

TEN YEARS ON AFTER THE *FILTHY, VIOLENT WHITE SUPREMACIST RIOT* TRADE UNIONISTS, ETHNIC PEOPLE & ALL ANTI-RACISTS MUST UNITE TO OPEN UP CRONULLA BEACH TO PEOPLE OF COLOUR! KICK THE RACISTS OUT!



12 December 2015 - Today, brave people of all colours will take a stand against racism on the shameful anniversary of the racist riot on Cronulla Beach. Ten years ago in Cronulla thousands of racists savagely rampaged against people of Middle Eastern and South Asian backgrounds and, indeed, against anyone *without white skin*. **An Aboriginal youth and many people of Afghan, Bangladeshi, Iranian and Lebanese background were amongst those brutally bashed.** The riot was always meant to target all coloured people: it was openly built as “L_b and W_g bashing day.” The disgusting radio shock jocks, like Alan Jones, who promoted the racist riot ranted *especially* against “Lebanese Muslims.” During the riot, at least one woman who was wearing Islamic head dress had her headscarf pulled off as she fled violent attackers. However, people from all religious backgrounds were attacked if they did not appear White enough. **Thus, among those physically attacked was at least one boy of Jewish heritage and one girl of Greek background.**

The riot incited copy-cat attacks in the weeks and months that followed. from the Gold Coast to Melbourne there were individual attacks on coloured people at other beaches. At the time, one fascist website boasted: “The last two months have done more for Australian nationalism than the last ten years combined.” Six weeks after the riot, a middle-aged Sudanese man was brutally bashed by white racists at Seven Hills shopping centre in Sydney’s West. The following week another Sudanese man, this time in his 20s, was hospitalised after being attacked by racists in the same shopping centre. In Rockhampton, Queensland on “Australia Day” - just a month and a half after the Cronulla riot - a gang of rednecks went around in two cars with air rifles shooting *specifically* at Aboriginal people (*Koori Mail*, 1 February 2006). Among those shot was a thirteen year-old boy. The Aboriginal youth had to be operated on to remove an air gun pellet just millimetres from one of his lungs. Further south in Toowoomba, the house where Sudanese refugee Khamisa Abui and her seven children were living was firebombed by Neo-Nazis (*The Courier Mail*, 28 April 2006).

Nevertheless, today’s anti-racist mobilisation in Cronulla is not about the past – **it is about the present and the future.** Since the 2005 white supremacist riot, racist violence against people of colour in Australia has actually increased. In 2009, racist attacks on Indian, Chinese and other Asian students residing in Australia reached such a high level that it made media headlines and provoked international outrage. Such attacks continue today. Over the last 18 months the number of racist attacks has surged. Discriminatory government policies and draconian repression in the name of “fighting terrorism” have all helped to create a dangerous racist climate – a climate that nurtures racist violence and abuse on the streets.

Some people who sincerely do not like racism want to put their head in the sand and say we should just forget about Cronulla and “move on.” But the lasting effect of the riot in Cronulla is encouraging racist forces all over Australia *right at this very moment!* Although Cronulla is a heavily ‘Anglo’ area by composition, prior to the riot the beach itself used to be a very multi-racial spot. It was Sydney’s only major beach with a train station near it and could easily be accessed by car from Sydney’s multi-racial Southwest without having to pass through city traffic. However, since the riot, the number of non-white people going to Cronulla Beach has greatly diminished. Especially given the heightened racism throughout Australian society, people of colour are, understandably, fearful of going there. Those who do venture there have sometimes copped hostile stares or verbal abuse. As a result many people from Middle Eastern, Asian and African backgrounds are forced to go either further south to beaches near or in Wollongong or south to beaches like Brighton-Le-Sands. As the leader of the despicable fascist Party For Freedom, Nick Folkes, put it: “What happened 10 years ago protected [Cronulla] ... they haven’t had gangs [*read people of colour hanging out in groups with friends*] coming in.” That the riot has “achieved” such an on-going, de-facto “ethnic cleansing” of Cronulla Beach is a huge source of “inspiration” for Neo-Nazis and other violent racist groups – outfits that have been increasingly active over the last year. The Cronulla riot is their ideal! That is why one fascist group, the Party For Freedom, has planned to hold a rally celebrating the riot while a rival Neo-Nazi outfit, the Australia First Party (which actually helped incite the Cronulla riot itself) has vowed

to effect flash mob provocations on the beach. More importantly, the fact that the riot's effect has never been undone is one of the things that is giving confidence to bigots nationwide to harass and assault Asian and African people on public transport, bash coloured people on the streets and intimidate Muslim women wearing headscarves.

