

Antifa Activists As The Truest Defenders Of Free Speech

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Anarchists have always paid a lot of attention to feedback loops. Seemingly small actions, small arrangements, small evils tolerated, can rapidly or inexorably build up to systematic and seemingly omnipotent power relations. Things that, in isolation don't seem that bad, can lead to the formation of states or make those states even more authoritarian. Certain economic arrangements can lead to wealth progressively concentrating power into the hands of a few. As anarchists we are always laser focused on the the dangers of letting anyone get a monopoly in anything. On the dangers of even the tiniest interpersonal acts of domination. And as radicals we never settle for established conventions, we're always questioning where what is considered "common sense" breaks down. We are always searching for the boundary conditions beyond which a rule of thumb is no longer useful. In what contexts do some dangers overwhelm other dangers?

The ideal of free speech — or as I think it should be better parsed, *freedom of information* — is an ideal of incredible importance that extends well beyond merely opposing state censorship. It's deeply worrying to see that value erode with the rhetorical ratchet of online conflict. However, freedom of speech is not as clear-cut of an ideal as some think; its application or pursuit is unavoidably tangled, as its most studied champions admit. A world of vibrant open communication where the most accurate ideas rise to the top is a *goal* — not something that can be achieved by codifying a few simplistic rules of action.

We can all agree that cutting the telegraph wires of fascist generals coordinating an invasion would violate their personal "free speech" but it is also an action clearly justified insofar as it saves the free speech of the millions they plan to subjugate. To truly defend free speech on the whole we must sometimes deny it to its murderous enemies. To defend the ideal of a richly interconnected world where information flows freely takes more than speech, it requires action against those brutally organizing against it.

It is precisely my openness to contrary or extreme ideas, my diligence in listening to all parties, that has led me to realize complexities to free speech. In particular to recognize very extreme situations where the danger of backsliding on broadly tolerant social norms is outweighed by the danger of those ideologically committed to domination and whose recruitment proceeds not through reason but shows of force. There are always exceptions to otherwise good strategies and heuristics — as anarchists we do not rely upon the state or its obtuse and dangerous legal system and thus it is our duty as individuals to not hide from such complications. It is our responsibility as individuals to sometimes judge and act in ways that we would never trust any monopolistic institution to judge or act. Although, of course we must be careful and vigilant nonetheless.

While I inevitably have some disagreements with some among the vast and diverse array of activists who work as antifascists, I value the work that antifa groups and organizations have long undertaken to safeguard our world from the worst possible horrors. When in my neighborhood a decade ago swastikas were going up, businesses owned by people of color were being attacked, and neonazis were brutally jumping people, I certainly wasn't going to go to the police. I'm an anarchist and consistent in my opposition to the authoritarianism of the police state. But also Portland's Police — like many other departments — are themselves infested with white nationalists and broadly sympathetic to such scum. Instead I forwarded descriptions to some community members who'd gotten fed up and formed an antifa group and were actively researching and exposing these neonazis. Their work as journalists and as activists to organize boycotts and physically resist attacks helped save my neighborhood and I will never forget that. Similarly to how the faith leaders at Charlottesville attacked by neonazis will never forget the black bloc an-

archists who rushed to put their bodies on the line to save their lives. As an anarchist — and the overwhelming majority of “antifa” are also diligent anarchists who reject the state as an ethical means — I’ve remained in the same circles and listened to what they’ve had to say over the years as I’ve traveled from city to city, country to country. I’ve remained consistently impressed by their scholarship, consideration, and bravery.

As full-blown fascist and white nationalist groups have recently started using the political rise of Donald Trump to infiltrate conservative protests or activism, the situation has grown more complex. And it has also become more fraught as “antifa” has suddenly entered the popular lexicon, almost warped beyond recognition. The overly-nuanced research nerds living in praiseless obscurity that I knew have abruptly been cast as violence worshipping thugs, or frothing naive college kids looking to punch anyone problematic. This is, as all anarchists know, absolutely incorrect, although such cartoonish and disconnected narratives clearly further the agendas of both liberals and conservatives. Sadly, in some respects this media narrative becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy that marginalizes longstanding antifa groups, and casts things into much broader conflict of Trump supporters (as “nazis”) versus any and all Trump opponents (as “antifa”), an astonishingly ignorant framing that only benefits fascist entryists and helps spread misinformation via mainstream partisan paranoia.

But there clearly are important ethical and strategic challenges that the mainstream analysis among antifascist activists presents to the rest of us.

- When nazis hold a march with guns through a jewish neighborhood is that really just a matter of open discourse?
- Where does a reasonable boundary of “imminence” or “likelihood” to a threat get drawn?
- How many people need to be killed and at what frequency for us to see ourselves as at war?
- If a group organizes so that one wing works as streetfighters and murderers and another wing as public spokesmen and recruiters should we really be obligated to treat them as distinct groups or at what point should we see them as the same entity?

Many of these questions would be revolting if it was the leviathan state itself we were trusting to judge such distinctions. But we are anarchists, and as autonomous individuals our ethical responsibilities and capacities are different. Where institutions may have to behave as *rule consequentialists* lest their bureaucratic momentum carry them to terrible places, individual minds have the agency — and responsibility — to often behave more as *act consequentialists*, capable of recognizing nuance and context in ways that are more finely grained. Rather than sticking with hamfisted rules we can examine the specific context of each possible action before us.

I agree with the dominant antifascist critique of liberalism and its shortsightedness. Liberals do not grasp the threat posed by fascism — they over-privilege the perceived stability of their institutions and the status quo. They codify simplistic codes of behavior modeled upon the state’s legal system — and naturally, the fascists can run rings around these. Liberals happily legitimize fascists through debate, failing to realize that the game fascists are playing isn’t the game of reason, but the game of psychological appeals. As a practical matter fascism succeeds in debate — in the sense of quickly mobilizing enough of the population to achieve its aims — because the truth is complex, whereas false but simplistic narratives are often more emotionally resonant.

Most longstanding antifa groups are obviously and explicitly not out to singlehandedly win the long war against fascism, but to win the immediate battles necessary for our survival. In the long run fascism will never be defeated by fists but by all the shit like empathy and science that fascism is bad at. It will ultimately be defeated by making the world a better place, by tackling the deeper psychological and sociological dynamics that make fascism possible. We will only truly win when we achieve a world of plenty without oppression, where social hierarchy and dominance games become finally lost to history. That day is obviously far fucking off. It's important we continue to diligently work towards it, to continue growing the roots of such a world.

But it is also important that we fucking survive to see it. We cannot afford to privilege the future entirely over the present just as we cannot afford to privilege the present entirely over the future. Fascists mobilizing in the streets pose a relatively immediate existential risk to many communities. The situation we now face with not just a police force but an executive branch deeply infested with and sympathetic to outright white nationalists poses unique problems not reducible to the struggles that kicked neonazi thugs out of American cities in the 80s, 90s and 00s, but we also can't afford to ignore the experience and insights from those struggles.

Much of the "debate" over free speech and the now longstanding analyses that have developed among antifascist activists combating fascism has been profoundly disconnected from the dangers of fascist organizing and the history of antifascist activism. It's weird hearing conservative media personalities repeating the narrative, "*ANTIFA is a bunch of thugs opposed to free speech, they're the real fascists*" that a decade ago you'd only hear from shitty metal bros upset a band they like was exposed as neonazis and boycotted. But among sincere critics of antifa orgs in anarchist circles I think the underlying tension is one not just of philosophy, but of deeply varying takes on the strategic landscape.

Antifa approaches are not remotely designed to win hearts and minds among the wider population, but to stop fascist thugs from metastasizing in numbers by demonstrating unopposed strength. I am deeply sympathetic to forms of activism that do not attempt to "win votes" but just directly solve a problem, even if that problem is just the momentary survival of civilization. However it is true that there's a degree to which today's alt-right recruits via different mechanisms than the neonazis of the 80s, pulling from a much larger and more mainstream base that they're attempting to radicalize using antifascist violence as a boogeyman.

Although those activists actually doing antifascist work on the ground are in many ways epistemically privileged compared to us offering pointers from the peanut gallery – the exact best recipe of strategies to counter this current wave of white nationalist organizing clearly remains an open question.

I hope that this Mutual Exchange will bring some of these complex issues into greater clarity and perhaps defuse the feedbacking tribal suspicions that can occur in the absence of discourse. I have criticisms of some things and some developments under the expansive banner of "antifa" (as most antifa do themselves) but I find their arguments on the whole potent and persuasive.

This is a tough topic because to most people the stakes seem immense and thus there's an instinct to shy away from anything that could open a rhetorical crack to whatever potential horrific darkness you feel is pressing in. I hope that we can do better, and perhaps find our way towards some kind of meta-resolution.

Since we're talking about actually existing antifascist groups I will largely follow their lead and stick to using "fascist" in the specific political sense of the broadly hyper-nationalist authoritarian anti-modernists and anti-globalists in the tradition of Mussolini, Hitler, Schmitt, Evola,

et al. rather than the abstract philosophical sense of ANY extreme authoritarianism, tribalism, or amoral power worship. Sure there's degrees of "fascism" to be found in everything, from the sitcoms we watch to the layout of our neighborhood grocery store, and those sort of sweeping philosophical conversations can be enlightening, just as there's also a place for comparisons of authoritarian liberals like Hillary Clinton to fascists, but let's try to stick with the sieg heiling numbskulls. For the sake of brevity — unlike antifa groups which tend towards nerdy precision — I will also refer sweepingly and colloquially to a variety of white nationalists in the fascist tradition as "nazis." I don't feel that any ethically important distinctions are lost in such language.

I will break my opening piece into five parts: 1) Why free speech matters. 2) Why fascists constitute a real and pressing threat. 3) A defense in the abstract for each of antifascist activists' most prominent means — reporting, boycotting, doxing, physical defense, and proactive physical disruption, as well as responses to other more abstract critiques. 4) Critical feedback on some tendencies in antifascist strategy in the present context. 5) A challenge to sincere critics of present antifascist activists.

Why Free Speech Matters

Even though I expect this to be read as a spirited defense of antifa and their supposed "violations" of free speech, I want to begin with a piece underlining the importance of the ideal of free speech.

Perhaps the most revolting thing about the alt-right's positioning on "free speech" has been the calculated backlash it has provoked among the younger radical left. If the alt-right says it's pro anything a certain fraction of the online left will convulsively declare that thing bad, verboten, and out-group. This reactive tribalism has a lot to do with the way that our mediocre information technologies have framed and shaped communication and social-association norms online. It's hard to know who some rando is online or where they stand on important things, so people fetishize and overreact to whatever signifiers they can find to try and clear out the trolls and assure some level of productive mutual agreement in their circles or secure some basic social norms.

"Free speech" has started to become nothing more than a signifier of a certain kind of internet troll that uses the phrase as an empty shield, and thus many people convulse to repel anyone invoking such an outgroup phrase. In the process, some legitimate critiques of misapplications of "free speech" have gotten spread and applied widely. The meme signaling wars have gotten so bad that in some places it's basically obligatory that you respond with something like "muh freeze peach" immediately upon the invocation of "free speech" lest you yourself be revealed as in the grip of the dumbass outgroup.

This is unproductive.

Just because "free speech" is often misapplied by liberals to defend neonazi organizing or intimidation rallies, doesn't mean that we can afford to discard such an important ideal or its centrality. The misapplication of "free speech" as some kind of myopic legalism that can be invoked by chortling bullies to still our resistance should not eclipse the underlying value.

As anarchists we seek to promote and expand freedom. But in order for people to have agency in their lives and surroundings they must have an accurate model of the world. Freedom is literally impossible in ignorance. If you don't know the consequences or context of your actions you

can't meaningfully be said to choose them. Freedom of information — the even more radical and expansive version of “freedom of speech” — is about expanding access to information, and not just the most bare particulars, but the full context of things. This includes the social context, the conversations, the evaluations, debate of ideas, and yes even the lies. Without access to others' perspectives, their models and experiences, our understanding of the world would be incredibly impoverished and inaccurate. Understanding is most efficiently reached through openness and collaboration.

We are always tempted to wall off realms of discourse or ideas and claim that some speech has nothing to contribute, has zero value, but there's inherently a danger that small deviations — small chosen ignorances — can compound until we're wildly off base. When for example we cease listening to all conservatives entirely we may miss how dire certain evils brewing among their ranks are, we may miss new tangles in their analysis that could spell doom or be derailed in a more productive direction. And we will miss when, like a broken clock, they end up stumbling across a few true things that we've all missed.

