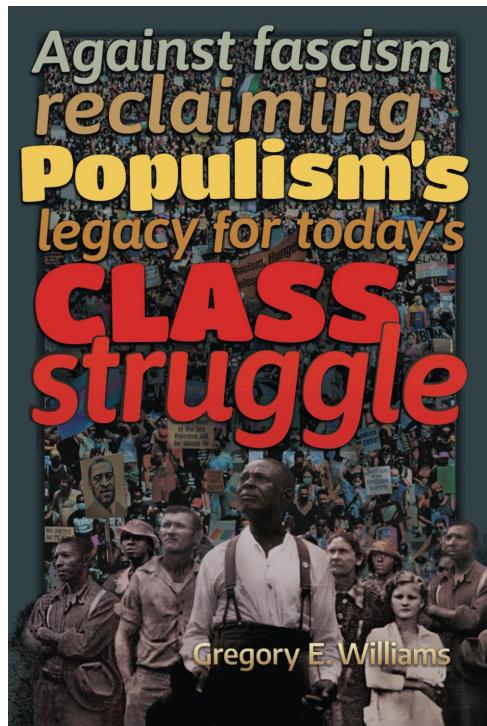




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Fascism is capitalism in crisis: Socialist author urges revolutionary readiness at LA book talk

written by Gregory E. Williams
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On May 3, the Struggle for Socialism Party Los Angeles branch discussed the new

book, “Against fascism: reclaiming populism’s legacy for today’s class struggle, compiled by Louisiana socialist Gregory Williams. Following is the opening presentation for the class series.

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John Parker: This is a time when the attacks of fascism are so clear, so blatant. We work with a group called the Community Self-Defense Coalition, doing daily patrols. Over 60 organizations are part of it. If you see ICE, there’s a number you can call to bring the patrol out.

This work helps empower the community to fight back and chase out these ICE forces when they try to kidnap folks. You know, let folks know you’ve got to have a signed warrant before you can go in.

I was on patrol yesterday, and I guess I’m making the point about why that’s so important for this class. Often people think about the issues, and what can be done about them, and they just think, “It’s a damn shame they’re doing this to these people.” But when you see it happening to you and your neighbors, and your children — all the time so blatantly — you don’t have a choice. You’ve *got* to get involved.

But to understand how to get involved, you’ve got to know what the situation is. What is it that’s causing this? What’s fundamentally creating this problem?

How can we get ahead of it? If we understand what’s going on, we can try to get ahead of it. Gregory Williams analyzed a lot of the stuff in the class struggle, from a Marxist point of view, on what’s going on now with Trump. This book is going to give us a heads up and the tools to be able to fight back. We’re so glad to have the author here today.

Gregory Williams: Thanks, John. What you said dovetails into what I’m planning to

say. Thank you for having me here.

We've published this new book through Struggle - La Lucha, the magazine we put together through the Struggle for Socialism Party. Since this is class one, I'll give an overview of the book, or try. It's challenging because it's a compilation dealing with people's struggles in multiple periods. It's going from the late 19th century all the way to now, or the beginning of this year, and Trump's second term.

But when we look at these periods, side by side, common themes emerge. And they're things our movement needs to understand in the fight against capitalism and fascism. So even though the book goes into a lot of history, it's really about strategizing in our current moment.

From the back cover summary:

"Fascist movements are on the rise worldwide, attacking working-class and oppressed people. The authors of this collection argue that capitalism's inherent dynamics are the cause, as with fascism in the 20th century. Fascism is the capitalist class's response to a system in crisis.

"They use racism and misogyny, transphobia and homophobia to try to beat back the diverse working class while amassing more wealth for themselves. But the workers beat back fascism before, and we can do it again.

"Workers have the power to eliminate the root cause of fascism by transforming society with socialist revolution, and this book is about getting us there. All the pieces in the book come from fighters in the revolutionary struggle, and most have already been published in Struggle - La Lucha.

"Topics include populism, a progressive farmer's movement of the 1890s; the contemporary trans struggle; the Silicon Valley MAGA connection; the legacy of the Jena Six; the abortion rights movement in the South; the real motives of right-wing

governors; and the fight against KKK leader David Duke.”

Analyzing our moment

I want to talk about one of the book’s themes, and that’s the question of how we analyze a given political period in terms of the stage of the class struggle, the balance of forces, whether the period overall is more progressive or reactionary, because that affects how we organize.

I’ll focus on the David Duke section just for some examples because it offers some keys for how to read the book, and for strategizing in our political moment.

