

Roger Waters took to the stage in Berlin last week as part of his "This is not a drill" tour. Since then, he has been labelled a Nazi, anti-Semite, and a Putin aficionado. This is all over Twitter, but also found its way to more conventional news platforms. For instance, the renowned liberal Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* published an article with a headline stating that Waters has been flirting with Nazism: "German police investigate Roger Waters' Nazi flirtation on stage". This narrative has found its way to major news sites across Europe and the US.

Flirt is a simple word with one possible unambiguous interpretation.

It's deeply disturbing to me that this man, whose entire body of work and activism I interpret as a complete devotion to confronting the perils of fascism, oppression, injustice, and totalitarianism, finds himself under such attack. This is more than an abstract issue for me; it is intensely personal. Roger Waters has been the guiding light in my understanding of oppression and intolerance ever since I was a child.

The morning after the concert, misrepresentations of the concert's proceedings were published. For example, in one early instance, two photographs from the concert are juxtaposed. One features Waters alongside two actors donned in theatre costumes that unmistakably resemble the German Nazi uniforms of the 1940s. The other showcases the stage with the name 'Anne Frank' projected on enormous screens.

The theatre scene in the first photo has roots in the tour for the album *The Wall* (1979) and has been a feature of Pink Floyd's and Roger Waters' concerts since then. It's a mockery of fascism. In the song that accompanies this act, the fascist character identifies various individuals in the audience he wishes to eradicate: gays, a person who appears Jewish, coons, the riff-raff, **a cannabis smoker, and an individual with acne**. Even devoid of its context within a deeply anti-fascist album or knowledge of Roger's work, it's clearly a parody.

The photo featuring 'Anne Frank' on the massive screens is from an entirely different segment of the concert. This portion displays the names of a multitude of victims of oppression and totalitarianism, with each name followed by a crime (being Jewish, being Black, being a woman, etc.) and the corresponding sentence: death. The list includes names such as Anne Frank, George Floyd, Mahsa Ahmin, and Shireen Abu Aqleh.

So far in this text, I have focused on aspects that I feel very confident about, be it that they are obvious, an area of my expertise or because they are easily verifiable facts. I've shared my personal reactions to the ongoing situation, delved into some details of Waters' body of work, and provided a brief summary of components of his show.

There is hardly room for any controversy. In the following paragraph I will state an opinion. It is based on my interpretation of Waters' work and activism. Do not automatically assume it is the truth. Read on and come to your own conclusion.

The inclusion of Anne Frank's name isn't an attempt at making direct comparisons with other victims. Rather, it serves as the most potent symbol of the devastating outcomes of unchecked hatred and intolerance, and the potential for societal disintegration.

I will say nothing more specific because it would only be telling you what to believe. Instead I will conclude this by paraphrasing and freely expanding on what Waters asked us all to do in his address to the UN Security Council in February this year.

I ask the publisher of Dagens Nyheter and you, the reader, to do hard work. I regret to inform you, but there are no shortcuts here - they all lead in circles.

Read, read, read. Read, no, *listen* to Waters' work. Avoid conclusions of others as the plague. Read what has been said about Waters since his Berlin concert. Find out who the powers involved are. Read what the powers involved are saying. Think about their motives. Think about the requirements for oppression and discrimination. Read about past wars and conflicts. Read about how past narratives have been proven false. Read about the Nuclear Scientists and what they are saying. Read and think about how all parties, on all sides, are constantly lobbying. Read and think about the outcomes of unchecked hatred and intolerance. Read what is actually written and hear what is actually said. Think about the implications of voices being silenced or miscredited. Give the benefit of the doubt. Read and think about the importance of speaking up, however imperfect your voice might be. Read, read, read. Go the whole mile.

Then, and only then, ask yourself the questions at hand: Has Roger Waters flirted with nazism? Is he a national socialist? Is he an anti-Semite? Is he a Putin apologist or a Putin supporter?

As much as I care about Roger Waters, this is not about him or Pink Floyd at all. It is my deep personal belief that our willingness to do the hard work is all that lies between now and the next unimaginable disaster.

