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”Sometimes, if you want to get rid of the gun, you have to pick the gun up.”

-Huey P. Newton

or Democrats) against the idea of workers collectively exercising their constitutional right to bear arms has been housed in the insurmountable strength and technology owned by the government's military. Left-wing skeptics claim that an armed working-class will simply have no chance against an overpowering military. The problem with this is that it is preoccupied with a large-scale, pie-in-the-sky revolutionary situation. It ignores the reality faced by many working-class people who find themselves in small-scale, daily interactions with police and vigilantes, both of whom are heavily armed and not afraid to use their weapons to kill. It is in these very interactions, whether it's a black citizen being racially profiled and harassed by police or an activist being terrorized by reactionary groups, where the access to a gun may become vitally important and life-saving.

Advocating for disarming those who need protection the most simply doesn't make sense, especially in an environment such as the modern U.S. - a heavily racialized, classist landscape with over 300 million guns in circulation. Nobody wants to be drawn into a violent situation that may result in the loss of life, but our current reality does not allow us that choice. Unfortunately, we live a society where police oppress rather than protect; where violent reactionary groups are allowed freedom to carry out their terrorizing of marginalized people; and where politicians readily use their monopoly of violence to enforce capital's minority interests against masses of workers. Because of this, modern gun control can only be viewed as anti-black, anti-woman, anti-immigrant, anti-poor, and anti-working class because it leaves these most marginalized and vulnerable of groups powerless in the face of a violent, patriarchal, white-supremacist power structure that continues to thrive off of mass working-class dispossession. The conclusion is simple: If the oppressor cannot be disarmed, the only sane option is to arm the oppressed. In the U.S., the Constitution makes this a practical and legal option.

In June 2016, the Democrats had a sit-in on the House floor to push for gun legislation that had been blocked. It has been noted by numerous writers the myriad of problems with this bill[1][2][3] as well as the hypocrisy of the sit-in itself.[4] However, this article is to talk about something deeper: the question of violence, so-called "gun control," and how these issues relate to politics and the working-class majority in its place within the socio-capitalist hierarchy.

There are arguably three main types of violence which will be premised in this analysis: state violence, group violence, and revolutionary violence. The first two forms of violence, coming from the state and groups empowered by the status quo, are designed to oppress. The third form, coming from revolutionaries and the systematically oppressed, is designed to strike back at this oppression for the purpose of liberation. The first two types (state and group) are violent, or offensive, by nature. The last type (revolutionary) is counter-violent, or defensive, by nature.

State Violence

Violence and politics are historically intertwined, so much so that the definition of the state is "*a human community that (suc-*

[1] Philip Bump, "The Problem With Banning Guns For People On The No-Fly List," *Washington Post*, June 13, 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/07/the-no-fly-list-is-a-terrible-tool-for-gun-control-in-part-because-it-is-a-terrible-tool/)

[2] Alex Pareene, *The Democrats Are Boldly Fighting For A Bad, Stupid Bill*, Gawker,http://gawker.com/the-democrats-are-boldly-fighting-for-a-bad-stupid-bil-1782449026 (June 22, 2016)

[3] Zaid Jilani, "Dramatic House Sit-In on Guns Is Undercut by Focus on Secret, Racist Watchlist," *The Intercept*, June 22, 2016 (https://theintercept.com/2016/06/22/dramatic-house-sit-in-on-guns-is-undercut-by-focus-on-secret-racist-watchlist/)

[4] Tom Hall, "Congressional Democrats stage 'sit-in' stunt on gun control," *World Socialist Website*, June 25, 2016 (https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/06/25/dems-j25.html)

cessfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."[5] Due to this monopoly of violence, the state is able to put restrictions on what kinds of weapons people can have, and if they can have any at all. Because of the state's monopoly on the use of violence, which is directed at citizens of that state whenever deemed necessary, the issue of "gun control" is rather peculiar. It is also fairly unique to the United States, a country that was born at the hands of the gun, and a country that has been largely shaped by the degrees of "liberty" reflected in gun ownership among the populace. In modern society, gun control seems like a common-sense measure as it is quite obvious to many that people shouldn't have the right to possess tanks, Javelins, Scuds, nuclear weapons, and other military-grade weaponry. However, as technology in weaponry increases, so too does the power of the state in its monopoly of violence. Because of this natural progression of state power based solely in military hardware, a side effect of gun control is that it creates a polarization of power between the state and its citizenry. In other words, the state continues to build its arsenal with more powerful and effective weaponry, while the citizenry continues to face restrictions on access to weaponry. While this scenario may seem reserved for the Alex-Jones-watching, prepper-obsessed fringes, the reality is that, within an economic system (capitalism) that naturally creates extreme hierarchies and masses of dispossessed people, it is (and has been) a serious problem in the context of domestic political and social movements.

In the U.S. (as with many countries), there are underlying class and racial issues related to the state's monopoly of violence and its restriction of access to guns for its citizens. Looking from a historical perspective, when it comes to violence at the hands of the

[5] Fact Index, *Monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force*, http://www.fact-index.com/m/mo/monopoly_on_the_legitimate_use_of_physical_force.html

preaching strictly non-violent and pacifist tactics to poor, working-class, people of color exposes their privileged, white-supremacist leanings. The fact that they do this while also passing draconian legislation that has led to the virtual genocide of an entire generation of blacks (through drug laws and mass incarceration), and in the face of brutal, daily murders of black citizens by police, further exposes them. The recent silence from the NRA regarding the police killing of Philando Castile[44], who was licensed to carry a gun in Minnesota and properly identified his status to officers before being shot for no reason, has exposed the NRA's white supremacist leanings. Also, the split that occurred within the Oath Keepers when one of their members in the St. Louis chapter, Sam Andrews, encouraged black residents in Ferguson and Black Lives Matters protestors to practice their Second-Amendment rights[45] has exposed their own white supremacist leanings which they regularly disguise as "constitutionalism."

While white supremacy has an intense and insidious hold on every aspect of American culture - social, economic, political, etc. - it is especially strong within the gun-control debate. So much so that it drove then-California governor, Ronald Reagan, in 1967, to sign extensive gun control legislation under the Mulford Act[46] in response to armed patrols by members of the Black Panther Party. The classist nature of gun control can be found in the targeting of the most marginalized of the working class, along with the historically brutal state repression against workers collectively striking or standing up for their rights against bosses. The most common argument from the authentic, anti-capitalist left (not liberals

[44] Brian Fung, "The NRA's internal split over Philando Castile," *Washington Post*, July 9, 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/09/the-nras-internal-revolt-over-philando-castile/?utm_term=.b0f673e3221c)

[45] Alan Feur, "The Oath Keeper Who Wants To Arm Black Lives Matter," *Rolling Stone*, January 3, 2016 (http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-oath-keeper-who-wants-to-arm-black-lives-matter-20160103)

[46] Wikipedia, *Mulford Act*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulford_Act

Both sides of the modern gun-control debate cling to very problematic positions and ideologies that are tantamount to their respective arguments. Both sides, in their own ways, reinforce the embedded racial and class privileges that repress much of the working class, the poor, and people of color - in other words, those sectors of the population that are most likely faced with extremely dire economic situations, occupying police forces that resemble foreign armies, and (literally) daily, life-or-death interactions with both police (state violence) and vigilantes (group violence). The liberal or Democrat argument for gun control, like those represented by the Congressional sit-in, almost always target extremely marginalized groups, like felons who have been victimized by the draconian "drug wars" of the '80s and '90s, as well as those who have been victimized by the "war on terror" and find themselves on terrorist watch lists for little more than their chosen religion or Islamic-sounding name. The reactionary opposition to gun control, represented by the NRA and Republicans, remains embedded in white supremacy, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and classism, and thus also ends up targeting these same marginalized populations. This latter group's motivation is evident in the overlap between fringe groups that historically adhere to group violence, like the KKK and Oath Keepers, and the more "mainstream" operations of the NRA.

