

**there is only today.
we only have each other.
only we can save us.**

Find the Courage
Police Murder, Recuperation,
Minneapolis



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Find the Courage: Police Murder, Recuperation, Minneapolis

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1. We want to push back on the predictability of protests and marches. If there is no element of surprise or an assessment of local power relations to act upon, these actions become easy to repress by cops and fascists. Instead, how can we intentionally channel these demonstrations to attack material targets of oppression (i.e. condos, warehouses, police precincts, frat houses)?

2. What does actual material subversion look like? We suggest looking up and learning these methods (look them up using DuckDuckGo search engine, on a Tor Browser, or on CrimethInc.'s website): sabotage, blockades, squatting, black blocs, monkey-wrenching, occupations, tree-sitting, expropriations, and other direct actions and autonomous projects.

3. We should stop over-directing community resources on bail funds for non-impactful "intentional arrest" actions. Let's save that for Black/queer/trans funds, where they are really needed.

4. If there's no foreseeable direct, material change as a result of the work being done, we should question its effectiveness. A good rule of thumb to gauge performativity is to ask yourself who the action is for and whether it directly benefits them. For example, posting a black square in honor of #BLM but not doing any other work for Black lives does not benefit the Black community. (We are NOT equating relevant, behind-the-scenes work to useless, performative work. Keep educating yourself when no one is looking, joining reading groups, having low-key meet-ups with comrades, etc. even if the effects of these aren't immediate.)

5. Keyboard warriors would benefit from putting their phones down more often and meeting real people. Tweets and statements are valuable only when accompanied by action and change, and when they're written by people who are actually doing the work. The oversaturation of commentary online based on theory and opinion detracts from relevant anecdotal evidence and analysis provided by people who are actually on the ground. Practice is the best teacher.

6. Asking celebrities and people with accolades (i.e. doctors, lawyers, legislators) to co-sign your action literally does nothing except display an attempt to be palatable to the public. We don't need "distinguishable" acceptance for our demands to be valid and, instead, need to reject respectability in all forms.

7. Petitions do NOT guarantee anything because they appeal to legislators and politicians who already don't empathize with our struggles. Like statements, petitions are only useful when they're accompanied by other actions to legitimize them. In fact, online petitions (such as those Change.org petitions that have been circulating) can instead document/publicize your information (name, zip code) if you forget to sign anonymously.

8. As mentioned previously, things like sit-ins, group-chaining, op-eds, etc. are purely performative. We'd also like to reiterate the problem with labeling protest actions as "peaceful" and the effects of the enforcement of peace at these actions. Demonstrators will lose interest if they see a call to action that does not result in material change. When an action is just a street performance that asks for political leaders to empathize, we should question who we're doing this for and why. (People who aren't ready to get rowdy should not feel forced to, but a protest should be a place that allows rowdy protestors AND peaceful ones. The absolutism and enforcement of the "peaceful" label is the problem here; P.L.U.R. is cool for music festivals, but not for shutting down the system.)

9. Create a power-map of your area and/or conduct a tactical terrain analysis with your squad, and share it with others in an assembly or discussion. These two methods of outlining local power relations allows communities to identify key material targets, suitable for subversive actions that lead to material disruption. Look for the openings where you can attain maximum rewards with minimal consequences.

Towards abolition and nothing less!

A Critique of Performative Politics & Symbolic Protest

We believe in healthy, constructive critique, and we think that movements and the individuals that make them up should be self-critical in order to improve practice and thought. But too many times, our community actions try to replicate the most visible/publicized actions, and try to follow models of organizing that carry the most social capital. Most of the time (there are some exceptions), this ends up reproducing ineffective political positions and actions.

In particular, we want to point out the issues of performative politics and symbolic protest.

Performative politics are exactly what they sound like: taking action through superficial performances. One of the definitions of performance is “a musical, dramatic, or other entertainment presented before an audience.” Thus, performative politics are a politic rooted in recycled scripts and uncritically repeating prescribed roles. By the nature of performance, people tend to not think for themselves and let others else dictate their moves. This politic detracts from the autonomous potential that lies outside of preordained or “acceptable” political/protest norms.