This is why Trotskyist Platform argues that today's anti-racist mobilisation must have a perspective of not just opposing the far-right groups that plan to celebrate the riot but of *enforcing the right of coloured people to use the beach safely*. Our aim should be to bring a multiracial crowd of people, especially including a large number of people of colour, into the heart of Cronulla Beach and enforce their right to use it without intimidation or abuse. This was how black and white activists in the early 1960s Freedom Rides in the U.S.A sat together in bus terminal restrooms and waiting rooms (and later also restaurants and hotels) that were reserved exclusively for white people. We need a perspective of organising large numbers of coloured activists to unite with white activists and make a point of using Cronulla Beach together to *break open* the defacto restriction, effectively a system of apartheid in all but name, on the number of coloured people using the area. This will be the opposite of what happened ten years ago: it should be anyone who intimidates or makes people with dark skin feel unwelcome who should be kicked off the beach. ***Violent white supremacists have no place on stolen Black land.***

If this perspective of de-segregating Cronulla Beach can be realised it will send a message to racists everywhere that their attacks will be defeated. Whether it is sensible to attempt to realise this perspective today will depend on how strong the forces are that have been mobilised for today's anti-racist gathering. The intensity of the vilification of Muslims by right-wing politicians and the climate of repression since the Paris terror attacks does intimidate many would-be anti-racist activists. But it is still possible that we may end up with sufficient forces today to open up Cronulla Beach to people of colour.

RELY ON THE MULTIRACIAL WORKING CLASS MASSES NOT THE CAPITALIST STATE

The Greens and some small-l liberal anti-racists have opposed any anti-racist mobilisation in Cronulla today using the argument that such a mobilisation will incite the extreme racists. However, far-right racists have for a long time now planned an event in Cronulla to commemorate the riot's tenth anniversary, specifically with the hope of actually sparking a new riot. What is *actually igniting the flames of extreme racism* is the vilification of Muslims by the mainstream media, the brutality at the hands of sadistic detention centre guards against refugees imprisoned in the hellholes of Christmas Island and Nauru and the ongoing state repression against Muslims and Aboriginal people. The fascist inferno, once ignited, is then able to grow because the fascists and the government racist policies that fuel them have not been combated powerfully enough. Allowing the flames of fascism to burn unimpeded will only allow new fuel sources to combust in their turn and the racist bonfire will become larger and more menacing. Those who advocate a so-called 'pacifist' perspective, unfortunately regardless of their intentions, are actually assisting the spread of far-right extremism.

Small-l liberals, social democrats and Greens also say that we should leave it to the police, courts and governments to stop the extreme racists on the day of the Cronulla riot anniversary. But let's look at how the police and courts actually responded to the Cronulla riot itself and the racist attacks that it incited. Consider the amount of forces that the police mobilised for the expected mass white supremacist rally on that day in December 2005. Police knew very well in advance that the racist rally was going to be big and very likely turn violent. Yet, by their own admission, they only deployed 92 police in Cronulla on the day of the riot (*Cronulla Riots, Review of the Police Response, Report and Recommendations* by Strike Force Neil). To put this in perspective, on 8 February 1990 when police raided the Aboriginal community on The Block in Redfern to bring eight minor charges against people - charges like unpaid fines, being drunk on a train six years earlier and alleged possession of small stolen goods - they deployed 135 cops. *Just think about it:* police mobilised one and a half times as many cops to arrest Aboriginal people for allegedly doing things like stealing an electric shaver and a pair of goggles as they did to stop an impending violent rampage by thousands of howling white supremacist thugs! This is not an issue of police incompetence or miscalculation. For the police and government, subjugating Aboriginal people is very important while stopping extreme racist violence is not a high priority at all. As for the courts in the hallowed halls of the bourgeoisie's much vaunted 'justice' system, in the aftermath of the riots those violent white supremacists who were arrested received relatively light sentences. This only served to encourage racist attacks throughout the country. Meanwhile, with great fanfare in the weeks following the riots, then NSW ALP premier Morris Iemma actually **legitimised the rednecks** by establishing the Middle Eastern Organised Crime Squad which, as its name makes no effort to hide, openly targets people based on their ethnicity - the same ethnic group that were, actually, the main victims of the horrific racist riot!

