

**find
each
other!**



on building the world we want

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don't wait for a revolution that will never come!

I'm tired. Tired of Marxists of varying stripes telling me "well, there won't be a revolution in our lifetimes, but it's coming!" I'm tired of my fellow anarchists who tell me our "revolution is coming soon!" Just one more week of mutual aid, one more march, one more protest outside the governor's mansion (all good things when done right, don't get me wrong). And I'm *really* tired of liberals who tell me the system isn't broken. "We can fix it!" Just one more watered down compromise to slightly change police/taxes/housing--ignore the loopholes big enough to drive a semi-truck through--and we'll have "won!"

And yet, cops still shoot unarmed black and brown folks every day, billionaires use their unfathomable wealth to play astronaut, my unhoused friends still find themselves sleeping in tents come rain or shine.

It's fucking exhausting.

Eight hours of work (with boring should-have-been-an-email meetings and dumb office politics), your hour commute to and from the office, eat something for dinner, hopefully get some exercise in, then back to work on this week's crisis. An unhoused encampment being violently evicted by the cops? Fascists invading your town? Cops murdered another person with impunity? Oh and it's still a raging global pandemic.

And day by day, it only gets worse. Your local cops drop a million dollars or five on whatever some tech company salesgrifter tells them they "need." And oops, your boss needs that report by tomorrow not next week, sorry, he misread his calendar.

Friend, we can do so much better.

The value of money is fiction. Black men don't have to die for the "crime" of walking down the street. Our unhoused neighbors don't have to sleep in a park when there are more vacant homes than people without them!

I can't tell you "here's what our world will look like when we've achieved our revolution." There won't be a revolution, so don't waste your time waiting for one. I can only tell you that **none of this has to be this way, if we want it to be different!** We created this world, we can destroy it for something better too.

now!

Now is the time to find each other, to build affinity groups, networks of mutual aid, and to take meaningful direct action. The texts in this collection were selected to give you ideas on how to get going and divided into three sections:

1. Why: an introduction to Anarchism and Nihilism
2. How: building an affinity group and keeping your group safe

3. Now: ideas on where to start

Most of this collection are excerpts, not full texts. But you can find them all and more on ***edist.ro***.

get going!

For almost two centuries, Anarchists have been imprisoned, tortured, and murdered. And yet, we persist. Why? Because our desire for a world in which we are all truly free is an idea that will never die.

This zine is very intentionally a hard read. We are in the midst of a crisis with existential implications. There are no easy solutions, no answer that results in everyone going home with a puppy or a kitten. But I hope you'll read it anyway.

Only we can keep us safe! Only we can protect us!

We have no other choice! Get going!

--- **silberfuchs**
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Why?

Desert

The idea of Progress was central to the modern Western paradigm and the presumption that the entire world was moving ever onwards to a better future was dominant. The idea of the inevitability or possibility of a global libertarian future originates from that belief.

In many ways Anarchism was/is the libertarian extreme of the European Enlightenment – against god *and* the state. In some countries such as turn of the Twentieth Century Spain it was the Enlightenment – its militantly pro-science anti-clericism being as much an attraction as its anti-capitalism. Yet the rubbish of history is not so easily discarded and ‘progressive’ revolutionary movements have often been, in essence, form and aim, the continuation of religion by other means. As an example, the belief that universal peace and beauty would be reached through apocalyptic tumults of blood and fire (revolution/the millennium/the collapse) indicates firmly that as an enlightenment ideology, Anarchism has been heavily burdened by its Euro-Christian origins. John Gray was talking about Marxism when he said it was a “...a radical version of the enlightenment belief in progress – itself a mutation of Christian hopes... [Following] Judaism and Christianity in seeing history as a moral drama, that’s last act is salvation.” While some anarchists never fell for such bunkum, many did, and some still do.

These days Progress itself is increasingly questioned both by anarchists and across society. I have yet to meet anyone today who still believes in the *inevitability* of a global anarchist future. However the idea of a global movement, confronting a global present and creating a global future has many apostles. Some of these are even libertarians and look hopefully to the *possibility* of global anarchist revolution.

The illusory triumph of capitalism following the destruction of the Berlin Wall lead to the proclamation – more utopian than real – of a New World Order – a global capitalist system. The reaction of many to globalisation was to posit one from below, and this was only re-enforced by the near simultaneous public emergence of the Zapatistas and the invention of the Web. The subsequent international action days, often coinciding with summits, became the focus for the supposedly global anti-capitalist ‘movement of movements’. The excitement on the streets enabled many to forestall seeing the spectre by looking in the direction of the ‘global movement’. But there never was a global movement against capitalism, then, or ever, just as capitalism itself was never truly global. There are many, many places where capitalist relations are not the dominant practice, and even more where anti-capitalist (nevermind anarchist) movements simply don’t exist.

...

The illusion of a singular world capitalist present is mirrored by the illusion of a singular world anarchist future.¹

*Ed.: There is **no global anarchist future** nor will there be some global anti-capitalist revolution. It falls on us therefore to destroy the structures that lock us into a system that will otherwise destroy us all*

¹ The full text can be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/desert>

Blessed is the Flame

We are being led to our slaughter. This has been theorized in a thousand ways, described in environmental, social, and political terms, it has been prophesied, abstracted, and narrated in real time, and still we are unsure of what to do with it. The underlying point is that the progress of society has nothing to offer us and everything to take away. Often it feels like we are giving it away without a fight: when we sell our time for money, allow our passions to be commodified, invest ourselves in the betterment of society, or sustain ourselves on the spoils of ecological destruction, we openly (though not consensually) participate in our own destruction.

...

We have already been led to our slaughter — it is all around us. The world in which we exist is a protracted death, a sort of economically-sustained limbo in which hearts are permitted to beat only to the extent that they can facilitate the upward stream of capital. The plague of domestication has reached into every wild space, and the lines of colonization have crossed us more times than we can count. Every unproductive aspect of the biosphere has been flagged for eradication, from the “beam-trawled ocean floors” to the “dynamited reefs” to the “hollowed-out mountains,” the highest calibers of technology are locked into a perpetual killing spree chugging along in a “monotonous rhythm of death.” We who still have air in our lungs are the living dead, and struggle daily to remember what it feels like to be alive, holding tightly to the “desire for wildness that the misery of a paycheck cannot allay.” We roam the desolate architecture of our slaughter houses (“the prison of civilization we live in”) like ghosts who feel but cannot quite understand the vapidness of our existence. To borrow some apt phrases from the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (CCF): we have become thoroughly integrated into “a system that crushes us on a daily basis”, that “controls our thoughts and our desires through screens” and “teaches us how to be happy slaves” while letting us “consider ourselves free because we can vote and consume”, and all the while, “we, like cheerful Sisyphus, are still carrying our slavery stone and think this is life.” As an American Iraq war veteran-turned-strategy consultant wrote in the New York Times in 2013: “The biggest problem we face is a philosophical one: understanding that this civilization is already dead.” The extent to which we have internalized the rhythms, values, and stories of this civilization “ties our future to [this] undead and all-devouring system.”

...

Despite its gloomy connotations, the commitment to pure negation finds its most interesting manifestations as a joyful, creative, and limitless project. Most notably, *Bæden* utilizes the French word *jouissance*...an ecstatic energy, felt but never captured, that pushes us away from any form of domination, representation, or restraint, and compels us towards fierce wildness and unmitigated recalcitrance. It is “the process that momentarily sets us free from our fear of death” and which manifests as a “blissful enjoyment of the present,” or a “joy which we cannot name.” *Jouissance* is that which animates resistance for its own sake so that even if we have no future, we can still find life today.²

² The full text can be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/serafinski-blessed-is-the-flame>

How?

Affinity Groups:

The Essential Building Block of Anarchist Organization

Turbulent times are upon us. Already, blockades, demonstrations, riots, and clashes are occurring regularly. It's past time to be organizing for the upheavals that are on the way.

But getting organized doesn't mean joining a pre-existing institution and taking orders. It shouldn't mean forfeiting your agency and intelligence to become a cog in a machine. From an anarchist perspective, organizational structure should maximize both freedom and voluntary coordination at every level of scale, from the smallest group up to society as a whole.

You and your friends already constitute an affinity group, the essential building block of this model. An affinity group is a circle of friends who understand themselves as an autonomous political force. The idea is that people who already know and trust each other should work together to respond immediately, intelligently, and flexibly to emerging situations.

This leaderless format has proven effective for guerrilla activities of all kinds, as well as what the RAND Corporation calls "swarming" tactics in which many unpredictable autonomous groups overwhelm a centralized adversary. You should go to every demonstration in an affinity group, with a shared sense of your goals and capabilities. If you are in an affinity group that has experience taking action together, you will be much better prepared to deal with emergencies and make the most of unexpected opportunities.