By symbolic protest, we mean the ways certain types of actions mostly (but not always) implement a performance that does not materially disrupt systems of oppression. These include (but are not limited to) taking a knee, yelling at cops, hashtags or Instagram “Blackout” posts, letters of opposition, taunting officials, parades, voting booths, etc. All of these things are about symbolism, which is more about “making a point” than actual disruption.

We want to center our main argument here: we should be gauging our power in terms of our material capacity to shut down material systems of oppression.

We want to say, Keep the actions and momentum going! This is NOT a diss to organizers who are new or folks who have just started taking the streets; everyone is still learning, and this is a lifelong experience. We also do not want to diss previous protest actions that were peaceful or youth-led initiatives for voting, etc. In fact, to qualify what we are saying about what causes changes, we'd like to mention that we will never know what effect these actions truly have because inspiration is not something tangible that can be calculated. However, we do know, based on decades of performative actions and symbolic protests, that those methods do not and have never dismantled systems of oppression. Otherwise, we wouldn't be where we are now.

We acknowledge that certain actions can be labeled performative or symbolic AND may still have been inspiring for some folks, and that's perfectly fine. That is all valid, and we appreciate the bonds and connections made through past actions because that is what liberation is all about. HOWEVER, we do want to be clear that we must abandon performative and symbolic action when we feel ready to take part in direct action or be a part of autonomous initiatives.

Imagine how many more people could be inspired if ALL of our protests and actions materially disrupted capitalism and state violence; how many more people could be inspired by a MATERIAL shift in their lives. Our main point is that symbolic action will never accomplish that material shift, even when it feels better than doing nothing; that's the difference. We want to push for folks to get involved in projects that really disrupt oppression. Dismantling power materially is not just inspiring, but also directly affects our lives and disentangles our communities from the material strongholds of capitalism and white supremacy. We can only get rid of these systems once and for all when we shift away from symbolism and performance and instead, towards material disruption and abolition.

A few other points that we want to reiterate:

what will it take?

fuck the police

Last Wednesday, February 2nd, I heard a flash on the radio while driving. Minneapolis Police had murdered yet another Black person, Amir Locke, in ice cold blood. Once again, all of the promises Jacob Frey made about Police "Reform" (e.g., banning the use of no-knock warrants), were broken in the span of nine seconds by the MPD SWAT team.

How many more innocent black and brown lives will be lost to the merciless hand of police violence? How many more times will Frey go on TV to say what happened was an "unavoidable tragedy" and how unfortunate it is that he, the person with sole oversight of the police and most of the city government (thanks Question 1!), can't do anything about it.

How many more times are people going to go to marches or protests downtown on a weekend, walking in a circle, shouting tired slogans at empty buildings, and listening to people tell you "if only **we** controlled the police!" or "we can vote this away!"

How many more times is some big name organizer going to get up on a stage at one of these "protests" to tell us "we need peace and you need to keep this protest peaceful!" when the only unpeaceful ones are the police who won't stop murdering.

How many times are we going to do this, over and over and over again? How many more lives will be shattered and dreams destroyed until people finally realize that **the only way to stop the police from killing is to abolish the police!?**

To quote from "Please Riot"¹

Fighters in Minneapolis and around the country showed what it meant to fight back against a deeply racist system of policing that has dominated the lives of Black and Brown USians, but also the lives of poor and working-class whites. There will never again be a sight as beautiful as when the Third Precinct burned, across the street from that Minneapolis Target.

In the glow of those flames emerged a truth known by revolutionaries throughout history: we aren't voting our way out of this Hell. No ballot box can hold the truth that we hold in our hearts. A better world is possible, but we must fight for it. Anyone who tries to sell you on electoral politics and reform is a dupe or a fraud. The clock is ticking; every minute that passes is another minute of living subservient to a system that denies the humanity and autonomy of all but the wealthiest and most powerful, and every day that passes will be the last for thousands around the world, killed by the uncaring and violent systems that structure our whole lives. Climate catastrophe, too, looms close over the horizon as extreme weather systems, that will only become worse as the earth cooks, wreak havoc on human communities the world over. **What is incremental change in the face of so many life-ending and world- shattering slow catastrophes? What is reform as we face down apocalypse?**

A graffiti crew, an urban garden, an anti-fascist patrol and workout schedule, an electronics repair workshop, a social center, a variety of accountability models, an Addicts Autonomous of sorts, an anarchist distribution center, a weekly prisoner correspondence night, several counter-repression projects and firearms trainings, many attempts at collective living, bursts of short-term direct action groups, a squatters' network and tool-share, a dumpster CSA, a successful (though unpublicized) rent strike, a compost pick-up & drop-off site, a weekly poetry workshop, several food distribution networks and groups, a recording studio, a neurodivergent support group, an insurrectionary study and research group, a begaydocrime sex worker crew, a homeless shelter, a traveler kid rest stop...

