

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

find each other!
build networks of mutual aid!
spread anarchy like rainwater spreads on the sidewalk!

there is only today.

**towards
no
future!**

**a collection for
understanding
the present**

towards no future!

the revolution always comes tomorrow

climate change is irreversible and only getting worse. working 40 hours a week isn't enough to survive. corporations--especially companies like Facebook or Amazon---are increasingly essential to our lives. fascists roam the streets attacking our unhoused neighbors. and now, in the middle of an ever worsening global pandemic, we're expected to pretend that everything is back to as it was in February 2020. **what a time to be alive!**

feel overwhelmed? it's okay, i was too.

this collection of materials from edist.ro exists to help you understand this particular moment:

- *Desert* argues that the world cannot and will not be saved by some social-anarchist revolution. Things are likely going to get worse. But when we cast away our illusions about the future we can recognize the enormous possibilities of the present.¹
- *Why I left the PSL...* tells us that the possibilities of the present can only be realized by us. Not some organization or central committee. It's on us.
- *A Critique of Performative Politics & Symbolic Protest* is a reminder that meaningful direct action is action that disrupts existing systems of oppression.
- *Signals of Disorder* is meant to inspire you to go steal (or buy, if you must) a nice permanent marker and walk around your city for tactical urban beautification.
- *Towards Insurrection* reviews the role anarchists played in the 2020 Uprising and how we can be more effective in the future
- *After the Crest* is a zine from the post-Occupy Wall Street era with lessons learned for moving forward after a promising moment of protest has passed.²

writing this all in late summer 2021, we all know that the 2020 moment has passed. now is our time to build infrastructure (things like edist.ro itself!), form networks of mutual aid, and spread anarchy, like rainwater running into every crack in the sidewalk.

"find each other" is more than just a section in *The Coming Insurrection* but our most important task in this anxious moment. don't wait for a revolution that isn't coming!

only we can save us. only we can keep us safe.

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

² the full text can be found at <https://edist.ro/library/crimethinc-after-the-crest>

Desert

Forward!

Something haunts many activists, anarchists, environmentalists, many of my friends. It haunted me. Much of our subcultures tell us it's not there, that we can't see it, hear it. Our best wishes for the world tell us not to see it. But for many, despite their best efforts — carrying on with the normal activism, the movement building, living both according to and as an expression of their ethics — despite all this, the spectre gains form. The faint image grows more solid, more unavoidable, until the ghost is staring one in the face. And like many monsters of past tales, when its gaze is met — people freeze. Become unable to move. Give up hope; become disillusioned and inactive. This malaise, freezing, not only slows 'activist workload', but I have seen it affect every facet of many of my friends' lives.

The spectre that many try not to see is a simple realisation — the world will not be 'saved'. Global anarchist revolution is not going to happen. Global climate change is now unstoppable. We are not going to see the worldwide end to civilisation/capitalism/patriarchy/authority. It's not going to happen any time soon. It's unlikely to happen ever. The world will not be 'saved'. Not by activists, not by mass movements, not by charities and not by an insurgent global proletariat. The world will not be 'saved'. This realisation hurts people. They don't want it to be true! But it probably is.

These realisations, this abandonment of illusions should not become disabling. Yet if one believes that it's all or nothing, then there is a problem. Many friends have 'dropped out' of the 'movement' whilst others have remained in old patterns but with a sadness and cynicism which signals a feeling of futility. Some hover around scenes critiquing all, but living and fighting little.

"It's not the despair — I can handle the despair. It's the hope I can't handle."³

The hope of a Big Happy Ending, hurts people; sets the stage for the pain felt when they become disillusioned. Because, truly, who amongst us now really believes? How many have been burnt up by the effort needed to reconcile a fundamentally religious faith in the positive transformation of the world with the reality of life all around us? Yet to be disillusioned — with global revolution/with our capacity to stop climate change — should not alter our anarchist nature, or the love of nature we feel as anarchists. There are many possibilities for liberty and wildness still.

³ No, not Derrick Jensen but John Cleese! — *Clockwise*. Film. Christopher Morahan. 1986; London, Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment.