Epistemic closure is dangerous as hell, and it happens by degrees. A rightfully critical lens towards the capitalist press and US propaganda can warp into “the holodomor never happened. You can't listen to bourgeois historians.”

Just as centralized violent organizations always risk compounding into the runaway avalanche of full-blown states and empires, so too can small deviations from intellectual diligence spiral out of control. Often we think “oh it's psychologically useful to believe in some mystical shit” or “sure this creates an echo chamber but it reinforces our friendship” and consider the damage done very small compared to the good. Our monkey brains and their instincts are not fully rational, so we cope with them by engaging in supposedly limited irrationality. We partially trade pursuit of intellectual accuracy for the psychological boosts provided by collectivism, tribalism, mockery, etc. But these self-perpetuate and reinforce, they erode our capacity to see how much damage we're doing, how far we've drifted from a focus on accuracy. Finally the corruption grows until the comforting roar of the in-group becomes so much more powerful than any curiosity or fear of lurking unknowns beyond the enemy's lines.

The left has always had an absolutely terrible infection with this sort of thing. It's easy when you're clearly right on very big pressing issues, to decide that the time for analysis is over and contrast action with intellectual diligence, to suggest that inquiry is counter-revolutionary and demand that all theorizing payoff immediately — either in terms of psychological strengthening or practical means. There's been decades of people turning up their noses at “abstract” issues and declaring “We'll solve this through praxis” — when what that really means is “We'll solve this through trial and error once the shit hits the fan and we don't actually have time for laborious trial and error.” It's absolutely no secret that the Left and radical milieus like anarchism have a lurking inclination towards anti-intellectualism — despite at the same time often being bogged in insular references to esoteric terminology and philosophers. Leftists organize collectively and radicals often define ourselves by our activism; as a consequence there will always be a “enough talk, let's act” pressure towards disparaging abstract or distant communication and analysis — and certainly engagement with anyone problematic.

But such “pragmatism” is fundamentally at odds with radicalism — ie pursuing the roots of things. When we assume that what we have is “good enough” it takes absolutely no time for blindspots to start growing out of control. For decades communists subscribed to the crackpottery of Lysenkoism because the western capitalists just had to also be wrong about Darwinian evo-

lution. In the 90s anti-vaccination wingnuttery was the fucking norm among anarchists, rarely objected to because *what are you gonna take the side of big corporations??* The list of such embarrassments for the left is long and horrifying. Our willful blindness has had consequences, sometimes quite dire. How many people have let their simplistic knee-jerk support for “the underdog” and a community echo-chamber lead them down the path of supporting Israel or North Korea or whatever?

Openness and engagement are our fucking values! The very bedrock of anarchism is internationalism, post-nationalism, globalism – to unite the world in collective liberation, in the collaborative creation of teeming cosmopolitanism, finally free of states and the wounds they rip through us and call borders. It’s beyond preposterous and infuriating that those dedicated to closed borders, to the partition and apartheid of humanity, could ever be taken seriously as “free speech” idealists. Even more galling that anyone would let the book burning alt-right attempt to appropriate the mantle of free speech online. The entire fucking point of the internet is to permanently dissolve borders.

Reactionaries have managed to reduce the grand aspirations of free speech to something as inane and disconnected as whether someone can be punched for saying the n-word. They have turned away from *Freedom of Information* and instead focused on the far more myopic and ultimately incoherent *Freedom of Expression*. Instead of viewing the flows of information and efficient epistemic processing in society as a whole, they’ve narrow-beamed on whether or not someone can get away with saying whatever they like with no consequences. They have done this in no small part because we have let them. We have allowed the discourse to collapse to mere legalism – to exist only in relation to the state and simplistic codes of behavior.

Basically everyone gets the argument against state censorship. If a single already hyper powerful organization with a near monopoly on violence also gets to determine what information can pass between people resistance to that state becomes truly impossible. It can do whatever it wants and there is no means of stopping it. And the way the legal system works, even a small sliver of justified censorship can rapidly be expanded to censorship of anything. This is why even statist recognize the need to make sure the state can never censor anything – as well as the importance of stopping the state from ever having a true 100% monopoly on violence. In the United States both of these concerns are even codified as Amendments #1 and #2 to its constitution.

But few people can seem to agree on the contours of “free speech” beyond a prohibition on state censorship. The looming presence of the state has so atrophied our capacity to speak of ethics, values and goals outside of it.

Is it free speech to shout over your speech so you can’t be heard? Is it free speech to create a hostile environment to all but the majority perspective so that anyone who deviates is promptly harassed? Is it free speech to feel obligated to give every random ignoramus time on your news channel to say whatever they like? Is it free speech to broadcast the certain ones and zeros that hack someone’s computer?

What exactly are we aiming at here? To even ask that question sounds alien these days because the *goal* of free speech has been lost to the *code* of free speech. This reduction has left the whole affair feeling like kids whining in the back seat about some arbitrary set of rules. The bully snottily announcing “*this tree is a home base, you can’t punch me back when I’m touching it*”. “*I’m not actually touching you yet, I’m just organizing hordes of fellow nazis to launch our genocide sometime in the future. What are you gonna go around punching people because of what they MIGHT do later???* You’re okay with punching people for having *DIFFERENT OPINIONS???*”

If you think about free speech as a goal, as a value to be maximized in the world, rather than some kind of law or contract, the whole issue becomes obvious:

It's a good rule of thumb to strongly err on the side of engagement and open discourse, to resist anything that might compound into systemic impediments or barriers. But there are going to arise cases where a violation on the small scale leads to advances for connectivity and discourse on the large scale.

Someone can leak a politician's files (violating their privacy) in the service of saving the privacy of everyone. A physicist can seek to advance our collective understanding by not trying to correct each of the cranks filling her inbox but by going to a conference of her peers instead.

Similarly one can interfere with the public organizing of a group dedicated to suppressing everyone's freedom of assembly. One can pressure publishers and institutions to not lend prestige and social standing to nazis by featuring them. And one can choose to prioritize engaging with those actually interested in engaging productively, rather than the obvious grifters, charlatans and trolls of the alt-right.

One can boycott segregationist businesses even though both the boycotting activists and the racist owners can be simplified into the absurdly reductive category of "discrimination." Yet such grouping is obviously nonsense to anyone with an ounce of sense. In exactly the same vein, isolating, de-platforming, and physically kicking nazis off the streets creates a local violation of the ideal of engagement and connectivity within humanity, but saves the whole. In the same way that the internet organically routes around faulty nodes, cutting them out of the network to save the whole. Or a brain tumor is removed before it can sever too many synapses.

Sure there are dangers here. There are always reductios and slippery slopes. We should remain vigilant and wary of the pitfalls. They are great and grave. Broadly tolerant social norms are important, broad engagement is important. But we shouldn't lose sight of the fucking goal. We shouldn't surrender our ethical responsibility to try to keep the bigger picture in perspective. We shouldn't trade in ethical vigilance for simplistic rules.

I want to be clear: Credulous conservative hysteria about "antifa out to attack free speech" is largely full of shit, direct narrative collaboration between neonazi entryists and conservative demagogues more interested in mobilizing the base than resisting said entryism. Whether neonazis can march and organize without fear of being punched is pretty far afield from any slip in cultural norms that could lead to the bugaboo of antifascists beating anyone they disagree with. Antifa has stayed studiously on target for a century — much to the derision of the broader left which thinks other concerns, issues and enemies are more pressing. Antifa beating up nazis on the streets in the 80s and 90s never led to a collapse in our civilization's discourse norms, and despite endless ginned up hysteria by conservatives, no antifa group has ever targeted regular conservatives. The people most effectively pushing for civil war and conflation of conservatives and neonazis are the conservative activists actually getting in bed with the nazi entryists.

But what actually *does* pose a threat to free speech is leftist reaction to this conservative narrative. For decades, antifa groups have taken a studiously pro free speech line when it comes to statist means — opposing hate crimes legislation and other means of censorship. They correctly realized the damage of such statist means would be far greater than the benefit. But now, a fresh-faced generation of leftists only now getting interested in "antifa" are starting to let themselves be goaded by online trolls into incredibly unstrategic oppositional stances.

It's not a good thing that monopolistic tech giants are making precedents by removing people from the internet. Huge scale corporate censorship may not be state censorship, but it's no less

uncheckable. And you'd better believe it'll be turned on anarchists to the roaring approval of the same liberals and conservatives now whining about the rights of nazis. It's not a good thing when copyright law or norms are expanded dramatically to merely inconvenience a few alt-right trolls. And when leftists cheer for "kicking Russian trolls off twitter" what they're really cheering for is the fucking nationalization of the internet — a Richard Spencer wet-dream. Such a nationalization would be a rollback of the most important victory us internationalists have ever had. Solutions to the dominance of nazi trolls look like Mastodon — a decentralized open source social network where freedom of association from the bottom up marginalizes nazis — not sweeping universal edicts from authorities on high.

Obviously most anarchists weren't stupid enough to cheer for state and corporate censorship, but we all encountered a spattering on the broader left who were enthused by such. *That* is actually dangerous creep with potential consequences. Dumbass leftists mobilized by a shallow understanding of "antifa" formed in reaction to conservative narratives. Not whether anarchist vigilantes continue to punch neonazis waving swastika flags and bust up their spectacles of force. Antifascists cannot afford to concede to the "free speech" narrative.

Why Fascists Constitute A Unique and Pressing Threat

It's frankly astonishing and horrifying how widely conservative demagogues have managed to spread the lie that fascists are irrelevant and of little danger. The internet has become filled to the brim with ignorant comments claiming that nazis are so marginal they constitute no real threat. I've seen variants of this repeated endlessly from tiresome "centrists" or "libertarians" with reactionary inclinations trying to front as though they're above the fray of politics: "Everyone gets that nazis are bad, the KKK only has a few thousand members, they're in no danger of taking power, if anything it's the SJWs being rude to me on campus that are the real threat."

Since they suddenly discovered the existence of fascists and antifascist activists, there's been a broad epidemic of liberals and conservatives using them to score points in their own electoral and culture war battles, all of them blithely assuming that literal fascists pose no threat except as a rhetorical tool.

Let me clarify several points:

1) **There's a large array of fascists and white nationalists active today.** Formal "KKK" membership rolls are almost irrelevant. White supremacist gangs control America's prisons and much of its streets. In turn these groups are often closely allied with more above ground political groups. Additionally there's been decades of coordinated white supremacist infiltration of police departments in the US, this provides them incredible cover and institutional sway. We see this from cops who build shrines to nazis to police chiefs who run neonazi record labels. This model is repeated internationally — half the police in Greece vote for the neonazi group Golden Dawn. In recent years the internet has enabled the spread of inane reactionary analyses, as anonymity and connection has enabled secret racists to network and build community. Since many people collect "opinions" only as weapons in psychological or social terms, the edgy positioning of fascist and white nationalist perspectives has infested chan and gamer culture in particular. But it would be wrong to write these losers off as merely posturing, since the exact same loser/troll recruitment trajectory was involved in the rise of the classic KKK and Nazi Party, and /pol/ folks have repeatedly turned their politics into gunfire. The few hundred people with the personal fi-

nances and lack of obligations to travel to a Richard Spencer rally are not reflective of some small pool of white supremacists. Any more than a few dozen or hundred anarchists in a given black bloc is representative of the tens of thousands of anarchists active in the US.

2) **A very small number of people can do immense damage.** Two thousand active Al-Qaeda insurgents in Iraq brought the country and the US empire to their knees. A very small number of people can keep a larger population living in terror. Lynchings, church burnings, mosque bombings, and street beatings can cow an entire population. You may not remember the bad old days of the 80s and 90s as it was in many cities – the terror inflicted by neonazis then may not have affected you – but for many it was a nightmare. You don't have to kill very many people to keep the rest in line, and those that nevertheless stand up or act undaunted are the first to get targeted. While terrorism can have an affective component, some of the responses it garners can be quite rational. If, as a person of color, you run a non-negligible risk of being beaten bloody for walking in your city with a white girlfriend you are going to modify your actions. Active fascist street thugs have a *chilling effect*. And this is part of the point – why they'll show up to every left wing event or pride parade or whatever they can if they know they'll be unopposed. They don't have to consistently beat those they oppose in order to effectively cow and intimidate them. For decades nazis have been the ones fearful of flying the swastika in public. Today they are trying to reverse that – to make neonazis fearless and anarchists/leftists/libertarians/queers/poc/etc afraid to walk in public. The overhead of activists having to constantly *take precautions* would impede and demobilize the small but committed sliver of activists presently holding back the reactionary/authoritarian impulses of our institutions. When Hungarian neonazis and cops won the streets from anarchists, many activist fronts were deeply hindered and the government accelerated towards authoritarianism.

