

Antifascist Toolkit:

An Introduction to Antifascism

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ROSE CITY ANTIFA

Introduction



We wrote this zine in Spring of 2021 in the immediate wake of the Trump presidency, the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, and the mass Black Lives Matter uprisings against police brutality. Over the last year it's been heartening to us to see so many people identifying themselves as antifascists.

While individuals and groups may have their own definitions of antifascism, we've created this zine as a guide for new antifascists (or for those who have just learned the term) in order to provide Rose City Antifa's answer to the question:

“what is antifascism?”

Rose City Antifa breaks antifascist work into three main categories: direct action, solidarity work with other liberatory groups, and community education. All these tactics build upon each other to create a world free of fascist ideology.



Why We Remain Anonymous

Antifascist organizers remain anonymous because we investigate activity from people who are capable of violence and harm (and may have enacted it in the past), and because of the real possibility of state repression. In the United States, prominent leftist organizers (including members of the labor movement, communist movement, abortion rights advocates, and Black liberation activists) have been targeted by the state and arrested, prosecuted, disappeared, or murdered. Practicing good security culture keeps us and our comrades safe, and it's better to err on the vigilant side than be underprepared.

Anonymity also means that no one of us gets the clout or social capital associated with doing antifascist work. We operate as a collective, united by the common goals of defending our community and defeating fascism.



The Historical Roots of Antifascism

Antifascism as an organized movement began in Europe in the 1920s, first in Italy in response to the rise of Benito Mussolini's dictatorship, and then throughout Europe as a response to the growing Axis influence and increasing threat of ethnic cleansing.

In 1932, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) established Antifaschistische Aktion as a militant wing united against the fascist influence in their country. The double flag logo used by the KPD is still used today in antifascist organizing.

In the United States, the contemporary iteration of Antifascist Action began in the 1980s with Anti Racist Action. ARA had a lot of crossover with the punk scene, and disrupted white supremacist gangs in street-level confrontation and in subcultural spaces like venues.



Solidarity

Although the scope of antifascist work is narrow, antifascists broadly support those who are working towards liberation. Solidarity with black, indigenous, trans, queer, disabled, poor, immigrant, and other marginalized identities is a central part of sustaining our work. It's important to learn the history of this solidarity work within our movement-- both the stories of success and examples of when we fell short. The work of antifascism supports others in their struggles against oppression.



Education

As antifascists, much of our work involves educating our communities about the threats of fascists, ways to resist that threat, and making people aware of who in their neighborhood is dangerous. Examples of community education could be holding a training on how to recognize prominent hate symbols or fascist rhetoric, or publishing zines or materials on subjects related to antifascism. We can't do this work without the support of the community.

Antifascists' work to educate our communities is supported by a large body of research on far right agitators. Often, fascists, neo Nazis, and others on the far right do a lot of their work and conversation online. Antifascist research involves checking prominent far right forums and websites and monitoring activity. Tying people's online/"secret" political opinions to their real world identities is what creates consequences for Nazis. It's important to maintain a very high standard of research and evidence so that innocent people don't get mistakenly identified as fascists, and so that evidence we provide in a doxx is irrefutable.



Other historical examples of antifascist organizing were the Slovene and Croat group TIGR in Italy; Arditi del Popolo during Mussolini's rule; the Spanish anarchists during the Spanish Civil War; and Resistance movements in France, the UK, Scandinavia, and Poland during WWII.





Rose City Antifa was founded in Portland in 2007 out of an ad-hoc coalition formed to disrupt the neo-nazi Hammerfest music festival. Building on ARA's opposition to street-level white-supremacy, RCA broadened the scope of antifascist work to disrupting not only neo-nazi skinheads but also the far-right's ability to organize, recruit and spread their ideology. Rose City was the first group in the United States to adopt the name "antifa," which had previously only been used by European antifascists, and better reflected a commitment to confronting fascism at every level of society.



What is an antifascist protest?

While antifascists can and should support actions that push us towards collective liberation, RCA narrowly defines antifascist protests as coordinated events taken to oppose the insurgent right wing. Actions whose goal is to oppose the state, capitalism, or other oppressive structures would be more accurately described as anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, or another term.



Types of Antifascist Work

Direct Action

A central part of antifascist work is directly confronting fascists and making sure they don't have a platform to organize. In the event that far right groups gather in public, antifascists should do what they can to disrupt them.

Rallies bring together coalitions of people who believe in antifascist work and disrupt events where fascists gather. For example, a rally countering the Proud Boys on August 17, 2018 brought together thousands of people in Portland to directly counter the fascist incursion into the city.

Sometimes rallies are confrontational, but sometimes it's a chance for allies to connect and share resources. On September 26, 2020, leftist groups gathered in Peninsula Park to table, infoshare, and listen to speakers. At the time, there was a Proud Boys rally happening in Delta Park, but the community's energy was better spent building resilience by connecting with one another.



Antifascist organizers come from a variety of different backgrounds and political ideologies. Often, there is crossover between antifascist ideology and anarchism, Marxism, communism, and feminism. However, it's not always true that because someone identifies as, say, an anarchist, they are antifascist. Sometimes within leftist political ideologies there can also be exclusionary or damaging values connected to them--for example, rhetoric used by radical feminists can be co-opted by trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) and anarchoprimitivist talking points can be co-opted by ecofascists attempting to use environmentalism as an entry point to leftist circles. Be careful of conflating antifascism with other movements, both so we don't dilute good work and so we don't excuse bad behavior.



The Torch Points of Unity

Today, many antifascist groups in the United States are part of the Torch Network, which is a loose antifascist coalition but adheres to agreed points of unity in their work:

1. We disrupt fascist and far right organizing and activity.

2. We don't rely on the cops or courts to do our work for us. This doesn't mean we never go to court, but the cops uphold white supremacy and the status quo. They attack us and everyone who resists oppression. We must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and stop the fascists.

3. We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation. We intend to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement of oppressed people centered on the working class against racism, sexism, nativism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest, and the most oppressed people. We support abortion rights and reproductive freedom. We want a classless, free society. We intend to win!

4. We hold ourselves accountable personally and collectively to live up to our ideals and values.

5. We not only support each other within the network, but we also support people outside the network who we believe have similar aims or principles. An attack on one is an attack on all.