What are some of these possibilities and how can we live them? What could it mean to be an anarchist, an environmentalist, when global revolution and world-wide social/eco sustainability are not the aim? What objectives, what plans, what lives, what adventures are there when the illusions are set aside and we walk into the world not disabled by disillusionment but unburdened by it?

No (Global) Future

Religious myths: progress, global capitalism, global revolution, global collapse

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-clericalism 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.”⁴ 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*⁵ of a global anarchist future. However the idea of a global movement, confronting a global present and

⁴ John Gray, *All Queda and What It Means to Be Modern* (London: The New Press, 2003), p. 7.

⁵ While I know no-one personally who professes this today, Anarchism as the telos of human history is still present in our propaganda. As late as 2006 in what I would say is the most accessible and by far the most visually beautiful introductory book to Anarchy it is stated: “that the general direction of human history was continually towards liberty, in spite of anything that authority imposed, and that further progress was inevitable... Society is naturally developing to secure a life of well being for all, in which collective productivity will be put to collective use — Anarchism.” — Clifford Harper referring approvingly to Peter Kropotkin’s ‘Scientific basis for Anarchism’, in, Clifford Harper, *Anarchy: A Graphic Guide* (London: Camden Press, 1987), p. 59.

The chief goal of repression is to open the fault lines within the targeted social body, isolating it and forcing it into a reactive position. Ideally, we should respond to repression in ways that establish new connections and position us for new offensives.

Hold your ground.

How do we transition into other forms of connection when the exceptional circumstances that drew us together are over? The networks that coalesce effortlessly during the high point of momentum rarely survive. While new events were unfolding, there was an obvious reward for setting differences aside and interrupting routines to converge. Afterwards, the large groups that formed slowly break down into smaller ones, while smaller groups often vanish altogether. The reshuffling of allegiances that takes place during this period is vital, but it's equally vital not to lose each other in the shuffle.

During the crest of a movement, participants often take for granted that it will leave them at a higher plateau when it is over. But this is hardly guaranteed. This may be the most important question facing us as we approach the next wave of struggles: how do we gain and hold ground? Political parties can measure their effectiveness according to how many new recruits they retain, but anarchists must conceive of success differently.

In the end, it isn't just organizations with contact lists that will remain after the crest, but above all new questions, new practices, new points of reference for how people can stand up for themselves. Passing these memories along to the next generation is one of the most important things we can do.

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 utopian⁶ 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, then⁷, or ever⁸, 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.

Amidst the jolly unreality of this period of 'Global Resistance' some could get really carried away: "We have no interest in reforming the World Bank or the IMF; we want it abolished as part of an international anarchist revolution."⁹ Such statements are understandable if written in the drunk-like exuberance one can sometimes feel on having defeated the police, but they are found more commonly. The self-description of one Anarchist

⁶ The idea of the millennium implicit in the 'end of history' affects the rulers as well as the ruled.

⁷ Though the 'global' day of action that arguably kicked off this period, J18 1999, was named by Reclaim the Streets (London) as the 'Carnival against Capital', there is little evidence that most who participated elsewhere (especially outside the West) saw themselves as anti-capitalist, either then or in the subsequent period. Peoples Global Action — the main network that then linked anarchists/activist groups in the West to organisations in the Majority World — was never really that global and its scale was often exaggerated.

⁸ As the absence of any global movement against capitalism is so obvious, those with a desire to believe in one have to go to impressive mental lengths. Ignoring the grand-standing of the authoritarian left, the main technique in our circles is to think of all the diffuse struggles and moments of personal and collective resistance implicit in class struggle, and then join them together by naming them: communism, the movement of movements, the multitude — take your pick. Fundamentally this is an example of magical thinking, by categorising and naming the diffuse and invisible it becomes real. The thing can then be given attributes and desires can be projected on to it — unsurprisingly often exactly the same desires the imaginer would like to see in a movement which expressed their politics. That these incidents of struggle might be being carried out by people with fundamentally different beliefs, desires and needs is unimportant, for it is the imaginary construct that matters, not its actual content.