3) **The danger isn't 51% of the American population voting for a swastika LARPer on an explicit platform of genocide.** Sure almost no one in the US is going to vote for a politician slathered in Third Reich imagery, but people vary quite dramatically in their analysis of WHY racism and fascism are bad. Just as almost no one explicitly supports “rape” but huge numbers of men happily report having forced sex on other people against their consent without using that term, so to does a large fraction of the populace think whites are oppressed and the US should be centered on whiteness. About a third of the population polls consistently authoritarian, tribalist, and conservative. In many respects they're almost fascists a few steps behind in self-recognition. Although those steps do matter and we should do everything to stop them from waking up, we need to recognize that such reactionaries constitute a powerful base. For example, the hordes of people shouting “nuke em till they glow” after 9/11 revealed themselves as bootlicking genocide enthusiasts. Such thuggish near-sociopaths are an eclectic bunch, self-centered, stupid, opportunist, and hard to truly unify and mobilize to their full potential, but they do provide a broad recruitment base for fascists and they have shown they will happily vote for and violently defend fascistic policies. Given a slow ratchet of fascism, there is no breaking moment where we can expect basic ethics to trump their authoritarian instincts and tribal loyalties. The danger isn't that the KKK persuades a hundred million people to join it and then wins elections and institutes fascist rule. That's a strawman built on incredibly naive political notions. **The danger is that the fascist fringe spreads terror, pushes the overton window to make hyper-nationalism and racism acceptable in public, and gradually detaches the actual power of the state (the police and their guns) from the more reserved liberal legal apparatus supposedly constraining them.** Explicit fascist street gangs are not going to get millions of votes any time

soon, but the danger is that they will they draw in thousands of recruits if they are allowed to appear powerful and legitimate and the impact on our country's climate would be dramatic, severely impeding anarchist, leftist, and libertarian activism, and unleashing the state's authoritarian inclinations. Tens of millions of people could be deported, arrested, harassed, raided, jumped on the streets, etc, without any politician ever explicitly flying a swastika or wearing a white hood. As bad as shit was under imperialist liberal presidents like Obama, it could become a hell of a lot worse with an unsuppressed fascist vanguard.

It's important to debunk a common illusion: the fascists never magically went away. They remained in great numbers after the Second World War. Fascism was never defeated by persuasion, it was defeated by force. Most of the millions that filled the ranks of fascist movements in the first half of the twentieth century went to their graves still believing in aspects of fascism. Even in America there was no deconversion per se of the vast number of American Nazis. Watch this video of 20,000 Americans sieg heiling in Madison Square and remember that many who aligned against the Nazis in World War Two weren't aligned against the ideology of Nazism but against the German *foreigners*. Further the Cold War kept fascism quite alive in many places. We all know that the allied governments snatched up Nazi scientists and bureaucrats after the war, but there was rarely any attempt to address their ideology. Large parts of the US government were sympathetic, saw the Nazis as merely over-zealous anti-communists. Kissinger even made moves to bring the Nazis back to power in West Germany in hopes that they would serve as a bulwark against communism. And the Soviets in turn helped maintain a reactionary and authoritarian culture — the success of modern fascist activity in Europe maps almost perfectly to the old iron curtain, those formerly under Soviet rule far more likely to long for a return to the simplicity of authoritarianism.

It was force that put fascism in remission, and it has been anti-authoritarian cosmopolitan pop culture that was capable of slowly killing it over generations while it remained in remission. But the operative word is *slowly*. The values of liberty win out in the long run, but fascism can metastasize very quickly in the short term if it is not constantly and diligently suppressed.

Today it is once again flaring up and much of the antifascist activist infrastructure maintained throughout earlier decades has lapsed or been slow to respond. While antifa groups debated academically in late 2015 whether or not Donald Trump could properly be called a "fascist", actual undeniable fascists have flooded into the ranks of Trump protests and online communities. And online subcultures already increasingly turning to reaction started gobbling up the garbage of actual full-fledged Nazis.

Every observer is in agreement that we've seen an upsurge in white nationalist and fascist organizing. But I want to put that in terms of just some of the deaths that this organizing has already caused:

- In June 2015, Dylann Roof was inspired by the "hate facts" posted on Daily Stormer and Council of Conservative Citizens to murder nine people at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina.
- In July 2015, John Russell Houser, a far-right former bar owner, shot and killed two people and injured nine others before committing suicide in a Lafayette, LA movie theater which was playing a feminist film. Houser praised the actions of Adolf Hitler on online message boards.

- In November of 2015, a group of well-armed 4chan regulars attended a Black Lives Matter camp in Minneapolis, harassing them with racial slurs. They opened fire on activists attempting to chase them out when they returned a second night, wounding five.
- In August of 2016 a black teen named Larnell Bruce was run down for sport outside of Portland by a white supremacist member of European Kindred named Russell Courtier.
- On Inauguration day an antifascist protester of Milo Yiannopolous was shot in stomach by Elizabeth Hakoana, who came to the protest with her husband, who planned to “crack skulls” of the “snowflakes” at the event and provoke a reaction to justify shooting someone. (Notably that antifa protester refused to help send them to prison, and insisted on restorative justice rather than revenge.)
- Later in January, Alexandre Bisonette, a fervent supporter of Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen, opened fire on a Quebec City Islamic Culutral Center, killing six.
- In February, a white U.S. Navy veteran, Adam Purinton, 51, killed an Indian engineer, wounded his Indian co-worker, and shot a man who tried to stop the murder at a bar in Olathe, KS while yelling “get out of my country.”
- In March, James Jackson, a subscriber of Alt Right Youtube channels, traveled from Baltimore to New York with the sole purpose of murdering a black person at random. He stabbed Timothy Caughman, killing him.
- In May a fight between a former neonazi and his two neonazi roomates who were building bombs to destroy civil infrastructure, led to the deaths of two of them.
- In May Sean Christopher Urbanski, a University of Maryland student and member of online alt-right facebook groups, randomly stabbed to death black Army Officer Richard Collins III in Baltimore.
- Self-proclaimed nihilist and neonazi Jeremy Christian (former supporter of Sanders but consistent racist), who had marched in alt-right protests, stabbed 3 people in Portland who intervned to tell him to stop yelling racist remarks to two young girls on a light rail train, instantly killing two.
- In May the white supremacist Anthony Robert Hammond hacked a random black man with a machete after yelling racial slurs at numerous people in Clearlake, CA.
- And of course in August James Alex Fields Jr, an admirer of Hitler who worked with the white supremacist and fascist group Vanguard America, drove down peaceful protesters injuring 19 and killing Heather Heyer.

These are just some of the highest profile cases in that time. It doesn't include many brutal murders between neonazis or written off by police as simply part of their crime. For example neonazis in my home town skinned a rival with a belt-sander and dumped his body in public on a major city street. For a much longer and more detailed list of just incidents within 2017 see this post filled with examples and citations.

And see also these summaries from Snopes and even a liberal org that despises antifa. And of course this doesn't scratch the surface of the unending history of fascists shooting anarchists and antifascists, from Lin Newborn and Daniel Shersty to Luke Querner.

Meanwhile absolutely no antifascist has killed anyone or come close. The incredible restraint that antifascists have shown in this war is remarkable in context.

The "left" — mostly broadly construed — can maybe lay claim to a few murders in this time. If we assume that police and politicians aren't valid targets then in July of 2016 Micah Xavier Johnson killed five police officers in Dallas and Gavin Eugene Long killed three in Baton Rouge, and in June of this year James T. Hodgkinson shot a congressman and four others. Each of these was massively hyped by the mainstream media — the eternal running dogs of both cops and politicians — but the statistics make the picture clear:

Over the past 10 years (2007-2016), domestic extremists of all kinds have killed at least 372 people in the United States. Of those deaths, approximately 74% were at the hands of right-wing extremists, about 24% of the victims were killed by domestic Islamic extremists, and [2%] were killed by left-wing extremists. [source]

I'm not particularly interested in defending the left at large, I'm no fan of it and there are statist communists who worship regimes just as horrific and murderous as fascist ones, but the disparity here is profound. And that disparity would of course remain if we counted murders at the hands of the police or military or state policy. We should also note that the black nationalists responsible for police killings are pretty far afield from antifa and anarchism — being staunchly anti-nationalist. At various points in history black nationalists and statist communists have made alliances with white nationalists and fascists, whereas anarchists and anti-fascists would obviously rather die first.

If we're talking about antifascists specifically then at best they've thrown a few punches at rallies crawling with out white nationalists and neonazi entryists. Among the thousands of community members that showed up in Berkeley for an antifascist organized rally a few broke some windows and set a lamp on fire. And in a mass demonstration a Trump supporter in a wheelchair was shoved by some rando and the blame assigned to "antifa." Meanwhile most every viral story of "antifa punched this dude just for being a Trump supporter" is inevitably debunked when the dude in the red cap is revealed to be a known white supremacist entryist who was throwing punches before the tiny snippet of video put on twitter. And yet social media is covered with even more outrageous lies:

1) That antifa fought alongside ISIS in syria (using a picture of antifa volunteers who fought ISIS and were showing off their liberation of ISIS territory and smashing of its billboard). 2) That antifa threatened to attack an annual parade in Portland because republicans would be marching (the only piece of evidence being an absurdly written anonymous email that the longstanding local antifa organization Rose City Antifa dismissed). 3) That antifa called for the beating of women who voted for Trump (in actuality a pretty open /pol/ disinformation campaign). 4) That antifa called for the murder of pets belonging to white nationalists (exposed as a misinformation campaign by antifa groups, when in fact neonazis HAVE actually in the past killed the pets of antifascist activists). On and on it goes. One can't keep up with the lies. My favorite gem was when antifascists made a snarky sarcastic banner demanding the money Soros was purportedly paying them and conservative blogs dutifully reported on the banner as if it was real.

The demonization of antifa through feverish projection has become a self-perpetuating avalanche. Reactionaries make up whatever they can because it must be close enough to the bogeyman they assume “antifa” is and in turn assume any nonsense they hear is true.

We’re in a situation of extreme asymmetry. There’s intense threat from the fascist fringe and intense demonization of the antifascist fringe that used to keep them in check.

“Okay but what about the leftists!?? You see the damn SJW menace everywhere and they’re far more popular and now they’re punching people and getting guns. They may not be killing people now, but eventually!”

This is a classic cognitive bias where the near enemy blinds you to the distant enemy. Sure there are far more leftists and SJWs than neonazis. But there is absolutely zero chance of radical leftists enacting their goals through collaboration with the police state. The cops will never in a million years arrest you up for not being vegan, but they routinely murder people for being black. The police state is hyper-right-wing. We can mostly survive higher taxes and a stupid centralized health care system, tens of millions of people won’t survive an ethnonationalist policy. Tens of millions will live in fear under the boot of fascist thugs in collaboration with the police.

The vast majority of the radical left in America are anti-authoritarian fellow travelers to anarchists who generally forswear use of statist means. They’re incapable of organizing systematic or institutional means of oppression. You can’t build a Stasi or KGB if you’re fundamentally opposed to anything that looks like police. There are statist communists in America, but they’re far smaller in number and even more profoundly out of sync with the populace.

Absolute worst case is the state communists start some minor Shining Path style terrorist insurgency and the SJWs college kids create environments where dissent from arbitrary ideological lines or cultural norms is punished by ruthless social ostracization or condemnation. That would be bad, but it would certainly be survivable. There wouldn’t be tens of millions of forced deportations and a regime of random street murders. Mostly some folks would feel like they couldn’t say some things without risking their jobs. There’s just no comparison in terms of human suffering.

And further, let’s be clear, while there’s toxic elements to corners of SJW culture, without subsidy from institutional violence the norms they’re capable of spreading are largely rational ones predicated upon real arguments about damage to minorities that actually resonate with people. While sometimes small communities are capable of forming echo-chambers to reinforce some arbitrary party line, those norms have little memetic potency. But over the last two decades in the explosion of voices from previously oppressed people, a great many people have been persuaded of the things they have to say. Things like “microaggressions” and “safe spaces” have rational and persuasive foundations even if they also have obvious misuses. It shouldn’t be radical to point out that small acts of minor racial prejudice or lack of understanding add up in effect. People sometimes need breathers where they can hang with people with the same experiences, to have new conversations built off of shared knowledge rather than contest the same 101 debates with those ignorant of their experiences. The occasional toxicity of SJW discourse is not what has driven its explosion, such occasional toxicity is rather parasitic on its underlying *rational* potency.