Both sides of the gun-control debate, whether consciously or subconsciously, are motivated by what Noam Chomsky (paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson) recently referred to as a fear of "the liberation of slaves, who have 'ten thousand recollections' of the crimes to which they were subjected." These "fears that the victims might rise up and take revenge are deeply rooted in American culture" (in racialized institutions of slavery and white supremacy) with reverberations to the present."[43] The liberal insistence on

[43] Hampton Institute, *On the Roots of American Racism: An Interview with Noam Chomsky*,http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/chomsky-on-racism.html (April 22, 2015)

state, it is regularly used on the side of capital. One only need look at the history of the American labor movement during the first half of the twentieth century, which was an extremely violent time. Within the context of class relations under capitalism, whereas the state represents moneyed interests and a powerful minority, the working-class majority has faced an uphill battle not only in its struggle to gain basic necessities, but also in its residual struggle against an increasingly-armed state apparatus that is inherently designed to maintain high levels of dispossession, poverty, and income inequality. A primary example of the state using violence to aid capital is the Ludlow Massacre.

In the year 1913, in the southern Colorado counties of Las Animas and Huerfano, miners (with the help of the United Mine Workers of America) decided to strike. They argued for union recognition by the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, an increase in wages, and an eight-hour work day, among other things. In response, the company kicked a number of miners off of the company land, and brought in the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency which specialized in breaking coal strikes. The Agency initiated a campaign of harassment against the strikers, which "took the form of high-powered searchlights playing over the colonies at night, murders, beatings, and the use of the 'death special,' an improvised armored car that would periodically spray selected colonies with machine-gun fire." The purpose of this harassment "was to goad the strikers"[6] into violent action so the National Guard could be called out to suppress the labor strike. It worked.

In October 1913, Governor Elias A. Ammos summoned the National Guard, under the command of General John Chase, who declared martial law in the striking area. Under control of the National Guard, a state-controlled militia, a number of atrocities took place against the striking workers, such as the "mass jailing of strik-

[6] Mark Walker, "The Ludlow Massacre: Class Warfare and Historical Memory in Southern Colorado,"*Historical Archaeology* 37:3 (2003), pg 68

ers, a cavalry charge on a demonstration by miners' wives and children, the torture and beating of 'prisoners,' and the demolition of one of the [workers'] tent colonies."[7]

The situation came to a gruesome ending when on April 20, 1914 gunfire broke out between the striking miners and National Guard troops. When miners who had taken up arms to protect themselves and their families went to a railroad cut and prepared foxholes in an attempt to draw the National Guard away from the colony, Guard troops sprayed the colony with machine gun and rifle fire and eventually burned the tent colony to the ground. An estimated 25 people died that day, "including three militiamen, one uninvolved passerby, and 12 children."[8] Unfortunately, this example of the state using its monopoly of violence to represent the minority interests of capital against the majority interests of workers. The state had previously come down hard on the side of union-busting with violence in the 1892 Homestead Massacre in Pennsylvania, and in 1894 when President Cleveland sent out over 16,000 U.S. Army soldiers to handle the railroad strikers in Pullman, Chicago.[9]

In 1932, state violence targeted a large group of war veterans who had assembled in Washington, D.C. demanding payment from the federal government for their service in World War I. The Bonus Army, an assemblage of roughly 43,000 people consisting primarily of veterans, their families, and affiliated activists, marched on D.C. to demand payment of previously received service certificates only to be met with violent repression. First, two veterans were shot and killed by Washington, D.C. police, and then, after orders from Herbert Hoover, Douglas Macarthur moved in on the veterans with infantry, cavalry, and six tanks, forcing the Bonus Army, their wives, and children out of their makeshift encampment and burning all of their belongings and shelter. "Although no weapons

[7] Walker, pgs 68-69

[8] Walker, pg 69

[9] Ronald J. Barr, *The Progressive Army: U.S. Army Command and Administration, 1870-1914* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pg 7

after years of degradation, to rise up against their destroyers, and determine what death they would choose: Treblinka or Uprising."[42]

This human spirit referred to by Zuckerman is the same that compelled Nat Turner to take up arms against slave-owning whites, the same that led to the formation of the original Black Panther Party, and the same that motivated Robert F. Williams in 1950s North Carolina. Without access to weapons, this human spirit would result in nothing more than gruesome massacres at the hands of state and group violence. With weapons in hand, this spirit is presented with a chance to stunt pending attacks of physical oppression and terrorism, if not repel them.

