How to Defeat Neo-Fascists, Racists and the Extreme Right

By Bruce Lesnick, John Leslie, Jeff Mackler, Michael Schreiber and Steve Xavier

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Introduction

From Charlottesville to Boston, Berkeley, Seattle and elsewhere across the country, right-wing racists have spilled out of the shadows, moving beyond their Internet chat groups and into the public streets. Though small in numbers, these KKK and Nazi admirers represent a threat that must be taken seriously.

Virulent racist and neo-fascist groups feed off the misery and economic uncertainty of the 99% that are the hallmarks of capitalism in crisis. Endless war, poverty, rampant inequality, obscene levels of unemployment and underemployment, declining health, environmental catastrophe, injustice and ever-lowering expectations are the realities that greet working people each morning.

Militarists, chauvinists, racists and neo-fascists blame all of societies ills on “the other” – some presumed “inferior” country, culture, race or ethnic minority that threatens the rest of us. The rightists carry water for the 1% by obfuscating the real source of the problems we face, by undermining solidarity, and by sowing divisions among the victims of the current economic and political onslaught amidst attacks raining down on us from our common oppressors.

Typically, the ruling rich keep the fascist threat on the back burner so long as the democratic charade they use to control the majority proves effective. At present, racists and neo-fascists are only able to mobilize small groups of adherents. However, we know from history that as a last resort, when the veneer of democracy can no longer hold opposition to their system in check, the robber barons will throw their weight behind the fascist movement in order to obliterate unions, left political parties and other fighting organizations of the working class. To defeat the right, a two-pronged strategy is required:

1. We must harness the power of working people, in massive numbers, to stand up to the racist and neo-fascist threats.
2. We must offer a comprehensive, convincing counter narrative that explains the current crisis and how to extricate ourselves from it.

The articles that follow address the first aspect of this strategy.

In *Counter Mobilization: An Effective Response to Right Wing Speech*, Bruce Lesnick lays out the proven approach to mobilizing against ultra-right forums, rallies and marches.

In the following three sections:

- **Charlottesville rally turns deadly: Build unity to counter neo-fascist actions!**
- **Tens of thousands join Boston march against neo-fascism and bigotry**
- **Bay Area Mass Mobilizations Counter Neo-Nazi Events**

Steve Xavier, Michael Schreiber and Jeff Mackler recount how responses to neo-fascists rallies were handled in practice.

In *What is Fascism?*, John Leslie examine the nature of fascism and take up the question, “Is Donald Trump a fascist?”

For an antidote to the neo-fascists’ bleak world view, please see the companion pamphlet, *What Socialists Stand For*. There we present the socialist analysis of the problems facing working people today and a detailed plan for building a just and sustainable world.

Bruce Lesnick, November, 2017
Counter Mobilization: An Effective Response to Right Wing Speech

By Bruce Lesnick

As the effects of the Great Recession linger, the ruling rich are making every effort to ensure that the working class bears the brunt of the economic crunch. In this atmosphere, elements of the extreme right feel emboldened to promote their reactionary wares. From the increasing visibility of right wing websites like breitbart.com, to well-publicized speaking tours by conservative ideologues like Milo Yiannopoulos and others, to former Breitbart editor Steve Bannon attaining the status of presidential advisor – the message from the top is clear: racism, sexism and xenophobia will all be used to divide and oppress the 99%. Meanwhile, these same poisonous sentiments are used to divert attention from those actually responsible for and benefiting from the current crisis.

It’s natural for any compassionate, thinking person to be angry at the notion of a Yiannopoulos, Bannon, Limbaugh, Beck, Hannity, Coulter, O’Reilly or Trump being given a prominent platform to promote their reactionary ideology. The question is: what should we do about it? What’s the best way to counter right wing propaganda? How can we most effectively shift the narrative from the phony answers offered by the right to the genuine solutions championed by the revolutionary left? How can we best ensure that the right wing talk doesn’t become right wing action? How can we best respond when the rightists do get violent? And critically, how can we best harness the power of the 99% – the working class majority – in this ideological, social and economic battle?

Pyrrhic Victories

A look at recent events helps to illustrate what’s at stake.

On January 20, 2017 Milo Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak before a sellout crowd of 700 at the University of
Washington in Seattle. Outside, protesters gathered. Some in the crowd began throwing bricks, fireworks, paint and other objects. One protestor was shot by a Trump/ Yiannopoulos supporter. Despite the disturbance, Yiannopoulos’ was able to complete his talk.

On February 1, Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak at the University of California, Berkeley. A small break-away group from the 1,500 protesters at the event threw rocks through campus windows, causing a generator to catch fire. University officials claim that $100,000 in damage was done. The police responded with rubber bullets and locked down the campus. The event was cancelled before Yiannopoulos could speak. Afterwards, some protestors smashed commercial storefront windows and car windshields and clashed with police. Later, Yiannopoulos was quoted as saying that “the left is absolutely terrified of free speech and will do literally anything to shut it down.”

On April 15, protesters clashed with participants at a pro-Trump rally at a park in Berkeley. Fireworks, bottles, trashcans and traffic cones were thrown. Eleven people were injured; seven were taken to the hospital. Police used pepper spray on the crowd.

