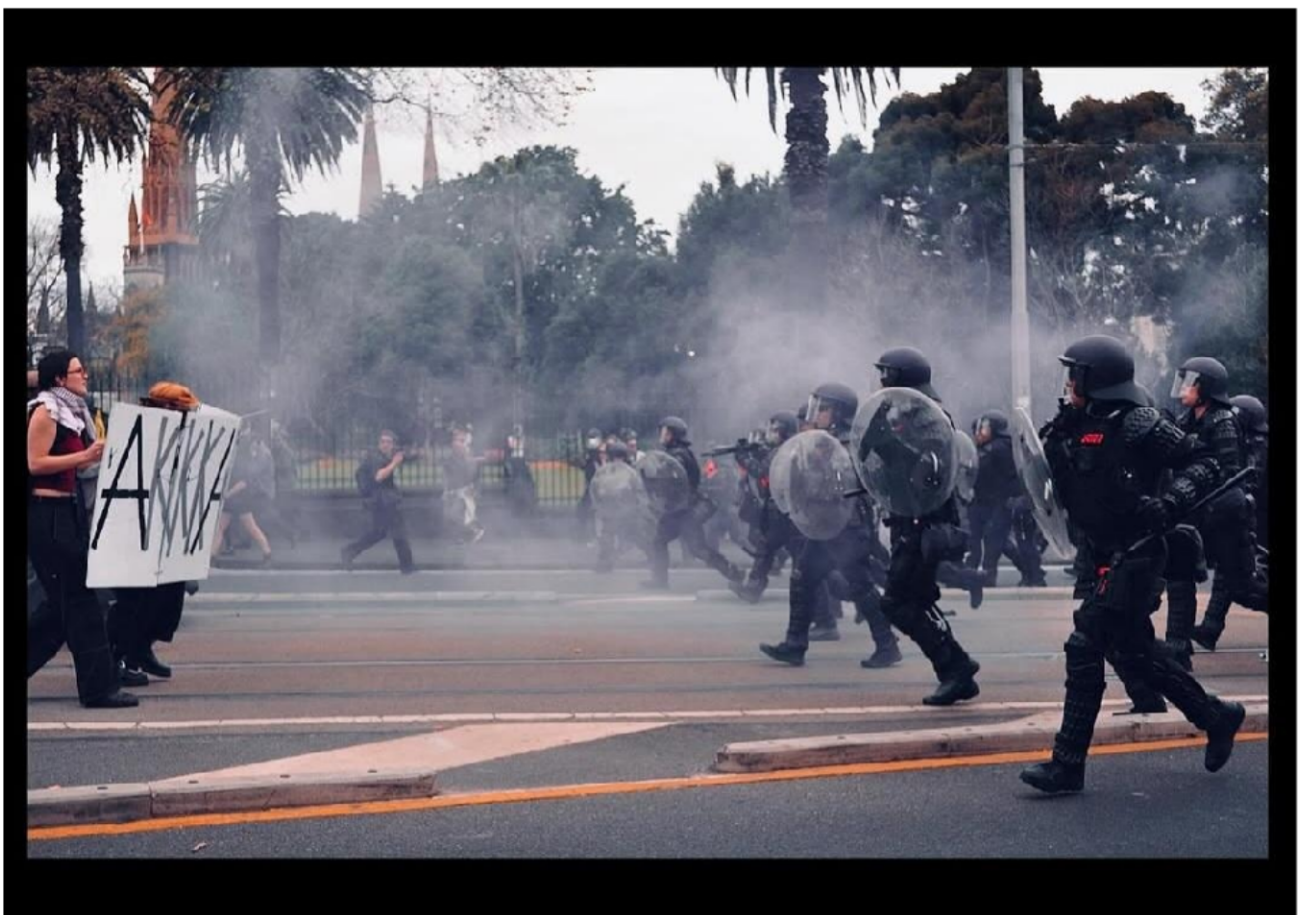


REPORTBACK FROM THE ‘MARCH FOR AUSTRALIA’ OCTOBER 19TH: The contradictions of a non-confrontational Anti-fascism and the “badge” of Anti-racism

by anon



Prior to the rally there were talks within the “United Front Against Fascism” (a loose affiliation of mostly Settler “Socialist” Palestine, “anti-racist orgs” and Mob collectives such as the Black Peoples Union and Camp Sovereignty) regarding the limitations of the last two anti-fascist counters. This included a need to organize more closely with Mob which apparently fell apart over disagreements around leadership and structure of the rally (allegedly also around the inclusion of Palestine symbolism). It also included the need to have a reign on protest marshals and the policing of autonomous factions within the counter. This is a report back from a few of us who attended this counter.

Comrades who arrived at the beginning of the counter march at Melbourne State Library have detailed the intense police presence and disciplining of attendees. Many people were being searched as they initially joined the gathering, with those wearing face coverings being unmasked with the use of the anti-protest “designated zone” powers. A number of people who had masks, or who were in light bloc and managed to slip in, were frequently targeted by cops who used the initial low numbers early on to rush parts of the crowd in gangs demanding to remove all face coverings or face arrest. After the speeches from delegates of the various UFAF organisations, the crowd began moving down Swanston Street toward Flinders with a large number of cops following.

