

RefuseFascism.org, January 2018 National Tour: Summary of Findings



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Background:

RefuseFascism.org is a movement of people coming from diverse perspectives, united in our recognition that the Trump/Pence regime poses a catastrophic danger to humanity and the planet and that it is *our responsibility* to drive them from power. This means working and organizing with all our creativity and determination toward the time when many thousands of people will fill the streets of cities and towns in nonviolent protests that continue day after day and night after night, growing in numbers and spreading throughout the country to force those in power to meet our single unifying demand: *This Nightmare Must End: The Trump/Pence Regime Must Go!*

On November 4th, 2017 Refuse Fascism (RF) began a serious first attempt at this by mobilizing four thousand people to protest with courage and conviction in more than 20 cities in defiance of a wave of fascist lies, threats, and armed Nazis. People were not yet ready to engage in continuing sustained protest. Nonetheless, November 4 was a harbinger.

We pledge to follow through on our mission to mobilize the people to vote with their feet in the streets to drive out the Trump/Pence regime — to act with courage and conviction embodying the morality and stakes of this moment: *In the Name of Humanity, We REFUSE to Accept a Fascist America.*

Refuse Fascism National Tour: January 2018

In early January, RefuseFascism.org launched a national tour to build on what we have accomplished and to go to work on fulfilling our mission. Members of Refuse Fascism's national

and local leadership traveled to Chicago, the Bay Area, New York City, and Los Angeles and teamed up with the steering committees of local chapters. We met with hundreds of people, representatives of 20 organizations, and initial gatherings of faith and student task forces. Substantial discussions were held with Refuse Fascism activists and organizers. There were also important national fundraising meetings.

Tour Goals:

[1] The main purpose of this tour was to conduct outreach, “active investigation,” and on that basis to forge unity and strategic working relations with organizations and community leaders towards the objective of driving the regime from power. Active investigation is a way of engaging, struggling, *and* uniting with others about how to understand the problem that humanity confronts with Trump/Pence Regime and what must be done to stop its drive to consolidate fascism in this country with potentially existential stakes for humanity.

[2] To forge and train wider rungs of national leadership of Refuse Fascism, as well as to strengthen the chapter leading groups and our broader membership. This included beginning work to establish religious and student task forces. It also included holding **mass invitational meetings in each city to involve new people** in Refuse Fascism.org.

Main Findings

The following are two main themes of analysis that the tour consistently returned to and deepened.

[1] In their first year, the Trump/Pence Regime has made significant strides in imposing a fascist remaking of society, shattering the political, social and cultural norms of U.S. society and international relations.

At the same time, the regime has been increasingly normalized, accommodated, and conciliated with, including among those who are outraged.

There continues to be a very deep and wide reservoir of people numbering in the tens of millions who are profoundly disturbed and angered by the Trump/Pence regime *and* who continue to want to act on this, even if not yet in ways commensurate with stopping a fascist regime. In January people were preparing to go out for the anniversary of Women’s March which this year drew a still very significant 1.5 million people compared to 4.5 million the day after the inauguration in 2017. And, it is significant that there have been over 8,000 protests

in the past year, including many small protests with civil disobedience around immigration.

We confirmed and deepened our sense going into the tour that the principal contradiction we face in seeking to mobilize these millions in *sustained day after day* political protest is between people's continued deep revulsion at the regime on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their unwillingness as yet to break out of the comfort zone and relative stability of their lives which combines with their expectation and hope that others (the Democratic Party, the courts, other institutions of society) will solve the problem of this regime for them.

People see the abnormality of the regime, but continue to think and act within normal channels. This basic assessment was deepened through all the interactions we had. Key political and ideological questions that contribute to this, and which pose pathways for transforming this through struggle, were more keenly identified, as delineated in a concentrated form in this report, and which will be further developed on our website, RefuseFascism.org.