Affinity Groups are Powerful

Relative to their small size, affinity groups can achieve a disproportionately powerful impact. In contrast to traditional top-down structures, they are free to adapt to any situation, they need not pass their decisions through a complicated process of ratification, and all the participants can act and react instantly without waiting for orders—yet with a clear idea of what to expect from one another. The mutual admiration and inspiration on which they are founded make them very difficult to demoralize. In stark contrast to capitalist, fascist, and socialist structures, they function without any need of hierarchy or coercion. Participating in an affinity group can be fulfilling and fun as well as effective.

Most important of all, affinity groups are motivated by shared desire and loyalty, rather than profit, duty, or any other compensation or abstraction. Small wonder whole squads of riot police have been held at bay by affinity groups armed with only the tear gas canisters shot at them.

The Affinity Group is a Flexible Model

Some affinity groups are formal and immersive: the participants live together, sharing everything in common. But an affinity group need not be a permanent arrangement. It can serve as a structure of convenience, assembled from the pool of interested and trusted people for the duration of a given project.

A particular team can act together over and over as an affinity group, but the members can also break up into smaller affinity groups, participate in other affinity groups, or act outside the affinity group structure. Freedom to associate and organize as each person sees fit is a fundamental

anarchist principle; this promotes redundancy, so no one person or group is essential to the functioning of the whole, and different groups can reconfigure as needed.

The affinity group is a flexible model.

Pick the Scale That's Right for You

An affinity group can range from two to perhaps as many as fifteen individuals, depending on your goals. However, no group should be so numerous that an informal conversation about pressing matters is impossible. You can always split up into two or more groups if need be. In actions that require driving, the easiest system is often to have one affinity group to each vehicle.

Get to Know Each Other Intimately

Learn each other's strengths and vulnerabilities and backgrounds, so you know what you can count on each other for. Discuss your analyses of each situation you are entering and what is worth accomplishing in it—identify where they match, where they are complimentary, and where they differ, so you'll be ready to make split-second decisions.

One way to develop political intimacy is to read and discuss texts together, but nothing beats on-the-ground experience. Start out slow so you don't overextend. Once you've established a common language and healthy internal dynamics, you're ready to identify the objectives you want to accomplish, prepare a plan, and *go into action*.

Decide Your Appropriate Level of Security

Affinity groups are resistant to infiltration because all members share history and intimacy with each other, and no one outside the group need be informed of their plans or activities.

Once assembled, an affinity group should establish a shared set of security practices and stick to them. In some cases, you can afford to be public and transparent about your activities. In other cases, whatever goes on within the group should never be spoken of outside it, even after all its activities are long completed. In some cases, no one except the participants in the group should know that it exists at all. You and your comrades can discuss and prepare for actions without acknowledging to outsiders that you constitute an affinity group. Remember, it is easier to pass from a high security protocol to a low one than vice versa.

Make Decisions Together

Affinity groups generally operate on via consensus decision-making: decisions are made collectively according to the needs and desires of every individual involved. Democratic voting, in which the majority get their way and the minority must hold their tongues, is anathema to affinity groups—for if a group is to function smoothly and hold together under stress, every individual involved must be satisfied. Before any action, the members of a group should establish together what their personal and collective goals are, what risks they are comfortable taking, and what their expectations of each other are. These matters determined, they can formulate a plan.

Since action situations are always unpredictable and plans rarely come off as anticipated, it may help to employ a dual approach to preparing. On the one hand, you can make plans for different scenarios: *If A happens, we'll inform each other by X means and switch to plan B; if X means of communication is impossible, we'll reconvene at site Z at Q o'clock*. On the other hand, you can put structures in place that will be useful even if what happens is unlike any of the scenarios you imagined. This could mean preparing resources (such as banners, medical supplies, or offensive

equipment), dividing up internal roles (for example, scouting, communications, medic, media liaison), establishing communication systems (such as burner phones or coded phrases that can be shouted out to convey information securely), preparing general strategies (for keeping sight of one another in confusing environments, for example), charting emergency escape routes, or readying legal support in case anyone is arrested.

After an action, a shrewd affinity group will meet (if necessary, in a secure location without any electronics) to discuss what went well, what could have gone better, and what comes next.

It's safer to act in chaotic protest environments in a tight-knit affinity group.

Tact and Tactics

An affinity group answers to itself alone—this is one of its strengths. Affinity groups are not burdened by the procedural protocol of other organizations, the difficulties of reaching agreement with strangers, or the limitations of answering to a body not immediately involved in the action.

At the same time, just as the members of an affinity group strive for consensus with each other, each affinity group should strive for a similarly considerate relationship with other individuals and groups—or at least to complement others' approaches, even if others do not recognize the value of this contribution. Ideally, most people should be glad of your affinity group's participation or intervention in a situation, rather than resenting or fearing you. They should come to recognize the value of the affinity group model, and so to employ it themselves, after seeing it succeed and benefiting from that success.

Organize With Other Affinity Groups

An affinity group can work together with other affinity groups in what is sometimes called a cluster. The cluster formation enables a larger number of individuals to act with the same advantages a single affinity group has. If speed or security is called for, representatives of each group can meet ahead of time, rather than the entirety of all groups; if coordination is of the essence, the groups or representatives can arrange methods for communicating through the heat of the action. Over years of collaborating together, different affinity groups can come to know each other as well as they know themselves, becoming accordingly more comfortable and capable together.

When several clusters of affinity groups need to coordinate especially massive actions—before a big demonstration, for example—they can hold a spokescouncil meeting at which different affinity groups and clusters can inform one another (to whatever extent is wise) of their intentions. Spokescouncils rarely produce seamless unanimity, but they can apprise the participants of the various desires and perspectives that are at play. The independence and spontaneity that decentralization provides are usually our greatest advantages in combat with a better equipped adversary.

Bottomlining

For affinity groups and larger structures based on consensus and cooperation to function, it is essential that everyone involved be able to rely on each other to come through on commitments. When a plan is agreed upon, each individual in a group and each group in a cluster should choose one or more critical aspects of the preparation and execution of the plan and offer to bottomline them. Bottomlining the supplying of a resource or the completion of a project means guaranteeing that it will be accomplished somehow, no matter what. If you're operating the legal hotline for your group during a demonstration, you owe it to them to handle it even if you get sick; if your group

promises to provide the banners for an action, make sure they're ready, even if that means staying up all night the night before because the rest of your affinity group couldn't show up. Over time, you'll learn how to handle crises and who you can count on in them—just as others will learn how much they can count on you.

Go Into Action

Stop wondering what's going to happen, or why nothing's happening. Get together with your friends and start deciding *what will happen*. Don't go through life in passive spectator mode, waiting to be told what to do. Get in the habit of discussing what you want to see happen—and making those ideas reality.

Without a structure that encourages ideas to flow into action, without comrades with whom to brainstorm and barnstorm and build up momentum, you are likely to be paralyzed, cut off from much of your own potential; with them, your potential can be multiplied by ten, or ten thousand. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world," Margaret Mead wrote: "it's the only thing that ever has." She was referring, whether she knew it or not, to affinity groups. If every individual in every action against the state and status quo participated as part of a tight-knit, dedicated affinity group, the revolution would be accomplished in a few short years.

An affinity group could be a sewing circle or a bicycle maintenance collective; it could come together for the purpose of providing a meal at an occupation or forcing a multinational corporation out of business through a carefully orchestrated program of sabotage. Affinity groups have planted and defended community gardens, built and occupied and burned down buildings, organized neighborhood childcare programs and wildcat strikes; individual affinity groups routinely initiate revolutions in the visual arts and popular music. Your favorite band was an affinity group. An affinity group invented the airplane. Another one maintains this website.

Let five people meet who are resolved to the lightning of action rather than the agony of survival—from that moment, despair ends and tactics begin.³

³ This text can be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/crimethinc-affinity-groups>

What is Security Culture?

A security culture is a set of customs shared by a community whose members may be targeted by the government, designed to minimize risk. Having a security culture in place saves everyone the trouble of having to work out safety measures over and over from scratch, and can help offset paranoia and panic in stressful situations—hell, it might keep you out of prison, too. The difference between protocol and culture is that culture becomes unconscious, instinctive, and thus effortless; once the safest possible behavior has become habitual for everyone in the circles in which you travel, you can spend less time and energy emphasizing the need for it, or suffering the consequences of not having it, or worrying about how much danger you're in, as you'll know you're already doing everything you can to be careful. If you're in the habit of not giving away anything sensitive about yourself, you can collaborate with strangers without having to agonize about whether or not they are informers; if everyone knows what not to talk about over the telephone, your enemies can tap the line all they want and it won't get them anywhere.