The behaviour of the police, courts and government during and after the Cronulla riot was no aberration. Police and prison guards throughout Australia have killed large numbers of Aboriginal people in and out of state custody and are notorious for harassing coloured "ethnic" youth in Sydney's working class suburbs. The courts have legitimised and covered up for all these atrocities. Governments of all stripes have been brutally attacking refugees, demonizing Muslim people and seeking to forcibly close down Aboriginal communities. The right-wing Liberal/Nationals are the most unashamed about their racist policies but these policies - including the mandatory detention of refugees and racist anti-terror laws - have been upheld and even sometimes introduced by Labor and Labor-Greens coalition governments alike.

The racist nature of the Australian police and courts arises from these institutions' essence as central organs of a capitalist state that was created - and is maintained - for enforcing the rule of a capitalist exploiting class over working class people. The capitalist exploiters must continue to divide ordinary people with racism in order to continue to

maintain their rule over a disunited populace. The state organs that enforce capitalist rule – like the police and courts – are, necessarily, in the forefront of this business of inciting and actually carrying out racist attacks. Governments under capitalist rule, no matter who its individual personnel are, administer this racist, rich people's state.

We should have absolutely no reliance on the government, police and other capitalist state organs to stop racist attacks. We should, instead, **seek to mobilise the masses - and in particular the organised working class. The working class has a very real interest in opposing racist attacks because racism means division and division means not being able to stand united and strong against greedy bosses.** Today, the government, the police and the courts are trying to jail two CFMEU construction worker union officials for having stood up staunchly for workers' rights - all as a means to intimidate workers' struggle in general. So, today, building workers' unity through positively mobilising against racist attacks is *especially* imperative for the trade union movement. In fact, the potential for mobilising the working class against the extreme racist threat was seen in Brisbane on May 2 last year when a hundred rank and file construction worker trade unionists were at the forefront of an action that actually drove a rally by the openly fascist Australia First Party right off the streets of Brisbane. Such heroic, working class struggle is simply demobilised if anti-racist workers get conned into believing that they can leave it up to the organs of the capitalist state to oppose racism. On the other hand, to witness the power of a group of multiethnic workers standing united together against a common racist enemy and succeeding in their struggle, as happened on that day in Brisbane, is a truly remarkable, powerful and inspirational experience.

True opponents of racism should also not be fooled by the moves of the Sutherland Shire Council and the NSW police to try and stop the Party For Freedom (PFF) from rallying in Cronulla today. For starters, even without a permit the PFF may well go ahead and hold their demonstration anyway. After all, the white supremacists didn't need a permit to perpetrate the Cronulla riot in the first place. Furthermore, it's clear that the police and government *usually* have no objection to fascists holding rallies. In fact, the cops have recently excelled themselves in actively facilitating rallies organised by the hardline racist Reclaim Australia movement, right up to the extent of violently attacking antifascist counter-demonstrators. If, through the actions of the courts, the state does stop this particular fascist demonstration, it will only be a hollow victory for the anti-racist movement. One far-right racist provocation may be to some extent thwarted, and of course we do not oppose this, but it will, in the long run, sow dangerous illusions in the state and demobilise the mass action needed to stop the fascists for good. A determined, mass action of anti-racist people of all colours, led by the united and proud, multiracial organised working class of Australia, is what really has the potential to truly land decisive blows against the fascist thugs.