More autonomous groups joined the march as it was chanting at the intersection of Exhibition and Collins Street. People were holding the usual banners such as CARF’s (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism) “Unite to Fight the Right” and “Stand Against Racism”, alongside Palestinian and Aboriginal flags. The march had been blocked off from moving towards Parliament by a line of cops, denying the crowd the ability to move anywhere within 500 meters of the Parliament Steps where the “March for Australia” rally was being held, organized by the white nationalist and petite-bourgeois run “National Workers Alliance.” After a bit of the usual chanting “Nazi scum off our streets!” and “migrants are welcome, Nazis are not!” we headed down Exhibition Street to the intersection on Flinders Street to try and get around the police line only to be met with another line of cops. Like with previous rallies there was a lot of confusion about what to do.

Some Mob members of the crowd were fronting up against the cop line while half the crowd had turned and went back up the hill on Exhibition Street because UFAF leaders had decided to reverse direction. People on loud speakers were yelling at people further up to come back down while others condemned them for “splitting the crowd” (this is very standard). Things seemed pretty static with no way round to Parliament from this side and the crowd felt pretty immobilized. A scuffle then broke out with the “split” crowd.

The cops, emboldened by “designated area” anti-mask laws, brutally tackled a member of the crowd pinning them to the ground. People quickly began moving against the cops trying to de-arrest them and as per the OC spray came out. Outnumbered cops were trying to hold back the crowd while they could organize moving the arrestee and getting pushed over in the process with people attempting to de-arrest being pushed back and hit with spray. Someone was sprayed directly in the face while a woman cop dragged them away by the hair. One person was de-arrested. The crowd was pushed back further by cops and recoiled from more OC spray. A bunch of people began handing out masks, umbrellas and

goggles — with people enthusiastically taking them up — while others were treated for the OC spray. As the crowd closed in again the cops tried spraying people and to their dismay were met with a wall of umbrellas protecting people from getting hit. The cops then abruptly moved the arrestee up the hill with the crowd on their heels hounding them until they got behind the police line back on the intersection at Exhibition and Collins.

People began fronting the cop line, swearing, calling them pigs, cowards and all sorts. This went on for a bit and then settled down as the cops remained unmoved. The crowd was still split in half and small groups were heading back down the hill towards the rest of the counter at the other police line. Some big oaf of a cop came out and started walking among the crowd demanding people take off their face coverings but was quickly surrounded with people yelling and filming. It seemed as if he was doing it just to get a reaction, before slowly slinking back to the cop line. People were milling around a bit and more masks, umbrellas and goggles were handed out. Looking back down the hill, the Mob contingent had split from the counter and was making its way down towards Flinders Street (more on this later). The rally decided to try its luck at another route to Parliament and thus made its way back up the hill to where we were and we began marching and chanting the usual slogans down Exhibition Street.

Every street leading up to Parliament was blocked off by a line of cops with the main Bourke Street leading up to the back of the “March for Australia” rally at Parliament blocked off by multiple cop lines and police barriers. Meaning there was around two to three-hundred cops out covering the whole area. We eventually ended up going up a side street to the north side of Parliament on Spring Street— where we always go and where cops sanction us to go — met with the usual large police barriers crossing the entire street with hundreds of cops, including mounted cops and PORT (riot cops). People were doing the usual chants “Too many nazis on the streets of Melbourne” and “long live the Intifada” alongside people from SALT (Socialist Alternative) and CARF doing their usual boring speeches that no one was really paying attention to. Some old white guy on the mic talking about the standard “the billionaires are wanting you to blame migrants” white socialist shtick. After a while, as usually goes, the energy starts dying down. A few Mob that continued on with the main counter-rally contingent were looking bored and talking about wanting some eggs to throw. SALT and CARF continue doing their self-aggrandizing speeches about how they are “with the people who stand against racism” and stand with migrants etc.

Some people in bloc about ten meters back from the police barriers unveiled a cop effigy on a stick and set it on fire to cheers from the crowd. A circle opened up and people got out Australian flags to burn with some Mob guys joining in to cheer and step on the remains. The theatrics injected some much-needed energy into the crowd. As some more time passed people were getting a bit restless while the general monotonous speeches went on. Some kind of struggle started on the right edge of the crowd — potentially a scrap with an “Aussie” flag holder provocateur or the cops — a bunch of cops then broke from the police line and charged into the crowd, looking like they were targeting some people, holding

up their OC Spray grunting and shouting “Move!” In response the crowd initially backed up, with some having to climb over a wall they were being pressed into by the cops, while a number of people held out umbrellas to defend themselves. Cops then began spraying the front line of the crowd while PORT cops further behind began firing rubber bullets and pepper balls (like tear gas but not as bad, at least if you’re wearing a mask) into the crowd.

People who were in bloc and with umbrellas began trying to form lines to defend themselves and others from the spray, bullets and pepper balls when a flash bang/stinger grenade was thrown and exploded in the middle of them. A SALT leader on the mic who had been chanting the Liberal “this is not a police state, we have the right to demonstrate!” quickly changed his tune and started screaming “lets march! Lets march back to the state library!”

At this point things got a bit fucking hectic.

