marched enthusiastically to war.

Yet the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia renewed hopes for the global triumph of communism. And it was not just Russia which fell to communism. A number of European nations either fell to socialist revolutionaries or suffered under revolutionary conditions.

In 1919, the second communist state in Europe, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, was established, with the notorious Béla Kun as the most influential figure. After inflicting murderous reprisals on civilians during a Red Terror, the communist government fell only after defeat at the hands of the Romanian army. A Soviet republic was also proclaimed that same year in Slovakia.

Also in 1919, in the southern German territory of Bavaria, a Bavarian Soviet Republic was established for a brief time before being defeated by the German army and the right-wing Freikorps paramilitaries. Among those soldiers who played a small part in the Bavarian Soviet Republic before its fall was a

young Adolf Hitler, who was heavily criticized in later years for not being part of the Freikorps like so many other later Nazis. An additional Soviet republic existed for a short term that same year in the German city of Bremen.

Even in those areas where the government was not overthrown, there was great labor unrest and the revolutionary Left was surging. Fascism, as a mass movement capable of seizing power, grew out of this unrest as a force that could stop the Bolsheviks.

The man who led the first fascist revolution, Benito Mussolini, was a former socialist who broke with the movement after he came to support Italian entry into World War I. Bray summarizes Mussolini's postwar efforts as an attempt "to start a new movement that would fuse elements of his earlier socialism with his growing nationalism and authoritarianism to forge 'national syndicalism,' a new ethos of corporatist class collaboration in the interest of the Italian nation."⁴ It was out of this fusion that fascism was born.

Yet, whatever Mussolini's rhetoric and the supposed theoretical basis of fascism, on the ground it was far more simple. The "two red years" of Italy, 1919-1920, saw mass strikes, the takeover of factories, a general strike held in solidarity with the Russian Revolution, and an increase in the price of goods. "The threat of revolution, and the more immediate reality of significantly disrupted production, pushed economic elites to look beyond the 'impotence' of the parliamentary government for solutions to their problem," writes Bray. "They soon determined that Benito Mussolini was their man."⁵

Though Mussolini and other leaders would sometimes express support for councils of workers running factories, more

important was the fascist development of a force on the ground of “anticommunist street fighters called the Squadre d’Azione, or the *squadristi* – more widely known as Blackshirts.”

“Their expressed purpose was defending the ‘national community’ (businesses and landowners) from ‘Bolshevik’ worker militancy,” writes Reid.⁶ In 1920, it was the fascists who were used to break a general strike in Milan. Mussolini would eventually be given control of the government by the king after the “March on Rome,” which in the fascist imagination was a coup, but actually represented a decision by the conservative elite that fascists would be preferable to a communist revolution.

Socialists were shocked by how fascism had seemingly emerged out of nowhere to crush their revolutionary hopes in Italy. Reid emphasizes fascism was not just a physical threat to the Far Left because it rallied paramilitary opposition to resist Red violence, but was also a potent political threat because it could simultaneously appeal to fearful elites and those who wanted radical change.

He writes:

For Mussolini’s supporters, Fascism offered them the chance of revolution without economic uncertainty, precariousness, and risk, and the ruling classes could hardly disagree. For those in government and behind corporate desks, it seemed wiser to invite the Fascists into the halls of power than suffer full-scale syndicalist revolution, and that is precisely what they did.⁷

As Reid and others note, the success of Mussolini in seizing power and crushing communism within Italy inspired waves of copycat movements throughout Europe. The fascists also

won praise in North America. American Legion Commander Alan Owsley declared, “If ever needed, the American Legion stands ready to protect our country’s institutions and ideals as the Fascisti dealt with the destructionists who menaced Italy.”⁸ Sir Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, notoriously said his own followers would be ready to meet a threat with “fascist machine guns.”⁹

DID ANTIFA CREATE FASCISM?

This raises a theoretical question about the very nature of Antifa. Without communist revolution and without the vanguard leftist parties that launched those revolutions, there would have been no reason for fascism ever to exist. More importantly, even if some fringe movement had developed, business leaders and conservative elites would never have provided support to these movements, which, after all, openly talked about the need for the state to establish control over capitalist enterprises.

Essentially, the communist revolutionaries and their “direct action” tactics had created their own nemesis capable of defeating them in the streets and willing to compete with them for the loyalty of the workers. Fascism was not a coherent ideological movement that spontaneously gained power – it was a response to communist violence, reactionary in the purest sense of the word.

Ironically, though Antifa claims to be necessary to keep fascism from rising, fascism only arose in the first place because European nations were fearful of revolutions launched by communists and anarchists – i.e. Antifa itself.

WHERE ANTIFA SYMBOLS COME FROM

Antifa always was just a brand for already existing communist and anarchist activists. In its origins, Antifa wasn't even a separate concept, just a front group for already existing leftists. And today's Antifa draws its symbols, insignia and philosophy most directly to the Far-Left groups that arose in interwar Germany.

The Communist International defined fascism as “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”¹⁰ Its solution for confronting this problem was a united front or an anti-fascist People's Front – led, of course, by the Communist Party.

Among the most important was the Roter Frontkämpferbund, the Alliance of Red Front-Fighters, or the Red Front. It was headed by Ernst Thälmann, who was also head of the KPD, the Communist Party of Germany. This group of communist street fighters had around 130,000 members before it was banned in 1929. It was well known for its street clashes with the National Socialists and the Sturmabteilung, the SA. Its logo was the raised fist, the socialist salute that is even now used by Antifa.

After the Red Front was banned, the successor organization was the Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus (Fighting Alliance Against Fascism, the KbGF). It ultimately helped organize the first true Antifa organization: Antifaschistische Aktion (Antifascist Action).

Created explicitly by the KPD, this network was designed to unite the entire communist subculture in Germany – including sports leagues, party groups, factory cells, and every other formation – against the National Socialists. According to the socialist magazine *Jacobin*, “The alliance's iconic logo, devised by Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists members Max

Keilson and Max Gebhard, has been since become one of the Left's most well-known symbols."¹¹

To put it another way, every American neo-Nazi may be using the logo from a German political party of the 1930s – but so is every anti-fascist.