The central principle of all security culture, the point that cannot be emphasized enough, is that people should never be privy to any sensitive information they do not need to know.

The greater the number of people who know something that can put individuals or projects at risk—whether that something be the identity of a person who committed an illegal act, the location of a private meeting, or a plan for future activity—the more chance there is of the knowledge getting into the wrong hands. Sharing such information with people who do not need it does them a disservice as well as the ones it puts at risk: it places them in the uncomfortable situation of being able to mess up other people's lives with a single misstep. If they are interrogated, for example, they will have something to hide, rather than being able to honestly claim ignorance. But getting organized doesn't mean joining a pre-existing institution and taking orders. It shouldn't mean forfeiting your agency and intelligence to become a cog in a machine. From an anarchist perspective, organizational structure should maximize both freedom and voluntary coordination at every level of scale, from the smallest group up to society as a whole.

Don't ask, don't tell.

Don't ask others to share confidential information you don't need to know. Don't brag about illegal things you or others have done, or mention things that are going to happen or might happen, or even refer to another person's interest in being involved in such activities. Stay aware whenever you speak; don't let chance allusions drop out thoughtlessly.

You can say no at any time to anyone about anything.

Don't answer any questions you don't want to—not just with police officers, but also with other activists and even close friends: if there's something you don't feel safe sharing, don't. This also means being comfortable with others not answering questions: if there's a conversation they want to keep to themselves, or they ask you not to be part of a meeting or project, you shouldn't take this personally—it's for everyone's good that they're free to do so. Likewise, don't participate in any projects you don't feel good about, or collaborate with anyone you feel ill at ease with, or ignore your gut feeling in any situation; if something goes wrong and you get into trouble, you don't want to

have any regrets. You're responsible for not letting anyone talk you into taking risks you're not ready for.

Don't ever turn your friends over to your enemies.

If captured, never, ever give up any information that could endanger anyone else. Some recommend an explicit oath be sworn by all participants in a direct action group: that way, in a worst-case scenario, when pressure might make it hard to distinguish between giving up a few harmless details and totally selling out, everyone will know exactly what commitments they made to each other.

Don't make it too easy for your enemies to figure out what you're up to.

Don't be too predictable in the methods you employ, or the targets you choose, or the times and places you meet to discuss things. Don't be too visible in the public aspects of the struggle in which you do your most serious direct action: keep your name off mailing lists and out of the media, perhaps avoid association with aboveground organizations and campaigns entirely. If you're involved in really serious clandestine activities with a few comrades, you may want to limit your interactions in public, if not avoid each other altogether. Federal agents can easily get access to the phone numbers dialed from your phone, and will use such lists to establish connections between individuals; the same goes for your email, and the books you check out from libraries, and especially social networking sites like Myspace.

Don't leave a trail: credit card use, gas cards, cell phone calls all leave a record of your motions, purchases, and contacts. Have a cover story, supported by verifiable facts, if you might need one. Be careful about what your trash could reveal about you—dropouts aren't the only ones who go dumpstering! Keep track of every written document and incriminating photocopy—keep them all in one place, so you can't accidentally forget one—and destroy them as soon as you don't need them. The fewer there are in the first place, the better; get used to using your memory. Make sure there aren't any ghosts of such writing left behind in impressions on the surfaces you were writing on, whether these be wooden desks or pads of paper. Assume that every use of computers leaves a trail, too.

Don't throw any direct action ideas around in public that you think you might want to try at some point.

Wait to propose an idea until you can gather a group of individuals that you expect will all be interested in trying it; the exception is the bosom companion with whom you brainstorm and hash out details in advance—safely outside your home and away from mixed company, of course. Don't propose your idea until you think the time is right for it to be tried. Invite only those you are pretty certain will want to join in—everyone you invite who doesn't end up participating is a needless security risk, and this can be doubly problematic if it turns out they feel your proposed activity is laughably dumb or morally wrong. Only invite people who can keep secrets—this is critical whether or not they decide to participate.

Develop a private shorthand for communicating with your comrades in public.

It's important to work out a way to communicate surreptitiously with your trusted friends about security issues and comfort levels while in public situations, such as at a meeting called to discuss

possible direct action. Knowing how to gauge each other's feelings without others being able to tell that you are sending messages back and forth will save you the headache of trying to guess each other's thoughts about a situation or individual, and help you avoid acting strangely when you can't take your friend aside in the middle of things to compare notes. By the time you have convened a larger group to propose an action plan, you and your friends should be clear on what each other's intentions, willingness to run risks, levels of commitment, and opinions of others are, to save time and avoid unnecessary ambiguity. If you haven't been part of a direct action planning circle before, you'll be surprised how complicated and convoluted things can get even when everyone does arrive prepared.

Develop methods to establish the security level of a group or situation.

One quick procedure you can run at the beginning of a larger meeting at which not everyone is acquainted is the "vouched for" game: as each person introduces himself, all who can vouch for him raise their hands. Only vouch for those you are confident are worthy of your trust. Hopefully, each person is connected to the others by some link in the chain; either way, at least everybody knows how things stand. An activist who understands the importance of good security will not feel insulted in such a situation if there is no one present who can vouch for him and the others ask him to leave.

Meeting location is an important factor in security.

You don't want a place that can be monitored (no private residences), you don't want a place where you can be observed all together (not the park across from the site of the next day's actions), you don't want a place where you can be seen entering and leaving or that someone could enter unexpectedly—post scouts, lock the door once things get started, watch out for anything suspicious. Small groups can take walks and chat; larger groups can meet in quiet outdoor settings—go hiking or camping, if there's time—or in private rooms in public buildings, such as library study rooms or empty classrooms. Best-case scenario: though he has no idea you're involved in direct action, you're close with the old guy who runs the café across town, and he doesn't mind letting you have the back room one afternoon for a private party, no questions asked.

Be aware of the reliability of those around you, especially those with whom you might collaborate in underground activities.

Be conscious of how long you've known people, how far back their involvement in your community and their lives outside of it can be traced, and what others' experiences with them have been. The friends you grew up with, if you still have any of them in your life, may be the best companions for direct action, as you are familiar with their strengths and weaknesses and the ways they handle pressure—and you know for a fact they are who they say they are. Make sure only to trust your safety and the safety of your projects to level-headed folks who share the same priorities and commitments and have nothing to prove. In the long term, strive to build up a community of people with long-standing friendships and experience acting together, with ties to other such communities.

Don't get too distracted worrying about whether people are infiltrators or not; if your security measures are effective, it shouldn't even matter.

Don't waste your energy and make yourself paranoid and unsociable suspecting everybody you meet. If you keep all sensitive information inside the circle of people it concerns, only collaborate with reliable and experienced friends whose history you can verify, and never give away anything

about your private activities, agents and police informers will be powerless to gather evidence to use against you. A good security culture should make it practically irrelevant whether these vermin are active in your community or not. The important thing is not whether or not a person is involved with the cops, but whether or not he constitutes a security risk; if he is deemed insecure (double meaning intended), he should never be permitted to end up in a situation in which anyone's safety depends on him.

Learn and abide by the security expectations of each person you interact with, and respect differences in style.

To collaborate with others, you have to make sure they feel at home with you; even if you're not collaborating with them, you don't want to make them uncomfortable or disregard a danger they understand better than you. When it comes to planning direct action, not abiding by the security culture accepted in a given community can wreck not only your chances to cooperate with others on a project, but the possibility of the project happening at all—for example, if you bring up an idea others were planning to try in a setting they deem insecure, they may be forced to abandon the plan as it may now be associated with them. Ask people to outline for you their specific security needs before you even broach the subject of direct action.

Let others know exactly what your needs are when it comes to security.

The corollary of abiding by others' expectations is that you must make it easy for others to abide by yours. At the beginning of any relationship in which your private political life may become an issue, emphasize that there are details of your activities that you need to keep to yourself. This can save you a lot of drama in situations that are already stressful enough; the last thing you need on returning from a secret mission gone awry is to end up in a fight with your lover: "But if you trusted me, you would tell me about this! How do I know you're not out there sleeping with...!" It's not a matter of trust—sensitive information isn't a reward to be earned or deserved.

Look out for other people.