People pulled each other back from the front and sought to help those who had been hit with OC Spray and rubber bullets. A few people were on the ground struggling to breathe because of the pepper balls and smoke from the flash bang/stinger – others had wounds from the rubber bullets (which have huge metal slugs in the middle of them). People began gathering in small units back from the police barriers to both defend themselves and those receiving medical attention, using reinforced banners (largely corflute-backed) and umbrellas to create a protective shell around those being treated for OC spray and experiencing difficulties breathing. Others began going up to the police barriers to lay into them with insults demanding why the fuck they had escalated so disproportionately against us. Cops were still firing stray rubber bullets into the crowd.

At the same time as many autonomous groups in bloc and general crowd members were trying to hold position and help the wounded, the SALT/CARF (Socialist Alternative) led UFAF leadership had all ran about a hundred meters back from the barriers. There was about fifty to one-hundred people left in the – “protest zone” let’s call it – between the cops and the rest of the counter-rally with a few people calling on the crowd to come back and provide support. One of those on the megaphone shouted to the crowd “you say you are here to support anti-fascism, come and help your comrades and act in solidarity!” Some people actively laughed in response to the notion. Some representatives of these organizations even came up to one of those on the megaphone and told them that it was okay that there was distance between the main counter-protest and the other protesters still holding the line in front of the cops.

Probably the worst part about the whole scenario wasn’t necessarily the cowardice – flash bangs and rubber bullets are fucking scary things – it wasn’t only the lack of solidarity with other protesters in the counter *they themselves* had called. It was more that while all of this was happening those on the CARF/SALT megaphones and parts of the crowd were still doing anti-fascist chants — making out they were engaged in acts of resistance— *while they were literally running away!* There’s being gaslit after the event about what happened. It’s a whole different experience to be gaslit in front of your own eyes as it’s happening.

Back in the “protest zone” a number of people had formed up against the cop barrier — which was now lined with armoured up PORT riot squad cops who were still occasionally firing stray pepper balls and rubber bullets into the crowd. People with banners were chanting things like “the people united will never be defeated” while others had set up a sort of make shift barrier using some of the reinforced banners and had started to launch projectiles over the heads of what was left of the counter at the cops. It started off as eggs, then it became rocks.

The counter had moved from symbolic anti-fascist protest, to anti-fascist combat with bloodthirsty fascist pigs protecting a white supremacist rally.

The cops were taken back at first both by the projectiles and the level of anger and energy stood against them even after the weaponry they had deployed on us. They soon began ramping up their own response to launching more anti-personnel and stun grenades into the crowd. People defended themselves from the blasts and rubber bullets with umbrellas and strategically deploying banners against the blasts. Looking back where the rest of the counter had been most of them had left, trailing back to the state library declaring their job done. The riot cops jumped the barriers with shields and batons and ran at the crowd which was left forcing us back towards the tram stop at Albert and Nicholson Street intersection, continuing to chant things like “the people united”, “no justice no peace” and “Vic Pol, KKK, IOF they’re all the same!” Some older guy from one of the other organizations tried reasoning with the riot pigs and was quickly informed by one of us that this is their job and they enjoy doing it, to which he promptly agreed. People carried on chanting while members from the South-East Asian grouping Anakbangsa/Anakbayan played drums and kept the energy high.

The crowd was slowly pushed back down through a traffic jam that had formed around us to the intersection on Lonsdale and Spring Street where some people lit a cool bin fire as riot pigs pushed down on us. After a bit more of a stand off for about five minutes it looked like the riot pigs didn’t want to press us any further, putting themselves in the middle of the disruption which had now moved from the “authorized” area for protest around parliament, now out onto the streets of the city – where commuters and shoppers were starting to take a look at what was going on. We looked down at the long street behind us that the rest of the counter had followed back to the state library and it was largely empty. Not many cars, no cops. The fifty or so of us that were left began moving down it, chatting, chanting, double checking to make sure everyone was okay and had no medical emergencies.

There’s a bit of an exhilarating feeling at moments like this when the cops have been thrown into a state of disarray and the streets are yours to do as you please. Walking down blocking both sides of the road forcing all vehicles to stop; people graffitiing “ACAB” and “LAND BACK” on pavements and tram stops as we chanted our opposition to cop racism, violence and colonialism: “Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land!” We slowly made our way up the street eventually reaching the intersection at Swanston and Lonsdale where we met a cop line which was blocking any exit back towards Flinders Street. Clearly they wanted this protest over.

We decided to hold the intersection, blocking all traffic and make a bit of a noise. After five minutes or so of chanting largely anti-cop slogans such as “The Kops and the Klan go hand in hand”— people who had just been walking through began to stop and take an interest with some of them filming. The cops were being pretty belligerent with passes by who were trying to get through their line. Someone on a megaphone began explaining to the crowd (which was largely made up of South and East Asian people as the Melbourne CBD usually is) about what had happened. That there was an anti-immigration white supremacist rally at parliament, that the cops had facilitated it and that our counter-rally against it had faced rubber bullets, pepper balls, flash bang/stinger grenades, OC spray, beatings, arrests and that the cops go out of their way to protect fascists and racists. More people began gathering around the intersection, talking, watching and filming. Some began coming up and asking what was going on. Where people usually treat protests as a bit of a novelty, it looked as though people were genuinely taking an interest and seemed more frightened and aggrieved at the cops than any of us on the intersection.

