

# Rock musician Neil Young releases song denouncing Trump's armed takeover of Washington, D.C. and the “billionaire fascists”

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To his credit, veteran rock musician Neil Young debuted a protest song in late August that denounces President Donald Trump's authoritarian military takeover of Washington, D.C. and calls for a fight against fascism. The song, “Big Crime,” is one of the few public artistic protests released by popular musicians in the US against Trump's unfolding military-police coup d'etat.

On August 20, on the basis of the lie of “preventing crime,” Trump sent National Guard troops from seven Republican-governed states onto the streets of Washington, combining with local and federal police agencies to create a military-police occupation of the city by over 9,000 armed personnel. The US capital could remain under military occupation indefinitely, depending only on the decisions of Trump as “commander-in-chief.”

Trump has since threatened or begun dispatching troops to other American cities, including Chicago, New Orleans and Memphis, while expanding his fascist deportation campaign against immigrants.

Young's “Big Crime” first debuted at a live sound check before a Chicago concert on August 27 and posted on YouTube. It was officially released on Young's website and streaming services on September 3. The 79-year-old artist is currently on tour with his backing band The Chrome Hearts and is reportedly playing the song at each concert to enthusiastic audience response.

The lyrics of ‘Big Crime’ explicitly refer to Trump as a fascist, and denounce the military takeover of Washington, D.C. as a criminal act:

Don't need no fascist rules  
Don't want no fascist schools  
Don't want soldiers walking on our streets  
Got big crime in DC at the White House  
There's big crime in DC at the White House

The music is propulsive and thick with Young's familiar distortion-heavy guitar sound and backed by a multi-vocal chorus.

The second verse begins: “Got to get the fascists out / Got to clean the White House out!”

All told the song is intended to be a hard charging call to action at his concerts. Verse three goes:

No more money to the fascists  
The billionaire fascists  
Time to blackout the system  
No more great again  
No more great again  
Time to blackout the system

Young, a dual US-Canadian citizen, has repeatedly clashed with Trump since the latter took office in January. In April, Young warned followers of his website that he anticipated Trump would try to attack him for critical comments he had made against the government while touring outside the US. “When I play music in Europe, if I talk about Donald J. Trump, I may be one of those returning to America who is barred or put in jail to sleep on a cement floor with an aluminum blanket.”

In May, Young joined Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam in support of rock musician Bruce Springsteen, who criticized Trump at a May 14 concert in Manchester, England. Trump responded to Springsteen with an unhinged personal attack and incitement of his supporters, to which Young responded on social media:

What are you worryin' about man? Bruce and thousands of musicians think you are ruining America. You worry about that instead of the dyin' kids in Gaza. That's your problem...I am not scared of you. Neither are the rest of us. You shut down FEMA when we needed it most. That's your problem Trump. STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT ROCKERS ARE SAYING. Think about saving America from the mess you made.

Young has a long history of important protest songs. One of his most well-known songs is the powerful “Ohio,” a response to the killing of four Kent State University students and wounding of nine others in May 1970 by the Ohio National Guard. Other notable Young songs include “Southern Man” (1970), “After the Gold Rush” (1970) and “Rockin in the Free World” (1989). The latter is an indictment of the George H. W. Bush administration. Young repeatedly opposed and eventually sued Trump for using the song during his election campaigns in 2016 and 2020. He dropped the suit after Trump lost the 2020 election.

Young, whose political views are all over the place, has also produced several muddleheaded and misguided songs, particularly in support of the US-NATO-provoked war with Russia. Nevertheless, Young’s opposition to the fascist military coup unfolding in Washington, D.C. and other cities is an important sign of widespread popular opposition and speaks to Young’s better instincts and artistic courage. The song is also notable because, at the moment, it is one of the few popular artistic protests in the US to openly denounce Trump’s unfolding coup. As noted above, while there is vast opposition among workers and young people, very little of this yet finds its way into the work of popular artists in the US.

One exception is musician Jack White, formerly of the White Stripes. After issuing relatively mild criticism of the “vulgar” and increasingly gold-plated décor of the White House on Instagram, the artist was singled out for personal attack in a public statement by Trump’s communications manager Steven Cheung.

White responded in a lengthy Instagram post on August 20 denouncing Trump, among other things, for his

blatant fascist manipulation of the government, his gestapo ICE tactics, his racist remarks about Latinos, Native Americans, etc., his ridiculous “wall” construction, his attacks on the disabled, his attempted coup and mob insurrection

Like Young, White has also been prone to illusions in the Democratic Party and vocal in support of the US-NATO war with Russia. The Instagram post reflects some of these limitations. But it does conclude with:

The only way you can support this comman is because you are a victim of the 2 party system and you ‘defend your guy no matter what he does.’ No intelligent person can defend this low life fascist...This man and his goon squad have failed upwards for decades and...[has] hundreds of thousands of deaths from his inaction of the pandemic on his hands..

The post by White was “liked” over 254,000 times, and statements of vocal support for it came from musicians Jason Isbell, Margo Price and Chan Marshall (of the band Cat Power), as

well as comedian Patton Oswalt and filmmaker Jim Jarmusch.

Elsewhere, signs of opposition continue to develop. A protest song by the Liberian-American folk artist Mon Rovia, “Heavy Foot,” has gone viral on Tik Tok, with the artist increasingly selling out smaller concerts across the US. The sensitive protest song denounces authoritarianism in the US and the bourgeois media’s cover-up of the genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration continues its war on culture and critical thought on every front. The Kennedy Center, essentially held captive now by the fascists in the White House, has become a hub of backwardness and philistinism. In August, the Center fired its dance programming team. “Three individuals were terminated,” read a statement from Kennedy Center spokesperson Roma Daravi. “We will have an exciting announcement about the new direction for Dance programming soon.” As NPR reported at the time,

President Trump has taken major steps to reshape the cultural center. Just last week, Trump surprised Kennedy Center staff when he announced his picks for this year’s Kennedy Center Honors, including actor Sylvester Stallone, disco star Gloria Gaynor and the rock band Kiss.

This past week, another longtime staffer at the Kennedy Center, Kevin Struthers, was dismissed. He was a senior director of music programming who had been at the arts institution for 30 years. NPR commented that

Struthers had been the administrative director of the Kennedy Center’s jazz programming. Previously, the Kennedy Center had been celebrated for inviting a vibrant roster of established and emerging jazz artists. The only mainstage jazz performance still on the Kennedy Center’s schedule is an October performance by The Glenn Miller Orchestra, a group which began recording in 1939.



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