⁹ Andrew Flood, 'S26 in Ireland and the Origins of the Anti-capitalist movement', *Workers Solidarity Movement (Ireland)*, 13th September 2000.

Federation reads: "As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and worldwide".¹⁰

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

I love us, there's so much we can do and be, but there are limits

Anarchists are growing in number. Groups and counter-cultures are appearing in countries where there were few, or no, social movement anarchists¹¹ previously. Yet an honest appraisal of our strengths and prospects, and those of the communities and classes we are part of, would show clearly that we are not growing "the new society in the shell of the old"¹², that someday will liberate the world in a moment of rupture. The earth has a lot of places with a lot of people; a reality that can increasingly easily get lost in the web-encapsulated global (activist) village.¹³ To want to rid the world of capitalist social relations, or further still civilisation, is one thing. To be capable of doing so is something else entirely. We are not everywhere — we are rare.

Actions, circles of friends, social centres, urban guerrilla cells, magazine editorial groups, eco-warriors, housing co-ops, students, refugees, arsonists, parents, squats, scientists, peasants, strikers, teachers, land based communes, musicians, tribespeople, street gangs, loving insurgents and so, so much else. Anarchists can be wonderful. We can have beauty, and self-possessed power and possibility in buckets. We cannot, however, remake the entire world; there are not enough of us, and never will be.

Some may argue that a global libertarian revolution can succeed without being made, or significantly aided, by overt anarchists so 'our' present numbers and resources are null

¹⁰ UK Anarchist Federation, *Resistance*, May 2009, p. 4. These quotes are just illustrations — you could find many similar ones yourself. Don't take it as a dig if you are allied to these organisations/tendencies. Many of you I know are doing great stuff and are lovely people who I have shared laughs and struggles with.

¹¹ I use the phrase, 'social movement anarchists', to mean those of us who self-label as anarchists, and feel allied somewhat, to largely western originated, anarchist traditions. Many peoples and individuals have, and do, live anarchist/acephalous lives, without any link to our relatively modern social movements. I write about these other anarchists in Chapter 4 — African Roads to Anarchy

¹² Statements that refer to building or growing the new society in the shell of the old are relatively common in libertarian writing. Though the concept predates it, the origin of these phrases is thought to be the century old preamble of the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World: "By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

¹³ Sure the web connects the globe, but most of us end up hearing mainly people just like ourselves: "We end up within these filter bubbles... where we see the people we already know and the people who are similar to the people we already know. And we tend not to see the wider picture." Ethan Zuckerman, *Listening to Global Voices*, TED, (www.ted.com).

Save energy for the fallout.

All of these problems are often intensified by the explosion of discord that usually follows a movement's demise. Once it is clear that a movement is definitively over, all the conflicts that the participants have been putting off come to the fore, for there is no longer any incentive to keep them under the rug. Suppressed resentments and ideological differences surface, along with serious allegations about abuse of power and violations of consent. Learning from these conflicts is an essential part of the process that prepares the way for future movements: for example, contemporary anarchism is descended in part from the feminist backlash that followed the New Left movements of the 1960s. But participants rarely think to save energy for this phase, and it can feel like thankless work, since the "action" is ostensibly over.

It was a few nights before the eviction of the Occupy Philly encampment, and we were holding a General Assembly to decide what to do. Tensions were running high between the residents of the camp, who were primarily homeless, and those who participated chiefly in meetings and working groups. That night, a homeless man interrupted the GA to accuse several of those in leadership positions of being in league with the police, being racist, and planning to sell out the homeless. The facilitator tried to ignore the disruption, but the angry man drowned him out and eventually riled up a few more people who began shouting too. In this moment of chaos and heightened emotion, we had a unique opportunity. We could have shifted our focus from the threat that the government wanted us to react to, instead using that GA to finally address the tensions in our own group in hopes of building a force that could survive into the next phase of struggle. Instead, the facilitator tried to restore order by directing us to "break into small groups and discuss what 'respect' means." My heart sank. Our shared energy was explosive; we needed to channel it, not suppress it.

That was the last time I saw many of the comrades I'd befriended over the preceding months. The eviction wasn't the greatest threat we faced after all.

Repression hits hardest at the end.

