

The “Alt-Right” Label: What’s Real, What’s Fake, And Why It Matters



HELP ENLIGHTEN YOUR FELLOWS. BE SURE TO PASS THIS ON. SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON IT.



The Southern Poverty Law Center has [issued a full retraction and apology](#) for a bizarre screed it published last week

lumping anti-war leftists in with fascists and Nazis. As of this writing [two](#) other [articles](#) by the same author, Alexander Reid Ross, have also been pulled by the Southern Poverty Law Center “pending further review”.

Full disclosure I have a slight history with Ross. In September I [attacked](#) a shockingly awful [Intercept article](#) which quoted him extensively in a highly strained effort to conflate opposition to interventionism in Syria with Nazism. Since that time Ross [has participated](#) in the ongoing “Caitlin Johnstone is a secret Nazi” smear campaign, and one of his removed-pending-review articles was cited in a recent [conspiratorial smear piece](#) about me.

The retracted article is worth reading in light of the fact that the SPLC is unwilling to stand by its claims, so [here's an archive](#) if you're curious. It's full of weird arrow graphs that would look more at home on an Illuminati conspiracy website and academic jargon like “Atlanticist”, “fascist *engagées*”, “Duginists”, “LaRouchite” and “Eurasianist” that most normal people don't use or understand. Ross weaves that mess into a barely decipherable conspiracy theory about a “red-brown populist collaboration” to advance fascist regimes against American hegemony, making the anti-imperialist left “a willing accomplice” to fascism.

Right. Gotcha. It can't possibly be that antiwar leftists recognize that US military violence is literally always disastrous and literally never accomplishes what its proponents claim it will accomplish. It can't possibly be that the far right objects to American lives and resources being spent on pointless wars that create refugee crises. It can't possibly be that for those two reasons the antiwar left and anti-interventionist right often find themselves on the same side of the debate on issues like Syria. It's that they both secretly love the idea of fascist foreign governments rising to power in a multipolar world. If you squint at it just right

through Ross' convoluted, conspiratorial reality tunnel, it almost kinda sorta makes sense.

BREAKING: The Southern Poverty Law Center has retracted and apologized for falsely calling me Alt-Right. <https://t.co/jaMKksM4Ko> pic.twitter.com/MvBnAG2cNz

– Tim Pool (@Timcast) [March 14, 2018](#)

Among those caught up in the article's accusatory ramblings were Vanessa Beeley (who Ross hilariously labels a "conspiracy theorist"), the Ron Paul Institute's brilliantly lucid anti-war conservative Daniel McAdams, the always excellent Margaret Kimberley of *Black Agenda Report*, Ben Norton (who ironically has on [more](#) than [one](#) occasion used his platform to falsely smear me in exactly the same way Ross falsely smeared him), Max Blumenthal and Rania Khalek.

A lot has already been written about the latter crew, including an [article by Buzzfeed](#), and they all have large platforms on which they are capably defending themselves. I don't feel any need to further point out the obvious fact that antiwar leftists oppose US interventionism because it unleashes deadly horrors and unfathomable suffering upon the innocent for the benefit of the wealthy and the powerful, not because they love fascism. But I would like to say a bit about a part of this drama which isn't getting much attention on the left.

The one error that Ross [has conceded](#) he might *possibly* have made in the article was his [baseless and easily disproven](#) claim that journalist Tim Pool had once attended a conference for Holocaust deniers in Iran. Unlike the Southern Poverty Law Center, however, Ross has *not* conceded that he also inaccurately labeled Pool as an "Alt Right journalist" while reporting his false claim about the Iran conference, which [greatly offended Pool](#).

The confusion around the label alt-right is one of those things that makes it abundantly clear how thick the walls of the political social media echo chambers are. While you will see leftists routinely pinning that label on everyone from Pool to Donald Trump to Laura Ingraham to Cassandra Fairbanks (who was also wrongly called alt-right in the SPLC article), and even to unabashed antiwar leftists like myself, everyone on the political right seems to be crystal clear about what that label actually refers to and what it doesn't.

In [an informative interview](#) with TYT's Michael Tracey, *Kill All Normies* author Angela Nagle describes how her research for the book showed her that the meaning of the term alt-right was somewhat nebulous after its creation, but in recent years has come to refer specifically to white ethnonationalism of the sort described by the creator of the term, Richard Spencer.

"The problem, I suppose, is that the definition of alt-right was kind of very unsettled," Nagle told Tracey. "I think now it's much more settled, and the group of people that are now accurately described as the alt-right are pretty small."

Interestingly, this understanding of the definition of alt-right is the same one used by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which is one of the top results that comes up in a Google search for the term.