In the aftermath of these events, dozens of mainstream as well as right wing outlets rushed to proclaim:

“Berkeley riot lays bare liberal hypocrisy on free speech”
“The biggest threat to free speech? It’s the left”
“Liberal Hypocrisy on Freedom of Speech BRUTALLY Exposed”
“The Imitation Game – How the Left is Silencing Free Speech”
“The hypocrisy of ‘love trumps hate’ liberals”

Who’s Responsible for Violence?

The narrative that grew out these events was a gift to the right and corporate elites, making it easier for the powers that be to turn reality on its head.
It’s a fact that our society is characterized by rampant inequality, where wealth and power reside in the hands of a tiny minority. But such an imbalance is unnatural and can only be prolonged by the use of force. No privileged minority can maintain its rule over the majority without resorting to repression and violence. In a true democracy, with full respect for democratic rights and civil liberties, the majority would quickly unseat any dictatorial, exploitive, parasitic minority.

It is the 1% and defenders of minority rule who are responsible for violence and exploitation today. War, racism, sexism, mass incarceration, police brutality, austerity, destruction of the environment and attacks on civil liberties – all so characteristic of modern capitalism – benefit only those at the top.

Of course working people – the majority – have every right to defend ourselves from those who would use force to exploit us. But in the process, we should not carelessly hand propaganda victories to our enemy, muddying the waters as to who are the real perpetrators of violence.

**Critical Gains for the Working Class**

Free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and other civil liberties are vital, hard-fought gains for working people. Each of these rights is constantly under attack, though, to date, none have been decisively reversed.

It is easier for us to fight against the rule of the 1% with the tools of civil liberties in our arsenal. If we were forced to fight for fundamental change against an overt dictatorship – if we were compelled to function as an illegal, underground movement – our task would be immensely more difficult.

When we consider some of the basic civil liberties that are not guaranteed to Americans today – free, fair and unbiased elections; mass media immune from the influence of big money; the right to health care and family leave; the right to education; the right to form unions; the right to a job; the right to democratically
control our workplaces and our economy – it’s easy to see how the lack of these rights hinders our ability to fight back.

By contrast, those in power today do not rely on civil liberties to maintain their rule. In fact, they readily flout the law when it suits them, and they steadfastly defend their perks and privileges whether or not they are strictly legal.

Thus, civil liberties are more important to the working majority than the ruling elites. When democratic rights are attacked, it is always the working class and progressive movements for social change that bear the brunt and suffer the most. For this reason, we must guard against giving the authorities any excuse to restrict our rights.

**Our Rights Under Attack**

There are many examples of the ruling elites trampling the democratic rights of the majority as a way of countering dissent and keeping us divided. For example:

- For nearly a century, all labor unions were illegal in the US. From 1800 -1842, there were more than twenty indictments and prosecutions for “criminal conspiracy” related to attempts to unionize.

- With the passage of the Espionage Act in 1917, opposition to WWI was criminalized. To speak against the war was “to interfere with the operation or success of the armed forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies.” Socialists and antiwar activists, like Eugene V. Debs, Kate Richards O’Hare and others, were imprisoned for insisting that, “the working class has no interest in the wars declared and waged by the ruling classes of the various countries upon one another for conquest and spoils.” With characteristic irony Debs noted, “…it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world.” In the Palmer Raids of 1919-1920, the US
Attorney General sought to arrest and deport as many left-leaning radicals as possible.

- Slavery was legal in the US until 1865. Blacks in America could not vote until 100 years after the country was founded. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin was legal until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- Women were denied the right to vote until 1920. Young adults could not vote until 1971. Meanwhile, voting rights for African Americans and others are now under renewed attack.

- In March of 1975, a professor at San Francisco State University invited a member of the neo-Nazi National Socialist White People’s Party to speak at his class. A small, group of ultra-left demonstrators forced the event to be cancelled. The majority of students on campus, while condemning the views of the neo-Nazi group, opposed the forced cancellation of the event, seeing it as the threat to free speech more generally. University officials used the ultra-left demonstration as a pretext to go after campus radicals and socialist groups, even attempting (unsuccessfully) to expel several from campus.

- The right to speak in defense of Palestinian rights is under siege. Professors Norman Finkelstein (DePaul University) and Steven Salaita (University of IL) were denied faculty positions because of their support for the Palestinian struggle. The governor of NY issued an executive order prohibiting the state from doing business with any organization or company that supports the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). On US college campus and in countries across the world, restrictions on the right to speak and organize for BDS are spreading.

- Government attacks on WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and numerous whistleblowers pose a direct threat to free speech and freedom of the press.
Two Sides of the Same Coin

Liberal reformers have no faith in the ability of the working class to organize and change society. They erroneously believe that meaningful change can come through appealing to the better nature of the ruling elites. This is why they focus their efforts and energy on pleading with “friendly officials” to grant incremental reforms.

Frustrated radicals and ultra-left activists make a similar mistake. They too have given up on organizing masses of people. Instead, they substitute their own sensational, often violent confrontations for the mobilization of the 99% as a whole. Like liberals, ultra-left radicals hope to shock and shame the corporate establishment into making reforms.

But an effective movement is not one that is overly concerned with changing the minds of those at the top; it is one that reaches out to those at the bottom. The powers that be cannot be moved by moral or logical arguments because their rule is not based on morality or logic. It is based on economic and political power. For this reason, the aim of our actions must be to harness the countervailing power of millions of working people, and in so doing force a change of course, against the will those at the top.

