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Turning the Tide/People Against Racist Terror, P. O. Box 1990, Burbank CA 91507.

SUPREME COURT DEFENDS WHITE, MALE SUPREMACY

The recent Supreme Court decision declaring restrictions on cross-burnings to be unconstitutional was predicted by PART over a year ago when the court accepted the appeal of the conviction of a nazi bonehead for burning a cross on a Black family's lawn in St. Paul, MN. It was preceeded by a similar decision in favor of Richard Barrett's Mississippi based Nationalist Movement, in which the court ruled that it was unconstitutional to require Barrett to pay for the security his provocative demonstration in Forsyth County. These decisions illustrate the futility of relying on the state to deal with the problems of racist terror. In regards the Barrett decision, we do not want to strengthen the hand of the state to limit demonstrations, because such powers are much more likely to be used against progressives than against racists.

Concerning the cross-burning ruling, PART reiterates its position that burning a cross is not free speech, but racist terror and intimidation. As we said a year ago, burning a flag is the symbolic speech of those who oppose oppression and genocide. People who burn crosses, on the other hand, are issuing a terrorist threat against Black and other oppressed people. Such action should justifiably be criminalized.

The lesson to be drawn, overall, is that we need a militant and effective grass-roots movement to combat racism. Such a movement can create a social and cultural space that promotes solidarity and anti-racism among white people. It is appropriate to challenge and expose racist groups whenever they mobilize openly, and to make it clear that the political costs of such racist manifestations will be a strengthening of the anti-racist movement. It is right to be demonstrative and confrontational, and to defend ourselves if attacked. It's wrong to ignore the racists, and there is no need to stay away or organize elsewhere is they are showing up. But we should make it clear that it is the racists and the state who are the source of violence, and not discredit ourselves by initiating physical attacks. Provocative actions may well be the work of provocateurs.

In another predictable decision, the Court gutted "Roe v. Wade," the decision making an abortion the constitutionally protected private decision of a woman, by upholding a Pennsylvania law imposing restrictions and obstacles. The so-called "center-rightist" justices tried to pretend that they were maintaining that decision while actually inviting the states to enact ever more severe impediments to a woman's right to choose. Anti-abortion forces expressed anger at the court, mainly to justify their direct action campaigns against women seeking medical care and health care providers. Such rhetoric incites the kind of violence that has flared up again. In the weeks before the court decision, a hand grenade was discovered outside a New York clinic the night that it had been the site of an anti-abortion protest. The same night, a clinic in Redding CA, scene of repeated anti-abortion violence, was firebombed and burned down. The court decision represents the continuum between the state, the "religious" right, and the terrorists.

Again, the lesson is not to rely on the state to defend women's rights. The pro-choice movement needs to broaden and deepen its social analysis, and stand against racist violence and genocide, and for reproductive rights. Taking a leaf from the right's handbook, women's groups are beginning to dvelop direct action, such as the capacity to abort without medical approval. But such strategies, while laudable and necessary, just like the Underground Railroad during slavery days, are insufficient. We need to have a strategy for uniting progressive forces to fundamentally transform the racist and sexist power dynamics of our society.