The movement is everything that you're already fucking doing – here, now, individually, collectively.

This world is ending. No global revolution is coming to save us. What worlds emerge is dependent on the particular trajectories the collapse will traverse in each region. Empire will survive in the places where workers still prioritize the needs of the techno-industrial economy – be it capitalist or communist – over the needs of the world they inhabit.

Elsewhere, anarchy spreads like cracks in the concrete. Anarchy, not anarchism. A diverse, decentralized mosaic of struggles for autonomy.

Until the land beneath the ruins of the colonial order is reclaimed by a life beyond Leviathan.

¹ the full text is at: <https://lib.edist.ro/library/anonymous-please-riot>

I never want to wiggle my fingers for “consensus” again. I’m sick of attending “meetings” instead of just talking and working on shit with my friends. I refuse to be marginalized for questioning the decisions handed down by the party leadership or the coordinating committee or the whatever-the-fuck jargon is used to disguise hierarchy these days.

No, I don’t want to join a fucking politician’s street team. No, I don’t want to listen to another boring speech. No, I really don’t think trying to convince people that the legacy of Stalin or Mao (or any other dead dictator) is worth redeeming here, in fucking Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the Year of Their Lord 2021, in the heart of an empire built on stolen land. Are you fucking serious.

I wasted years on general assemblies and GBMs trying to force an insurgent network into existence, when all I had to do was just start paying attention to what was already going on, take a second to realize that no Party could ever “organize” all of it into a coherent movement, and then take a step back far enough to see **that’s actually a good thing**.

If the alphabet soup of communist parties ever actually pivoted toward militancy (they won’t, but if they did) then they’d literally be setting themselves up for immediate repression.

Anarchy, on the other hand, is a flawed and centerless constellation of relationships, which is to say anarchy is built on affinity, trust, and reciprocal knowledge. Pittsburgh anarchist scenes are just as fragmented as the Left. It is true that “we” do struggle to sustain coordination and momentum, beyond the intermediate term. Like every movement, anarchy waxes and wanes. I couldn’t care less. Any communist or anarchist who believes that revolt in the united settler-states actually depends on the strength of “the Left” is deluding themselves. Revolt happens with or without us. So rather than waste my time obsessing over the strength of some organization or ideology’s influence in a given region, I’d rather learn more projectual approaches that might contribute to conflictuality. I know some of you reading this are studying this framework as well, and I look forward to discovering your projects, wherever they may incite or strike.

To me, it makes more sense for “the movement” to refer to a circulation of tactics, skills and projects within and between radical social scenes... and that movement sure as hell doesn’t have much to do with the political organizations that fill my email’s spam folder.

At the end of the day, I’m still not sure what giving up on The Organized Left actually means though. What I do know is that despite all our grandiose beef, I’m still gonna see the real commies by my side at the barricades from time to time. And in those moments, the fragmentation in Pittsburgh will weigh heavy. But the moment passes. I’ve finally left the Party, and I know what I’d rather be doing.

I want to elaborate my search for affinity, and to discover where my projects might collide with yours. Lately, I’ve come to think that sorta thing is all a movement is actually about, anyway.

It’s about navigating social life & conflict with the intent to find accomplices through what we do, rather than what we say.

It’s about negating passivity and reimagining the spaces you inhabit, assessing the possibilities that your every action could open up.

It’s about understanding the things you do as already being part of an insurgent project.

It’s about that rush of euphoria that hits when your projects start introducing you to all sorts of punx, plugs, insurgents, accomplices, rebel artists, mentors, lovers – and then collaborating organically *because you’re never to meet a “new recruit” ever again*.

It’s about the decisions you make every single day, from the ways you choose to get your food to the people you choose to share it with.

What, then, will it take to recapture the spirit of May 28th, 2020? What must we do to finally break the cycle of unending violence?