Government repression usually does not hit in full force until after a movement has died down. It is most convenient for the state to attack people when their support networks have collapsed and their attention is elsewhere. Operation Backfire struck years after the high point of Earth Liberation Front momentum, when many of the participants had moved on and the communities that had supported them had disintegrated. Similarly, the authorities waited until May 2012 to strike back at Occupy with a series of entrapment cases.

Indeed, during a declining phase, it may be important to resist the tendency to escalate. When the SHAC campaign ran aground, Root Force set out to apply the same strategy against a much bigger target—scaling up from a single animal testing corporation to the major infrastructural projects underlying transnational capitalism. A SHAC-style campaign targeting a smaller corporation might have succeeded, empowering a new generation to go on applying the strategy, but Root Force never even got off the ground. Quit while you're ahead.

The declining phase of a movement can be a dangerous time. Often, popular support has died down and the forces of repression have regained their footing, but the participants still have high hopes and feel a sense of urgency. Sometimes it's best to shift focus before something really debilitating occurs.

Yet quitting while you're ahead is complicated. If the connections that have been made are premised on collective action, it can be difficult to retain these without staying in the streets together.

Months after Occupy Oakland was definitively over, police brutally attacked an anarchist march against Columbus Day, making several arrests and pressing felony charges. It is an open question whether this showed that anarchists had overextended themselves, but after a payback action the following night in Oakland, street activity in the Bay Area died down for almost a year. On the other hand, after the UK student movement died down, an explosion of riots in August 2011 suggested that many of the underclass participants felt abandoned by the withdrawal of their former activist allies from street action. It is possible that, had the movement continued in some form, the riots might have turned out differently—as a point of departure for another wave of collective struggle, rather than the desperate act of a marginalized population rising ruinously against society itself. Be prepared for burnout and depression.

After the crest, when the euphoria is over, many participants will experience depression. Since the events that regularly brought them together have ceased, they are isolated and more vulnerable. Others may veer into addiction: substance use can be a way to maintain intimacy with each other and with danger itself when there is no more fire in the streets. The simple pleasures with which people celebrated their victories can expand to fill the space left by the receding tide of events, becoming self-destructive. This is another reason to establish new venues to maintain camaraderie and connection when the window of possibility is closing.

and void. While it's a given that social crises and revolt are regular occurrences in societies based on class warfare; to put ones faith in the 'revolutionary impulse of the proletariat' is a theory approximate to saying 'It'll be alright on the night.'

There is unfortunately little evidence from history that the working class — never mind anyone else — is intrinsically predisposed to libertarian or ecological revolution. Thousands of years of authoritarian socialisation favour the jackboot... ¹⁴

Neither we, nor anyone else, can create a libertarian and ecological global future society by expanding social movements. Further, there is no reason to think that in the absence of such a vast expansion, a global social transformation congruent with our desires will ever happen. As anarchists we are not the seed of *the* future society in the shell of the old, but merely one of many elements from which the future is forming. That's ok; when faced with such scale and complexity, there is a value in non-servile humility — even for insurgents.

To give up hope for global anarchist revolution is not to resign oneself to anarchy remaining an eternal protest. Seaweed puts it well:

Revolution is not everywhere or nowhere. Any bioregion can be liberated through a succession of events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it, mostly as the grip of civilisation in that area weakens through its own volition or through the efforts of its inhabitants... Civilisation didn't succeed everywhere at once, and so it's undoing might only occur to varying degrees in different places at different times. ¹⁵

Even if an area is seemingly fully under the control of authority there are always places to go, to live in, to love in and to resist from. And we can extend those spaces. The global situation may seem beyond us, but the local never is. As anarchists we are neither entirely powerless nor potentially omnipotent, thankfully.

From anti-globalisation to climate change

For many of us, when the turn of the century anti-globalisation surge lost its momentum, ¹⁶ the global thinking, and religious optimism went with it. However, in the last few years,

¹⁴ Down with Empire, Up with Spring! (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 74.

¹⁵ Seaweed, Land and Liberty: Toward an organically self-organized subsistence movement, ('Occupied Isles of British Columbia': Self Published, 2002). Available online: (www.anti-politics.net/distro).