The other well-known Antifa logo often used is that of the Iron Front, featuring three arrows moving down and to the left. The logo was seen as an effective use of propaganda because the three lines made it easy to deface a swastika. The Iron Front was championed by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), a socialist party and supporter of the Weimar Republic. Though the symbolism was used by the party in its electoral effort, it was never a fighting formation on the lines of the Red Front.

The meaning of the three arrows is a matter of some controversy. To some, they stood for three of the pillars of the Weimar Republic – the SPD, the unions, and the Reichsbanner [an SPD paramilitary force]. Another interpretation was that they stood for unity, activity, and discipline.¹²

But there's also another interpretation of the three arrows. An SPD election poster with the three arrows shows them puncturing three enemies of the party – a crown (monarchists), a swastika (National Socialists), and the hammer and sickle and communist star. Thus, the SPD was just as much opposed to the KPD as it was to the Nazis. The feeling was mutual. Up until the moment the National Socialists took over the government, the KPD considered the SPD its primary political enemy.

The SPD, as perhaps the primary supporter of the Weimar Republic, did not want to support the extra-parliamentary methods of the KPD or a communist takeover of the country and in many ways considered the KPD just as bad as the Nazis.

Meanwhile, Ernst Thälmann, working with the Soviet Union, pushed a party line that considered the SPD social fascists.

The journal *International Socialism* mourns:

The theory of social fascism dictated that Nazis and Social Democrats were essentially two sides of the same coin. The primary enemy of the Communists was supposedly the Social Democrats, who protected capitalism from a workers' revolution by deceiving the class with pseudo-socialist rhetoric. The worst of them all were the left wing Social Democrats, whose rhetoric was particularly deceptive. According to the theory, it was impossible to fight side by side with the SPD against the Nazis under such conditions. Indeed, the KPD declared that defeating the social fascists was the "prerequisite to smashing fascism."

By 1932 the KPD began engaging in isolated attempts to initiate broader anti-fascist fronts, most importantly the *Antifascistische Aktion*, but these were formulated as "united fronts from below" – i.e. without the leadership of the SPD. Turning the logic of the united front on its head, SPD supporters were expected to give up their party allegiance *before* joining, as opposed to the united front being a *first practical step* towards the Communist Party. Throughout this period the leaderships of both the SPD and the KPD never came to a formal agreement regarding the fight against Nazism.¹³

Both symbols, the two flags logo of the KPD's Antifascist Action and the three arrows of the SPD's Iron Front are still in use today, with little modification. (The colors of the two flags logo are occasionally modified, with black used instead of red to show anarchist beliefs instead of state socialist beliefs.)

Though these symbols show Antifa's roots in the European Far Left, it does not mean the leftists will make the same mistake of remaining divided. Indeed, the two flags logo and the Iron Front logo can often be spotted together at the same protest or even displayed by the same person.

Still, the tensions between different schools of thought on the radical left will always cause internal divisions within the Antifa camp. And just like the communists in the old German KPD, the most extreme leftists will accuse their more moderate socialist and liberal cousins of serving fascism if they are not militant enough.¹⁴

ENGLISH ANTI-FASCISM: THE BATTLE (AND MYTH) OF CABLE STREET

Unquestionably the most important development for Antifa in the English-speaking world was the Battle of Cable Street.

Sir Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists wanted to hold a march through the East End of London, home to a large Jewish population. The opposition to the march was led by the Communist Party of Great Britain, which led a broad coalition including Jews, Irish workers and members of the Labour Party, the latter disregarding its own leaders who had urged ignoring the march.¹⁵ On October 4, 1936, tens of thousands took to the streets and attacked police who were attempting to clear the streets for the march.¹⁶

Ultimately, Mosely called off the march to avoid bloodshed and the Left declared victory. Yet the legacy of the Battle of Cable Street is complicated.

In the first place, for all the talk about directly confronting

the fascists, the protesters were not really fighting fascists at all – they were fighting the police. And though the Battle of Cable Street is remembered as a time when the British Union of Fascists began its descent into political obscurity, it actually increased in popularity in the immediate aftermath.

Daniel Tilles, co-editor of “Fascism and the Jews: Italy and Britain,” wrote in *History Today*:

Within days the party’s newspaper, *Blackshirt*, was boasting that the incident had given Fascism “an immense impetus.” The BUF regularly exaggerated the strength of its support, but this particular claim was more than spurious bravado. In its monthly report on extremist political activity Special Branch observed in October “abundant evidence that the Fascist movement has been steadily gaining ground in many parts of east London.” Its sources suggested an influx of over 2,000 new recruits in the capital, a considerable boost given that party membership in London had stood at less than 3,000 earlier in the year.

In the week after Cable Street the BUF “conducted the most successful series of meetings since the beginning of the movement,” attracting crowds of thousands and little opposition. Mosley made an “enthusiastically received” address to an audience of 12,000 at Victoria Park Square, which was followed by a peaceful march to nearby Limehouse. By contrast the Communists’ efforts to consolidate their victory had “met with a very poor response.” “A definite pro-Fascist feeling has manifested itself,” the Special Branch report concluded: “The alleged Fascist defeat is in reality a Fascist advance.”¹⁷

As Tilles notes, in the immediate aftermath, the fascists were

able to claim “with some success” that it was simply trying to exercise legal free speech through meetings and police-approved processions that were “being systematically suppressed by left-wing extremists.”

Not surprisingly, the British Union of Fascists began to actively seek out such confrontations, hoping to create conflicts, win media attention and gain new recruits. Arguably, the same pattern of the Far Right and Far Left reinforcing each other through pitched battles in the streets remains at work today.

Regardless of its actual effects, for most Antifa, the Battle of Cable Street is remembered as a great victory and a testament to the power of direct action. It is because of this event that Antifa is so eager not to let fascists march, even if they have a permit to do so. And the cry of “They shall not pass!,” exclaimed by the communists on that October day, still echoes when Antifa oppose the Far Right on American streets now.

