



# Dangerous and Unprecedented Times

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**T**hese are certainly dangerous and unprecedented times for all workers.

Many have heard the saying – if we don’t learn from history, we are bound to repeat it. But to learn from it, we must know it.

In January, the world commemorated the 80th anniversary of the Red Army’s liberation of the Nazi Auschwitz concentration camp toward the end of World War II. Yet a recent survey shockingly revealed that two-thirds of the U.S. population under the age of 42 knew nothing of this notorious fascist death camp where over one million people, mostly Jewish, were murdered in gas chambers.

**How does a society turn to such barbarism, where human beings exterminate other human beings, justifying their heinous crimes behind the “big lie” that the white, blond-haired, blue-eyed, “Aryan race” is superior to “inferior” peoples?**

History shows it never starts with death camps.

It starts with actions like those that are happening again today: demeaning and degrading others based on who they are, where they were born, or the color of their skin; labeling those with differing views as enemies of the state; calling immigrants trash; mocking disabled people; eliminating women’s fundamental rights; criminalizing protests; placing a president above the law; chilling free speech; bullying universities and lawyers; pardoning convicted insurrectionists; banning books; declaring the teaching of true history as unpatriotic; defying court orders; and attacking unions and workers’ rights.

Retired conservative Marine General John Kelly, Donald Trump’s longest-serving chief of staff during his first term, warned us during the 2024 election that Trump is essentially a fascist and prefers ruling as a dictator. The start of Trump’s second term confirms his warning. Workers should be deeply concerned.

History teaches us that fascism is a bitter enemy of working people. One of Hitler’s first acts was banning trade unions, seizing union assets, and arresting, imprisoning,

and executing union leaders and activists. Millions of workers were forced into slave labor. Behind the Nazi call to “Make Germany Great Again,” and their military onslaught to rule the world and eliminate “inferior” peoples, over 85 million people were killed before world fascism was defeated.

History also provides a lesson on the importance of solidarity. Reverend Niemoller, a German Lutheran pastor who initially supported the rise of Hitler, resisted when the Nazis sought control over his church. He survived imprisonment and left us with this powerful message:

*“First, they came for the Communists, and I did not speak up because I was not a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak up because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew.*

*And then when they came for me, there was no one left to speak for me.”*

At the 2018 APWU National Convention, delegates wisely passed a resolution calling on members to “engage in the struggle to defend union rights and all democratic rights in opposition to rising fascism...”

Such democratic rights include defense of the public Postal Service, the rights of federal workers to join unions and bargain for a better life, voting rights – including Vote-by-Mail, of refugees seeking asylum, to protest and dissent, to due process, to public education, and to free speech.

Despite these challenging times, workers certainly are not helpless. No matter our political beliefs or how we vote, we can and should find common ground in meeting the rising tide of fascism with an even greater tide of resistance of workers’ unity and solidarity. Fighting back and winning against growing tyranny can help ensure that the devastating history of German-led world fascism will not be repeated on our watch! ■