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The Story of Charlottesville Was Written in Blood in the Ukraine

By Ajamu Baraka
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What is the character of racist right-wing politics today? Is it the crazed white supremacist who plows into an anti-fascist demonstration in Charlottesville, VA or can it also be the assurance by Lindsay Graham that an attack against North Korea would result in thousands of lives lost.... but

those lives will be “over there”? What about the recent unanimous resolution by both houses of Congress in support of Israel and criticism of the United Nations for its alleged anti-Israeli bias? Would that qualify as racist and right-wing, since it appears that the ongoing suffering of the Palestinians is of no concern? And what about the vote by the U.S. House of Representatives to go even beyond the obscene proposal of the Trump administration to increase the military budget by \$54 billion dollars and instead add a whopping \$74 billion to the Pentagon budget?

What I find interesting about the current discussion around what many are referring to as the emboldening of the radical white supremacist right is how easy it is to mobilize opposition against the crude and overt white supremacists we saw in Charlottesville. So easy, in fact, that it’s really a distraction from the more difficult and dangerous work that needs to be done to confront the real right-wing power brokers.

The white supremacy that some of us see as more insidious is not reflected in the simple, stereotypical images of the angry, Nazi-saluting alt-righter or even Donald Trump. Instead, it is the normalized and thus invisible white supremacist ideology inculcated into cultural and educational institutions and the policies that stem from those ideas. That process doesn’t just produce the storm troopers of the armed and crazed radical right but also such covert true believers as Robert Ruben from Goldman Sachs, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Tony Blair and Nancy Pelosi – “decent” individuals who have never questioned for a moment the superiority of Western civilization, who believe completely in the White West’s right and responsibility to determine which nations should have sovereignty and who should be the leaders of “lesser” nations. And who believe that there is no alternative to the wonders of global capitalism even if it means that billions of human beings are consigned permanently to what Fanon called the “zone of non-being.”

This is the white supremacy that I am concerned with. And while I recognize the danger of the violent right-wing movement, I am more concerned with the right-wing policies that are being enacted into law and policy by both Democrats and Republicans at every level of government.

More than two years ago I wrote that:

“The brutal repression and dehumanization witnessed across Europe in the 1930s has not found generalized expression in the U.S. and Europe, at least not yet. Nevertheless, large sectors of the U.S. and European left appear to be unable to recognize that the U.S./NATO/EU axis that is committed to maintaining the hegemony of Western capital is resulting in dangerous collaborations with rightist forces both inside and outside of governments.”

The impetus of that article was to critique the inherent danger of the Obama Administration’s cynical manipulation of right-wing elements in Ukraine to overthrow the democratically elected government of Viktor Yanukovich. Not only was it dangerous and predictably disastrous for the Ukrainian people, but because U.S. support for a neo-fascist movement in Ukraine took place within a context in which the political right was gaining legitimacy and strength across Europe, the political impact of the right gaining power in Ukraine could not be isolated from the growing power of the right elsewhere. Which meant that the Obama Administration’s selfish, short-term

objective to undermine Russia in Ukraine had the effect of empowering the right and shifting the balance of forces toward the right throughout Europe.

But because Obama was incorrectly seen as a liberal, he was able to avoid most criticism of his policies in Ukraine, in Europe and domestically. In fact, liberals and the left both in the U.S. and in Europe generally supported his Ukraine policies.

However, playing footsie with right-wing elements in the Ukraine and underestimating the growing power of the right has resulted in powerful and dangerous right-wing movements on both sides of the Atlantic who have effectively exploited endemic white racism and the contradictions of neoliberal capitalist globalization. The ascendancy of Donald Trump cannot be decontextualized from the racial, class and gender politics of this moment here and abroad.

The alt-right that showed up in Charlottesville this past weekend was mimicking the tactics of the frontline neo-fascist soldiers who orchestrated the coup in the Ukraine, yet everyone is saying this is a result of Trump. The objective fact is that the U.S. has become a dangerous right-wing society as a result of a steady shift to the right over the past four decades. The idea that Trump's election somehow "created" the right cannot be taken seriously and cannot be reduced to the crude expressions of the alt-right.

The structures of white power, that is the structures and institutions that provide the material base for Euro-American white supremacy and its ideological reproduction, should be the focus of radical opposition. But the capitalist order and its institutions – the World Trade Organization, IMF, World Bank, and global Westernized higher education that serves as the material basis for hegemonic white supremacist power – escape critical scrutiny because popular attention is directed against a David Duke and a Donald Trump.

Trump and the alt-right have become useful diversions for white supremacist liberals and leftists who would rather fight against those superficial caricatures of racism than engage in more difficult ideological work involving real self-sacrifice – purging themselves of all racial sentimentality associated with the mythology of the place of white people, white civilization and whiteness in the world in order to pursue a course for justice that will result in the loss of white material privilege.

Looking at white supremacy from this wider-angle lens, it is clear that support for the Israeli state, war on North Korea, mass black and brown incarceration, a grotesque military budget, urban gentrification, the subversion of Venezuela, the state war on black and brown people of all genders, and the war on reproductive rights are among the many manifestations of an entrenched right-wing ideology that cannot be conveniently and opportunistically reduced to Trump and the Republicans.

And when we understand that white supremacy is not just what is in someone's head but is also a global structure with ongoing, devastating impacts on the people of the world, we will understand better why some of us have said that in order for the world to live, the 525-year-old white supremacist Pan-European, colonial/capitalist patriarchy must die.

Your choice will be clear: Either you join us as gravediggers or you surrender to class and racial privilege and join the cross-class white united front. The alt-right is waiting, and they are taking recruits from the left who are tired of “identity politics.”