After another five or ten minutes the PORT pigs once again turned up (being ferried in by van, obviously) and began aggressively pushing their way through members of the public to back up the cop line, which then began doing their standard grunting “Move!” and pushing on us, threatening arrest and OC spray. This pushed us back to the state library where it appeared that the rest of the counter rally had not hesitated to stick around. So much for “smashing fascism.”

The cops tried forcing people onto the paths and off of the roads/tram tracks but people held their ground and there was a standoff at the state library tram stop. At this point we began chanting again “no justice no peace, no racist police” while taking a bit of a “lets take the piss” tone with people jeering “one three, one two, your kids hate you” and calling out “have you caught Dezi yet?” (a far-right guy who shot and killed some cops and is still on the run). This was dispersed with people calling out to onlookers telling them what was going on and what the cops were doing and different people taking the megaphone. Large crowds began forming around us watching and filming.

Its hard to tell, but the general energy seemed supportive of us and against the cops, who were looking very disgruntled. They didn’t attempt to press us any further despite us continuing to block the roads and the tram path. Perhaps they didn’t want a fight to break out with so many onlookers or where passers by who were now watching might get injured by their weaponry and OC spray. Perhaps they were happy just letting us sit in this little corner. Either way, it was a stalemate — which considering things is the best we could’ve asked for.

Moments like this are rare with “protests” – most of the time it feels as if we exist almost as a separate entity to the people in the city around us. But this felt different. Like our energy was beginning to coalesce. The cops had brought violence and brutality to defend a fascist rally and people could see that, at the very least, the bunch of us were trying to do something about it.

At some point someone yelled “police” and others “kettle” as PORT cars arrived on La Trobe St, to the north of the state library. There was a bit of back and forth discussion and seeing our dwindling numbers the group decided to back off and take the long way round towards Camp Sovereignty. We

charted a course while continuing with chants and people graffitiing tram stops and trams with anti-cop messaging. Again cops were nowhere to be seen. At one point we passed two guys up one of the streets waving Australian flags. Some people broke off and made their way up the hill to throw eggs at them when the flag shaggers charged them. A fight broke out which was pretty messy. The flags were taken by people in black bloc, snapped and put into bags or thrown in bins with cop cars blaring their sirens turning up soon after. People ran back into the crowd or off in different directions. The rest of the small crowd continued down Elizabeth Street and we eventually made our way over the bridge to Camp Sovereignty.

Reflections

Immediately after the counter officially ended there was a cop and media frenzy regarding the launching of projectiles. Allegedly two cops had been hospitalized with minor injuries (one of them because they had been kicked by protesters, not because of the rocks). As always, the manufacturing of consent for cop violence went into overdrive across the mainstream media. The narrative that was painted described a small group of “issue motivated groups” (as if people protest for non-issue related things) and “professional protesters” (they were very upset at the effectiveness of the umbrellas) that went specifically to provoke and fight the police.

Obviously this is untrue. Not that fighting the police is a bad thing that needs any moral or political justification — whether as an act of self defense or as an offensive manoeuvre, fighting and hurting cops is an act that connects us to resistance we are witnessing today in Indonesia to Kenya to Chile. Its important to remember that the police are a relatively recent invention, coming into being in around the late 18th – 19th century, primarily as institutions to further colonial oppression, slave catching and preventing working class organisation. Over the last few centuries all social struggles have inevitably involved fighting the police. Confrontation with the police connects the 19th century Aboriginal guerrilla war against colonial invasion, to the 20th century strikes for land rights and equal wages, to the 21st century riots of Redfern to (almost) Disrupt Land forces. They’re all about getting free. But the primary reason people turned up on the 19th October was that they wanted to physically oppose and disrupt the fascist “March for Australia.” Which necessarily requires fighting with cops.

The cops and media always do this, it is to be expected. What is worth addressing in the context of what happened at this counter and those previously on the 31st August and 13th September, is a repeating theme.

That the leading Melbourne “Anti-fascist” organizations of the United Front, particularly SALT and CARF, are for the most part reluctant to, as they put it, “smash fascism.” Or at the very least, they do not want to engage in, support or have solidarity with a set of practices which may actually be physically disruptive and materially effective.ⁱ To not only run away when your comrades and allies on the streets are facing cop brutality, but then in the aftermath to condemn and distance yourselves from them not only divests a responsibility toward basic solidarity, affirms the “divide and rule” strategy the media and police manufacture to squash anti-fascism.

It seems that much of the action and speeches around these rallies are more concerned with posturing “Anti-fascism” in order to demonstrate anti-racist credentials and legitimacy in the easiest way. That is, engaging in symbolic gestures against openly neo-nazi and white supremacist rallies as they are an easy target. It is much harder to build coalitions and movements around the normalized institutions of white supremacist violence that produce and protect fascism, such as the police, the borders, the prisons, the land grabs, supplying weapons to Zionist or Indonesian colonialism. These contradictions lay at the heart of the fragmenting coalition and necessitate an overhaul of what is understood as Anti-fascist theory and practice relevant to confronting the growing international fascist movement.