But “they shall not pass,” originally popularized as a French World War I slogan, is most popular among Antifa not because of the Battle of Cable Street, but because of a different conflict. Indeed, it is most often displayed in Spanish - *¡No pasarán!* It comes from a famous speech a few months before the Battle of Cable Street, delivered on July 19, 1936, from a defender of the Spanish Republic – a member of the Spanish Communist Party.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND INTERNATIONAL ANTIFASCISM

The great battle between Right and Left in the twentieth century was the Spanish Civil War. A leftist government controlled by a Popular Front was widely opposed by conservatives, monarchists and military officers, who rose in rebellion in July 1936.

The fight for control of Spain quickly became an international conflict, with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany assisting Francisco Franco's Nationalists and the Soviet Union assisting the Republicans.

The remaining Western democracies mostly stayed out of the war, though the Republicans would receive a great deal of rhetorical support from leftist parties and military support in the form of international volunteers who joined the fight. Among those leftist volunteers who enlisted with the Republicans was the author George Orwell, who thought he was joining the fight against fascism.

Indeed, "anti-fascism" was at the heart of the communist propaganda effort during the Spanish Civil War.

During the (temporarily) successful defense of Madrid, Dolores Ibárruri famously called on workers, farmers and "anti-fascists."

She thundered:

The Communist Party calls you to arms. We especially call upon you, workers, farmers, intellectuals to assume your positions in the fight to finally smash the enemies of the Republic and of the popular liberties. Long live the Popular Front! Long live the union of all anti-fascists! Long live the Republic of the people! The Fascists shall not pass! They shall not pass!¹⁸

Yet the old question remains. Who, exactly, are the fascists?

For example, Ibárruri (who would head the Spanish Communist Party in exile until returning to Spain after the transition to democracy in the 1970s) also blasted the Trotskyites as "the agents of fascism ... the agents of the German Gestapo ...

it is essential that we destroy Trotskyism with a firm hand, for Trotskyism is no longer a political trend in the working class, but a weapon of the counter revolution.”¹⁹

Thus, the anti-fascist Orwell learned that the most dangerous enemy for many leftists in Spain was not the fascist forces, but his fellow leftists. As chronicled in his book, *Homage to Catalonia*, the Spanish Republican cause was plagued by infighting between anarchists, Stalinist-communists, anti-Stalinist communists, liberals and myriad other factions.

Though Orwell left Spain with his democratic socialist convictions reinforced, he was scathing in his critique of the Communist Party. He was especially furious about how the Soviet-controlled leftists would savage the factions they couldn’t control as fascists. As in Germany, these divisions, and the Communist Party habit of simply calling everyone who wasn’t under its direct control a fascist, would ultimately contribute to the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War.

Indeed, it is questionable if even the Nationalist side in the Civil War was really fascist. Both sides in the Civil War consisted of broad coalitions, and the leader of the Nationalist Forces, Francisco Franco, was more of an old-style “throne and altar” European conservative and military officer than a fascist. As even Bray admits, “Franco was not a fascist himself – he was more of an authoritarian Catholic traditionalist.”²⁰ The heart of the Nationalist revolt was Franco’s Army of Africa (including many North African soldiers) and professional military officers, not fascist paramilitaries or white supremacists.

The “fascist” element of the Nationalist coalition was the “Falange,” an almost miniscule party on the eve of the Civil War. Its leader, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, was executed by

the Republicans early in the Civil War. This was convenient for Franco, who had a potentially dangerous rival for power removed and was able to incorporate the imagery and rhetoric (if not the more revolutionary policies) of the Falange into his movement and eventually his government. The Falange would rapidly grow in size during the Civil War, serving as the vanguard of the Nationalist forces, though without its charismatic leader it would never displace Franco and the movement was essentially co-opted.

Despite all the proud boasts of “they shall not pass,” the Nationalists ultimately did pass, capturing Madrid in 1939 and taking over the country. Franco brutally suppressed his leftist opponents after the war. However, though he partially owed his victory to Mussolini and Hitler and sent troops to fight the Soviet Union during World War II, Franco never formally joined the Axis cause and so remained in power after the Nazi defeat.

Many conservatives, both at the time and afterward, argued that were it not for Franco, Spain would have been transformed into essentially a Soviet satellite. Such hypotheticals are impossible to settle. Initially isolated after the war, Spain eventually became a close ally of the United States during the Cold War, developed a thriving middle class during the “Spanish miracle,” restored the monarchy soon after Franco’s death and is today a Western democracy. “Fascism” has almost no presence in contemporary Spain.

Yet the Spanish Left is thriving today. The defeat of the Spanish Left in the Civil War gave the communists, left-anarchists and the international volunteers the aura of martyrdom, as well as the boast of being the first Western military forces to fight the allies of Adolf Hitler. The Spanish Civil War is

thus important for contemporary Antifa because it is a source of heroes, slogans and inspiration, with the narrative of “anti-fascist” resistance used to cloak the Stalinist affiliations of many Republican fighters.

For example, there are monuments to the Americans who fought on the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War throughout the United States, including a monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade unveiled in 2008 in San Francisco.²¹ Of course, as conservative author Daniel Flynn points out, about 80 percent of the brigade was officially affiliated with the Communist Party and were essentially fighting for Stalin.²² Indeed, such pro-Stalinist forces were the mortal enemies of anti-authoritarian leftist forces in Spain.

Yet because the Spanish Communist Party never actually ruled Spain, it was never morally discredited or publicly disgraced the way communism has been in Eastern Europe. Instead, the struggle against Franco’s Nationalists is simply regarded as anti-fascism rather than a battle to impose communism. The problematic associations and policies of figures such as Ibárruri are wiped away by the thrilling call that “they shall not pass.”

Indeed, symbols of some of the dissident Spanish leftist factions, notably the red and black flag of the anarchist National Confederation of Labour, is still incorporated into Antifa imagery today, even though it was these dissident groups who were smeared as fascists by Communist Party members during the war itself.²³

Political defeat in Germany papered over the divisions between the SPD Iron Front and the KPD’s Antifascist Action and allowed the symbols and legacies of both movements to be used by Antifa today. A similar process took place in Spain.