We will not win every battle. We might not win in the end. But to fail to try, to fall back to the hope that this time reformism will “work” the way we want it to, is to damn ourselves to this hyper-policed hell.

**find the courage.
find each other.
burn four more.**

— **silberfuchs**
Minneapolis, occupied Dakota Territory
winter 2022

Field Guide to Twin Cities Collaborators

What Are Collaborators? What Is Recuperation?

The state has two complementary strategies for defeating rebellious movements such as the George Floyd Uprising and the subsequent surge of explicitly abolitionist organizing. One strategy, well known to most, is **repression**. The faces of repression are usually those clearly identified as our enemies: police, prosecutors, prison guards, judges. Surveillance, criminal charges, incarceration, and suppression of dissent through police violence are tools of the state that rebels and revolutionaries are continually working to defeat and overcome through our own organizing, innovative tactics, and the power of solidarity.

Less well known and analyzed is the other strategy for defeating rebellious movements: **recuperation**. Especially here in the Twin Cities, where public sentiment overwhelmingly cheered the destruction of the MPD Third Precinct and where city and police leaders abandoned killer cop Derek Chauvin at his murder trial, recuperation is doing a lot of heavy lifting for those who wish to keep business as usual.

Recuperation is the process by which those who would otherwise fight to overthrow current power structures (such as policing) are made to support initiatives that either **reinforce those power structures** (such as “police-community partnerships”) or **replace them with other structures that serve essentially the same function** (such as “community patrols” that act like police, only minus the badge and uniform).

One of the most important means of recuperation is the use of collaborators: people, organizations, or institutions who at first glance may seem to be sympathetic, or at least neutral, to the interests of liberation and rebellion, but **whose ultimate loyalty is with the same forces that employ repression** (whether stated or not). Here in Minneapolis, law enforcement with the aid of the mayor and city council have made extensive use of collaborators in their recuperation strategy.

As abolitionists called for alternatives to policing, politicians took up the challenge by pouring money and resources into non-police groups that still work with the police and serve the police’s purposes. - As police reform campaigns drew attention to the fact that over ninety percent of MPD officers live outside the city, business and law enforcement interests hurried to prop up collaborator groups whose leadership and members do usually live in Minneapolis. - As racial justice advocates have gained enough traction that even nakedly anti-Black, exploitative corporations now regularly use phrases like “Black Lives Matter” or “Say Their Names,” the elites have turned especially to Black collaborators (many of whom now have the opportunity to work with the blessing of powerful government institutions for the first time). This is a divide and conquer tactic against multiracial rebellious movements less likely to fight back against a black or brown nonprofit worker in a t-shirt than against a white cop in a riot suit.

*The full text of this article can be found at:
<https://lib.edist.ro/library/a-field-guide-to-twin-cities-collaborators>*

Why I Left the PSL...or the DSA or Socialist Alternative or whatever

For six years, my sights were always set on spamming out emails and event invitations, optimizing social media engagement, writing press releases and meeting agendas, recruitment, discourse pissing contests...

Leftist organizations were the center of my life until the day I burned out, and I regret the time that I wasted on them.

Don’t get me wrong, there are plenty of formal organizations that do genuinely radical and important things. But that shit just doesn’t work for me anymore. And it honestly sucks that it took me so long to realize this.

At the time of my involvement with my former organization, I was only vaguely familiar with some of my friends’ projects, yet I felt they were never serious about taking the Next Step (electing delegates to send to our meetings). I came to dismiss them as lifestylists and anarchists.

I lauded the anarchists for their absence from the struggle against gentrification and landlords, even as I heard about the squat evictions and the solidarity attacks that followed, even as I walked through the neighborhoods where a creative and hostile graffiti culture kept the developers at bay. I made tired jokes about vegan burritos, even as the food distribution centers and groups multiplied across the city without needing the direction of any central committee.

I used to treat organizing like a try-hard student treats a group project. Other radicals’ ideas, activity and efforts were only Good if they were useful to whatever campaign I was working on. My friends helped out here and there, but they lacked commitment to the organization and would fail to return to meetings after completing the project they helped with.

While I was hard at work trying to recruit strangers for the next meeting, or preaching the gospel of the Proper Position on some trending issue, or educating “The Masses” about the merits of yet another piecemeal reform campaign dressed in last century’s revolutionary garb, my friends were busy growing together.