The idea of a “United Front Against Fascism” exists to bring together elements of the Left, Anarchists, Socialists, an assortment of diaspora collectives and First Nations groups across the eco-system to organize a collective response to growing street fascism and white nationalism. Yet there exists two distinct issues which need to be confronted if this model is going to work.

The first is that if the largest organizations involved are actively going out of their way to organize counters so as to avoid any actual physical engagement with street fascist marches, then these counter-demonstrations will continue to exist in the realm of symbolic gestures and will frankly not be effective. Further, to try and install not only ideological but strategic and tactical conformity is an affront to the very idea of a “united front” – which requires a loose acceptance of a diversity of tactics that will be in play from the many organizations and networks that are trying to work together. You have to fight the fascists and fighting cops is a part of that process.

The second is that anti-cop and anti-colonial politics are fundamental features of Anti-fascist theory and praxis and the consistent belief that these counters can merely skirt around dealing with the police as a state sanctioned fascist paramilitary fails to see the forest for the trees. Seeing fascism as something that merely exists on the fringes of politics, or worse yet “Australian” society, erases the white supremacist and genocidal basis upon which this colony is built and sustained. Resulting in a scenario where we are merely playing cat and mouse with the symptoms of fascism as opposed to striking at its source.

Anti-Fascism, Violence and the police

Refusing to confront fascists is not an effective strategy. There is no such thing as a “peaceful” or non-confrontational Anti-fascism. Standing over one-hundred meters away past multiple cop lines and barriers chanting “No Nazis, Never Again!” then going home — sometimes even before the fascist rally has ended— is not a form of disruption, it is a form of pacification at best, if not outright posturing. Over the last three counters, the “March for Australia” and “Unite Australia” rallies have gone ahead largely as intended alongside their police escorts throughout the CBD. When people tried to block the march on the 31st of August they were not supported by the main organizations represented by the “United Front” because they were nowhere to be seen.ⁱⁱ On the 13th of September when the front of the crowd — mainly made up of Mob — attempted to charge and get past the cops, it was SALT, CARF and other marshals who were telling people to stop and slow down. On the 19th of October

much played out the same. When people attempted to stand up to cop violence, the leading organizations turned their backs and ran, to later condemn the resistance of those who stayed behind.

As a CARF statement put out a few weeks after the counter-rally put it:

“When a number of people show up in uniform and engage in pointless confrontations, they provide political cover for the police to unleash violence against us all ... They prevent less experienced people from attending, fearing that joining an anti-racist rally means they will end up in a warzone ... Instead our strategy must be to organize mass working class-counter mobilization, ultimately with the goal of abolishing the racism and inequality that gives rise to fascism time and time again”

SALT released a similar article to much the same tone:

“Thinking seriously about how we can build an anti-capitalist movement based in the working class is vital, even if it is a medium-to long-term prospect. Bashing a few fascists or throwing stones at police is the very definition of performative. It is pure street theatre, a chance for small groups to feel tough and radical by acting out their pseudo-revolutionary fantasies.”

These peculiar oppositions to street confrontations beg the question: what would we be organising a mass working class-counter mobilization for? If one is intent on avoiding “pointless confrontations” and “street theatre” then the idea is to mobilize a mass-movement against these fascist rallies purely for symbolic and not disruptive reasons. This is something which flies in the face of the tactics deployed even among majority white Anti-fascist networks. Does such a position imply that events like the 1936 Battle of Cable Street – where working class and Jewish communities alongside Anarchists and Communists cancelled a British Union of Fascists rally primarily through pitched battles in the streets with fascists and the police – or to take a more recent example, the defeat in 2015 of the “United Patriots Front” in Richmond, Melbourne (which SALT/CARF were involved in) – where Anti-fascists fought with fascists and the police, breaking their lines and forcing both back into defensive positions preventing the UPF from reaching their destination – were demonstrative of a “pseudo-revolutionary fantasy” perhaps?

If the true course of action is not to be found in street confrontations and rather in the building of a “mass-movement against the racism and inequality that gives rise to fascism” – something that much of the white Anti-fascist movement continues to ignore to this day – then why is there a consistent refusal to engage in Abolitionist, anti-state and anti-police politics at these rallies? Systems of carceral violence which by all objective measures exploit, disenfranchise and kill more migrants, First Nations and people of color than any of these fascist organizations do. We see too often various settler UFAF organizations not only downplay, but actively discourage connecting together, the fact that any anti-fascist struggle must be built upon the anti-colonial struggle against Black deaths in custody, police violence, borders, deportations and prisons.^{[iii](#)}

The list of reactionary confusions from both organisations continue – the funniest argument being that Black Bloc as a tactic is “undemocratic” as it “imposes the consequences of the block’s tactic on others who did not necessarily support, agree to carry out the tactic and could not reasonably be prepared for

it.” As if resistance and spontaneity could be so organised! We’re imagining Marsha P. Johnson at the Stonewall riots picking up a brick to throw at cops and running round asking every member of the crowd “can I throw this?” Ultimately these responses are motivated by fear and disorganisation, not clarity and are being addressed by autonomous crews elsewhere.