With this clearly in mind, tactics can be chosen which will bring the maximum number of people into action.

A Winning Strategy

It is counterproductive to seek to prevent right-wing ideologues from speaking. In the first place, it is not their speech that is dangerous, but their policies and actions. In the second place, all of the right-wing talking points can be easily debunked by suitable arguments from the left. (Anyone who doubts this ought to carefully consider which side they’re on.) Thirdly, as noted above, history has shown that any restriction of free speech or other democratic rights rebounds most severely on the organizations and movements of the left.
However, right-wing propaganda does present a real threat that needs to be answered. What’s needed is a response that strengthens our hand, undermines the opposition, makes clear who’s responsible for systemic violence, and demonstrates which side has the majority.

The strategy that fits the bill is *counter mobilization*. Here’s how it works.

When a right wing speaker is invited to campus, student and community groups should unite in demanding that an opposing speaker representing a more radical left view be invited as well. Preferably, the entire event should be turned into a debate.

Wherever a right wing racist, misogynist or xenophobic speaker is given a platform, mass protests and pickets should be organized outside. The point is not to prevent people from attending or to prevent the speaker from being heard, but to ensure that the speaker’s viewpoint does not go unchallenged and to visibly demonstrate which side has the majority.

When right-wingers move into action, the left should build a bigger, broader counter-action. Right wing marches and pickets should be met with larger, broader counter marches and counter pickets. There’s no need to prevent the right-wingers from marching per se. Rather, the aim is to dwarf the impact of the right’s action with a suitable, massive counter action.

Where the right resorts to outright violence, the left should organize massive, community-based defense. Peaceful, left wing protesters also have the right to defend themselves if attacked by unhinged rightists. Because our strategy relies on mobilizing the majority, we have no interest in initiating violence, but this does not preclude our right to self-defense if attacked.

**More of Us Than Them**

In 1978 a group of about a dozen neo-Nazis marchers in Chicago were met by thousands of counter demonstrators, myself
among them. After what had been a lengthy, controversial build-up\textsuperscript{15}, the right wing action was dwarfed by a united, progressive response. In the end, the Hitler wannabes made their speeches, but the broader relationship of forces was clear for all to see.

Yes, reactionary, right wing speakers must be challenged. But this is best achieved in a way that brings the largest possible number of people into struggle against their ideas and policies. Counter mobilizing does this, while at the same time defending important civil liberties that strengthen our hand. The counter mobilization strategy makes it crystal clear who represents the majority and exposes the ruling rich, their gendarmes and their right wing hangers-on as the ones responsible for initiating any violence.
1 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anthony-w-orlando/recovery-of-the-rich-by-t_b_5997890.html

2 http://rightwingnews.com/top-news/the-50-most-popular-conservative-websites/

3 https://www.campusreform.org/?ID=8724

https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/08/07/the-biggest-threat-free-speech-the-left/QeNyES0rXB3bdWR8rjHKTl/story.html

http://thefederalistpapers.org/us/liberal-hypocrisy-on-freedom-of-speech-brutally-exposed

http://time.com/4379501/liberal-hypocrisy-of-free-speech/


8 https://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1918/canton.htm

9 https://www.thenation.com/article/50-years-after-bloody-sunday-voting-rights-are-under-attack/

10 http://www.csun.edu/~vcmtth00m/finkelstein.html


15 https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/06/25/3000-protest-against-nazis-in-chicagos-loop/b21c5ab5-2775-4d97-963b-acddc0a440f2/?utm_term=.6717687ac5a1
Charlottesville Rally Turns Deadly: Build Unity to Counter Neo-Fascist Actions!

By Steve Xavier

On August 12, 2017, an ultra-right thug plowed a car into a crowd of counter-protesters mobilizing against a so-called “Unite the Right” rally. Heather Heyer, age 32, was killed and more than 30 other anti-racist protesters sustained injuries during the course of the day.

Heyer, who worked as a paralegal in Charlottesville, Va., was protesting to demonstrate her love of humanity and her opposition to the racist, neo-fascist goons that the decaying capitalist system has spewed forth. Her alleged murderer, James Alex Fields Jr., 20, escaped from the scene but was apprehended shortly afterwards. One of his high school instructors in Ohio told ABC News that Fields was “infatuated by the Nazis and Adolph Hitler.”

The call for an ultra-right rally in Charlottesville was intended to bring together “alt-right,” neo-Nazi, neo-Confederate, and Ku Klux Klan groups in an action to defend the statue of Robert E. Lee, the general who led the slaveholders’ army during the Civil War of the 1860s. The Charlottesville city council had voted to remove the monument from its site at the former Lee Park—now renamed Emancipation Park. The rally was reported to be the largest gathering of far-right and racist groups in over a decade.

In a torchlight march across the University of Virginia campus the previous night, white supremacists and neo-fascists chanted: “white lives matter,” “you will not replace us,” “Jews will not replace us,” and “blood and soil” (the Nazi slogan of the 1930s extolling racial purity). Rightists attacked a smaller group of counter-protesters, using sticks and brass knuckles, while police stood by and watched.
The next day, as the neo-fascists gathered for their rally, the counter-protesters outnumbered them two to one. As clashes broke out, the authorities declared a state of emergency and cops ordered the gathering to disperse. Scuffles between fascists and counter-demonstrators continued, injuring at least 15.

