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# UNControllables: The Story of an Anarchist Student Group

And How to Organize Your Own

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August 16, 2017

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our land and our health, they better be prepared for a fight.”

It’s that time of year again, when students head back to school. With the government lurching towards tyranny and fascists killing people on the streets, it has never been more pressing to organize on campuses to promote self-determination and collective defense against oppression. This is especially pressing because from Berkeley to Charlottesville, the far-right has set their sites on campuses as a place to recruit future stormtroopers and suppress critiques of authoritarian power. If you are a student yourself, *now is the time* to lay your plans—whether that means founding a formal student group, coordinating an informal network, or at least preparing to distribute literature. To do our part, we will be publishing a series of articles exploring different examples of student organizing. In this account, a veteran student organizer relates the story of how an anarchist student organization got off the ground and everything you need to know to do it yourself, from filling out paperwork to organizing a Radical Rush.

## In the Beginning

The idea for an anarchist student group ranked pretty low in my ambitions when I was accepted to the University of North Carolina. It wasn’t because I shared the long-term career goals of my classmates, nor their short-term goals of getting fucked up every weekend. The thing is, I had already been an anarchist for over a decade. In terms of my social life and political priorities, I was an anarchist first and a student second. Plus, the radical student groups I had encountered turned me off—they were short-lived carousels focused on intra-university reforms. I wasn’t invested in democratizing the university; I wanted to loot it and redistribute its resources for revolutionary purposes.

“On the other hand,” I told myself, “if I’m going to spend most of my time on campus anyway, I may as well make the most of it.” Besides, we had a good name: *The UNControllables*.

The UNControllables didn't start as your typical student group. Three of us had spent a decade doing the DIY traveler thing. We only became students as a kind of late twenties punk retirement, the age at which better grants are available. The fourth person behind our idea was a spiritual omnivore graduate student that we met through Occupy who was doing his dissertation on Christian video games—in other words, a total freak. We didn't operate with the same goals as other student groups. We weren't about building campus campaigns or recruiting as many students as possible. We had our eyes on the money. Literally: Student Congress funds.

Before the group was even officially registered, the punks dipped out. It felt like a bad joke—a collective of two? As the last punk left, I felt especially betrayed. Hadn't we spent the majority of our teens and twenties scamming and stealing? Compared to that, what was filling out a few forms to get our hands on potentially thousands of dollars? Perhaps it wasn't a sufficiently antagonistic form of wealth redistribution for the punks, or perhaps they had joined the list, thousands long, of punks who really do treat college as a kind of retirement. In any case, then there were two.

Every group has to start somewhere. A traditional introduction to campus organizing would focus on collective practices: outreach, consensus decision-making, vision and strategy. Anarchism has a rich, diverse history regarding the question of organization, but for this account to be honest I have to admit that in the beginning we relied on a different kind of anarchism—the kind that values the initiative, the will, the irreducible self of that taboo subject that haunts anarchist history: the individual!

Basic guides to campus organizing presume you have a crew who are all down to collaborate and participate equally with you. If you do, that's great! Unfortunately, sometimes there's just one crazy firebrand and maybe their sidekick friend who has an idealistic opinion about Bitcoin and is into the *Carlos* miniseries on Netflix. Or maybe there *are* a number of student radicals who identify as anarchists, but choose to dedicate their time

it comes to sacrificing our health and environment for short-term profit, Democrats and Republicans have put their differences aside to find common ground. The Obama administration has praised fracking, while Democrat governors from Jerry Brown to Earl Ray Tomblin are jockeying to see who can sell out their people and their land for the quickest buck.

“But we're not just focused on the College Republicans here. If this fundraiser is successful, we're going to bring a proposal to the Board of Governors that students in the entire UNC system can solve the budget crisis by fracking their own universities. The state legislature is far too busy to help students who will have to drop out if tuition keeps rising. Instead, they're hard at work closing women's health services and giving tax breaks to corporations. So let's do our part by fracking the Old Well right here in Chapel Hill. Hope you're stocked up on bottled water.