Conclusion

The modern gun control debate has taken on two, stereotypical, opposing sides. The first side is representative in the Congressional sit-ins on the House floor this past June. They represent a common liberal viewpoint that gun-control measures should be taken to restrict or, at the very least, delay the acquisition of guns by citizens. Popular demands coming from this side include the banning of all automatic or semi-automatic weapons, the blacklisting of certain people (including those suspected of "associating with terrorists," the mentally ill, and felons), and the implementation of more stringent forms of clearances. The other side is represented by a reactionary right, mostly white, that is backed by both the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its surrogate, the Republican Party. These who oppose the liberal attempt to stifle the Second Amendment historically come from privileged strata of the status quo, including whites of all classes and those occupying advantageous positions in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

[42] A. Polonsky, (2012), *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Volume III, 1914 to 2008, p.537

white man who was accused of attempting to rape a black woman, Williams summed up the need for oppressed people to take up arms in their own self-defense. "If the United States Constitution cannot be enforced in this social jungle called Dixie, it is time that Negroes must defend themselves even if it is necessary to resort to violence," responded Williams. "That there is no law here, there is no need to take the white attackers to the courts because they will go free and that the federal government is not coming to the aid of people who are oppressed, and it is time for Negro men to stand up and be men and if it is necessary for us to die we must be willing to die. If it is necessary for us to kill we must be willing to kill."[41]

Revolutionary violence often finds itself up against difficult odds, being deployed by marginalized peoples with limited resources against powerful state and group entities with seemingly unlimited resources, professional military training, and advantageous positioning within the given power structure. The 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising reflected this exact scenario, as a Jewish resistance in the hundreds, armed with handguns, grenades, and Molotov cocktails faced off against the powerful Nazi paramilitary Schutzstaffel (SS). When reflecting on the uprising over two decades later, one of the Jewish survivors, Yitzhak Zuckerman, encapsulated the need for an oppressed and degraded people to strike back:

"I don't think there's any real need to analyze the Uprising in military terms. This was a war of less than a thousand people against a mighty army and no one doubted how it was likely to turn out. This isn't a subject for study in military school. (…) If there's a school to study the human spirit, there it should be a major subject. The important things were inherent in the force shown by Jewish youth

[41] Ibid

were fired, cavalry advanced with swords drawn, and some blood was shed. By nightfall, hundreds had been injured by gas (including a baby who died), bricks, clubs, bayonets, and sabers."[10]

Later in the 20th century, state violence continued, yet it had switched targets from union members and striking workers to political activists. An example is the Kent State shootings, where on May 4, 1970 "members of the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of Kent State University [antiwar] demonstrators, killing four and wounding nine."[11] Kent Mayor Leroy Satrom had requested Ohio Governor James Rhodes to summon the Guard due to "threats had been made to downtown businesses and city officials as well as rumors that radical revolutionaries were in Kent to destroy the city and the university."[12]

The rhetoric of Governor Rhodes escalated the situation as he called the protesters "the worst type of people in America and [stated] that every force of law would be used to deal with them," which created a perception among both soldiers and university officials that "a state of martial law was being declared in which control of the campus resided with the Guard rather than University leaders,"[13] and on top of this, all rallies were banned. This helped to foster an increase of tension in an atmosphere that was already extremely tense.

On the day of May 4th, around 3,000 students gathered to protest the Guard's presence on the campus. At noon, it was announced the General Robert Cantbury, the leader of the Ohio National Guard, had made the decision that the rally was to disperse; this message was delivered to the students via the police.

[10] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/peopleevents/pandeAMEX89.html

[11] Thomas R. Hensley, Jerry M, Lewis, "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The search for historical accuracy," *The Ohio Council of Social Studies Review* 34"1 (1998), pg 9

[12] Hensley, Lewis, pg 11

[13] Ibid

When this was met with shouting and some rock throwing, the Guard was sent in to break up the protest and, due to the students retreating up a hill and on to a portion of the football field, the soldiers who followed them ended up somewhat trapped between the football field's fence and the protesters. The shouting and rock throwing continued as the soldiers began to extract themselves from the football field and up a hill, and when they reached the top, the soldiers fired their weapons back toward the crowd, with a small amount firing directly into the crowd.