Make explicit to those around you what risks you may pose to them with your presence or with actions you have planned, at least as much as you're able to without violating other precepts of security culture. Let them know to the extent you're able what risks you run yourself: for example, whether you can afford to be arrested (if there are outstanding warrants for you, if you are an undocumented migrant, etc.), what responsibilities you have to keep up with, whether you have any allergies. Don't imperil others with your decisions, especially if you're not able to provide concrete support should they somehow get arrested and charged on account of your behavior. If someone else drops a banner in an area immediately adjacent to a fire you set, the police might charge them with arson; even if the charges can't stick, you don't want to risk their ill will, or accidentally block their planned escape route. If you help initiate a breakaway march that leaves the permitted zone, try to make sure you keep your body between the police and others who have come along but don't necessarily understand the risks involved; if you escalate a spontaneous parade by engaging in property destruction, make sure others who were unprepared for this are not still standing around in confusion when the police show up. Whatever risky projects you undertake, make sure you're prepared to go about them intelligently, so no one else will have to run unexpected risks to help you out when you make mistakes.

Security culture is a form of etiquette, a way to avoid needless misunderstandings and potentially disastrous conflicts.

Security concerns should never be an excuse for making others feel left out or inferior—though it can take some finesse to avoid that!—just as no one should feel they have a “right” to be in on anything others prefer to keep to themselves. Those who violate the security culture of their communities should not be rebuked too harshly the first time—this isn’t a question of being hip enough to activist decorum to join the in-group, but of establishing group expectations and gently helping people understand their importance; besides, people are least able to absorb constructive criticism when they’re put on the defensive. Nevertheless, such people should always be told immediately how they’re putting others at risk, and what the consequences will be should they continue to. Those who can’t grasp this must be tactfully but effectively shut out of all sensitive situations.

Security culture is not paranoia institutionalized, but a way to avoid unhealthy paranoia by minimizing risks ahead of time.

It is counterproductive to spend more energy worrying about how much surveillance you are under than is useful for decreasing the danger it poses, just as it is debilitating to be constantly second-guessing your precautions and doubting the authenticity of potential comrades. A good security culture should make everyone feel more relaxed and confident, not less. At the same time, it’s equally unproductive to accuse those who adhere to security measures stricter than yours of being paranoid—remember, our enemies are out to get us.

Don’t let suspicion be used against you.

If your foes can’t learn your secrets, they will settle for turning you against each other. Undercover agents can spread rumors or throw around accusations to create dissension, mistrust, and resentment inside of or between groups. They may falsify letters or take similar steps to frame activists. The mainstream media can participate in this by reporting that there is an informant in a group when there is not one, or misrepresenting the politics or history of an individual or group in order to alienate potential allies, or emphasizing over and over that there is a conflict between two branches of a movement until they really do mistrust one another. Again, a shrewd security culture that fosters an appropriately high level of trust and confidence should make such provocations nearly impossible on the personal level; when it comes to relations between proponents of different tactics and organizations of different stripes, remember the importance of solidarity and diversity of tactics, and trust that others do, too, even if media accounts suggest otherwise. Don’t accept rumors or reports as fact: go to the source for confirmation every time, and be diplomatic about it.

Don’t be intimidated by bluffing.

Police attention and surveillance is not necessarily an indication that they know anything specific about your plans or activities: often it indicates that they do not and are trying to frighten you out of continuing with them. Develop an instinct with which to sense when your cover has actually been blown and when your enemies are just trying to distress you into doing their work for them.

Always be prepared for the possibility that you are under observation, but don't mistake attracting surveillance for being effective.

Even if everything you are doing is perfectly legal, you may still receive attention and harassment from intelligence organizations if they feel you pose an inconvenience to their masters. In some regards, this can be for the best; the more they have to monitor, the more thinly spread their energies are, and the harder it is for them to pinpoint and neutralize subversives. At the same time, don't get caught up in the excitement of being under surveillance and begin to assume that the more the authorities pay attention to you, the more dangerous to them you must be—they're not that smart. They tend to be preoccupied with the resistance organizations whose approaches most resemble their own; take advantage of this. The best tactics are the ones that reach people, make points, and exert leverage while not showing up on the radar of the powers that be, at least not until it is too late. Ideally, your activities should be well known to everyone except the authorities.

Security culture involves a code of silence, but it is not a code of voicelessness.

The stories of our daring exploits in the struggle against capitalism must be told somehow, so everyone will know resistance is a real possibility put into action by real people; open incitements to insurrection must be made, so would-be revolutionaries can find each other and the revolutionary sentiments buried in the hearts of the masses find their way to the surface. A good security culture should preserve as much secrecy as is necessary for individuals to be safe in their underground activities, while still providing visibility for radical perspectives. Most of the security tradition in the activist milieu today is derived from the past thirty years of animal rights and earth liberation activities; as such, it's perfectly suited for the needs of small groups carrying out isolated illegal acts, but isn't always appropriate for more aboveground campaigns aimed at encouraging generalized insubordination. In some cases it can make sense to break the law openly, in order to provoke the participation of a large mass that can then provide safety in numbers.

Balance the need to escape detection by your enemies against the need to be accessible to potential friends.

In the long run, secrecy alone cannot protect us—sooner or later they are going to find all of us, and if no one else understands what we're doing and what we want, they'll be able to liquidate us with impunity. Only the power of an informed and sympathetic (and hopefully similarly equipped) public can help us then. There should always be entryways into communities in which direct action is practiced, so more and more people can join in. Those doing really serious stuff should keep it to themselves, of course, but every community should also have a person or two who vocally advocates and educates about direct action, and who can discreetly help trustworthy novices link up with others getting started.

When you're planning an action, begin by establishing the security level appropriate to it, and act accordingly from there on.

Learning to gauge the risks posed by an activity or situation and how to deal with them appropriately is not just a crucial part of staying out of jail; it also helps to know what you're not worried about, so you don't waste energy on unwarranted, cumbersome security measures. Keep in mind that a given action may have different aspects that demand different degrees of security; make sure to keep these distinct. Here's an example of a possible rating system for security levels:

1. Only those who are directly involved in the action know of its existence.
2. Trusted support persons also know about the action, but everyone in the group decides together who these will be.
3. It is acceptable for the group to invite people to participate who might choose not to—that is, some outside the group may know about the action, but are still expected to keep it a secret.
4. The group does not set a strict list of who is invited; participants are free to invite others and encourage them to do the same, while emphasizing that knowledge of the action is to be kept within the circles of those who can be trusted with secrets.
5. “Rumors” of the action can be spread far and wide through the community, but the identities of those at the center of the organizing are to be kept a secret.
6. The action is announced openly, but with at least some degree of discretion, so as not to tip off the sleeper of the authorities.
7. The action is totally announced and aboveground in all ways.

To give examples, security level #1 would be appropriate for a group planning to firebomb an SUV dealership, while level #2 would be acceptable for those planning more minor acts of property destruction, such as spraypainting. Level #3 or #4 would be appropriate for calling a spokescouncil preceding a black bloc at a large demonstration or for a group planning to do a newspaper wrap, depending on the ratio of risk versus need for numbers. Level #5 would be perfect for a project such as initiating a surprise unpermitted march: for example, everyone hears in advance that the Ani DiFranco performance is going to end in a “spontaneous” antiwar march, so people can prepare accordingly, but as no one knows whose idea it is, no one can be targeted as an organizer. Level #6 would be appropriate for announcing a Critical Mass bicycle ride: fliers are wrapped around the handlebars of every civilian bicycle, but no announcements are sent to the papers, so the cops won’t be there at the beginning while the mass is still vulnerable. Level #7 is appropriate for a permitted antiwar march or independent media video screening, unless you’re so dysfunctionally paranoid you even want to keep community outreach projects a secret.

It also makes sense to choose the means of communication you will use according to the level of security demanded. Here’s an example of different levels of communications security, corresponding to the system just outlined above:

1. No communication about the action except in person, outside the homes of those involved, in surveillance-free environments (e.g. the group goes camping to discuss plans); no discussion of the action except when it is absolutely necessary.
2. Outside group meetings, involved individuals are free to discuss the action in surveillance-free spaces.
3. Discussions are permitted in homes not definitely under surveillance.
4. Communication by encrypted email or on neutral telephone lines is acceptable.
5. People can speak about the action over telephones, email, etc. provided they’re careful not to give away certain details—who, what, when, where.

6. Telephones, email, etc. are all fair game; email listservs, fliering in public spaces, announcements to newspapers, etc. may or may not be acceptable, on a case-by-case basis.
7. Communication and proclamation by every possible medium are encouraged.

If you keep hazardous information out of circulation and you follow suitable security measures in every project you undertake, you'll be well on your way to fulfilling what early CrimethInc. agent Abbie Hoffman described as the first duty of the revolutionary: not getting caught. All the best in your adventures and misadventures, and remember—you didn't hear it from us!⁴

⁴ This text can also be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/crimethinc-what-is-security-culture>

Now!

Land and Freedom: An Open Invitation

The endless stream of ecological and social catastrophes can be stopped. When you're in a battle you don't have many choices: continue to fight, surrender, or retreat and regroup. It would be wise to look at all of the means at our disposal, to consider all of the paths that might lead us to a place and time where self-organized people can create the lives they choose.

If we exclude surrendering, what's left?

Fighting includes riots, sabotage, insurrections, and other forms of self-organized mutiny. Some may be spontaneous, like waves that seem to swell up suddenly wherever you live that you can participate in. Others might involve instigation and intent, like blockades and occupations.

We can withdraw, drop out, encourage absenteeism, stop participating and refuse various forms of conscription. We can regroup, build trust, come to some agreements, and then perhaps lay some plans.

We can also plant seeds for the future. This sometimes involves attempting to create a different world here and now. Other times, it means acquiring skills and tools that may be useful for sustenance should a cataclysm turn the world upside down. This would help ensure that the Old World doesn't immediately return to prevent genuine New Ones from taking hold. It often prioritizes withdrawal over direct attacks. Sharing skills, growing food, hunting and fishing, prioritizing conviviality, pirate radios, gatherings, and communal child rearing are just some examples of this approach.

There is no approach that guarantees that we can realize a more unprejudiced and authentic world, a world without commodities or money, without states or wage labor, without prisons and politicians. In fact, the most we can likely hope to intentionally accomplish is to free, temporarily or permanently, our home, the place where we live, of these institutions and ways and values.

Of course, we want our rebellions to be global because our adversary is global, yet we must avoid being paralyzed by an attitude that views all local attempts and activity as marginal and ineffective. We have to counter all of the doctrines that promote a view of humans as helpless, powerless objects of history. History can be a story that we all have a voice in authoring. It is our activities, taken collectively, that create history.

But right now our powers are under the control of malevolent, impersonal institutions which we ironically reinforce by continuing to not only obey, but believe in, as though they were gods. There are gods, but they are you and me. We are just afraid of our powers, of the possibilities they might unleash.

One thing is certain: waiting, either for ecological or economic collapse, for global rebellion or local insurrection, can not be the main choice. We can change the world because we can change our world, the place where each of us lives.⁵

⁵ The full text can be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/land-and-freedom>

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Liberalism

Mutual-aid is in the air. Look near any anarchist or socialist project, and you will see the importance of it emphasized in big bold text. In the name of mutual-aid, people are doing food shares, repairing pot-holes in black bloc attire, fixing brake lights, mucking and gutting flooded houses, and giving out Narcan and clean IV supplies to drug users. These have become ubiquitous practices on the left.

All very good deeds, how can we be against this? When people are hungry, you feed them. If you have two coats and your neighbor has none, you have one coat and your neighbor now has one. The impulse is more than relatable, I too believe in these things. The appeal is hard to disagree with. From disaster to crisis, mutual aid comes like Superman to save the day, feeding and housing everyone, saving each other's lives.

But the truth is, mutual-aid isn't a challenge or threat to the social order which produced hunger and precarity. The state is largely indifferent or even welcoming to it. In a world where the working class is increasingly being told to fend for itself, can we continue to call this "solidarity" with any honesty? If not, then what actually do these practices do for us?

The problem of poverty is precisely that we don't have the shit. Let's get a few very agreeable things straight, which really clarify why mutual aid is wholly insufficient: 1. The world of private property and wage labor drive poverty and produced a number of social problems. 2. The poor and working class is characterized by lacking reserves and does not have free time, and 3. The poor and working class do not have the unpaid labor and unused property by which to alleviate these problems directly without going to the source keeping it from them.

However, Big Door Brigade, a website which collects and aggregates mutual-aid efforts across the country says the opposite:

What do we mean by "mutual aid"? Mutual aid is when people get together to meet each other's basic survival needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together RIGHT NOW!

How can both be true? If the working class does not have the shit, why is mutual aid elevated as "the work"? What are the impulses behind the popularity of mutual aid? Is it organizing? Is it solidarity? What do these things mean if it is not? What does the Bread guy that AOC likes to quote actually have to say about all of this?

Honest Service Work

It is more honest to call the bulk of what gets sold as mutual aid to be "service work". This comes under various names: "survival programs", mutual aid, and "serve the people". Regardless of the nomenclature, these function largely the same. They are not new, Food Not Bombs has been a staple of anarchist culture for decades.

There is no shortage of examples of good groups engaging in honest service work throughout history. The most well-known example is the Black Panthers. As the Black Panthers were constantly portrayed in the media as frightening armed terrorists, their survival programs served a number of functions at once. They brought legitimacy to their more central practices. They

improved their standing amongst the people they were trying to organize. They also served as an outlet for those wanting to have an “immediate” positive impact. It also overcame barriers to organizing, a Communist Party that takes up a literacy campaign doesn't just do this to improve lives, but to actually further be able to reach people and deepen their relationships.

It is worth delineating and examining these and how they related to other organizing. The Lincoln Hospital was a site of struggle for the Young Lords as much as it was a place transformed by service work into something more egalitarian and humanistic. This was the kernel of what would become “harm reduction”, which is mostly voluntaristic work that saves lives every day. The Chicago Women's Liberation Union had service work as a part of its multilateral apparatus, providing abortion care and procedures women did not have access to, this was one of many projects which brought attention to their brand of Socialist Feminism, while they also were heavily involved in workplace organizing amongst women in Chicago factories. It is hard to not be influenced by a historic organization which incorporated service work.

Honest service work is not always antithetical to a broader struggle which is primarily propelled by target-and-demand driven projects. They can be a very good supplement, to the point where if you are in a growing group dedicated to class struggle that is really making bigger and bigger moves, devoting a bit of extra labor in this direction is a good idea. However, it raises the question of an overall strategy, and where we really want to put our faith. We need to harvest new relations and forms of care, but outside the context of conflict, we lack the thrust which gives these new forms their class character.

This is not just the domain of the left either, Identity Evropa (a fascist group, now American Identity Movement) shares supplies and picks up trash in parks and neighborhoods, and you'll hear a lot about the “good work” that Gazi and the Black Hammer organization are doing. However, this also says a lot for how we should approach honest service work: it's politically neutral, often the domain of opportunists, and is very limited. It should be seen honestly for what it is, rather than giving the impression that this suffices for organizing. A “both-and” approach isn't something I'm against, but it's on us to make the service-work supportive of the organization's broader thrust.

Words and Deeds

Today's mutual aid efforts spend a great deal of time explaining all the ways in which they are not charity. They try to make it clear that they, the feeders of the hungry, are on the same side as the freedom fighters. According to Mutual Aid activist Dean Spade, mutual aid organizations “Use people power to resist any efforts by government to regulate or shut down activities”, “is connected to other tactics, including disruptive tactics aimed at root causes of the distress the aid addresses”, and “builds broader political participation, solidarity, mobilization, radicalization”. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez says in her Mutual Aid 101 guide, that mutual aid is: “A great jumping off point for other kinds of organizing and movement work”

My contention is that mutual aid organizations do little, to none of this. The beliefs and rhetoric simply do not translate into action. There is certainly support at the peaks of struggle, protests are supplied with medics and water-bearers, however this is not the way this looks day-to-day, for either the mutual-aid groups, or the disruptive organizations they claim to build solidarity with. Most of the day-to-day looks like increasing support for mutual aid.

One characteristic of mutual aid sticks out, and reminds me of the self-exploitation that co-op workers put themselves through. It's the rebranding of what are essentially capitalist firms and

enterprises to be “movement-friendly”. As someone experienced on what a non-profit looks like from the inside, including as someone who was paid but was glad to do the work otherwise, this jumps out as a major concern from Spade’s chart:

Efforts to flatten hierarchies—e.g. flat wage scales if anyone is paid, training so that new people can do work they weren’t professionally trained to do, rotating facilitation roles, language access.

If implemented on a wider scale, this could possibly lower the value of everyone’s labor in a related industry. The capitalist class laughs all the way to the bank with this one, just look at the “learn to code for free” classes tech companies are giving, this lowers the cost of the labor for everyone, which Silicon Valley wants very badly to cut. There’s also nothing preventing a non-profit from seeing this and running with it, thus using a mix of volunteer and paid-staff labor to further exploit everyone!

I always try to reserve judgement not for where people came from, and less so (but still important) what they say, but mostly for what they do. These are not always the same thing, and the disconnect should always set off alarms. mutual aid groups dress up what is functionally similar to NGOs and church groups, and pass it off as something new and most contentiously, something “radical”.

Most of what Spade characterizes as mutual-aid he believes is radical because of what is believed about poverty (which reduces stigma) by the organization, how people are educated (to overcome differences), and an egalitarianism of expertises and skills. These are all good things, but all in the realm of ideas, the problem isn’t the way we think about care and poverty, it’s about how it’s organized, and how our labor is organized.

