

Antifa Intl. on July 25th Day of Solidarity with Antifascist Prisoners



The Final Straw Radio - July 14

Here's an interview with Walter of the Antifa International social media project. In 2016, this took over the running of the annual July 25th Day of Solidarity with Antifascist Prisoners that was formerly a day to show affinity with Jock Palfreeman, an Australian antifascist who was incarcerated in Bulgaria for defending some Romani people from a right wing attack in which an attacker died.

For the hour we talk about the day of solidarity, the associated Antifascist Defense fund, international lines of solidarity around antifascism, recent cases of repression and continuing to support cultures of resistance while comrades are behind bars.

Walter: My name is Walter and my pronouns are he/him. I'm one of the founding members of the Antifa International Social Media Collective and currently, I'm the administrator for the International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund.

TFSR: Thank you for being here, I really appreciate it.

Walter: Oh, it's absolutely a pleasure! Thank you for inviting us.

TFSR: In past years, I've talked to David Campbell about this day of solidarity, or we talked to NYC Antifa. But there was recently a call on the website it'sgoingdown.org promoting fundraisers being organized around the annual July 25th International Day of Solidarity with Anti-Fascist prisoners. One of the orgs that has been responsible for a while for promoting the J25 Day of Solidarity and distributing funds is Antifa International. Y'all just had your 10-year anniversary/birthday. Is that right?

Walter: That is correct.

TFSR: Congratulations! Happy birthday!

Walter: Thank you very much. I'd like to say that the years blew by, but no, they didn't. A lot has happened.

TFSR: Would you would you talk about the AnComIntern Shadow Counsel that directs the global conspiracy? Or just at least talk about Antifa International?

Walter: Yeah! Happy to. So as a branch subsidiary of the Satanic Trilateral Commission, we're located on the fifth floor of the Antifa Global World Headquarters. No, no, I'm just kidding.

TFSR: Which is under Davos, just so we know.

Walter: Well, of course, its under Davos, you know, funded by Soros, etc, etc. But really, back in 2014, a couple of us realized that we were hearing about a lot of really incredible anti-fascist work that was popping up all over the globe. But the problem was we were only hearing it sort of in scattered isolated spots on the internet, and there wasn't really a central place that you could go to get an overview or a summary of all the amazing work that was going on around the world.

So we thought, naively perhaps, that we would start an anti-fascist social

media collective—Antifa International. Our goal was to be sort of a main source for information about the anti-fascist initiatives we were hearing about from around the world. We also want to use it to promote the tenants of anti-fascism and encourage people to take antifascist action where they lived, and to come up with ways to support the antifa that were putting in work.

So we started off—god 10 years ago is crazy—with, as everyone would do, a blog on Tumblr. Since then, we've grown our collective to 10 members in eight different countries. We post on eight different social platforms, where we put up something like over 20,000 posts to 110,000 followers. We've also, in those 10 years, set up a few different projects that we're pretty proud of to support anti-fascists a couple of which I'm sure we'll be talking about a little bit. So that's kind of what our collective is about.

TFSR: That's great. There are a lot of different definitions for fascism, and people quibble about specifics within it. But similarly, anti-fascism is often expressed in certain terms and against certain frameworks, with certain philosophical horizons attached to it.

Walter: Yep.

TFSR: And so, I've seen stuff covered by y'all. Definitely from actions and organizing in Europe. Actions and organizing in on Turtle Island, in South America, in Australasia, in the Americas, generally. But can you talk about the scope of the news that you all cover? Is there much in the way of anti-fascist coordination, organizing, or solidarity with, say, people that are resisting the RSS and the BJP in India or other like Hindutva forces or like outside of like in, in Asia and Africa? Does that question make sense?

Walter: Yes. It's a question we get we've gotten in the past as well. Like many things on the left, we're limited by what resources we are able to cobble together as a collective. That means we're kind of limited by the languages that our collective members speak collectively, I think we probably cover maybe a dozen languages, and the regions they're in and the access they have to groups in those regions. So, we have pretty decent coverage in North America and Europe. And then the further you get from those centers, the more scant our coverage of those areas starts to get.

Which is really unfortunate and something that we're constantly trying to come up with ways to improve on. However, linguistic and geographic barriers are problems. And then on top of that, you know, we're dealing with the anti-fascist movement, and anti-fascists, if they're smart, are pretty cautious about who they're getting in touch with and collaborating with, and want to make sure everything's

properly vetted, and there are secure channels to communicate. So those are real challenges that our collective is fine-tuning, reporting on, and making contact and collaborating with anti-fascist groups. For example, people are fighting the emerging fascism in India, and there is a huge anti-fascist movement in Brazil. Unfortunately, none of our members speak Portuguese in our collective, so that's been a challenge for us as well.

So, you know, and I think that's typical of any movement on the left is that is that we run to these limitations. And we don't have the resources available to easily overcome them. But we are trying to look for creative ways. I do have to say that, because we have the reach we do with our social media platforms, we are starting to make connections along those lines and are trying to improve on them. I don't know if that answered your question.

TFSR: Yeah, I think it does. I think that that's those are natural limiting factors. One project cant do everything. But also, hopefully, someone in the listening audience to this will hear this and be like, "Oh, yeah, I'm from Brazil and I'm bilingual." And maybe I can pass some resources towards these folks or whatever.

