

Antifa Attack Peaceful Demonstrators to Stop Hate at Berkeley

The Washington Post has the latest chapter in the Battle of Berkeley, which broke out over the weekend. Here is [the colorful lead](#):

Their faces hidden behind black bandannas and hoodies, about a 100 anarchists and antifa – “anti-fascist” – barreled into a protest Sunday afternoon in Berkeley’s Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park.

Jumping over plastic and concrete barriers, the group melted into a larger crowd of around 2,000 that had marched peacefully throughout the sunny afternoon for a “Rally Against Hate” gathering.

Shortly after, violence began to flare. A pepper-spray wielding Trump supporter [was smacked to the ground with homemade shields](#). Another was [attacked by five black-clad antifas](#), each windmilling kicks and punches into a man desperately trying to protect himself. A conservative group leader retreated for safety behind a line of riot police as marchers chucked water bottles, shot off pepper spray and screamed “fascist go home!”

All told, the [Associated Press reported](#) at least five individuals were attacked. [An AP reporter witnessed](#) the assaults. Berkeley Police’s Lt. Joe Okies told The Washington Post the rally resulted in “13 arrests on a range of charges including assault with a deadly weapon, obstructing a police officer, and various Berkeley municipal code violations.”

Antifa peacefully beating down a Trump supporter ! This is

*The ALTLeft! [@realDonaldTrump](#) [@seanhannity](#) [#Berkeley](#)
[pic.twitter.com/FEIq3QINAL](#)*

– Oak-Town?Unfiltered™ (@hrtablaze) [August 27, 2017](#)

The spasms of violence are unsurprising to anyone who has been following the tactics of these self-described “antifascists.” They’ve been candid about their willingness to use violence to fight right wing extremism (or, rather, what they identify as right wing extremism).

“You need violence in order to protect non-violence,” a 20-year-old Antifa member, Emily Rose Nauert, recently [told the New York Times](#).

What’s more troubling, however, is that many intellectuals seem to approve of the group’s violent tactics.

A Johns Hopkins professor recently authored a (bizarre) editorial in the Washington Post [that said](#) it was time to “start throwing rocks” in the effort to defeat white supremacy.

While some notable progressives—such as Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz and Norm Chomsky— have condemned Antifa, there has been much hand-wringing over calls to denounce the group, which uses [terrorist-like tactics](#) to suppress free speech and assembly.

The same day peaceful demonstrators were attacked at Berkeley by mobs of Antifa wearing masks, the *New York Times* published an op-ed by Todd Gitlin, a professor of journalism and at Columbia, [defending Antifa](#).

“So far, there is a fearful asymmetry between the far right and antifa: Over the decade ending in 2016, estimates of the percentage of politically motivated killings committed by right-wing extremists range from 73 to 92 percent... Despite the spurious rhetoric of equivalency, supporters of antifa have, to date, killed no one.”

Saying [a pox on both their houses](#)—those of the alt-right and the radical left—is a non-starter for many progressives, as I recently learned discussing the group with an old friend.

When I, tongue in cheek, wondered if a solution might not be to arm the alt-right and Antifa to the hilt, rent them AT&T Stadium for a couple days, and let them have it out, I received this response:

“When I read these garbage comparisons, what I’m hearing between the lines is an attempt to further normalize the alt-right movement by painting it as just another political end of the spectrum that we see on the left and the right,” he said. “I can’t understand how any rational person can compare the two.”

The many people who sympathize with Antifa seem intent on making the discussion one of *degree*. Sure, Antifa might be a bit extreme, at times. But how can a group organized to oppose hate be as bad as that hate group?

This is dangerous thinking. Splitting hairs between who was worse, the Bolsheviks or the Brownshirts, distracts from the truth of the matter: they were both evil.

And as Reason magazine points out, any group that claims "hate speech is not free speech" is going to get quickly find violence a suitable means to achieve its end. People of good will should stop defending Antifa.