The problems and insufficiency with NGOs was never really the services they provide though, it’s where they locate and build power (“proper channels”, Democratic Party, seat at the table), and yes, to Spade’s credit, their ethic and structure. However, it’s not clear if breaking with this structure in form yields some new content. If anything, the mutual aid model that has become popularized is a good guide of practices that many non-profits could adapt and improve themselves, and they should. At times when reading Spade, I become confused as to whether what is being proposed cannot be done by a non-profit or is antithetical to them, as when describing the solidarity which mutual-aid builds, he still describes a non-profit organization (Sylvia Rivera Law Project), with a multi-tiered staff structure and all the fixings.

Why does the “non-profit industrial complex” use the organizational model of capitalist firms (sometimes at the cutting edge) to operate? Because it is effective. We will also never out-organize them by trying to compete directly with them. Instead, my proposal is to circumvent them entirely and organize the unorganized, but also to break with the primary function (service) they serve. Also, instead of abandoning NGOs to create a superior model, we should consider the fact that these are workplaces that need to be organized, and would be improved by organizing.

Funding? Nowhere in Spade’s “Solidarity, Not Charity”, even in the section describing the challenges of not being a charity, is there any discussion on how mutual-aid groups are funded. My personal experience is that they are either crowd-funded, or are funded by micro-grants/sub-grants from actual non-profits. That’s not quite “the revolution will not be funded”. Member run unions, tenant and student organizations solve this problem often with dues structures. Dues can be made sliding scale and have free rates for houseless and unemployed members, and slush funds to further assist them. If an organization is committed to democracy regarding how dues are spent, members can have a sense of ownership in the organization. Also, restricting donation sizes for members

also prevents any member from using this as leverage, while still allowing for large donations and incomes overtime from members who have more to spare.

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Where's the Solidarity? The Lost Art of the Fighting Organization

Look anywhere near a mutual aid grouping and you will see the slogan "Solidarity, Not Charity". While the look of "charity" and its association with philanthropy may not be what is intended, and it is arguable if the model is different enough to say it is not charity, the point is that "solidarity" doesn't describe service work. This is concurrent with a historical decline in class struggle organization.

By conflating "solidarity" with service work, we risk impoverishing what solidarity actually means and feels like. It's a serious problem when we're perplexed when a worker is having a conflict with their boss/landlord over stolen wages and rent, and the best thing we think we can do is start a GoFundMe for them. If your work is visibly indistinguishable from NGOs, capitalist firms, well-meaning religious groups, and even fascists, you cannot expect the political content to actually be different. No amount of plastering red flags changes this.

Proclaiming "solidarity, not charity!" doesn't actually put you in a position of solidarity with the people you claim to fight for, solidarity isn't about service, it's about reciprocal defense of each other because we are in the same social position. It also means "skin in the game", you're all in it together. That feeling, that massive undertaking, all the building that happens prior to the march on the boss, are not bonds formed by sharing our meager crumbs, but coming together to take what is ours. It's high points are preceded by less flashy work, but it's based in the kind of relationship between people willing to sacrifice themselves for each other.

It is certainly not easier to do actual organizing, with targets and demands, amongst people who are actually positioned to be in solidarity with each other. It takes a great deal more patience, planning, ground work, research, courage, pain and sacrifice. However, it is without any substitute. So, we need to think critically and politically about what is elevated as "good work", because there's a lot that's getting thrown around as such which is getting us nowhere.

Some may detract and point to the need to organize collective care work and the creation of a new world, and this deserves consideration. However, this is always proposed in the context of a clearly demarcated struggle. Proponents of mutual aid differ in that they presume the relationship of fighting organizations to mutual-aid efforts, and presume their political content, whereas those who sought to revolutionize care work paid close attention to the relationship of their reproductive labor to capital. What is proposed by these proponents looks markedly different than the mutual aid that Spade proposes.

If our mutual-aid efforts are not closely linked with target-and-demand driven fights with bosses, landlords, administrators, it has no relationship to organizing. What passes as "organizing" today is mostly being a member of an organization and doing whatever it takes to make that organization grow. Like "solidarity" and "direct action", we have to draw some lines and some contrasting of "organizing" with mutual-aid.

Mutual-aid or Class Struggle? Why does the Liberalism in Mutual Aid Prevail?

What is the grip that mutual-aid has on the left? Why do people take to mutual-aid so quickly, instead of building a target and demand driven fighting organization? The answers to me are pretty clear

1. ***It requires little risk on anyone's part.*** If there is a risk, it's also a risk for the state to repress it, because of the moral consequence and optics of trying to impede service work. It poses very little challenge to the state and capital, who view these efforts largely indifferently, or even positively, since you are actively helping them reproduce workers, a burden increasingly relegated to the working class
2. ***Anyone can participate regardless of their social position.*** A group of aristocratic worker/ petite bourgeois socialists can easily get in on the "work" without blowing their cover. There's very little in common you actually need to have with the people you are serving. In fact, there's a stark power division, you have something valuable, that these people need and do not have.
3. Because this does require some labor, ***you get away with all the ability to capture the rhetoric of "organizing", you are doing "the" "work"***. You can tell people "well, what are you doing?". Most leftists who become active and reach out to leftist groups are looking for the first thing to DO and will latch themselves to the first thing that looks good. You can "do first, think critically about what you're doing later".
4. ***The optics are undeniably good and you get all the moral high-ground.*** Your critics become critics of feeding people, and your opponents can be framed as not desiring people to be fed. This moral buffer can even be used to excuse other unrelated problems with your politics or practices. In this sense, it serves the same function as philanthropy from the ruling class.
5. ***Professional and managerial tendencies translate neatly.*** Your skill juggling 5 different communications platforms and work-flows are needed. You learned everything you need on how to check vibes, social network, "emails emails emails", the whole thing. You're on the cutting edge, and there's important work to do. Who's gonna send the email about it?
6. ***It requires neither the patience nor discomfort of class struggle work. Instead, the "good feelings" are immediate.*** The payoff and gratification of "doing something" comes instantly, and cannot be taken away from you. You may have had to enter an uncomfortable conversation but for the most part, you can do a lot just talking to the people you know. In today's fast-moving world, our redemption and sleep at night comes to the lowest bidder on a first come, first serve basis.
7. While this might seem counterintuitive to rationale 5 above, ***much of the economy is already service oriented.*** Therefore, it is easy for some to reduce it to the same interchangeable parts, and the work is accessible, and people know to expect a grind. It is easier to get people to give their labor in a strategic way, than it is to get them to withhold it.

It's not as simple as it is to say it's "easy", as mutual-aid organizations do a lot of work. In fact, the point of it is sort of that there's always work to do. It's more accurate to consider the myriad of political reasons why this gets attention over organizing. Mutual aid projects are more well supported than fighting organizations because they alleviate conditions on an individual basis (even if done many times over) without challenging their source, and it also provides no challenge to "common sense" consciousness that pervades much of US liberalism.

One "March on the Boss" is worth 1000 "Food Not Bombs"

Spade, in the beginning of "Solidarity, Not Charity", gives an urgent warning to those who neglect mutual-aid:

Movement organizations could fail to provide any real relief for those whose lives are most endangered and leave newly scared and angry people to the most passive and ineffective forms of expressing their opinions.

Is mutual-aid now the least passive and most effective form of expressing your opinion? Also, is expressing our opinions the only channels we need to fly open? Why is it not an option to build an organization where people feel like they have a voice, where democracy lives and propels the organization forward, which actually favors direct action?

What do these things look like to me? Taking the problem to the boss. Taking the problem to the landlord. That's direct, not passive. That's effective. People with a common grievance come together and fight back and win every day. That's tenants coming together to fight deposit theft and rent hikes in their complexes. That's workers coming together to fight wage theft and speed-ups in their workplaces. That's public university students coming together to fight tuition hikes and cuts to ethnic and cultural studies in their schools.

You won't find any of this in Spade's paper. The bonds formed this way can never be formed in his mutual-aid model. This is because it's not even on the table in his vision. In his view, "Working and living inside hierarchies deskills us for dealing with conflict", therefore conflict is best not located and fought in our daily lives, between workers and bosses and tenants and landlords, but in the context of mutual-aid.

...

There is a liberal tendency within today's anarchism that favors amorphous movements over the kind of long-term organization building that poor and working class people need, such as member-run independent unions or political organizations. There is a lot of emphasis on service and consciousness raising with symbolic actions and protest militancy, with some good ideas mixed in. Of course, I think organizations need childcare infrastructure, and things like rapid response systems for ICE raids are great as well. However, there is an allergy to organization building that has been plaguing anarchism since the 90's. The prescription is to look inward, to affinity groups, to people you trust only because you have the same ideas. Most (but not all) of the tactics in Spade's vision are completely consistent with the CrimethInc affinity group model. This is the same model that allowed for a dine-and-dash, calling for a Rent Strike everywhere early in the COVID-19 crisis, only to hear not a peep about the tenants movement months later.

