

Anti-Racist Uprising Infiltrated by Extreme-Right Hooligans

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The city of Minneapolis is where it all began. It is where the last drop fell on the surface of a proverbial overflowing lake, causing the dam to burst, consequently starting to destroy the foundations of the empire.

A death of just one single man can, under certain dreadful circumstances, put into motion the entire avalanche of events. It can smash the whole regime into pieces. It can fully rewrite history, and even change the identity of a nation. It can... although it not always does.

George Floyd's death became a spark. The city of Minneapolis is where the murder occurred, and where the ethnic minorities rose in rage.

But it is also where white extreme right-wing criminals, and some even say, entire regime, perpetrated the uprising, kidnapped what could have become a true revolution and began choking legitimate rebellion by a stained duvet of nihilism and confusion.

Here, we will not speculate. We will not point fingers at "deep state" or some multi-billionaire families, and to what extent they have been involved. Let others do this if they know details. But this time, I simply came to listen. And to pass to the world what I discovered first hand and what I was told.

This time I simply went to Franklin Avenue and Lake Street, both in Minneapolis.

I spoke to Native American people there. To those who joined forces with the African-American community during those dangerous days after May 25, 2020. To people who dared to defend their neighborhoods against brutality against white gangs, which came to loot, infiltrate, and derail the most powerful uprising in the United States in modern history.

Bob Rice is a Native American owner of Pow Wow Grounds, a local entrepreneur, and a 'community protection organizer.' His legendary café is located on Franklin Avenue. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been reduced, for the time being, to a takeaway business, but even as such, it is enormously popular among the Native Americans, as well as others.

At the back of the cafe is huge storage, full of food. Everyone hungry, in need of help, can simply come here and take whatever he or she needs.

We grab some freshly brewed coffee from the shop and take it out to the public benches

outside.

Bob Rice then begins his story:

“There has been police brutality for a very long time, against people of color. Not only talking about Minneapolis but in all these other places, since the 1991 Rodney King incident. Things were boiling and building up – leading to a big blow up.”

“And all this discrimination did not start here; it came centuries ago from Europe.”

“After the George Floyd murder, I wanted to show solidarity. Native Americans were experiencing an even higher degree of persecution than Black people. We had to stand together. I went down to the site of the murder of George Floyd, in order to support protests.”

For a while, we talked about the mass media in the United States, an official and even some ‘independent one,’ and how it quickly and violently turned against the left, as well as against those who have been daring to expose endemic racism in the United States.

But soon, we returned to the events that took place here, in May and June.

“I noticed the presence of strange elements right from the start. I was watching guys breaking windows. At about 6 am, the morning after, I traveled down to South Minneapolis. There were piles of rocks in front of the rioters. Flash hand grenades. I kept on moving around the areas and kept on seeing rocks. I noticed the Minneapolis Umbrella Man, dressed all in black, with mask and black umbrella and black hammer smashing things – at the end being stopped by black guys. People were walking out of the store with car parts, and I thought, “why stealing those things”? These guys didn’t seem to be as part of the protest. I started moving and going away from the area, thinking that these guys would burn down stores and places soon. I even called up my insurance company the following morning to see if my policy covers civil unrest. That night they burned a lot of stores – auto stores, liquor stores, all types of businesses. I thought that if we do not do something ourselves to protect our neighborhoods, they will burn down all of our areas, too.”

“From what I saw, I couldn’t tell you who these guys were, but they were not from here.

So, we put up our protection zone calling out people on Facebook. We became the Headquarters of protection of Native American businesses and nonprofit organizations, as well as banks, shops, investment properties, etc. all belonging to the Native American community around here.

I noticed there were Caucasian people, driving cars very slowly with no license plates, yelling racial slurs out of the windows. We formed a human shield, chain, along Franklin Avenue, to protect ourselves and our people.

At a high point, about 300 people were protecting the area all night long for about eight days in a row. It had to be done, because here we had people from all over, including Wisconsin, descending on us – we had white supremacist group Proud Boys here. They arrived wearing masks. We had young white kids – 16 and 17 years old – coming from Wisconsin, looting liquor stores. We caught them. Obviously, they came out here because they thought it was an exciting thing to do. They didn’t even know where they were – this area is very

dangerous with drug dealing and gang violence at night. Lucky, they got caught by us.”

And the coverage? I wanted to know whether these events, in the heart of Native American neighborhoods, were described in depth by media reports.