“Honestly though, the true rivalry brought out by 'funding-gate' is not between liberals and conservatives. The true rivalry is between the haves and the have-nots. The rich at this school, like the rich throughout the rest of society, are used to getting their way and used to getting *our* money. But things are changing at UNC the way things are changing in Turkey, in Brazil, in Spain and Greece and northern Africa. That's why we applied for Student Congress money, to bring participants in these movements to come speak and help us understand how our struggles are connected throughout the world. People everywhere are standing up against exploitation and oppression, and if the College Republicans want to use our money to further advance the interests of the rich, at the expense of

Luckily for them, the College Republicans were quickly able to attract wealthy donors by complaining publicly about ‘funding gate,’ which got them twice what they were originally asking for from Student Congress. We applaud this solution, and encourage the Republicans to share the names and addresses of their rich donors so poor people everywhere can redistribute private wealth until nobody even needs government handouts. Obviously, the Republicans have access to corporate money to bring their pro-fracking speakers to campus anyway, but they would prefer to use money generated from the rest of us, especially if it takes away from radical causes. However, anarchists at UNC have brainstormed a lucrative fundraising scheme for the Republicans that achieves all these goals—frack the Old Well!

“If fracking is such a good idea, why not start right here at UNC with the center of UNC, the Old Well? Supporters of fracking like the College Republicans ignore the consequences of devastated land and polluted watersheds, since they’re not the ones with water coming out of their taps that you can literally set on fire. They emphasize the economic benefits for landowners and small businesses, who can gain a few temporary jobs in exchange for forcing the rest of us to kiss clean drinking water goodbye.

“By bringing hydro-fracking to UNC, we can allow the entire student body to enjoy the benefits of natural gas extraction: poisoned water, fire hazards, accidental spills, free floating carcinogens, and plenty of profit for the rich at the expense of you and me: something Republicans love. The College Republicans complain that Student Congress reveals a liberal bias, but when

and effort to specific campaigns, like sweatshop divestment or gender-non-discriminatory housing, and don’t have the time for another group. DO NOT LET THIS DETER YOU!

The anarchist valorization of the individual was important when there were only two of us. We didn’t allow lack of membership to hold us back from taking action. If participation only serves to legitimize activity that we can carry out regardless, then the imagined mass of participants is simply another authority we need to bypass in order to act.

This is not to say that the UNControllables always relied on individual efforts. But for a six-month period at the beginning, it sure depended on the work of two of us! If we had decided to give up because there weren’t enough members, we never would have had a third member, and eventually a fourth. And then, eventually, dozens!

The measure of success for any anarchist group shouldn’t be how big it is, but rather how well it equips *all* of its participants to maximize their individual potential. It’s worth remembering this, even after more people join—lest the group suddenly be reduced to a collective of two again. No need to get all Britta Perry about that shit.

## Paperwork

Actually registering our student group was a piece of cake, even with only two members! In our registration we had to write something about why our group was unique and relevant. We researched how many books about anarchism, by anarchists, or from anarchist publishers were in the library as a way to argue that the university had already demonstrated a vested interest in the subject. We also cited professors who had published works touching on anarchism, especially anything published by the university. Lastly, we touched on current events and the resurgence

of “anarchist” as a household word. After we got approved, we had to submit our organization’s bylaws and constitution. Literally, all we did was copy the RNC Welcoming Committee’s “points of unity” and some instructions for consensus decision-making from the internet and pasted them into a word document. It was that easy. When any online form included a field for “organization president” or any other office, we simply wrote, “We are a non-hierarchical organization.” This came in handy later when we faced more institutional scrutiny, since one way administrators try to pressure radical groups is by pressuring its officers or the people otherwise most officially associated with the group.

Finding a faculty sponsor was easy for us, as one of the school’s professors was on the board of our local infoshop. However, this is one part of the process that has a lot of potential for problems. Ideally, you want a faculty sponsor to be three things: supportive, hands-off, and tenured. On rare occasions, you might want your faculty sponsor involved in the group itself, but in general they stand to lose more from being associated with a rowdy group of troublemakers than they have to gain. Involving a professor can lead to power imbalances within the group, in which the professional limits on your sponsor guide what the group decides to do or not. This is also why you want your sponsor to be tenured, so it’s less easy for the university to threaten them in order to pressure your group.

In the end, all we really accomplished in our first year was officially registering the group and holding an interest meeting, an anarchist FAQ event, and a Steal Something from Work Day film festival.

## Radical Rush

Although we didn’t get a ton done in our first year, we did learn one thing: a little bit of *détournement* goes a long way on cam-

to those who want to learn more. At the same time, they act as a catalyst for campus activism and provide an organizational structure for planning other kinds of action.

### **Being so funding-centered in terms of your organizing, did the money ever cause problems in the group?**

- Given the nature of our organization, the funding we receive from student government is always precarious. Even with the funding we get, it’s not uncommon for us to have to find ways to scrounge up more to cover all of our events and activities.