Later, the counter-demonstrators began a march through downtown, chanting “Whose streets? Our streets!” Without warning, Fields allegedly drove his car into a column of marchers, killing Heyer and injuring at least 19 others. Among the injured were members of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and the International Workers of the World (IWW).

**Trump’s Rise Emboldens Neo-Fascists**

Klansman, Holocaust denier, and former Nazi leader David Duke said at the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally that “we are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. … That’s why we voted for Donald Trump, because he said he’s going to take our country back.”

Trump ran for president on a reactionary populist appeal, blaming immigrants and others for a very real economic squeeze felt by working people from coast to coast. During his rise to the White House, Trump scapegoated immigrants and Muslims while gathering support from overt fascists like David Duke, alt-right founder Richard Spencer and the Ku Klux Klan. Trump supporters, encouraged by the candidate himself, physically attacked protesters at campaign rallies.

Trump does not command a mass organization of armed, ultra-right shock troops. Thus, he is not a fascist, properly so-called. But he has surrounded himself with far right spokespeople like Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller (a college friend of Richard Spencer). His election and ongoing rhetoric has emboldened the neo-fascist and racist far right. While still tiny, these groups have grown and mobilized since the election, taking Trump’s rise to power as a signal to come out of the shadows. The Nazi *Daily
Stormer wrote that Trump “is setting us free.”

Trump has been silent about the large number of racist and anti-Semitic hate crimes that have taken place since he took office. In a rambling and barely-coherent statement following the clashes in Charlottesville, Trump neglected to mention the murder of Heather Heyer. Instead, he condemned the violence on “many sides” while refusing to condemn the white supremacists and fascists specifically.

David Duke, apparently irritated by Trump’s mild rebuke, tweeted, “I would recommend you take a good look in the mirror & remember it was White Americans who put you in the presidency, not radical leftists.”

But other rightists took Trump’s statement as a victory. “Did Trump just denounce anti-fa?” tweeted Richard Spencer, using a term used to describe anti-fascist protesters. And the Nazi Daily Stormer wrote gleefully that Trump had “outright refused to disavow” the fascists. “He didn’t attack us. … When asked to condemn, he just walked out of the room. Really, really good.”

**Fascism and How to Fight it**

Fascism is a symptom of capitalism in its terminal decay. The tactics of fascists were described by Malik Miah in the August 1975 *International Socialist Review* (“Free Speech and the Fight Against the Ultra-Right”):

“The fascists try to turn the anger of all those threatened with ruin by the capitalist crisis against the oppressed racial minorities and organized labor. In this country, the approach of fascist organizations in the 1930s and 1940s was to claim to be the representatives of the ‘little man’ against both the big capitalists and the ‘communists,’ directing their fire especially at Blacks, Jews and ‘big labor.’ In his book ‘Fascism and Big Business,’ Daniel Guerin points out that ‘fascism’s game is to call itself anti-capitalist without seriously attacking capitalism.’”
The social base of fascism is the middle class (“petty bourgeoisie”). In the struggle for power, fascism uses anti-capitalist slogans, but their paymasters are the ruling class. They use the middle class as what revolutionist Leon Trotsky called a “battering ram” against the working class. The regime of fascism is, in the final analysis, the government of finance capital.

Having masked their intent under anti-capitalist rhetoric, the Nazis quickly subordinated all of German society to the needs of the capitalist class. We can’t rely on cops, courts, and capitalist politicians to protect us from fascist goons. Cops often ally themselves directly with the fascists.

Socialists reject the notion that small groups engaging in street fighting can defeat the fascists. We seek to mobilize the largest possible counter-mobilizations of workers and the oppressed against these thugs. We need to build united-front mass-action coalitions that include the trade unions and organizations of oppressed nationalities, women, students and LGBTQI people.

At the same time, we support the right to organized self-defense against racist and fascist attacks. We take to heart the IWW slogan, “an injury to one is an injury to all.”
Tens of Thousands Join Boston March Against Neo-Fascism and Bigotry

By Michael Schreiber

In the week following the white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, which ended with the murder of Heather Heyer, anti-racist and anti-fascist protests erupted in hundreds of cities and towns across the United States. About 3000 marched in Philadelphia on Aug. 16, 2017 and 1000 rallied in Portland, OR two days later.

The largest mobilization of the week took place on Aug. 19, when tens of thousands of demonstrators filled Boston Common and marched through the streets to say, “No Nazis, no KKK, no fascists in the USA!” The huge outpouring of protesters dwarfed a simultaneous rally of right-wingers in Boston Common.

The Boston Herald reported that upwards of 30,000 joined the counter-protest; city officials said that 40,000 were there. They marched to the Common behind banners proclaiming, “Black Lives Matter” and the labor movement refrain, “Which Side Are You On?”

One counter-protester told Yahoo News: “I’m here because I stand against hate; I stand against bigotry; I stand against ignorance. A fire is being lit on that side [by the racists], and we need to squash it—we need to squash it soon. We need to show them how small a segment of our society they really are.”

The right-wing organizers had planned their so-called “Free Speech” rally for weeks, and predicted that several hundred people would participate. Although the organizers avowed that their event had nothing to do with racism, they encouraged the participation of outspoken racists and other leading figures from the far right.

Thomas Robb, national director of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, assured the media that KKK members from
Massachusetts would be there. But in the end, the Klansmen never showed up.

