



dispatches from
CHARLOTTESVILLE

2017



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She’s not around to tell us if she wants to be a hero. I do know that some of us entered that weekend consciously accepting that we might die, or that our comrades and loved ones might die. When you take on that kind of mindset, it leaves some scars. I just can’t think about this question in an abstract way.

Some people talk about courage like it’s just a matter of inner righteousness or integrity or something. I disagree with that idea. You can be a person of great integrity, ready to go through the fire for your beliefs, but when it comes time to use the weapons at your disposal you’re too hesitant to make a contribution. Our understanding of courage should capture that readiness to step forward and act without guarantees. That’s why I say it’s about victory.

This isn’t about violence versus nonviolence. Some of the most courageous people I saw in Charlottesville were not throwing punches; they were dressing wounds, or praying, or standing alone in front of a line of advancing riot cops. Those people were all using the weapons at their disposal.

I guess the risk is that courage alone can’t guide you. I mean, courageous soldiers can fight imperialist wars, but that doesn’t make them right. Honor and sacrifice can fuel a spiral of meaningless violence. Sometimes the things that make you hesitate when you shouldn’t are also the things that make you reassess your direction when really you should.

If you want to back way up and look at it, courage is a warrior value, and anarchism is a peace movement. I mean that in the very simple sense that it’s about people treating each other right without being forced to. That’s peace. Obviously, there’s fighting involved too. I’m just not convinced that the things that make us strong in the face of adversity are always the things that make us good to one another, or that being ready for war makes you ready for peace. Maybe that just comes back to making sure that your vision of victory is really worth dying for.

Published in memory of Heather Heyer.

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does it serve when we perceive our conflicts as irreconcilable, and why do we have to listen to those voices?

Right now, people like Bannon are pushing a vision of a society threatened by deep, irreconcilable conflicts, but they're not the conflicts a leftist would talk about. They're citizen vs. alien, West vs. Islam, and so on. We can push for a different way of seeing the structural divisions in our society, and put our bodies on the line for those beliefs, but if that's all we do we're giving a lot of ground to authoritarians who want to be the neutral party. I'm talking about mom-n-pop authoritarians, not just the deep state. So I think we have to bring the idealist side of anarchism with us too: don't just challenge the analysis of our society's real conflicts, but challenge the state's claim to protect us from each other. Challenge the belief that we have always needed protection from each other, and always will.

In Europe, one of the anarchist critiques of antifascism has been that it obscures the necessity of struggle against the state, capitalism, and other forms of domination. Do you see this as a risk in the US? Why or why not?

Like, we imagine that as soon as the last Nazi is dealt with, capitalism and the state will come crumbling down of their own accord, and trans women won't have to worry about getting murdered for their gender? I don't see that risk. If you just mean that antifascism can tie down anarchists and keep them from prioritizing the work they really believe in—well, of course it can. It's a defensive struggle. Defense only works if you're poised to counterattack, and our best counterattack will always be liberatory social movements.

What I do see is that our experiences of struggle deeply shape our imaginations. That's true whether your experience is rioting, or community organizing, or fighting Nazis, or just daily survival in a world that wants to erase you. You start to imagine the whole revolution as just whatever struggle you're used to, but on a larger scale. In addition, you may be limited by your learned instincts and the culture you build up around them.

That may be a problem for the generation that's been radicalized in the Trump era. There's the potential for a kind of creeping authoritarianism on the left—the revolutionary left I mean. You know, that whole mythology of the militant. It can obscure the necessity of struggle against—not the state of today, but the state of tomorrow.

But you know, we have a choice about that. We don't have to be determined by our experiences, even if we're shaped by them. We can have a more expansive vision of struggle. We can choose what we're struggling for.

Clearly, it takes a lot of courage to physically confront armed fascists. What does courage mean for antifascists? What kind of courage should we be trying to cultivate? What are the risks of focusing on courage as a value?

Courage is being willing to die for the sake of victory. That's a straightforward definition. And that is exactly what happened in Charlottesville. One of us died, and we had a victory. That might sound inspiring to some people, but to me it's fucking nauseating, it makes me want to cry. I mean, I didn't know Heather, I don't know if she was preparing herself for the possibility of death.

ANTIFA RISING:

THE AFTERMATH OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

AMI DU RADICAL

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Since the events of Unite the Right, the nation has been forced to consciously reckon with the threat of widespread fascism and white nationalism. Through a gruesome 48-hour period, the public bore witness to a resurgence of the darkest spectacles of colonial, white supremacist violence, living nightmares of torchlight and bloodshed. With no bodycam footage to suppress, no mug shot to delegitimize the victim, it seems a large segment of the public has finally been shaken out of their torpor. There is no disguising now that America contains not only an active movement of far-right, white nationalist murderers, but also a white supremacist superstructure which buttresses every organ of the state, and all of American history. While it is disappointing that it took the Charlottesville terror attack to awaken them, when multiple alt-right attacks and dozens of police executions did not, we can already recognize a shift in public perspective.

Within hours of the attack, white nationalists and alt-right goons were thrown into discord. Having spent so many months (and years) salivating over the idea of sparking a cultural war, their first foray into all-out street combat taught the fascist movement how unprepared they truly are. Between their losses on the battlefield, the public shame heaped upon them for their savagery, and the culminating murder which has proven their true intentions beyond reproach, fascists have made the painful realization that their prophesied crusade will not end in victory. They have succumbed, for the umpteenth time, to factionalism and elitism, falling over themselves in a rush to determine who is at fault, who should be ousted, and who should be counted as the “true” alt-right.

Not so for the left. Even as antifascists and anti-racists grieved the latest victims of fascist barbarity, a collective sense of outrage swelled worldwide, and poured out into the streets in solidarity marches, vigils, direct actions, and recommitments to fight on every front, in every community. By the very hands of the white nationalists themselves, a great doom was written for their movement on August 12th. The antifascist and anti-racist organizations of so-called America are growing, individually and as a whole. The public is becoming less convinced by centrist hand-wringing, and the media has at long last taken a serious, if flawed, look at contemporary white nationalism and antifascism.

The tide has turned. The high days of the alt-right ended with the election of Donald Trump. Now, the sun rises on the ranks of the workers, marching towards something greater, more permanent, than the J20 arrestees might have imagined possible.

THE ALT-RIGHT IN PANIC AND MANIA

The alt-right and its assorted factions have, ironically, splintered over the events of Unite the Right. While hardcore ethnostatists and outright neo-Nazis

have been threatening lethal violence at many rallies this year, the cryptofascists and “cleaned up” white nationalists of the alt-right have been scrambling to distance themselves not just from the murder of Heather Heyer, but from one another and, in some cases, from the alt-right itself.

Baked Alaska was early in the lineup of shameless turnabouts, having been sent to the hospital after a severe macing. While he recovered, and speculation cropped up that he might have maced himself intentionally to garner sympathy, he took to twitter to speak out against the racist bile and hatemongering around which he’s built a social media image. Having managed Milo Yiannopoulos’ college tour, indulged in anti-semitic jokes and the white supremacist “milk” meme, tweeting the 14 Words, and publicly identifying as a white nationalist, Tim Gionet suddenly had a change of heart. Now, he is urging others to reject violence and embrace peaceful coexistence.

Gavin McInnes issued a firm denouncement of the alt-right, insisting that his anti-masturbation cult, the Proud Boys, had not been in attendance. He neglected to mention, however, that not only were multiple Proud Boys spotted at Unite the Right, including one displaying a forearm tattoo of the “Proud Boys” name, but that the white nationalist organizer of the event, Jason Kessler, is himself a long-time friend of the Proud Boys. Alex Michael Ramos, one of the fascists involved in the brutalization of Deandre Harris, is both a member of the III% Militia and FOAK, the militant wing of the Proud Boys.

In a text conversation with Mike Peinovich, McInnes confirmed the willingness of his henchmen to make an appearance at Unite the Right, and their generally favorable views of white nationalism. However many times he assures the public that his group does not directly support white nationalism, nor is it part of the alt-right, there comes a point when a person is no longer just “crashing on the couch” and has become an official roommate.

Even the ugliest parts of the fascist movement have tried to divorce themselves from Unite the Right. Vanguard America, the neo-nazi organization spawned from the Iron March forums, has participated in a lengthy campaign to publicly push a white supremacist, white nationalist agenda with Nazi-themed posters and stickers. The terrorist James Fields was photographed with one of their shields early in the day during August 12th, and Vanguard America was quick to point out that Fields is not an official member, but rather one of the participants who took one of the shields handed out by Vanguard America that morning. This, of course, is a meaningless distinction: as full-fledged Nazis, the members of Vanguard America follow an ideology based around genocide, and share the guilt for the manifestation of their ceaseless calls for bloody violence against non-whites, non-cishet folks, and leftists.

The pinnacle of hypocrisy came when Richard Spencer and Nathan Damigo held a press conference to extricate themselves from the ugly movement they’ve worked so hard to create. Spencer was especially combative with the attending reporters, making a laughable gambit for public sympathy by focusing on the behavior of police, parroting the criticisms usually leveled against officers by leftists. “I have never felt like the government or police were against me,” he said, referring to an as-yet unspecified instance of police prejudice against the

On the other hand, some of them may try to move back toward a mass movement, and away from the fringe. They might stick to being the “pro-white bloc” at Trump rallies.