Therefore, it is important we understand why in this particular case the government, local council and police are, ostensibly, reluctant to see a far-right rally commemorate the anniversary of the Cronulla riot. The main reason is that such a demonstration would give Cronulla and Australia a bad name. Yet, these state organs are equally intent on stopping any anti-racist protest in Cronulla for that would, too, draw attention to the ongoing intense racism in Cronulla and Australia more generally. The Sutherland Shire Council doesn't want such attention since it would mean that businesses in the area would lose potential customers. Australia's capitalist rulers, meanwhile, want to maintain a "good image" internationally because that helps them, under the guise of "human rights," to politically and militarily meddle in other countries' affairs – all the better to advance the interests of greedy, Australian-owned "multinational" corporations. We must not assist them in their predatory ambitions. Let the world know the truth about the intense racism suffered here in capitalist Australia!

Even while the local government wants a better reputation and, hence, more visitors and business for Cronulla, still they want to keep the number of coloured youth from working class suburbs visiting the area down to a minimum token level. This hostility to working class, coloured youth can be seen in the recent ex-Mayor of Sutherland Shire Kent Johns' comments where, alongside correctly pointing the finger at the Neo-Nazis, he put the blame for the Cronulla riot, in the first place, upon "heaps of thugs from Lakemba" (*The Australian*, 12 August 2015). This is a complete re-writing of history that quite disgustingly blames the victims of the racist violence – the so-called "thugs" [i.e. coloured working class youth] from Lakemba – for the riot. It is apparent that Sutherland Shire Council just want to keep the status quo that has existed since December 2005: Neo-Nazis kept on the leash and forced to drag their feet somewhat as anything else would bring too much attention upon the racism inherent in Cronulla while, at the same time, non-white "ethnic" and, especially, young people from Sydney's working class Southwest are, for the most part, kept away from the area. This all stinks of the purely racist and upper class prejudice wafting from the chambers of the largely Liberal Party-controlled local council. However, it also reflects councillors' connections to property developers and property holders in general. Due to the racist and class prejudice of many of Australia's upper middle class home buyers and investors, higher property prices can be obtained if an area does not have coloured working class youth wandering around, enjoying the sun. In fact, the current mayor of Sutherland Shire Council, Carmelo Pesce, herself owns four homes and two shops in the shire as well as a business connected to the building trades – i.e. connected to property developers. Both her property investments and her business thus stand to gain higher value by ensuring that Cronulla limits the amount of working class, coloured youth in the area. Similarly, deputy mayor Hassan Awada has a property development background. The fact that he is of Lebanese Muslim background is of little consequence – this capitalist, Liberal party councillor is guided first and foremost by the interests of his class which are, naturally, also his direct material interests.

That is why only stopping the planned Cronulla action by the fascist PFF, while it would be a useful victory, is far from sufficient unless it is melded together with a wider perspective of ending, once and for all, the *de facto* exclusion of most working class, coloured youth from the area. Let's not play into hands of the mainstream right-wing forces who don't want to be embarrassed by uncouth, far-right groups but, nevertheless, are entirely wedded to the "ethnic cleansing" effects of the racist riot that these far-right groups incited.

THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEAT FASCISM IS THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEAT CAPITALISM

Of course, the threat from fascists is indeed a serious one. As the capitalist system continues its inevitable process of decay and dissolution, while it produces hardships and insecurity for many, the capitalist rulers use racism to divide and divert the attention of the masses of people from the real culprits responsible for their troubles. Mainstream racist policies, in turn, fuel the growth of the fascists. Terror attacks by reactionary fundamentalist groups falsely taking up the mantle of Islam (and which were themselves at one time built up by the Western capitalist powers) have aided capitalist governments and their fascist compadres to whip up racist fears. The horrific actions of ISIS and Al Qaeda then provide a pretext for further intervention by capitalist powers in the oil-rich Middle East as well as in Asia and Africa – intervention that is ultimately not aimed at fighting terrorism but, as in time immemorial, at advancing imperialist exploitation. To justify such intervention, the imperialist rulers need to further engender nationalist arrogance. The nationalist *hoopla* that the Australian capitalist rulers have created to accompany their participation in the imperialist bombing of Syria and Iraq has made the racist climate here even more severe and incendiary.

Such is the cycle of capitalist decay, racism, imperialist intervention, terror attacks and yet more imperialist intervention and racism that the capitalist world is now swirling and seemingly stuck in. Right now, in every world power where Muslims are in a minority – with the exception of socialistic China - we are seeing the mainstream media and politicians engage in racist vilification of Muslims. And in every world power – again with the important exception of socialistic China – far-right racist forces are gaining in strength. In the recent French regional elections, the fascist National Front topped the vote count. And throughout Europe and America, the number of violent attacks by white supremacist gangs has increased. In Australia, where the mainstream is already itself so racist, the far-right forces are not yet as strong as they are elsewhere but have, nevertheless, grown noticeably in the last 18 months.