No matter how one looks at it, the entire point of the National Guard being deployed to Kent State University was to squash the protesters who had gathered under their perceived constitutional rights to express their collective displeasure with the Vietnam War. The state chose to deploy its monopoly of violence as a tool to end these public protests.

Assassination campaigns by the state, directed by the FBI or CIA, and often times carried out by local police departments, have also been deployed under this monopoly of violence. There is the notably disturbing case of Chicago Black Panther Party chairman Fred Hampton, who was assassinated by Chicago police due to his political views and membership in the Black Panther organization.[14] There is also speculation and credible evidence that the U.S. government was involved in both the deaths of Martin Luther King Jr.[15] and Malcolm X.[16]

Today, state violence has manifested itself in daily public displays of police brutality and violence against citizens. This endemic

[14] Ted Gregory, "The Black Panther Raid and the death of Fred Hampton," *Chicago Tribune*, July 3, 2016 (http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-pantherraid-story-story.html)

[15] The King Center, *Assassination Conspiracy Trial*, http://www.thekingcenter.org/assassination-conspiracy-trial

[16] Garrett Felber, "Malcolm X Assassination: 50 years on, mystery still clouds details of the case,"*The Guardian*, February 21, 2015 (https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/21/malcolm-x-assassination-records-nypd-investigation)

"gun control" come back into the mix. How are people supposed to free themselves, or even defend themselves from state and group violence, if they are unable to have guns? How are people able to protect themselves from oppressive violence if they do not have access to the same weaponry used by their oppressor?

When faced with systemic violence that is rooted in either a direct extension of the state (police, military) or an indirect extension of the power structure (the KKK, the Oath Keepers, neo-Nazis, neo-fascists), written laws constructed by the same state and power structure aren't typically useful. And when doubled-down on by media and liberal establishment cries of free speech and false equivalencies, oppressed sectors of the population become even more vulnerable to state and group violence. Often times, armed self-defense becomes the only option to protect oneself, one's family, and one's community from these deeply embedded, existential threats.

Formulating revolutionary counter-violence and self-defense measures became a staple of the American Civil Rights movement. From Malcolm X's calls to defend the black community "by any means necessary" to the original Black Panther Party's organizational emphasis on armed self-defense, the Civil Rights movement as a whole gained strength due to these more militant strains centered around revolutionary violence. In 1956, after a "relentless backlash from the Ku Klux Klan," Robert F. Williams, a Marine Corps vet, took over the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the NAACP and strengthened it with militancy by "filing for a charter with the National Rifle Association (NRA)," forming the Black Guard, "an armed group committed to the protection of Monroe's black population," and delivering weapons and physical training to its members.[40] In 1959, following the acquittal of a

[40] PBS Independent Lens, *A synopsis on the film, "Negroes with Guns: Rob Williams and Black Power*," http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/negroeswithguns/rob.html

Revolutionary Violence

Revolutionary violence is realized in two distinct forms: self-defense and/or counter-violence. It is a type of violence in which the goal is either self-defense for an oppressed people and/or full liberation for a people, whether that liberation take the form of autonomous communities, a nation state, or something else. It is also resistance to encroachment on the land by oppressive forces, such as in the case of indigenous resistance to expansionist Americans. Revolutionary violence may come in different forms and be carried out through various means. It includes everything from individual acts of "propaganda by the deed" to large-scale revolutions against a state.

Examples of revolutionary violence are abound throughout history, and include the slave revolts of Spartacus and Nat Turner, the Reign of Terror against the French monarchy, the Spanish revolt against the fascist Franco regime, Alexander Berkman's attempted murder of Carnegie Steel manager Henry Clay Frick, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Reconstruction-era blacks taking up arms against the KKK, the Mau Maus in Kenya[38], the Cuban revolution[39], and a number of national liberation movements in the mid-twentieth century that occurred around the world.