Instead of actually grappling with the realities of friends and enemies, winning and losing, we have in its place grandiose delusions about "actually building new social relations that are more survivable" while my city is 6 feet underwater. Mutual-aid during Hurricane Harvey was phenomenal, but was also rife with conflict, opportunists, and just generally tragic experiences. Mutual-aid was so prevalent, whereas fighting organizations were nowhere to be found, what happened was people were left to fend for themselves, and the state called the bluff, evicting people at record-breaking rates. The role that mutual-aid actually played was contradictory and a mixed-bag at best. What we learned most from that experience is we cannot treat mutual-aid as some kind of silver bullet.

What we needed during Hurricane Harvey that wasn't there was any struggle against the forces which made our lives so fragile to begin with. There was no accountability and no taking back any of the wealth we created. What we needed was what we always needed, and the problems of poverty in Houston could not be resolved in Houston alone, nor does disaster present any special "opportunities", nor does it make organizing easier or change the rules around long-term building and fighting and winning.

To conclude, my prescription is actually not to pack up all the service work the left does. It is instead to be honest, to start building the kinds of fighting organizations the working class needs in the long run, and to think strategically about the role that service plays in our organizations, movements, and history. We can make the organizations of our future right now, and build the workplace organization that will someday be able to stop and bend entire economies to its will. We can build tenants' movements that won't stop until we have a world rent and landlords. These are where we can locate the kernels of "actually survivable relations" and they all begin in the here and now. We will have the mutual-aid and revolutionizing care work too, but we can't have a revolution without the organizations that build and fight at the places where capital is produced and reproduced. Every picket line needs reinforcement, every rent strike needs support, every comrade deserves care and aid. Instead of envisioning mutual-aid to contain the beginnings of a new world, we have to apply mutual aid to existing organizations that actually are.

Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season. It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year. It is today that we fit ourselves for the greater usefulness of tomorrow.

— W.E.B. DuBois⁶

⁶ The full text can be found at: <https://edist.ro/library/gus-breslauer-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-liberalism>

Why Break Windows

The attack is the most beautiful moment an anarchist can undertake. Feeling the adrenaline of rushing to a window with a rock in hand, or the moments before striking a cop with your fist. Planting the bomb, pulling the trigger, shouting FUCK THE POLICE! The attack is an experience unlike any other, one many of us desire to experience, and many of us have experienced. We get tingles and a rush of adrenaline just thinking about it. Picturing ourselves tossing the lit Molotov at a line of riot police is one of the most entertaining day dreams all of us have. Power alone in scandalous thoughts many in our own milieu have tried to extinguish. They tell us we can't blow up a social relationship, but time and time again we show them we had a hell of a time trying.

Anarchist attack is a tradition, and a foundational base of anarchy. Without the attack as the actualization of our desires and dreams, what are we but bitter Marxist begging the working class to follow us? Without the attack we are but mere political elites, constantly talking down to the slaves "below" us in hopes of them joining our ranks, by signing up for our Listserv or joining in our boring chants all about the "power" of the "working class." We are just sophisticated creatures who talk talk talk.

The attack serves as a reaction to the constant tension between those below and those above. Our declarations of hatred are a downtrodden reaction to the strengthening grip social order holds around our throats. The bomb is planted not to only to instigate a reaction, but to defend against initiated violence against us. Social and material grips on our self, locking the gate to our unique, declaring us as criminals and roaches to be crushed under the boots of state tyranny, capital exploitation, and sexual shame. So much power pressing us against the walls in hopes to keep us there, willingly working and slaving away to continue the death march to extinction for profit and power. Boots on our throats, hands on our necks, and knives to our crotches, and they wonder why we react!

But among this reaction, this tension, we still do the work of our enemies for them. Shaming other comrades, letting them rot in prison alone without love and support, letting liberals boss us around because we don't fit the criteria for their petty leadership. Selling out other comrades on ideological lines and dogmatic principles. Solidarity can feel dead at times, even at a moment when passion burns brightest.

At this point in history we have reached an interesting rock and a hard place with lines blurred between right and wrong, where the liberal fog of nonviolent "resistance" is but a facade fewer and fewer individuals are upholding. A time when Molotov cocktails have been thrown in America, Bristol anarchist showing their swiftness under stressful pressure and fear from the state. A time where it feels as if nihilist anarchism is growing in popularity. A time where Murray Bookchin's ideas have actually inspired a revolution. We are currently holding our breaths, humming before the tension reaches a boiling point. So, why break windows you ask? Simply put, why the fuck not? However, before we can answer why...

1: The Anarchist Tension

As a child, do you remember feeling tense, agitated when your parental figure ordered you around the house? Demanding you pick up the toys, to do your homework, and be respectful. Initiating this false facade of "legit" authority over your young and adventurous self? At the time, or currently depending on your age you felt that tension. That bubbling rage inside desiring to shout NO! So petty we think now, but is it petty or is it microcosmic?

In school, work, or out on the town we can see and feel this tension everywhere. When the school child refuses an order barked at to her solely because her skirt is “too short” and “distracts the boys.” When your boss demands you perform better because you “just look like you aren’t performing at your best.” When the cop pulls the gun on the black individual solely for walking where society doesn’t want them.

Tension is our conceptualization of the power produced between opposing forces, contradictory forces. Whiteness against Blackness, the state against the criminals, society against the individuals. Tension is how we describe the grasp of our throats by the boot and the pressure of conformity. Our own conceptualization of a bubbling force of againstness between us, and them. Some say look at the grey, but it is as black and white as a dichotomy can be. There is no middle ground with power, you have it or you don’t. You are the powerful being in charge, or you are the bitter and resentful slave below.

Recognition of ones social and material placement. An understanding that the weight is on our shoulders. Our daily interactions are upheld by this tension, as is the slave’s reaction. Confrontations on every street corner surround us, and hold dominion over our existence because that is what life is. A constant tension, a feeling of weakness.

But within this recognition, we find the difference between tension, and anarchist tension. The slave, the common worker, understands this relationship but accepts it with open arms. Opening the door to the unwanted guest out of a fear of repression and failure. Eager to please the ferocious monster, as it laughs. Selling their own child over to the beast to be sacrificed as they were, to become yet another common worker. To become yet another slave to drive the death march home to a decayed and destroyed earth, with only the faintest hint of nature left. This comrades, is what separates tension, from the anarchist tension.

The anarchist tension is not defined by the destructive and tyrannical relationship between the worker and the boss, rather it is defined by the bullet lodged into the bosses head as the worker runs in gleeful hurry to the nearest safehouse. The anarchist tension is defined not by the “checking of privilege” but the fist to the face of the obnoxious bro calling the sexy lad a faggot. The anarchist tension is not defined by unease of submission but the refusal and reaction against expected submission. The anarchist doesn’t stop at saying no, they continue until death.

2. The Anarchist Reaction

Like tension, there exists a difference between reaction against power, and the anarchist reaction against power. For the common slave a reaction is simply a venting of unease. Complaints amongst co-workers about how hyperbolic the boss presents themselves as. Woman in the club bathroom mocking the jockey dude bros who hit on them in the most asinine ways.

The reaction of the slave is merely a tension reliever that does not confront those with power head on, but rather directs rage into small pockets that ventilate the rage so they can continue another day of miserable existence.

A more modern and personal example of this would be the petition. Internet sites such as Change.org, or Whitehouse.gov contain the possibility to make a petition, and then attempt to make it viral for a week, in an attempt to garner as much gossip and supporters as possible. Then, when all is said and done, the petition and all talk of it disappears until a new petition takes its place, or a new social cause to get riled up about. Constantly shifting, but taking momentary pauses and going back to shopping working and general submission.

Another modern example would be the role of opinionated journalism sites that tout “social justice” as a meaningful concept such as Huffington Post, or Jezebel, or even Black Girl Dangerous. Posting article after article based around the hot new social issue effecting modern society and all of its inhabitants. Like petitions however, they are but minor ventings that simply proclaim a sense of againstness, but never actualize into one outside of social media. It should also be stated all of these sites feature ads, which generate revenue for these sites. This venting is not only useless, but it is commodified! Tired of racism and white supremacy? Read this article and oh, also generate us money based on your frustration!