SJW critiques of our social norms are winning out in no small part because they’re often quite well reasoned anarchist critiques, albeit rather defanged for liberal consumption. There are of course dangers of tribalism and echo-chambers, but in the absence of a hunger for violent institutional power, the only damage this ultimately does is to one’s own cause.

Certainly the toxic or hamfisted failings of SJW land have played a role in inspiring broad reactionary movements. But fascists aren't merely just reactionaries. Plenty of people hear the word "privilege" and curdle in rage ("how dare you tell me that I'm privileged, you don't know me, I've suffered so, I've earned what I got" or "privilege implies the freedoms I have aren't rights but something you can take away"). The broad reactionary subculture engendered by gamergate, MRAs, etc, that poses itself as "anti-sjw" is clearly a recruiting base for fascists, but they are also quite frequently not full-blown fascists. There have always been reactionaries furious at social advancements – that is always dangerous, but fascist recruitment takes things further.

I've written at length before about fascist organizing, but the long and short of it is that fascism recruits through appeals to our cheapest monkey brain needs. As a purer, and rather uniquely self-aware flavor of authoritarianism/tribalism, fascism prospers by directly promising brute power and social belonging. Fascism strips away the complexities of agency, of freedom, of individualism, of intellectual vigilance, and offers instead comforting simplicities. In the astonishingly self-aware words of Andrew Anglin of the Daily Stormer:

"We feel emasculated. Many of us feel we have never had power. We crave power. We lust after power. We want to be part of a group, which will give us power. A group that will confirm our worth as men. We do not have identities. We want identities."

To satiate such gut-level needs, fascists make gut-level appeals. An authoritarian can talk forever about how he's gonna give you power, but an authoritarian that visibly, viscerally demonstrates power, that's the authoritarian who will successfully recruit.

Fascists make a mockery of debate intentionally, in the authoritarian mind it's inherently just positioning and only fools take ideas seriously. From such a perspective the fascist that discards the existing norms, that dances around in a flagrantly bad faith way, demonstrates a kind of strength in honesty. The only honesty, in their mind, being that truth and ideas don't matter. Power matters, power through deception and manipulation – the capacity to get someone to put you on a stage, in a position of respect, despite your flagrant dishonesty – and power through physical strength – the capacity to march in the open, in great numbers, with weapons, with muscles, trappings of masculinity, displays of wealth, etc. Widespread mockery can hurt fascists by demonstrating their unpopularity, but so long as they have other sorts of power to fall back on the fascist can simply tell himself "this is the real power, this is the only thing that actually matters, what those people have is fake and hollow, that they will be overthrown." [source]

Fascists have thus no allegiance to truth – they are rather, as any denizen of the internet knows all too well, closely align with trolls, not good-faith debaters. Hence the situation we find ourselves in where the alt-right is most known for making lies and disinformation faster than can be debunked. Fascism is fundamentally rooted in a nihilistic anti-intellectualism where truth becomes nothing more than a game of narrative construction.

The problem is that while the Flat Earther might be happy to spit out 100 arguments that the earth is not a globe and sucker in a few thousand rubes who want to feel special, like they have secret suppressed knowledge that makes them elite, the fascist also appeals to a power fantasy. *"All those elites with the cultural or social capital you don't have, making you feel excluded. You don't have to climb the ladder of laboriously figuring out anti-racist terminology and conventions just to not be mocked, and you'd probably never be accepted as cool shit anyway cuz you're a white cis dude, and anyway you might have to give some shit up, fuck that, let's just kill them all and grind their haughty faces into the dirt, teach them that raw TRUE power was what mattered all along."* There is a large reactionary base in our society, for whom such fantasies are utterly seductive. The only

thing keeping a large and dangerous fraction of them from leaping into the streets sieg-heiling is self-preservation. A fear of the ramifications.

It is of course important that we tackle the underlying reactionary base, but progress there will take ages, in the meantime it's absolutely necessary that we keep the ramifications so dire that few self-interested reactionary sociopaths see a net upside to signing up with them. This means denying them all pretense of legitimacy and acceptability in civil society. And it means preventing them from successfully staging spectacles of jackbooted force – like their intimidation rallies.

In Defense Of Antifascist Activism

For decades antifa have served a niche role as watchmen, as relatively lonely nazi hunters and researchers. Their ranks would occasionally swell when a particularly noticeable infection of fascists cropped up, as local community members would step up to join in resisting them. But what has happened in the last two years is utterly off the scale.

It's a little stunning to be an anarchist in this context. It's like watching an impassioned national conversation about Food Not Bombs or Anarchist Black Cross. A longtime staple of the anarchist movement, a franchised friendly neighborhood project the rest of us don't think about much, has been weirdly thrust into the spotlight. Literally everyone is scrambling to identify with it or against it, and to redefine it into their personal political narratives.

Trump is both central to this recent story and at the same time almost entirely vestigial. He's a reflexively authoritarian political figure who has aptly played to the nativist and racist tendencies in his reactionary base far more explicitly than arguably even Nixon, but he's also an idiot opportunistic figurehead being used and bounced between different forces. While Trump himself will do some immense amount of damage – like all Presidents – the unique dangers of his presidency are that he'll serve as a catalyst to fascist and reactionary forces. Will he effectively unleash the police and set off this century's Palmer raids of dissidents? Will he institute mass deportations and ethnic cleansing? Fuck, it, will he start a war that kills tens of millions? These questions hang in the air every day. They are important and pressing and we must be ready to resist them but, *policy* is not a traditional concern of antifascists. There's already an array of activist institutions in some sense prepared to deal with these potential atrocities. In contrast, what antifascists have focused on is fascist organizing. In keeping the seemingly marginal nuts, marginal.

Now the wall keeping explicit fascists out of society has mostly come down and no one knows what comes next.

While antifascists are adapting and innovating, so far they have responded mostly by escalating their traditional means of reporting, doxing, and physically disrupting fascist organizing. This laser focus has its benefits, but it just as clearly has its downsides. Antifascist groups were formed to organize community self defense against nazis, not to win a media battle in the mainstream. Their skillset is investigative reporting, organizing and physical resistance, not media narrative crafting. As a result they were obviously completely unprepared to counter the abrupt mainstreaming of fascism into the public discourse, handle the rapid rise in people identifying as “antifa”, or counter narratives painting antifa as somehow bad.

At the root of the bad press antifa has been getting and the success of reactionaries in spreading lies about them is a tension over “media relations” and public outreach that anarchists have felt for ages.

“Worrying about whether we’re giving them material for their lies is a fool’s neuroticism. They’re going to make up fake news anyway—turning a fascist who lost a fight into an innocent bystander or lending credence to the guy who stabbed himself and blamed antifa. The truth is that most pundits (on the right and supposed left) are happy to fall for these “vicious antifa” stories because these pundits are more concerned with order than justice. For them, people fighting in the street over politics will always conjure images of other countries where they don’t want to live. It upsets them.” [source]

Your reaction to this will depend in no small part on whether you think the war for public opinion is critical or centrally important to the struggle against fascism. I think the real challenge of the Trump era is that the public opinion and media narrative game HAS started to matter in a way that wasn’t previously true when it came to antifascist activism. But I’m not convinced that public opinion or media narratives are of such importance as to eclipse all other issues. I think it’s worth critically evaluating that assumption. Most Americans grow up indoctrinated in the assumptions of liberal democracy, shaping our every instinct to think that winning public opinion or “a majority” is the *definition* of success. There’s often a lot of baggage preventing people from evaluating or really thinking in terms of direct action – of just getting a thing done, regardless of whether you’re widely hated for doing it. Running the underground railroad in the antebellum south was not remotely about winning hearts and minds among the white population – it was about immediately freeing slaves. Going against the wishes of the majority not to eventually persuade them, but to directly impede their capacity to oppress is often a quite valid means. We would today rightfully scoff at those condemning the underground railroad for “undermining the struggle for public opinion” by breaking the law and thus contributing to white fears. And we could spin a similar analogy here when it came to vigilante violence against slave owners.

It’s important to remember that antifascist groups exist in large part because anarchists don’t trust the state to respond to white supremacists (and Islamists like ISIS), and want to disrupt the organizing of such would-be-tyrants without appealing to the state’s cancerous monopoly on violence. Much of the historic squabbling between antifascists and liberal groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center has centered around precisely whether the state can be trusted with “hate crimes” laws or “anti-extremism” efforts.

I keep saying “anarchist” because let’s be honest — despite there being liberal, socialist, and libertarian members of antifa groups, antifascism has been predominately an anarchist project since the end of the second world war, championed and directed by anarchists. Especially in the United States where antifascism is overwhelmingly an anarchist project. Antifascist work is necessarily done in secret with no reward of social capital and no hierarchical machinery to seize, and thus has been of little interest to statist communists who prefer infiltrating and seizing control over liberal organizations.

Of course antifa is varied, active for decades across numerous countries, in a variety of contexts. The European model is more broad subcultural and marxist-influenced, the American model both more tightly organized and anarchist. But differences abound between regions and countries. And antifa groups or campaigns often emerge in ways specific to subcultures and scenes. Fascists have consistently tried to build subcultural bases by infiltrating and corrupting existing ones, and so you get people in skinhead, punk, goth, metal, paganism, libertarianism, etc, exposing and

pushing back against them. Naturally these antifa all look different and take different approaches. But if there's universal conclusions one can extract it's that it's worth being hated if you're also able to rally people to expel a popular band or figure, and that in many circumstances only a willingness to use physical force will get the job done.

The pattern I've witnessed over two decades is that committed antifa groups will consistently win the structural war against fascist entryism — but also suffer what wounds the fascists can inflict in retreat: usually lingering hostilities simmering among a minority of the scene who lap up the parting lines of the fascists pushed out about how antifa are tyrannically censoring innocent edgelords. This kind of simmering resentment is perpetuated by low-information scene members who repeat whatever lies are told to them. They'll spend years denouncing antifa for protesting a band and *never bother to actually read antifa's report proving the band's fascist affinities*. It's almost hilarious the regularity with which I derail a long-time hater of antifa I've met by just looking up the relevant article with google and reading it aloud. "Oh", they say, crestfallen, "I guess I hadn't heard that evidence," *having never fucking read the points of the side they demonize*.

This is a point I was myself somehow surprised to discover years ago. Far from being frothing hysterics out to witchhunt anyone and everyone under a sloppy notion of "fascism", antifa — in the sense of longstanding groups like those in the TORCH Network — are painfully reserved and accurate in their exposes. Almost to the point of being boring.

Indeed it's quite arguable that a good fraction of the blame for the situation we're all in lies in fact that many antifa dragged their feet in response to Trump. Antifa activists and academics debated internally whether Trump was technically "fascist" and in many cases seemed paralyzed about how to respond to fascists and white nationalists using the electoral organizing as a cover. Most anarchists were absolutely loath to be seen as taking a side in American electoral politics, even as the situation grew more and more desperate.

If anything I've found myself increasingly frustrated reading antifa sites as they painstakingly adopt terms like "white nationalist" or "alt-right" rather than just calling the scumbag in question a nazi. While I admire the intellectual diligence and strive to at least some approximation of it, but this does seem to be playing a different sort of public relations or "respectability" game — hoping to be admired for accuracy by the few academics still reading antifa blogs while letting Fox News spread absolute nonsense unopposed to the wider populace. There obviously aren't easy resolutions to the conflict between hyper accurate language to better serve a few elite readers and more rhetorically charged broadness to convey a truth to a wider audience in general terms.

I do however like how this passage from Atlanta Antifa navigates the obfuscated mess around Milo "not technically a nazi" Yiannopoulos with accuracy but *also* with a certain succinct clarity:

"[Milo] relies on racist tropes, has spread Nazi propaganda, who spread anti-Muslim hate, who attacks transgendered people and singles them out in his speeches, who has made apologetic statements about pedophilia, spouts misogynistic shit, who writes for Brietbart a known far-right website which supports and promotes white nationalist and racist ideas, has employed known neo-Nazis and white nationalists... So he's not just some run of the mill conservative. And if you're claiming he is, then you're admitting that conservatives are complicit with all of those aspects mentioned above."

Of course now we all know that Milo literally had nazi minutia for his passwords and happily sung to a sieg-heiling crowd.

It bears repeating a thousand times: despite conservative hysteria that pattern-matches actual antifa to random mean lefties by comparing them to nazis on twitter and thus freaks out

that “they’ll be punching any GOP member next!!!” antifascists have stayed resolutely and precisely on target over the decades. There’s plenty of deliberately constructed grey area around literal neonazis – things like the ProudBoys that claim not to be racist, and only embrace the hypernationalist patriarchal components of fascism, but still recruit and collaborate with white nationalists and neo-Nazi gangs, as well as adopting much iconography and cultural signifiers from bonehead Nazi thugs. It would be obviously amiss for antifascist activists to ignore such auxiliaries and attempts at obfuscation, but they nevertheless struggle to avoid intellectually-dishonest conflation. And when the fascist activity dries up in a region so too does antifascist activism. Those activists happily go back to normal lives or sedate leftist activism like building community centers. They don’t go looking for new targets to call “Nazi.”