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## Appendix II: Frack the Old Well!

Here is our “Frack the Old Well” statement in full:

“Before we reveal our fundraising plan for the Republicans, we want to explain why an anarchist group would do something like this. In case you haven’t followed the ‘funding gate’ controversy, let me break it down for you. The College Republicans could not convince Student Congress that *their* events were worth more than our *anarchist* events. Specifically, student congress cut \$5,000 for an event of theirs defending fracking, a method of natural gas extraction linked with cancer, polluted water, and climate change. Having had \$10,000 cut from our own proposed budget, we felt their pain. It can be humiliating to grovel at the feet of government for a handout, while certain political bodies question whether you deserve access to such resources. The Republicans must truly understand now what it’s like for millions who are forced to turn to welfare to survive.

led to the problems we have now and how that relates to your specific context. There's a lot going on right now, but grounding yourself in your place, diversifying your tactics, and collaborating with other groups can help a lot.

**How do you balance your crazy, revolutionary aspirations with the banal, day-to-day rigmarole of accomplishing a university education?**

- Everyone has a different way of balancing university education and activism, but in general, we try to implement a division of labor where different members “bottomline” different tasks that they have time for, in order to work towards our goals and objectives. Volunteering for the role of bottomliner means holding the primary responsibility for making an event happen, hopefully with the assistance of whoever else is available and interested.

**What can non-university, off-campus anarchists do to help spur the growth of anarchist student groups at their local universities?**

- The distribution of information about anarchism and liberation movements is one of the best way to help spur the growth of radical student organization, by giving students an introduction to radical politics. Beyond this, off-campus anarchists can help by collaborating with student groups on presentations, workshops, and skill-sharing sessions.

**What role do you see student groups playing in the anarchist movement as a whole?**

- Radical student groups can act as an introduction to radical politics for students who haven't been exposed to these ideas before, as well as providing education and information

pus. People loved our name. So, for our next big idea we decided to employ more clever wordplay: *Radical* Rush Week. For those lucky enough to not know what a “rush week” is, it's a week at the beginning of the semester during which fraternities and sororities recruit new members through ritual hazing, drunken oblivion, and competitive feats of conformity. It's gross. On the other hand, we liked the idea of an intensive week of activity for new radicals at UNC to get acquainted with the rebel scenes on and off campus, so we dubbed our first big event *Radical* Rush Week.

Radical Rush Week was the UNControllables' real debut onto the campus scene. We tried to organize with other student groups, reaching out and offering each a day of the week to fill with a workshop or activity of their choice. This didn't really work. A lot of the groups were too disorganized to put anything together, but didn't let us know that until it was time to publish the Radical Rush calendars. The one group that did take on a day—a “student power” communist front-group—didn't reciprocate with ANY of their members attending our other events. Later on, we heard from a comrade who worked with them that their leadership was “terrified” of our organizing. Radical Rush Week was a success overall, but only in spite of the other student groups we reached out to.

On the other hand, including off-campus anarchist activities like our local Really Really Free Market, a workshop at our local infoshop, a books-to-prisoners packing day, and an off-campus punk show was an unqualified success. Throughout the UNControllables' existence, drawing from the connections and experience of off-campus anarchists has been crucial. More experienced anarchists helped by suggesting speakers to invite and passed on lessons about organizing. Our off-campus connections also meant we had something unique to offer students, in contrast to groups who claim a radical view of the world but never step out of the university bubble.

When we organized Radical Rush Week the following year, we decided to fill it with events we wanted to see *ourselves*, rather

than trying to make it representative of the campus activist scene as a whole. We were able to host the Stimulator from subMedia, an anarchist-feminist sex worker, anarchist panther Ashanti Alston, and a journalist who documented police surveillance of local anarchists—all on the university's dime.

Going all anarchist worked out much better for us. By organizing events that we ourselves wanted to see, rather than ones we thought would “bring out the most people,” those of us in the group still felt like we got something out of the events that didn't have a huge attendance. Since the events were explicitly anarchist, seeing the same faces at multiple events throughout the week meant we were able to build relationships with people on that basis and invite them into the group. The people who were attracted to our group after our second Radical Rush were more enthusiastic about working with us specifically. The previous year, most of the new members split their energy between multiple student groups, leaving just a handful of us to do most of the work—not exactly a collective dynamic.

