

Fighting Police Terror in an Age of Fascism: A Time of Urgency, a Time for Unity, and a Time to Bring Forward an Era of Mass Resistance

Where We Are

Friends, family, comrades in the struggle to end police terror:

It may feel like we've dodged a bullet with Trump being voted out, but we haven't. We may have bought ourselves some time with Trump's electoral defeat, but the danger is only beginning. We are facing insurgent fascism amidst a deadly pandemic, which itself is being weaponized by the fascists. Things are extremely polarized: on the negative side, emboldened white supremacy and open terror looms, but on the opposite side, the side of humanity, we are divided and contentious, as the masses of people under the heel of police terror and mass incarceration, who a little more than a year ago were the driving force of change, are relegated into the role of spectators to their own struggles.

In the summer of 2020, we saw a beautiful uprising of humanity all over this country against police terror that targets and terrorizes Black, Brown, working class, and indigenous people and communities. People in the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, took to the streets and town squares in sustained and creative protest that seized the imagination and the conscience of the country.



The protests did not go unopposed. Not only were they met with repression, violence, mass arrests, and targeted attacks on leaders by official police formations, but a new and dangerous force was brought onto the scene: a violent, white supremacist movement made up of militia-types, street thugs, and straight-up Klan and Nazis moved against our protests, attacking and even murdering protesters in numerous cities.

Make no mistake: the magnificent uprising against police terror that followed the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, which reached into every corner of society and brought forward broad and defiant protest from people of every race, religion, and nationality is a *huge* problem for the powers-that-be in this country. And let's also be clear: the massive rejection across the country of normalized racist state violence has brought forward a violent, emboldened, and fascist reaction among the most backward sections of society. Not only that, this reaction is encouraged, coordinated, and defended by fascists in authority at all levels of government.

Racist Backlash vs. Co-optation and Containment: Different Means to Similar Ends, But One Holds a Potentially Catastrophic Outcome

We are now a year out from the massive and inspiring protests of the previous summer. These protests have largely, though not completely, receded, and while they were opposed, corralled, sometimes co-opted and even attacked with deadly violence, they gave us a vision of the kind of movement that could present a

fundamental challenge to systemic, racist police violence. The essence of that challenge, the one which gives it real, earth-shaking potential, lay not in any one organization or leader, but in the undeniable fact of millions of people in motion against a situation they would no longer tolerate. This happened in every state, not only in big cities, but in small cities and even small towns across the country.

There is no doubt that this phenomenal uprising against official violence and white supremacy forced the powers-that-be to make some immediate concessions, most notably in the guilty verdicts handed down against George Floyd's murderer, and, more recently, in the indictments of three police officers and two paramedics involved in the killing of 23-year-old Elijah McClain two years ago. Yet, while corporate America scrambled its PR battalions to assure us that they would do everything in their power to make sure that Black lives really do matter, at the same time the powers-that-be were mounting a backlash on every front. True to the history of the U.S., this backlash spans a continuum from bland reformist containment on one end, to deadly racist violence on the other—all of which is promoted from the heights of power.



We need to be very clear: what we saw from 2016 on under Trump—the open white supremacy, the urging of violence against anyone perceived to be opponents and targeted as scapegoats, the wholesale dismantling of democratic rights fought for and won by people's movements—is a sharp break from politics as usual and represents an embrace of fascism by a large section of the ruling class. This fascist process has metastasized since Trump's electoral defeat in 2020, and is not going away.

For years, many activists in the movement against police brutality have rightly pointed out that police terror and the wholesale occupation of Black and Brown communities happen under both Republican and Democratic administrations. And while this is true, what we currently see is that the Republican Party has stopped even pretending to distance itself from overt white supremacy, and now openly allies itself with and even promotes the most vicious, violent street thugs such as the neo-Nazi murderers in Charlottesville in 2017, and the white nationalist Proud Boys, whom Trump told to “stand down and stand by” in October 2020, only to

rely on their violent street mobilizations in Washington DC in January 2021 to fight for his lie of a “stolen election.” **Under fascism, the old rules of democracy, as unfit as they are at actually representing the interests of oppressed people, are thrown out and, increasingly, open terror rules.**