More flies with honey and the issue of timescales

Let’s start with something that I see crop up in almost every critique of a specific line someone doesn’t like antifa crossing. The argument tends to go something like this: “One of the reasons (condemning, protesting, doxing, punching, etc) Nazis is bad is that it makes them feel bad, which hardens them in their position.”

What’s so interesting about these “catch more flies with honey than vinegar” arguments is how rarely they get applied consistently. Literally any level of meaningful opposition is going to make Nazis “feel bad” and harden many in resistance. Should we be greeting them instead with a hug and a blowjob in hopes that – between mouthfuls – we’re able to get in some convincing points? And do you advocate the same thing for dealing with ISIS? Should we be trying to win ISIS members over with honey and meanwhile critique the Kurds for shooting at them because “it’ll only harden them”?

Some may argue that the degree of hardening is different between different ethical tiers. The person who thinks a certain type of doxing is unethical might say that “I’m not opposed to you putting his personal information online with screenshots of his Nazi statements, but when they put his mother’s phone number online because she was paying his bills that was a step too far” and okay, sure, fine, there’s certainly an ethical case that doxing family members causes unacceptable collateral damage on potential innocents, that’s an argument I personally happen to agree with (unless the mom is a Nazi too). That case can and should be made. But what is totally invalid is the frequent move to then pull the “and this is only going to make the Nazi more disinclined to change” card. This line of argument presumes that the Nazi makes the same ethical category distinctions that the critic does! The Nazi may in fact care a lot about being personally exposed and very little about his mother’s phone number getting shuffled in. Similarly it’s frankly preposterous when non-aggression hardliners use this argument over whether or not to punch a Nazi preemptively or only after he punches first. If a Nazi has rejected and laughed at the non-aggression principle I think we can safely say the only thing that matters to him is that he got punched – *any* punching is going to “harden” him in equal measure (if it does at all), regardless of whether that punching falls on one side or another of your personal ethical categories. If we’re truly to optimize for “not making Nazis harden in their way” you’ve gotta recognize that’s going to cut in weird directions. Completely humiliating someone in a debate can often harden that person in their politics far more than a punch will. Further the exact opposite is often true – for a lot of people physical repercussions can suddenly make their online game real in a way that scares them straight.

And let's remember that if getting punched or shamed for being a "merely" ironic half-committed nazi makes someone more likely to lean into the nazi life, chances are he was going to go down that path anyway, regardless of specific prompts. We should take the "*you meanly characterized me as a nazi for being an ethno-nationalist in every meaningful way so now I might as well fly an outright swastika, see what you've done??*" about as seriously as any other sociopath deciding to revel in their actual values the moment they can no longer hide. As the immortal tweet goes "If I started calling this guy a pig-fucker for a few months, he'd start going to the farm for dates"

I'm not saying there's *no* value to deconverting fascists or drawing them in with honey. There clearly is value to that, albeit in the proper context. But 1) it's something that takes time compared to metastasizing threat fascists pose on the street. And 2) there's already a large liberal NGO apparatus for deconverting fascists. Trump naturally cut all funding for such programs, but they're precisely the sort of thing that moderates will already open their checkbooks for. In short the marginal ROI is presently very low on that kind of activism compared to the more dangerous and risky exposing and confronting of active fascist organizing.

However I will note that there are antifa organizations who also work in this space — for example providing alternative support networks to people coming out of prison or under the thumb of nazis within — as with some of the work of the Pacific Northwest Anti-Fascist Workers Collective. Typically anarchists gravitate towards the kind of work that can only be done by people who don't give a fuck about the law. NGOs have to play it safe, but anarchist activist groups can happily keep shit confidential or assist in ways that would be a legal liability for a non-profit.

There are countless things that must be built over the long term to permanently dig the grave of fascism. Providing exits for people out of fascist movements is just one of them. Broad cultural changes are incredibly important. We will never finally win until anti-authoritarian cosmopolitan values pervade society so deeply that fascism is unthinkable. Such a victory will take love and art and science and all the things free people do better than fascists. But there are different timescales to be considered.

Antifascist activists obviously shouldn't entirely ignore the long term, but this is a triage situation. Eating healthier will impede the odds of cancer in the long term, but when you've actually got cancer you don't need kale, you need to fucking cut it out of you ASAP.

Smug liberal activists just discovering antifascism love to jump in with the absolutely inane commentary that "antifa isn't solving the long-term problem of fascism." Of course it fucking isn't.

You wouldn't claim that an anarchist member of the French Maquis was under the illusion that fascism would be forever vanquished by her bullets, but goddamn, the point is that said bullets might secure our survival for a few more years so we can also work on all those longer-term solutions.

I'm all about the long-term, and anarchism has spent centuries raising the alarm about short term fixes that impede our ultimate goals. But there is another side to the equation. We can just as easily fall into the failure mode of entirely privileging long term strategy over short term tactics.

Anarchism is at its very essence anti-fascist, we stand in every way possible at literal opposite pole from nationalism, statism, and traditionalism. Everything anarchists do in pursuit of anarchy is thus in the ultimate sense "antifascist." But let's not get lost in the hyperopia of "*my poly vegan*"

intersectional open-source bike coop is building an 'anti-fascist' world" and fail to see to the neonazi barbarians presently at the gates.

Boycotting

It's been said endlessly by those of us who've paid attention to them over the years but the vast majority of what antifa does isn't oriented towards street fighting but leveraging social pressure to get fascists boycotted. Nazi band tries to play a bar, and antifacists will notify the bar owner, delivering evidence of the band's politics. If the bar owner doesn't care then they'll publicize that and rally public pressure until the bar owner fears being boycotted. It's frankly hard to imagine how anyone would have any sort of issue with this kind of activism, but in reality people are incredibly averse to conflict and take challenges to people's social standing far more seriously than nazis murdering people.

People in general don't give a shit about ethics or anyone besides themselves. So when someone says, "*hey the band you like isn't just aping fascist aesthetics and being edgy, they've also donated thousands to fascist orgs and have let nazis recruit at their shows,*" a lot of people's first response isn't "*oh my god, that sucks, thanks for giving me a heads up!*" but to instead spin out in hysterics over who the Thought Police will be coming for next and *how dare anyone expect anything from you, that's The Real Fascism*. It's a startling lack of compassion for the targets of fascism and a myopic concern with any remotely distant likelihood you might yourself be inconvenienced. Sure the band may be facilitating gangs of nazi thugs beating immigrants on the street, but the REAL issue at hand is that some folks might respect you less for going to their shows.

It's a kind of egotistical nihilism that is common in scenes like punk and metal. Caring about other people or shit in the wider world is whatever, but the fires of hell must be unleashed if someone's "moralism" runs the risk of even slightly negatively affecting you. When the alt-right declares that they're the punk rock of today, there's actually a solid case to be made that they're right. Or at least they represent the unbroken continuation of a nihilist current always within such scenes. Shitbags like Jim Goad that decades ago published punk zines calling for women to be raped and beaten are now leading figures among the modern fascist milieu. Indeed the antifa vs. nihilist shitbag split over fascist bands is pretty much exactly replicated when it comes to issues like long standing rapists being called out in the punk scene. A hell of a lot of people don't even bother to read the evidence and testimonials but immediately start screaming about "Witch Hunts!" because whether or not the dude raped someone or the band is fascist is totally irrelevant to them, what they're most concerned about is the establishment of *social consequences* for it.

Libertarians have been shouting for years that boycott is the ethical approach, that organized boycotts could have suppressed the horrors of Jim Crow without involving the state. But now that folks have actually come face to face with organized boycotts and the social pressure that underpins them many are horrified. "*Social pressure!?! Sanctioning those who don't sanction?! That way lies mean kids in high school. I just meant if you don't like something you should shut up about it and maybe not purchase it, don't ever preach about it or judge others' purchasing habits.*"

It's a sad reality that whole point to libertarianism for many is a simplistic elitism and amorality. A code of rules (property rights) that one can blindly adhere to without much cognitive overhead and then ignore all other ethical considerations or complications. The modern core libertarian demographic is infamously slightly intellectual white boys – who in their worst mo-

ments just want to dwell in the protective simplicities of their privilege and ignore the pleas of those oppressed in complex and challenging ways. “*Patriarchy! Hah! What nonsense. No, I’m not going to listen to an explanation longer than can fit in a brief youtube video. Look, honey, I respect property rights and don’t need to pay attention to anything else, it’ll sort itself out. And if it doesn’t then you were wrong to whine about it.*”

Of course many *actual* libertarians have known better – just as many if not arguably more are drawn to libertarianism by sincere empathy for victims of war or the police state. And smarter figures recognize that “the market” is inherently inclusive of activism around cultural changes. Organized boycotts are as important to the growth of a healthy market just as much as investments, and social justice style activism is just another rational form of market participation that can build a healthier world.

I just want to briefly point out that opposing boycotts is profoundly non-libertarian and anti-market. To oppose the organizing of boycotts is to oppose to the flow and processing of information. If someone frequents a racist establishment that says something about their character. To not integrate that into your own evaluations of who you want to associate with requires a deliberate act of ignorance, of intellectual self-sabotage. The entire justification for markets is supposed to be that they’re effective at transmitting information and thus providing greater agency. What opponents of boycotts want is the curtailing of what information can be transmitted on the market. Or, if we’re being more honest, what they secretly always wanted was a world where they wouldn’t have to consider issues of ethics and values, where pertinent information in those issues is never transmitted or acted upon. Fuck that.

Now of course there is a second direction of critique. One could argue that boycotts and other choices of exclusion or ostracism *raise barriers in the same way that borders do*. This is a transparently bad faith critique when it comes from people who themselves advocate draconian state-enforced borders, but there are a spattering of actual anarchists concerned that boycotts violate the spirit of openness and connection that anarchism aspires to. Isn’t boycott “exclusionary”?

I’ll absolutely admit that boycotts sever connectivity in specific ways and even sever connectivity on the whole. But the tactic of boycotting can also be applied in ways that increase overall connectivity in a network *by* impeding the connection of a malicious or faulty nodes. A router forwarding packets on a network may keep a record of how honest or effective other routers are in forwarding the packets it sends, and it may update who it thus forwards packets to. Indeed routers can receive information from other routers alerting them to badly performing routers. This strategy actually enables greater overall connectivity.

As an anarchist, I am a consequentialist, not a deontologist. I’m not interested in constructing some mirror of the clumsy rules for behavior that the state imposes as law. I’m interested in achieving the goal of freedom through whatever means are efficient and coherent enough to actually reach it. While I want a world of peace, sometimes violence like resisting the Stasi is necessary to achieve that ends. Similarly while I want a world of connection, some limited disassociation can be necessary to achieve that ends.

Racism is a specific form of boycott. But racism is an irrational and counterproductive severing of connectivity, whereas boycotts of racists is a severing of connectivity to nodes that impede connectivity. Boycotting racists is about *routing around damaged nodes*, limiting the extent to which they can damage us all, the same way that the internet increases connectivity by routing around nodes that impede connectivity.

Refusing to give fascists the prestige of a podium is exactly the same as refusing to give Flat Earthers the prestige of a podium. Science would be utterly crippled if every wackadoodle was allowed into scientific conferences, much less given a platform at them. There's simply not enough time to address every wingnut, nor should we. Keeping pseudoscientific con-men out of scientific prestige is a matter of severing connections, of choosing disassociation, so as to make the whole enterprise more efficient at spreading knowledge. Someone's record of honesty constitutes *meta-information* that shouldn't be censored or suppressed, but accurately spread. One way we spread that is by denying the prestige of platform to people who have a history of fraud. To enforce a regime where Flat Earthers are obliged a spot on any geology panel is to forcibly suppress the meta-information that such symbols of legitimacy like a podium otherwise convey.

Note just how dramatically different this from national borders. Boycotts emerge from the distributed decisions of individuals, national borders are imposed by monopolistic collectivist entities in ways that inherently suppress the agency of the complex array of people they somehow claim to represent or speak for.