And today, while Franco's monuments are torn down in Spain itself, the symbols of the Spanish Left are used by Antifa around the world.

ANTIFASCISM IN POWER – EAST GERMANY

As Nazi Germany neared defeat in 1945, some of the original anti-fascist groups began reforming to take power in German cities. As Loren Belhorn points out in *Jacobin*, many of these Antifa groups were composed of older men who had been members of the SPD and the KPD, survivors of the prewar leftist movements.²⁴ These Antifa groups briefly drove policy in some German cities after the war.

However, the more moderate SPD eventually joined with the anti-communist policies of the Western allies, once again splitting the German Left. The KPD briefly rose after the war, legitimized by its opposition to the Nazis, but it also was eventually sidelined. When Antifa arose again in West Germany, it had a far different emphasis.

The situation was different in what would become East Germany. What few indigenous Antifa groups arose were quickly co-opted and marginalized by the Soviet occupiers. Yet anti-fascism became central to the East German government's claims of legitimacy.

The new leadership in East Germany was composed of members of the KPD – the German Communist Party which had actually created Antifascist Action as a front group.

The governing party of East Germany was the Socialist Unity Party (SED), created by the merger of the SPD with the KPD (thanks to heavy Soviet pressure on the former). East

German leaders like Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck were former KPD members who spent World War II working for the Soviet Union.

And just as East Germany co-opted the term “democracy” for the formal name of the country – the German Democratic Republic – it also heavily used anti-fascism in its propaganda. For example, the most iconic symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall itself, was officially called the Anti Fascist Protection Rampart.

According to the regime’s ideology, “denazification” hadn’t sufficiently been executed in the West Germany, which the East German regime continued to portray as staffed by ex-Nazis. In contrast, East Germany taught its people about “heroes” such as Red Front leader and KPD chief Ernst Thälmann. Resistance to the Nazis was incorporated as central to the East German identity. The supposed danger of fascism, and the fear that it would somehow return, was used to justify the East German regime’s repression, similar to how Antifa uses the supposed danger of fascism to justify attacking people today.

However, in a complicated way, this East German denazification was actually less complete than it was in the West for two reasons.

First, in West Germany, there was a heavy burden of guilt placed upon postwar Germans, which eventually led to some of the overtly self-hating Antifa movements of the future such as the Anti-Germans – Germans who actually mobilized against any expression of patriotism in their country.²⁵ In contrast, in East Germany, the regime portrayed the citizens (most of whom had once identified as National Socialists and worked or fought for the Hitler regime) as victims of history, rather than

perpetrators.²⁶ Thus, though the Nazi past was demonized, East Germans were blessed as automatically Anti-Fascist, and were not told to confront their own past or apologize for their history.

Second, the Soviet definition of “fascism” interpreted the phenomenon as part of class warfare. Recall that the Communist International had defined it as “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.” It was thus a phenomenon blamed on capitalism, rather than on racism or sexism inherent within traditional Western culture as a typical leftist academic (and certainly a typical Antifa activist) would argue today.²⁷ Because fascism was a product of capitalism, there wasn’t the same drive to completely deconstruct and unmake supposedly national identities and cultures seen in contemporary leftists, who are chiefly driven by Cultural Marxism.

East Germany may have been repressive and used anti-fascism as a rationale for its repression – but the communist bureaucrats of that regime were far more restrained in their aims than the Antifa activists of today.

POLICING THE SCENE – THE NEW ANTIFA IN THE U.K.

Anti-fascism remained a brand utilized by postwar Western European leftist groups. Direct attacks were often launched against Far-Right parties, notably when Sir Oswald Mosley tried to make a political comeback years after World War II.

One of the most important developments in postwar anti-fascism was the creation of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) in the United Kingdom in 1977. Like most Antifa groupings, it was a front group, in this case a creation of the Socialist Workers

Party. The ANL's main enemy was the National Front, a Far Right grouping which campaigned against Third World immigration into Britain.

As Steve Tilzey recalls in *No Retreat*, he joined the fight against the National Front even before he really understood what socialist politics was all about. Though he had been in violent situations in the past, "I felt that this politics thing had a real purpose and logic, that there was a tangible enemy to hate, the NF [the National Front], the bosses and the police," he wrote.²⁸

The ANL, despite its ostensible broad base, had a solid core of hard left supporters. The "ANL was dominated by the Socialist Workers' Party, although Labour MPs, trade union leaders and a number of smaller left-wing groups and anti-racist/anti-fascist campaigns also got behind the campaign."²⁹

The squads, or paramilitary fighters created by the Socialist Workers Party, were controversial within the Left. As Dave Hann recalls in *Physical Resistance: A Hundred Years of Anti-Fascism*, a schism "developed between anti-fascist militants and party devotees," as the former were "increasingly autonomous." Thus, the squads were building up "local allegiances with numerous non-aligned individuals, anarchists and members of rival left wing groups."³⁰

The squads were eventually kicked out of the SWP, but many of their members went on to form "Red Action." These activists, in turn, helped created Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) in 1985. Hann in "Physical Resistance" identifies the players behind the AFA as "Red Action, Class War, the Jewish Socialist Group, Newham Monitoring Project and Workers Power... representatives from Searchlight [an anti-racist monitoring

group, similar to the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project], the Refugee Forum, and local anti-racist bodies from places some distance from the capital."³¹

In 1976, music star Eric Clapton made comments supporting Enoch Powell, a Conservative Party member who had warned against mass Third World immigration in his famous "Rivers of Blood" speech.³² Along with other statements of support for the Far Right from some musicians, this led to the creation of Rock Against Racism, a series of concerts designed to combat the Far Right. Much of Antifa activity also consisted of trying to shut down Far Right concerts and prevent fascists from gaining any kind of a presence in the music world.

The development of Anti Fascist Action (which eventually led to Unite Against Fascism) and Rock Against Racism (which eventually became Love Music Hate Racism) are a kind of bridge from the old Antifa, which was more or less directly controlled by specific parties and what became contemporary anti-fascism.

There are three important differences between the "old" Antifa and the contemporary breed.