More to our point, the mainstream UFAF organizations fail to understand the legitimacy of confronting the cops, with people often (as mentioned) trying to reason with them as they are beating down on us. Yet we think that even some among “Anarchist” and “autonomous” sections have demonstrated an inability to see the forest for the trees. Some have, even if not in the tone of throwing other Anti-fascists under the bus, accepted the premise that fighting the cops is at best a distraction, if not a completely flawed strategy. There are two issues we find with this, one strategic, the other concerning what we believe fascism to be.

Strategically speaking, you have to fight the cops. There is no way around that. As the late Marxist theorist of Riots Joshua Clover notes^{iv} on contemporary forms of resistance to capitalism, we find ourselves in a historical moment where decisions which govern all of our lives, from the price of food and rent, to whether we can access medical care, to the extraction of minerals and fossil fuels from Aboriginal lands, to the export of weapons to Israel and Indonesia, are made and controlled by people increasingly out of our reach: politicians, landlords, multinational corporations. Whereas historically the “state” was far and the marketplace was near – the 18th century food riot could target the grain merchant; the 19th and 20th century strike could target the factory bosses – in a world defined by multinational corporations and global supply chains, the marketplace is far, yet the state, with its police militarization, increasingly restrictive laws and mass-surveillance, is insinuated into all aspects of our lives and communities. This means that when we want to do something about any of this, from fighting for trans healthcare, to blocking weapons shipments, to opposing Black deaths in custody, to fighting fascists, the police are going to be in our way to stop that from happening. Its all sticks and no carrots:

“This is an actual problem, right, which is to say: I think you have to fight the state, I think you have to fight the cops, I think there’s no way out that doesn’t pass through that. And I don’t want to delude myself that we can somehow route around that moment. But you can’t get locked into a ritualistic struggle with the state. I think we saw that, like in Greece, for example, which, after the 2008 collapse, Greece popped off first. For the classic reason: the cops shot a kid who was on his vespa and riots popped off, and they just kept going. It turned into...there was a certain calcification where it just became sort of a march on the parliament and attempt to storm the parliament. Massive defence forces around the parliament building in Syntagma Square squaring off, this happened sort of repeatedly. And it’s important not to get trapped in that moment, you have to figure out a way to get past the militaristic confrontation with the state, but you can’t route around it. So you have to figure out a way to get through it.”^v

What this means is that if we want to continue disrupting the fascist rallies or block them from marching, we are going to need to develop more effective strategies at dealing with cops, resisting them, circumventing their anti-crowd tactics and containment strategies. Yet we also think it is

important to argue that the escalation of events on the 19th achieved a more successful attempt at “disruption” and confrontation with the “March for Australia” than a static rally, in that it has the ability to potentially install ideological defeat on our enemy. The cops were genuinely taken aback, hence the riot squad charges and use of a variety of weaponry on us.

Unlike with the attack on Camp Sovereignty which painted Anti-fascists and particularly Aboriginal people as victims and in need of protection from the state (fulfilling the fascist claim that the Liberal colonial state is against them, rather than facilitating them); when Anti-fascists have to be physically forced back with a wide arrange of anti-personnel weaponry and that they are willing to fight back, informs our enemy of what we are capable of and what would potentially happen if the cops were not there to protect *them*. At that point, it would be correct to claim as those on the CARF megaphones do, that fascists would know what will happen when they come out onto the streets.

On what we consider fascism “is” — we do not believe it is honest to shout slogans such as “the Kops and the Klan go hand in hand” or hold banners stating “Cops = paid fascists” if we do not actually believe that this is true. Whenever we fight cops it is on asymmetric terrain, outside of a riot our only success can be to reach a stalemate with them. But the act of resisting cops is an essential feature of Anti-fascism. An “Anti-fascist United Front” without an explicit Abolitionist and anti-police politics is theoretically confused and strategically incapacitated. Aboriginal people, Black African people and poor peoples of colour have long held that the police function as a fascist paramilitary upon their communities. Keeping them under constant surveillance, racialised harassment and de-developing communities economically and disenfranchising them politically through arrests and mass-incarceration. As Black Panther political prisoner and Martyr George Jackson described:

“After one concedes that racism is stamped unalterably into the present nature of Amerikan [trade for Australian] sociopolitical and economic life in general (the definition of fascism is: a police state wherein the political ascendancy is tied into and protects the interests of the upper class — characterized by militarism, racism, and imperialism), and concedes further that criminals and crime arise from material, economic, sociopolitical causes, we can then burn all of the criminology and penology libraries and direct our attention where it will do some good.”^{vi}

If our Anti-fascist energy and physical force is directed *only* at street fascists and not the armed agents of the state that hospitalise Trans people, deport migrants and kill and oppress First Nations, Black and communities of colour, then SALT is correct and we are all playing street theatre. The escalation of policing and state powers to crush protest, to incarcerate communities and the rapid militarisation which the police are undergoing internationally — the political economy of policing/security is one of the fastest growing industries in the world with the Zionist occupation of Palestine at its centre — is a fundamental feature of growing state fascism. When we fight and resist the cops, we are fighting the continued ascent of state fascism. Getting stuck in fighting fascists in the street, whether street or state fascists, is not and cannot be the priority of Anti-fascism. But it is an *essential* element of resisting it. If the United Front continues to remove itself from physical confrontation and support from it, then it will continue to be met with political defeat held up only by self-aggrandizing empty chants.

