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# DEBUNKING <sup>the</sup> 3 BIGGEST MYTHS ABOUT ANTIFA

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REVERE - PRESS  
9. 2 2017

The “antifa”—or *antifascist*—movement has captivated the American public’s attention as of late, especially in the wake of the deadly far-right gathering in Charlottesville, VA on August 12, and clashes in Berkeley, California on August 28. But many myths about the movement have been circulated in media reports and op-eds, creating something of a moral panic about the fight against fascism. Below are three of the most pernicious myths about antifa and evidence as to why they are dangerously wrong.

The aftermath of Charlottesville may have broken the back of the Alt Right’s fascist wing. The street-fighting with antifascists caused the rally itself to be canceled. Afterward, *the Far Right suffered many material losses*: Nazi websites have been knocked off the internet; nationwide marches canceled; leaders have been arrested for felonies; and numerous digital platforms canceled accounts. Richard Spencer’s AltRight.com sees Charlottesville as a major defeat and is now advocating the clandestine “leaderless resistance” strategy because they feel it is pointless to organize openly.

It’s evident that public resistance works when confronting far-right groups, and antifa are not the left-wing terrorists despite how they have been portrayed. And so perhaps we should ask ourselves: *why are so many mainstream media sources using dishonest methods to create a folk panic about antifa, and who benefits as a result?*

## MYTH #3 — *Antifa is a Gift to the Far Right*

Many pundits have repeated the idea that antifa is a “major gift to the right.” Furthermore, it is often argued that without antifa, the far right would simply wither away.

In fact, the Alt Right grew exceptionally well before it faced organized street opposition. It is far from clear that the movement has grown in size due to the clashes, but there is abundant evidence that it has been hurt by them.

After Yiannopoulos’s February talk in Berkeley was cancelled, the resulting media glare brought attention to his unsavory views on underage sex. As a result, his book deal was canceled and he is no longer a sought-after speaker for the Right.

## MYTH # 1— *Violence is at the Core of Antifa*

Sensationalist media coverage, especially since January, has portrayed violence as the core element of antifascist activism. In fact, around 95 percent of antifa work does not involve violence. Media outlets seeking titillating stories fixate on that 5 percent. And what violence does occur—especially in Berkeley—has been wildly exaggerated.

While meeting fascists wherever they gather is certainly part of it, most antifascist work consists of researching far-right activities; revealing the identities of fascists in their community; advocating that businesses refuse to provide resources to far-right groups; and engaging in educational programs, rallies and benefits. This week, for instance, after Hurricane Harvey, antifascists are **organizing relief efforts**—while Alt Right groups formed armed patrols to stop supposed looters.

## MYTH #2—*The Violence is Equal on “Both Sides”*

The far-right is an incredibly violent political movement, having killed almost **450 people** in the U.S. since 1990.

In the media’s drive to create a “both sides are equal” narrative, many mainstream press sources wildly exaggerated antifa violence. For example, regarding a 2016 Nazi demonstration in Sacramento Politico wrote that “counter-protesters linked to antifa and affiliated groups... attacked, causing a riot after which at least 10 people were hospitalized, some with stab wounds.” What they omit is that nine of those injuries were caused by the Nazis.

The far right is responsible for at least six murders this year alone. These include the February 2017 xenophobic murder of an Indian man in Kansas; a March fatal stabbing in Times Square (the alleged murderer wanted to kill all the black men he could find); and a May fatal stabbing allegedly by a man who had Alt Right affiliations. Later that month, two men were murdered after intervening against an Islamophobic tirade; the alleged killer had previously attended an Alt Right rally. And on August 12 in Charlottesville, one of the participants in the fascist-led rally ***rammed his car into an anti-racist march***, killing one person and injuring 19 others.

And these dramatic incidents don’t include the January 2017 shooting of a counter-protestor against Alt-Right speaker Milo Yiannopoulos in Seattle. Nor do they include the thousands of hate crimes—including murders, assaults, and attacks on mosques and synagogues—that occur annually.

I have found no reports of recent lethal attacks by antifascists. The the only death I have found was in Portland, OR, which occurred during a clash between anti-racist and Nazi skinheads in 1993.

So, since 1990, ***the ratio of deaths caused by the far right versus antifa is 450 to 1.***