The section consists of three pieces written by Marxist leader Sam Marcy on Duke’s 1991 gubernatorial campaign in Louisiana.

I’ll paraphrase the introduction I wrote in that section. In his “Perspectives on the Duke Campaign,” Marcy explains what was truly *new* about Duke’s campaign. He argued that even if the racism was the same old, same old espoused by segregationist politicians George Wallace and Lester Maddox in the Civil Rights era, Duke was more dangerous because the 1960s and ‘70s were a very different period politically from the early 1990s.

Marcy says:

“In the 1960s, when both Maddox and Wallace were trying to become national figures, their type of all-out, segregationist racism was basically *defensive*: They were trying to hold onto white supremacy as it had existed for a century; they were trying to retain the status quo of racism. At that time, there was an upward, progressive movement throughout the whole country. ...

“In contrast to the present, it was a progressive era. ...

"The Duke movement is not just a defensive attempt to halt the progress of Civil Rights. It is a wholesale offensive to undo and reverse the historic gains made by the Black and other progressive forces.

"The Duke campaign comes in the midst of an anti-labor offensive. Gains made by the workers have been crumbling; the capitalist recession and the attacks on the living standards of the workers have brought frustration and anger. The labor movement has been forced into concession after concession.

"Strike breaking and scab herding are on the order of the day.

"The situation is ripe for a fascist demagogue to prey upon these frustrations, especially among the middle class who are losing their moorings to the bourgeoisie."

In 2025, most of the progressive gains of the past centuries have *already* been reversed. We're in a deeply reactionary period, with economic conditions rapidly deteriorating and staggering inequality being the order of the day. The situation now is truly ripe for fascist demagogues, as Marcy said of 1991.

(And speaking of the segregationists of the '60s, things are so bad now that the courts are overturning school district desegregation orders. It's already happening in one Louisiana school district, and it could be the first of many. That's how reactionary it is. They're overturning school desegregation, which was never fully completed anyway.)

So, that's the introduction to the Duke section. What strikes me is how precise Marcy is in his analysis of his present moment. That was also a major feature in Vladimir Lenin's thinking, as the leader of the Bolshevik socialist revolution, closely analyzing the historical moment, looking at many aspects of it — political, economic, cultural, etc. According to Lenin's thinking, this kind of analysis — when developed collectively by a revolutionary party that's based in the masses — that is what can

allow the working class and the oppressed people to effectively organize, to overthrow the ruling class. And this has been tested in many revolutions beyond the USSR, especially in the Global South.

In 1991, Sam Marcy understood that the political situation had changed drastically since the high tide of struggle in the '60s and '70s. After the economic crisis of the '70s, the global capitalist system was restructured in many ways. Nixon nixed the international gold standard. In the U.S., there was more automation. Factories and industrial jobs were sent overseas, always in search of cheaper labor.

Unions were increasingly under attack when they had actually been making gains up until the mid-70s. Privatization was on the rise. Real wages declined while the cost of living rose. The working class was squeezed. The social safety net was cut. Everywhere, the capitalist class was on the offensive.

As the capital of capitalism, the U.S. is exemplary, but these things were happening in all the imperialist countries to greater and lesser degrees. But in the U.S., particularly, the military budget grew year after year, taking on an outsized role in the economy, sucking up resources from meeting human needs. And unlike during World War II, the oversized role of war spending tended to *depress* the economy, not to stimulate it.

(This is almost never discussed in the bourgeois media, but military spending is inflationary. It's never discussed that the billions they've been giving to Israel and Ukraine and so on have been a major factor in the inflation of the past few years.)

So, all that was just a description of what was happening in the imperialist countries themselves, especially in the U.S. But at the same time, around 1991, in much of the socialist camp, namely the USSR and Eastern Europe, imperialist-backed counterrevolutions were underway. Everything that the working class and the oppressed people had built in those countries was being dismantled and sold off to

the highest bidders. Life expectancy plummeted in the formerly socialist countries.

In the Global South, in the colonized and formerly colonized world, the imperialists installed brutal dictatorships, which were fascism 2.0. As in many Latin American countries, they destroyed unions and attacked anyone who stood in the way of squeezing the people to the max to extract profits for capitalists in the imperialist countries.

So, when Marcy analyzed Duke's campaign in 1991, he wasn't just thinking about what was happening in the state of Louisiana, even though there was a major crisis happening there. He was thinking about this whole context.

