

Fascist Attack in Charlottesville

Anarcho-Syndicalist Review

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Neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville, Virginia, attacked protesters and murdered a protester widely reported to be an IWW member – part of a group of Wobblies and others mowed down when one of the neo-Nazis plowed his car into the crowd.

The Industrial Workers of the World issued this statement: “Heather Heyer, the 32-year old murdered by fascists on August 12, 2017, lost her life protesting the fascists. She should be alive with us today. We carry her in our hearts, and move forward with the struggle determined to realize the hopes she held when she faced down the fascists.

“On the internet, it has been widely reported that Heather was a member of our union, the IWW. It does not appear that she ever joined our union, but we would have welcomed her. She was a courageous woman and we should all seek inspiration from her and work to amplify her message. Members of the IWW were on the scene and were among the wounded. Like Heather, they courageously stood up to the forces of hate in one of the largest fascist gatherings in decades. We are grateful that they remain with us, and we are furious that Heather is with us no longer.”

The violence began the night before as hundreds of neo-Nazis and other white nationalists descended on the city, chanting fascist slogans and attacking protesters. Many of the neo-nazis were carrying assault rifles and other weapons; police stood by as one fired in the direction of protesters and then walked past a police barricade. (He was arrested two weeks later on charges of discharging a firearm within 1,000 feet of a school, after the ACLU released video footage of the incident they had earlier shared with police.)

Police allowed the fascists free reign to terrorize the city, refusing to protect Congregation Beth Israel, where gun-toting neo-Nazis stood watch at the entrance, and hundreds of fascists paraded past chanting “Sieg Heil” and other anti-Semitic slogans. (Forty worshippers ultimately escaped through the rear of the synagogue.) Cornel West, part of a group of clergy and civil rights activists standing arm-in-arm in an attempt to block the fascist march, noted that the police made no effort to protect them. “We would have been crushed like cockroaches if it were not for the anarchists and the antifascists who approached, over 300, 350 antifascists. We just had 20. ... They saved our lives.”

A Virginia state trooper interfered with a street medic who was trying to save Heyer’s life. As the medic administered CPR, the trooper forcibly removed an EMT who was assisting in resuscitation. The trooper continued ordering the medic and protesters who were assisting her to leave – stopping only when a firefighter arrived on the scene and took over chest compressions.

This brazen display of fascist violence triggered renewed calls to tear down Confederate and other race-baiting monuments across the country. In Durham, North Carolina, protesters took matters into their own hands, toppling a memorial to Confederate soldiers erected in 1924, as a resurgent Ku Klux Klan was terrorizing African-Americans, Jews, and labor activists. Four people were arrested for this act of civic improvement, and hundreds lined up outside the jail to turn themselves in as participants.

In Minneapolis, performers and bar workers walked out of Clubhouse Jäger after learning that its owner was financially supporting former Ku Klux Klan Grand Dragon David Duke, now a white supremacist Republican. Workers quit en masse after learning that their labor was supporting racists and fascists. The owner told a local television station the donation was a matter of “free speech.”

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