

# El Paso, white supremacist terror and fascism

written by Sharon Black

August 17, 2019



We should remind ourselves that white supremacist terror is not new to U.S. soil. Historically, it has been intertwined with the development of capitalism. First with the theft of Indigenous lands and later with the institution of chattel slavery.

The stolen land of Indigenous people and the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans provided the basis for the expansion of capitalism on this continent, and, along with

the Northern troops, it was the General Strike of Black labor, both enslaved and free, that played a pivotal role in bringing down the slavocracy in the Civil War (1861-1865).

What was immediately ushered in after the defeat of the slavocracy was one of the most thoroughly democratic periods in U.S. history — Reconstruction. Reconstruction not only brought change and power to Black workers, it also ushered in progress for landless poor whites.

All of this is brilliantly documented in W.E.B. Du Bois' seminal book, [Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880.](#)

It took the extralegal power of the murderous Ku Klux Klan to bury this revolution in blood through lynchings, torture, mutilations and terror. The Klan was a continuation of the pre-war slave patrols but on a much larger scale. In both cases, the purpose was essentially the same: protecting the slave owner class.

The betrayal and defeat of Reconstruction was fueled by the fears of Wall Street and the Northern finance capitalists. The idea of dividing up the slave owners' plantations was considered far too radical for the Northern bourgeoisie.

In the final analysis, it was the violence and terror of the Klan, which was led by former Confederate officers and plantation owners, that crushed this brief period of "people's democracy."

The legacy of the defeat of Reconstruction continues today. In the end, the vast tracts of land were back in the hands of wealthy landowners and the promise of "40 acres and a mule" was never fulfilled.

## **Galveston, Texas**

There is nothing that illustrates this more graphically than the recent actions of the

two Galveston, Texas, police on horseback leading a handcuffed Black man by a rope through the street.

This disgusting image is painfully reminiscent of the slave hunters of the past, who tied up captured slaves and paraded them publicly to discourage escape. This fact could not be lost on the present-day descendants of enslaved people.

### **Is gun control the answer?**

It is critical that revolutionaries and socialists understand and distinguish the pain of those who have suffered horrific losses in mass shootings and those who have had their communities decimated by gun violence, from the cynical manipulations of politicians and their pundits.

In these former cases, it's understandable that people who feel powerless and in pain turn to the demand for gun control, especially since it's what receives the most attention in the bourgeois media.

The problem is that politicians promoting gun control from both big business parties, Democrats and Republicans, have done more to cloud the issue than to lend clarity or address the root causes of violence.

We need to understand what class forces are involved, that is, who has power and who doesn't, and what is propelling political and social developments. First, guns and all kinds of weapons are already in the hands of extralegal white supremacists and fascist groups.

It is important to point out two things about the state, with all of its police agencies, whether they are local police and sheriff's departments, or national entities like the Customs and Border Patrol or the FBI. First, the state is not neutral. And it is certainly not on the side of the poor, the oppressed or the working class in general. Second, the state and its police agencies are all armed.

The repressive apparatus of the state has grown ever larger.

[It has been thoroughly documented](#) that members of white supremacist groups and individuals who have similar ideas, including virulently misogynist and Islamophobic ideologies, work inside police departments, in jails and prisons, serving as guards, as secret service agents, in sheriff's departments and as border patrol agents.

The [ProPublica group recently revealed that close to 10,000 Customs and Border Patrol agents](#), present and former, were part of a secret Facebook group that posted violent and racist material mocking migrant deaths and posting a rape meme of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who had visited and spoken out against the horrific conditions at the border camps.

Police killings of innocent Black and Brown people have been so frequent that they have been referred to as "modern day lynchings." On Aug. 8, 2019, a study published by the National Academy of Sciences says that the sixth leading cause of death for youth is police violence. The study found that Black men and women, Indigenous men and women, and Latinx men have a higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than white civilians.

Are we to believe that these same agencies of the state, whether it's the police or the Customs and Border Patrol, will disarm and disband the neo-Nazi, white supremacist movement? It is a lot like "asking the fox to guard the henhouse."

If there is any sincerity in those who advance gun control, then the demand must be made to disarm the police, the sheriff's departments, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and all the racist state institutions that are armed. It means that we must also assert the right of the oppressed to self-defense and community control.

Matsemela-Ali Odom exposes the proliferation of guns in the community and the connection to colonial war in his article ["Militarism leads to gun violence](#)

[and the teachings of the late Michael Zinzun.”](#)

To build solidarity with people around the world who are suffering from war, or indirectly from sanctions, it is critical to call for disarming and disbanding the CIA and the Pentagon, both of which act as global police.