This was a reactionary period, characterized by reversals for people's struggles. And although the capitalists were on the offensive everywhere, the capitalist system itself was increasingly decaying, more plagued by contradictions, as with the outsized role of the military in the U.S. economy, distorting the economy as a whole and dragging it down, all these contradictions getting worse and worse. All of this is why Marcy identified Duke as such a threat. He wasn't just any old racist in any old time, this was a serious fascist threat.

In that period, Marcy thought a demagogic fascist figure shifting the blame of the capitalist crisis onto oppressed peoples was very dangerous. And all these trends are even more acute now. If we look at the writings from that time, the main takeaway for me is that things have gotten much worse.

We know these contradictions are driving resurgent fascism. But what can we do in such a period? The most reactionary sections of the ruling class have the upper hand. Trump and Musk are tearing up any part of the capitalist government that might actually help people, while bolstering the repressive state.

Trump's tariff war is fueling fears of recession, and any worker knows the economy

is already bad. We're not going from a good economy to a bad economy, we're going from bad to worse.

People know things are bad, and they increasingly have a sense that it's going to take people in the streets to turn things around. And the courts, Congress, and Democratic Party won't save us.

Militarism fuels fascism

During the past month, millions of people have protested all over the U.S. On April 5, tens of thousands came out for Palestine and immigrants in Washington, D.C., marching on ICE headquarters.

Millions also came out for the Hands Off and 50501 protests. And that is an encouraging sign that people are coming out, but we know movements controlled by the Democratic Party can't win the fight.

(And here's an aside for when we go into the history of the populist movement of the 1890s. A big part of the story of how their movement was derailed is that it ultimately was taken over by the Democratic Party. I don't know if that was the very first time that happened in the history of the country, but it was an early one, and that's sort of been the pattern ever since. This isn't talked about enough in the book.)

Back to the Hands Off protests. People are rightly angered by the cuts to Medicaid and Social Security, etc., but the protest organizers included "hands off NATO" in their list of demands. Comrade John Parker wrote an [article](#) about the 50501 rallies, saying:

"NATO and U.S. wars are never about democracy or freedom. They are about maintaining global dominance, fascism, poverty, and the subjugation of our

international working class – starting with the Global South, Black and Brown, Palestinian, and anyone getting in the way of U.S. imperialism and its IMF and World Bank.

“We must be wary of progressives who sidestep these issues, especially those who avoid discussing Palestine, minimize police brutality, or demonize countries like Iran, Cuba, China, Venezuela, Nicaragua, the DPRK, and Russia. Of course, no state is without contradictions — but we must focus on the largest contradiction of all: the unchecked violence of U.S. imperialism.”

That violence he’s talking about is a driver of fascism, not least of all because it’s fundamentally racist. The genocide happening in Gaza is absolutely racist, just like what the Nazis did. This is one place where we as revolutionaries can intervene. We have to be the ones to expose the role of militarism because the liberal groups won’t do it.

For example, people have been protesting at Tesla dealerships, and I think that’s a good thing, and shows the right instinct that billionaires need to be hit in the pocketbook, especially with strikes, but less attention is paid to Musk’s military contracts.

Gary Wilson, one of the editors of Struggle - La Lucha, [recently wrote](#):

“SpaceX has established near-monopoly status in orbital launch capabilities, accounting for approximately 90% of mass launched into orbit in 2024. This dominant position makes the company indispensable for military and intelligence satellite deployment.”

SpaceX CEO Gwen Shotwell recently claimed that the company has \$22 billion in government contracts altogether. I don’t know if that’s the real total because some of these things are classified.

The book talks a good bit about Silicon Valley and how these tech capitalists are funding and promoting fascism, just like industrialists and bankers who bankrolled Hitler. And I'd like people reading the book to think about how Silicon Valley is fundamentally integrated into the military-industrial complex and fuels this kind of politics, and think about how tech is integrated into surveillance, policing, deportation, imprisonment.

A big part of what Trump's doing right now is about militarism. He's making an unprecedented increase in the military budget — \$1 trillion.

This is the working class's money, and he wants to give even more of it to people like Musk. And that's part of the whole tariff thing because tariffs are a regressive tax on working-class people, while he's cutting taxes for billionaires.

Anti-racist class unity needed

Another major theme in the book is class unity, class-conscious unity against racism, as Comrade Lallan Schoenstein put it in the interview she did for the Jena Six section. But it's also class unity against the attacks on trans people and immigrants.

Take the sections on populism in this book. The book argues that Trump and Vance aren't populists, as the media likes to claim. They call anybody who makes any kind of appeal to the masses, they call that populism, and there's a history of that, and there's a reason why it's done, but it's not true. Populism, like I said before, was a left-wing historical movement. What Trump and Vance represent is fascism.