Libertarians should ostensibly know better than this since the very fucking justification of the market is supposed to rest on the premise that collective bodies like "nations" or even "tribes" can't conceivably make efficient decisions. Individuals know better the particulars they face than can ever be conveyed in a committee. Agency, calculation, consideration doesn't take place in the head of some abstract "committee" but in the actual brains of its constituent individuals. Individual brains are infinitely more tightly and efficiently networked than any social organism can be through mere human communication – a choice in your head is can be an immediate calculation involving billions of neurons, no comparable processing happens anywhere else. This is why only individuals constitute agents in any real sense. When people form a committee they don't magically create some kind of supervening "agent" in any ethically relevant way. And that's certainly not true when it comes to laughable mythical entities like "races."

Because individuals are the site of agency, top-down edicts about association necessarily cut agency. Thankfully antifascist activism is a perfect example of bottom-up or horizontally organized boycotting. A means for people to network together and work *as individuals* to make the world a better place. Each node evaluating not just the faulty node but the evaluations made by other nodes in response to the faulty node. ...Provided of course that you *actually* don't want nazis recruiting and making money at your local bar, and you *actually* care about whether people likewise have anti-nazi values.

Doxing

As a staunch proponent of free speech (ie freedom of information) I have the hardest time fathoming how someone could object to doxing nazis. Once again you'd fucking think that libertarians at least would be pro more accurate information being available to inform market decisions. *"Oh? This fellow applying to work for me is a nazi with a history of calling for ethnic cleansing? Well I certainly don't want to contribute to his daily bread, much less hangout with such a would-be genocidaire."*

Surely whether someone has raped, stolen, etc, is relevant metadata about them you'd want to know before interacting with them! And surely disseminating that metadata in ways accessible to those likely to interact with them is as basic a social service as you could ask for. Mailing

neighbors of a nazi organizer to let them know about his activism, or equivalently putting his information online, seems to me as unimpeachable an action as one could take.

But then folks have gotten really weird about privacy in the last decade. In reaction to the surveillance state truly horrible notions of privacy have become cancerous in our society. See for example the European Union broadly backing and attempting to impose the hyper-authoritarian “*right to be forgotten*.” You want to talk about attempts to control one’s thoughts or limit free speech?! The notion that someone has a right to delete or censor the information held by someone else is how we get monstrous atrocities like intellectual property.

While the capricious and violent behemoth of the state changes some situational calculations – creating an ethical obligation to avoid spreading true information that will get someone imprisoned when the damage they’d do otherwise is below that – as an overwhelming rule our every instinct should be towards spreading truthful information.

If you’re opposed to doxing nazis then you’d be opposed to survivors naming and exposing their rapists. I literally can’t think of a more damning reductio then that. What in the fuck was the whole fight for the internet and freedom of information even FOR if it wasn’t to provide people with more accurate information on abuse and leave less hiding room for monsters?

No one has a right to erase reality, to hide from past harm, to silence survivors, and memory hole actual facts. If a less than ideal society over-judges that individual then the better solution in general is to correct that with more truthful information, not to fucking hide it. We should err on the side of freedom except in extreme situations (snitching to the state, outing queer folk in homophobic societies, etc), and protecting literal nazi organizers is certainly not one. One can see suspending a general obligation towards freedom of information to save a random anarchist organizer for reasons of consequences – their activism would be curtailed, etc. There are no comparable negative consequences to leaking the info of nazis.

If the concern is that outing someone as a nazi organizer has a very small chance of bringing vigilante violence down upon them, well 1) antifascists are the ones that get literally shot or bombed when doxed, I know of literally no case when fascists have been killed as a result of doxing and 2) oh for the love of – why should anyone care about nazi organizers getting beat up?

Violent Disruption of Fascist Organizing

Alright, let’s have at it.

Organizing is not merely speech. No antifascist group that I’m aware of advocates the punching or doxing of random racist grandpas. The issue is when people organize towards fascist means. When they come together and act or recruit explicitly to accomplish the fucking horrific goal of ethnic cleansing and turning our society into an absolute prison.

We can surely all agree that it’s totally okay for the anarchists currently fighting ISIS in Syria to use preemptive force, to initiate individual battles rather than always waiting for that fascistic enemy to fire first.

Why is this ethically okay? 1) Our general ethical inclination towards non-aggression is just a rough heuristic that breaks down in some circumstances, it’s not an immortal axiom. 2) “Non-aggression” is poorly defined outside the space of really obvious immediate threats. 3) If we heed to immediatist notions of aggression we will get killed, because it allows the concealment of the gun until the very last second.

The notion some NAPist libertarians have of non-aggression is wildly naive about actual violent conflict. “*We’ll all sit here while the fascists assemble outside our house with guns, and then wait until the very last second to try and outrace them on the quickdraw.*” That shit’s insane. You will not win a war on such terms. And while libertarian extreme reticence to think in terms of war is in some sense admirable, it opens a catastrophic weakness. And if you steel wall yourself on all fronts but one your enemy is going to happily choose to fight you in the one direction you’re weak.

It’s absolutely true that we should endeavor to avoid outright war or full-scale civil conflict as much as conceivably possible. The baby gets split, no one wins, the death toll is unimaginable. I absolutely do not want a civil war, or even two insurgencies – anarchist and nazi – fighting each other. But if we prove ourselves weak in that arena, if we signal to fascists that our hands are tied, that we will only ever belatedly defend ourselves, rather than be smart enough to sometimes throw punches first, we will make such a conflict absolutely inevitable. If we make ourselves impenetrable on the discourse and culture front but hesitant on the physical force front we will have painted them into a corner where the only option for them is physical force. Right now they’re throwing up a lot of disingenuous flak to give them cover to organize a fighting force, but their rampant lying and bullshit arguments are hopefully going to catch up with them. If we let them build an army while they have this cover, without smashing them up, or play a purely defensive game, we will get obliterated. They don’t jump you when you’ve five friends armed to the teeth, they jump you when you’re alone in an alley, or bomb your house when you’re asleep. This is shit neonazis *already do*. The myopic inability of non-aggression to see wider context simply won’t cut it in such conflict.

There’s a kind of panic that I’ve seen in folks when forced to face up to this reality. The classic move is to embrace a high-horse fatalism – “*well okay, we’ll all die, but I’ll die with my soul intact.*” This is especially strong with libertarians who see consequentialism as the literal devil, and any concession to it as opening the door to statism. A rich philosophical dive seems beyond the scope of this essay but I want to emphasize that a consequentialism with freedom as its end cannot replicate the state unless you completely discard all intelligence about means. The basic anti-statist insight is that giant monopolies on violence cannot be constrained or limited, if allowed to exist their tyranny will grow. That’s still inescapable for the serious consequentialist. But justifying people’s militias or individuals firing first on ISIS does not fucking imply constructing a singular institution with a monopoly on violence. There are feedbacking tendencies in the language and psychology of “war” that can definitely lead to reactive violent tribalism and the construction of states, but “war” is not a singular unified simple thing. The insight from it that if you’re in WWII you should probably shoot someone with a swastika armband coming toward you before they formally shoot first is a fucking good one.

So why the fuck should we not consider ourselves at war with fascists when they consider themselves at war with us and are actively killing people? Why are neonazis any fucking different from ISIS?

Nazis absolutely intend to kill us all. The ethnonationalist agenda is one of genocide, since forced deportation would not and has never been passively ceded to, and they all have moments where they admit this. Extermination of anarchists is the number one agenda of every authoritarian nationalist state in history, of any ideological pretense, from Hitler to Stalin. And in any case the imposition of fascist rule on the survivors would be pretty near to death, given the ways it would systematically and totally suppress individual agency.

Sure the liberals and conservatives are also statist and inclined to authoritarianism. Although there is at least a rather large difference in scale of the democide explicitly laid out in their aspirations. But I'm happy to accept the expansion of the set of people we could say are pursuing mass murder. No anarchist on earth would condemn someone punching Cheney, Clinton, Bush, Obama, etc. And it would surely be okay to preemptively kill the demagogues urging genocide over the radio in Rwanda. How on earth was Bill Kristol's role in the lead up to Iraq any different from them? While I think preemptive violence should be narrowly accepted, I happily bite the bullet that this could extend to genocidal politicians in liberal democracies or say Marxist-Leninists' hungering for purges. Better to bite that philosophical bullet than inevitably receive their actual bullets. I'm not saying that anarchists randomly spraying bullets at members of the political establishment would be *strategic* (I don't think it would be), just that it wouldn't be *inherently unethical*.

The strategic point is an important one, and worthy of complex analysis. Obviously no one's going around executing nazi organizers and street thugs, and it would probably be a bad move for people to start that. A good number of antifa rallies don't actually involve punching nazis, and fewer involve punching first. Optics and the complexities of the Trump-era situations where undercover nazis have been using republicans as a shield are non-trivial and antifa activists clearly recognize this. There's been quite a variety of strategic thought I've seen expressed and debated on antifa sites. We can have a good faith argument about strategy, what we shouldn't waste time on is pretending that Richard Spencer is categorically different from an ISIS recruiter in any ethically profound way.

And yes, although there are splits and different functional internal organs, the fascist movement is interconnected as a single entity waging war on us. Why should we give that much of a shit whether Vanguard America formally claims James Alex Fields (the murderer of Heather Heyer) as a member? Why place such weight upon arbitrary organizational pretenses? Fields hung and collaborated with them, and they shared the same goals.

When the Earth Liberation Front burned down logging trucks, the "ELF Press Office" was a legally distinct above the ground entity ostensibly not in personal collaboration with the ELF cells doing the property destruction. That may have rightfully protected Craig Rosebraugh and Leslie James Pickering from some measure of legal retaliation — we would be in an absolutely horrid place if we happily allowed the state to prosecute publishing and defending a terrorist group as "functional collaboration" — but *on an actual ethical analysis rather than legal one*, of fucking course Craig and Leslie were functioning as organs in a larger ELF organism. The same way that some military administrators function as organs in the larger military. Or Richard Spencer functions as an organ within the larger fascist movement. Obviously the ELF was a hell of a lot better in goals and means than the US military or the fascist movement, but it's not like we'd try to make some kind of profound *ethical* (rather than legal) distinction between Craig's participation in the ELF and those of the cell members physically vandalizing the logging trucks.

Today, in a different direction, the mexican terrorist nihilist group "Individuals Tending Towards Savagery" happily adopts endless different names, seemingly had different internal splits, etc, but they're still functionally the same cluster of people.

The network of collaboration and crossover between outright fascist / white nationalist groups is well documented. What arbitrary totemic titles they happen to assign to random sub-clumpings of their ranks is really quite irrelevant. Organizations aren't magically real entities — they're just people happening to call themselves something. And getting drawn too much into taking

that shit seriously will make us easy to run rings around. Just fucking read the Milo expose, that motherfucker was happily collaborating with piles of nazis and extreme reactionaries while pretending there was a distance there absolutely wasn't. The same gets revealed constantly of everyone else in the fascist movement.

“Okay, but what about strategy? Surely punching people is a bad strategy. It'll just make nazis doubledown with victim complexes and meanwhile lose public support.”

While sure, a population pickled in liberal democracy is going to recoil reflexively at acts of violence that aren't super over-the-top clear cut defensive and proportional, there's good evidence that repression does not have the same “doubling down” effect on fascists as it can have on others. Over decades of struggle antifascist activists from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of contexts have converged on the same general conclusion.

It's important to understand that fascist psychology and the mechanisms of their recruitment are different than anarchists or even liberals.

The primary recruitment tool of the fascist is the appearance of power.

This is why fascists — and those other self-aware authoritarians in their general orbit including Stalinists and Maoists — focus so strongly on aesthetics and rituals that reinforce perceptions of broad popularity, community, strength-by-association and general social standing. Those movements that only whine, offering victimization narratives and promises of power without any tangible content to them, rarely recruit any lasting base of self-aware authoritarians (although a few will surreptitiously set up shop to prey upon the few true believers and deadenders). Appearance of strength and legitimacy is everything, without it fascist movements dry up. No self-aware authoritarian wants to back a loser cause.

This is why refusing fascists the legitimization of a platform and violently countering their rallies has worked so well historically. The authoritarian base that fascists recruit from, don't share the instincts of proponents of liberty, they aren't attracted to underdogs with no hope, they aren't compelled to self-sacrifice in defense of the weak, they're attracted to supermen on the rise. When a nazi gets up on a stage to call for genocide his arguments don't matter, it's the potency of the act, the very fact that he was able to get on that stage and say such things in the first place, that recruits. [source]

Some people really do only respect physical force. The most quintessential examples of such people are fascists.