Revolutionary violence is different from state and group violence in that it manifests itself as a response to violence often stemming from one of these two opposing sources. For this reason, it is strictly counter-violent (or defensive) in nature, designed to break the violent oppression that its adherents find themselves under. The benefit of being able to deploy revolutionary violence is obvious in that it allows the oppressed to strike back at their oppressors. It is in this beneficial scenario where the question of guns and

[38] "Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody history of Kenyan conflict," *BBC*, April 7, 2011 (http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12997138)

[39] Andres Suarez, "The Cuban Revolution: The Road to Power," *Latin American Research Review* 7:3 (1972)

use of state force has become so bad that a recent report from the UN Human Rights Council noted concerns "for police violence and racial discrimination" in the U.S.[17]Yet, despite this widespread recognition of state terror being directed at citizens, we see that the federal government (the highest level of state) is protecting its enforcers, with President Obama signing into law what is effectively an Amber Alert for the police[18], and states such as Louisiana passing 'Blue Lives Matter' bills which designates "public safety workers" (a clever euphemism for police) as a specially protected class of citizens, opening the door for possible "hate crime" legislation that further protects those who carry out state repression.[19]

This rampant use of state violence against U.S. citizens has also gone international. In the age of the Global War on Terror, the U.S. government has gone so far as to decide it has the power to use its monopoly of violence on its citizens abroad. The case of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen who was killed via drone strike in Yemen in 2011, provides a notable example of this.[20] The significance of this extension to the parameters of "international warfare" or the often vague "fight against terror" is that any U.S. citizen deemed to be under suspicion of associating with "terrorists" may be immediately executed without due process. Since al-Awlaki, the U.S. government has officially acknowledged that it has killed four

[17] Natasja Sheriff, "US cited for police violence, racism in scathing UN review on human rights," *Al Jazeera*, May 11, 2015 (http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/5/11/us-faces-scathing-un-review-on-human-rights-record.html)

[18] Gregory Korte, "Obama signs 'Blue Alert' law to protect police," *USA Today*, May 19, 2016 (http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/05/19/obama-blue-alert-law-bill-signing/27578911/)

[19] Elahe Izadi, "Louisiana's 'Blue Lives Matter' bill just became law," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/05/26/louisianas-blue-lives-matter-bill-just-became-law/?tid=sm_tw&utm_term=.6d262fdb3218)

[20] Joshua Keating, "Was Anwar Al-Awlaki Still A US Citizen?" *Foreign Policy*, September 30, 2011 (http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/09/30/was_anwar_al_awlaki_still_a_us_citizen)

American citizens abroad, while claiming that three of those deaths were by accident.[21]

In looking at the state's (in this case, the U.S. state at multiple levels) monopoly of violence and its continued use against its own citizens, we see that this deployment of violence is always done in the favor of capital (a small minority) in order to expand and strengthen capital's influence, through its state surrogate, over the working-class majority with no regard for life.

Group Violence and Its Enablers

Group violence manifests itself in numerous citizens joining together in a common cause to perpetrate violence against other citizens who in some way fit the intended target of that cause. When discussing group violence, it should be noted that the subjects are non-state actors. While these groups may be directly or indirectly supported by the state, they essentially carry out their acts of violence as groups autonomous from the state apparatus.

The Ku Klux Klan (which is currently attempting to make a comeback[22]) has for decades engaged in numerous acts of group violence, from public lynchings to terrorism and coercion to bombing churches.[23] The purpose of this group violence has been to maintain a social order in which Anglo-Saxon, Protestant white men are able to keep their hands on the reins of power in the U.S., if not systematically, then culturally and socially.

[21] Adam Taylor, "The U.S. keeps killing Americans in drone strikes, mostly by accident," *Washington Post*, April 23, 2015 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/04/23/the-u-s-keeps-killing-americans-in-drone-strikes-mostly-by-accident/)

[22] John Bazemore, "Ku Klux Klan dreams of making a comeback," *The Columbus Dispatch*, June 30, 2016 (http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national_world/2016/06/30/0630-is-klan-making-a-comeback.html)

[23] Southern Poverty Law Center, *Ku Klux Klan*, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan

nearby Dodge County couldn't look into the incident"[34] due to his being busy baby-sitting.