Also scheduled to speak were Joe Biggs, a former writer on the *Infowars* conspiracy website, and Kyle Chapman, former director of the New Zealand National Front, a white-supremacist party. Chapman is facing charges of attacking anti-Trump demonstrators with a lead-filled stick in Berkeley, Calif., in March 2017. However, it does not appear that either man attended the Boston event.

News reports said that only about 20 people participated in the right-wing event. The participants were forced to pack up early, without any of the scheduled major speakers having addressed the rally. As police escorted the right-wingers into police vans to make their getaway, the counter-protesters sang, “Hey, hey, goodbye!” and chanted, “White supremacy has got to go!” It was an important victory for the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

**Trump Gave a Fresh Wind to the Far Right**

Following the election of Trump to the presidency, white supremacists and neo-fascist forces felt that they had a fresh wind in their sails. The KKK’s official newspaper, *The Crusader*, and David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Klan, endorsed Trump’s candidacy and were outspoken in their support once he gained office.

A range of far-right ideologues gleefully donned the Trump campaign caps that read, “Make America Great Again.” In Charlottesville, the red caps served as a kind of uniform for many of the rightist marchers. No doubt the wearers were emboldened by Trump’s stance against Muslims and other immigrants, his more recent call for a ban on transgender people in the armed forces, his call for police to “rough up” people that they apprehend, and his speech in Poland on increased militarization in order to uphold the values of “Western civilization.”
Racist violence and other acts of bigotry, such as the desecration of synagogues and mosques, have increased since Trump’s election. In May, a KKK chapter announced it would hold a cross burning in Asheboro, N.C.; the event went on, but in private, while anti-racist counter-demonstrators took over the space in front of the local monument to the Confederacy.

Trump’s remarks following the terrorism in Charlottesville, in which he insisted on placing blame for the violence on “all sides,” further lifted the spirits of the racists, neo-fascists, and the “alt-right.” But the huge outpouring of protesters around the country, and especially in Boston, gave evidence that mass counter-mobilizations are the surest way to deflate and deflect these reactionary forces. It underscored that masses of people are determined to join the fight against racist intolerance and the ultra-right.

Moreover, Boston showed that truly massive counter-protests are effective in helping to avoid the sort of violence that took place in Charlottesville. The huge demonstration of people who declared, “Hate has no home in Boston,” was able to scare away the Klan and other violence-prone thugs who had hoped to attend the rightist rally.

White supremacists planned at least nine rallies nationwide for the weekend of Aug. 19-20 alone. But in nearly every case, counter-protesters came out in greater numbers to overshadow the racist events.

Some rightist rallies, as in Dallas, were ostensibly called to denounce plans to dismantle statues celebrating the slave-holding Confederacy that were set up throughout the South during the days of Jim Crow segregation. The Dallas anti-racist counter-mobilization drew over 2000 participants who chanted, “This is not Charlottesville!” Unfortunately, towards the end, non-violent protesters were dispersed by police in riot gear and on horses.

Hundreds marched to Martin Luther King’s tomb in Atlanta on Aug. 19 in a protest against white supremacy organized by a
new coalition of civil and human rights groups, Georgia Resists. Also on Aug. 19, at least 4000 protested a right-wing event in Vancouver, B.C. The right-wingers, some of whom carried Confederate flags, said that they were opposing Islam and the Canadian government’s immigration policies.

Right-wingers planned events in San Francisco and Berkeley on the weekend of Aug. 26-27, and broad coalitions formed to organize large counter-mobilizations. The Rally Against Hate scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 27, in Berkeley’s Martin Luther King Park, won the endorsement of some 40 groups, including the Alameda County Central Labor Council and several unions, as well as socialist and community groups.

ILWU Local 10 voted to stop work on Aug. 26, and to march to Crissy Field in San Francisco to counter the rally of neo-Nazis that was planned there (see the union’s statement below). Hopefully, the statement of the longshore union will serve as a wake-up call to the labor movement as a whole to involve itself fully in the fight against white supremacy and the neo-fascists. It is a matter of survival that they do so.

**Will the Ruling Class Obtain a More “Moderate” Trump?**

The fact that the neo-fascists have met resistance around the country has reinforced the understanding by the major sector of the U.S. ruling class that now is not the time to lift its mask of “tolerance” and “democracy.” Accordingly, a host of politicians and corporate CEOs have seized the opportunity to proclaim their abhorrence of racism, their anger over the events in Charlottesville, and their “horror” over the resurgence of overt neo-fascist groupings—although not long ago they were happy enough to work with fascists groups in the Ukraine.

Many spokespeople for the rich have shed crocodile tears over the fact that Trump did not display what they consider to be a “proper” sensitivity to these issues. This is one more indication, according to some politicians—including Republicans—that the
impetuous Trump is proving to be a liability, both domestically and in foreign policy, and that he must be reined in.

This was revealed by Stephen Bannon who, after stepping down as Trump’s top advisor, announced that he would return to a position at the “alt-right” *Breitbart News* in order to “cover for Trump.” In an interview with the *Weekly Standard*, Bannon said of Trump, “I just think his ability to get anything done—particularly the bigger things, like the Wall, the bigger, broader things that we fought for, it’s just going to be that much harder.”