### **Rooted in the failure of capitalism**

The screed written by the racist El Paso killer, who stated that he was targeting Mexican people, while rambling, is a classic fascist document.

Whether the recent mass shootings are the acts of individuals or not, there is no doubt that they are all influenced by a fascist movement that is global in scope: from the U.S. and Europe to Brazil and the streets of Venezuela, where “guarimbas” target and burn to death Afro-Venezuelans for allegedly being Chavistas.

These forces have one major thing in common, they are used directly to turn back the gains of the working class and to crush any incipient struggle for liberation.

This is not accidental. It is a result of capitalism, which is now an interconnected global system that is in decay. It has forced workers to compete globally with each other in a never ending spiral that produces poverty and alienation.

Neoliberalism has failed, as attested by the “Yellow Vest” protest movement in France. Not only has the gap between rich and poor widened, but the next generation faces the possibility of planetary failure from unbridled climate change.

It is not necessary for the different white supremacist, xenophobic and misogynist killers in El Paso, Texas, or Dayton, Ohio, or Gilroy, Calif., to have known each other. Their actions flow organically from the present social, political and economic conditions. This is, of course, not to assert that there are not organized groups who do conspire.

One of the hallmarks of capitalism is that production is not planned but is instead determined by the anarchy of the market and by what is profitable. Despite the fact that members of the ruling class conspire to keep themselves wealthy and in power, the system itself operates beyond their mere will. This is equally reflected in social conditions.

### **Trump is very much a part of this fascist movement**

When Trump calls out to his supporters, “Who’s going to stop the invasion?” referring to immigrants and refugees, whether they are Latinx, Caribbean, African, Indian, Filipino or Chinese; when he tells women-of-color representatives, “Go back where you came from,” he is loading the gun. It doesn’t matter whether he fired it or not. The orders are clear.

One would ask how is it possible that Donald Trump is tolerated by even his own wealthy class or certainly by those in the political establishment who might have preferred to have all of this hidden and sugar-coated regardless of party affiliation. Which sections of the ruling class, of the banks and big businesses, does he most serve? What does this mean for the possibility of imperialist war? Both are important questions.

But the immediate answer is rather straightforward. The very rich are making money, or more precisely, profit! And a lot of it!

This is made possible by the unfettered exploitation of the world’s working class and by the capitalist system’s introduction of technology on a level previously unheard of in history. In the hands of private ownership, it makes work a nightmare. Ask the Amazon workers.

The subject of Trump may occupy the minds of everyday people. But the question that surely haunts the more conscious members of the class of bankers and

billionaires is power, that is, how they can keep it, and what if their modern slaves rebel.

“What happens if the system falters and collapses?” Some of their economic thinkers are predicting another possible economic collapse similar to the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in 2008, which became a worldwide crisis.

Vince Copeland, in the [“Unfinished Revolution,”](#) explained it best when he described how the slave owners were more conscious of and frightened by a slave rebellion than even by the enslaved peoples themselves or the abolitionists. They understood their own crimes better than anyone and lived in fear. They remembered Nat Turner.

What a fascist movement does regardless of rhetoric is preserve the power of the big banks and billionaires. In many cases, it paves the way to imperialist war.

Vice President Mike Pence’s words on Aug. 11, 2019, at a campaign rally in Atlanta, just five miles from where the Democratic Socialists of America were conducting a conference, shouldn’t be lost on anyone. He said, “The moment America becomes a socialist country is the moment America ceases to be America.”

For the capitalist class, it doesn’t really matter what kind of socialism is envisioned (at least at this moment), whether it’s a revolutionary version or simply a reform that will cut into their profit margin. This attitude would change immediately, of course, if they were confronted with either revolution or reform.

### **Solidarity is our immediate and urgent task**

Our most immediate and urgent task is to fight to stop the war on migrants and refugees and to actively fight white supremacy. This includes shutting down the camps, literally if possible, and making sure that every effort is undertaken to organize defense of all who are under attack. It is through struggle that workers

learn not only solidarity, but also who is the enemy and who are our friends.

### **Socialism is the answer**

There is no returning to a so-called better period of capitalism. It didn't exist then, and it doesn't exist now. The only answer is to move forward in getting rid of capitalism and building socialism, a system based on human needs, which includes cooperation and planning, a system that will allow us to begin to challenge the longstanding ideologies of white supremacy, sexism and misogyny, anti-LGBTQ2S bigotry and much more, so that all human beings can develop to their fullest capacity.