What do the events in Charlottesville mean for the strategy of Richard Spencer, who seeks to popularize a new “respectable” white supremacy?

He lost. His strategy lost. The President tried running interference for him, but it didn’t work. I mean, these suit-and-tie Nazis can’t change their character overnight, so they’ll keep trying the same rhetoric, but it’s going to be a dwindling audience.

On the other hand, that rhetoric does enable young alt-right recruits to remain in denial about what they’re signing up for. For the most part, they think they’re the Freikorps, but not the Final Solution. We should also remember, again, that clashes like the ones we’ve been seeing can harden these kids. So the ones who don’t drop out because of fear or shame are becoming a more dangerous kind of cadre. The respectability strategy is basically over, but the same individuals can now go about consolidating their gains.

Can anti-fascists take credit for the ouster of Stephen Bannon? Will his return to Breitbart and the grassroots far right embolden fascists and give them more momentum? Beyond the obvious strategy of “no platform for fascists,” what role should anti-fascist activity play in our struggle against the state, the chief implementer of totalitarian measures?

I don’t really care who takes credit for Steve Bannon’s career change, but I don’t really see it emboldening the far right. You know, the Democrats want to tell it like Charlottesville got Bannon kicked out, because that shifts the focus back to the Oval Office and out of the streets. It might have. I don’t know. I’m glad he’s out, but it’s not my focus. I’m not sure he cares whether he’s directing his movement from inside the institutions or from outside.

What I anticipate is that he’ll try to create a home for all the young people who don’t want to go to Nazi rallies anymore, he’ll push this “alt-left” nonsense, basically he’ll try to do a better version of Richard Spencer’s strategy. That means no Nazis, no Klansmen, just nice Midwestern church people who wouldn’t mind seeing the police gun us down. I’m not sure the momentum is with him now, but we’ll see.

As for the state. We’re still in the midst of an authoritarian backlash in the broader culture, alongside the white backlash. Trump draws on it, but so do his opponents. If you’re trying to get a popular mandate for authoritarian governance, you present yourself as the only force able to contain irreconcilable, violent conflicts within society. That’s what Trump was doing when he talked about the “many sides” of violence in Charlottesville, and I’m sure that’s what his centrist opposition will do when they try to replace him.

Anti-authoritarians can respond to that one of two ways. You can double down on the irreconcilable social conflicts, and say it’s our job to bring them out into the open and fight consciously from the side of the exploited—you know, refuse an oppressive social peace. Or you can dispute the state’s claim that it can resolve people’s conflicts better than we can resolve them on our own. Who

I don't know if guns were an important deterrent as the day wore on. Maybe they were early on before things really started, when we were just milling around several blocks away. Realistically, if a Nazi had started shooting later in the rally no one would have had a clear shot before he emptied his clip, and once the gunfire started the crossfire would be hellish. So I guess it depends what kind of threat you think was deterred. Probably the deterrent effect was a factor in the open areas where more one-on-one fights happened—you might not pull a knife in the open if you think there's a chance you're being covered. But on that topic, the possibility of getting stabbed makes you pretty careful too. We were all thinking about Sacramento.

I can see an argument that the possibility of handguns mixed in the crowd would discourage the guys with shields and clubs from rushing in too aggressively. Maybe it put more pressure on them to stay in very tight formation, which limits how aggressive you can get with a club. I'm just speculating here—I still think the concern with image was a bigger factor for them. Anyway, that's different from the militia-style, open carry rifles that some people had.

I guess I did see a neo-Confederate man in the front lines reach for his pistol and then change his mind when we yelled that he had a gun. He settled for an extendable baton instead. So that's an example where knowing that you can be identified and targeted will convince you to keep your own weapon holstered. That deterred him from brandishing a gun, though. He really did have a self-defense mentality, even if it was a racist, delusional one; he was going to pull his gun to "deter" the mob he was facing. It would have been very different if his primary goal had been to kill people.

As soon as you start talking deterrence, you're talking about an arms race. I think that's a danger whether the weapons in question are guns, knives, or plexiglass shields. You lose the social character of the struggle and you lose the diversity of tactics. I don't mind being around assault rifles, but I do mind the paramilitary mentality. We're susceptible to that mentality when fear clouds our thinking.

If you get into an arms race with a bunch of scared people who have little or no experience of gun violence—I'm talking about antifascists as well as the alt fascists, we're scared too—you're creating an extremely volatile situation. All it takes is one jumpy person pulling a trigger.

Probably the only thing you can do is think very concretely about what you're trying to deter. Reflect. What you're doing has to be based in experience—yours or a mentor's or something—and it has to be realistic about the big picture. Otherwise, you've just got a very risky security blanket.

Do you have any thoughts about what approaches we should expect fascists to take in the wake of Charlottesville?

It's a dangerous time. They've already lost the battle to look like victims, so some of them will be happy to look like successful aggressors. That could certainly mean they go in the direction of clandestine attacks, but it could also mean they show up at these things looking like Roman legionnaires and they rush us first, hard. Our best defense is numbers, which maybe we have now. Obviously, there are tactical questions for us too.

alt-right. "There has never been a situation in my life when I've felt this way."

Jason Kessler, organizer for the event, echoed this sentiment: "This has changed everything. I thought that the police would uphold constitutional law no matter what." Spencer has stuck by the line that the police are to blame for the violence and eventual murder which unfolded in Charlottesville, saying that they did not "do their job," that they didn't patrol the streets. Most importantly, he has tried to compartmentalize himself, his movement, and the actions of individual fascists, and pleaded for patience while an investigation takes place to determine the "real" cause of Fields' attacks.

"We need to wait," he implored, "for these institutions to do their job."

Damigo, for his part, questioned why the police did not provide different exits from the park, theorizing on why order was not enforced, and playing second fiddle to Spencer's long-winded deflections. Damigo, of course, is himself a violent felon who served five years behind bars for a racially-motivated armed robbery against taxi driver Changiz Ezzatyar. As a white nationalist, and founder of the white supremacist group Identity Evropa, Damigo's every ideological tenet is rooted in hatred, genocidal inclination, and a disregard for the human rights of others based on their organic identities. It is unspeakably crass for such an individual to wail and moan over the behavior of police, and his personal victimization, especially when he is inexplicably allowed to continue his education in a collegiate environment while publicly engaging in neo-nazi rallies. This to say nothing of the verifiable manner in which police handed control of the conflict in Charlottesville over to the fascists: as filmed by Unicorn Riot, the alt-right initiated the first clashes, attempted to beat a man to death, and were allowed to walk free during and after their attacks on antifascists.

Unlike Spencer, who has always been a "charming face" for the alt-right, Damigo has gotten his hands dirty as an organizer – even in Charlottesville, Spencer gave Damigo most of the credit for pulling together the various strands of alt-right, white nationalist, and fascist factions. Damigo is taking an active role in putting boots on the ground for fascists: he plans to return to the Bay Area for a rally on the 27th of this month, the scene of a brawl at UC Berkeley in April which appears to have been the training ground for some of the more coordinated and thuggish fascist elements who appeared in Charlottesville. Damigo cut his teeth at Berkeley using Identity Evropa as a bridge between loosely-connected, neo-fascist elements of the alt-right. This next rally will undoubtedly be more violent than the last, and certainly be just as openly sanctioned by police as the "Battle of Berkeley," where our comrades were disarmed by officers working alongside the alt-right before the inevitable hand-to-hand conflict began.

If Spencer represents the retreating half of the alt-right, Damigo represents the empowered fascist movement. It wasn't a day after the murder of Heyer that screenshots surfaced of a Discord chat room in which white nationalists were gloating over the death and destruction caused by their brethren, thirsting for more in the future. For all the shrinking and doubling-back done by softer elements of the alt-right, an equal portion has been energized by the understanding that in addition to being given free reign by police during protests, they also have the capacity to kill without being collectively blamed by the legal

system. At Charlottesville, we saw a fruition of the gradual paramilitarization of fascists which has taken place over the past six months. Militias brandishing weapons protected the fascists' leaders, guns were drawn by white nationalists to threaten counter-protesters, and while police have had access to photographs and names of the men responsible for beating Deandre Harris and the UVA students, those men are walking free as we speak. Some states have even drafted legislation to insulate people like James Fields from legal ramifications if they should "accidentally" run over protesters.

Neither of these trends should be underestimated. Some portion of the alt-right will attempt to soften its image even further, blending into the jungle of mainstream politics and camouflaging themselves in concern for the rule of law. They will continue the outright lie that "white advocacy" isn't code for white supremacy, that individual violence doesn't represent a movement which was once best-known for chasing female game developers out of their homes with death and rape threats. This will allow them to deceive a portion of the centrist liberal population, convince them that "violence isn't the answer," and make room for white supremacy to worm its way back into the undergrowth to avoid a messy death.