By the time I had finally burned out of my organization and started hanging with my friends again, I had become so accustomed to organizational processes that it took me years to repair my relationships enough to begin to see and understand how anarchists organized. At first, the informality felt like a mess; I couldn’t keep track of who was doing what unless I was directly involved and needed to know. And that was difficult to adjust to, especially when I could see projects everywhere but still didn’t really know who might help me find a way in.

There was never any rush to invite “everyone” and so I never really knew when things were happening. There were no unified plans to link Events into a Campaign, or any real pressures to even attend events, really. I often wondered if I should return to the Real political work, which obviously had to be elsewhere. But elsewhere still meant within the range of my former organization’s influence... and I just couldn’t bring myself to go back to that world.

When I was a Leftist organizer, the movement that I imagined myself to be building was always something exterior to my life – something that took place outside of myself, my friends and their projects, the spaces that we inhabit. But “the” movement isn’t elsewhere.

Leftist organizers told me that the Project emerged from the Organization. My friends showed me that organization emerges between our individual projects.

us to leave the streets, accusing us of being “outside agitators,” or promising some more effective outlet for our rage if only we will cooperate—anything to thwart, discredit, or defer immediate concrete struggle against injustice. In every case, it’s the same swindle: peace now, justice later.

But real peace is impossible until we put an end to the violent imposition of inequalities. All the conflicts that are currently suppressed by the forces of order—between developers and residents, between rich and poor, between the racially privileged and everyone else—must be permitted to rise to the surface. Make it impossible for anyone to coerce anyone else into accepting a relationship that is not in her best interest: then, and only then, there will be an incentive for everyone to address conflicts and reach accord.

This is the only way forward, but it’s a daunting prospect. It is not surprising that people often blame those who stand up for themselves rather than coming to terms with how deep the divisions in our society run. This explains why so many apparently well-meaning pundits have pretended not to understand why people would engage in looting as a form of protest against the murder of Michael Brown. The same constant imposition of force that took Michael Brown’s life separates millions like him from the resources they need on a daily basis. In this light, looting makes perfect sense—as a way of solving the immediate problems of poverty, of rebelling against the violence of the authorities, and of emphasizing that change has to be more thoroughgoing than mere police reform.

Let us not resent those who *get out of hand* for reminding us of the conflicts that remain unresolved in our society. On the contrary, we should be grateful. They are not disturbing the peace; they are simply bringing to light that there never was any peace, there never was any justice in the first place. At tremendous risk to themselves, they are giving us a gift: a chance to recognize the suffering around us and to rediscover our capacity to identify and sympathize with those who experience it.

For we can only experience tragedies such as the death of Michael Brown for what they are when we see other people responding to them *as tragedies*. Otherwise, unless the events touch us directly, we remain numb. If you want people to register an injustice, you have to react to it immediately, the way people did in Ferguson. You must not wait for some better moment, not plead with the authorities, not formulate a sound bite for some imagined audience representing public opinion. You must immediately proceed to action, showing that the situation is serious enough to warrant it.

Ferguson is not unique—there are countless such towns across the United States, in which the same dynamics play out between police and people. The rebellion in Ferguson will surely not be the last of its kind. Those of us who don’t buy into Governor Nixon’s program of *peace now, justice later* must prepare ourselves for the struggles that are soon to unfold. May we meet one day in a world without tear gas, in which skin color is not a weapon.

Mass Politics and the Spirit of May 28th

In the turn to populism represented by the DSA, the left showed it had learned the wrong lesson from the Trump era. It was not any specific rhetoric that made Trump a political behemoth, because his messages fluctuated in wild contradictions day to day, even line by line. Trump’s rabid fanbase was instead the result of his adept appeal to a type of person who thinks a certain way, wants to live a certain kind of life, and is ready to join a mass movement/tribe/cult devoted to that yet-unnamed identity. When, during the 2018 midterms he declared himself a nationalist, he was more right than even he knew, for he had created his own nation: MAGA.

