

FALSE PROMISES OF SAFETY & THE POLITICS OF DANGER



A Personal Narrative of Safety in Danger

We permit corporations to not only lay off workers and to threaten the balance of workers while cutting their salaries, but to poison the air and water to boot. We permit the police, Klan and Nazis to terrorize whatever sector of the population they wish without repaying them back in any kind. In short, by not engaging in mass organizing and delivering war to the oppressors, we become Anarchists in name only.

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I have never known safety. Ever since I became aware of my blackness I have known white supremacist violence, I have known violence based on other identities too; my queerness, my trans-ness. All I have ever known is violence.

I grew up in a small town, and became intimately acquainted with white supremacist violence. From swastikas graffitied to slurs shouted at me from passing vehicles, to physical confrontation to having my house shot up before I left. I have known police violence, getting stopped for 'fitting the description', being stopped for 'being in the wrong place', I have been beaten; I have had guns drawn on me. Multiple times I've been one step away from being nothing more than a hashtag. These are all too common experiences for those of us who dare exist in black and brown skin in a world that has been painted white at gunpoint.

The modern black liberation movement, in response to this massive violence levied against us, gives us a politic of safety endemic in anti-oppression practices. It's a disempowering, paternalistic narrative that equates us being in danger to being defenseless and needing to be protected by so-called white allies. It ensures that the control of situations always lies in the hands of these white allies, who make sure never to push situations, to never confront the police. While it rejects respectability politics on the surface, it has a strong ideological adherence to non-violence that tries to reinforce this idea of us and our resistance being peaceful, non-violent. This is both a lie and a trap.

Black liberation, much like decolonization, has always been a violent idea; from slave insurrections, to the black power movement, to today's era of anti-police riots. Trying to come off as peaceful and non-violent leaves black militants isolated and easy pickings for state repression and violence. This ideological adherence to peaceful resistance and non-violence also sabotages the long term project of black liberation. As Fredrick Douglass said, "power concedes nothing without struggle." When the state feels its power is threatened, it will come guns drawn in the night[1], it will drop bombs on us[2], it will use every tool at its disposal to destroy us[3]. Black liberation threatens the very foundation of the state and every entity founded and built up by white supremacy. The black power movement of the past knew this and was greeted with a particularly brutal attack by the state. In the wake of the destruction of the black power movement, it makes sense why we would be fed a politic based in safety. The state is powerful and it is scary.

Those that push this politic tend to have stake in the current state of the world. They hold some kind of power, or want to hold power. Academics, politicians, career

activists, the 'good' black cops; they all push these kinds of politics. For them, the system isn't the issue, just that those who hold the reigns are all white. They want the power of this white supremacist system for themselves, to be wielded against their own people. For its survival and the survival of its legitimacy, white supremacy obliges.

We live in a scary and particularly dangerous time. The state has been rapidly expanding its power and taking away what little protections we managed to scrape together. This expanding power brings with it intense repression from the state and outright violence from the defenders of the current order [4]. Under Trump, we are facing a reinvigorated and particularly violent insurgent far right. It is only going to get worse. Trying to be peaceful makes sense as a short term, knee-jerk reaction; or, as a way to maintain power in the current system. In reality, politics that preach peace and nonviolence only put us in more danger.

Non-violence only has the capability to win reforms and moral victories. Reforms can be and are undone or rendered useless. We could spend all our energy trying to win reforms and scrambling to defend them as they come under attack time and time again, but that's a quick way to burn out and erode our movement. Moral victories won't ever stop bullets. If we want to be safe, if we want to be free, we have to build collective power on our terms rather than struggle for representation in our subjugation.

SAFTEY IS A MYTH

If your goal is, like mine, to not just fight for black liberation but win, then instead of a politics rooted in a false idea of safety, I would put forth a politic of danger. That is, rather than shying away from confrontation, we seek it out and fight on our terms; physically defending ourselves when they come for us. A politic not of nonviolence, but one that states we are ultimately safer when we fight.

In 2015, I came to Olympia. Here, I came into the struggle for liberation by painting the streets with neo-nazi blood. On May 30th, in response to the shooting of Andre and Bryson[5], neo-nazis tried to have a march in support of the police[6]. This was one of my first times in the street. I remember being there with my friends, we were all a little nervous. I was scared as there weren't that many of us. From across the street, a group of 30 people dressed head to toe in black came in unison and my fear eased. More people dressed in black trickled in; some gave me and my friends small lead pipes. Eventually, there was a crowd of 300+ of us and we decided instead of waiting for them, we'd go looking for them. We took the streets with the chant of

“Nazis out of Oly, take the streets!”.

My heart was racing; I had never felt this kind of energy. I was scared earlier, but now I didn't just feel safe, I felt powerful. We went up and down 4th looking for them, but there was no sight of them. On one of the loops back down 4th a group of 12 neo-nazis are standing on a side street and the crowd notices them. Someone yells and I come to see what the commotion is. I catch the tail end of it, a water bottle flies and someone lets off a fire extinguisher at the nazis, they break and run. I push to the front, the crowd is chasing them. We pass by a business that has chairs stacked outside and people grab them and throw them at the nazis. I chase down one who is twice my size and throw my pipe at the back of his head. He goes down hard and when he gets up there is blood coming from his nose and mouth.

I catch a glimpse of his face and recognize the look of absolute terror. That is the same look I gave when I was confronted with white supremacist violence but this time the balance of power is shifted. Tonight, I am not the object of their violence; they are the object of my violence, our collective violence.

They get to their trucks and try to leave, their windows are shattered as they speed off. We return with chants of “Whose Streets? Our Streets!”. I have never been safer in my life.

I have many stories like this, involving white supremacists and the police.

DON'T BE SAFE – BE DANGEROUS

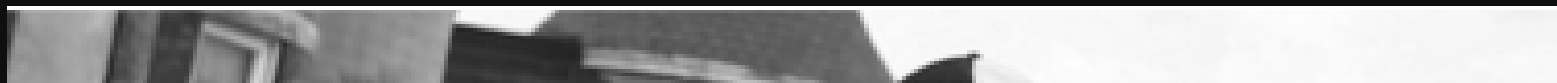
Whether we like it or not, we are engaged in a war that has been going on for 500 years. It is a war that has continued since the dawn of colonization, since the dawn of white supremacy as the order of the world. The fore-bearers of our struggle killed slave masters, klansmen, and cops. The history of our struggle is awash in the blood of the oppressor.

Our ancestors understood that we would only be safe when we are free and that to get free we have to fight. When we know how to fight, not just how to defend ourselves but how to go on the offensive, the balance of power will shift and no longer will we be only victims. In the long run, we will be safest when we are not afraid to militantly resist and when we link up and struggle with other oppressed peoples. When we build collective, autonomous power on our terms and have the knowledge, tools, and resolve to defend it, white supremacy and all its nation-state and autonomous

guardians will not stand a chance.

See you in the streets...

- [1] <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/38611-the-assassination-of-fred-hampton-47-years-later>)
- [2] <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/13/406243272/im-from-philly-30-years-later-im-still-trying-to-make-sense-of-the-move-bombing>
- [3] <https://www.democracynow.org/topics/cointelpro>
- [4] <https://itsgoingdown.org/conflict-minneapolis-terrorism-civil-war/>
- [5] <http://olywip.org/a-mothers-plea-for-justice/>
- [6] <https://olydocuments.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/what-happen-here-the-events-in-olympia-on-the-evening-of-may-the-30th/>





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