There is also the famous case of the Freedom Riders, three Civil Rights activists who were killed by the Klan, which amounted to three individuals being "arrested by a deputy sheriff and then released into the hands of Klansmen who had plotted their murders."[35]

This connection has yet to end. In 2014, in Florida, two police officers in the town of Fruitland Park were linked to the Klan[36] and in 2015 in Lake Arthur, LA, a detective was a found to be a Klan member and even attended one of the group's rallies.[37]

These connections allow for the state, and all the power and resources it wields, to be used directly to further the ends of white supremacy and empower fascistic, racist group violence in the streets. It also puts racial minorities from within the working class at greater risks since many of these bigoted individuals who carry out group violence on their own time are also allowed to carry out state violence while on the job. As agents of the state, they can kill, terrorize, harass, and imprison racial minorities with impunity vis-à-vis their roles as state enforcers and are further empowered by the public's and media's reverence of oppressive forms of assembly and "free speech," as well as the police officers who defend this.

[34] David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), pg 336

[35] Civil Rights Movement Veterans, *Mississippi Civil Rights Martyrs*,http://www.crmvet.org/mem/msmartyr.htm

[36] Michael Winter, "KKK membership sinks 2 Florida cops," *USA Today*, July 14, 2014 (http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/07/14/florid-police-kkk/12645555/)

[37] Bill Morlin, *Police Chief Demands Resignation of KKK Cop*,https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2015/09/01/police-chief-demands-resignation-kkk-cop (September 1, 2015)

oppress the oppressor. To equate their motivations is irresponsible and dangerous. This false equivalence that has been deployed by much of the media, both liberal and conservative, amounts to placing a murderous and whip-lashing slave owner in the same light as a rebelling slave who murders the slave owner to gain freedom. By using this hypothetical, it is easy to see that there is a fundamental difference between violence and counter-violence.

Another side effect of this public defense of the oppressor, and subsequent legitimization of group violence, is that it is used to increase state violence. Marcos Brenton, a writer at *The Sacramento Bee*, argued that "I would bet that future demonstrations will see a shared command center between the CHP and Sac PD instead of what we saw Sunday: CHP officers overwhelmed by warring factions. […]Law enforcement wasn't ready this time, but they have to be next time. In a climate where life isn't valued, life will be lost."[33] This is an argument that is implicitly in favor of an increase in state violence from an already hyper-militarized police force. And, when used in this context, the deployment of state violence will almost always be directed at those who assemble to stop oppressive group violence, because arguments housed in free speech and false equivalencies erase any and all distinctions between violence and counter-violence.

This is where the connection between state and group violence often manifests itself. As mentioned before, there is a rather long history of the police and the KKK being connected: On April 2, 1947, seven black people in Hooker, GA were turned over "to a Klan flogging party for a proper sobering up" by Dade County Sheriff John M. Lynch. In Soperton, GA in 1948, "the sheriff did not bother to investigate when four men where flogged, while the sheriff of

[33] Marcos Brenton, "Madness came to Sacramento, and the cops weren't ready," *The Sacramento Bee*, June 29, 2016 (http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/marcos-breton/article86556112.html)

In many cases, because they may share interests, group violence intertwines with and complements state violence. During Reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War, the KKK had well-known ties to the more official southern state apparatus of power. In the modern era, white supremacists who adhere to notions of group violence have purposely and strategically infiltrated formal arms of state violence, including both the U.S. military and many local police departments around the country.[24][25] A similar group that is making major headway today is the Neo-Fascists, who can be seen in Europe being legitimized and assimilating into mainstream political parties such as Greece's Golden Dawn, the UK's UK Independence Party, Austria's Freedom Party, and France's National Front. Like the Klan, these groups seek to maintain a race-based, social status quo that benefits their own group. In the polls, they seek to gain some influence on the use of state violence, whereas on the streets they adhere to group violence and domestic terrorism.