¹⁶ We started to be defeated on the streets by the police, bored by the routine, infiltrated by the left, intimidated by lengthy prison sentences, overshadowed by Islamist insurgency and Western wars of invasion, watered down by immersion in the anti-war movement and then weakened by its failure. Some key struggles were on some levels won (GM Terminator technology stalled and WTO negotiations imploded), many migrated to more advantageous (or dramatic) terrains of struggle, some battles moved beyond what was generally acceptable. Many consolidated locally and/or abandoned illusions about the mass and the spectacular. Myriad 'non-political' issues of everyday life — kids, generational shift, depression, death and employment — should also not be underestimated.

an attempt to resurrect the ‘global movement’ appeared amongst us once again — this time around climate change.

The mobilisation at the Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference was billed by many as the next Seattle¹⁷ and some groups have claimed they are “building a global movement to solve the climate crisis.”¹⁸ Greenpeace, for instance, says “climate change is a global public ‘bad’. To solve it requires global collective action... We have no alternative but to build a global grassroots movement, move politicians forward, and force corporations and banks to change direction.”¹⁹ I’ll take it as a given that you the reader understand the naive unreality of such lobby groups but it’s worth looking at those at the less institutionalised end of climate change campaigning.

There are three main tendencies, and sometimes folk wander from one to another. Firstly, there are those that have similar beliefs to Greenpeace — i.e. ‘direct action’ as an awareness raising/lobbying strategy. Secondly, there are those who use the discourse around climate change to aid mobilisation in local campaigns which, though unlikely to have any effect on climate change, at least have practical and sometimes achievable objectives in mind i.e. halting the destruction of an ecosystem/the worsening wellbeing²⁰ of a community or simply increasing self-sufficiency.²¹ Thirdly, there are those nostalgic anti-capitalists who envision ‘climate justice’ as a metamorphosis of the imagined “alter-globalisation movement”²² (notice it’s increasingly no longer anti-globalisation). An anonymous writer described the last tendency well:

[When activists] try to convince us that it’s the ‘last chance to save the earth’... it’s because they’re trying to build social movements... There is a growing and disturbing trend that has been lingering around radical circles over the last few years, based on the idea that blind positivity can lead to interesting and unexpected successes. Michael Hardt and Tony Negri’s books have provided some of the theoretical bases for this, and it has been taken up by some who want to unite the masses under the banner of precarity, organise

¹⁷ Apart from being hopelessly USA-centric this was surely another example of fundamentally magical thinking. One wonders if an equation that concluded Copenhagen = Seattle would have been as popular if COP 15 had occurred near the sixth anniversary of Seattle rather than the numerically elegant ten year anniversary.

¹⁸ The 10.10.10 day organised by 350.org saw 1600+ events in 135 countries, mostly of the ritualistic tree planting/light bulb changing variety though also appropriately with the option of ‘faith work’.

¹⁹ John Sauven — Executive Director of Greenpeace UK, ‘Global collective action is the key to solving climate change’, *Guardian*, 16 February 2010, p. 33.

²⁰ See the sadly now evicted Mainshill Solidarity Camp or the successful Climate Camp linked campaign against the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

²¹ Some of the groups allied to Transition Towns would be the most obvious example, at least in the British Isles.

²² See Tadzio Muller and Ben Trott, *How to Institutionalise a Swarm?* (www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/?p=412).

Don’t regress to outmoded strategies.

Sometimes, after a new strategy that is attuned to the present context has created new momentum, there is a tendency to revert to previous approaches that have long ceased working. When people with little prior experience converge in a movement, they sometimes demand guidance from those who have a longer history of involvement; more often, it is the veterans themselves who demand to provide this guidance. Unfortunately, longtime activists frequently bring in old tactics and strategies, using the new opportunity to resume the defeated projects of the past.

