

Notes and Resources

¹ On the importance of archiving radical struggles, see “Fighting Collective Amnesia: Recovering Our Memory and Staying Alert”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/fighting-collective-amnesia-recovering-our-memory-and-staying-alert/>

² See “From Antiglobe to Antifa: A Recent History of Anarchist Struggle in NYC”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/From-Antiglobe-to-Antifa-v14-single-page-reading-order.pdf>

³ <https://kolektiva.media/videos/watch/0da4f0ea-1881-46fe-b9ae-a1e046d9b0b9>

⁴ On the failures of reform and the importance of abolition, see Angela Y. Davis’s work *Are Prisons Obsolete?*: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/angela-y-davis-are-prisons-obsolete.pdf>

⁵ <https://gothamist.com/news/police-rally-back-the-blue-brooklyn-dyker-heights>

⁶ See, for example, this video of the 2017 counter-inauguration protests: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMLj9-Q-QQE&feature=emb_title 33:10-34:30 shows the formation, charge, and aftermath of the attempt to break police lines.

⁷ For an introduction to protecting one’s identity at protests, see the zine “Blocing Up for Portlanders”: <https://zines.headingnorther.com/pdfs/bloc/doubledwebbloczine.pdf>

⁸ Often, autonomous action is confused for the capacity for individuals to act voluntarily outside of established political organization. This confusion stems from an individualism imposed by settler-colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal conceptions of the self. Autonomous action blooms when a collectivity forms that produces new relations, knowledges, and ways of being. This collectivity transcends the individual, enabling actions that would not be possible if individuals acted without the knowledge, kinship, and experience imparted, felt, and lived by others. When an autonomous action takes place, it is never alone. For criticism of individuality from an anarchist perspective, see Emma Goldman’s “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For”: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-anarchism-and-other-essays>. For autonomous action within swarm tactics, see “The Swarm Approach to Warfare: An Introduction for Frontliners”: <https://illwilleditions.com/the-swarm-approach-to-warfare-an-introduction-for-frontliners/>

⁹ For a fairly extensive collection of doxes, see:

<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1292287805104820224.html>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/AbdullahMYounus/status/1282466150186713088>:

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/chadloder/status/1282562029883031552>

¹² <https://twitter.com/ScooterCasterNY/status/1282464495839981569>

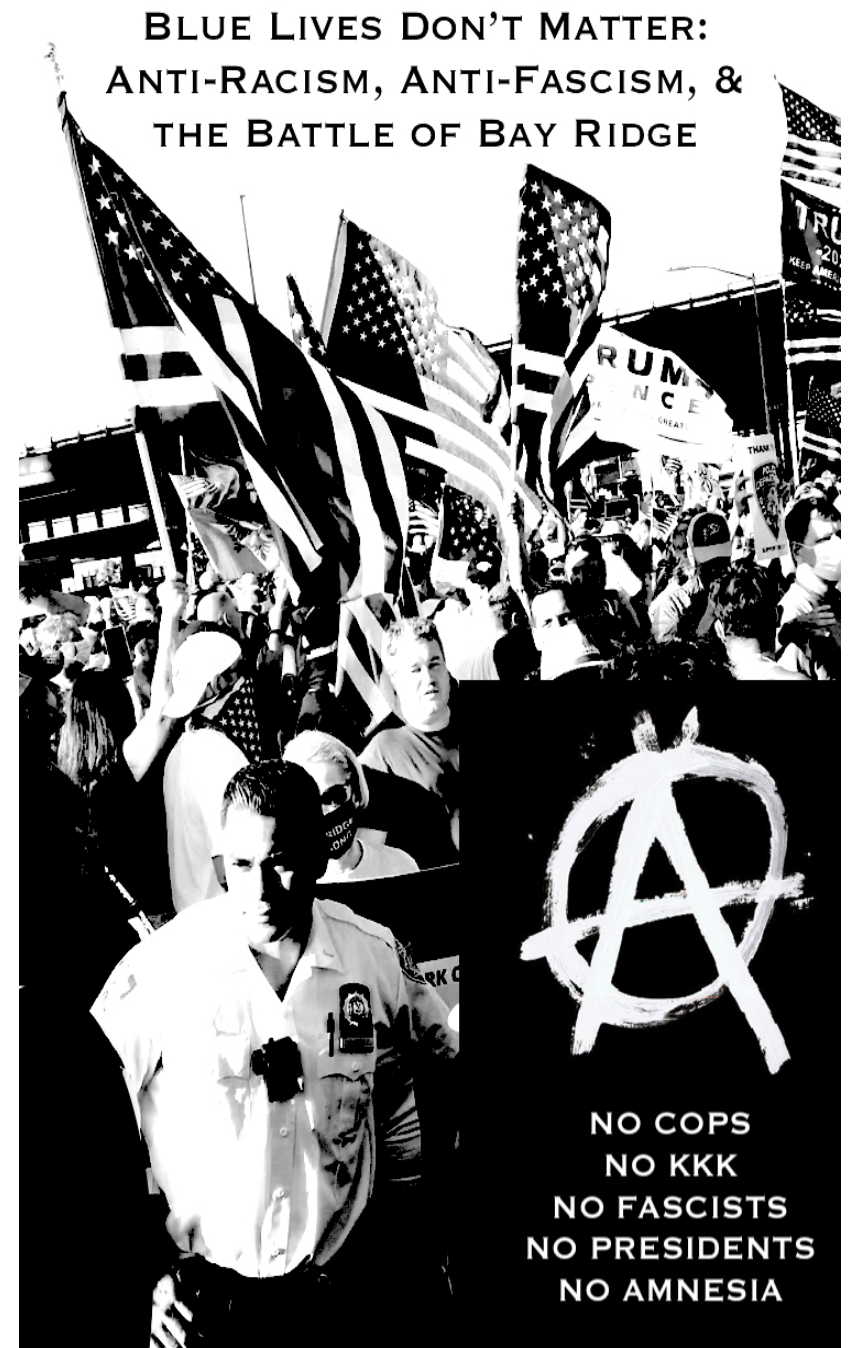
¹³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CcluWy-DBWw/>

¹⁴ https://twitter.com/protest_nyc/status/1282484821244235782

¹⁵ For an analysis of the uprising in NYC before the Battle of Bay Ridge, see “Gifts To The State Against the Fire of Revolt: On Identity Reductionism and Weaponization in NYC” <https://itsgoingdown.org/identity-reductionism-weaponization/>

¹⁶ In NYC, follow United Against Racism and Fascism, Outlive Them All, MACC NYC, NYC Antifa, Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network, Indigenous Kinship Collective, NYC Shut It Down, Peoples Power Assembly, New Sanctuary Coalition, Close the Camps, Fight Back Bay Ridge, among others.

¹⁷ For an account of these tensions in NYC, see “In Defense of Black Bloc at NYC Protests”: <https://www.amwenglish.com/articles/in-defense-of-black-bloc-at-nyc-protests/>. For an analysis of tensions between anarchist and black liberation struggles, see “At the Wendy’s: Armed Struggle at the End of the World”: <https://illwilleditions.com/at-the-wendys/>



To Our New Friends

As the tide ebbs from the George Floyd Uprising, we are presented an opportunity to reflect, document our successes, and debate our failings. Adrenaline often fuels our tactical debriefs, but we must commit these reflections to paper for the benefit of the movements to come. Radical communities are prone to “collective amnesia” in which “we forget the stories, victories, and debates of the recent past.”¹ Some NYC Anarchists have initiated the struggle against collective amnesia by documenting the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist struggles of the last 10 years.² This zine is a contribution to that struggle, recounting the events of July 12th 2020 in which counter-protesters overwhelmed a fascist Blue Lives Matter rally. For those newly radicalized by the initial Uprising, this event cemented affinities between anti-fascist and anti-racist struggles. As we brace ourselves for extended counter-insurgency in which liberals and conservatives work together to defang the radical movements, and as we confront the fascist MAGA coalitions committing violence against our communities, we must arm ourselves with the insights of the past.³

The demands of police and prison abolition will always exceed politics.⁴ Our commitment is then to build community through turning the solidarity found in the streets into long-term action, mutual aid, and self-defense. Moments like the Battle of Bay Ridge are key in that they reveal the power we have always had. Bay Ridge made many of us realize we were already anti-fascists, that during the nights we spent resisting the curfew we developed the skills to fight police tyranny. They inspire us to believe in something more than endless marches and tired chants: radical community forged in struggle. Whether our enemies be the fascists, Far Right, police, state or capital, our radical communities will sustain us in the fights to come.

3. Reactive versus Proactive Action

The principle flaw of anti-fascist struggle is the adoption of reactive politics. We become trapped in a feedback loop of responding to the most recent crisis. Certainly, countering whatever ghoulish fascists are coming to town will always be a priority. At the same time, fascism functions through the generalization of suffering and violence as to justify authoritarian solutions. As such, an anti-fascist struggle is always a struggle against racial capitalism, settler colonialism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, ableism, and the state. These oppressive regimes enable the emergence of fascism.

In terms of tactics, every reactive action is also an opportunity to go on the offensive. The scale of the counter-protest in Bay Ridge significantly diverted police resources. Affinity groups should consider what possible autonomous actions are enabled by the distraction of similar counter-protests. With police focusing their attention elsewhere, autonomous actions that target the constellation of forces enabling police terror can bloom. In turn, the anti-fascist struggle can be generalized to the structural forces and centers of power that endeavor to birth more fascist regimes.

zines, pamphlets, and QR codes to telegram chats on the ground. Media savvy comrades can produce documentations of successes and counter-narratives to work against the establishment's efforts to slander our movements. Projecting the strength of our solidarity is essential to disrupting the fragile order held together by white supremacists, fascists, cops, and their apologists.

2. Blue Lives Matter and Police Violence

The Blue Lives Matter movement is not going anywhere. The backlash to the George Floyd Uprising has demonstrated the political efficacy of doubling down on "Law and Order." For those engaged in street politics and anti-state work, the implications are that police will be emboldened to act in more violent ways to appease the bloodthirsty Blue Lives Matter supporters. Bay Ridge demonstrated how the symbiotic relationship between cops and Blue Lives Matter encourages violence. Pro-cop demonstrators were comfortable assaulting counter-protesters in broad daylight as they knew there would be no consequences. Similarly, police felt empowered to terrorize people of color, counter-protesters, and anyone opposing policing. This sense of power further derives from the Democratic Party who, in New York, have done nothing to restrain the police.

Police abolition movements must make explicit these connections. Whether through writing, protest, or militant action, the movement must clearly show how the police unions, rank and file officers, and police brass are given free rein to terrorize people of color because they are supported by the Democrats, Republicans, and Blue Lives Matter movement. As the police are increasingly employed to violently evict people from their homes during a pandemic, resistance will be predicated on disrupting police operations and revealing the incestuous politics supporting the pigs.

July 12th: Stand up, Fight Back

The Battle of Bay Ridge emerged from a dangerous absence of solidarity. On July 11th, pro-police demonstrators overwhelmed the Dyker Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. Anti-racist and anti-fascist counter-protesters were outnumbered, giving pro-police agitators license to harass and assault them.⁵ Videos of the pro-police attacks circulated on social media, joined with a call for a second counter-protest to the "Back the Blue" rally planned for Bay Ridge, Brooklyn the following day. The events of July 11th highlighted a simple truth: the police will turn a blind eye to their own supporters' violence. The implications of this reverberate throughout the so-called justice system, with Blue Lives Matter supporters emboldening police violence and the police encouraging their supporters to attack anti-racists and anti-fascists. The need for counter-protests is essential to check the abuses of police and their enablers.



(Image: Counter-Protest Flyer)

Arriving in Bay Ridge, the diversity of the counter-protest coalition was striking. Younger people from Abolition Park's occupation of City Hall, seasoned Black Lives Matter organizers, anti-fascists in tactical gear, anti-racists carrying banners and instruments, frontliners ready for conflict, medics, and other supporters armed with food and water all coalesced at 86st and 4th avenue. The coalition reflected both the power of videos and images from the previous day in mobilizing people and the lingering enthusiasm from the riots that kicked off the summer. As the police watched the crowd grow, they were clearly shaken. They deployed more vehicles to surround the crowd and readied barricades meant to divert the counter-protest from confronting the Blue Lives Matter march. Some counter-protesters were not deterred, maneuvering around the barricades to confront Blue Lives Matter supporters from the start. When confronted with police opposition, a unified crowd is essential to overcoming the police line.⁶ From the onset, Blue Lives Matter supporters attacked counter-demonstrators. Largely, however, the crowd of counter-protesters remained with the core march.

The counter-protest march began at a brisk pace. Chants and drumming were essential to maintaining speed as the cops tried to wedge cruisers between the crowd or slow turns around street corners. The initial route of the counter-protest was disrupted by barricades, but a sense permeated the crowd that movement was key. Instead of pausing to regroup, the crowd immediately turned down another street. Along the way, the atmosphere was festive, with people popping their heads out of their buildings to cheer on counter-protesters. This joy was essential to sturding counter-protesters' resolve. While radicals can downplay the importance of chants and music during protests, the musicality of the march kept a steady tempo that enabled the crowd to outmaneuver the police. Expanding across the roadway, taking turns with a wide

1. Solidarity between anti-racists and anti-fascists

Tensions between anti-racists, anti-fascists, and the Black Lives Matter movement has threatened the success of prison and police abolition movements.¹⁷ In part, this reflects the success of the media and state in demonizing anti-fascists as violent agitators. But blaming our enemies will only get us so far. The fundamental problem lies in the difficulty of connecting the anti-fascist struggle to anti-racism. Whiteness always threatens anarchist and anti-fascist work through eroding multi-racial solidarity. Further, the overlap in objectives between the Black Lives Matter movement and longstanding calls for police and prison abolition amongst anarchists raises concerns within anti-racist organizing about anarchists coopting the movement.

The success of Bay Ridge derived from organic solidarities between these movements. Our enemies weaponize ideological differences to divide anti-racists and anti-fascists. They wish to neuter the radical possibilities that exist when we work together. Bay Ridge is evidence that a diversity of tactics deployed against a common enemy gets results. Anti-fascist and anti-racist solidarity emerges through struggles like Bay Ridge. When we find our shoulders pressed together on the frontline; when we share food, water, emotional support, and radical demands; when our voices harmonize in chants and songs; when we flee from the police side-by-side; and when we hold ground against the pigs and fascists, we discover our common struggle overwhelms our enemies' attempts to divide us.

This solidarity should not be taken for granted. We must solidify these bounds through creating lines of communication and opening space for collective strategizing and celebration. While the priority was on opposing the Blue Lives Matter rally, future counter-protests should build lasting connections through sharing

Lessons

The Battle of Bay Ridge occurred at a crucial moment in the transition from general uprising to sustained activism.¹⁵ The riotous excess that guided militant action, looting campaigns, curfew defiance, and multi-racial solidarity was being replaced by issue-based campaigns (Defund the Police), new organizing bodies recycling old tactics (the Abolition Park occupation of City Hall), and counter-insurgency by the non-profits and establishment politicians. As the constellation of forces conspired against revolutionary change, radicals found each other at Bay Ridge. In the months after, conversations at endless marches would lead to memories of Bay Ridge, of fighting back. These emerging friendships traced the bonds forged at Bay Ridge. In turn, the connections would sustain radical direct action, protest, and mutual aid through 2020.

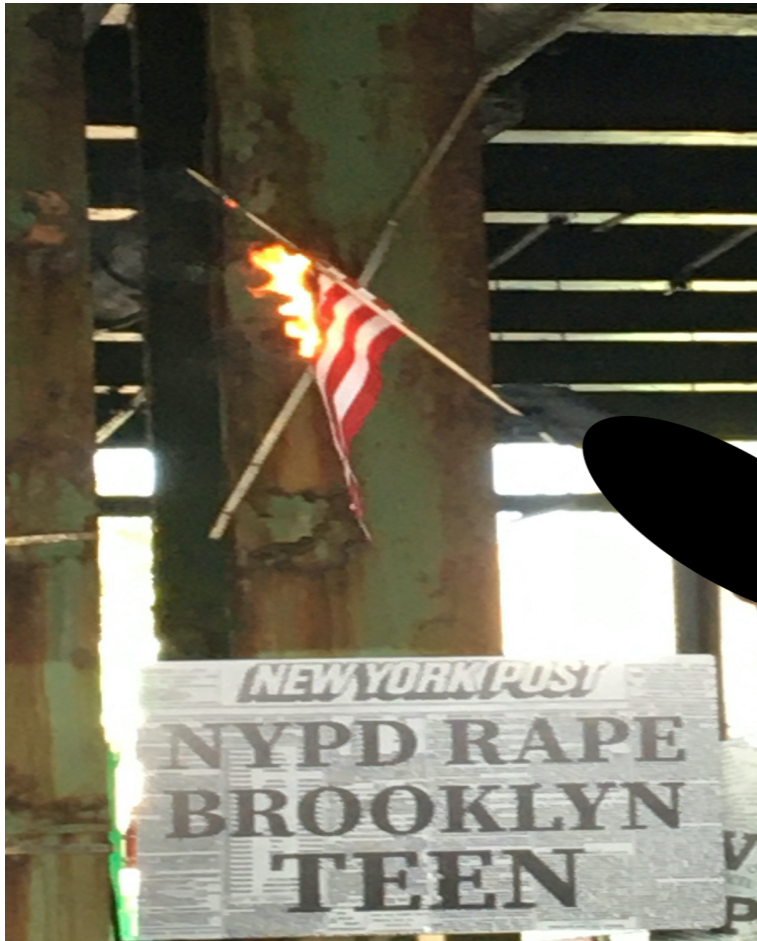
This zine attempts to provide a detailed account of the June 12th for future radicals, but Bay Ridge is only one example of many in which anti-racists and anti-fascist joined together. From other cities and towns across the country, solidarity between the two bloomed in beautiful opposition to the state, fascists, and capital. The point therefore is not to fetishize the Battle of Bay Ridge, but to encourage you to find your own experience. Maybe it has already occurred and you are now realized your ongoing participation in the anti-fascists and anti-racist struggle. Maybe this zine creates the desire for action in which case search out the next call to oppose the Far Right and police in your area (or create the call yourself).¹⁶ Either way, the groundwork for a broader coalition between anti-fascists and anti-racists has been in place for decades. Our mission is to continue pushing it forward, to stamp out the Far Right, and to build a shared future without cops, prisons, and fascists. To conclude, we consider key takeaways from the action:

cross-section of the crowd, purposefully standing in-front of police vehicles to prevent the police from separating the crowd were all key tactics. The coordination between different elements of the march displayed a beautiful leaderlessness. While bull-horn-happy organizers tried to direct the flow, they could not contain the overflow of autonomous decisions, a coordination guided by principle instead of order.

The Blue Lives Matter rally and counter-protest finally met at 4th Avenue, between 66th and the Gowanus Parkway overpass. The Blue Lives Matter crowd bulged from the sidewalk to the street, surrounded by a line of police protection. Trump 2020, Thin Blue Line, Albanian, and standard American flags loomed over the crowd. Many mask-less cop supporters ambled around, antagonizing counter-protesters by yelling misogynistic and racist diatribes. Many filmed counter-protesters—a reminder that anonymity through full coverage of identifying marks is essential to prevent fascists from doxing radicals.⁷ Blue Lives Matter supporters tended to be older, white men, decked in American flags and polos. With cop protection at hand, they itched for a fight, often trying to bait counter-protesters into touching them to justify their assaults.

