

# Why is the New York Times promoting the “black bloc”?

Bill Van Auken  
4 February 2017

The *New York Times*, the semi-official voice of the Democratic Party establishment, published an extraordinary article in its Friday edition headlined “Anarchists Vow to Halt Far Right’s Rise, With Violence if Needed.”

The piece, which ran across four columns of the newspaper’s front page under a huge photo of a black-masked individual preparing to break an office building window with an iron bar during Wednesday night’s protests at the University of California, Berkeley, amounted to free publicity and promotion of the violent protests organized by elements identifying themselves as the “black bloc,” anti-fascists and anarchists.

Authored by *Times* reporter Farah Stockman, the article consists not only of breathless accounts of gratuitous acts of violence by these elements and extended quotes from individuals claiming to represent their politics, but also multiple links to anarchist and black bloc websites and twitter feeds, helpfully provided for any reader who might want to get involved.

“With far-right groups edging into the mainstream with the rise of Donald Trump, self-described anti-fascists and anarchists are vowing to confront them at every turn, and by any means necessary—including violence,” Stockman writes.

“Anarchists also say their recent efforts have been wildly successful, both by focusing attention on their most urgent argument—that Mr. Trump poses a fascist threat—and by enticing others to join their movement,” the article continues. It is clear that she and the *Times* decided to lend a hand to this “enticement.”

The article ran just two days after the protest in Berkeley over a scheduled speaking appearance there by Milo Yiannopoulos, a senior editor at the extreme right-wing Breitbart News, whose former boss, the

fascistic Stephen Bannon, has become Trump’s chief White House strategist.

While thousands of Berkeley students turned out to protest peacefully against Yiannopoulos, a reactionary provocateur who laces his speeches with Islamophobia, racism and right-wing nationalism, a minority of about 150 black-masked demonstrators organized under an amorphous coalition describing itself as ANTIFA, standing for anti-fascist, marched onto the campus and carried out acts of gratuitous violence that an overwhelming majority of the students at the protest opposed.

The ANTIFA contingent smashed windows, set fires, shot fireworks at police, assaulted the few Trump supporters in the area and vandalized local stores, buildings and ATMs.

The intervention by these hooded vandals managed to turn a mass protest into a police provocation.

These actions were precisely what Yiannopoulos and his supporters desired, allowing them to drape their virulent anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant racism in the mantle of “free speech.” Trump responded with a threat to cut off federal funding to UC Berkeley, and the turmoil was seized upon by various politicians as a pretext for promoting laws to suppress genuine protests and strikes.

There has been a long experience with the violence of the so-called “black bloc,” anarchist and ANTIFA protesters, not only in the United States, but in Europe and around the world. The politics of these movements are thoroughly reactionary, based upon a visceral hostility to any struggle to mobilize the working class and youth in an independent political struggle against the capitalist system and for socialism. They attract demoralized and disoriented elements from the middle class, along with a sizable number of police

provocateurs who hide behind hoods and masks and egg on the violence to provide an excuse for repression.

For obvious reasons, as at Wednesday night's protest in Berkeley, these forces are often given a free hand to carry out provocations that are then exploited by the police. The challenge confronting those seeking to carry out genuine political actions in opposition to the government and the capitalist system it defends is to identify these provocateurs before they can do their dirty work and throw them out.

The *Times*, however, seems determined to see them get in. The article includes the following: "The question now is whether anarchists' efforts against Mr. Trump—whether merely colorful and spirited, or lawless and potentially lethal—will earn their fringe movement a bigger presence in the battle of ideas in years to come."

No, the real question is, why is the *Times* promoting this "fringe movement" as some kind of serious contender in the "battle of ideas"?

The article, like much of that which appears in the news pages of the *New York Times*, stinks of a filthy political provocation.

The *Times'* aim in promoting such retrograde tendencies as the "black bloc" and self-styled anarchists is to help divert the growing popular radicalization in response to the most right-wing government in US history into safe political channels.

Whatever the cost in broken windows, damaged ATMs and looted Starbucks' coffee shops, these forces are fully subordinated to the Democratic Party and the capitalist system, while serving as a useful tool for the police in repressing mass unrest.

This explains how a newspaper that endorsed Hillary Clinton for president, has supported every imperialist war waged by Washington and has waged a neo-McCarthyite campaign in support of confrontation with Russia has become an enthusiastic patron of anarchism.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**