Bob Rice replied readily:

There was no media reporting on these matters - mass media blamed everything on the Black Lives Matter movement.

When liquor stores and tobacco shops were on fire, no police or fire trucks were around. Then the National Guard took over - using tear gas.

Mr. Rice sighed, still in disbelief:

Just incredible how our so-called President has done all the mess going and even made it worse!

Robert Pilot, Native Roots Radio host, drove me for days all around the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, explaining what really took place on both Franklin Avenue and Lake Street.

But before, we visited provisory, impromptu monument, where the murder of George Floyd took place. There were flowers, graffiti, works of art; there was grief, and there was solidarity. Native American people clearly supported the plight of the African-Americans.

The area was safe; it was well organized. People of all races came here to pay tribute to the murdered man, and centuries of atrocious history of the United States.

As we drove, Robert Pilot explained:

“Native American neighborhoods armed themselves after the Floyd murder. But not only that: economic hardships ensued after the murder; food banks have come up. The Pow Wow Grounds used to be a food distribution depot but ended up becoming a food bank for anyone to donate and get what they need.

Protesters were everywhere; the young generation got fed up. So different from other murders. The last straw was the murder of George Floyd. Four years earlier, in 2016, Philando Castile, an African American man, got murdered by police. He had worked in a school cafeteria. His murder was broadcast live on Facebook. It was a buildup. 10,000 people protested on 38th Street and Chicago in Minneapolis - the site of the murder of George Floyd. Combination of racial and overall frustration.”

We drove by burned stores, services, gas stations. Everything was resembling a war zone, and in a way, it was.

If you are there, things are extremely raw, emotional. It is not like analyzing things from a distance from the comfort of one’s home.

Robert continued explaining, as we drove by block after block of the Middle East-style combat destruction:

“There is a small percentage of African American people as compared to White Americans. We need allies, too. We have to support each other. Signs everywhere in my neighborhood, ‘Black Lives Matter.’”

“Some young white people have woken up. They see the truth. The opinion of the masses is moving to the left; they are feeling fed up with what is happening around them and what it is that the country is doing to the world because of oil.

What is interesting is that there is a protest every single day, which is something new and mind-blowing. The media is misreporting, minimizing the enormity and magnitude of protests, CNN, MSNBC, etc.”

Robert Pilot is not only a radio host, but he is also a teacher:

“White teachers are still teaching history; they are teaching it to black and Native American kids! Political standing of my students – a few are engaged, but definitely not all. Perhaps 10 percent of people are engaged and doing the work for 90 percent.

The white guilt now and then... But many of us feel: You should stand behind us and with us but not in front of us. Revolution is happening in that sense. Everything is changing since protests are happening.”

Not everyone likes the changes; definitely not everyone. The establishment is fighting back, trying to survive, in its existing, horrid form.

Robert Pilot concludes:

“Generally, Black and Native Americans are together, supportive of each other.

It is symbolic that the Native American movement started on Franklin Avenue, where protests began in 1968. We would never burn down our own stores like grocery stores and hospitals. Why should we?

But we had to mobilize and stop members of the KKK and Proud Boys type of guys.”

We drive some 100 miles north, in order to meet Ms. Emma Needham – a young Native American activist. Emma was kind enough to bring traditional medicine from her area. We met halfway at the Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area.

Before our encounter, along the highway, we are surrounded by true ‘Americana’: endless open spaces, half-empty highways, more than 100 car-long cargo train pulled by two monstrous engines, while pushed by yet another one. We pass by St. Cloud Correctional Facility – an ancient-looking prison that bears the resemblance of some massive medieval English mansion surrounded by an elaborate system of barbed wires and watchtowers.



In one of the towns along the road, there is a big makeshift market selling posters, T-shirts, and other memorabilia, all related to the current President. It is called Trump Shop. Big banners are shouting at passing cars: “Trump, Make America Great Again,” “Trump 2020 – No More Bullshit,” and “God, Guns & Guts Made America. Let’s Keep All Three”.

Emma is a storyteller, a writer. She is an intelligent, outspoken, sincere, and passionate person:

“Where we were, we did not see a lot of white men with masks attacking, but what we did see were two young white kids, around 16, from Wisconsin, looting a liquor store which was run by Native Americans.”