A difference worth noting between the old-school group violence of the Klan and the new-school group violence (or at least contributing to an atmosphere of violence) that neo-fascists encourage and enact is that the new-school violence has been legitimized in many ways by both the media and the public at-large. In other words, we now have large segments of the population who are openly defending the neo-fascists through legitimizing means.

Back in the heyday of the Klan, there was violence, yet no one defended it under the banner of free speech or attempted to legitimize it through mainstream channels. It was certainly supported by mainstream power structures, and even gained steam through the insidious white supremacy which characterized American cul-

[24] Hampton Institute, *Rising Nazism and Racial Intolerance in the US. A report gathered and submitted to the United Nations*, http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/Rising-Nazism-and-Racial-Intolerance-in-the-US.pdf (April 30, 2015)

[25] FBI report on white supremacists infiltrating law enforcement agencies in the US.http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/402521/doc-26-white-supremacist-infiltration.pdf

ture, but it wasn't openly defended. The KKK often carried out its operations in a clandestine manner, attacking and terrorizing at night, and wearing hoods to maintain anonymity. And many black people actively took up arms to defend themselves against it.[26][27] Today, the situation has been turned on its head, with many people arguing that fascists have the right to free speech and that they should be protected.

An example of this changing paradigm regarding right-wing extremism and group violence could be seen after a recent fight between Neo-Nazis and antifascists in Sacramento, California in late June 2016.[28] The incident brought out many defenders. Sacramento police chief Sam Somers stated that "Regardless of the message, it's the skinheads' First Amendment right to free speech."[29] Debra J. Saunders, a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, wrote in an article that "the bullies who were protesting against fascists seemed to have a lot in common with fascists - they're also thuggish and simpleminded" and that "An informal army of anarchists uses violence to muzzle unwanted speech."[30] The *Los Angeles Times* editorial board wrote that they agreed with Antifa Sacramento that racism shouldn't be tolerated, but "What we disagree with is the idea that skinheads and neo-Nazis,

[26] Rebecca Onion, "Red Summer," *Slate*, March 4, 2015 (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/03/civil_rights_movement_history_the_long_tradition_of_black_americans_taking.html)

[27] Akinyele K. Umoja, "1964: The Beginning of the End of Nonviolence in the Mississippi Freedom Movement," *Radical History Review* 85:1 (2003)

[28] Ellen Garrison, Stephen Magagnini, Sam Stanton, "At least 10 hurt at chaotic, bloody neo-Nazi rally at Capitol," *The Sacramento Bee*, June 26, 2016 (http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article86099332.html)

[29] Ibid

[30] Debra J. Saunders, "Saunders: Freedom of speech stifled by Capitol rally fracas," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2, 2016 (http://www.recordnet.com/article/20160702/OPINION/160709984)

or anyone else with a wrongheaded view, shouldn't have a 1st Amendment right to free speech."[31]

There are a number of problems with these statements. First, by defending fascists through arguments couched in free speech, such commentators are not only ignoring the underlying group-violence historically perpetrated by these groups, but also misusing the First Amendment itself. The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."[32]Note, the Amendment says nothing about how other citizens may respond to free speech, nor does it say that groups of citizens can't abridge free speech; rather, it specifically applies to Congress and its prospective legislation. In other words, the Constitution of the United States applies strictly to the*government* and how it relates to its citizens, whereas the laws created by the government apply to *the individuals* and how they relate to the government.

Then there is the matter of ignoring power dynamics and creating a false equivalence. These responses create the illusion that each side is doing something negative and so neither side should be supported. This ignores the fact that one side (the neo-nazis and fascists) are assembling with the purpose of oppressing others, while the other side (the anti-fa and anarchists) are assembling to stop (violently, if necessary) the one side from oppressing. While the former adheres to violent means to oppress people based on the color of their skin, or their sexuality, or their Jewish heritage, the latter adheres to violent means to resist this oppression, or essentially

[31] Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, "How anti-racists play into the skinheads' hands," *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 2016 (http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-neo-nazi-rally-20160627-snap-story.html)

[32] Legal Information Institute, *First Amendment*,https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment