

## **Recommendations from the history of anti-fascism for opposing the far right today**

### **1. Use history wisely**

We should remember that the inter-war period is the worst-case scenario from history and that today's far right shows the signs of having been defeated time and time again since 1945. We would do better to focus on this history of far right defeat rather than on the exceptional circumstances of the inter-war period. In a similar vein, we should restrict our use of terms like "fascist" and "Nazi" to when they are genuinely appropriate.

### **2. Anti-racism > anti-fascism**

Since 1945 racism has been the chief breeding ground for fascism, and the contemporary far right depends heavily on mobilisation of anti-immigration sentiment for support. The focus of today's opponents of the far right must, therefore, be on anti-racism rather than anti-fascism, and liaising with immigrant and ethnic minority communities is essential.

### **3. There is no substitute for communal politics**

We need to oppose the politics of the far right at its most basic level: when it raises its head in our local communities. As numerous anti-fascist groups have shown over the decades, the far right can be effectively suppressed through welcoming and inclusive forms of local politics that focus on commonality rather than on ideology.

### **4. Don't over inflate the far right's importance...**

The far right has been more effectively opposed when its frequent irrelevance, its focus on problems not solutions, and its inability to deliver its promises have all been highlighted. Whilst isolated far right successes and its visibility on the streets are scary, we should remember that the far right is more likely to be successful if the public genuinely believes it can accomplish things.

### **5. ... But also don't ridicule it**

Having said that, we should also be careful not to ridicule the far right, especially its more overtly esoteric elements, which we need to take just as seriously. Overt neo-Nazi subcultures may be easy to mock, for example, but they are frequently home to some of the far right's most dangerous groups and individuals, incubating the likes of David Copeland (the 1999 London nail bomber) and Thomas Mair (the murderer of Jo Cox).

### **6. Use culture to mobilise**

A core lesson from Rock Against Racism (RAR) in the late 1970s is the ability of popular culture (especially music) to bring together anti-racist forces to oppose the far right. Promoting what Paul Gilroy has called "convivial culture" (interaction between those from different cultural and racial backgrounds), RAR demonstrated that tolerance and unity can be as effectively promoted by gigs as by political meetings.

### **7. We need to oppose the right (particularly when it is in power), not just the far right**

More than ever the far right's ability to maintain itself in Britain stems from the willingness of the wider political right (especially when it is in government) to endorse its divisive, anti-multicultural politics. Like anti-racists throughout post-war British history, then, we need to highlight the racism present in much of mainstream politics as well as that of far right extremists.

### **8. Set an example**

One of the chief challenges the left faces in opposing the far right today is the inability of sections of it to set an example. Antisemitism, conspiracy theories, overt misrepresentation of history, and the politics of division should be left to the far right.