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party has not only been largely paralyzed in the face of this rise toward fascism, but through its influence in philanthropic foundations, non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it has sought to demobilize and paralyze mass movements as well. These structures, which are fully integrated into the function of the status quo, have never sought to undo the actual underpinnings of oppression, but only tinker around the edges of the machinery, promising reforms that seldom materialize, and only then as a result of mass social upheaval. Instead of mobilizing people in the millions, the non-profit-led movement only seeks to train and install a cadre of gatekeepers. We are now in an untenable situation where we mainly have an energized, violent, and proudly bigoted movement toward fascism led by

the Republican Party on the one hand, and an infighting, turf-defending, and splintered movement beholden to the Democratic Party and its funders on the other. In the meantime, over a thousand people have been killed by U.S. law enforcement so far this year (and after a quarter century of the [Stolen Lives Project](#) and later others documenting and asserting how the official number of those killed by U.S. police is severely undercounted, British medical journal *The Lancet* [recently published](#) a study that confirms this, identifying the violence of U.S. law enforcement as an “[urgent public health crisis](#)”).

A whole other way forward is needed, one that can unite and mobilize all the strands of resistance to oppression.

Two Different Approaches: “Stay in Your Lane,” or “Unite All Who Can Be United”?

Eventually—on a smaller scale, but more insidiously—the capital available to NGOs plays the same role in alternative politics as the speculative capital that flows in and out of the economies of poor countries. It begins to dictate the agenda. It turns confrontation into negotiation. ... Real political resistance offers no such short cuts. The NGO-ization of politics threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job. With a few perks thrown in. Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary. [emphasis added]

— Arundhati Roy, “The NGO-ization of Resistance” (2014)

In his blistering “Message to the Grassroots,” Malcolm X unmasked how the ruling class sought to co-opt the 1963 March on Washington, rob it of its original militancy, and render it ineffectual:

Kennedy said, “Look, you all letting this thing go too far.” And Old Tom said, “Boss, I can’t stop it, because I didn’t start it ... These Negroes are doing things on their own. They’re running ahead of us.” And that old shrewd fox, he said, “Well if you all aren’t in it, I’ll put you in it. I’ll put you at the head of it. I’ll endorse it. I’ll welcome it. I’ll help it. I’ll join it.”

— Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots” (1963)

In 1996, the [October 22nd Coalition](#) to Stop Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation declared in its mission statement that it aimed “to expose the state’s repressive program ... to bring forward those most directly under the gun of Police Brutality AND to also reach into all parts of the society—bringing forward others to stand in the fight against this official brutality.” This statement represented a whole outlook and whole style of work that purposefully brought together the families of victims of police murder into the same movement as people from all walks of life, united in the goal of ending the abuses encapsulated in the name of the organization: police brutality, political repression of dissent, and the criminalization of Black and Brown youth.

In recent years, however, especially since the mass rebellions following the murder of Mike Brown in 2014, the “unite all who can be united” approach of October 22nd Coalition has been eclipsed by a new kind of activism, mainly led by non-profit organizations, flush with foundation dollars and beholden to the Democratic Party. By the time of the uprisings of the summer of 2020, a whole new network of reformist organizations with professional, salaried leadership was

in place. While the mass uprising came from all sections of society, and correctly put police terror and white supremacy at the center of its protests, the outlook of the funded, reformist movement operatives that demanded control of the mic and the megaphone spread a demoralizing and demobilizing message that unless people were directly affected by police terror, they should “stay in their lane” because “this is not your fight,” as though activism is the franchise, or private property, of one single group.

The sheer size of the summer 2020 uprising is proof of the widespread and deep anger at racism and police brutality, and its potential has only been hinted at in people’s victories such as the guilty verdict in the trial of George Floyd’s murderer. There need to be meaningful and empowering ways for the literally millions of people who sprung into motion last summer to take their own activism to new levels. The short-sightedness of the outlook and approach that says “stay in your lane if this is not your fight” can only serve to demoralize and demobilize people during normal times, and cut off people who live daily under the gun from allies and comrades throughout society. In a time of growing violent fascist reaction, this approach divides us to be more easily picked off one by one.

What Kind of Movement Is Needed Now?