But other fascists have made a fateful decision to endorse and escalate the malice and cruelty of Charlottesville. Nathan Damigo will become a figurehead for the militant fascist wing, demonstrating that with the backing of police and the benefit of the doubt from the legal system, murder and terrorism will be an effective weapon in the future, if used with finesse. Neo-nazis and militiamen will blend closer together, and mutate into something more grizzly and blood-thirsty than the larval stage of the alt-right, tempering their actions with talk of gun rights and self-defense. What we saw in Charlottesville was a display of the naked brutality and racism which has always lurked in America's heart: a cadre of torch-wielding white supremacists surrounding a black congregation, attempting to immolate teenagers who stand in their way, and chanting the slogans of the Third Reich without shame or hesitation.

Even the soft-spoken and cordial Spencer couldn't resist a little fantasizing: during his press conference he offhandedly mentioned that if they'd wanted to, the fascists could have killed antifa members "with their bare hands."

THE WORKING CLASS AWAKENS

When Trump delivered his "many sides" comment following the Charlottesville battle, it seemed he'd finally crossed a line between ambiguity and outright complicity with fascists – at least in the eyes of the public and the mainstream media, who up until now have been fairly reluctant to directly accuse Number 45 of having a favorable view towards white nationalists. He was bombarded immediately with outrage and disgust, even from within his own party. No doubt most of the politicians were merely covering their asses or opportunistically seizing on Trump in a moment of vulnerability, but surprisingly, it appears a growing sector of the population is recognizing the necessity of the antifascist movement.

The most visible change in rhetoric came from the publications which, in earlier weeks, have critiqued antifascists, dusting off the tired (and now, dis-

lence was important, I think, and so were the diverse approaches of those who did use physical force, I mean as far as acting more offensively or defensively.

Unite the Right was all about image. They wanted three things: they wanted to look like victims of antifa/"sjw" aggression, to look like friends of the police, and to look like they were winning the physical battle in the streets. I think all those wires got crossed in Charlottesville because of the diversity of their opposition.

As a side note, we made a conscious decision not to do Saturday in black bloc. I think that helped in those specific circumstances.

So diversity of tactics was important. A lot of these alt-right people are scared of confrontation, even though they fantasize about power. You could tell that made it hard for them to psychologically switch gears; by the time they figured out how to deal with one kind of counter-protestor, the situation had changed and they had to go back to square one. They had to think too hard. They didn't know if they were going to get punched or prayed at. And the whole time they're getting pelted with paint balloons, and they just look silly.

Then you had macho types who reacted to that paralysis by going ham, charging in swinging by themselves. That was scary, because these were big dudes who understood violence, but it didn't really serve their larger goals, and they lost fights because we would surround them and beat them back. It didn't help those guys that their official rally was up a hill behind barricades.

Finally, there were the guys in full-on riot gear, plexiglass shields and clubs and face-shields, stuff like that. They had a hard time early in the day, marching into the park, because they couldn't figure out what kind of confrontation they were in; they wanted to beat us up but they wanted it to look like our fault, and they came out worse on both counts. Later, they regrouped, and it seemed like they were ready to crack some skulls in a more paramilitary style: charge out of the park in formation and just trample whoever was in their way. I think that would have happened more if the rally had gone on longer, because they were starting to give up on the whole image thing. We should have had more tools to obscure their vision and keep them at a distance. But the cops dispersed the rally before it went there. I think we can take some credit for that.

This sounds weird, but I think anarchists might have better discipline than Nazis, at least in this kind of situation. Fascists had the advantage when things were really scripted, and a lot of them would have had the advantage in a one-on-one fight, but they were just clumsy when it came to navigating a complex situation. I guess what I'm talking about here is *self-discipline*. But it has this real communal aspect to it, because we actually care about each other and pay attention to each other, like not just our cliques and affinity groups, but also strangers. You can't fake that. You can't squeeze that out of an authoritarian ideology.

Some have reported that it was very important that there were guns on the anti-fascist side of the conflict, to discourage fascists from escalating past a certain degree of force. Others have expressed concern about whether guns can be a useful tool in struggles for liberation. Coming away from Charlottesville, what is your impression?

If there's tangible, physical opposition, the nervousness is going to be more intense, but so is that gut-level lesson learned from a victory. So when we confront these things, we should recognize that we're raising the stakes. I think groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) fixate on that side of things when they try to discourage people from counter-protesting. I think their attitude is, we can't do anything about these young men's acculturation into hate groups, but we can deny them opportunities to really get hardened. Or maybe they think that acculturation happens in internet forums, not torch marches. I don't know. I think anarchists sometimes understand this process better than sociologists, because we've been through something similar, in sub-cultural spaces or street marches or whatever.

Also—about what happened Friday night—we're not static. Even when we take a loss that strengthens the movement we're fighting against, it can strengthen us too. Friday night seriously shook people, but it probably made us more determined and smarter on Saturday. I almost want to say wiser. We knew exactly what kind of victory we needed to deny them, and we knew we would have to do it without the advantage of physical superiority. If no one had showed up to oppose them on Friday, maybe we would have made worse mistakes the next day, against a sharper adversary. There's no way to know.

Why were anti-fascists not as prepared to respond on Friday night? Can you say anything about the motivations of those who still chose to confront the torchlit march?

The details of that march were announced much later, that's the main thing. Also I think some kinds of counter-protestors are always going to stay away from a nighttime event like that, because it's more likely to be crazy. Some people were prepared, but it was just different situations.

I do think Friday highlighted one weakness we have right now, which is that we don't share much common culture around assessing our group capacity in the heat of the moment. I've seen this at other events too. Some of us are used to quietly running the numbers when we're in a crowd and adjusting our approach accordingly—asking ourselves, you know, what are the odds we can successfully unarrest people if there are issues with the police? Or what are the odds we can physically prevent this group of white supremacists from reaching their destination? Other people, maybe people who aren't drawing on the same kinds of street experience or think of their goals differently, seem to approach those questions morally rather than situationally. Like, we must not let them reach their destination, therefore we shall not let them reach their destination.

I'm not saying there's a single correct way to look at it, but if we're not having those conversations constructively outside of these crisis moments, it's not good. Those conversations are part of building a strong movement culture.

On Saturday, it appeared that counter-demonstrators were outmatched by fascists in terms of muscle mass, equipment, numbers, and terrain. It was a terrifying situation. Yet anti-fascists did unexpectedly well in the confrontations. What do you attribute this to?

I think the antifascists had a deeper understanding of diversity of tactics. The presence of counter-protestors with a personal commitment to nonvio-

proven) argument that forcefully confronting white supremacists will paradoxically drive more people to identify with white supremacy. In an Atlantic article entitled "The Rise of Antifa," just six days before the murder of Heather Heyer, Peter Beinart theorized that by challenging the monopolized violence of the state, and taking the fight to the Nazis themselves, antifascists are fueling the fears of conservatives and actually adding to the alt-right's ranks.

After Charlottesville, the tune of the mainstream journo shifted to a near polar opposite of this line of reasoning. Brian Feldman, writing for New York Magazine, penned a piece which addressed Baked Alaska's expended defense of using racist memes, Nazi symbolism, and genocidal rhetoric "ironically," to stir up outrage for his own amusement:

White nationalists hiding behind the label of "troll" — like Weev, Baked Alaska, Millennial Matt, and their thousands of anonymous comrades — can spout shit online with no work or investment, and when called on it, dance away with more jokes or claims that it's all just talk... The Ironic Nazi is framed as a product of how easy platforms make it to be an asshole online. The ones who came to Charlottesville were the exact opposite: focused, methodical, and intentional in their efforts. For [Tim] Gionet, it meant coordinating travel, lodging, and times to meet up with other demonstrators. It meant going out of his way to stand with literal white supremacists, and investing time, money, and possible bodily harm to do so. Consider the words of college student Peter Cvjetanovic, a picture of whom, mid-shout while holding a tiki torch, circulated widely on social media this weekend. "I hope that the people sharing the photo are willing to listen that I'm not the angry racist they see in that photo," he told news station KTVN, despite having traveled to Charlottesville specifically to protect the legacy of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. In the real world, it's not "just talk" anymore.

From Vox, Dara Lind published an article which included the subheading, "Trump basically lied about who was to blame in Charlottesville," under which read, "The violence was initiated, on Friday night, by right-wing marchers who assaulted protesters around a statue of Thomas Jefferson. While both counter-protesters and marchers engaged in some throwing of water bottles and rocks on Saturday, the marchers were the ones projecting a military presence and who initiated the bulk of the confrontations. The image Trump evoked, of a mass of counter-protesters 'charging with clubs,' is a complete invention."

In general, the media has opened up not only to the truth behind the "alt-right" moniker, which has always been a cover for various white supremacist and fascistic cells across the nation, but has also begun to seriously consider and report upon the antifascist movement. The critiques are sometimes half-cocked, but some publications have genuinely examined the roots of antifascism, its growth through the '80s and '90s in Europe, and its newfound foothold in the US as far-right ideology becomes normalized. The New York Times published an article which established the outline of the antifascist response to Charlottesville:

"As soon as they got close," said the young man, who declined to give his real name and goes by Frank Sabaté after the famous Spanish anarchist, "they

started swinging clubs, fists, shields. I'm not embarrassed to say that we were not shy in defending ourselves."