On The Specific Connection Between The Alt-Right and the NAP

There's a good faith argument that can be made that the youtube alt-right recruits differently than the neonazis of prior decades — appealing to whiny beta-males for whom a tissue thin pretense of moral high ground is more relevant than the power fantasy being sold, and thus the beatdowns that worked so well against boneheads may only inspire more “*see the globalists are soooo unfaiiiiiir*” reaction from losers who hunger for power but are more desperate for any sort of identity, cause or belonging. Myopic notions of what constitutes formal aggression may be unreflective of how the wider populace views things, but still indeed have some particular resonance with former libertarians.

It's depressing seeing how many modern alt-right folks come from libertarian origins and try to weld fascist ideology onto a shallow Ron Paul-esque politic. *“I'm not an authoritarian so I'm not a fascist, I'm a typical libertarian, I just believe magical collective entities of nationstates should*

violently stop the free association of individuals.” But since libertarians opened the fucking door to this horrorshow there is some argument that they’re better equipped to disrupt the blatantly contradictory ideological gymnastics underpinning it. Yet there’s also a case to be made that libertarians had their fucking chance, and for decades let in racist after racist, reactionary after reactionary from Rothbard to Ron Paul to Lew Rockwell to Hoppe, and now half the libertarian orgs have been taken over by fascists like the Mises Institute (openly championing “blood and soil”) and the other half are barely fighting off the cancer. They’ve had decades to stop this in their communities and they failed miserably the entire way, so maybe their advice is of little fucking import at this point.

I’m somewhat split between these takes. I think libertarians can and should play a great role in undermining the alt-right, and probably have some useful insights to the unique psychology and twisted ideology of the alt-right youtube/chan kids. But it also seems clear that they haven’t been making much headway, and the differences between the /pol/ losers of today and the skinhead losers of the 80s are perhaps overblown. A greater affinity for the pretenses of performative “intellectual debate” online perhaps, but the same underlying reactionary psychology.

How much does it matter that ethno-nationalist youtubers like Stefan Molyneux initially recruited their base from “libertarians”?

The Center for a Stateless Society and the Alliance of the Libertarian Left have been in these fights for a decade. Most of the major nazis in this crop of the alt-right have origin stories in denouncing us / getting pushed out of libertarianism by us. Because we’re a nerdy think tank we’ve stuck to countering their ideas, critiquing them, deconverting their followers, entirely in the realm of words. And we have had some success.

But what has been abundantly clear over the years is their opportunism and lack of any ethical compass. Molyneux went ethno-nationalist basically because he realized anarchists weren’t going to support his using DMCA and the state to bully a critic, so he pretty openly pivoted to a new audience that would pay his bills. Christopher “crying nazi” Cantwell basically did the same as he realized libertarianism wasn’t a path to personal power. A similar story with the folks behind The Right Stuff, etc, etc. These people, for all their pretenses of being champions of reason and debate, are obviously attracted to power, and so too does this seem to be the case for a good fraction of their audience. This strongly implies that whatever other victim narrative anti-sjw garbage they tap into if you stop the alt-right from being able to generate spectacles of power and you’ll at least dry up most of the power-hungry opportunist fraction of them.

Deontology and the Charge of Hypocrisy

People with ethical systems focused on categorizing actions in isolation rather than on strategic pursuit of goals have a nasty tendency to drop accusations of hypocrisy: *“If you’re okay with punching nazis in pursuit of a freer world then you have no capacity to object to nazis punching anarchists in pursuit of a more hierarchical world.”*

This maneuver is annoying as hell. *Of course* non-anarchists could use the reasoning I’m using here to justify all manner of things including exterminating anarchists *if you utterly remove the core values/goals I’m following*. As a consequentialist I’m not trying to set up some kind of value-independent framework of play that I think should be established universally, some kind of rules of conduct between ideologies.

Anarchists want freedom for all, fascists want their nightmarish dystopia of domination and a fractured humanity sliced apart and imprisoned in suffocatingly static tribes. There can be no pretense of tolerance between such wildly varying values and goals. It's not like fascists and anarchists can "agree to disagree" or politely reach some kind of civil detente. Our utility functions are utterly opposed and incompatible on every level.

Thus there's no point in pretending that there could ever be some kind of "fair" rules by which we should hold each other to in our conflict. I'm not going to feign shock and betrayal when they march us off to the extermination camps or just lie like crazy on twitter – although of course I will point out both. And there is no equivocation between them punching or doxing us and us doing so to them. The act isn't the fucking relevant category, the goal is.

Fascists are gonna do what fascists do, which is try to kill all proponents of freedom. And anarchists should do whatever is most effective in building a freer world.

In some very strong sense this ties our hands, because for example imprisoning all reactionaries in gulags would clearly not be a sustainable or coherent step towards a freer world. You can't jail or massacre people into freedom. Not that that evil scumbag Marx was ever truly interested in freedom as anarchists called out from the start, but even his pretense of a "transitory dictatorship" is obviously a means that will never ever lead to the ends of freedom.

Yet pure saintly pacifism isn't an option either. To stem the overall blood flow sometimes, in rare, extreme, isolated situations you have to get a little bit of blood on your hands. The path to a better world isn't just going to be the slow evolutionary building of better cultures and norms, of winning arguments and persuasion. It will sometimes on the fringe involve shit like throwing a punch before a nazi thug can. Proving to them in a language they understand that there will be fucking consequences to their horrific game so at least a fraction of self-interested little sociopathic shits go home.

There are dangers here – of course – but there are greater dangers in tying our hands entirely to some kind of overly simplistic code.

The liberal attempt to create value-independent rules for behavior is just fucking naive as shit. As if nazis can live in peace with anyone. That shit is a comforting delusion that will get us all killed.

There's a historical anecdote I love about the President of the Spanish Republic on the dawn of the Spanish Civil War. He wakes late and goes into his office only to be irked to discover there's no coffee or breakfast waiting for him. But no matter, he calls his Minister of Finance to resolve a problem they'd been working on the other day and gets no response on the other end. So he calls another Minister. No response. Another minister and another department. Down the line. No one picks up. Finally he storms out only to discover his palace is empty. No receptionists at all. And as he wanders into the streets crowds of armed workers hurriedly pass him by with little notice. The fascists have launched a war and the anarchists have mobilized most everyone in response. The liberal government – the insane pretense of an ordered peace between irreconcilable values of oppression and freedom – is de facto dissolved, and the President was the last person to discover this.

The assumptions of liberal democracy have been suffocating us all since birth, but there is no treaty possible with fascists. No code that if we hold ourselves to we can expect them to hold themselves to. We must remember this, or end up wandering stunned like that Spanish president. This isn't some conflict between tribes or muddled political positions, this is a conflict between utterly opposite and purified ethical values. What matters is our goal of freedom for all, our

tactics should be evaluated in their efficiency in reaching that — not as commentary on what we're cool with fascists also doing.

Constructive Critical Thoughts on Antifa and The Present Situation

Antifa was basically formed to solve a pressing problem in the short term through direct action. It has never pretended to offer a long-term solution — any more than street medics at protests might be critiqued for not offering a long-term solution to the health care crisis or police brutality. This in no remote way detracts from the importance of such work. Yet it does ultimately mean there's boundary conditions to the utility of their traditional work, or wider issues to be addressed. And as antifascism has risen to prominence so has this been greeted with howls from longstanding activists in other arenas, each with their own off-the-cuff prescription for how antifascist work should be subsumed under their preferred institutional or strategic approach.

It's a lot like some activist version of a youth pastor telling kids *"Hey I know you kids like antifa, but did you know that the REAL antifascism is getting people signed up to their local union?"* There's a fucking cavalcade of such "advice" from opportunist radicals.

"Antifa" groups have suddenly gone from marginalized janitors of the anarchist movement without social capital to high-respect activism, and everyone has jumped in to declare themselves antifa and also try to dictate what antifa should be, or throw out the most poorly formed criticism. This is a major reason I feel trepidation wading into this debate — everyone with any social capital suddenly is an expert on antifa and wants to declare themselves an antifascist thought leader. Although just as an anarchist present in the anarchist milieu I've occasionally read and talked with antifascists for well over a decade my experience is fundamentally limited and I don't mean to appropriate the mantle of "antifa" for myself.

However.

While I may be nothing more than the peanut gallery on this, I do have some analysis and perhaps constructive criticisms. My two biggest points are, admittedly rather obvious: 1) that antifascist practice was not remotely developed to best win a propaganda or meme war, and 2) the creeping generalization of "antifascism" into a nebulous pan-leftist movement to push for left tribe versus right tribe is profoundly dangerous and unstrategic.

The Alt-Right was basically formed to expand overton window and win the propaganda war to epistemically isolate and radicalize a large fraction of the population. Antifa was formed to kick fascist thugs off the streets and impede their capacity to organize. Both are succeeding at what they're good at. Antifa is often winning on the streets and losing on youtube, which is far better than losing on both fronts, but is still ceding a couple million kids on youtube to increasingly frothing and misled hyperreaction. Don't get me wrong, I am not suggesting the opposite arrangement would be better. Anything that limits their capacity to organize and intimidate in meatspace saves lives. But it's worth noting how completely asymmetric these movements are:

Antifa groups have stuck to journalism and the studious documentation of facts. Conversely, the Alt-Right has tried to spread as many lies as possible to muddy the waters and win narrative / partisan ratchet games. You don't need information theory to know which approach has the edge — almost no one commenting on "antifa" even knows they have websites documenting

nazis, but millions have seen memes misrepresenting antifa's capture of ISIS territory in Syria as somehow antifa being in league with ISIS.

Antifa have largely stuck to small discrete secretive formal organizations created by anarchists to fight neonazi gangs. Conversely, the Alt-Right is a soup without much formal organization and what formal organizations there are are less secretive. One of the left's true talents is in organizing, and secrecy has obviously allowed them to continue working without all getting executed by nazis. But at the same time the formality associated with traditional activist security culture can be constraining in other ways, creating inside-outside hierarchies where small circles of people dictate how information flows and give de facto marching orders to those outside.

Additionally, since antifa are overwhelmingly anarchists they've recruited primarily through the meatspace anarchist community/movement. The anarchist milieu is far more of a closed or richly tied network than the Alt Right. We live together, we work together. This closeness in many dimensions has historically provided a kind of solidity that at least to some degree impedes infection. We're able to enforce certain norms, culture, politics, etc. This has all kinds of dangers and downsides as well as upsides. The alt-right, despite the neoreactionary fetish for "community" has absolutely nothing comparable. And so we're fighting a truly bizarre war where the explicit fascists are utilizing perhaps more anarchist or at least fluid means — amorphous networks, anonymity, swarm tactics — against an anarchist movement that has retreated to solidity, clear boundaries, highly tied community, etc. What they pine loudly for — identity, belonging, community, solidity — is what we already have (and have discovered the downsides to). At the same time they are leveraging what should be our advantages.

On the one hand antifascist professionalism is valorous and part of a commitment to truth that the alt-right happily discards in favor of postmodern trolling and social positioning. I'm not challenging the value of antifascist groups doing their research meticulously, nor am I challenging the formal organizing or at least structure that often requires. I still think the sheer intractability of reality means our commitment to truth will *ultimately* bend things in our favor and I think a rush to embrace the means of the Alt Right — dishonest polarizing misinformation — would absolutely doom us all.

But on the other hand it's very clear that our obsession with community — a need that many have long noted drives the majority of the activist milieu far more than actually changing the world — has turned us inward. And here by "us" I mean not just anarchists but nearly everyone in the left or post-left or "social justice" or whatever.

Why does the very idea of caring what the general public thinks or trying to persuade them sound utterly perplexing and alien? Because we've given up on them, our selfish hunger for the monkey brain needs of community and belonging has slowly warped anarchism into a site of retreat, not attack. Anarchism has become a hideout from the problematic world, rather than a launchpad for grappling with it. The warm blanket embrace of a community with actual ethical values and behavioral norms that don't kick the lowest has so entirely colonized our reward mechanisms that we have turned inward. We focus on policing our community rather than persuading outsiders.

Don't get me wrong there is absofuckinglutely a place for holding one another accountable and drawing lines, I'm not saying we should tolerate abuse out of some kumbaya "why can't you make nice with your rapist" garbage, and I'm not saying we shouldn't hold absolute lines against the creep of horrific politics like tankies, nazis and eco-extremists like ITS. We do need some kind of base from which to move the world, and a place to retreat to when need be. But the alt-

right actually has something that anarchists have largely lost — a sense of possibility. The world seems pregnant to them, a place where their wild dreams can actually happen. And thus they're out there searching for any possible avenue To Change Everything. We've largely forgotten how to do that. So while the alt-right is naive and stupid as fuck they're still throwing everything on the wall to see what sticks. When was the last time anarchists did anything new?