- First, contemporary Antifa is based in the hard Left, but today it is harder to link its members to a specific political party in the same way the German "Red Front" was essentially just a group for the Communist Party (KPD). Instead, it serves as a kind of "safe space" for the hard Left to infiltrate and organize.

For example, Unite Against Fascism deliberately tries to assemble as broad a coalition as possible. Yet UAF is widely noted for how many members of the Socialist

Workers Party are in the leadership, the same SWP that once kicked out the squads from its own party because they weren't disciplined enough.³³ Antifa today is far more autonomous and less linked to a particular faction than those of the past, though its participants are still all on the hard Left and particular leftist parties still do their best to try to control and lead the various organizations.

- Second, much of anti-fascism is about controlling the cultural sphere, rather than just the political sphere. When there is no actual Nazi group hosting marches or standing for elections, Antifa members try to shut down bands they don't like, close businesses that employ people they don't like, and prevent any other events they don't think should be held. The Antifa brand is also closely associated with particular music and cultural scenes, notably punk during the 1970s.
- Third, most Antifa today, especially on the Continent, are anarchists, rather than state socialists. And the most militant come out of the Autonomist movement.

RISE OF THE AUTONOMISTS AND THE NEW ANARCHIST ANTIFA

The largest movement that sustains Antifa in Europe is autonomism, a new Marxist approach that involves bottom-up organizing rather than the top-down Stalinist model. This movement emphasizes the ability of the working class to initiate its own self activity, rather than simply following the orders of a vanguard party or being utterly subject to the capitalist ruling class. Autonomists try to live outside and against

both the state and the capitalist economy.

What this means in real life is the formation of squatter colonies in many cities of Western Europe, the reclamation of empty buildings to create centers for propagating radical ideas and protest movements, and attacking social norms that were viewed as supporting oppressive ideas. “The soul of the new autonomous movement was strongly animated by new currents of radical feminism, evident in the first Take Back the Night marches in Rome in 1976, where ten thousand women dressed as witches and chanted ‘No longer mothers, no longer daughters, we’re going to destroy families,’” writes Bray.³⁴

Bray notes the original Antifa logo featured two red flags to represent “communism and socialism,” but newer Antifa publications produced by these movements generally feature a red flag with the black flag of “anarchism/autonomism.” Some may feature two black flags. Needless to say, this kind of scene is very welcoming to certain kinds of musicians and artists, which helps expand the Antifa brand into culture, and not just politics.

The emphasis on protest, living outside both the state and the capitalist system, and deliberately trying to deconstruct existing identities and the entire social order has also allowed the autonomists to pioneer many of the tactics and ideas now characteristic of Antifa. Among them is the black bloc tactic and the uncompromising opposition to the police.

The most spectacular recent demonstration of these activists’ effectiveness was the huge July 2017 riot in Hamburg, Germany, to protest the G20 conference. A black bloc of around one thousand people helped lead resistance to police, spearheading thousands more protesters in a violent demonstration that led to widespread property damage, hundreds of

arrests, and 476 police being hurt.³⁵

The German government identified an Antifa website as being at the center of planning for this demonstration.³⁶ However, though Antifa groups and organizations were heavily involved, tactics such as the black bloc and the growth of anarchist colonies and squatter settlements can't be stopped by banning a website. Indeed, media coverage showing the compelling images of black blocs fighting with police guarantees the movement will grow organically. Every action by Antifa helps grow its brand just as attacks by terrorists build the reputation of ISIS's caliphate, even when there is no central command.³⁷

AMERICAN ANTIFA

Though the autonomist movement is central to Antifa in Western Europe, Antifa in America owes more to the street-level anti-fascism pioneered by British activists as they fought for control of music scenes. SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) and RASH (Red And Anarchist Skinheads) formed in the 1980s to fight racist skinheads who showed up to concerts and were creating a growing subculture. However, the most important creation was Anti-Racist Action, the outgrowth of an anti-racist gang known as The Baldies in Minneapolis.³⁸ With dozens of chapters around the country, Anti-Racist Action became the face of Antifa in the United States until very recently.

Typical activities included beating up fascists who showed up to concerts and cleaning up Far Right graffiti. They also "defended abortion clinics against Christian fundamentalist attacks (support for 'reproductive freedom' was one of ARA's four points of unity), organized cop-watch patrols, protested

supposed police brutality, conducted Palestine solidarity campaigns, and supported the imprisoned Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal,” as Bray put it.³⁹ Bray also notes the ARA was “predominantly anarchist and antiauthoritarian ... though there were also Trotskyist, Maoist, and other Left members as well.”

The first American group to use the name Antifa was Rose City Antifa in Portland, Oregon, founded in 2007. According to Bray, Rose City Antifa was characterized by the high number of Europeans among the founders.⁴⁰ This is now an increasing characteristic of the larger movement, as anti-racists in America increasingly look to the Continent for tactics and ideology.

Thus, though the autonomist movement doesn’t have the same kind of presence in America as it does in Western Europe, the ideology and aesthetics of this new form of left-anarchism is still having a major impact in the United States. Centers serve as hubs for these movements, notably The Base in New York City, with new spinoff locations planned soon.⁴¹

ANTIFA: THE BRAND

Antifa is a brand. It was created as a front group for communists and now it is more commonly used by anarchists. From the days of the KPD’s original Antifacist Action to the Refuse Fascism coalition opposing President Trump headed by the Revolutionary Communist Party, anti-fascism has always just been a propaganda term for the communists. Rather than opposing fascism, the primary goal has always been to advance the murderous ideology of the radical left through violence.

The only question is whether Antifa is working on behalf of a specific communist party (as during the days of the Red Front

ANTIFA

in prewar Germany) or on behalf of a more decentralized movement. Either way, for conservatives, libertarians and even genuine liberals, the slogan Antifa brandished during the recent Hamburg riots should be considered an apt warning – “Welcome To Hell.” And as the Trump presidency has shown thus far, even if you are not fascist, even if you are explicitly *against* fascism, if you are a conservative, Antifa is coming for you.