And this is where the anarchist reaction diverges from the simple reaction. As anarchist, we take things further. We are radical, rebellious, iconoclastic, nihilistic individuals who’s only goal is the destruction of which destroys us. Capitalism, White Supremacy, Patriarchy, all of these apparatuses of domination that aim to control us, that expect us to submit. They are not met by a simple proclamation of againstness but a swift and decisive action that not only proclaims but shocks those in power. From the simple smashing of windows to the placement of a bomb or the robbing of the bank our actions are heard and felt rather than ignored and treated as everyday life.

As anarchist our reaction is not simply venting but constant and consistent anger and rage towards this society. Our anger isn’t centered and focused on minute details of specific apparatuses but against them in totality. Our anger isn’t brushes aside, it is fought back against with harsh repression. FBI raids, long prison sentences, infiltrating state agents. SO many resources are placed against us because of our reaction, not because of our positioning. Anyone can proclaim that they are against the police, but that is merely a reaction. We not only proclaim, but we act by smashing up the states vehicles and torching their offices, this is an anarchist reaction.

3. Why Break Windows?

Finally, to the point of this small zine; why break windows? As stated at the beginning this question has a very simple answer that doesn’t need entire pages to explain and justify. The smashing of a window is simply a microcosm of grander actions taken by other anarchist. Whether you are pro violence and nihilist terrorism, or if you are against it, we can all agree it is much grander than smashing a simple window. However, as anarchist grand is not the point of our rage. Whether we build a solidarity network to help those in our lives resist the control and abuse by tenets pulling sleazy tactics, or if we rob a bank to fund our revolutionary activities, we are all contributing to a simple idea that we are the creators of our experiences. Not society, not capitalism, not socially constructed systems of control like race or caste. In our own ways, we all fight back and it is important not only tactically, but emotionally to support and declare solidarity with acts that resist and fight back. We can critique, and boy we do, but we can also accept and praise.

So rather validate and justify window smashing, I would rather take a more risky route and attempt to convince you why you should the next opportunity you get.

The smashing of a window, like all acts of resistance, is as exciting as it is risky. The adrenaline of running up to a window and smacking it with a flag is an experience unlike those which we commonly experience. Telling a cop to fuck off is nothing compared to smashing his car’s window out! Tagging “Fuck gentrification” on the wall of that new coffee shop is nothing in comparison to smashing its windows out during a riot or a small and simple attack with friends! Smashing a window is the most intense form of attack and tension building you can do without facing too much legal repercussions. Smashing a window is also ridiculously easy.

A wise anarchist once told me in his poetic writings that freedom is not an achievable goal, rather a lived experience, that we feel when participating in clandestine and violent acts against the establishment. Tagging will make you feel free, smashing a window will make you feel free. Yelling FUCK THE POLICE with a crowd will make you feel free. Simple acts with no meaning, except the meaning that comes with the anarchist reaction and the anarchist tension.

Smashing windows is also a very popular, and very effective actualization of propaganda by the deed. I would not be writing this if it wasn't for an anarchist smashing a window in-front of me. How exciting and fun that looked! I kept hearing chants of "Anarchy now!" as well, so of course I went to google. Will smashing a window inspire everyone? Of course not! It will however, inspire someone.

Lastly, why not? Smashing windows largely take place in 3 possible situations. A riot, a street demo, or a night time action taken with comrades. Alternatively and most often, the act takes place when all three are combined. In all of these situations you are there because you are an anarchist, so make it an anarchist reaction! Turn the boring chants in loud decelerations and demands for freedom, then experience freedom and feel what it is like to resist and fight back as an individual, take power for yourself and throw the brick!

4. It Won't Change The World; But It Will Change Your Night!

The most common argument against smashing windows, really the only argument worth engaging, is that window smashing does nothing to advance the "anarchist cause/movement" and "only makes others hate you!" Let's take a look at the various forms this argument exist in.

1. It both does, and does not change things. Nobody is going to argue that smashing a window will incite a mass and global revolution where workers worldwide seize the means of production and finally abolish the state, absolutely nobody argues that, because that is not the point to breaking a window. Breaking a window is but an individual expression, an anarchist reaction. Breaking a window also separates the leftist charade, a.k.a. street parade, from the riot. Boring chants, boring leaders giving boring talks, boring walking in circles doing nothing but holding a sign. Until, that is, a window is smashed. Dumpsters being thrown into the street and set on fire, projectiles being thrown at cops. A tone and aura of againstness and rage culminating into the most exciting moment of your boring life. Smashing a window is not a logistical choice to strategically advance a movement, but an individual decision to react and fight back and finally feel a sliver of freedom.
2. Smashing windows does not hurt workers, and if they do, then shouldn't that business be smashed and torched? A common argument presented is that when you smash a window, workers pay for it. This is partly true, as workers pay for anything anyone does to or with the business, because they are workers. If a janitor has to clean up a broken window, is that not already part of their job? Workers are defined by their business and the roles in place, which is already a damaging relationship anarchists are against. So why do we pretend we are saving them when we choose not to/stop someone from smashing a window? The only worker you are protecting is yourself to finally feel good about something you did and pretend as if you are some saviour. Enough with this anarchist! Lastly, let's say the worker's pay is docked because of a smashed window. Why don't we organize a solidarity network and get that pay back? Hit them on multiple fronts, not discourage action for the sake of presentation.
3. Finally, it isn't about looking good. We are not politicians, we do not have to care about being presentable or respectable. We are anarchist for crying out loud! We state within our name

alone that we are against all this society stands for, is it any wonder why they shame us? As if your union strikes are as well liked as teenage rioters. Both are presented as parasitic scum, damaging the core of this society. Both are presented as something to not follow and join in on, yet for some reason people do anyways. Why is that? Because either people will like us, or they will not. Treating ourselves like show dogs, making sure all the hair is trimmed and fluffy and cuddly, will not change a goddamn thing because at the end of the day we are still a show dog who's only reason for existence is to garner money for their owner.

Is it valid to not personally partake or agree with window smashing? Of course, but to so publicly shame and harass those who do? As if your existence is any more relevant?

5. Whatever You Do, Get Away With It.

The fear of repression is the states strongest enemy, so, how do we as anarchist combat this? Simple. BE SMART. Getting away with smashing a window is incredibly easy, so here are a few tips.

1. Wear gloves. Crime shows are fiction. They cannot simply get your prints from a cell phone app. Prints, in reality, are actually quit difficult to gain, however one should still take precaution. It is obvious why if you are already in the system from prior arrest, but if you are not here is something to remember. The state recognizes patterns extremely well. If finger prints are reoccurring not only are they stored in the database, but are linked together. If you do get caught, well there is the evidence. How to avoid this? WEAR GLOVES. Really any gloves will do. You can buy black gloves for a dollar at the dollar tree for example, or find them anywhere in a cheap store. Also, garden gloves will hide your prints. Lastly, for those extra cautious, wear latex gloves underneath your gloves.
2. Cameras are everywhere, hide your fucking face. The eyes and forehead, as well as the hair of an individual are not only the most recognizable features of the face, but when linked together make the state yell "Gotcha!" It's very easy to hide all of this. WEAR ALL BLACK AND BLOC UP. Simple guides are everywhere, and if nervous about NSA spying, simply google "how to look like a ninja."
3. No time is better than now, but safety first. As important as it is to act and react, it is also just as important to not do so blatantly in front of a cop, or in the middle of a quit time around a bunch of peace police. Some will argue, fuck that do it whenever and I agree with this position, but I am me and they are themselves. Are you willing to face time in a cell? It's okay if you aren't, but take care of yourself and realize you could get caught.
4. Don't brag about it. It's awesome, exciting, fun, and something you really want to share with others but for the love of god keep your mouth shut because it will get you caught. In closing, smashing a window is fun but like all acts of resistance it has its own danger. I personally argue to not worry about getting caught, and merely take your rage with you in prison and beyond. However, I am me and my own individual being. We are anarchist, not Marxist. You make your own decisions. Are you all about getting away with it, or are you uncaring? Neither determine how much of an anarchist you are, rather they determine who you are and what is important to you and that is okay. Smashing a window won't change the world, nor will it inspire a thousand new window smashers. It will make you feel a sliver of freedom and give you a memory worth keeping to keep yourself inspired and angry. It will grant you experience, knowledge, and excitement. It will give you something to be proud and happy about amongst the constant depression we all face about how miserable this world is. So, when asked why smash a window, answer back with... WHY THE FUCK NOT?

get going!

The world is ablaze, the crisis is now.

What are you waiting for?

It is our duty to fight for our freedom!

It is our duty to win!

**We must *love each other*
and *support each other!***

We have *nothing* to lose but our chains!

— Assata Shakur

**don't wait for a
revolution that will
never come!**

find each other!

build networks of mutual aid!

spread anarchy like rain on the sidewalk!

there is only today.

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