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Hope Is in the Streets

Why Grassroots Resistance Is Our Only Hope

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As Donald Trump's administration digs itself deeper and deeper into trouble, many people are looking to the corporate media, the FBI, the judicial system, or other recognized authorities to resolve this situation. Yet every effective measure against Trump and his cronies has begun with grassroots efforts. Even if he is deposed by other elements within the state, it will only further legitimize the structures through which politicians like him are able to do so much damage in the first place, setting the stage for other politicians to continue carrying out the same activities. Our freedom and safety will not be assured until we can defend them ourselves, through direct action, without need of leaders or representation.

When Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, anarchists and other opponents of the state swung into action. While liberals and party leftists were still reeling, anarchists immediately called for combative demonstrations at the outset of the Trump regime, and took to the streets alongside other angry people to show that business as usual would be impossible under Trump.

In the first days of Trump's administration, countless people came together in courageous acts of resistance, confronting the authorities and shutting down airports and other infrastructure. This succeeded in breaking the ruling class consensus around Trump, destabilizing his administration and undermining its efforts to shift the US government from a neoliberal strategy for managing capitalism to an overtly nationalist strategy. Had resistance continued at that intensity, neoliberalism, too, might have been in danger.

Unfortunately, this momentum was a victim of its own success. As soon as it achieved a few victories, good liberals began to stay home watching the news and "liking" things on Facebook rather than putting their bodies on the line. Meanwhile, realizing that his initial strategy had failed, Trump demoted nationalist advisor Steve Bannon, ordered an airstrike in Syria, and tried to cozy up to the neoliberal elements of the deep state. If he succeeds in doing so,

he will be able to push through his racist, nationalist agenda under the cover of ordinary governance, just as Obama did.

It's naïve to hope that CNN, the FBI, or the Democratic Party will thwart Trump's authoritarian ambitions. They are just as essential to the power structure as Trump himself, just as complicit in its functioning. Grassroots resistance has been the only thing that has succeeded in putting the brakes on Trump's advance. Every victory against him has begun with people taking action on their own initiative. If we hadn't blockaded the airports, would any judge have had the guts to block the Muslim ban? If we hadn't flooded the streets, would White House employees have taken the risk of leaking information?

Going forward, we must remember the lessons of the opening of the Trump era: that even in the face of the most powerful empire in the history of the world, we have tremendous power, as long as we don't look to others to act in our place. Together, we can take back our lives and disable the institutions through which our rulers seek to dominate us. No party, politician, or organization can do this for us. Let's become ungovernable and free.