Sabaté is an adherent of a controversial force on the left known as antifa. The term, a contraction of the word "anti-fascist," describes the loose affiliation of radical activists who have surfaced in recent months at events around the country and have openly scuffled with white supremacists, right-wing extremists and, in some cases, ordinary supporters of President Trump. Energized in part by Mr. Trump's election, they have sparred with their conservative opponents at political rallies and college campus speaking engagements, arguing that one crucial way to combat the far right is to confront its supporters on the streets.

Unlike most of the counter-demonstrators in Charlottesville and elsewhere, members of antifa have shown no qualms about using their fists, sticks or canisters of pepper spray to meet an array of right-wing antagonists whom they call a fascist threat to American democracy. As explained this week by a dozen adherents of the movement, the ascendant new right in the country requires a physical response.

It was the Washington Post, however, which did the most admirable job of defining the outline of antifascism, the history of the movement, and its differentiation from liberalism. As written by Mark Bray:

There are antifa groups around the world, but antifa is not itself an interconnected organization, any more than an ideology like socialism or a tactic like the picket line is a specific group. Antifa are autonomous anti-racist groups that monitor and track the activities of local neo-Nazis. They expose them to their neighbors and employers, they conduct public education campaigns, they support migrants and refugees and they pressure venues to cancel white power events. The vast majority of anti-fascist organizing is nonviolent. But their willingness to physically defend themselves and others from white supremacist violence and preemptively shut down fascist organizing efforts before they turn deadly distinguishes them from liberal anti-racists.

There are, of course, plenty of journalists blaming antifascists for the violence of the far-right, and the term "alt-left" has crawled its way out of the mouths of liberals and Democrats and into the vernacular of Trump himself, an eventuality most leftists predicted months ago. Yet even there, the media was impressively prepared to counter the claim that an "alt-left" even exists. Sam Kriss, in a Politico article, mocked the artificial concept of a counterbalance to the alt-right, and unpacked the term's origins as a meaningless epithet invented by liberals to slander everything from Sanders supporters to hardcore Communists:

Something like "alt-left" was always going to happen; it's a product of whatever it is in our brains that conditions them to think in terms of opposites. As soon as everyone starts talking about the "alt-right"—that inchoate and incoherent grouping of Nazis, Klansmen, resentful failsons sweating from video games and chicken fingers, cynical media wannabes, bloviating internet commenters who think they're Ignatius J. Reilly, and others who think they're the Joker—that word seems to sit on one side of a seesaw, across from a silence waiting to be filled. If there's an alt-right, there must, somewhere, somehow, be

SQUARING OFF AGAINST FASCISM: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE FRONT LINES: AN INTERVIEW

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In the three weeks since anarchists helped shut down the largest fascist rally the US has seen in decades, the pendulum has swung back and forth between new public support for anti-fascist organizing and a dishonest, fearmongering reaction spearheaded by the extreme center that plays right into the hands of far-right elements in the police and FBI. Now, fascists are shifting towards a strategy of decentralized attacks while the Trump administration prepares a new racist offensive against nearly a million residents of the United States. It's more pressing than ever to learn from our victories in order to strategize for the next round. We spoke with a participant in the front lines of the clashes in Charlottesville about why an under-equipped anti-fascist contingent was able to defeat a more numerous body of fascists, how to halt the creep towards authoritarianism, and what courage means in these struggles.

In Charlottesville, on Friday night, August 11, if the torchlit march had not encountered any protesters around the monument or elsewhere—if it had been able to proceed without meeting any opposition—what do you think the consequences would have been?

Well, it's easy to be doctrinaire when you're speculating. I mean, any time fascists do something provocative without opposition, it sets a new baseline for them. It's like, "Oh, marching with torches and chanting 'Blood and Soil' is a pretty low-key thing to do, let's always do that at our gatherings from now on. It's fun and easy!" But I think it strengthens their movement even more when they encounter opposition that they can easily defeat, which is what actually happened on Friday. If that had been the only event in Charlottesville, or if the rest of the weekend had gone the same way, it would have been a gift to their movement.

I try to imagine the perspective of a fresh young recruit. He's posturing and puffing himself up, but he's nervous too. He feels awkward putting on that white polo shirt, he feels nervous carrying a torch at first. But then he sees everyone around him doing the same thing, his voice is amplified by a hundred voices saying the same words as him, and that nervousness turns into elation. So right there, his body learns an important lesson: "When I feel scared, these are the people who make me safe. When I feel weak, these are the people who make me strong." This is like church, you know. That whole process happens even if not a single counter-protestor shows up. He already knows that most of the world is against him.



No dignity in fascism.

something called an alt-left, otherwise the universe is unbalanced.

While the media has grappled with the events of the Charlottesville riot and altered its perception of the leftist bloc, the working class has experienced a dramatic awakening of its own potential. Sickened, heartbroken, and infuriated by the no-shit Nazis preying on their neighbors and comrades, decent people have begun to take matters into their own hands. Some have taken a vital step in the journey towards a legitimate, contending revolution: they are recognizing their own dormant power, and how it can be wielded against the state itself.

When Jason Kessler slithered back into the limelight after his rally ended in bloodshed and horror, he attempted to hold a brief press event to state his case. He made it through roughly one full sentence before the community turned on him with unrelenting vengeance, literally chasing him out of the area. Ignoring the presence of security and police, members of the crowd managed to strike Kessler at least twice as he fled, his voice drowned out in cries of “Nazi scum!”

Dr. Cornel West appeared on Democracy Now to speak up for the people who, on Friday the 11th, were trapped in St. Paul’s Church in Charlottesville, when the fascist horde descended upon them. In a gut-wrenching reenactment of the Reconstruction, torch-bearing white supremacists had surrounded and encircled the congregation, holding them hostage inside the church. As Dr. West explained, it was the students of UVA who averted disaster, young people who put their bodies at risk, were doused with lighter fluid and beaten with torches. In the face of dangers no teenager should have to witness, they demonstrated courage that most adults could not summon, and attempted to take back the area from the fascists. Dr. West went on to thank antifascists and anarchists for their hand in defending the clergy who demonstrated during the following day’s protests:

You had a number of the courageous students, of all colors, at the University of Virginia who were protesting against the neofascists themselves. The neofascists had their own ammunition. And this is very important to keep in mind, because the police, for the most part, pulled back. The next day, for example, those 20 of us who were standing, many of them clergy, we would have been crushed like cockroaches if it were not for the anarchists and the anti-fascists who approached, over 300, 350 anti-fascists. We just had 20. And we’re singing “This Little Light of Mine,” you know what I mean?... The anti-fascists, and then, crucial, the anarchists, because they saved our lives, actually. We would have been completely crushed, and I’ll never forget that.

Dr. West had nothing but venom, however, for pro-Trump figure Paris Denard, when the two exchanged words on Anderson Cooper 360. Faced with more apologia for Trump’s pandering to white supremacists, Dr. West stated very plainly what is at stake: “This is life and death, man, this ain’t no game... we’ve got a neo-fascist movement escalating...”

On Saturday the 19th, Bostonians arose to confront the next iteration of fascist uprising at the transparently-named “Free Speech Rally” set to take place in their city. Against a band of perhaps a hundred, an estimated 40,000 people organized on the Commons. The scene itself spoke volumes about the public’s newfound resolve against white supremacy, neo-naziism, and the assorted,

opaque labels under which those evils pass into mainstream society. During the demonstration, Confederate flags were set ablaze, fascists were shamed as they retreated, and the rally was ended quickly, leaving the public to contend with the aggressive police presence instead.

In the midst of such a beautiful example of solidarity and anti-racist attitudes came a glimmer of something new, a forbidden hope in the heart of on-looking revolutionaries: when a small contingent of antifascists in black bloc gear arrived at the Boston Commons, they were greeted with applause and cheers from the assembled crowd as they marched to the front line.

ANTIFASCISM ON THE RISE

Following the Charlottesville attack, an outpouring of sympathy materialized into acts of solidarity worldwide. From Bern, Switzerland, to Amsterdam, to London, and Greece, antifascists who have fought this war longer than most of their American counterparts organized rallies to support their newfound comrades. It was a reminder that the struggle against oppression is a global one spanning centuries of human existence. Across the United States, similar rallies connected Heather Heyer's murder to the deaths of the Portland victims, to the ongoing violence of white supremacist colonialism, to the unending lynchings committed by the modern-day slave patrol, and brought together comrades of many ideologies, colors, genders, and ages.

But as the saying goes, "mourn the dead, fight like hell for the living."