“I stayed over Friday and Saturday nights around the Indian American Cultural Center in Minneapolis. On Friday night, within half a mile to a mile in all directions, we could see and hear the riots and looting. There were gunshots, helicopters hovering all around us. But nobody came to rescue us.”

“On Saturday night, we could see white people on Jeeps, waving flags, cruising around the neighborhood. “The white kids from Wisconsin were there, it appeared to me, opportunistic grabbing whatever was available.”

“Majority of those who came to protest and loot were outsiders, not from the neighborhoods. It does not make sense for people in Minneapolis to burn down and loot stores they rely on.”

I wanted to know whether the Native Americans and African-Americans were helping each other in that difficult hour?

Emma did not hesitate:

“There was big solidarity between Black people and Native American people; there was empathy.”

“It has been lifelong degradation for many of us growing up poor and severely marginalized in reservations, but we had never seen anything like this, so close to what resembled a war.

Those of us who were down in North Minneapolis those nights – Friday and Saturday – could not find words to describe what was happening. But we had a strong sense that what has been happening to us, Native Americans was happening to Black Americans, too – 400 years of surviving in a system of oppression. Enough is enough! Shared horrors – same for both groups!”

I asked whether everything changed, and this is a new beginning for the nation? As many, Emma did not sound overly optimistic:

“A black American female artist once said, ‘I love my white friends, but I don’t trust you because I know when the time comes, you need to choose your skin color. You count on the freedom and safety which you have. Whether you make that conscious decision or not, it will be there for you.’”

On my behalf, Robert Pilot asked Brett Buckner, his fellow radio host, and an African American activist, whether he could confirm that the majority of rioters were whites and not from the community. He replied:

“I would say so. Based on police reports and accounts from the community members, most of the damage was done by outsiders. Unfortunately, their actions will cause our community pain for years and even decades to come.”

Before I finished writing this report, “Umbrella man” got ‘identified.’

On July 29, 2020, Daily Mail wrote:

“Masked “Umbrella Man” who was seen smashing windows of Minneapolis AutoZone that was later burned to the ground during George Floyd protests is identified as ‘Hells Angels gang member with ties to white supremacist group’... The Star Tribune reported the 32-year-old man has links to Aryan Cowboy Brotherhood, a white supremacist gang based in Minnesota and Kentucky.”

He was one of many, but the most notorious one. Looking at his photos when in action, he was bearing a striking resemblance to ‘ninja’ looking rioters – right-wing hooligans – who were unleashed in order to bring chaos to Hong Kong, people who have been supported and financed by Western governments. I know, because I work in Hong Kong, since the beginning of the riots. Coincidence? And if not: who really ‘inspired’ whom?

Before I left Minneapolis, Robert Pilot and his wife Wendy interviewed me on their Native Roots Radio. What was supposed to be just 30 minutes appearance ended up being a one-hour event.

They showed me their city and their state, sharing sincere feelings and hopes, unveiling suffering of both African American and Native American communities.

This time, I traveled to the United States in order to listen. But I was also asked to talk, and so I did.

During the interview, I took them to several parts of the world, where black people still suffer enormously, due to Western imperialism and corporate greed. The world where Native people of Latin America, Canada, as well as other parts of the Planet, are brutally humiliated, robbed of everything, even murdered by millions.

We were complimenting each other. Our knowledge was.

I am glad I came to Minnesota. I am thankful that I could witness history in the making.

I am also delighted that I observed solidarity between the African American and Native

American people. For centuries, both went through hell, through agony. Now, they were awakening.

Minnesota is where the latest and very important chapter of American history began. But I also went to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York City, Massachusetts. I witnessed protests, anger, despair. But there was also hope. Hope, despite tear gas and riot police, lockdowns, despite mismanaged COVID-19 and increasing poverty rates. Something was ending, something unsavory and brutal. Whether this could be considered a new beginning was still too early to tell.

In Minnesota, I chose to see events through the eyes of Native Americans, people who were here 'forever,' to whom this land used to belong. People who were exterminated by the "new America," by European migrants, in a genocide that claimed roughly 90% of the native lives. These were people who were robbed of their culture and their riches. I am glad; I am proud that I chose this angle.

True peace, true reconciliation can only come after history as well as reality are fully understood, never through denial.

Now, both African Americans and Native Americans are speaking, and the world is listening. It has to listen. At least this is already progress. These two groups are forming a powerful alliance of victims. But also, an alliance of those who are determined to make sure that history never repeats itself.

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