Walter: Well, in fact, one of the initiatives that we're sort of aligned with and some of the people that we've been working with are aligned with is a collective of translators that are doing translation work from an anti-fascist perspective. I believe they put out a translation journal, where they publish pieces about fascism and anti-fascism that they've translated. Which I think is an amazing initiative.

The one lesson I've taken our 10 years is that there's no limit to what people can do. People have great ideas but it's just a matter of having sort of the compunction, if you will, to do the thing. To get up there and do it and try and try it. Part of our functioning as our collective is to really encourage people to try to take some sort of action, or put some sort of project together where they are using what skills and resources they have.

TFSR: Is that is that *Barricade: A Journal of Antifascism and Translation*?

Walter: It is! Yeah, it's really fantastic. A couple of people that we collaborate with are heavily involved in that in that journal. It's incredible.

TFSR: Yeah, that's a hell of a resource. I'm going to put that link in the show notes.

So, one of the initiatives that y'all are involved with is the Interna-

tional Anti-Fascist Defense Fund. How does Antifa International relate to this project? How does the fund relate to the activist ecosystems in terms of autonomy in solidarity with individuals, groups and networks? Like, no, no group is reliant on the fund, but the fund, I imagine, is just available to them if you feel that there's solidarity between you and them.

Walter: Well, actually its not! That's a common misconception about the defense fund. So we started the Defense Fund nine years ago. That was our first year as a social media collective. We were noticing more and more anti-fascists were facing increasingly dire consequences of the anti-fascist work they were doing. They're left not only to face and deal with those consequences but to raise the resources they need to stop those consequences from destroying their lives. That's pretty hard when you're...for example, the first person we helped was a football supporter in Hamburg, Germany, who was facing prison time. It's kind of hard to put those resources together when that's who you are, and you're sort of local to there.

So we realized with our reach, we could establish a standing Defense Fund, whose sole purpose would be to provide emergency aid and support to anti-fascists facing emergency situations as a direct result of their anti-fascist work. It was sort of modeled on something the Anti-Racist Action Network in North America in the 1990s had gotten called the ARA War Chests. And it was sort of the same thing where, if an ARA member got in trouble for any anti-racist actions they took, there was a standing fund that was there to help them cobble together versus they need to get out of that jam.

As I said, the first person we helped was someone named Valentin in Hamburg, Germany, in 2015; I think we wound up sending 50 euros. Since then, it's grown quite a bit. We've given out almost a quarter million dollars to more than 760 anti-fascists in 28 different countries. We are really happy with it. I think we're also really happy that the model we use is kind of unique. Anyone who donates a minimum of \$20 to the Defense Fund gets an invitation to join what we call the Decision Crew. And that's a body of decision-makers who literally call the shots for how the Defense Fund is run and how we handle requests or proposals to support someone.

So far, that means over 1,500 anti-fascists around the world have been invited to participate in those decisions. We try to reach those decisions via consensus wherever possible. So, if we get a request for support, will take a week to have a discussion online about that, and see if there's consensus about what to do. If we can't reach consensus, then we'll take an extra week and go to a simple majority vote. So it's sort of a simple system. But it works really well. And we're especially proud of it because it allows people who support the defense fund to collaborate and participate in it.

TFSR: So how would you stop a chan from just getting a bunch of people to donate 20 bucks each, join the voting block, and then block everything moving forward? I mean, you'd get a lot of money in that first place, but I'm sure they could organize a couple thousand people to just war join or whatever.

Walter: We got to ask that question just last week. So first of all, when we're doing the online discussion, one of the things is that everything's anonymized. We send out the details of the proposal that's being discussed to everyone in the decisions crew, and then we invite them to send their comments back. Every day that we receive comments, we strip and anonymize it, so no one knows which crew member made the comment. And then we send it to everyone else for them to consider and respond to.

We do that for a week and see if we have a consensus. So part of the part of the defense mechanisms that gives me as the administrator of the Defense Fund, sort of a gatekeeping function where if anything's obviously being done in bad faith, I'm going to be able to flag that right away and figure out what to do from there. But the other thing is with, you know, 1,500 people invited to participate in this process, it would be actually pretty hard for a chan or a troll to organize people to overthrow a system.

The other thing is that I think they're cheapskates. In nine years, I can't think of a single situation where someone with obviously ill intent donated 20 bucks or more to participate in the process, and then just did it to undermine and sabotage the process. I think they're just cheapskates.

TFSR: I mean, I could bring up lots of "like, well, what about this? What about this?"

Walter: Well, we thought about all that when we first started this. There's no perfect system that's going to guarantee all of this. But I think having things anonymized helps a ton of a lot. Having an admin to handle incoming comments helps a lot. And in nine years we've helped 760 people. We get new requests every two or three weeks but have never run into that problem.

So I'm gonna challenge the trolls who are listening to donate as much money as they can, and try to prove me wrong! I've never said that come back to me and see if I regret making that statement.

I mean, I think it's a model is pretty effective. And one of the things that we're pretty proud of is that other people have taken the model we use for this for this defense fund and used it to establish similar defense funds. There was one set up in Australia a few years back that was for progressive leftists in general that use

the same model. There was an Anarchist Defense Fund. I don't know if it's still around but it was doing the same thing but for broader anarchist actions.

TFSR: That's the International Anarchists Defense Fund, they are still around.

Walter: We're really proud that they liked the model. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. We're glad they thought the model was useful, and we're happy to see that they're still using it successfully. That's fantastic.