Their craven desire for violent conflict masked their deep-seated insecurities. The Blue Lives Matter crowd relies on police protection to supply their courage. The counter-protest's greatest strength lied in undercutting the Blue Lives Matter crowd's sense of security. As soon as counter-protesters encountered the rally, they expanded across its perimeter. While the 86th precinct was nearby, Blue Lives Matter supporters were unable to gather and hold space in front of the building as they were entirely surrounded by counter-protesters. This further spread the police line thin as officers and white shirts were deployed at multiple fronts.

Tactics



(Image: Burning American Flag and Protest Sign)

Counter-protesters were able to set the pace of the confrontation through employing a diversity of tactics:

1) Protection: Shields, made from plywood or metal and decorated with anti-racist and anti-fascist images, were scattered throughout the crowd. Interlocking shield lines created safe areas for counter-protesters to amass and drown out Blue Lives Matter chants. Shield lines allowed anti-racists and anti-fascists to control crowd movement. By establishing

Matter rally and frustrated by its disruption. The crowd that had lingered was causing very little disruption. Instead, the instigating factor in the cop riot was the pigs' bruised egos. The desire to clear the roadway and the sidewalk emerged from the police's need to reestablish order. They felt the limits of their control.

As the crowd turned down a street to begin the long walk to the subway, the police escort hung close. Running had been a rash decision that thinned numbers; now, the emphasis was on remaining calm and staying together. The police successfully coordinated a targeted arrest, indicating that the sense of crowd cohesion was still lacking. Soon after, a tight group of 20-30 people, moving as a unified crowd, animated by music and chants, resisted the bike cops and pedestrian officers. When the police tail grew too close for comfort, small fires and blockades of garbage cans slowed their advance. The march to the subway was tense, but it offered an opportunity to build relationships. Sharing food, water, and words of comfort cemented solidarity between the remaining counter-protesters. As it became clear the police had abandoned their pursuit, more American flags were liberated and burned to the tune of "FDT" and "Disco Inferno." Fear had transformed to joy as victory was finally declared. All that remained was collective defiance of the MTA fare, joints on a liberated subway car, and a long night's sleep either back at Abolition Park or at home.

atmosphere was key to binding the crowd, bracing them for the police crackdown to follow. The police soon deployed the Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) to first demand demonstrators clear the roadway or face arrest for disorderly conduct. Interlocking their bikes, the cops formed a wall and chanted “move back” to force counter-protesters onto the sidewalk. Simultaneously, the LRAD continued to blare, “You are unlawfully obstructing the roadway. If you do not move from the roadway, you will be subject to arrest.” The atmosphere grew more tense among demonstrators as fear of police violence grew. Then, the LRAD squawked, “You are unlawfully obstructing pedestrian traffic. If you do not disperse, you will be subject to arrest.” The contradictory messages clearly indicated to the crowd that the police were preparing an assault. In moments like this, it is essential to reestablish crowd unity, to move as a unit and ensure that the police cannot single out specific demonstrators. Mistakenly, some in the crowd attempted to assert themselves as leaders, which only created division. Instead of pursuing leadership, crowds should seek consensus for their next movement as to reinforce existing solidarity and affinity. Still, an admirable sense of togetherness persisted as the group edged itself away from the police.

The police riot began when bike cops and officers charged the crowd.¹⁴ Cops sprinted as fast as they could, seemingly enraged by the day’s events, trying (unsuccessfully) to tackle counter-protesters. One pig’s tackle ended with them in a pile of trash, a fitting slop trough whose sight offered momentary levity. Simultaneously, bike cops flooded down the street, screaming at protesters to move and creating an environment of terror. Comrades largely stuck together, passing water back and forth after enough distance had been placed between the cops. What was immediately apparent was the police felt emboldened by the Blue Lives

a staple line near the overpass, shield wielders were able to push police and Blue Lives Matter supporters into the more confined space of the bridge. This both symbolically undercut the power of our opponents and materially forced them into a reactive stance, allowing anti-racists and anti-fascists to set the terms of engagement. Importantly, the shield line provided a protective space for counter-demonstrators to build momentum and solidarity.

