White Nationalism is a social movement that strives (in many ways) to secure and normalize institutional, cultural, social, and economic dominance for white, heteronormative, Christian, property-owning men. White nationalism reproduces the ideology of white supremacy while simultaneously denying its racist and xenophobic roots to claim “white victimhood.”

Who’s a Nazi?

Let’s play a game. Close your eyes and imagine a typical “white nationalist.”

Where do they work? What clothes do they wear? What kind of music do they like? Where do they live? Are they college educated? What is their class identity? What do they eat? Do they have tattoo(s)? Do they shop locally? Do they have tables at the farmer’s market? Are they ant-capitalist? What kind of tattoos do they have?

Avoid the dangerous stereotype: A white nationalist is an uneducated, angry, rural, ignorant, poor or working class white man, with tattoos and a shaved head. Unfortunately, this concept informs community responses. If it’s just a few idiotic, bonehead extremists, even if they’re wearing a suit and tie, then it’s understandable that people believe no response is needed.

White Nationalism is a social movement and will not be “ignored away.” This fact cannot be overstated.

Who’s Movement

It is rare that the term “social movement” is associated with white nationalist activism. They are taking over school boards, running for city manager positions, having bake sales, selling merchandise to plug their cause, networking with neighbors around local initiatives, having art shows, organizing music festivals, developing evidence in academia to support their claims, and performing in malls.

Just like other social movements, white nationalism is fueled by activists who employ a wide variety of tactics and organizing strategies. Members may even disagree on matters such as short-term strategies, priorities, aesthetics, recruitment tactics, religion, language, organizing models, and funding models. However, they are united by a common ideology that can readily answer the questions: Who is an American? What should America look like? What do we stand for as the Left? 

White Nationalism is a social movement and must be combatted. It is imperative that we ground our organizing in the understanding that we are fighting a complex and powerful social movement.

Three Way Fight

It is often assumed white nationalists exist because of injustices of the State—they are a product of the racist State, an effect. Under this logic, it follows that by fixing (or smashing) the State, and focusing on policy and institutionalized inequality, white nationalists will go away. However, white nationalists also assume if they reform (or smash) the State, “the Left” will go away. However, white nationalists also assume if they reform (or smash) the State, “the Left” will go away. However, white nationalists also assume if the focus is only on transforming (or smashing) the State and focusing on policy and institutionalized inequality, white nationalists will go away. While it is important to fight against institutionalized forms of oppression and everyday racial violence, it is also imperative to keep the white nationalist movement in our purview. If the focus is only on transforming (or smashing) policies and formal institutional structures, there is a risk of ignoring and minimizing the effective grassroots base-building and cultural organizing white nationalists are successfully doing.

At the heart of anti-fascist organizing is a commitment to the Three Way Fight and to creating multiple ways of saying “no. NEVER.” to white nationalism in every context.
Neutrality is a myth. Their efforts.

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You censor all the You don’t fight it with “Free Speech”

Another way white nationalists assert their victimization is through claims of censorship. It’s important to understand how to respond to this. Think about it: we censor all the time. We prioritize, we delineate, we separate, we ignore intentionally. We invite certain speakers to our events, we sell specific merchandise in our stores, we choose particular vendors, and we center specific perspectives. The idea we are censoring when we do not allow a white nationalist to play a venue, to join a panel on race at an academic conference, or to attend planning meetings, is an overt strategy white nationalists use to access spaces in which they can further organize, and therefore, needs to be cut off immediately.

White nationalists are also activists and community organizers and are intentionally attending shows, picnics, dinner parties, and other events in an effort to identify organizing opportunities. This is akin to us finding a new club or bar that we felt comfortable in and invited our friends to. If we are not clearly inhospitable in these environments, we are supporting their efforts.

Neutrality is a myth.

Don’t fight it with “Free Speech”

Many organizers do not know how to say NO to white nationalist claims for free speech rights. White nationalists are acutely aware of this and use “free speech” as an effective strategy to test a space to see how hospitable it is for their recruitment and organizing. Do not engage with the “free speech” trap.

Simply refuse the “free speech” argument and the logic that comes with it. For example, businesses can refuse to sell white nationalist records and literature, easily.

If you are observing a use of “free speech” that allows white nationalists a platform, be aware of collateral damages and consequences. “Free speech” does not occur in an ahistorical vacuum, free from hierarchical power structures. Under the logic of “free speech,” speech rights are taken away from anyone who doesn’t support or benefit from white nationalism. This confusion leads to the amplification of white nationalism and strengthens their recruitment at everyone else’s expense.

There are so many different ways to say “no, NOT EVER.” to white nationalism. These “NOs” are imperative to supporting social justice struggles.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is an organizing strategy that uses and/or creates a variety of access points through which ideologies, once considered aberrant or extreme, become palatable, everyday, and normalized. Don’t discount the mainstreaming efforts of white nationalist organizing and its long term impact.

This pamphlet can be folded into a 16 panel pocket guide. Start with the horizontal bold dashed fold line above, keeping this side of the document out, then fold again at the vertical dotted lines.

Anti-Fascist Boundaries

Anti-fascist boundaries are both proactive and reactive. The proactive component is understanding that there needs to be a formalized, collective commitment to cut a line against white nationalism: kick them out! This boundary means consistently refusing, in every way, to any platform they attempt to hold inhospitable. Organizers need to develop proactive boundaries that consists of having the skill and capacity to respond in the moment. A boundary might look like asking a white nationalist to leave your meeting, or having a conversation about a patch, symbol, tattoo, pamphlet, or language choice to figure out if they are a white nationalist or have connections to the social movement. Boundary setting in the moment.

Research

You don’t need to be a highly trained academic expert, be a researcher. This is only one form and style of research, not the only way. Because white nationalists are constantly trying to co-opt a variety of public, institutional, and cultural spaces, anti-fascist organizing needs all kinds of research.

We need research and to see ourselves as researchers because it helps us understand a given context and powerfully informs our anti-fascist strategies. Anybody can be a researcher; everybody is a researcher.

Cultural Organizing

Cultural organizing situates organizing and social change in the environment of the moment, the everyday of a particular time, place, and community; it is about world making and identity shaping.

Cultural organizing does not try to create one particular context that impacts people and communities and shifts white nationalism.