The community of Durham County in North Carolina showed us what it means to take the fight to the state. Days after Unite the Right, the residents of Durham decided their officials had not acted swiftly enough in removing a bronze statue of a Confederate soldier. They decided to remove it themselves, toppling the cheaply-made monument, one of the mass-produced, pro-slavery statues erected during the Reconstruction to reinforce white supremacy and pro-Confederate revisionism. Local police acted quickly to arrest one of the protesters involved, and tracked down others over the following week. To show solidarity with their fellow anti-racists, more than a hundred other residents of Durham County arrived at the sheriff's office to demand they be arrested as well, as many of them had participated in the demolition themselves.

Throughout the week, defacements of colonial monuments and Confederate statuary continued. The Jefferson Davis memorial in Arizona was tarred and feathered on the 17th, cleaned by the state, and then spray painted with a "KKK." In Bolton Hill, Baltimore, a 114-year-old Confederate statue was drenched in red paint. A hammer and sickle was painted onto the Confederate monument in Kansas City, Missouri. A statue of Christopher Columbus was similarly covered in red paint in Houston, while elsewhere in Baltimore, an anarchist armed with a sledgehammer laid low the oldest standing monument dedicated to that explorer-cum-mass murderer, built in the 18th century.

These demolitions are a small step, but a vital one, in the fight against the state. By physically eliminating the symbolism of white supremacy, radicals not only attack the tradition of honoring men who killed, raped, and pillaged in the name of colonial imperialism, but also attack the boundary between the state's authority and themselves. As a result of these actions, and as a direct result of

meant something more.

And now in the aftermath, as white nationalists announce more rallies over confederate statue removals across the US, threatening posters put in low income neighborhoods and random acts of racist violence, we are seeing that sentiment spreading and coalescing into a real conflict beyond protests. With liberals saying their routine denouncing of violence "On many sides", it's made clear once again that only we will protect us.

We have to come to the realization of peace and love being an outcome. A result, and not a means of maintaining itself. You can stand up to hate with love, but what vehicle of action is love driving? Certainly not more and more "love" until it somehow forms an effective weapon to literally kill white supremacy. You don't "love" a fascist to death or make your love out to be deadly if it can't hate and kill when it needs to.

Our relationships need to break away from appeasing the exploitation of non-violent complacency, monotonous popular dialog, and taking to heart the acceptability of liberal pats on the back.

If anyone cares about standing up to hate, they won't prioritize "taking a stand" and announcing support while backing down at the first sign of physical confrontation. They will speak last while organizing, arming, training and fighting alongside the marginalized. They will understand the need to raze the shackles of state mediation, working to the crossroads of autonomy or autocracy. It is possible, and day by day it becomes our time to decide.

Lives Matter banners. Cheers signal them into the mass of people united against white supremacy. We wave our flags and continuously declare these streets to be ours, as they are. But just after clearing the intersection, at Water and Fourth streets, I hear faint screams up the road. I grab my partner and a comrade and rush us to a sidewalk in the opposite direction before the screams culminate in a roaring smash with people tumbling over windshields. The rush of victory and camaraderie is instantly replaced by terror; fear for what the toll of injuries and deaths will be reported on in the news later that day. I clutch my partner, knowing that someone is dead. “This is fucking *class war!*,” we shout.

Paramedics arrive in minutes. One of our group members is missing, and our anxiety peaks when riot police begin stepping in, advancing ten feet per minute. To our greatest relief, she makes it back to us having been trapped on the other side when police cleared the street. For fear of being kettled, we rejoin with people from our state and get somewhere safe.

After the attack, activities on all sides are fragmented into a free-for-all. The *give a little, get a little* convention is thrown out the window. Hospitals caring for injured anti-fascists are circled by cars belonging to Identity Evropa. Reports of drive-by shootings by nationalists put everyone on edge. Sporadic reports of mass arrests send us to ultimately barren locations. Cooling down at a local coffeeshop, we decide that we’ve done our part. We make it back to our car and debrief at camp before getting on the road for home. We get the outside world’s view of the situation in the car. It feels almost insulting, after what we’ve seen firsthand.

Charlottesville as a city is now tainted to me. I can never get that first impression healed, and that city will always be bookended as where I was on August 12th, 2017. Every bit of stonework, every street and every shop can only play a part in mentally outlining the vessel for what arose on that day from devotion to the myth of “blood and soil.” Regardless, a few facts need to be repeated.

We outnumbered them. We shut their event down before it could start. We were lucky enough to have the cops turn on them. But they *will* step up their game. They *will* celebrate the murder of Heather Heyer and twist it into a repetitive in-joke, encouraging their fantasy to be built on further. They *will* kill more of us, and they *will* try to win. The fascist rise to power is always prefaced in the streets.

The analyses of late show all and more I could say about the situation: This is a testament to this generation’s resurgence of nationalism; the point where everyone agrees that they’ve moved out of the Internet. Where mere disgruntled young white men are organized into formations capable of terrorizing vulnerable communities and securing the already prevalent structures of oppression as the core mode of society.

Charlottesville as some grand call to action was a laughable failure, yes, but I can only speak for the impressions I got in the streets. Personally, it was a declaration of class war that was secured when Heather Heyer was killed. Each side had a sense of this being something momentous, probably not as profound when knowing that it was built up over the weeks prior, but it was there and it

the Charlottesville demonstrations, multiple cities and universities have moved to take down these statues themselves. With each one, a notch of American colonial veneration is removed, and the legitimacy of a state built around the invasion of indigenous soil is thrown off of our collective consciousness. But antifascists didn’t stop at marble and bronze.

In Minneapolis’ Hennepin County, protesters gathered at the county jail in a show of solidarity with those in Charlottesville, and to speak out against the rising presence of unambiguous white nationalism in America. A Nazi was burned in effigy. The crowd struck down the Hennepin County flag, burned it, and hoisted an antifascist flag in its place.

On August 19th, Durham County residents caught wind of a rumor that the Klan was organizing another rally of its own, and acted with incredible swiftness to counter-protest. But when the hooded goons didn’t show up, the demonstrators turned their mutual love into an impromptu bloc party instead. Durham residents quickly formed into a marching column, circling the area and chanting the familiar slogan of “no Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA.” Passing the county jail, they cried “we see you, we love you,” eliciting a grateful cheer from those inside the jail. When the march concluded, and no Klansmen were in sight, the soul of human commonality rose up in the attendees, and the bloc party ensued. With cases of bottled water, food, music, and jubilation, the region temporarily became an autonomous zone patrolled by police and uninterrupted by fascist agitators, a microcosm of non-hierarchical society. David A. Graham, writing for the Atlantic, describes the scene.

It was a diverse cross-section of the Durham community: young and old, black, white, Hispanic, and Asian. There were hipsters with sculpted mustaches and band t-shirts, men with graying dreadlocks, black-clad anarchists with bandanas over their faces even in the heat, women in hijabs, and young men obeying the old Southern dictum: Sun’s out, guns out. There was a drum circle, of course, and more chants. Some people climbed up on scaffolding outside the building and just sat there, surveying the scene. Photographers amateur and professional roamed the crowd. Local TV journalists, and your correspondent, sweated through their dress shirts and then kept sweating.

The barrier between the black bloc antifascist and the sign-wielding anti-racist is becoming less dense, not so much as to suddenly imbue every citizen with an anti-capitalist and anti-state philosophy, but enough to humanize the people behind the bandanas. A sense of trust is building between the people who find themselves compelled to defend one another from their common enemies: the state, the police, the fascists, and the Klan. In the process, antifascists are becoming more confident in their own abilities, more protective of one another, and more instinctively cooperative leftists who may read different authors, but share common goals. And with each success, they grow bolder, more concerned with the price of failure than the cost of victory.

Direct action is doing what laws and debates cannot. As of this writing, over 60 “America First” rallies like the one in Boston have been cancelled, the organizers understanding with finality that their presence is not welcome in our communities. Antifascists have incorporated more complex and diverse tactics

into their strategies, as exemplified in Charlottesville. A recent anonymous article published on It's Going Down, "Charlottesville Is Barely The Start," offers a look at how intricate antifascist plans for community self defense have become, and how rapidly they are learning to respond to the chaos of a street battle:

Over the next two hours, we move from park to park, checkpoint to checkpoint encountering the sections of this new wave of terror and fervor of racial fantasy. At the same time, we encounter some of the most courageous and selfless individuals who put themselves in danger to aid their comrades. Street medics tending to those pepper sprayed and injured by the enemy. Redneck Revolt giving armed protection to the mass of anti-fascists. Camp sites out in the woods providing legal info, mental health support and weapons training before the action. Every bit of this would contribute to our victory over the enemy in Charlottesville, but also set the paradigm for what to do from then on.

...Reports from communications come in and out, that the fascists are approaching us. A couple right-wing stragglers cross the street, get punched in the mouth and get their confederate flag expropriated, which is later burned. We make our way to McGuffey park to rejoin with people we got separated with. When we arrive we get word that Richard Spencer was arrested and celebrate accordingly. Soon after, we get reports of fascists en route to harass a black, low income neighborhood. As armed bike-runners are dispatched to confirm the situation, the need to gather all the counter-protesters to have the whole town on watch becomes obvious.