TFSR: Yeah, that's great. So the groups that participate that get funds sent to them or individuals are not a part of a wider institutional structure that the Defense Fund is also related to? For instance, the war chest that ABC, the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, offers on Turtle Island, you don't even have to be an ABC member to be getting contributions. Like Bill Dunne, I don't know if they are necessarily an ABC member, but they receive war chest funds every year. But there are constituent organizations that are a part of this structure that has the war chest that then distributes the money. But there's not necessarily that sort of organizational connection between say, like, if Lena E's Defense Fund were to request funding from y'all, it's not that it's just like you all doing your due diligence research, them doing their due diligence research, and then saying, "Hey, we can work together on this because we have commonality."

Walter: Absolutely, 100%. We actually did provide support for Lena when they reached out to us. Part of my function as the admin is I have to vet requests we get for support. Often, that means looking at media stories, maybe asking to see police records or legal documents or hospital bills, or speaking to someone's lawyer or doctor. Often having a recognized antifascist group who will vouch for the legitimacy of the claim is good enough for us. People don't have to be in an organization to make a request just like people don't have to be an organization to be an anti-fascist. If they take an antifascist action and they're in trouble because of it, we're there to help them. I would say the majority of people who we've helped have been first-time people who might not be in an organization and might not even think of themselves as anti-fascists. But the situation that they were involved in was clearly an anti-fascist action of some kind. And we've supported them.

TFSR: Last fall, I spoke with supporters of Alex Stokes Contompasis in New York State and they had mentioned getting funds from y'all, which I was super stoked about. I was excited.

Walter: Yeah, we just sent some money to his commissary, like two days ago. Alex, if you're listening to this, I hope you got it. I hope you're doing good out there. We've also provided money to help for his the appeal of his of his sentence which I think is going to be happening later this year. Hopefully.

It's a great example. He was well known around Albany as a really good person who was really active in helping a number of causes. I don't think he was involved as like an actual, card-carrying member of an anti-fascist organization. He saw that people were being attacked, and he stood up to defend them. You know, that's it. That's an anti-fascist action as far as we're concerned. He's facing a really bad situation because of that, so that's where we're going to step in and provide whatever help we can.

TFSR: That seems like the most common experience. I know that people in North America do join John Brown Gun Clubs, or, like, Torch chapters, or ARA chapters or something like that, or GTCs. But a lot of people just intercede because they see something wrong happening. And because they have the right(ish) politics.

Walter: For sure. There's one thing that your question touched on that I want to go back to, if you don't mind. I think that the contrast between how our defense fund operates and how other people have operated defense funds in the past. The best example of what I'm talking about is what happened after Charlottesville in 2018. The terrorist attack in Charlottesville that left, you know, 30 people injured and killed Heather Heyer. When that happened, we saw a whole bunch of crowd-funders pop up all over the place for people. And I think some of those were done by people who were well-intentioned but honestly had no contact with any of the victims of that terror attack and had no real way to get the money to them.

I think maybe a couple of those fundraisers were actually quite nefarious and were done with the intention of exploiting that with no intention of actually getting the funds to the people who needed them. Then there's the situation of the Democratic Socialists of America. They raised, I think, \$200,000 to support those people, and then kind of sat on the money and went through this convoluted process, where it was sent to a higher or a higher decision-making body in the DSA, who then decided that victims to access the funds, the victims would have to report to a police agency. In the end, I don't think we ever heard what actually happened to that money they raised on behalf of those victims. Or where it went.

So contrast that to what happened with the Defense Fund. We heard from a couple of the victims of that attack people who had life-altering injuries as a result of that attack. They asked for help to pay for their medical bills. We talked about it for a week. We had an immediate consensus to send whatever we could. A bunch

of Decisions Crew members threw in additional money because of the situation. And we got it to the people that have reached out to us within two weeks of their request.

In summation, it really underscored the need for a standing anti-fascist emergency fund because we are able to respond faster and more effectively than any other fundraising initiatives. We had a track record and legitimacy that fly by night crowdfunders did not.

TFSR: Thank you for bringing up that example. I've been surprised over the last seven years not to hear too many people bring that back up. But I never heard a resolution to it either.

Walter: I saw an apology. They issued an apology two years later. But apologies don't pay the medical bills. Apologies don't pay for people who can't work anymore. Apologies aren't paying for wheelchairs.

So yeah, it's unfortunate. I think they were well-intentioned, but then they got caught up in a lot of their own bureaucracy and gatekeeping. That contrasts very much with how the International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund works—which is to get what's needed to the people that need it as quickly as possible.

TFSR: I know at different points you've had different public facing accountability tools. You were doing quarterly reports for awhile, which seems like a lot of work. But for anyone who's listening to this and thinking like, "Oh, yeah, well, it sounds like a good story. But how do I know this money is getting to where it gets?"

Walter: Great question. Yes, the quarterly reports thing was a little much. Frankly, we did not have the capacity to continue it after a few years. We do publish annual reports. We just published one about three weeks ago? Two weeks ago? A week ago? It's all up on our International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund blog. We also blog about every decision we make—even the decisions where we decide not to fund someone or send funds. Unless, of course, they've asked that we don't provide that information. Usually, when that's the case, there are some serious legal ramifications with us advertising it, or they are very concerned about attracting more attention from fascists.

That's pretty rare. I'd say 90-95% of the decisions we've made in the last nine years are all up on our blog on WordPress. So that's a great place to go to read about what we've done. Often when people are comfortable, we name and identify who we've helped with, they're okay with that. And people are free to check those people or check with any if they happen to know any of the 1500-plus people who

have been invited to make these decisions, check with them. Or, you know, kick in 20 bucks and get on the decisions crew and see how it works themselves.