Trump’s success had always been in finding the easiest path to success, and through Twitter and television he savvied that this mass was out there waiting for a name, aesthetic, and leader. We now know that despite the handful of post-fascist intellectuals in his orbit, the sophisticated palingenetic appeal of MAGA, the structurally antisemitic America First campaign against the “global elite”, and the xenophobia of Build the Wall, were all instinctively reverse engineered from the anxieties of the GOP base and anti-political “lumpen” middle classes. By trying to contain these explosive desires within the demands of the big bourgeoisie, the Republicans were approaching the inertia of their so-called rival Democrats. Just as Democrats legitimize themselves by sucking at the grassroots of organized labor and social movements, Trump channelled the energies of the active conservative movement (Tea Party, Patriotic militiamen, Minutemen, Blue Lives Matter, Libertarians, White Nationalists, etc.) into the Republican Party, temporarily giving it new life.

Unfortunately, the Democrats are far better managers of their active base than the Republicans, whose ham-fisted theatrics after Trump’s 2020 loss nearly led to a split in the party. Examples can be found in every instance of popular struggle: the Women’s March of January 2017, one of the largest mass mobilizations in US history, was easily reduced to a fundraising and electoral campaign for Democrats, and the blockades of international airports and Abolish/ Occupy ICE camps that followed were quickly plumbed into an NGO/Non-Profit professionalization pipeline.

But before they could gain control, these moments were confronted by the obvious next step of direct action: the Women’s March demonstrating the numbers existed to shut down the country against threats to reproductive rights. The airport blockades actually did shut down airports, until a court decision stayed Trump’s Muslim ban executive order. ICE facilities around the country were forced to reroute their detainees, switch to teleconference, and even close and relocate. But immediately upon success of these measures, the professionals swoop. The blockades only make the state crueler, they argued, demanding that adventurist elements respect their authority, trust the courts, check their privilege, and allow them to continue the Sisyphean work of harm reduction.

Compare this to the May 28th, 2020 explosion that was the George Floyd Uprising. After years of being told to elect politicians who would push for police reform, the people of Minneapolis said enough was enough, taking their city back in a fiery purge of mourning, destruction, and self-preservation. Fearing for their lives, city politicians actually resolved to disband the Minneapolis police—a decision easily reversed once they regained control of the streets.

The vanguard of the George Floyd Uprising were not activists, but a new generation of rebels, largely Black and lower-class. Many were veterans of Black Lives Matters who learned their lesson in 2014, but many others were too young to participate then, yet instinctively knew what had to be done to avenge George Floyd and make the cops think twice before killing again. This, more than the few isolated incidents of sympathy strikes by bus drivers, represents the proletarian desires beating in the heart of the working class as a whole, yearning to break free immediately, collectively, en masse.

The challenge of those like us who want to develop a tendency faithful to the uprising—while trying to overcome its limits—is to theorize how this mass movement can convince millions more to follow the proletarian vanguard into the next uprising.

An immediate contradiction in thinking through this shift is that so many participated in the uprising as individuals who spontaneously built ad-hoc crews. If this is the model for contemporary revolution, old left ideas about the workers' movement, the social movement, and the party should adjust. Throwing oneself into the riots and being transformed by the struggle itself was more important than trying to win everyone over to one particular strategy or organization.

Transformative moments like these did occur during the uprising. In downtown Manhattan, cultural venues, churches, art galleries, and cafes were converted into shelters or free stores to supply or hide the rioters. Elsewhere, workplaces across the country were forced to reckon with pay disparity and other forms of daily racist treatment and complicity with the police and prisons. The trend of corporate wokeness that followed is better understood as a desperate attempt to placate these questions, rather than the demand of the uprising as it spread into professional settings.

It is also notable that this mass rebellion occurred at the highest point of unemployment in the United States since the Great Depression. But unlike the mass movements that were contained by the jobs programs of the New Deal, the uprising did not call for a jobs program, nor did it emerge from the specific conditions of specific workplaces. It was instead a revolt of the precariat against a world that has become itself a massive workplace.

This is not to challenge the importance of the traditional working class, however narrowly defined. It is this class, alone, which has the power to really shut production down, and then start it running again as it sees fit. Previous Marxist attempts to analyze urban riots have often made the mistake of emphasizing the separation between the lower-class and the working-class by either pejoratively or patronizingly invoking the nebulous category of the lumpenproletariat. The uprisings' main participants were neither petty bandits nor counterrevolutionary opportunists, but workers, freshly unemployed or otherwise, and their teenage children. They can be found driving taxis, driving buses, doing gig work, selling clothes online, selling drugs, doing sex work, and working at the same retail shops that were looted and burned. This group is no longer at the margins of the working class, but a massive plurality of it. This demonstrates the necessity of understanding the participants in the uprising as a vanguard faction of the working class.