The membership in our second year demonstrated another advantage to having an anarchist presence on campus—we attracted folks from a different social body than other local anarchist groups. In North America, there aren't a lot of spaces that produce new anarchists. Mostly, folks get into it through subcultural activity or street protests. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. The author of this piece would even go so far as to say that if we recognize that anarchist ideas and practices circulate within particular subcultures, we should put effort into keeping those spaces vibrant and rebellious. On the other hand, the fact that our group was made up of people who don't fit the stereotype of young anarchists made it really special. All kinds of students flocked to our group: an adult student with a country drawl who fled the US to spend his teens and early 20s in China training in martial arts; the president of the school's Muslim Student Association who learned about anarchism through a class on neoliberalism; a runaway from

Despite the rough patches, not to mention various embarrassing mistakes made in the course of being a young group with young members, the UNControllables was one of the easiest anarchist projects I've participated in, and it had direct results. We were able to redistribute resources in support of anarchist struggles all over the world. We attracted new anarchists from social bodies that had little-to-no recent anarchist presence. We opened up other rebel students' imaginations about what resistance can look like.

We hope that this account will encourage anarchists who find themselves attending universities to do the same.

## **Appendix I: Six Questions with Today's UNControllables**

*To follow up on this history, we caught up with current members of the UNControllables and asked them a few questions.*

**Has the fact that the UNControllables has a five-year history done anything to help or hurt current organizing?**

- Our history as a student organization in many ways emboldens us to keep acting and keep fighting. We've been lucky enough to have past members pass down organizing knowledge while simultaneously acknowledging the ways the UNControllables has changed with different members and adjusting to different contemporary needs.

**Speaking as a group that existed for a few years before the Trump era, and continues to exist now, what kind of advice would you give to others who want to start campus anarchist groups?**

- Know your history. Know the history of the university. Know the history of your town or city. Investigate deeper into what



## Concluding / Beginning

We hope that this short history can inspire similar anarchist student groups, so it may seem counterintuitive to end this story on the dour note of repression from above, conflict between us, and bleak prospects ahead. But I want to end on this low point precisely because it *wasn't* the end of our group. Through two years of collective organizing and mutual aid, the relationships within the UNControllables had grown to a point that we wanted to learn from our mistakes and improve our efforts together. Rather than abandoning the group when faced with conflict and repression, everyone chose to talk through the disagreements and support each other through the hard times.

In response to the fallout from the Support Ferguson Resistance Rally, we had an hours-long discussion to repair the relationships within our group and discuss how to interact with other groups in future organizing. Let me put that another way: instead of cold-shouldering each other and dismissively bickering over the internet, 21<sup>st</sup> century teenagers got together, in person, to talk out their disagreements! Also, some of us took away the lesson that if your chief goal with an anarchist student group is to appropriate resources, it's best not to brand confrontational engagements of questionable legality with your group's name.

Three years after this low point, the UNControllables is still around. In fact, when Trump won the election, the very same tactic that sparked conflict in the Support Ferguson Resistance Rally—occupying the main intersection in town—was the go-to tactic everyone used to demonstrate resistance against the Trump regime. This time, it lasted for hours. Pushing the envelope is not always popular or easy, but it can open the popular imagination to more ambitious possibilities, in preparation for times when everyone recognizes the importance of challenging the status quo.

a fundamentalist Christian household who was squatting the university (he spent Thanksgiving break sleeping in the philosophy department); various students whose parents migrated to the US fleeing harsh conditions; and a local high school student who took advanced classes at UNC. We were our very own special kind of crew that didn't fit into the popular culture on campus, but also didn't fit the anarchist subcultural norm. On the other hand, most of our crew was white, which we eventually had to reckon with.

## The *Dis*Orientation Guide

After a few semesters, we learned two important lessons for campus organizing. One, the students' workload grows as the semester proceeds; this makes it increasingly difficult to get things done. Two, the beginning of the fall semester is the sweet spot for attracting students to your group's activities.

Consequently, we decided to pack the start of the fall semester with activity and outreach, even participating in boring official incoming student events—since we were, after all, an officially registered student organization. A word of advice: as wretched as official student outreach events are, it's where a lot of disaffected students who don't fit into the frat culture will end up. We met a lot of our members and collaborators at these functions. Table these events, get a good spot, be aggressive with your propaganda, sign people up to an email list. The main thing we handed out to students was a zine we compiled every summer called *The Disorientation Guide*. Seriously, a little wordplay goes a long way on campus.