TFSR: So you mentioned folks that y'all decline to give funding to. Since we brought up the Lina E case, as I understand, there was one of the people who was in the wider case that decided to flip because they didn't feel like they were getting supported in the ways that they wanted. I know that some organizations removed support for that specific individual because they were acting against the movement and against their codefendants. Another example might be that maybe somebody requests funds, but the activity doesn't fall within the purview of what you all define as the kind of anti-fascist action that you want to support. Like, maybe they're acting in solidarity with Palestine. But they're also an overt, antisemite, and they have like a strange definition of anti-fascism.

Can you talk about the decision-making tree? What are the parameters for what you all support?

Walter: Absolutely. So first of all, as it meant, I have a bit of a gatekeeping function. It starts with the mandate. And as I said, our mandate is to provide emergency support to anti-fascists who've run into a situation that can be considered an emergency or really have negative consequences to them as a result of their anti-fascist work. So using that as sort of the of the mission statement for the Defense Fund, I field requests. I look at them and I make a determination whether or not it meets that mission statement. Sometimes, we'll get requests from anti-fascists who do anti-fascist work and are maybe in a bad financial situation, but not necessarily because of their anti-fascist work. In that case, I would recommend rejecting that request.

Sometimes we get requests from people that have done work that could be construed as anti-fascist maybe, but it's hard to say. That would probably go to the Decisions Crew for a decision. If I decide that a request does not meet our mission statement, I'll reject it, but I will report it to the decisions crew that this is the request we've received, that I've rejected it, and the reasons why I've rejected it. And then anyone on the Decisions Crew has veto power over me. They can say, Walter, you made a mistake, that should have been discussed by us as legitimate requests for the Defense Fund. In which case I'll say Okay, if you if you disagree with me, then let's have that discussion. And then we'll treat it like a regular request.

So while I do try to get keep to minimize the number of requests that don't really meet what we're doing, anyone who's on the Decisions Crew can overrule that decision with me, and then we'll discuss it as a regular request. Then the second part is when the Decisions Crew decides whether or not a situation meets the

mission statement of the Defense Fund. We haven't rejected a lot of cases in the past. A couple I can think of that come to mind is there was a case where an anti-fascist wanted money to replace their computer, but their computer was damaged because they dropped a beer on it. It wasn't because it was smashed by a Nazi or by police at an anti-fascist rally. And we're like, we're not really set up to re-equip anti-fascists with stuff they broke. So we're going to reject that one. Or another case where a person was up on charges around having firearms or ammunition while being a felon. And while they were doing anti-fascist work, the charges themselves didn't stem from that. And their original conviction didn't stem from that. So I think we rejected there as well.

But you can see where it gets a little bit gray, right? It's not always a black and white, this fits to defense from this does not, which is why we have the decisions group and why we discuss these and try to reach consensus on things. And if we can't reach consensus, then we'll go through, we'll take an extra week, we'll take a simple majority vote, and we'll take it from there.

TFSR: Can you talk about either ongoing court cases or prisoners who y'all are supporting right now?

Walter: We don't have any current cases. We're pretty much free of those cases. That's typical, because with the defense fund, we usually resolve a case within a week or two of receiving it. So that's not unusual.

TFSR: Oh, no, I'm sorry. I meant, are there any people that are facing prosecution currently that you are offering, say like legal funds or other such legal support for?

Walter: It's actually sort of the same question. People make requests to us or come to us with their proposal to support someone. We resolve it within a week or two weeks and either send the funds out or not. The last one we dealt with was an anti fascist in Copenhagen, Denmark. There was a really, really great May 1st demonstration in that city themed around solidarity with the people of Palestine and colonized people around the world. Entirely peaceful. But of course police get bored and need to do something to stay entertained. So they decided to randomly pick up a participant and beat him and arrest him. He wound up not only facing pending charges, but the assault by the police also triggered some mental health issues he was experiencing from a previous violent encounter with the police.

We discussed it, and we wound up sending him money not just to help him pay for a lawyer when the charges come out but also to pay for the therapy he needs now. So that was the last one we dealt with. That was the end of May.

TFSR: Are there any cases against anti anti-fascists that listeners might be that you have maybe offered support in for the defendants that people might want to be aware of?

For example, there's a case currently against a member of, I think, a John Brown Gun Club in Texas, [Chris G] is facing pretty heavy charges, and was also brutalized by the police. If you don't have that capacity, just like pull up examples, that's perfectly fine.

Walter: Let's start with that example, right there. That was one of the organizers of the Elm Fork John Brown Gun Club in Texas, who has done amazing work. That particular John Brown Gun Club chapter became the boogeyman for the far right. When Fox realized that 'oh, wait, people are showing up to defend drag, drag queen brunches, and drag events in Texas from the armed Nazis showing up with the stated intent to kill people, and the people defending them have guns?' Well, suddenly the Second Amendment suddenly didn't really apply for Fox News, which is weird.

Elm Fork got a lot of heat for that. Unfortunately, a few of their members are facing some pretty serious charges. We've made some contributions to help them with their legal defense, but they're still seeking funds to help pay for their lawyers because lawyers aren't cheap. To be honest, while we're happy that we're often the biggest contributor to say, a legal defense campaign for an anti fascist, it's very rare that we're able to donate enough money to cover the lawyers full stop. We'd like to get to a point where we're able to do that. But we just haven't raised enough funds to do that yet.