"Alt-righters eschew 'establishment' conservatism, skew young, and embrace white ethnonationalism as a fundamental value," the SPLC says.

This understanding of the term is in line with that of those who label themselves alt-right, as well as conservatives and Trump supporters who reject white nationalism. From what I've seen, everyone under the Trump umbrella is crystal clear that alt-right refers to white ethnonationalism, and the different factions which oppose it routinely have knock-down, drag-out online debates with those who promote it. Whereas lefties

often aren't even clear about what white nationalism actually is.

So let's be very clear about this: alt-right refers to those who embrace white nationalism, also known as white ethnonationalism. White nationalism is a disgusting ideology with the stated [agenda of creating an all-white ethnostate](#), i.e. a nation with no people of non-white races in it. These were the primary groups that were involved in Charlottesville.

And that's it. That's the full meaning. Unless you see someone advocating the creation of an all-white ethnostate, as people like Richard Spencer and David Duke do, it's inaccurate to label them alt-right. Many conservatives in America want stricter policies against illegal immigration, whine a lot about white people having it too hard, have misguided ideas about Black Lives Matter, think political correctness is ruining the world, and are opposed to notions like gay marriage and gender fluidity. That doesn't make them alt-right, it just makes them conservative.

Anyone who thinks I am alt-right has no concept of what it is, and they're prob suffering from trump derangement syndrome. Dangerous folks.

– Cassandra Fairbanks (@CassandraRules) [September 20, 2017](#)

- 1. Nobody with half a brain thinks I'm alt right.*
- 2. Yesterday was the anniversary of the beginning of the siege.*
- 3. Last night was the final episode of the six part mini series about it.*
- 4. Liberals pretending they care about law enforcement when it comes to Waco is a joke. <https://t.co/NrWN3MUQ1q>*

– Cassandra Fairbanks (@CassandraRules) [March 1, 2018](#)

I am not defending conservatism here, and I am not being pedantic. These distinctions matter, because the confusion around them is being exploited in a very toxic way.

Think about it: you've got Group A (white nationalists) saying "Yeah, hi, we're alt-right," you've got Group B (the much larger group of Trump supporters who aren't white nationalists) saying "Those guys over there saying they're alt-right are alt-right, but we're not alt-right," but then you've got Group C (leftists and centrists) coming in rejecting those clear definitions and saying "actually you're all alt-right," which is saying they're all white nationalists, which is saying they're all actively pursuing the creation of an all-white ethnostate.

Doesn't that sound a bit fishy? Almost like a manipulation that was cooked up in some DC think tank?

In August of 2016 [a widely circulated article](#) titled "What Is The 'Alt-Right'? A Guide To The White Nationalist Movement Now Leading Conservative Media" was published by Media Matters, a Democratic party-aligned propaganda firm headed by the Clinton campaign's David Brock, who Bernie Sanders once charitably referred to as "the scum of the earth". The article mentions Richard Spencer and the neo-Nazi website Daily Stormer, but it also lists people like Steve Bannon, Milo Yiannopoulos, and Mike Cernovich, who have all said some gross things in their time but have never been advocates of white separatism or the creation of a white ethnostate. They might be far-right, and on many issues they might also be far-wrong, but they are not alt-right.

On the same day the Media Matters article was released, Hillary Clinton [drove this notion into mainstream consciousness](#) with a speech warning that the alt-right "has effectively taken over the Republican Party."

What this deliberate conflation did is allow any figure remotely associated with Trump support to be painted as alt-right, effectively creating the “everyone to the right of Hillary Clinton on any issue is an actual, literal Nazi” mind virus that is still wedging Americans apart today. I myself have been called a Nazi many, many times just for my willingness to interact with Trump supporters on issues of mutual interest. Left Twitter is still to this day shrieking about [an article](#) I wrote nine months ago in which I stated I was fine with collaborating with the MAGA crowd on issues of convergence, despite my explicitly rejecting the possibility of collaborating with Richard Spencer and his ideology in the same article.

Do you see how that works? These manipulators are simultaneously broadening the definition of alt-right to include all Trump supporters while narrowing that large and diverse group of opinions into actual Nazism. I can't even count how many people I've tried to explain my position only to be cut off with “No, you want to collaborate with Nazis! With people who want to *kill* me! Fuck you!” Me saying I don't mind some social media overlap with Trump supporters became me saying I support the alt-right, which became me saying I support Nazism, which became me saying I support the murder of minorities.

Someone's profiting from this divisive dynamic, and it ain't you. If the entire right side of the political spectrum can be so effectively painted with the brush of Nazism, there's no chance of the people uniting against the actual real-life fascism which has already taken hold of America.