When the populist movement was at its height in the 1890s, it was mainly based among farmers, who were also linked up with industrial laborers. They were coming up against big capitalist monopolies emerging in banking and industry, the Rockefellers, Standard Oil, JP Morgan. They were also up against the rich planters in the South in the post-Reconstruction period. And in order to stand any kind of

chance, they needed class unity across racial lines. They needed Black and white unity.

Unfortunately, the populist movement never solved that problem, but they did make important strides, and the book goes into this a lot. They attempted alliances, which were very progressive for the day, but to a large extent, everywhere they failed it was *because* they didn't have that unity. It was primarily due to the racism of white people in the movement. It wasn't that the Black farmers wanted to have separate organizations, especially in the beginning. In a lot of cases they weren't allowed to be in the white organizations. And to some extent, they overcame that, but ultimately it didn't go far enough. And that's part of the reason they failed.

Some of the lessons for us come from the fact that, like our movement, the period in which the populists were operating was overall reactionary. It was during the rise of Jim Crow, which was the result of the counterrevolution against Reconstruction.

Reconstruction had been one of the most progressive eras in the country. One of the only times that there was a real specter of democracy. Both Black people and poor white farmers in the South made strides during the Reconstruction period after chattel slavery was ended. Reconstruction consolidated political and economic gains stemming from the heroic defeat of slavery.

But after Reconstruction was defeated, much of that process was reversed. I argue that the Klan terrorism of this period was fascist in character. Fascism didn't just originate in Europe. U.S. racism in that period — not to mention the whole history of colonization — you can't really understand fascism without looking at colonialism. But particularly in this post-Reconstruction period, Klan terrorism was a precursor of fascism.

So, parts of the book focus on the way rich people in the South, especially, whipped up racist hysteria using the mass media of their day. They used newspaper articles

and cartoons, similar to how social media disinformation is disseminated now, often with rich funders. This is one of the patterns I talk about when comparing these periods.

Just like today, the scapegoating and bigotry are all about keeping the people disunited so they can't fight our real enemies, the rich. And this picture of a Klan rally [in PowerPoint] isn't from the 19th Century. It's from the 20s in New York, but I thought that was a really good one because you see exactly where the "America first" slogan came from. You could put this right into 2025, "one God, one country, one flag" — it's all the same stuff.



A Klan march in Binghamton, New York, in the 1920s.

Organize and study for upsurges ahead

Finally, I want to say that a book like this can't tell us what we should do in our moment. It can't give us a blueprint. Even with the writings of great revolutionary figures, we don't get a blueprint. That has to be figured out through the movement itself. But the book does try to document some flashpoints of current struggles.

When I was going back and editing, it was interesting to see these snapshots of our recent past — of demonstrations we've done, marches we've been at, because, often with the social media news cycles, as soon as things happen, they're sort of forgotten. And everything is just so ahistorical. Even the recent past. This was on display after Oct. 7. They started every news segment with "the war started by Hamas on Oct. 7," without mentioning the history of colonization. Everything is given without a context.

I hope the book can help spark political discussion, both about history and present-day strategy. Right now, they're trying to erase history in every conceivable way. In general, if we can have more collective study in the movement, that would be good. These kinds of discussion groups are important. It's a way for us to build our collective consciousness. That's essential for us to win against the fascist enemy.

It's especially exciting to talk about the book with you all, because the Harriet Tubman Center is part of the Los Angeles Community Self-Defense Coalition, as John already said, along with 60 other organizations, initiated by Unión del Barrio. With community patrols, they're making it harder for ICE to operate. They're actually obstructing these fascist attacks at the street level where it's happening. This is the kind of organizing that really strikes at the fascists.

And there's a section in the book that talks about something that happened back in February, when the residents of historically Black Lincoln Heights, Ohio, drove out neo-Nazis who were having a rally there. Then they formed armed community patrols to protect their community throughout the neighborhoods. This is another example of the type of practical work, and we need to combine our collective study

with that type of practical work, like what you all are already doing. And if we do that, we'll be able to ride the waves that are coming.

Another theme from the book is that we don't know exactly when there's going to be a people's upsurge. (This comes out in the interview with Larry Hales, talking about the Jena Six). But we know it's coming, we know that it has to come as conditions get worse. Something's going to spark it off.

We don't know when the exact moment will be or how it's going to happen, but when we're studying, when we're building the community infrastructure ahead of time, then we can actually take that on. And I hope that the work ya'll are doing gains more visibility. It's really a great example for people throughout the movement to learn from. I wish it were in the book.