In the coming weeks, the alt-right will attempt to recoup its losses at Charlottesville, staging more gatherings to intimidate the public, more grandiose theatrics to convince themselves that their movement is a righteous one. They have been proven wrong more than once, and while they have repeatedly spilled the blood of our comrades, they have never prevailed in quelling the antifascist cause. Although they grow more vicious and more militaristic, they fail time and again to appeal to anyone but their own grotesque, racist mob. They retain a tenuous influence in the government, and their Goblin King still sits on the throne of the American Empire. But the bulk the population has lost faith in the government, in electoralism, and in capitalism, and marching under a swastika isn't going to convince anybody that puffed-up trust-fund 30-somethings can build a better civilization. Meanwhile, antifascism has ascended and entered the public lexicon, and the neo-nazis who thought themselves saviors of the white race have been rebuked by the people they assumed would bow to a new master so long as his skin looked like theirs.

The antifascist movement is evolving beyond purely defensive measures, into the realm of active engagement with fascists before, during, and after they arrive for their rallies. The intensity of the pushback against white nationalism has cut the fascist movement in half, between those whose imagination cannot exceed Roman-style shield walls, and those who have resorted to obfuscation, duplicity, and renunciations of white nationalism and the alt-right in order to save their own hides. Every step forward, every small victory, has built up momentum against oppression, against the colonial state, and against the exploitative systems which will cease to function when they can no longer divide us. The revolutionary spark is being born in the minds of thousands who have

CHARLOTTESVILLE IS BARELY THE START

ANONYMOUS

itsgoingdown.org

Our group of four stood at the crosswalk, flagpoles in hand and bandannas around our necks. Off in the distance, the park is teeming with black-clad people with clubs, shields, respirators, flags, banners, signs. Any form of message delivery, all with the same idea. Looking down the street to see if there's a quicker way to get across, we spot the first of our enemy: Identity Evropa marching in a single column down the sidewalk across the park, their distinct blue and white flags waving above them. Before they round the corner to face the anti-fascists, we already hear cries against them, cries unlike at any sporting event; cries with sincere disdain on every level. "Nazi Scum Off Our Streets!" The column leaves our sight, and we cross the street. This is at 10 AM.

Over the next two hours, we move from park to park, checkpoint to checkpoint encountering the sections of this new wave of terror and fervor of racial fantasy. At the same time, we encounter some of the most courageous and selfless individuals who put themselves in danger to aid their comrades. Street medics tending to those pepper sprayed and injured by the enemy. Redneck Revolt giving armed protection to the mass of anti-fascists. Camp sites out in the woods providing legal info, mental health support and weapons training before the action. Every bit of this would contribute to our victory over the enemy in Charlottesville, but also set the paradigm for what to do from then on.

After the police declared Emancipation park an unlawful assembly for the white nationalists, we regrouped at our initial rendezvous. We eat, rehydrate and plan our next moves. Reports from communications come in and out, that the fascists are approaching us. A couple right-wing stragglers cross the street, get punched in the mouth and get their confederate flag expropriated, which is later burned.

We make our way to McGuffey park to rejoin with people we got separated with. When we arrive we get word that Richard Spencer was arrested and celebrate accordingly. Soon after, we get reports of fascists en route to harass a black, low income neighborhood. As armed bike-runners are dispatched to confirm the situation, the need to gather all the counter-protesters to have the whole town on watch becomes obvious.

We set our sights for the busy roads around the pedestrian mall, a mile out from Emancipation Park. An improvised chant invigorates our numbers down the road leaving McGuffey. "Everywhere we go, pigs wanna know; Who we are — so we tell them: 'We are the People! The motherfucking people! Fighting for Justice. Black liberation, brown liberation, queer liberation, trans liberation, native liberation, workers' liberation!'"

Soon we reach an intersection, and we are greeted by red flags and Black



Fascists were better equipped than counter-protestors in Charlottesville, yet failed to gain the upper hand.

come see their own struggles as part of a greater machine which has vampirically preyed upon the working class for centuries, and must be dismantled completely before freedom is possible for any of us.

FORWARD TO LIBERATION

Here is the grim reality of our situation: this conflict cannot, and will not, lose inertia on its own.

The fascist movement has found its calling. Given enough leeway by the liberal bloc, and fueled by a right-wing which has always quietly accepted the votes of white supremacists, the neo-fascist right has reached maturity. It will shed the uncommitted and the less-than-serious, becoming more violent and chaotic even as it loses numbers. Whatever cry-wolf antics Richard Spencer employs to blame the crimes of his movement on police inaction, fascists are fully aware that the state is on their side: there's a reason the FBI didn't uncover hardcore leftists when it investigated police departments for extremist political positions. While statue vandals are rounded up the day after their alleged crimes, the men who tried to burn UVA students alive will go unpunished, even when their names and faces are made public.

But antifascism has become equally enconced in 21st century America. After the presidencies of Bush I, Clinton, Bush II, Obama, and Trump, about half the population recognizes that the state has no concern for their interests, that their lives will not improve no matter who is made president, and that global warfare, capitalist strangulation, and mass incarceration are the final stage of America's development. A growing percentage of us do not bother to vote. We are at the mercy of the 0.01%, who reap everything we sow, rob us with both taxes and wages, and doom us to a police state where we are unceasingly surveilled, imprisoned, brutalized, and three of us are killed every day by government-sanctioned executioners.

And behind it all is the cultural and economic structure which led inevitably to the rise of American fascism, the beast which now lurks in our cities and occasionally lunges at the throats of our comrades.

Antifascists have grown strong through class conflict. The conjoined evils of capitalism, militarism, and nationalism are now a common point of discourse among former liberals. Time and again, in ways big and small, antifascists and anti-racists have risen to the challenge and gained insight into their own capability. But with each victory, there is a greater battle looming on the horizon.

The alt-right cannot stand forever. But time will tell if antifascists are prepared to counteract the paramilitary gangs which will be birthed like bloathflies from the corpse of cryptofascism. When fascists become accustomed to combat during their scheduled rallies, can antifascists learn to strike at them the night before? If the police become even more heavy-handed in their tactics, can we protect ourselves? If Trump attempts to unify the nation and repair his plummeting approval rating through warfare with Afghanistan or a preemptive strike against the DPRK, could we rapidly build a strong antiwar response? If the DOJ weaponizes the legal system against us, either through invasions of our privacy, brutal prison sentences like those faced by the J20 defendants, or by declaring antifascists to be terrorists and exposing us to attacks from the DHS,

are we capable and willing to disobey and fight back?

And what of the rest of the population; when the liberal bloc and Democratic party attempt to coopt our struggles and take credit for our victories, how will we respond? When the people look for alternatives to electoral politics and corporate parties, will we have meaningful answers for them? When all the statues are torn down, how else do we attack the concepts of state supremacy, police benevolence, and American exceptionalism?

Whatever the future holds, this much is undeniable: antifascism will not be quietly put down, as the alt-right had hoped after Berkeley. The problems which have led us to this point, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the continued nostalgia for a freedom-loving America which never existed, cannot be undone overnight, and so this movement will not suddenly lose its purpose. Our course is set, and more people are beginning to understand that the black bloc is merely one appendage of a movement which sees prison slavery, imperialism, wage labor, and white supremacy as many faces of the same enemy. If we are incredibly fortunate, we will live long enough to see a day when, together as workers, we hammer the columns of the state into dust, and build a new society from the rubble.

of those who participated in the “Unite the Right” rally are being broadcast on twitter feeds such as “yes, you’re racist,” and more extensive doxxing is undoubtedly soon to come. It seems a stressful and rather lonely moment for our opposition.

On the government side, Steve Bannon has lost his job, but he is back at his old post at Breitbart, preparing to catalyze another wave of grassroots nationalism. As always, Trump is either on the ropes or on the verge of pulling off an authoritarian coup. It is time for Americans of good conscience to resume the offensive, before this match made in hell has time to regain its footing and to consolidate further.

Donald Trump was elected head of state through the democratic process, of course, as was Adolf Hitler. He has the support of millions of people; so did Adolf Hitler. His government is in bed with people who dream about carrying out a second Holocaust and reinstating slavery, among other things. We have every right to topple this government if we can. It would be unfortunate to look back on this moment with regret, realizing that we missed our chance.

In my opinion, the high-water mark thus far of resistance to the Trump regime was the wave of airport occupations at the end of January, which set in motion a course of events that ultimately led to Steve Bannon being iced out of the foreign policy sphere by the few remaining adults in Trump’s circle. Unfortunately, they left Bannon the domestic sphere as his playpen, and the Deep State doesn’t care very much. No one is coming to save us.

What would it take to rise to this occasion? We would have to mobilize large crowds nationwide to shut down government infrastructure, prioritizing everything nearest and dearest to Bannon and his faction. Something like that might work. I don’t think it’s too late.

Of course, after Charlottesville, all such crowds will be considered soft targets by fascist murderers. We will have to demonstrate that we are able to exert deadly force to deter such attacks, as Redneck Revolt did admirably in Charlottesville.

If Americans of good conscience push hard enough, we may be able to force Trump to abandon Bannon and Bannonism. We might be able to topple Trump entirely. But under no circumstances will anyone with any self-respect ever submit to governance by Nazis. This government and its fascist allies should think carefully before they choose their next move.

