

Three Ways Antifa Is Like the Nazis They Condemn

When the antifa phenomenon arrived on the scene several years ago, [I observed](#) the name of this new movement was rather oxymoronic. Antifa, one college professor claimed, is very postmodern in its mindset, and as such, replaces objective reality with “lived experience.”

This relativist mindset, I noted, was very much like the one Benito Mussolini held to in [his description of fascism](#):

Everything I have said and done in these last years is relativism by intuition... If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and those who claim to be the bearers of objective, immortal truth ... then there is nothing more relativistic than Fascist attitudes and activity... From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist infers that everybody has the right to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to enforce it with all the energy of which he is capable.

The inkling that Antifa has a lot in common with the fascists it claims to oppose has quite a bit of supporting material. In his [August editorial for *Chronicles Magazine*](#), editor-in-chief Paul Gottfried draws on his research for his forthcoming book *Antifascism: The Course of a Crusade* (Cornell-NIU Press, 2021) to make parallels between the fascist Nazis of yore and the Antifa of today.

Gottfried starts with the caveat that there are a number of differences between Antifa and the Nazis. Unlike the latter, “American Antifa members... loathe their own race and nation and are doing everything possible to weaken them.” Antifa members also depart from Nazi tradition through their failure to

revere historical heroes of the past, a fact evidenced by the vitriol they direct at statues of George Washington and others.

Yet as Gottfried points out, "political movements often imitate those that they purport to stand in opposition to." Hitler's Nazis did this with the enemy ideology of communism, borrowing "Concentration camps, a totalitarian state structure, [and] ubiquitous secret police" from it. Antifa can claim they are against fascism until they are blue in the face, Gottfried implies, but history and the tendencies of human nature demonstrate otherwise.

The second similarity between Antifa and Nazis is their violent, destructive nature. "Antifa has no rational or even pseudo-rational plans to reconstruct society," Gottfried writes, "but focuses on venting destructive energy against hate targets." The Nazis did the same, venting hate toward an ever-widening circle of "Jews, socialists, clericalists, and other supposed enemies of the German people."

Wide-spread social support is another thing these two alleged opposites have in common. Both "have built on a vast support system that gave their unruly behavior social acceptability," Gottfried notes. Today's Antifa activists, although condemned by President Trump as a terrorist organization, are openly embraced by other politicians. They are also backed by corporations and receive favorable treatment by the media. Such treatment "recalls the public relations advantage held by the Nazis, who reveled in the sympathy of many Germans while they were rising as an electoral force." These Nazi sympathizers "viewed Hitler and his paramilitary organizations as misunderstood patriots."

Like it or not, Antifa and its tactics are probably here to stay, Gottfried implies, noting that political praise and fear of their tactics makes them a force to be reckoned with. Those who fear Antifa, however, have one thing going for them.

Antifa members, like many coming out of today's education system, seem to struggle with clear and coherent thinking. "[E]arly Nazi theorists and apologists generally made much more sense than today's academic and media defenders of our rioting radicals," is one of Gottfried's consoling final thoughts. "Here we are encountering not so much sinister thinkers as tiresome crybabies."

Gottfried's insights should give us pause. Many today are quick to point out Nazi-like behavior and totalitarian tendencies in today's leaders. As members of a republican system of government, it's wise and right that citizens are on guard against such attitudes. But have we turned a blind eye to those same attitudes unfolding in our streets through Antifa activities? Perhaps it's time for us to wake up and realize that Antifa is playing the same game as the fascists it loudly disavows.

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