The black bloc, for example, has become a hollow echo of a hollow echo, a signifier warped by the mythologization by a half dozen radical generations. Anarchism has become drenched in convention and obligation. A whole lotta tumblr-generation kids only bloc up because they see it as a necessary ritual for community belonging. Where the bloc once had innovative security culture when everyone was making things up for the first time, that knowledge has been casually discarded. Things like Pastel Bloc demonstrate just how profoundly the bloc has been reduced to ritual in the service of community rather than tool in the service of accomplishing shit.

I am not trying to be a mean crabby old anarchist here lecturing kids about the proper respect of lawns, there is a value to community building and I appreciated Pastel Bloc's aesthetic game just like everyone else, but I want some level of explicitness on the asymmetries at play. Our strengths, our weaknesses, and the things we've perhaps unfortunately given up.

And I also want to warn that if antifascist organizing has a too formalized and insular failure mode, it also has a "too expansive" failure mode.

As folks previously not involved in antifa work have rushed in to champion the term there's been a push towards broadening antifa as a broad leftist coalition or movement building. I'm deeply disquieted about this approach, both in that I find it unstrategic and dangerous to try and broaden the goals of antifascism and that as an anarchist I consider "left unity" a trap. Anarchists have nothing in common with authoritarian communists, they have been our enemies from the start. Granted, a lot of established antifa have spoken out loudly against such, but still, the situation is dangerous.

Let me be absolutely clear on this: Anarchists must clearly and publicly oppose communist authoritarianism. Antifa cannot be (and thankfully is not) quiet when it comes to denouncing those who fetishize some of the most heinous states in human history because they made some perfunctory noises about freeing the working class. Further the sort of monsters who diminish and defend genocides committed by communist regimes must have their organizing and entryism exposed and resisted just as we do for fascists. If this is not to be done under the label of "antifa" specifically, then as many anarchists have suggested, anti-tankie action groups should also be formed. Failing to be strong and morally consistent on this allows fascists and their allies to cloak their work under the guise of standing up to authoritarian communism (and equivocating between the horrors of Leninists and those like anarcho-communists that died fighting them). Those "anti-communist action" shirts sold by fascists that fetishize the tyrannical Pinochet regime's murder by helicopter of dissidents have been effective at ratcheting up an authoritarian creep whereby right and left authoritarians pretend to be the only viable response to the other.

Yes, it will take many things to stop fascism, broadly defined, but there is immense strategic utility in having antifascist activism remain very specific and relatively tightly defined. When left-liberals on twitter say "wanting universal healthcare or student debt forgiveness is antifascism" they do an immense disservice to the cause of antifascism. Fascism constitutes a very distinct and specific danger; there are many other dangers or objectionable things in this world. Muddying the waters — casting antifascism as a left v right struggle (Now With Streetfights!) directly plays into the hands of those fascists trying desperately to pull the rest of the right into embracing outright

fascism. Yes of course the neoliberal surveillance state constitutes an immense threat, as does neoconservative imperial conquest. But these are distinct things that function differently and must be tackled differently. The small pleasure you get out of rhetorically being able to slander your other enemies with the “fascist” label is sometimes simply not worth it.

These criticisms may seem in broad conflict — on the one hand I think that antifa has stumbled because waging a war for the soul of our society teetering on the brink of outright authoritarianism through a partisan electoral conflict is well beyond its purview and expertise — on the other hand I’m deeply worried about antifa being subsumed and appropriated as a rallying cry to unify and mobilize the left as a movement. But I think that there’s a relatively straightforward path that avoids this pitfalls.

Formal antifa groups should stay focused and precise — folks need to make it absolutely impossible for the centrist media to conflate an anti-trump rally and antifascist groups. The question of how to respond to Trump has tortured antifa writers since he entered the primary. My view is that whether Trump’s authoritarianism and his most fervent base is formally fascist is academic and irrelevant. Peeling the self-aware fascists entryists from the 60 million Trump voters is an existential issue. We literally all die if we fail on that front.

An actual civil war will not go the way the nazis and broader bloodthirsty GOP dumbasses think, but both sides will lose profoundly in a civil conflict. The “come at me bro” right has no fucking idea what it would actually be getting into or the extent of support, resources, skills, and indomitability that leftists, anarchists and even many liberals would actually tap. In part because of the right’s self-chosen isolation from anyone to the left of Limbaugh. But the baby would get cut in half. Most likely some centrist technocratic vestige of the state apparatus would emerge the blood-soaked tyrannical victor. There is no future down that path where what is won is worth the victory. We must make preparations, of course, no one is saying anarchists should give up their guns or stop training, but ideally the goal should be to prepare precisely in order to avoid such a drawn out conflict.

Don’t get me wrong, if we are to see a better world there will inevitably arise moments where violence is necessary. Where politicians are dragged kicking and screaming from their positions of power lest they otherwise destroy the world to retain their rule. But violent conflict is not a goal into itself, it must be tempered by diligent strategy and ethics. The cheap comforts of collective team rallying are not worth the long term damage that can arise from their misuse.

In my view we need two fronts: we need a political anarchism augmented by a broader anti-authoritarianism (with milder goals like the abolition of prisons, borders and cops) that goes out and finds any conceivable way to convert seven billion people to anarchism within two decades, that builds a stigmergic mass movement and the resilient decentralized infrastructure for serious resistance. And we need a second front that sticks exclusively and pragmatically to the explicit fascist cancer lest it metastasize — doing precisely what antifa groups have always done research, expose, organize against and meet head on. This second front needs to do things like work with the GOP or libertarians or furries or whatever to peel nazi entryists away from them. It must be incredibly pragmatic and precise. Less interested in how pure our own community is than what we can do to limit damage in the world.

Although of course, part of pragmatism is recognizing the limits to one’s capacity to alter or direct the reactions of millions outraged at our country’s slide into fascism and with a limited vocabulary to express that outrage.

I'm less clear on how to navigate the issues of collective representation and narrative crafting. Right now antifa groups will release absolutely devastating exposes... and at absolute best they'll get on the order of a hundred or thousand shares on twitter, while alt-right conspiracy nuts will get hundreds of thousands. That sort of marginalization is absolutely unsustainable. Critiques of respectability politics only go so far, if antifascists don't do more to win the narrative among the wider world of normies and reactionaries – or at least lose it less crushingly – fascist bullshit could get normalized among literally tens of millions, and then we all die.

Sites like It's Going Down and Anti-Fascist News have started to take up the narrative crafting role – neither as generic anarchists fighting the broader longer term fight nor as highly specific antifa groups doing the triaging, but I'm troubled at points in this melding of very different functions. IGD syndicates from local antifa groups but also pushes generic movement building stuff and non-antifa content in ways that can muddy the waters. These folks do good work, but I wish there was a more clear distinction being broadcast between traditional highly professional antifa groups and the generic “antifascist movement” that everyone wants to build now. And I wish that folks would stop hijacking antifascism for broader causes or to stoke radical or leftist team identity when that framing impedes things like the pragmatic collaboration with the GOP to expel nazis in Minneapolis. More than anything I wish there was some way to get good national-narrative-strategy-minded media teams into older antifa groups, and that the nebulous generic “antifascist movement” beyond these antifa groups was both more focused on fascism and serious about winning the memetic war for hearts and minds among the tens of millions that the nazis are looking to recruit from.

I recognize this shit is complicated and folks are already stepping up in many respects, but I'm just saying I would emphasize the arena of public narrative crafting, as well as trying to draw clear lines around antifascism to make it capable of wider outreach and less boxable into mainstream partisan tensions.

I will say that I admire that as a generic anarchist project Crimethinc has been somewhat cautious about appropriating the mantle of “antifa” from those doing that work before the rest of us cared too much. And I do love NYC Antifa's twitter presence – snarky, sharp, heavy on evidence, explicitly anarchist, highly narrow-beamed on traditional antifascist work, as well as capable of pushing stories more widely. Near fucking perfect in every way. Absolute shoutout to them.

Challenge to Critics of Antifa

I recognize that no matter how well I make my points here – even if I'm absolutely and obviously right – a good number of people are so deeply and instinctively revolted by the idea of preemptive violence or ever taking the side of some activists subculturally alien to them that they'd far rather live in cognitive dissonance.

Okay!

In Britain before WW2 there were a few liberal-inclined folks who felt strongly about nonaggression and protecting freedom of assembly but who nevertheless recognized that whatever small erosion of liberal norms antifascists might cause the literal fascists were out to abolish them all. So they went to fascist rallies and heckled them and then defended themselves when the nazis inevitably tried to stomp or kill them. They were as a consequence of their reactive

stance often far more badly beaten than other antifascists but they claimed their demonstration of the moral high-ground was worth it.

One can of course critique popular antifascist approaches without stepping to and putting your own life on the line. A valid critique remains a valid critique regardless of who voices it. But some critiques would ring louder if those voicing them were demonstrably serious about the threat posed by fascist / white nationalist groups (It would also help many critics if they demonstrated a basic familiarity with actual antifascist activism and groups, although I realize that that apparently seems a bridge too far.).

So my challenge to all of us in the peanut gallery is this: if you sincerely are aghast at the return of fascism / white nationalism and their organizing efforts, if your heart clinches up in fear and outrage, then do what you *do* feel is allowable to fight them. If the one antifa tactic you object to is the street fighting then form your own antifa (or whatever you want to call it) group that explicitly does all the reporting and boycott organizing without the street fighting. If what you take objection to is folks occasionally throwing the first punch then get your friends together and form a group that shows up to only provide defensive strength. And maybe, just maybe, you'll come to the same realizations as every other antifascist activist.

But even more importantly if you value freedom at all you should recognize the situation: the state and Trump in particular are of course going to demonize antifascism and use them as a boogeyman to justify vicious and sweeping state repression. Since they can't settle for identifying a couple people who threw punches in a park they'll try to repress the hundreds of thousands who identify or speak out broadly as anti-fascists. How everyone protests is impossible to police without making ourselves authoritarian and artificially unified. Remember that the few scuffles and clashes antifascists have been a part of pale in comparison to what was present in the civil rights movement, despite the history being sanitized. There's space for hoping our voices persuade a few people to stop doing shit we feel is counterproductive, but this impact is ultimately small. Whereas the impact of voices joining in with the state's narrative of antifascists being terrorists who must be suppressed is far far far more damaging to the cause of liberty.

So I urge incredible caution and at the very least explicit and prominent nuancing when making critiques of antifa. Obviously no libertarian can endorse classifying antifascist activists as terrorists. Obviously no libertarian can endorse police repression against antifascist activists. But libertarians and others sincerely in favor of liberty must be explicit about that every time the subject is brought up. At the very least in the same way that we feel obliged to pair "the North Korean government is horrifically evil" with "war with North Korea would also be horrifically evil."

Plenty of liberals, libertarians and centrists have tried to retreat to "both sides are bad" framings – but let's be absolutely clear if the antifascists are bad for trying to suppress the fascists (without even using the government) then any hint of the government repressing antifascists would be far worse.

In the worst possible case antifascists normalize an illiberal culture of college kids shouting at and occasionally punching anyone they find problematic. This would be bad, no doubt, but is completely put to pale by any increase in the power of the police state. Some punchy overblown "SJWs" would be an annoyance, not an existential threat to freedom itself, whereas the necessary expansiveness of a state campaign against "antifas" would be the deathknell of any hope whatsoever.

Yall get that, right?

Even if antifa is technically “wrong” they’re still fundamentally better than almost anyone else around, and suppression of them would set off a nightmare of state repression for all other anarchists and libertarians.

No longstanding antifa groups or activists have called for hate crimes legislation or the cops to enforce tyranny. In fact part of the reason conservatives have called antifa and BLM “terrorist” “hate groups” is precisely because they don’t trust the police state and want to defang it’s power to oppress, not expand or redirect that power.

Any criticism of antifascists should start by lauding that decision.

Despite that bombastic slogan in Berkeley, antifascist struggle has obviously never embraced *literally* “any means necessary” – after all blowing up the planet is a “means” by which we might stop fascism. Lobbying for hate crimes laws and police power to round up neonazi street thugs would also be a “means” to defeating at least that expression of fascism, but it’s a clearly a both intolerable and implausible one. By even the most uncharitable evaluation antifascists are thus *far* less authoritarian than your average liberal, since liberals are more than happy to say “there should be a law” or “call the police” in response to these neonazi gangs.

In any case if you would flip over a military recruiter’s table but not a nazi recruiter’s table you’re either inconsistent or wildly naive to the threat of fascist organizations. And if you’re somehow opposed to flipping over a military recruiter’s table then you’re not an anarchist or libertarian in any meaningful or consequential sense.

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