In the spirit of Robert Grodt, who fought fascism in Raqqa, and in the spirit of Heather Heyer, who fought fascism in her own hometown.

One could argue this meant Nazis dissipated into the streets faster making it less safe, but let's be real: Nazis have been making these streets less safe for a long time. They would have been out and about soon enough with or without the antifa.

I was with a group of clergy committed to non-violence today. We did our part. We bore witness to the pain and hatred in this city. We provided pastoral care/support as needed, especially during traumatic violent acts. This was our determined role going into today. Yes, some clergy risked injury and arrest to stop the Nazis. They formed a blockade at the entrance, but they were overpowered by the Nazis. The police did not view us as threatening enough to shut things down, because again, we were not there to threaten.

The antifa strategically incited enough violence before noon to make the police declare it illegal to gather in Emancipation Park. Through this strategic violence they effectively made a previously legally permitted Nazi rally, illegal.

We may not agree with each others tactics. We may have had different goals, but if you're looking to praise people specifically for shutting down the "Unite the Right" rally, praise/thank the antifa. Not the clergy and not the police."

I do not want it to be soon forgotten that American anarchists and anti-fascists shut down the largest Nazi and white supremacist gathering on US soil in decades. We accomplished this despite being outnumbered, underequipped, and literally fighting up a hill—at great personal risk and at a terrible cost.

What if things had gone differently? What if we had done as the mayor recommended and stayed away from Emancipation Park, so as not to “feed into a cycle of violence”? What if the rally had proceeded as planned? What if Nazis and white supremacists had been able to build momentum into the night? Based on what I saw Friday and Saturday, there is no doubt in my mind what would have happened next: they would have terrorized the city of Charlottesville. They would have left their leadership a degree of plausible deniability, broken into smaller groups, and killed and injured any number of people in decentralized locations throughout the city. It was to be their Kristallnacht, their burning cross, their triumphant return.

Instead, they had to leave town in disarray in fear of us, the people of Charlottesville, and the police—in that order. They sent twenty people to the hospital and murdered Heather Heyer.

It could have been much, much worse.

These are dark and dangerous times. Nazis and white supremacists have shown that they are ready to kill and able to mobilize in great numbers, and they have the blessing of the President of the United States. They are well on their way to solidifying their position as the paramilitary arm of the Trump administration. These groups hope to be to Trump what ISIS is to Erdogan and what the Taliban is to the government of Pakistan: terrorist auxiliaries that provide strategic depth against enemies of the state.

On the other hand, Nazis and white supremacists discredited themselves completely in the eyes of millions of American people this weekend, as did their President by emboldening and defending them. The names and faces of many

ANTIFA SAVED THEIR LIVES: REPORT FROM CLERGY AT CHARLOTTESVILLE

ANONYMOUS

itsgoingdown.org

A few times a day, I group text with two of my closest friends, Brandy and Jen. It was a normal day on Thursday, August 3rd when we were texting about our typical subjects: academia, politics, our writing (or lack thereof!), dating, and hanging out with each other again. None of us live near each other so this is the best way to keep in touch. Shortly prior to this particular group text message, Brandy moved to Charlottesville, Virginia for a post-doctoral fellowship in the Religious Studies department at the University of Virginia. I live fairly close to Virginia so I asked Brandy when she wanted me to come visit her during the month of August. She joked at one point in the group text that I could come down and join the clergy counter protest for this Alt-Right rally entitled “Unite the Right,” which was supposed to take place on Saturday, August 12th. If you watch the news for any decent amount of time, you know who the Alt-Right are and what they believe. I did not think it would be a particularly memorable event, and without much thought, I agreed to attend so I could protest with my friend. I then signed up for the Clergy Call organized and led by phenomenal leaders Seth Wispelwey and Smash Patty in local congregations in Charlottesville. Little did I know what was coming for us.

A few days later, I received an email from the Clergy Call organizers warning about the dangers of attending the counter protest against the neo-Nazis at the Unite the Right rally. I read the email with some concern, but I still had no idea what was coming for us. I told Brandy that due to personal reasons, I could not risk getting arrested right now. She told me I could still attend the protest and be the designated person to bail her out of jail. I quickly agreed.

The few days leading up to the Unite the Right rally on August 12th were very consuming for me. I led a conference for my job, and I also faced some personal issues that were unfolding at the same time. On Friday, August 11th, I planned to drive down to Charlottesville after my work conference wrapped up in the late afternoon. By the time I actually made progress driving towards Charlottesville, it was the early evening, and I was completely exhausted. At one point during my drive, I called Brandy with the intention of telling her I was going to skip the rally and drive home instead. I remember calling her, and she talked about her preparations for the clergy counter protest.

In that moment, I did not have the heart to tell her I was too tired to visit. I wanted to be there with her more than I wanted to go home and sleep, so I kept driving. Brandy texted me late that evening while I was still driving to let me know that she was stuck in the church where the clergy gathered that evening to worship in order to prepare themselves spiritually for the counter protest on Saturday. I did not know this at the time, but my friend was trapped

inside that church, because neo-Nazis were outside the front doors blocking in the congregants with tiki torches in hand. I am thankful she never told me all these details at that time. I do not think I could have handled the truth in my state of exhaustion.

I finally arrived at Brandy's apartment in Charlottesville shortly before midnight. She told me that we were going to attend a sunrise service the next morning to spiritually prepare for the counter protest. She said we had to be there by 6 AM. I was *not happy* about the early wake-up call given my exhaustion. But she said Cornel West was preaching so I knew it would be worth attending.

We woke up early and arrived to First Baptist Church on West Main Street where hundreds of people gathered for an interfaith worship service. The church was energized as we sang many African American spirituals sung during the civil rights era. It was a moving worship time. At this point, I *still* had no idea what was in store for the day. I had no framework for what to expect, and I was not expecting much beyond a peaceful protest and a few fascists showing up to this rally. This was my first time in Charlottesville, after all. How bad could it possibly get?

Once the interfaith service ended, the leaders asked the clergy who were planning to be on the front lines of the counter protest to meet in the front of the church. Only 40 or 50 clergy members and other individuals stayed. It was disheartening to see how many people left the church when the organizers of the counter protest hoped that we would have huge numbers for the event. One of the leaders of the Clergy Call, Rev. Sekou Osagyefo, began to speak to the individuals who stayed to counter protest in Emancipation Park.

After kicking out media and government employees from the sanctuary, Sekou spoke some harsh warnings to those in the room. He told us that if we were not prepared to die that day, we should not attend this protest. He told us that if we were not prepared to be beaten that day, we should not attend this protest. At this point, I look over to my friend Brandy with my eyes wide open with fear and panic and ask her what he is talking about. Brandy assures me that we will not die, and we will not be injured. She tells me Sekou is trying to prepare us for the absolute worst, but that death and injury properly will not happen. But Sekou keeps repeating these warnings, and suddenly, I realize that I am entering a real battle zone.

I did not prepare for any of this in any way—spiritually, emotionally, or mentally—and I also did not receive the weeks of non-violent training that Brandy underwent. At this point, I am convinced that I should stay as far behind as possible to protect myself. When we finally formed a line to leave the church and march towards Emancipation Park by foot, I stayed in the very back of the line with the non-profit volunteer lawyers. I figured that if I stick with the lawyers, I would be safe (probably not the best logic!). There was an eerie, almost deafening silence in the town as we walked through the streets. It felt like a ghost town as very few people could be seen anywhere in the streets. Right before we made it to Emancipation Park, we had to make a left turn up a small hill.

I was still marching in the back at this point when I saw over a dozen armed male militia at the top of the hill with AK-47s in hand. Fear engulfed my entire

WHY WE FOUGHT IN CHARLOTTESVILLE: A LETTER ON THE DANGERS AHEAD

AN ANARCHIST

crimethinc.com

I am one of the thousands of people who confronted Nazis and white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia last weekend. I am a blue-collar person, with a job, family, and responsibilities. I would have preferred to do other things with my weekend. However, I had to ask myself: *If these people are allowed to run roughshod over this town, what will they do next?*

"We would have been crushed like cockroaches if it were not for the anarchists and the antifascists... They saved our lives, actually. We would have been completely crushed, and I'll never forget that."

—Dr. Cornel West

No, I did not behave peacefully when I saw a thousand Nazis occupy a sizable American city. I fought them with the most persuasive instruments at hand, the way both my grandfathers did. I was maced, punched, kicked, and beaten with sticks, but I gave as good as I got, and usually better. Donald Trump says that "there was violence on both sides." Of course there was. I might add that there were not murderers on both sides—but that's not really my point.

I would like to ask a different question. What would have happened if there had *not* been violence on both sides? What would have happened if there had only been violence on one side?

On the night of Friday, August 11, 2017, I saw something that I never thought I would see, and that I hope I never see again: 500 Nazis and white supremacists marching across the campus of the University of Virginia while police did nothing, surrounding 30 counter-demonstrators who were holding hands around a statue of Thomas Jefferson, and beating them with torches while calling them "nigger" and "boy." By the end of the night, it was clear to me that the "Unite the Right" march had been organized for the express purpose of killing people on Saturday.