THE TRUMP ERA

There's nothing new about Antifa or leftists generally declaring Republicans fascist. Left-wing author Naomi Klein famously declared in 2007 that each of what she considered the ten steps to fascism "has already been initiated today in the United States by the Bush administration."¹ And black blocs had been seen before in anti-globalization protests or protests against the Bush administration. Conservative campus speakers have been habitually shut down for years by self-described anti-fascists. In 2009 for example, brick-wielding protesters forced the cancellation of a speech by former Congressman Tom Tancredo at the University of North Carolina.²

Yet the election of Donald J. Trump has galvanized leftists to organize specifically as Antifa and the brand has become far more prominent since he was elected. Trump becoming President of the United States constituted an existential challenge to Antifa for three main reasons:

- First, Trump, in addition to tens of millions of regular hard-working Americans was heavily supported by the Alt-Right, a coalition of nationalist, paleoconservative, Identitarian and White Nationalist activists and intellectuals that

grew out of an Internet subculture. Though the term had a more ambiguous meaning before the election, most people would come to call it racist following the election, as figures such as Milo Yiannopoulos, Steve Bannon and others who had once associated with the label disavowed it. Hillary Clinton had specifically condemned the movement as racist during the campaign, but she had targeted too many people. Instead of focusing on a fringe group, she had characterized virtually the entire base of Trump's supporters as deplorable, thus encouraging Trump voters to defiantly rally to the cause, rather than worry about being associated with racists.

Of course, both the Alt-Right itself and the ferociously anti-Trump media had a motive to exaggerate the Alt-Right's numbers, importance and proximity to Trump. Nonetheless, after Donald Trump had been elected, there was excitable talk about how "fascism" now resided in the White House. The people Antifa had defined as its main enemy were no longer marginal. It's not surprising that many left-wing activists, especially considering how broadly they define "fascism," took the rhetoric seriously.

- Second, the ability of Trump's Internet supporters to dominate discussion and create memes on heavily trafficked websites like 4chan's /pol (Politically Incorrect) forum, Twitter, and various pages on Reddit was a major challenge to Antifa's strategy of "No Platform." If fascists could distribute their ideas online and largely anonymously, they would essentially have outflanked Antifa and rendered their control of the streets unimportant. Thus, Antifa had

to increase efforts to dox and economically ruin Alt-Right or Trump supporters, making it increasingly dangerous even to flirt with nationalist ideas.

- Finally, and most importantly, Trump's confrontational, politically incorrect approach and refusal to apologize emboldened conservatives who were impatient with the apologetic, defensive approach of the mainstream conservative movement. While few Trump supporters could be characterized as racist, let alone fascist, normal conservative college students were suddenly chanting slogans such as "build the wall" or making half-serious declarations such as "feminism is cancer."

Rather than being rebellious, the radical Left was suddenly forced into the position of being censors and cracking down on views many normal Republicans considered common sense, not "fascist." So instead of being confronted by "fascists," Antifa groups suddenly had to deal with normal Republicans confronting them or even seeking out fights with them rather than apologizing.

PREMONITIONS OF WHAT WAS COMING

A sign of things to come was the March 11, 2016, Donald Trump rally in Chicago, during the Republican primaries. A huge coalition of leftist groups and activists (notably including former domestic terrorist Bill Ayers) succeeded in shutting down the rally, creating images of Trump supporters being beaten in the streets. Incredibly, Trump's fellow Republicans, including Sen. Ted Cruz, actually blamed Trump for the violence, moaning how Trump had created "an environment that

encourages this sort of nasty discourse.”³

Such attacks on Trump supporters became a typical part of the campaign. In May 2016, Mexican flag-waving protesters attacked Trump backers at a rally in New Mexico.⁴ Similar scenes took place outside a Trump rally in Costa Mesa, California.⁵

Antifa also briefly became part of the national conversation after a June 2016 rally in Sacramento, by the national socialist Traditionalist Workers Party (TWP). Antifa Sacramento and a far-left group known as BAMN (By Any Means Necessary) attacked the group with weapons in what became known as the “Battle of Sacramento.” Significantly, the TWP had claimed it was responding to violence against Trump supporters, showing how violent leftist tactics can actually embolden the Far Right to step forward and offer itself as protectors. Several people were stabbed.⁶

“PUNCH A NAZI”

Yet it was Trump’s Inauguration that truly set the tone for the emergence of Antifa as a mainstream force in American cultural life. Investigative reporter James O’ Keefe’s Project Veritas captured members of the DC Anti-Fascist Coalition planning to attack the DeploraBall of Trump supporters with an acid bomb. Scuffles and fights still took place outside on the night of the event, and on Inauguration Day itself, there was widespread rioting, property destruction and arson by Antifa using the black bloc tactic. Most notably, Alt-Right figurehead Richard Spencer was sucker-punched by a masked Antifa member while giving an interview. The attack was captured on video and quickly went viral.⁷

This last incident truly launched the modern wave of Antifa, as the cry of “Punch a Nazi” was largely celebrated by the mainstream media and openly defended by progressives, including reporters and celebrities.

A spate of articles appeared in the leftist press soon afterward featuring Antifa and predicting rapid growth for the brand. Wes Enzinna claimed in *Mother Jones* that Antifa and fascists would soon be battling in the streets. “The return of the war between fascists and anti-fascists is another expression of our current political atavism,” Enzinna wrote. “This time, given a uniquely pugilistic president of the United States, the battle may rage hotter than ever.”⁸

Natasha Lennard openly defended Antifa and implicitly called Trump a fascist in *The Nation*, condemning liberals who “cling to institutions” instead of fighting the right. “The decision to join the Women’s March or Disrupt #J20 should not be a benchmark for division,” she wrote. “The line instead should only be drawn when someone, in [sic] professed name of democracy, would sooner condemn or even imprison anti-fascist, anti-racist actors before they would see a ceremony affirming and buoying fascism meet with interference.”⁹

In February 2017, black bloc protesters in Berkeley shut down a speech by provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos. The violence caused \$100,000 in damage and featured assaults on members of the College Republicans and random bystanders and even the use of Molotov cocktails against police.¹⁰ President Trump openly speculated about denying federal funds to the university in response.

