

16 August 2024

PCS anti-racist and anti-fascist webinar

PCS held an anti-racist and anti-fascist webinar on Thursday 15 August to discuss the threat of the far-right in our communities and workplaces.

The webinar was put together at short notice following the rising presence of the far-right on our streets in the last few weeks.

Opening the meeting, PCS president, Martin Cavanagh started by remembering the children who were tragically killed in Southport. The meeting paid tribute to them with a minute's silence. Martin condemned the fascists who have attempted to exploit their deaths.

PCS general secretary, Fran Heathcote, added that the violence we have witnessed was not in the girls' names. She spoke of the importance of engaging with members in the workplace about why countering the far-right narrative is a trade union issue. Fran said that it was important to educate and look at how we collaboratively work together to respond to the far-right.

PCS national vice-president, Hector Wesley, made it clear that tackling racism and fascism was everyone's responsibility. It wasn't just up to Black and Asian members to combat it. He said that the recent events have been a massive wake up call for the labour movement, and that trade unions are going to be crucial in tackling the narrative of the far-right.

Keith Johnston, PCS head of education, gave a summary of PCS plans for anti-racism trade union education which are being revamped for both one-day and bitesize training which will be available to workplaces.

Stephen Russell, TUC senior international officer, then gave an overview of the TUC's [Rise of the Far Right - building a trade union response](#) training materials which can be used by unions. He outlined the important work the TUC is doing in making sure workers get the resources they need to challenge the far-right rhetoric.

It was then the turn of PCS activists to give their powerful accounts of what they have experienced on the streets over the last fortnight in countering the far-right.

Sasha Sadjady, a PCS representative based in Bristol told the webinar about the far-right protests in the city, where some 250 fascists had threatened to attack a hotel housing asylum seekers. It was only the counter protestors that protected the hotel, despite there not being a lot of preparation.

Sasha then spoke about how the local community responded to fascists threatening the offices of immigration solicitors on 7 August. She said that the trade union coordination was crucial to the successful engagement of the counter protest with PCS, Unison and NEU being the largest and most visibly organised unions present. She said, "Trade unions are the voice of the working classes as we saw in Bristol and elsewhere."

Louis Radforth, a young PCS representative from Liverpool then gave his account of the counterdemonstrations there. He said the counter-protest of Saturday 3 August had not been well attended, but the demo on the following Wednesday had been more successful with the working classes of Liverpool turning out in significant numbers. This had sent fear and intimidation to the far-right ranks. He concluded by saying, "We must ensure we're turning out in significant and overwhelming numbers to drive the fascists off our streets."

Concluding the webinar, Martin Cavanagh assured everyone that the union is fully behind all members who want to counter fascism. For those wanting to attend demonstrations, he pointed them to the ARAF strategy which gives useful safety tips and how to challenge the far-right narrative both in communities and in workplaces.

Our [Racism & Intolerance: Changing Attitudes in the Workplace course](#) on **18 October** is now open for registration. This one-day workshop helps build confidence in challenging far-right ideas and tackling difficult conversations, and gives you practical campaigning tips.

You can [read more about the PCS anti-racism anti-fascism strategy on PCS Knowledge](#), where you can also find many articles on combating racism in the workplace.

[Watch the recording of the webinar.](#)