Anti-Fascism and Colonialism

“What am I driving at? At this idea: that no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies colonization and therefore force-is already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment.” — Aime Cesaire^{vii}, Negritude poet and Black Communist

As mentioned by comrades elsewhere, there is not much more to say on the issue of fascism and colonialism. The debate has been historically settled. There are numerous books, articles and zines which centre the colonial roots of fascism and how it is reproduced today through capitalist racial imperialism. For anyone reading this that is unconvinced of such claims see the references below.^{viii}

What is perhaps worth briefly addressing is the persistent appeal to the “badge” of Anti-racism that underpins the motivations for much “Anti-fascism” in Melbourne. As mentioned, it’s easy to be against people who are openly and proudly declaring neo-nazi rhetoric and white supremacist ideology. When the NSN or NWA are up their talking about the need to defend a white “Australia”, it’s easy to show off one’s anti-racist credentials in vocally denouncing it. It is a lot harder and more personally confronting to challenge our own implications in the colonial basis of “Australian” fascism. It is deeply unsettling to watch white people on megaphones stroll around declaring to a mostly white crowd “You are with the people who stand against racism, you are with the people who want to stop the far right, which means you’re with really good and lovely people”^{ix} – as if Anti-racism is some badge or personality trait that good white people get to show off and not a praxis of abolishing the social relations which produce racism: capitalism, colonialism and imperialism.

This use of Anti-Fascism as an “alternative white pride movement” is reflective both in the refusal to engage in Abolitionist, Anti-police and anti-colonial politics as well as some of the routine chants at the counter rallies. The Liberal slogan “Migrants/refugees are welcome, Nazis are not!” is an example of this.

The basis of “Australia” itself was founded upon the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their lands and the infamous White Australia policy which laid out the protections of white settlers and workers from the competition of colored labor, specifically Chinese and South-Sea Islander labor (both of which were met with mass deportations upon the founding of the federation).^x Infact it was the growing (white) Australian labor movement that specifically championed the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901. The Australian labor movement and the Labor party itself was galvanised specifically around the institutionalisation of the defence of white labour and this is still true to this day.

Settlers in “Australia” benefit from the continued colonization of Aboriginal lands and the maintenance of a border regime which keeps higher wages for Australian workers, provides them more benefits and a system of mass-consumption from supply-chains where the value (profits) from commodities produced in the global south are realized in the global north and not in the countries or among the

workers who actually produced them in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia or China. As the author of “On Not Being the Protagonists” puts it:

“It’s also worth nothing that while the ‘March for Australia’ rallies were described by their organizers and attendees as protests against non-white immigration, there was little discussion from anti-fascists about how to support migrants who are under attack from state and extra-state fascism — fighting against immigration raids, for example. Nor does migration as an outgrowth of imperialism seem to figure in most people’s consciousness at all ...Imperialism divides the world into rich and poor and migration is the human expression of that division. ‘We are here because you were there.’^{xii}

The ability for a mostly white crowd to declare “migrants/refugees are welcome” on stolen land they themselves occupy, ending with “nazis are not” while doing very little to combat the border imperialism which economically and politically sustains the “Australian” colony, with its boomerang of migration patterns and global value-chains which fascist nationalist reaction is legitimating itself upon^{xiii} (it is literally called a “March/Unite for Australia”). It calls into question the politics of what these “Anti-fascist” rallies are really about. At best, it is an expression of a desire for a Liberal multicultural “Australia” that is uncomfortable with “nasty” street fascism but sees as ultimately legitimate, if not sometimes excessive, rational and institutionalized structures of state fascism and colonialism.

Until Anti-fascism becomes Abolitionist, Anti-colonial and genuinely Anti-racist (not merely content with self-appraisal and showcasing the anti-racist credentials of “good whites”) there is no real Anti-fascist cause. Merely two competing visions of the same White “Australia”.

Rejecting Deference Politics for Anti-Colonialism

Lastly we want to address an issue which persistently haunts any Anti-racist, Anti-colonial or Abolitionist politics in “Australia” — specifically “Melbourne” — and that is the issue of deference politics towards Aboriginal people. After the rally there was a minor bit of discourse circulating online in regards to the initial split between the larger UFAF counter-rally and the Camp Sovereignty / Mob rally which made its way to Flinders prior to events at Parliament. Some of this discourse contained criticisms of the United Front organizations allegedly not collaborating with Mob and Camp Sovereignty effectively, ignoring suggestions when it came to planning for the counter-rally and not centring First Nations at the heart of Anti-Fascism. All of this is likely true, especially considering the historical relationship between these organisations and Aboriginal struggles.

Yet much of the criticisms also contained forms of deference politics. That is, deferring to First Nations people for its own sake, not due to any principled or material commitment to Aboriginal politics or Anti-Colonialism, but because that’s what it takes to be a “good ally.” Much of the criticism focused on the path taken by the counter-rally on the day, arguing that the rest of the counter should not have made its way to parliament to confront the fascist rally and instead should have “listened”, “centred” and followed the Camp Sovereignty contingent to the Flinders Street intersection and then on to Camp Sovereignty. Avoiding any engagement with the fascist rally entirely.