Some pacifist Left groups that oppose the idea of an action committed to physically stopping the fascists argue that we need to defeat the far-right *indirectly*, that is by combating the racist government policies that encourage the growth of fascism rather than by confronting the fascists themselves directly on the streets. However, does there need to be a choice to make between these two approaches. We need to mobilise against racist government policies *and* we also need to physically stop dangerous fascist provocations. Every time the extreme white supremacists get away with openly inciting racist hatred on the very streets of our cities and towns, it encourages every garden-variety redneck who is watching from the sidelines or out there in TV and radio land to, likewise, radicalise their racist stance. That means more racist attacks on people of colour on the streets, in public transport, in school yards and in nightspots. We need consistent and consolidated mass mobilisations of trade unionists united with Aboriginal people, coloured “ethnic” communities and anti-racists of all backgrounds *right now* to drive the fascists off the streets and shut down all the “Reclaim Australia” race-hate rallies. The same united forces - proud workers standing shoulder to shoulder with their even prouder Aboriginal sisters and brothers and all of the oppressed-need to mobilise *now* to oppose racist anti-terror laws, to demand freedom for the refugees and full rights of citizenship for all asylum seekers, immigrants, international students and “guest workers.” **The struggle against racist attacks must be connected to a struggle to unleash a class struggle fight against the unemployment, casualization of jobs and cuts to social services that cause some all too misguided souls to seek salvation in radical racist so-called “solutions.”** As part of building such a class-struggle fightback we must also put shoulders to the wheel within our unions and replace the current pro-ALP politics that leads the union movement with a militant class struggle and internationalist perspective.

Let’s decisively defeat the ever looming threat of fascism and liberate so many of our sisters and brothers in Australia who daily face racist attacks and humiliations. And let’s finally begin the great work of overturning the capitalist system itself that stirs the racist pot for the sake of profit. The working class leading all of the oppressed must sweep away the capitalist state. It is a thieving, brutal and murderous state that raised its flag of *terra nullius* over this land during the British colonial takeover and which some two hundred years later continues to crack its whip over the backs of workers, immigrant communities of Asian and Middle Eastern background and indigenous people alike. In the capitalist state one class of people - the relatively small number of *bourgeoise* - have the license to amass a fortune and build their pyramids of power using the surplus labour of so many. This *privilege to exploit* is, ultimately, enforced by the power of the gun hanging off the hip of the police officer and the grenade in the bloody hands of the soldier. The workers state that we will one day build will ruthlessly crush the neo-nazi threat in the process of tearing up the very roots of the capitalist state from which their foul fascist kind has grown. Moreover, in a socialist economy based on collective ownership, all of those machines and computerized systems of communication, all the big banks and mighty industries, all of the incredible *means of production* wrought by the common effort of the many hands and minds of 21st century humanity, all of this extraordinary productive power will be held in trust by the working class and used for the benefit of everyone in society. An Australian workers state will unite people together, not tear them apart like the capitalist state does today, as all will share a common economic interest, an interest in steering *their* ship of state into the calmer waters of a world free of racism, unemployment, poverty and war. A world which will one day only need to follow, as Karl Marx famously suggested, one simple rule: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx K., 1875) Let’s fight for this future world *now* by relying on the unassailable power of the working class and its allies in every progressive struggle that we are forced to face. Let’s advance working class people’s confidence in their own power by building a joint action of trade unionists, Aboriginal people, “ethnic” people and all antiracists to make Cronulla Beach safe again for people of all colours. The more we struggle together the stronger we will become.

**FOR \$10 SUBSCRIPTIONS TO TROTSKYIST PLATFORM PUBLICATIONS OR TO CONTACT US PLEASE CALL OR WRITE TO:
PO BOX 1101, FAIRFIELD, NSW 1860 0417 204 611 trotskyistplatform@gmail.com TROTSKYISTPLATFORM.COM**