*The Disorientation Guide* included the schedule of Radical Rush Week events, a map of town highlighting local DIY spaces and subversive projects, "ads" for local groups that folks could plug into, and—this UNControllable's favorite part—a full summary of the last year of resistance in our local area. It was a perfect group

project, since it involved clear tasks (writing, compiling information about local groups, layout, gathering art and images to use) that could be divided up and completed wherever each contributor spent summer break.

## The Money

Not all universities offer funding for student groups, but if yours does, GET IT. No offense to the young people reading this, but UNC had literal teenagers in charge of distributing hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding for student activities—it was easy to woo and impress them. Besides student government, there were a lot of other sources of grants and funding: individual departments, a body specifically for funding the activities of graduate students (including student groups they were involved in), the student union’s activity and entertainment board, and smaller funds for specific themes or topics that some of our events happened to fit. Each of these was hidden away on the internet in some nether URL and involved a slew of paperwork or electronic fields to complete, but they usually paid off.

The first semester that we asked for money, we had no idea what we were doing. Surprisingly, even though it was our first time, we did a lot better at correctly navigating the student congress bureaucracy than some groups that had existed for years. We came up with all the barely justifiable expenditures we could imagine within their funding-request fields: office space, office supplies, stipends for speakers, lodging for speakers, gas money, van rentals, printing funds, postage... you name it. We figured we’d make do with whatever money they were willing to give us.

In the end, we requested the second biggest budget of any group that year. Oops. Sorry not sorry.

Aiming high paid off. We got \$4000 in funding that semester. Most of that money went toward paying for the visa applications

and scuffles with the police—way beyond simply blocking an intersection for a few minutes in a small college town.

While the face-to-face discussions towards the end of the Support Ferguson Resistance Rally were respectful and engaging, a Facebook thread of dismissive bickering appeared afterwards and got totally out of control. Both sides of the Facebook argument were left less willing to trust each other moving forward, including between UNControllables members. On the one hand, some UNControllables thought the march was hasty and the defense of it on Facebook disrespectful. On the other hand, one of the people who helped organize the march felt hung out to dry after putting in their best intentions and effort. Worse yet, the two sides of the Facebook argument seemed to run along racial lines, with one side blaming white anarchists for their discomforts with the march, and white anarchists on the other side posting defensive tirades. The division between the two sides ran deep and led to some members not speaking to each other for weeks.

In addition to the internal conflicts, this was the first semester that our group finally came up against the state and university authorities. We found out that the university copyshop where we made all our flyers was handing over copies of our materials to the police. The dean of students was harassing us and asking to speak to us individually. The Durham Police Department released a report after the Black Lives Matter marches blaming out-of-town anarchists for directing all of the illegal activity at the march, mentioning the UNControllables, by name, as part of this supposed cabal.

This signaled an uptick in surveillance. Not to say it was high quality surveillance: when it came to describing what exactly anarchists did at these marches, the Durham PD wrote that, “the anarchist element will commit *acts of anarchy*.” Ooookay? More frighteningly, a couple of people close to our group were arrested and ended the semester facing charges, although not for UNControllables-related activity.

## And Then It Got Real

We were able to be so silly with *The Purge: Anarchy* and “Frack the Old Well” responses because they didn’t really matter to any other group. On the other hand, with the rising Black Lives Matter wave of actions in the fall of 2014, we found that we had to put more consideration into how we would interact with the other groups and people who were also invested in responding. At the beginning of the semester, a couple newer UNControllables reached out to some of the black student organizations on campus to put together a “Support Ferguson Resistance Rally.” The various organizations involved had different expectations about how it would go

When the rally turned into an unpermitted march that blocked the main intersection in town, one of the co-organizers from a black poetry group grabbed the crowd’s attention and shouted, “This is not in the spirit of Ferguson! It is a time for healing! We should be mourning!” After a tense moment, folks began to yell back:

“This is how Ferguson is mourning!” one protestor responded.

“In Ferguson they mourned by burning down the QT!” another said.

“This IS how I mourn!”

For the rest of the march, participants respectfully debated with each other about what kinds of responses were needed in the wake of police murders and popular rebellion. Looking back, this probably should have been how the rally began, rather than defaulting to anarchist habit and hurrying to march. Later that fall, at the rallies in response to the non-indictments of the cops who killed Mike Brown and Eric Garner, these discussions took place collectively before people stepped off from the rallying points. In one case, the discussion was limited to people of color. Not rushing to march and first holding an assembly over what to do meant these later marches had considerable more buy-in from participants for the confrontational tactics used at them, including highway blockades

and airfare for anarchists from Brazil to speak about the 2013 uprising there. Afterward, they were able to tour the east coast presenting on anarchism and popular struggles in Brazil. Funding wasn’t the only university resource we were able to support them with, either. Some faculty in the Latin American Studies department wrote up an official letter of invitation, which made it much easier for our comrades to secure visas.

