



9-21-2017

Pacifism Against the Alt-Right

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Anonymous, "Pacifism Against the Alt-Right" (2017). *SURGE*. 297.
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Pacifism Against the Alt-Right

Abstract

In 1944, Dr. Ancel Keys took 36 volunteers and used them as subjects for what would become known as the [Minnesota Starvation Experiment](#). These men were all conscientious objectors to war who wanted to find a nonviolent way to help those affected by the Nazi regime. One solution was to participate in Dr. Key's study to evaluate systematic rehabilitation of those who had been starved, such as the victims in Stalingrad—and later in Hitler's concentration camps—had been. They contributed a great deal to the allied powers, and to those the study was designed to help, while not fighting Nazis directly. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Diversity, Education, Race, Religion

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com. Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

PACIFISM AGAINST THE ALT-RIGHT

September 21, 2017



In 1944, Dr. Ancel Keys took 36 volunteers and used them as subjects for what would become known as the [Minnesota Starvation Experiment](#). These men were all conscientious objectors to war who wanted to find a nonviolent way to help those affected by the Nazi regime. One solution was to participate in Dr. Key's study to evaluate systematic rehabilitation of those who had been starved, such as the victims in Stalingrad—and later in Hitler's concentration camps—had been. They contributed a great deal to the allied powers, and to those the study was designed to help, while not fighting Nazis directly.

Throughout history, many have chosen to fight fascism and oppression with violence, and in some instances, it seems necessary. But, like 15 of the volunteers, I too am a member of the [Historic Peace Churches](#) and believe that violence is a last resort, if it is an option at all. Now, some may read this and think I'm just another neoliberal POS, that I'm just some pre-teen saying "give peace a chance" because I heard it once in a Beatles song. But, I have no interest in hearing fascists out, listening to their side, or respecting their rights. They want me, my family, and all those I've held close, dead. That's a fact. I've struggled with the notion of how to handle this hatred for many years.

Is self-defense violence if it harms your attacker? And what of psychological violence? Screaming in their faces, breaking into their homes and leaving disturbing messages on their walls, and even just *threatening* violence at rallies. Is that just as bad as physical harm?

In times like this, there are other options, there have to be. I go, unarmed, to protests with the knowledge that each one may be my last. At the first gay pride I attended when I was 13 years old, I was told to watch the roofs of nearby buildings for snipers. Granted, starving or taking a beating or a bullet to the head in the name of peace is not an appealing prospect, but at the same time, it's all I have. When the last Nazi is dead, the last fascist gone, the last white supremacist buried in a shallow grave, what will we have left? A society of killers. And in the unattainable and yet beautiful hope for some type of anarcho/communist future, that wouldn't work out very well. If people have a justification for their murder now, what happens when society as a whole justifies it? How does one come back from that?

Now, where I live, violence can at times seem synonymous with survival. I helped a friend pack for Charlottesville – all she brought was a gas mask, water, directions on who to inform of her death, and about 1,000 rounds of ammunition. She came back alive, but not without scars, physical and emotional. Luckily for those fighting her, she decided she'd let them shoot first before returning fire. She said that that was a mistake, one she doesn't plan on making again. And her story isn't uncommon here.

Being the pacifist I am, I stay on the sidelines, stitching up wounds, trying to lessen burns, neutralizing the effects of tear gas, dragging out those who have been knocked unconscious. However, fighting in the streets is not the goal. It's not even what those fighting fascism and oppression want to do. It seems that's being looked over. We, as human beings, should try to stop fascists BEFORE they congregate. BEFORE violence rears up and becomes the easy way to respond. Tie-dye their white hoods and cloaks, steal their clothes, soak wooden crosses so they can't be burnt, tell their bosses, their friends, family, potential partners what they do, bring their dogs to no-kill shelters and have them adopted to nicer homes. Violence is the last resort.

And even those responses are too soon, too close to times of gunfire and bloodshed. There are ways to end oppression without ending a life. The volunteers of the Starvation Experiment knew this. Today, we need to educate their kids away from this hatred. Show proper representation in media and in politics. Make being anything-but-a-WASP okay. Allow diversity, and teach tolerance. There are those that try to talk adults out of hatred, and they're successful for the most part. But we need to look forward, look to the future, so our children don't have to deal with this violence, because their children don't condone it.

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This post is written anonymously not out of fear, but to protect my identity. To contact me, email surgegettysburg@gmail.com.