And how will the remaining White House advisers affect Trump? “I think they’re going to try to moderate him,” Bannon said. “I think he’ll sign a clean debt ceiling; I think you’ll see all this stuff. His natural tendency—and I think you saw it this week on Charlottesville—his actual default position is the position of his base, the position that got him elected. I think you’re going to see a lot of constraints on that. I think it’ll be much more conventional.”

But whether Trump can be reined in or not will hardly matter in the long term. As the crisis of world capitalism deepens, the ruling class will ultimately seek a change in tactics. At that time, reactionary policies such as the ones that Trump currently espouses will not go far enough to suit the needs of the capitalists. They will then perceive the “horror” of fascism as their only hope, and they will attempt to unleash the fascist thugs in order to decisively crush the labor movement and its allies.

Now is the time to act! A mobilization of organized labor, as well as all people of social conscience, is necessary to give notice that “Fascism Has No Home Here.”

* * *
INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE WORKERS UNION LOCAL 10 TAKES LEAD IN FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

ILWU Local 10 Motion to Stop the Fascists With Stop Work Action and March in San Francisco. Approved on Aug. 17, 2017.

Whereas, the fascists, the KKK, Nazis and other white supremacists rallied and marched by torchlight in Charlottesville, whipping up lynch mob terror with racist, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic slogans, and

Whereas, that attack resulted in one anti-racist counter demonstrator murdered and many others injured when one of the fascist bullies ran them down with a car, and

Whereas, President Trump’s whitewashing this violent, deadly fascist and racist attack saying “both sides are to blame”, and his attacking anti-racists for opposing Confederate statues that honor slavery adds fuel to the fire of racist violence, and

Whereas, the Klan, Nazis and other racist terrorists represent a deadly threat to African Americans, Latinos and immigrants, as well as Muslims, Jews, LGBTQ people among many others, and directly to members of our union and the labor movement as a whole, and

Whereas, the fascist “Patriot Prayer” group that staged violent racist provocations in Portland, Oregon and elsewhere, attracting Nazi and other violent white supremacists, has announced it will rally on Crissy Field on Saturday August 26, and

Whereas, far from a matter of “free speech”, the racist and fascist provocations are a deadly menace as shown in Portland on May 26 when a Nazi murdered two men and almost killed a third for defending two young African American women he was menacing; and our sisters and brothers in the Portland labor
movement answered racist terror with the power of workers solidarity, mobilizing members of 14 unions against the fascist/racist rally there on June 4, and

Whereas, ILWU Local 10 has a long and proud history of standing up against racism, fascism and bigotry and using our union power to do so; on May Day 2015 we shut down Bay Area ports and marched followed by thousands to Oscar Grant Plaza demanding an end to police terror against African Americans and others; the San Francisco Bay Area is a union stronghold and we will not allow labor-hating white supremacists to bring their lynch mob terror here.

Therefore, ILWU Local 10 in the best tradition of our union that fought these right wingers in the Big Strike of 1934, will not work on that day and instead march to Crissy Field to stop the racist, fascist intimidation in our hometown and invite all unions and antiracist and antifascist organizations to join us defending unions, racial minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women and all the oppressed.
Bay Area Mass Mobilizations Counter Neo-Fascist Events

By Jeff Mackler

The organization of massive united-front-type counter-mobilizations to challenge the planned Aug. 26-27, 2017 far-right demonstrations in the San Francisco/Berkeley Bay Area proved to be key to exposing those currents for the tiny groups of isolated and pathetic reactionaries that they are.

In Berkeley, on Sunday, Aug. 27, the newly formed Bay Area Against Hate coalition of more than 70 organizations drew 5000 to 7000 protesters for a rally at the University of California Berkeley, followed by a march to Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park. These actions aimed at countering a scheduled, but then cancelled, neo-fascist “No to Marxism in America” event.

Endorsers of the disciplined, well-monitored and carefully planned counter-protest included the Alameda County Central Labor Council; the Berkeley and Peralta Federation of Teachers; several SEIU and AFSCME locals; the UAW/Graduate Student Union; several faith-based groups; socialist organizations including Democratic Socialists of America, International Socialist Organization, Socialist Action, Socialist Alternative, Speak Out Now/Revolutionary Workers Organization, and La Voz/Workers Voice; and a host of community organizations.

Pre-rally monitor training and security sessions involving some 200 activists were organized to ensure a disciplined, peaceful, and secure event that would maximize participation while minimizing possible disruption from both police and potential right-wing attacks.

Berkeley’s announced lost of reactionary speakers and organizers had long been partisans of far-right mobilizations, including the neo-Nazi and KKK-orchestrated violent events in Charlottesville. But like the reactionary organizers of a cancelled
Aug. 26 San Francisco “Patriot Prayer” rally, they Berkeley rightists vehemently insisted that their intentions were entirely anti-racist and anti-fascist.

The cancelled neo-fascist rally at Crissy Field near San Francisco’s Marina District had been granted a permit by the National Park Service, but its organizers thought better of using it in face of an impending labor-community counter-mobilization that promised to expose the handful of ultra-rightists as virtually irrelevant. In announcing their cancellation, the demoralized and demobilized ultra-reactionaries informed the media that they would hold a press conference instead at Alamo Square.