2) Self-Defense: Cops, Blue Lives Matter supporters, and fascists always turn to violence. As such, from within the counter-protest, frontliners emerged, prepared for physical confrontation at chokepoints in the environment. Frontliner action is self-defense. The front lines were both composed of and stood in solidarity with people of color, queer people, Black Lives Matter supporters, and anti-fascists, all of whom are the frequent targets of rightwing violence. Spatially, frontliners disrupted both ends of the Blue Lives Matter crowd to ensure that breakaway groups of thugs could not attack less cohesive elements of the counter-protest. Combined with shields, frontliners exerted crowd control over the Blue Lives Matter crowd to protect against and respond to acts of violence.

3) Unity: Bucket drums, other instruments, and dedicated chanters kept the energy up for an extended period of time to ensure that the lines held. These were essential roles that anyone could plug themselves which produced counter-protest unity. Our chants were always louder than our opponents, making it so that they could never unify through their chants. Creating an imposing soundscape was key to curtailing the momentum of the Blue Lives Matter protest by shaking their resolve. When our opponents couldn’t even mount successful chants, many sullenly left.

Those who are wary of frontline or shield action should never underestimate the power of their voice.

4) Autonomous Action and Demoralization: In setting the pace of confrontation and adapting to the terrain, the counter-protest created an environment for autonomous actions to flourish.⁸ Flags were snatched and burned to raucous cheers; Blue Lives Matter demonstrators were documented, later identified, and doxxed⁹; anti-fascist and anti-racist propaganda was spread through stickers and graffiti. In autonomous actions, in the collective of counter-protesters, people found the strength that they always had through experiencing radical community united against fascism and the police. While small acts themselves, flag burnings, the destruction of fascist propaganda, out-chanting our opponents, and acting together demoralized the Blue Lives Matter supporters. It made our opponents experience their own weakness. As anti-racists and anti-fascists, we must make our opponents feel the shame of defeat. Shame is carried into the future, corroding the movement from the inside. As the anti-racist/anti-fascist slogan goes, “Make Racist Afraid Again.”

From Fascist Violence to Cop Riot

The ecstasy of the counter-protest crowd translated to an extended opposition to the Blue Lives Matter march. Slowly, their numbers began to thin as they realized they had lost. In turn, the police mobilized more forces, including riot cops and counter-terrorism officers, to confront the counter-protesters that held strong. As the Blue Lives Matter crowd dwindled, the counter-protest transformed into a drawn-out confrontation with the police. The few remaining pro-police demonstrators retreated to the sidewalk as a line of riot cops erected a protective

barrier around them. Some counter-protesters took the opportunity to antagonize this police line, hurling insults to weaken the pigs’ morale. Others left, feeling the goal had been accomplished. As the lines become more ambiguous, the communication amongst counter-protesters was strained.

The lack of a unified objective or a sense of what we were escalating towards offered the fascists and cops the opportunity to strike. Multiple pro-police agitators punched counter-protesters.¹⁰ One of these fascists had earlier bragged about wanting to “break a Black kid’s head open.”¹¹ Emboldened by the Blue Lives Matter rally, a group of police assaulted and tasered a counter-protester who was in a smaller group.¹² Away from the main group, a pro-police agitator sucker punched an activist.¹³ While the assailant was taken into police custody, some noticed that he had not been handcuffed. Believing the assailants would be released a few blocks away and face no consequences for his action, counter-protesters surrounded the police transport vehicle. A standoff ensued in which counter-protesters demanded justice in some form for the attack. At the same time, the diffusion of counter-protesters across multiple fronts created confusion about how to safely disperse from the action. While the blockade of the police van was certainly a powerful display of solidarity, it also demonstrated the fruitlessness of confrontation with the police for its own sake. Following the movement of the van, in turn, moved counter-protesters back to the bridge, an area with fewer escape routes and a higher potential for kettling. Tactical considerations should always include how to safely disperse.

After the van outmaneuvered counter-protesters, many regrouped at the riot cop line. The armored officers were relieved by bike cops. Counter-protesters continued chanting, antagonizing the pigs, burning flags and klan hoods, and blasting music to keep spirits up. The