So yeah, Elm Fork could be a good case; there was a case of a person in Portland, Oregon who was being sued civilly by everyone's favorite milkshake aficionado. He's sued a couple of anti-fascists in Portland saying for some absolute bullshit. They beat him in court, but unfortunately, they have to pay their lawyers. So they're still raising funds for that.

I mean, often when we intervene a case, it's not one and done. It's like, we've helped, but we've helped a little bit we haven't fully helped, and people are still left on the hook trying to pay legal costs, medical costs, relocation costs, etc, etc. I mean, if you if you take an anti-fascist action charge, your legal bill can be anywhere from 12 to \$30,000. So, you know, that's a lot of money to raise on your own.

I'm sure people listening can imagine if you suddenly had to come up with 12 to \$30,000, I doubt a lot of people have that kicking around to spare. So there is ongoing stuff. And of course, we're happy to help advertise and share links to crowdfunders, etc. I really wish that we could cover the full bill for everybody. Maybe someday we'll get there but right now, we just can't.

TFSR: That makes sense. And I'm sure that even just the promotion that you all can do where people want that in their case is helpful for other initiatives or other individuals to be able to raise the funds and get attention and get court support out there. What it comes down to is a group that is trying to handle stuff at an international level is not what we should be as grassroots movements that are based in our community should be organizing, ideally. So hopefully, it'll get the opportunity to support local folks building that infrastructure and that solidarity.

Walter: Right, exactly. So we've built up our collective so we have 110,000, people that read our posts. We have eight people in our in the Antifa International Collective who are in 10 different countries. We have the resources to spread news about these things internationally. We've been really happy to see expressions of solidarity and support for people from all over. We've gotten support photos from Rojava, Australia, all over the place, which is fantastic.

So you're right. Because local anti-fascists the ground should probably be focusing on what's happening in their in their own communities, they shouldn't be expected to be able to have the sudden international outreach. Whereas that's kind of what we're building our capacity for. We're able to do that international outreach for them.

TFSR: Yeah. When I was talking about the Shadow Council, blah, blah, blah, earlier and you were making Soros jokes... This is the vision that the right promotes, whether they believe it or not, of how the left organizes. That we have central committees that are controlled by a top-down organizations with lots of money behind them. Because that's how they envision how power works and how organizing works. And that's how states work. And that's how capitalism works. But that's not how egalitarian, community-minded organizing on the left actually happens.

Walter: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's one of our strengths. For the Defense Fund, as an example, this is a project that works sort of on a consensus, egalitarian basis where there's no single person that has more power than anyone else. As an admin, I guess I theoretically have some more power, but honestly, any other number of Decisions Crew can veto a decision I make. So I think that's a real strength with us. And it's something that our opponents don't understand, because they're so focused. They don't understand a world where there's not a hierarchy. They don't understand nonhierarchical movements.

TFSR: Are there any trends in terms of repression of anti-fascists and anti-fascist organizing, even across borders, that you think are worth noting for listeners?

I got a little kick when I was talking to Jeremy about the wider San Diego Antifa case—how these conspiracy charges are coming. Then there's been a couple of conspiracy charges that have been leveraged by the German state or one around the Lena E case? With a bunch of unindicted individuals being accused. People assume the German state will just fill people into the slots or the arrests. There were, I think, two German anti fascists that were arrested when they were in Budapest at a demonstration last year.

Is that, for instance, a theme of international coordination among nation states or conspiracy trials to build arguments that these things are happening? What sort of trends are you seeing?

Walter: So I don't know necessarily. I've seen evidence that there's a lot of international coordination of legal repression of anti-fascists, except for maybe in the EU, where states are definitely coordinating with Germany, and Hungary is coordinating on that one case you mentioned in Budapest. We are seeing a definite increase in the state and state actors using their full power to persecute anti-fascists beyond any sort of rationality or good faith application of the law.

The San Diego case is a great example of where the anti-Fascists were the only ones arrested. The armed fascists—the knife and club-wielding fascists—that randomly attacked people (veterans, passersby) didn't receive any charges and received full protection from the police. Then the far-right District Attorney in that area has really gone over the top by overcharging the anti-fascists. And again, we have individuals that suddenly have to come up with \$20,000- \$30,000 to mount an effective legal defense or they're facing decades in prison.

I think as a lot of countries veer right, and as far-right actors and fascist actors take positions of power in government, as district attorneys, as sheriffs, as school board trustees, as elected officials, we're seeing them use those powers and those tools to attack anti-fascists. It's a real problem.

I looked at the numbers of cases that we dealt with in the last three years. They haven't gone down at all. It's the exact same number for the last three years that the Defense Fund has handled. What has gone down in those three years has been contributions to the Defense Fund in terms of the number of contributions we receive and also in terms of the overall amount. So while on the one hand, we're seeing the far right gain seats of power and then use that power to go after anti-fascists, we're seeing less support to provide emergency aid to those anti-fascist when it happens. So this is very disturbing. I'm not sure what the solution here is.

Strangely enough, our most effective defense funds most effective fund-

raiser was Donald Trump. The day he announced that he's going to have Antifa declared a terrorist group, I don't know if you remember that day. I was out in the woods hiking and as soon as I got cell phone service again, my phone began blowing up with people making donations. So people understand. When people see fascists take seats of power and start to do things. They get scared and start throwing money into support anti-fascists, but it's too late then. Because the fascists have power.