The following day, they said, they would join their co-thinkers in Berkeley for a rally from which “both fascists and Marxists” would be banned—a hyperbolic statement typical of these self-proclaimed “god-fearing Christian ‘free speech’ advocates.” On less than a day’s notice, 1000 counter-protesters, led by a contingent of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, whose Local 10 voted to close down the Oakland Port to organize ILWU members to challenge the threatened neo-fascist rally, arrived at Alamo Square. Again, few, if any, ultra-rightists appeared, at least not while the counter-protesters were there.

In Berkeley, the police, mayor, and campus administrators mobilized heavily armed contingents from virtually all the state university campuses to surround MLK Civic Center Park in order to protect the would-be neo-Nazi rally. At the same time, the authorities denied permits for the counter-protesters to rally and march and barricaded the West Campus Lawn assembly site in an attempt to minimize participation and egress. As city officials warned the public to steer clear of the area, Berkeley police blocked off march routes and cordoned off MLK Park itself.

But the sheer size and discipline of the anti-fascist mobilization dwarfed the police presence and forced city and police officials to open up previously closed streets.
The Berkeley marchers, an overwhelmingly portion of whom were young people, carried banners and placards representing a broad spectrum of anti-racist and anti-fascist viewpoints. The participants were high-spirited; their chants demonstrated pride in their solidarity with all those that the neo-fascist thugs would harm.

Rally speakers stressed the need for united and disciplined mass counter-mobilizations of working people and their allies – as opposed to small-scale confrontations – as the key to challenging what today are still extremely limited neo-fascist and alt-right gatherings.

Several socialist speakers took the occasion of the fascists’ planned “Anti-Marxism” rally to present their own views of Marxism and of socialism as a humane future society that would strive to guarantee full democratic rights for all—free from wars, racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-immigrant prejudice, and the degradation of the human spirit. The ever-growing rally audience during the two-hour morning event responded enthusiastically, to each new speaker, re-enforced by the shouts of unity and solidarity that their speeches evinced from the crowd.

A separate anti-fascist march of 1000 to 2000 people also proceeded to MLK Civic Center Park. It was organized by several Bay Area organizations including SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice), Arab Resource Organizing Committee, Community Ready Corps, and activists from the Anti Police Terrorism Project (APTP). A black attired and masked antifa group joined this march.

While police initially prevented both marches from entering the MLK Civic Center Park, the absence of fascists inside and the huge presence of the counter-mobilizations outside led city officials to order the police to abandon their barricades.

A handful of remaining, almost unnoticed neo-fascists pepper-sprayed the approaching counter-protesters, but were quickly dispersed by march security teams. A couple of harmless
smoke bombs set off in the course of this brief scattering of the fascist thugs provided an unfortunate visual effect that was employed by the corporate media to slander the mass counter-mobilization violent and extremist.

The *Washington Post*, whose reporters were absent from the scene, blared, “Black Clad Antifa Members Attack Peaceful Right Wing Demonstrators in Berkeley.” The *San Francisco Chronicle* similarly headlined, “Masked Anarchists Violently Rout Right Wing Demonstrators.” Mention of the 7000 peaceful Berkeley protesters, who accounted for the nation’s second largest united anti-fascist mobilization after Boston’s 40,000 a week earlier, was strikingly absent.

Rally Against Hate organizers met a few days later to evaluate the Sunday events and to discuss possible future mobilizations. One possible focus would be the UC Berkeley administration’s plans for a late September “Free Speech Week”, where contemplated invitees included only right wing ideologues from the *Breitbart News* former senior editor, Milo Yiannopoulos to other far-right figures like Ann Coulter and former Trump senior political adviser Stephen Bannon.

The unanimous assessment of the Aug. 27 march and rally organizers was that it represented an important victory for the rising movement against fascism and white supremacy. This victory rested in the broad united-front effort that democratically engaged labor, student, community, faith-based groups and other anti-racist organizations. It also reflected the resulting increase in confidence of the participants that they, not the tiny assemblage of neo-fascist thugs, represented the vast majority and the best hope for humanity’s future.

The mass counter-protests also had the undeniable effect of demoralizing and demobilizing the neo-fascist forces as well as exposing those public officials who sought to place an equal sign between the violent and reactionary intentions of the fascists and those who mobilized to oppose them.
The fact that the corporate media slandered and violence-baited our efforts was noted with regret, but this was more than mitigated by the fact that participants grew in understanding that neither the corporate media nor the police, city or state officials can be trusted. Indeed, the march organizers rejected with a smile the request by the violence-baiting, street-banning mayor of Berkeley to be a speaker at the rally.

On the same weekend, 2000 mobilized in anti-fascist actions in Chicago, 1500 in Seattle, and 600 in San Diego.
What is Fascism?

By John Leslie

In 2016, Donald Trump confounded the establishment by fighting his way first to the Republican Party nomination and then to the Presidency. This was done using a combination of right-wing populism, nationalist economic hype and openly racist appeals to anti-immigrant sentiment and Islamophobia. His “Make America Great Again” rhetoric echoed the appeal of segregationist George Wallace and Ronald Reagan’s promise to return the US to “traditional values”.

Trump’s election reflects a crisis in the capitalist two-party system and the instability of the current economic and political situation. The Trump campaign emboldened a tiny layer of neo-fascist forces that mobilized as Trump “supporters.” But while Trump’s right-wing populism is redolent of fascism, mistaking Trump himself for a fascist would be a dangerous error.