The violence in Berkeley was a rallying cry for Trump supporters, who began targeting the city for a number of free speech

rallies. On March 4, a rally to support free speech was attacked by Antifa. However, after months of experiencing violence at Antifa's hands, Trump supporters were ready. One man, Kyle Chapman, equipped with a gas mask and armed with a stick, whacked a black-masked protester over the head during the ensuing brawl, becoming known as "Based Stickman" on the Internet, and creating the first widespread anti-Antifa meme.¹¹

On April 15, Chapman returned to Berkeley, along with right-wing online celebrities Brittany Pettibone and Lauren Southern, for another "free speech" rally. Antifa again brawled with Trump supporters. Another anti-Antifa meme was created when Nathan Damigo, head of the overtly Alt-Right group "Identity Evropa," was captured punching a female Antifa activist, whom online trolls quickly discovered was a porn model. Because of her dreadlocks, she was christened "Moldylocks" on the Internet and Antifa had suffered another humiliation.

The right wingers were largely credited with routing the leftists in the "Battle of Berkeley" and the pattern for tit-for-tat street violence continued to escalate. However, as author Scott Greer pointed out, all Antifa had to do to avoid escalation was simply not show up to the free speech rallies. As he noted, in the months since the election, leftists had cheered the attack on Richard Spencer and the riot that shut down Milo. Academic Charles Murray had also been prevented from addressing Middlebury College by a violent mob that even assaulted a female professor.

The main thing that had changed, said Greer, was the Right was fighting back and openly organizing self-defense groups. He wrote:

The only conclusion to draw from this chain of events is that it was probably a bad idea to think violence was a good way to show your opposition to Trump. Now that elements of the Right have shown that they have the capability to defend themselves and drive the opposition, the only result of this embrace of violence is the radicalization of the Left's enemies.¹²

At the same time, even as the Right was organizing for street fights, the Left was continuing to identify all Trump supporters as "fascists." For example, "It's Going Down," a well-known Antifa hub, distributed propaganda in April comparing Trump supporters to Nazi soldiers and portraying those "Nazis" (wearing "Make America Great Again" hats) as being confronted by bayonets.¹³ That same month, a community parade in East Portland was canceled after threats against the local Republican Party, which had been slated to participate.¹⁴ Ordinary Republicans, even those who despised the Alt-Right, were thus being dragged into the battle.

On June 25, two rallies were held in Washington D.C., both of which could have been open to attack by Antifa. The first, the Freedom of Speech rally at the Lincoln Memorial, featured Richard Spencer and other Alt-Right personalities. The Rally Against Political Violence featured Michael Cernovich and other Alt Lite personalities who had broken with the Alt-Right over the issue of racism. However, Antifa generally protests both groups, considering them both racist. Interestingly, on this day, DC Antifa opted to avoid confrontation and instead protested the Washington D.C. police.¹⁴

After the Left's defeat at Berkeley and the peaceful events in Washington D.C., some speculated Antifa were standing down.

This was a mistake. In late July, the New Century Foundation, an academic group that calls itself “racial realist” and discusses white racial interests, was protested at its yearly conference by a large Antifa group and one attendee got into a fight with a protester.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, just as Antifa grew, the “racial realist” group’s own attendance also grew, with the conference selling out.

The Far Left and the Far Right were thus in a symbiotic relationship, as the growth of one fueled the growth of the other. It would have looked familiar to Italians of the 1920s.

THE BATTLE OF CHARLOTTESVILLE AND ITS AFTERMATH

The Unite the Right event was supposed to be the biggest “Far Right” event of a generation, with Richard Spencer headlining a group of “Alt-Right” speakers. Groups participating included Identity Evropa, the League of the South, the Traditionalist Workers Party, and the National Socialist Movement. The night before the event, a torchlight parade took place on the campus of the University of Virginia, with little opposition by Antifa. The number of attendees and the intimidating optics shocked the media and leftist protesters.

However, the next day, police broke up the scheduled Unite the Right event, forcing attendees into a mobs of waiting Antifa. The result was a massive street brawl as police largely let the two groups fight it out. Ultimately, the death of one woman protester resulted from the chaos.¹⁷

President Trump said “both sides” were responsible for the violence, sparking outrage among many reporters and even among some Republican officials. In the immediate aftermath

of the event, Antifa became mainstream, openly celebrated by many reporters as the equivalent of the American soldiers who stormed Normandy.

The Atlantic's Jeffrey Goldberg and former Hillary Clinton spokesman Brian Fallon both said the troops at Normandy had also "confronted the Nazis" without a permit.¹⁸ Mitt Romney and Jeb Bush both condemned the president for not doing enough to combat racism, suggesting there was no equivalence between the Alt-Right and those who protested them.¹⁹ For a brief time, Antifa members were heroes, the Republic's defenders against a supposedly surging White Nationalist movement.

But this narrative collapsed quickly. A small "No to Marxism" rally in Berkeley held August 27 was overwhelmed by mostly peaceful protesters, but was also attacked by a black bloc of Antifa. Group beatings and even attacks against reporters were captured on video. Kyle Swenson's story in *The Washington Post* was headlined "Black-clad Antifa members attack peaceful right-wing demonstrators in Berkeley."²⁰ Nancy Pelosi openly condemned the group. The mayor of Berkeley shared his disgust, calling Antifa a "street gang."²¹

By the next day, the media, which had mostly been supporting Antifa groups, had turned on them. Even liberal intellectuals, such as *Atlantic* editor Peter Beinart, said Antifa was doing more harm than good and serving as the "unlikeliest allies" of the "authoritarianism growing on the American right."²² Comedian Trevor Noah mocked ISIS as "Vegan ISIS"; even the satirical magazine *The Onion* joked that Antifa was spending its time disrupting not just neo-Nazi rallies, but whatever else is going on that day.²³ Capping off the PR nightmare for Antifa,

Politico reported the Department of Homeland Security classified the activities of Antifa as “domestic terrorist violence.”²⁴

IS THERE AN ALT-LEFT?