And that's why this is so important. While people like Alexander Reid Ross worry about secret fascists and double-secret fascist collaborators, America has had its democratic system completely undermined by an Orwellian corporatist oligarchy which keeps people poor and stupid with mass media propaganda and spends people's medicine money

dropping bombs on brown-skinned people overseas. While elitist academics write conspiratorial screeds about a “red-brown alliance” to strengthen fascism, *actual* fascism tightens the noose.

The "You're a secret Nazi!" accusation so often leveled by Left Twitter is even more moronic than the "You're a Kremlin troll!" accusation beloved by Centrist Twitter. Only idiots believe world is full of fake leftists secretly laboring to create a white ethnostate in America.

– Caitlin Johnstone (@caitoz) [January 24, 2018](#)

Now here we are with Trump continuing and expanding the same Orwellian, bloodthirsty, exploitative agendas as his predecessors, advancing a [virulent war hawk](#) to Secretary of State while elevating [an actual torturer](#) to CIA Director, and we're all too fragmented and afraid of each other to unite against it. All objections to establishment horrors receive a fraction of their possible visibility because the left thinks the right are Nazis and the right are sick and tired of being called fucking Nazis by the left.

Worse still, even lefties won't unite with lefties. Read the comments underneath any article where I try to talk about this denouncing me as a secret-secret Nazi who can't be trusted on any issue for examples.

As for myself, I insist on remaining open to people on both the right and the left to whatever extent they are willing to stand against the ecocidal, omnicidal oppressors who have seized control of the most powerful government on earth and its allies. If you really want to know what kind of collaboration my article nine months ago was talking about, you've got nine months of my history to look back on. I get published in the *Ron Paul Institute* periodically, my antiwar stuff gets retweeted by Fairbanks and Cernovich sometimes, I

promote the work of people like Daniel McAdams and Ben Swann, and I have a sizable conservative audience because I don't reject them. I have never once compromised on my leftist principles, I have never led a single socialist to embrace Nazism, and I have never supported white nationalism. What I have done is inject some healthy ideas from a lefty perspective into the MAGA mainstream. I think that's a good thing.

I insist that we've got to learn to interact with each other if we're ever going to have a shot at winning this thing. This means learning a bit about the other side instead of believing what Media Matters and Hillary Clinton tell us about them. Basically, it means being a normal adult and interacting with people of differing opinions, just like you do in the rest of your life when you're not staring at a screen beating up on people for likes and retweets.

We are capable of this. The debate between socialism and capitalism absolutely matters, and in my opinion unchecked capitalism is what got us into this place in the first place. But right now we've got a security/intelligence complex collaborating with an alliance of plutocrats to [escalate tensions between two nuclear superpowers](#), and anything could go wrong at any second. This is not the time to reject all helping hands that aren't perfectly in alignment with our ideology, this is the time to turn against our true oppressors so that one day we may have the luxury of a meaningful debate about political ideology in a political environment that isn't fully controlled by the iron fist of Orwellian oligarchy.

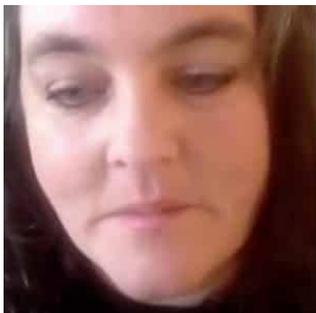
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About the Author



Caitlin Johnstone is a brave journalist, political junkie, relentless feminist, champion of the 99 percent. And a powerful counter-propaganda tactician.



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News

^0America's Goal...

Make every homeless tranny

gender comfortable!

Parting shot—a word from the editors

The Best Definition of Donald Trump We Have Found



In his zeal to prove to his antagonists in the War Party that he is as bloodthirsty as their champion, Hillary Clinton, and more manly than Barack Obama, Trump seems to have gone “play-crazy” -- acting like an unpredictable maniac in order to terrorize the Russians into forcing some kind of dramatic concessions from their Syrian allies, or risk *Armageddon*. However, the “play-crazy” gambit can only work when the leader is, in real life, a disciplined and intelligent actor, who knows precisely what actual boundaries must not be crossed. That ain’t Donald Trump -- a pitifully shallow and ill-disciplined man, emotionally handicapped by obscene privilege and cognitively crippled by white American chauvinism. By pushing Trump into a corner and demanding that he display his most bellicose self, or be ceaselessly mocked as a “puppet” and minion of Russia, a lesser power, the War Party and its media and clandestine services have created a perfect storm of mayhem that may consume us all.— **Glen Ford, Editor in Chief, Black Agenda Report**