Overuse of the word fascism undermines understanding of the real thing. Too often, liberals and some leftists argue that the Republican Party is “fascist” as a way of scaring working people and the oppressed to vote for the “lesser evil”, typically a Democrat. This is also the logic of ultraleft radicals who use fascism as a justification to “drive out the Trump regime”. Ultimately, the notion that one party is “fascist” plays into the hands of the other big business party. In reality, both the Democratic and Republican parties are capitalist institutions dedicated to serving the interests of the ruling rich.

Nor do the current racist, repressive police policies, mass incarceration and blanket surveillance conducted under the aegis of the post-9/11 security state amount to fascism, odious as those policies are. The governmental apparatus of which all these are a part is the expression of the class that’s ruling and calling the shots – the 1%. These repressive institutions, handed from one administration to the next, are part of the normal way capitalism functions. With fascism, however, the limits to these “normal”
forms of tyranny are left behind in the dust while civil liberties and
democratic pretentions are ripped to shreds.

Roots

In capitalist America today, corporate titans, Wall Street
and the 1% - the so-called bourgeoisie – run the show from top to
bottom. Via countless economic and political threads woven
together into a formidable yoke, they control the government, the
economy, the police and the courts. Legislative institutions and
elections provide the illusion of popular control. But as Mark
Twain quipped, “If voting made any difference, they wouldn’t let
us do it.”

In Germany in the 1930s, in the midst of a deepening
economic crisis and faced with formidable opposition from the
labor movement and mass, popular left-wing parties, the ruling
rich decided to ditch the democratic charade and wield their
undemocratic power openly, without pretense. As revolutionist
Leon Trotsky wrote, fascism emerges “at the moment that the
‘normal’ police and military resources of the bourgeois
dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer
suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium…”

Once in power in Germany, the fascists eliminated all
independent organizations of the masses, including communist,
socialist, other working class political parties and the labor unions.

Because it’s more efficient for a minority to rule by
illusion, where the majority can be persuaded to “love big brother”,
fascism is the last resort of a system in crisis. In that bare knuckles
incarnation of capitalism, all civil liberties and democratic forms
are thrown out the window as the corporate behemoths consolidate
their repressive power, subordinating all else to the needs of the
bosses.
Class Basis

As things heat up, one sector of society is caught between the ruthless power of the capitalists at the top and the determined resistance of working people at the bottom. These are the middle layers – the so-called petty bourgeoisie – who have a foot in each camp. Small business people, successful farmers and rich professionals, all squeezed by the big capitalists on the one hand, yet fearful of falling back into the ranks of the working masses as the crisis deepens. In an all-out fight between the 1% and the 99%, the middle layers can go either way. In the end they will be drawn inexorably to the side that seems most likely to win. As the ruling elites move toward fascism to save their system, they turn to the petty bourgeoisie to provide the shock troops to enforce their reign of terror. In this sense, fascism is “an instrument at the service of big business, but at the same time a mystical upheaval of the pauperized and discontented petty bourgeoisie.”

The capitalist class lifts up the fascist movement at the moment they see no other way out of the crises of their system. The big manufacturers and banks are the paymasters of the fascists, but the petty bourgeoisie, ruined by capitalism and threatened with a descent into the working class, act as the mass base of a rising fascist movement. A nascent fascist movement begins as gangs of strikebreakers and reactionaries. It’s as these formations grow and consolidate under the sponsorship of big business that they develop a mass base.

The US ruling class doesn’t “need” the fascism at this point; they are confident they can discipline and exploit the working class without resorting to such extremes. But we should still take action whenever the far right organizes, building the largest possible united front counter-mobilizations. No attacks on our civil rights, civil liberties, our right to form political parties or our right unionize should go unanswered. Through mass action countering neo-fascist threats we begin to feel our power and build our strength for the fights to come.
In Germany, it was the sectarian refusal on the part of the Stalinist influenced Communist Party to unite with the Social Democrats and build a mass opposition to Hitler that helped pave the way for his seizing power. The two mass, leftwing parties had a majority and together could have steered a different course.

In the US today, there are no mass communist, socialist or labor parties. Nevertheless, the united front strategy remains critical. It is essential for unions in particular to join the mobilization against the far right. Unfortunately, current union misleaders continue to demobilize workers and subordinate the needs of the ranks to those of the Democratic Party. They have yet to grasp the threat to labor posed by the far right.

While Trump himself is not a fascist, he has surrounded himself with reactionary figures such as Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, an old college buddy of the rightist Dick Spencer. The danger rests not with Trump so much as with the forces his campaign has unleashed and in the capitalist system’s inability to solve the current crisis without deepening the exploitation of working people, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and other doubly oppressed groups. The contradictions of Trumpism – promoting further austerity for the working class as a way to “fix” the economy, while simultaneously blaming all problems on Muslims, immigrants and other super-exploited workers – offers no real road forward.

Socialists fight for a future that puts people before profits. The solution lies in breaking the subordination of working people to the Democrats and Republicans, and building broad, mass struggles in the interests of the majority against the interests of the ruling rich. The best defense against fascism is to fight to defend and extend labor rights, democratic rights and civil liberties for all, while mobilizing in the largest possible numbers to meet any overt rightest threats. This puts us in the best position to feel our strength, gather our allies, defend our interests and stave off any challenge from the forces of reaction.
1 Fascism, what it is and how to fight it, by Leon Trotsky
2 Fascism and Big Business, preface to the 1945 edition, Daniel Guerin