But of course, haters gonna hate. Especially when those haters are College Republicans and they receive less funding than your anarchist group. That semester, Student Congress rejected a proposal by the College Republicans to bring a pro-fracking speaker to campus... bringing their approved budget down to a thousand dollars less than the UNControllables! This led to a ridiculous small-scale controversy in which they “protested” the next Student Congress hearing—pretty tamely by anarchist standards, we might add. They kind of just stood together in the far corner of the room, silently. Fox News eventually picked up the story, which allowed the College Republicans to crowdsource the funding for their speaker anyway. But we weren’t going to pass up an opportunity to humiliate whiny rich kids.

The following week, we sent out press releases announcing that, in a surprise turn of events, the UNControllables would be holding a fundraiser for the College Republicans in front of the Old Well, a drinking fountain inside a rotunda that is the symbol of the university. On the big day, we built a PVC “fracking rig” next to the Old Well and announced our scheme: “If the College Republicans want more money from UNC, why don’t we follow their advice and drill baby drill... starting right here at the heart of UNC! Frack the Old Well!” We held signs that said “Who needs clean drinking water anyway?” and handed out tinted, murky “fracked water” so passersby could experience the benefits of fracking first hand.

You can read the entire text of our statement below, in appendix II. Here’s an extract:

“By bringing hydro-fracking to UNC, we can allow the entire student body to enjoy the benefits of natural gas extraction: poisoned water, fire hazards, accidental spills, free floating carcinogens, and plenty of profit for the rich at the expense of you and me: something Republicans love. The College Republicans complain that Student Congress reveals a liberal bias, but when it comes to sacrificing our health and environment for short-term profit, Democrats and Republicans have put their differences aside to find common ground. The Obama administration has praised fracking, while Democrat governors from Jerry Brown to Earl Ray Tomblin are jockeying to see who can sell out their people and their land for the quickest buck.”

This stunt may sound dumb. It was definitely silly. But it was fun—and that little bit of fun went a long way for our group dynamics.

## Having Fun

Not only did it feel good to have fun together, but the “Frack the Old Well” event showed that a sense of humor was really healthy for our group overall. We carried out a number of other fun stunts. We organized a “march against bullshit,” we distributed call-and-response sheets to disorient the fundamentalist Christian preacher who would lambast sinners in the middle of campus, we sent loads of silly letters to the school newspaper. Yet the most over-the-top response we ever got was when we decided to troll the student union’s screening of *The Purge: Anarchy*.

One of the ways the university vainly tries to keep students from getting shit-faced obliterated every weekend is by offering free screenings of recently debuted movies. When we heard that

*The Purge: Anarchy* was coming up, we felt like it was our personal duty to defend the good name of anarchy, or at least the *good* reasons for it to have a bad reputation. We wrote a letter to the editor announcing our intentions to troll hard and set up a table in the lobby with real anarchist riot porn. The following day, the assistant dean of students started calling the letter’s authors, and continued to do so each day up until the movie. We were getting nervous that the university was going to take this a little too seriously.

Then, another problem arose—we pirated a copy of the movie and it turned out that *The Purge: Anarchy* is actually pretty fucking good! It’s basically a class war movie where the protagonists side with an underground army of poor black revolutionaries set on overthrowing the oppressive, racist ruling class. Fuck yeah!

So, rather than trolling the movie as hard as we originally planned to, we took a cue from the A for Anarchy project and used the movie to promote our ideas. But we still trolled a little bit. We printed pamphlets with one anarcho-geek’s review of the movie on the inside, and an “audience participation” guide on the back.

When we showed up early to stake out a good spot for handing out flyers, we were surprised to witness a squad of armed police officers with bulletproof vests and a bomb-sniffing dog exiting the theater. The officer with the dog then confirmed with the ticket takers that everything was “clear.” The cops remained in the theater for the rest of the movie. It was so fucking weird. However, it did make for a lot of fun whenever our crew of anarchists and sympathizers, rolling deep by the way, cheered and applauded the “purging” of a government tool in the movie. The letters-to-the-editor section for the following week was filled with back-and-forth letters about whether the police presence was justified or “an unnecessary show of force... threatening violence and courting tragedy.”