Firstly, a lot of such discourse comes off as extremely patronizing if not just racist towards Aboriginal people. As if they are a homogeneous group, with no internal political contradictions, who need to be indulged by settlers, rather than engaged with as social and political agents in their own right. Secondly, just following what “First Nations” people – or more specifically, the voices and people who settlers choose to follow — if we were following the line of the Black Peoples Union we’d have burned down parliament by now — is not solidarity, its Liberal allyship politics.

As the Indigenous zine “Accomplices not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex” details, solidarity is built on a shared interest in material liberation towards decolonization. Not “centering First Nations” in a way that doesn’t require you to take on positions which may be uncomfortable for our social, political and economic positions as settlers, or taking on acts which require risk or confrontation:

“Resignation of agency is a by-product of the allyship establishment. At first the dynamic may not seem problematic, after all, why would it be an issue with those who benefit from systems of oppression to reject or distance themselves from those benefits and behaviors that accompany them? In the worst cases, “allies” themselves act paralyzed believing it’s their duty as a “good ally.” There is a difference between acting for others, with others, and for one’s own interests, be explicit. You wouldn’t find an accomplice resigning their agency, or capabilities as an act of “support.” They would find creative ways to weaponize their privilege (or more clearly, their rewards of being part of an oppressor class) as an expression of social war.”

Or as put in “On not being the protagonists”:

“In a day to day sense, there is no apparatus to get meaningful permission anyway – asking the few First Nations people you personally know, or know on Instagram, is not the same as substantive consent. You don’t ask for permission to live on stolen land or pay taxes to a colonial government, and this selective obsession with getting permission only in cases of resistance, but not for every single way you uphold the colony all the time, is a recipe for doing nothing.”

We think it was the wrong decision for the First Nations / Camp Sovereignty contingent to avoid countering the fascist rally altogether. We think the practice of Anti-fascism, just as anti-colonialism, requires material confrontation and that First Nations resistance should be leading the struggle of Black self-defense against state and street fascism, not attempting to avoid it all together. If Mob want to practice culture on the streets while settlers go and fight it out, all the better. The more we’re fighting and killing each other the more space they have to build collective power against this genocidal colony.

Material solidarity maintains the ability to have contradictions. To engage First Nations as political agents that have differences with each other and that it is the duty of settlers to take the most militant line both in theory and practice. That if we think a political course taken by First Nations organizations is wrong, that we have the consistency and reliability to say it. To chance that maybe we are wrong and if so to learn from that and to derive a more radical conception of anti-colonial solidarity thereafter.

Anti-fascism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism. These are not badges. They are not things you hold and display. They are forms of praxis. “Centering First Nations” just like “Listening to Palestinians” (some

Palestinians are Zionist collaborators!) is simply gesture politics, empty of all conviction and principle for those who do not want to actually tear this fascist colony down to the ground but merely wish to gain “allyship” points. We support Blak sovereignty and Blak power. For us, that requires confronting and resisting settler fascism in all its forms, street, police, economy and state. That is the only legitimate course for the development of an authentic Anti-fascist United Front on this colony.

ENDNOTES:

i. See Mark Bray’s *ANTIFA: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, which studies the history of confrontational and disruptive Anti-fascist practice; specifically chapters five and six on disruption, militancy and self-defence.

ii See previously submitted reportbacks for the 31st August and 13th September here: <https://antieverything.noblogs.org/post/2025/10/24/reportbacks-from-the-march-for-australia-and-unite-australia-rallies-white-anti-fascism-and-the-progressive-plantation/>

iii Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, *Anti-Fascism and the Carceral State*: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lorenzo-kom-boa-ervin-anti-fascism-and-the-carceral-state>

iv Joshua Clover, *On Riots and Strikes*, <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/post/2021/07/05/joshua-clover-on-riots-and-strikes/>

v Josh Clover above.

vi George Jackson, 1970, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, Available at: <https://files.libcom.org/files/soledad-brother-the-prison-letters-of-george-jackson.pdf>

vii Aime Cesaire, 1950, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Available at: https://files.libcom.org/files/zz_aime_cesaire_robin_d.g._kelley_discourse_on_colbook4me.org_.pdf

viii Anonymous, 2023, *On “Australian” Fascism*, Available at: <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2024/03/29/on-australian-fascism/>; Anonymous, 2025, *On not Being Protagonists*, Available at: <https://antieverything.noblogs.org/post/2025/11/10/on-not-being-the-protagonists/>; Keiran-Stewart Assherton, *Fascism and Colonialism*, Available at: <https://www.blackpeoplesunion.org/peoples-liberation-library/>; Alberto Toscano, 2020, *The Long Shadow of Racial Fascism*, Available at: <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/alberto-toscano-long-shadow-racial-fascism/>

ix Video posted by @annekedemanuele and shared by @CARFMelborune on Instagram 21st October.

x Gerald Horne, 2007, *The White Pacific*.

xi Iker Saurez, *The Migrant Genocide: Toward a Third World Analysis of European Class Struggle*, Available at: <https://mronline.org/2025/06/18/the-migrant-genocide-toward-a-third-world-analysis-of-european-class-struggle/>

xii Indigenous Action, 2014, *Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex*; <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/indigenous-action-accomplices-not-allies>