So I think it's really important for us to—especially with what's coming up down the road in America this fall—I think it's important for us to start building up those resources and that capacity now, so we're ready for it.

TFSR: I got to talk to the editors of the *Three Way Fight* book that PM just put out, which is great book. One of the critiques that the three-way fight blog and approach gives is around liberal anti-fascism and centrist anti-fascism. People don't have to be anarchists, communists, or socialists, although I don't think it can help but to have a good, strong, actual critical approach towards anti-fascism, where it's not just the "Republican is the problem." I would love to see more people focusing on the cultural project of getting that discussion out there; getting the debate out there and challenging people on their, like, what I would call shallow anti-fascism .

Trump and Trump's allies are a problem. So is Biden! Like, nobody should be brunching right now, if everybody cant brunch. Even though people need rest and recuperation, and the four years under Trump were horrific—especially for some people in particular—that's not an opportunity. Biden continued a lot of the same policies that Trump was doing. Some of those policies are like preexisting institutions, what the Right would call the deep state, but are just bureaucracies like the FBI, or ICE.

It feels like most of what Trump does is bringing the terror of the state to a more domestic sphere of people within the borders of the US, like, "Bring the troops home! We're gonna put them on the border, or we're gonna have them policing, like neighborhoods, or call out National Guard" or whatever. What Biden does is he externalizes the violence of the state—while continuing the internal, because that's what the state does—but it's more military interventions into different places. More arms funding and CIA ops and like Defense Department people going to train military in different parts of the world.

Walter: I think that's absolutely right. I want to go back to *Three Way Fight*. We know those cats pretty well. Love them. I love them. They're great people. Some real heavy hitters in the anti-fascist movement involved in that effort. *Three Way Fight* really takes the position of being revolutionary anti fascists. And we think

that's a very important part of the anti-fascist movement. And I know they would argue that all anti-fascists have to be revolutionary anti-fascists, and I see a lot of appeal with their argument. But I don't think that revolutionary anti-fascism is a good entry point for everyone.

I didn't come into the anti-fascist movement as a revolutionary, and it was the anti-fascist movement that actually radicalized me to a great extent. I think for a lot of people who are just becoming aware of seeing how Fascism is playing out in their own communities, they don't have the revolutionary mindset yet. They haven't really looked at things yet. They haven't been, you know, what color pill are we're dealing with these days? They haven't been revolutionary pill yet, I guess. I see anti fascism as a great gateway to get them involved in a movement doing good. They may have to ask those deeper questions about why fascism is rising now.

Sometimes, we get questions from people on our Tumblr; we get a lot of asks. We've probably dealt with 1,000 questions there over the 10 years. Sometimes people will ask, "Do you have to be a communist or socialist or anarchist to be an anti fascist?" And of course you don't. For us. If you are opposed to fascism and bigotry, and are willing to do something about it, you're in your antifa. That's the sole requirement to being in that movement.

Once you're in that movement, say you're a capitalist and also an anti-fascist, you're gonna start questioning things. It's gonna become very uncomfortable for you to explain not the juxtaposition but the discrepancies between the economic system you support, how it underlies fascism and how it is the origin of racism. I don't think people are necessarily there yet when they get into the anti-fascist movement.

Probably all revolutionaries are anti-fascist as sort of a default, right? Most revolutions are anti-fascist in some capacity but I don't think all anti-fascists are revolutionary yet. But I think the longer they stay in the movement, and the more they get involved in it, and read it and start to understand fascism and anti-fascism. I think it's only a matter of time before they have a revolutionary mindset, or an anarchist mindset, if you will. And I think *Three Way Fight* is doing really good work to making that clear. Get that book, folks!

TFSR: Right. Besides the revolutionary position, I'm impressed with people that are doing popular education around anti-fascism, generally, and making stuff. As you said, it makes perfect sense that not everyone's going to come into their anti-fascism from a revolutionary perspective. The anti-fascist movement does give a lot of opportunities for radicalization.

Walter: Yeah, for sure. I was part of Anti Racist Action when it was dominant in North America. We were very effective at recruiting really young people into a

radical political movement. A lot of these young people didn't come in as revolutionaries but they sure left as revolutionaries.

TFSR: Yeah. The milieu.

Walter: And that wasn't our intent. Our intent wasn't a front organization to make people revolutionaries. But it's just that in the course of doing that work—street level, anti-fascist work—you start to ask questions and you start to make connections between things. Pretty soon, you have a clear understanding that the capitalist economic system that we're under, underpins and supports fascism in the end. History backs us up with that.

TFSR: Does the Defense Fund offer post-release support? For example, if someone's gotten out of prison and needs a little money to get on their feet, is that support you sometimes offer?

Walter: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I'm gonna speak as a member of the Antifa International Collective and touch on two projects that we're handling. So one is, of course, the International Anti Fascist Defense Fund. And that's an emergency fund to mitigate the negative consequences that sometimes arise from doing anti-fascist work. We think prison is a pretty serious negative consequence of that! When you get out of prison they give you like \$20 and a bus ticket that puts you off on a bad start to your new life in the world.

We have done, on a case by case basis, we have provided some support to a few anti-fascists that were released from prison, including Kita recently. I think she's the most recent one that we provide support for. We're happy to do that. We're glad we were in a position that we can do that and help support them to make sure their transition back to the world is as smooth as possible.