President Donald Trump used the term “Alt-Left” when discussing the violent left-wing protesters in Charlottesville and around the country. Many reporters scoffed at the term, denying it even existed.²⁵ Others have used “Alt-Left” in the way progressives used “Alt-Right,” not to mean anything in particular, but simply to mean “bad” or “extreme.”

Yet there is a case that there is such a thing as the Alt-Left. The Alt-Right, for example, challenges many of the premises of the American conservative movement – the belief in racial equality, the wisdom of the Iraq War, free trade, and American support for the Jewish state of Israel. Such views may be considered offensive or even monstrous by many conservatives, but they exist. It’s a fringe alternative, but an alternative.

The same could be true of Antifa and its sympathizers, what could broadly be called the Alt-Left. And the views of these activists are quite well known. Indeed, Antifa is quite comfortable in expressing them. Many progressives, indeed most, would be furious or even disgusted by them. But like the Alt-Right, the Alt-Left, if only because it has been branded by Donald Trump, now exists.

It is highly instructive to examine what Antifa is against. It has no allegiance to:

- Liberal democracy and its norms (such as free speech)

- The rule of law (the police are seen as serving a racist system)
- The free market and private property (most Antifa members are communists or anarchists)
- The Democratic Party
- The existence of the United States itself

These are neither mischaracterizations nor slurs, but rather an accurate summary of Antifa's own views, as put forward by its own statements. As Antifa chanted at the most recent rally in Berkeley, "No borders, no wall, no U.S.A. at all."²⁶

Antifa groups are not liberal. They are revolutionaries.²⁷ They explicitly support the destruction of America's social order. They see "fascism" everywhere. But anti-fascism is, and always has been, just a means to an end. And that end is either communism or left-anarchism, depending on the particular group in question.

American progressivism, however much conservatives may disagree with it, shares certain essential premises in common with the mainstream American Right. The rule of law, freedom of speech, private property, and the existence and legitimacy of the country itself are all accepted by the mainstream American Left.

And yet, Antifa has managed to become, in a curious way, mainstream. No group is more despised in the modern West than neo-Nazis. Antifa has won public support by proclaiming itself the public's defender against this all-but-nonexistent threat.

Of course, Antifa never has to explain what it wants, because it is rarely asked. If it were, even liberals would find they have virtually nothing in common with the people

claiming to defend them from Nazis.

Saying you are an anti-fascist will not threaten your job, or family, or your physical security. Thanks to Antifa itself, saying you voted for the current president of the United States is far more dangerous to your economic and physical well-being, depending on where you live in this country.

Antifa isn't just *against* certain things. What it wants is a communist or anarchist revolution. What it wants is to deconstruct what most of us still believe is the greatest country and civilization in the world. Few who have a stake in the continued existence of this society and this country share Antifa's vision.

Americans can disagree about the wisdom of certain policies, or whether a particular party or politician will do a good or bad job in office. But when Antifa openly declares its intention to destroy what Americans have built, it's time to start asking questions about a group that all too often is portrayed as a defender of the community, rather than one of its greatest threats.

Many Americans are starting to ask such questions. They understand Antifa doesn't comprise just political opponents like some Democratic congressman or liberal political activist. These are domestic terrorists. Their aims are totalitarian. Their ranks are growing and are likely to continue to grow.

And as you have learned from this report, even if you despise genuine fascism or racism, you are still very likely one of Antifa's enemies.

CONCLUSION – TIME FOR ANTICOM?

Antifa justifies its existence and tactics by claiming the supposed threats of fascism and National Socialism are so overwhelming

that those who adhere to those ideologies – or even to ideas that could potentially further those ideologies – simply must be stopped before they cause the deaths of millions.

Mark Bray, author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, speaking on the left-wing television network “Democracy Now” with his employer’s name (Dartmouth) serving as a backdrop, forthrightly declared that the enemy is so fearsome and evil that speech must be restricted. He thundered:

At what point do you say enough is enough and give up on the liberal notion that essentially what we need to do is create a regime of rights that allow neo-Nazis and their victims to co-exist, quote-unquote, peacefully, and recognize that the neo-Nazis don’t want that and that also the anti-fascists are right in not looking at it through that liberal lens and seeing fascism not as an ‘opinion’ that needs to be responded to ‘respectfully,’ but as an enemy to humanity that needs to be stopped by any means necessary.”²⁸

Yet this raises an interesting hypothetical experiment. Far more people were killed in the last century in the name of human equality and the Brotherhood of Man than in the name of the Aryan race. By this standard, it makes even more sense for a force of anti-communists – or Anticom – to spring up. After all, it could be argued very persuasively that communism “is not an ‘opinion’ that needs to be responded to ‘respectfully’ but [must be viewed] as an enemy to humanity that needs to be stopped by any means necessary.”

In fact, considering how truly marginal actual fascists or neo-Nazis are in today’s America, if regular Americans were to adopt Bray’s logic, they might feel compelled to stop *him* from

speaking. If they adopted his logic, they might say that since Bray is an avowed supporter of the most murderous ideology in human history, his sheer existence is an insult to its victims.

But conservatives and libertarians do not think this way – not even close. Without a second thought, they endorse freedom of speech even to avowed enemies. In a free society, good citizens have enough faith in each other and in the rule of law that they believe allowing destructive opinions to be aired is a reasonable price to pay for preserving liberty for all. As Thomas Jefferson put it in a letter to William Roscoe, “We are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.”

Antifa does not agree. And what it defines as “fascism” encompasses not just everyone on the American Right, but most people in the country. Antifa has made a unilateral declaration of war on every free citizen of this country, decreeing that they and they alone have the right to judge, punish, and even physically attack people for holding opinions that most people would consider not just to be non-racist, but simply common sense.

Decent Americans should not be deceived. No matter how reasonable their rhetoric, apologetic their tone, or inoffensive their positions, Antifa will always consider them as enemies. No matter how furiously good Americans denounce fascism or parade nonwhite supporters for the cameras, they will still be called fascists and racists and homophobes. And the rights of freedom of speech, assembly and association will continue to fade away until real Americans, those who truly love their country, culture and Constitution, fight back. ■

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