Normalization among the more politically engaged people often takes the form of fatigue with the relentless pace of the tearing up of governing and civil norms. There has been attrition and demoralization in many of the activist groups who have been pressuring congress, with people returning to their lives and hoping that somehow the nightmare will end. Despite proclaiming “a year of victories” by many national leaders of grassroots electoral groups such as Indivisible, we found that the mood or reality at the base of these organizations is highly contradictory with significant attrition. The passage of the tax bill demoralized those who expected quick victories. Many who are outraged are also rendered passive spectators by the nightly breathless revelations by Rachel Maddow and the anticipation she builds that Mueller's investigation or some other scandal will spell the regime's undoing – all while more horrors are locked into place.

In this context, it is important that we found an increased openness to meet with Refuse Fascism and to listen to and engage a serious analysis of the regime and our program and plan for driving out the regime compared to six months ago.

[2] There is a profound need to continuously wage the fight for people to grasp that the Trump/Pence Regime is fascist and that they are in the process of consolidating fascism. And, that *fascism* is a game-changer which poses an existential threat to all of humanity. More people are willing to call the regime fascist, yet for most people this is more of a curse, and the reality of what this means is not well understood.

We had to make the case for [a] what is fascism and [b] why it could and *is* happening here – going into its roots as well as the program put forth and implemented by the regime. We had to counter the argument that RF calling this fascism is bad “branding” and/or “too negative,” including our ubiquitous “NO!” signs, to which one of the youth organizers responded: “*Saying ‘NO!’ makes possible a thousand Yes’s.*” We had to make the case that knowing what the nature of the disease or problem you face is essential to working on a cure.

To make the case that this *is* fascism we brought out that the Trump/Pence regime has made significant reactionary progress in every aspect of their fascist agenda. To date, they have prevailed in establishing what amounts to a Muslim Ban; packed the federal courts with fascist judges; ripped up more than 30 environmental regulations; dramatically escalated the ethnic cleansing of Black and Brown immigrants; attacked the media, science and truth itself; relentlessly undermined the separation of powers and rule of law; normalized an ugly misogyny and white supremacy; and dragged the world dangerously close to nuclear war. A very powerful strain of this overall fascist regime is the role of Christian fascism, concentrated in Mike Pence but also reaching into every major institution, which is increasingly utilizing the power of the state to impose Dark Ages fundamentalism on society. And there are the fascist extralegal forces who have exerted a chilling effect on society and resistance. Charlottesville reverberates. While many see elements or even most of this, most are ignorant of – or resistant to confronting – the implications of all of this taken as a whole.

To enable people to more deeply grasp the fascist nature of the regime, we promoted the extensive source material on the RefuseFascism.org website, highlighting the Indictment panels[1] as well as the film of a talk by Bob Avakian: “*The Trump/Pence Regime Must Go! In the Name of Humanity. We REFUSE to Accept a Fascist America. A Better World IS Possible!*”

Another major factor standing in the way of people recognizing the full danger of the regime is not only Trump’s grotesque “America First” but the way that the leadership of the Democrats and much of the so-called #Resistance ignores and erases any recognition of the horrors being threatened for people all around the world (not *just* Americans). In this way, our insistence that we must drive out the regime *in the name of humanity* (which comprehends the regime’s threats of war, including nuclear holocaust, as well as the danger posed to global humanity by their destruction of the environment), both challenges unconscionable American chauvinism and is a powerful attractive force.

From RefuseFascism.org’s initiating *Call to Action*: “Fascism is not just a gross combination of horrific reactionary policies. It is a qualitative change in how society is

governed. Fascism foments and relies on xenophobic nationalism, racism, misogyny, and the aggressive re-institution of oppressive ‘traditional values.’... What is crucial to understand is that once in power fascism essentially eliminates traditional democratic rights.”

People were largely ignorant of, or had not put together, the scale and scope of the limitations already posed on basic democratic rights and where this is heading – which is leading to a situation where protest and even dissent could effectively be silenced.

There was serious engagement and consideration of this, even as most people are not yet willing to fully confront and act accordingly. Two ironies with heavy consequence: First, after considering and engaging the fascist nature and trajectory of the regime and coming to some agreement, very often people would say that its “not fascism *yet*.” To which we said, “Precisely the point: We have to prevent these fascists from fully consolidating fascism.” But then, they would often back away from the kind of implacable struggle necessary to deal with that. Second, especially among prominent people, after denying it’s as bad as we say, would often not “sign on” because (unsaid) doing so poses risks and could have real consequences (because they know it really *is* that bad).

Transforming this will require even more struggle in word and through action, that Refuse Fascism will take responsibility for.

Five Key Lessons from the Tour:

1. Refuse Fascism must constantly reground our thinking and the struggle to end this nightmare in what it will take to create a political situation where the Trump/Pence Regime is removed from power, and to proceed in everything we do *from that perspective*. Organizing, strategy, tactics, uniting with particular struggles, uniting with other organizations, fundraising, slogans and educational materials *all must be aimed at and serve to advance this single unifying objective*.

2. The importance of the correct relationship between resistance against each major front of the Trump/Pence Regime’s attacks on the people and the need to remove the whole Trump/Pence Regime from power to stop the consolidation of a fascist America.

While it is necessary that resistance to the major outrages perpetrated by the regime grow stronger, deeper, and more determined, WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IS THAT THIS RESISTANCE BE LINKED TO – and work undertaken in its own right to build towards – THE MOVEMENT TO DRIVE OUT THE WHOLE REGIME.

Fighting against key fronts of the regime's attacks on the people is essential because of the real damage these attacks do and because this is part of how people build strength to wage the larger fight. This is why this resistance must grow **broader** (involving more and more sections of the people), **deeper** (where people understand more clearly the scale and scope of these attacks and where they are headed), and **more determined** (with people understanding the life and death nature of the stakes for millions of people and the planet itself and willing to put themselves on the line). This is especially so when particular attacks come to concentrate the frontline of the overall struggle against the regime. At the same time, **what must be grasped clearly is that: Fascism can absorb many different acts of resistance...and sweep them all aside at a certain point, unless it is driven from power.**

This is the lesson of history, poetically captured with incalculable current relevance by Pastor Martin Niemoller: “First they came for the communists and I wasn’t a communist, so I didn’t speak up....”

3. The Tour underscored **the importance of devoting systematic attention to forging and deepening strategic relations with other organized forces and people of disproportionate influence. A process must be further developed and unfolded where people and organizations with very different philosophies, goals, and analyses are working together to stop this regime.** We must unite all who can be united with a method of unity-struggle-unity.

The process we put forth: Begin with a shared common objective in stopping this regime. Recognize that there will be disagreement and struggle over ultimate goals, ideologies and politics and that principled ways should be fostered for discussion and engagement without making these differences reason to not work together to stop this regime. Then, we must all consistently return to the serious necessity we face with the horror of the Trump/Pence regime and our responsibility to humanity to struggle together so that they are removed from power. History has shown the failure to achieve this unity to stop fascism from before it is consolidated has had a heavy cost.

By continuing to return to the stakes of the reality we face, not just for people living in this country, but in the name of humanity, there is the basis to rise up above secondary differences and to unite in this great cause. Refuse Fascism will convene continuation groups to develop common discussion and practice in a couple of cities as well as nationally.

4. We learned that **a key lesson from history must be fought for: there has never been a substantial change in the direction of the history of this country that has not been achieved through mass determined struggle.** For many this was new, for others, forgotten –

which must be revived.

We had to make the case with substance for why **only mass struggle from below could create a profound enough political crisis that could compel sections of those in power to act on our demand for the regime to be removed.** It became evident that it is essential that we break down the following from the Refuse Fascism's Calls to Action:

“Our determination to persist and not back down [from nonviolent protest that continues day after day] will compel the whole world to take note. Every force and faction in the power structure would be forced to respond to our demand. The cracks and divisions among the powers already evident today will sharpen and widen. As we draw more and more people forward to stand up, all of this, could lead to a situation where this illegitimate regime is removed from power.”

Bringing this alive required vividly painting a picture of what kind of political crisis it would engender if we began with even tens of thousands protesting continually for a week in several cities. How an act of repression against one of these protests, *if people came back the next day everywhere in large numbers*, could electrify, inspire, and call forth the actions of hundreds of thousands more people and eventually millions deciding to join in and take to the streets. Imagine what the national and the international repercussions of that would be. How those in power (some Democrats, some Republicans) would then feel compelled to act for their own reasons to remove the Trump/Pence regime in the larger interests of their whole set up.