Permit me to quote a post from a clergyperson in Charlottesville at length, because it correctly explains what happened on Saturday morning, and why. There are countless other narratives like it online.

A note on the Antifa:

They are the reason Richard Spencer did not speak today. They are the reason the "Unite the Right" march didn't happen. They strategically used violent tactics to incite the Nazis to violence, such that the governor declared a state of emergency before noon. Before the "Unite the Right" rally was scheduled to begin.

stand on those stairs as Nazis charged towards her. I begin worrying about war, violence against vulnerable communities, more hatred against those who are already oppressed, and what the future of Trump's presidency will mean not only for this nation, but for the world.

I was told that writing my story could help with the trauma and the confusion. I hope at some point to share some theological reflections. But for now, I wanted to document my story from the front lines of Charlottesville and encourage you, dear reader, to resist the power of white supremacy on all fronts.

body, and I quickly locked arms with other clergy members for fear of being on the outside of the group. We finally made it to Emancipation Park when we lined up along the one side of the park, arms interlocked with each other. I believe the original goal was to have enough clergy to circle the entire park, but there were only enough clergy present to line the one side.

It was around 9 AM when we made it to Emancipation Park. The first song we sang was "This Little Light of Mine." Never have the words to this song felt so vulnerable and almost foolish. We sang this song as armed militia and a few neo-Nazis began to pass us on the sidewalk. As time went on, more and more neo-Nazis began to trickle into the park along the sidewalk. The clergy line kept singing songs of freedom, praying, kneeling, and standing peacefully to be a counter witness to the hate and violence of the neo-Nazis in that space. At one point, we kneeled on the ground to pray one by one while a member of the armed militia stood directly across from me with his AK-47 in hand. I was overwhelmed with seeing a weapon like that so close to my body as I kneeled on the pavement, weaponless and full of fear. I have never felt so vulnerable before the powers of the world before. I kept wondering, "is this what Jesus is calling me to do?" All my theology of resistance became real in those moments alongside Emancipation Park. We were fighting against the powers of darkness that engulfed this park.

As more neo-Nazis passed the clergy line, they verbally abused us one by one over the course of a few hours. One man screamed that Jesus hates us. Another screamed that we hate the white race and are contributing to white genocide. Another man boldly came up to the clergy line and asked us if we have ever read Ephesians 5 and 6, because then we would know the Bible does not allow women to be clergy. He said we should be submitting to men. Another man taunted us for a good while asking us where we went to seminary, and tried to get us to answer questions about theology and the Bible to prove we were legitimate clergy. I can not fully remember everything that was said to me that day on the clergy line. Online trolls are one thing. We all know not to feed the trolls on the internet. But it is another thing to have the trolls right before your face yelling vile truths that contradict everything you believe. It took the sheer grace of God for me to stay silent in the midst of the verbal abuse.

One man came up to the clergy line with a t-shirt of Adolf Hitler's face right above a large swastika. He was very eager and adamant to inform us that he worshipped the same Jesus we do. It was in that moment that I realized how far darkness can take a person into complete falsehood. I wanted to look that man in the eye and tell him that his Jesus is not the one who hung from the cross for those he despises. But I could not say a word. It nearly took my breath away when they chanted, "Black Lives Don't Matter" and "Fuck You Faggots" over and over again. It felt like they just kept coming one by one. They showed up by the dozens along the sidewalk before my eyes with their weapons, shields, sticks, helmets, and zealous hatred. There were so many of them and so few of us. They looked nothing like I expected. They were young boys who looked strikingly similar to my nephew, my cousin, my neighbor, or any average white kid you would see on a daily basis. This was not the hooded Nazi's of my parents generation. No, this was far more covert and dangerous.

A few hours after the clergy arrived, the anti-fascists (or “antifa”) showed up with their banners denouncing white supremacy. They were small in number compared to the neo-Nazis, but I was so thankful when they finally arrived with their message that Black Lives Matter, that LGBTQ+ lives matter, and that hatred will not win this fight. They offered members of the clergy line water and food. Some put their hand on my shoulder and gave me a smile. I finally breathed a sigh of relief. I felt less alone in this fight against darkness.

At one point, the clergy line broke up as some clergy, including my friend Brandy, were planning to form a blockade on the steps leading up to the park. The intention was to stop neo-Nazis from getting into the park to attend their rally. The clergy knew how vulnerable they were next to the neo-Nazis because each one were committed to nonviolence. Some of the clergy did not want to join the blockade, but it was too dangerous to stay in the streets as more and more violence was breaking out. Those clergy began running toward a café a few blocks away, which served as our safe house for the day.

I started running with them when all the sudden I stopped, and said I could not leave my friend Brandy behind. They told me twice that I could either stay or go, but that they had to go. I did not know what to do. I wanted to go with them, but I could not leave my friend without knowing if she was okay. I decided in that moment to turn around and stay. I stood on the corner across the street from the steps of the park and watched my friend lock arms with other clergy members. I had to watch as neo-Nazis came charging in by the dozens and forcefully plowed toward the clergy blockade. A blanket of fear engulfed me as I watched my friend stand there not knowing if she would make it out of there alive. If antifa had not eventually stood between the clergy blockade and the neo-Nazis, my friends would have either been badly beaten or died. Antifa saved their lives.

While I stood on the corner, I also tried to dodge the many bottles full of feces that were thrown in the air from the neo-Nazis. I tried to not breathe in the tear gas and the pepper spray clouds that kept coming my way. At one point, the clergy line dispersed, and I was reunited with Brandy. We did not know what to do next so we tried to stay on the outskirts of the scene. The neo-Nazis just kept coming in groups over and over. We were far outnumbered, but I watched countless antifa youth risk their lives, one by one, to fight back. Many of them were eventually carried away covered in blood from being beaten. Some screamed in the middle of the street as their eyes burned from the pepper spray. It was the most horrific scene I have ever seen in my life. I coughed so hard at one point from breathing in pepper spray that I wet myself. I could not stop coughing. It was terrifying.

This violence and chaos ensued for over an hour. The police did nothing. I looked over at the police many times in the midst of the chaos only to find some laughing at certain points. I was not surprised, but I was still disillusioned by their lack of response.

As I looked on to see the crowds of people fighting and could hear the deafening sound of fists hitting flesh, I began to wonder if this is God’s judgment upon America for our original sin of racism and slavery. This nation was found-

ed upon the kidnap, rape, and enslavement of African and Caribbean bodies for our profit. While the concentration of pure and unadulterated hatred in Emancipation Park might be novel for this time period, the seeds and roots of that hatred are as old as the United States. This country has never confronted and repented for the devastating and continual violence done against black and brown flesh. From slavery to lynching to segregation to imprisonment, we continue to oppress, enslave, and kill all that does not fit into the toxic mold of white supremacy.

In the early afternoon (the actual time escapes me), the Governor of Virginia declared a state of emergency. The National Guard came out with a water tank, and told everyone through a loud speaker to leave the area, or we would be arrested. Brandy and I made our way to the safe house at the café I mentioned earlier. We rested there for a bit, and the owners of the café kindly gave us free food and beer. At one point in the afternoon, my friend Gregory messaged me on Facebook to tell me that counter-protestors were forming again and headed towards Water Street. Word on the street was that the neo-Nazis were headed to a public housing area, and organizers in the area asked for counter-protesters to come help stop them. I wanted to join him and the other protestors, but I did not know where Water Street was in relation to this café. I figured I would join up with them later at some point.

A few minutes later, someone came into the café and told us we had to come out immediately as something happened. A bunch of us from the café began running down the block to Water Street where we were met with bodies spewed all across the street. I would later learn that a neo-Nazi terrorist drove his car into this crowd of counter protesters and killed one protester named Heather Heyer. It felt like a war zone. Chaos and confusion filled those streets as we stood helplessly on the sidewalks wondering how this could happen.

Eventually, Brandy and I left downtown Charlottesville and went back to her house to sleep. It is hard to know how to recover from the horror we witnessed that day. Do you drink? Do you sleep? Do you talk to others who were there? Do you watch the news? Do you pray? What can you do to cope with such violence? How do you make sense of it? Where do you go from there?

I left Charlottesville the next day to return home. I drove home with an endless amount of questions swimming through my head, not knowing if I will ever receive answers. My theology was deeply challenged that day as I stood on that clergy line. I realized how deeply I am *already* part of the violence of white supremacy even if I committed to a nonviolent protest and even if I denounce the neo-Nazis. I wondered what it means to witness against white supremacy today as a white Christian in light of the rise of the Alt-Right. I wondered if this rise in Nazism requires a different response than what I would normally advocate.

I wrote this post, because since Saturday, I have been having great difficulty sleeping. I wake up in the middle of the night, and I can not get those rage-filled faces out of my mind as they play over and over again in my head. The heaviness of the future bears down on me, and I begin to realize how much work there is to do to fight against this darkness that is coming back over this nation afresh. I remember that blanket of fear that I felt as I watched my friend