A new [study](#) from the University of Chicago has sounded the alarm that the insurrectionist movement that attempted to overturn the presidential election on January 6th has by no means cooled off or died down, but is [even larger and more dangerous than before](#). What is needed in the face of these dangers? “Stay in your lane” and “this is not your fight,” or “unite all who can be united”? To clarify, the October 22nd Coalition has always embraced individuals and organizations who “work within the system” to achieve reforms, as it has been our mission to bring forward the widest possible movement against police terror and state violence. From its very founding, the Coalition brought such groups into alliance with many others, including artists, musicians, students, and revolutionaries, with the families of victims of police murder at the core of the group.

The big question is not how do we reconcile the differences between various leaders and groups. The big question is how do we put people into motion during a time of insurgent fascism to do what needs to be done. How do we reach those millions who took to the streets across the country in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others and organize them into a bold, diverse, and empowered movement to actually STOP police terror? Will we be another generation of misleaders that tells people to “wait and see” if this or that reform gets approved by a political class dead-set on maintaining its monopoly on violence? Or can we move people past being spectators to all this oppression, and all of us *together* insisting on doing everything we can to stop it?

Our purpose in writing and disseminating this statement is not to pick fights with different organizations in the movement, to carve out a piece of political turf for “our kind of movement,” nor to declare ourselves to be the “true leaders” of the movement

against police brutality. Our goal is to encourage all those who have raised their heads above the mire of an intolerable status quo over the past few years and have taken up the struggle against police brutality, state violence, and white supremacy in so many bold and inspiring ways, to face the enormity of the very real threat of fascism that is consolidating and join together to defeat it.

What Needs to Happen Next?

Chasing the illusory promise of justice under this system has proven to be a dead end. This system has no solutions to the oppression and outrages we face. It's up to us to demand an end to the continuing rise of police terror and mass incarceration coupled with the concomitant rise of white supremacists who have been empowered to openly promote voter suppression aimed at Black, Brown, indigenous and immigrant communities, and spew racist dogma and genocidal positions, while having significantly infiltrated law enforcement at every level.

We mean to rebuild and revitalize on the basis of our [mission statement](#)—to reach out and build on the basis of principled discourse, and not sectarianism and proprietary ideology, which suffocates the unity and strength we need. This means we are seeking persons, organizations, student groups, church social justice committees, and others who refuse to be bamboozled to

bring about the needed determined resistance that exposes this system and mobilizes the people for sustained resistance, from the hood, to the campus, to the suburbs.

We will reach out to our friends who are seeking reforms and electoral and policy changes. Even when we disagree with its efficacy under this imperialist system, we will work and fight with elected officials who manifest commitment to seeking solutions to this genocide and escalating repression.

We fight to maintain a resilience against the total suppression of the people's will to fight their oppression. In this climate, we cannot allow this system to crush that will, and to fight back effectively, we need to unite broadly across social and racial divides. Any defeated peoples among the Black, Brown, indigenous and immigrant communities will only open the flood gates of merciless repression and genocide.



Who are we? We are long-time core organizers of the national October 22nd Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation, going back decades. We are families of Stolen Lives who have been fighting for justice under this system. We are veterans of the turbulent Sixties and Seventies who continue to raise resistance. And yes, among us are people who identify themselves as revolutionary communists, such as co-founder Carl Dix, who has been at the forefront of this Coalition and continues to play a powerful role in exposing the hand of this capitalist-imperialist system that perpetrates genocide, calling for radical societal change, and revolution. Without the presence and leadership of revolutionary communists in our ranks, we would never have developed the distinct ethos of the October 22nd Coalition to STOP Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation. This name embodies our fundamental demand, and our uniting principle.

In this the fiftieth anniversary of the politicized prisoners uprising in Attica in 1971, we also remember Attica Brother Akil Al-Jundi, who played a major role in crafting the October 22nd Coalition Mission Statement. We end by reminding ourselves of this mission, and its vision of broad, defiant, and principled unity in the face of white supremacist police violence and terror:

The National Day of Protest aims to bring forward a powerful, visible, national protest against police brutality and the criminalization of a generation. It aims to expose the state's repressive program. It aims to bring forward those most directly under the gun of Police Brutality AND to also reach into all parts of the society--bringing forward others to stand in the fight against this official brutality. And the National Day of Protest aims to strengthen the peoples' organized capacity for resistance in a variety of ways.

In solidarity and struggle,

Working Core of National Office of October 22 Coalition