Many of the people and organizations we met with were actively involved in impeachment efforts including electing Democrats as the road to do that. At the same time many were pressuring the Democrats on particular bills – trying to hold them “accountable.” Or, if they were not actively doing these things their hope is that the Democrats and/or investigations will lead to Trump being stymied until voted out, while they are active around particular issues.

It was crucial to expose how and why the Democratic leadership has taken impeachment “off the table,” revealing that even the liberal Rep. Jerry Nadler has said: “If we were in the majority and if we decide that the evidence isn’t there for impeachment — or even if the evidence is there we decide it would tear the country apart too much, there’s no buy-in, there’s no bipartisanship and we shouldn’t do it for whatever reason ... ” then they would not impeach and would explain why not. Translation: for the Democratic Party leadership, maintaining “order” – even if it means order with fascists who will stop at nothing to impose their nightmare on the world – is preferable to stopping fascism.

We brought out how in 2006, many people thought that electing a Democratic congress would be the road to impeach Bush. However, when a Democratic Congress was elected, they didn't move to impeach. We went into how and why the Nixon/Agnew administration was removed from power in the context of massive society wide struggle. And, we brought in examples from other countries.

Through this tour it became much clearer that [a] only nonviolent, mass sustained nationwide protests can create the kind of political situation where the demand that *The Trump/Pence Regime Must Go* could be achieved and [b] that Refuse Fascism will need to continue to write and speak on why this is so, why relying on the mid-term and the 2020 elections as the means to unseat the fascist regime of Trump and Pence is not a winning strategy. And, win we must or there will be horrific consequence.

5. Contributing significant funds to – and joining in raising significant funds for – RefuseFascism.org is one of the most critical and meaningful ways for people to refuse to accept a fascist America and the catastrophic horror this would mean for all of humanity.

The analysis and road forward that has been developed by RefuseFascism.org is unique. It is the *only* realistic solution to the horrendous danger posed by the Trump/Pence Regime and it speaks to the deep yearnings of many millions in this country who could be mobilized to act to make this real. Where we have been able to reach, people have been impacted by our analysis, moved by our argumentation, and inspired by – and often moved to join in with – our actions. Yet, most in this society still do not know of this organization, so our impact is far short of what is needed and this undermines people's willingness to step out (or continue to step out) and act in the ways necessary to drive out the regime. What is urgently needed is to be able to project the analysis and mission, the concrete organizing and plans of RefuseFascism.org to *millions* throughout society – on the campuses, among faith communities, in the media and social media, through advertising, through poster campaigns, stickers, t-shirts and hats, and through a greatly heightened organizing infrastructure.

It is not possible to overestimate the difference it would make if Refuse Fascism had the funds to free up more people to work full-time on spreading and organizing this movement. It is impossible to conceive of a movement that succeeds in drawing forward the millions who hate what this regime is doing to become an unrelenting political force that drives them from office, without RefuseFascism.org becoming qualitatively stronger in many ways. All of this will require serious money – ultimately millions of dollars.

Raising funds is everyone's responsibility and must be woven into everything we do – from

shaking the can while doing outreach, to asking for funds during strategizing meetings, to holding fundraising gatherings, to phone-banking, to seeking out new potential donors (especially people in position to give significant funds). It is essential that we succeed in the \$250,000 fundraising campaign now underway, as a first leap in getting to the needed level.

CONCLUSION:

The January Tour deepened our understanding of the stakes of Refuse Fascism achieving its mission. The Trump/Pence regime is fascist. There are tens of millions of people anguished and still angry over its course. There are people and organizations that have been resisting but doing so by relying on the same processes that led to Trump and Pence coming to power. The January tour enabled Refuse Fascism to identify important strategic focuses and pathways for advancing this mission, we developed new relationships and networks of people and organizations opening up the potential to work together to fulfill the great need of driving the Trump/Pence Regime from power at the soonest possible time.

In the Name of Humanity, We REFUSE to Accept a Fascist America!

[1] *Refuse Fascism published seven Indictments of the Crimes of the Trump/Pence Fascist Regime focused on: immigrants; Muslims; civil liberties; women and LGBTQ people; the people of the world; white supremacy, police brutality and mass incarceration; the environment.*