When referring to the vanguard as the real movement, we are quoting Marx's definition of communism as "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence." Orienting towards the real movement distinguishes revolutionaries from populists and reformists—especially those factions of the left that have embraced arguments that the failure of Sanders to beat Biden were due to his being "too woke", or that the uprising itself was misguided because carceral solutions poll well among Black voters. Their interest, like the Democrats, is to maintain society basically as is. To the extent that they do orient towards the working class, it is only towards those elements that stand in contradiction to its revolutionary pole: the proletariat.

The proletariat succeeds when it moves towards overcoming the contradiction of humanity with capital. It fails when it recreates the world as it is: ordered by race, gender, and class. In the joyous, multiracial rebellion of 2020, we saw this order temporarily break down in the streets of America. The new subjectivity manifested there was not a voter, did not have a leader, sought neither reforms nor non-reformist reforms, did not want to make America a more just society. It was a mass politics qualitatively different from what is useful for the failing political parties.

What They Mean When They Say Peace

"I'm committed to making sure the forces of peace and justice prevail," Missouri Governor Jay Nixon said in Ferguson on Saturday, August 16, after a week of conflicts sparked by the police murder of teenager Michael Brown. "If we're going to achieve justice, we first must have and maintain peace."

Is that how it works—first you impose peace, *then* you achieve justice? And what does that mean, the *forces* of peace and justice? What kind of peace and justice are we talking about here?

As everyone knows, if it weren't for the riots in Ferguson, most people would never have heard about the murder of Michael Brown. White police officers kill over a hundred black men every year without most of us hearing anything about it. That silence—the absence of protest and disruption—is the *peace* which Governor Nixon wants us to believe will produce *justice*.

This is the same narrative we always hear from the authorities. First, we must submit to their control; then they will address our concerns. All the problems we face, they insist, are caused by our refusal to cooperate. This argument sounds most persuasive when it is dressed up in the rhetoric of democracy: those are "our" laws we should shut up and obey—"our" cops who are shooting and gassing us—"our" politicians and leaders begging us to return to business as usual. But to return to business as usual is to step daintily over the bodies of countless Michael Browns, consigning them to the cemetery and oblivion.

Governor Nixon's *peace* is what happens after people have been forcefully pacified. His *justice* is whatever it takes to hoodwink us into accepting peace on those terms—petitions that go directly into the recycle bin, lawsuits that never produce more than a slap on the wrist for the killers in uniform, campaigns that may advance the career of an activist or politician but will never put an end to the killing of unarmed black men.

Permit us to propose another idea about how to address conflicts—what we might call the anarchist approach. The basic idea is straightforward enough. Real peace cannot be imposed; it can only emerge as a consequence of the resolution of conflict. Hence the classic chant: *no justice, no peace*.

Left to itself, a state of imbalance tends to return to equilibrium. To maintain imbalances, you have to introduce force into the situation. The greater the disparities, the more force it takes to preserve them. This is as true in society as it is in physics.

That means you can't have rich people and poor people without police to impose that unequal relation to resources. You can't have *whiteness*, which inflects and stabilizes that class divide, without a vast infrastructure of racist courts and prisons. You can't keep two and a half million people—nearly a million of them black men—behind bars without the constant exertion of potentially lethal violence. You can't enforce the laws that protect the wealth of good liberals like Governor Nixon without officers like Darren Wilson killing black men by the hundred.

The militarization of the police is not an aberration—it is the necessary condition of a society based on hierarchy and domination. It is not just the police that have been militarized, but our entire way of life. Anyone who does not see this is not living on the business end of the guns. These are the *forces of peace and justice*, the mechanisms that "keep the peace" in a dramatically imbalanced social order.

Sometimes they appear as surveillance cameras, security guards, police stopping and searching or shooting us. Other times, when that becomes too controversial, the *forces of peace and justice* reappear as the good cops who really seem to care about us, the earnest politicians who want to make everything better—whatever it takes to get public opinion back on the side of the ones who shoot the tear gas. Still other times, the *forces of peace and justice* are community leaders begging