The other project we have is the is July 25—International Day of Solidarity with Anti-Fascist Prisoners. Throughout the year, we take in contributions to a special fund we've set up to provide immediate support to anti-fascist prisoners and their families. Then every July 25, we disperse that money to every anti-fascist prisoner we have on our list that we are able to find a way to get the money to. Usually that's all of them. Usually, it's not hard for us to do with all of them.

If those anti-fascist prisoners are getting out, of course, we would see that funds should be used to support them as well. So we actually have two different things to support them. The solidarity with anti-fascist prisoners fundraising is mostly to help them while they're in prison, but we would also consider help using that to help them when they get out. The Defense Fund has helped more than a few anti-fascist prisoners readjust to life outside bars when they're released.

TFSR: Its really awesome that the Defense Fund and July 25 are able to focus on the post release. Post release solidarity and support is what gives the possibility for continuity of movements for people not just to get dumped out by the state and us to say, “We just don’t have the resources, sorry, good luck.” Post release support helps us keep each other safe as much as possible.

I’d love to hear your take on how anti-repression work and anti-fascist work. Whether or not you are serving time in prison, or you get injured, or you’re facing harassment, or you’re just like deep diving into terrible, terrible online worlds, or inserting yourself into groups to learn more to do research for doxxes, we put ourselves through a lot of physical, emotional and communal pains for this work. Because we think that getting people out of fascist movements, or making it impossible for them to stay in fascist movements and hurt people is important enough for us to put ourselves on the line.

Zooming out a little bit from the organizing that your groups do for July 25, I wonder if you could talk about the social and self-care that people do in anti-fascist movements and the importance of that not only for sustaining the movement, but also because we matter.

Walter: Let me give you a really concrete example that I can think of. For about five years, Antifa International had a project we were running called the International Violent Hate Crimes Research Project. We were trying to compile and document media reports of far-right and fascist violence around the world. So every week, a group of us would go through media searches and we would put together a list of people that were murdered or injured and we would document attacks by fascist and far-right actors.

I realized after a few months, that it was really mentally devastating to do that work. On weekends was working and I would be in a foul mood all weekend and take it out on my partner, which was completely unfair. It was because I was reading about horrific levels of violence all day and compiling it. Coming out of that, I was not in a good a mind state. I realized pretty quickly that I had to figure out how to manage that work.

We aren’t doing the project anymore now. Not because of that, but I think that is a factor in why we decided to discontinue it in the end. I think activists in general on the left tend to neglect their own self care and social care, because they feel sort of innately that it’s selfish or self-centered, and they should be doing more to help the people that they’re trying to help. That’s a recipe for burnout. We really have to guard against that. I think we’re getting a lot better at guarding against that and doing real and effective self-care and social care. But I still don’t think it’s focused to the extent that it should be or could be.

No one is going to be able to do good work in any movement if they're hurting. It's important for us to recognize that in ourselves and to also check in with each other, and then also to have resources to help when that's going on.

TFSR: So since there's an invite that someone put out for fundraising in commemoration around the July 25, Day of Solidarity with Anti-Fascist Prisoners, can you talk about the resources that you all have available on your website? Or provide some examples of what people have done in the past to make some really like successful events? (Whether successful because they raise money, successful because they're really fun for the people that are there and build movement, or both!)

Walter: Sure. First, I will provide background about July 25. It was first designated in 2014 as a Day of Solidarity with Jock Palfreeman. Jock is an Australian man who was sentenced to 20 years in prison in Bulgaria. While he was there as a tourist, he wound up being involved in a thing where he physically defended two Romani men who were being attacked by a fascist gang in the streets. During that fight one of the fascists, who happened to be the son of a prominent far right politician in Bulgaria, died. And Jock was basically railroaded through the court system and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the "murder". He served 11 years in prison in Bulgaria and was granted full parole after 11 years when suppressed evidence finally came out, exonerating him. Since then, July 25 has morphed into International Day of Solidarity with Anti-Fascist Prisoners, recognizing that there are dozens of others like Jock who've been locked up for the alleged crime of defending their communities from fascism.

This day was originally started by New York City Antifa. When the organizing work to handle the day outstripped their capacity, Antifa International stepped in to help out. We have a website set up its support antifaprisoners.wordpress.com. If you go there, you'll find history of the day translated into 18 different languages. We have a current list of anti-fascist prisoners up. I think we're missing some people right now because there was recent mass arrests in Russia, and we try to get more information on them

You'll find information there about who the prisoners are and how you can support or write to them. We have downloadable artwork, flyers, and posters on that website that people can use to put up materials. And we also have a list of actions people can take in support of Anti-Fascist prisoners. A lot of people have done banner hangs in support of that date. I can think of probably a couple of dozen that have happened, which is great. People have found ways to raise money to support anti-fascist prisoners and their families. So, putting on fundraising events on July 25 or around that day is amazing.

Our own group Antifa International does an online t-shirt sale of a shirt that was designed by a former Anti-Fascist prisoner that we helped, and then we donate the proceeds from the shirts every year on July 25 to the anti-fascists currently locked up. We also have a standing fundraiser to support anti-fascist prisoners and their families that people can contribute to taking solidarity photos and putting them up online is great a couple of antifascist groups have done great events on July 25, where they get together at a bar or event space and they sit around, listen to music, and write letters or postcards to anti-fascist prisoners.

I think any antifascist prisoner, any prisoner, will tell you that nothing is more important to them than getting mail from people on the outside, which is like manna from heaven. I think that's a great event to do and show real solidarity with them. There's really no limit to the kind of actions that you could pull off on July 25 in support or in solidarity with anti-fascist prisoners, and you could dedicate an action to our comrades. We encourage anyone to use their imaginations and come up with something. If you are going to post something on social media. We're asking people to use the hashtag #J25Antifa. That will make it easier for people to find stuff online that day and see what other people are up to cool.

TFSR: Do you have any suggestions for people who are going to be posting photos onto social media? For example, safer ways of doing that like clearing EXIF data or blurring faces? I would assume that a lot of people are going to find this idea to be pretty self-explanatory and pretty basic, but I would hate for someone to post something unsafe.

Walter: Oh, absolutely, that makes sense. I'm not a digital security expert and I don't want to delve too far into all that stuff here. But I think common sense goes far here. Use good examples. We have good examples on our on the J25 Antifa website that people can see to sort of get an idea of the do's and don'ts here. Regarding anything online or on social media, when it comes to anti-fascism, you want to take security precautions.

TFSR: We recently had a chat about the June 11 Day of Solidarity with Marius Mason and other long-term anarchist prisoners that focused on memory and connections between folks behind the walls and folks outside. July 25 isn't specifically about anarchists or about long term prisoners necessarily, but it does seem an important opportunity to strengthen our ties of affinity across borders, through international support and education, as well as across time by recognizing that there have been anti-fascists as long as fascism has existed.

A few years ago, some folks were planning around here were plan-

ning a Dan and Spit Fest in commemoration of two members of anti-racist action who were murdered in Las Vegas by Nazis. For me, this is an interesting example of creating a musical multi-day event that would bring people together, like a rock against racism type thing, an opportunity for people to do that cross generational connection.

When I spoke to one of the editors of *We Go Where They Go*, they were talking about the importance of ARA in the period that you were talking about. Tabling at concerts, tabling it fests, touring with bands, to do this sort of outreach.

So, long winded, as is my style. Can you talk about the emotional and movement space opened by public commemoration of anti-fascist organizing history and vision?

Walter: Sorry, I might get a little emotional here. I was in Anti Racist Action when Dan and Spit were murdered. Dan and Spit were two Las Vegas leaders of the sort of street level radical anti-fascist anti-racism. They were members of both Las Vegas Anti Racist Action and Las Vegas Unity Skinheads. They were set up and lured out to the desert and murdered in cold blood by a gang of Neo Nazis there. I remember all that very clearly. Our collective was the only anti-fascists present at the second murder trial to cover it. It was pretty harrowing stuff.

I will say straight up that holding a music event in honor of Dan and Spit... I can't think of anything more appropriate or anything that either than would have been more into, because they were very into music. The thing about anti-fascists and street level anti-fascism in that era was very much tied to sort of a music scene. It was a main organizing point for a lot of anti-fascists in North America. I know hundreds, if not thousands, of people became involved in the movement because of what was going on in their music scenes, or because they made contact with organized anti-fascists at concerts or what have you. That's always a great place to do that. I think it's really important to remember the sacrifices that people have made in defiance of fascism and to try and stop fascism, including being murdered.

We have a list have maybe two dozen anti-fascists who are currently in prison because of their anti-fascism. Its important for us to not forget them. I think one thing that we do a lot better than fascists is we remember people that have made these sacrifices, and we don't forget them. We commemorate them and we support them. We continue to build relationships with them.

Any way we can do that is as important in terms of anti-fascist work as confronting Nazis in the streets. Because if we're not doing that work, if we're letting people down when they make the sacrifices, then we're not building a very strong movement or movement with good principles of solidarity. Having those principles of solidarity is what separates us from fascists, and what demonstrates

our understanding of humanity. This is a key way how we differ from fascism. I hope that was too soap-boxy for you.

TFSR: No, that was beautiful. I think it shows the way forward. It gives an introduction for folks that are maybe new to things or interested to be able to come and share space. Share your emotion, get some education, make some connections and move forward with that, hopefully. It also models, the kind of world that we want to see, right. It's a world that has art. It's a world that values people for the work that they put in it values, community values, also, beauty and solidarity.

Walter: Right now as we're talking, in Sydney, Australia, there is a 10 band all-day benefit show for the Defense Fund happening there. I've never been to Australia and I've never met the people organizing it. But one of the main organizers is an anti-fascist skinhead who we helped out after he got in a confrontation with some Piss Boys there, which is what I like to call Proud Boys. He wound up facing some assault charges as a result. We were able to help him secure a decent lawyer and he got off on very reduced charges. So he understands better than any of us really, the importance of these projects of solidarity and support. He's taken that and he's moved that forward by putting together a 10 band show that's happening right now in Sydney. Which looks amazing, I wish it could have been there.

Showing support and solidarity for people encourages them to stay in the movement, contribute more and build the movement. That's how we're going to win.

TFSR: Walter, thank you so much for having this conversation. Is there anything that I didn't ask about that you wanted? Any last thoughts that you want to share?

Walter: No, I don't think so. I'll send you a bunch of links for the show notes if you want. Thank you for the opportunity. We're huge fans of Final Straw Radio. Please keep doing what you do. It's so important for coverage of this stuff you guys cover to get out there in the world.

TFSR: You're not allowed to make me cry on mic. Thank you so much.

Walter: It's absolutely crucial. There's not enough people doing what you do. So thank you for what you do.

TFSR: Yeah. Thank you, same to you.

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