For example, fourteen years ago, worldwide summit-hopping offered a way to exert transnational leverage against capitalist globalization, offering a model to replace the local and national labor organizing that had been outflanked by the international mobility of corporations. Yet when labor activists got involved, they criticized summit-hoppers for running around the world rather than organizing locally the old-fashioned way. Likewise, Occupy got off the ground because it offered a new model for an increasingly precarious population to stand up for itself without stable economic positions from which to mobilize. But again, old-fashioned labor activists saw this new movement only as a potential pool of bodies to support union struggles, and channeled its momentum into easily coopted dead ends.

In the wake of every movement, we should study what its successes and failures show about our current context, while recognizing that by the time we can make use of those lessons the situation will have changed once more. Beware of rising expectations.

When a movement is at its high point, it becomes possible to act on a scale previously unimaginable. This can be debilitating afterwards, when the range of possibility contracts again and the participants are no longer inspired by the tactics they engaged in before the crest. One way to preserve momentum past the end of a movement is to go on setting attainable intermediate goals and affirming even the humblest efforts toward them.

The trajectory of green anarchist struggles in Oregon at the turn of the last century offers a dramatic example of this kind of inflation. At the beginning, the goals were small and concrete: protect a specific tree or a specific stretch of forest. After the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, the goals of green anarchists in the region hypertrophied until they reached a tactical impasse. When your immediate objective is to “take down industrial civilization,” just about anything you can do is going to feel pointless.

Push the envelope.

What is still possible once the horizon has been circumscribed? In a dying movement, one can still push the envelope, setting new precedents for the future so subsequent struggles will be able to imagine going further. This is a good reason not to avoid ideological clashes indefinitely; in order to legitimize the tactics that will be needed in the future, one often has to begin by acting outside the prevailing consensus.

For example, at the conclusion of November 2, 2011, Occupy Oakland participants controversially attempted to take over a building. This provoked a great deal of backlash, but it set a precedent for a series of building occupations that enabled Occupy to begin to challenge the sanctity of private property during its long waning phase—giving Occupy a much more radical legacy than it would otherwise have had. One year's breakthroughs are the next year's limitations.²⁶

During the burgeoning stage of a movement, participants often become fixated on certain tactics. There is a tendency to try to repeat one's most recent successes; in the long run, this can only produce conservatism and diminishing returns. Diminishing returns are still returns, of course, and a tactic that is no longer effective in its original context may offer a great deal of potential in another setting—witness the occupation of Taksim Square in June 2013, when no one in the US could imagine occupying anything ever again. But tactics and rhetoric eventually become used up. Once no one expects anything new from them, the same slogans and strategies that generated so much momentum become obstacles.

As soon as Occupy is in the news, anyone who had an occupation in mind had better hurry to carry it out before the window of opportunity has closed and nobody wants to occupy anything at all. In a comic example of this tendency to fixate on certain tactics, after Occupy Oakland was evicted, Occupy Wall Street mailed a large number of tents across the country as a gesture of support. These tents merely took up storage space over the following months as the struggle in Oakland reached its conclusion on other terrain.

²⁶ While it does encourage us to think of the ways that power is diffuse, not simply a top-down imposition that we suffer passively, the identification of "society" as the enemy reveals a disturbing ignorance as to what exactly the State forcibly disintegrated and reconstitutes with the bonds of nationalism and the Spectacle. It is this same unknown that palpably coalesces in the space of the riot and of struggle more generally. Margaret Thatcher's assertion that society does not exist, only the Market, was less an observation than the mission statement of capitalism.

migrants and mobilise for summits. For many coming from the left wing tradition, it has been the message of hope that they were wanting to hear, at a time when their ideologies seemed more moribund than ever.

...Theoreticians who should understand capitalism well enough to know better, write that a global basic income or free movement for all is an achievable goal. They may not believe it themselves, but ostensibly want to inspire others to believe in it, claiming that the 'moments of excess' generated by such Utopian dreams will give rise to potent movements for change. Climate change... is certainly a suitable testing ground for the politics of manufactured hope, being so alienated from our actual everyday realities. But whilst the new movement politicians — facilitators not dictators — watch their movements grow, there is still a case for living in the real world.²³

Outside the convention centres the new stars appear more and more like those within. Inside and out the message is that a global future is winnable if only we organise. However, the reality both within ecosystems generally and peoples stomachs in particular is that there is no global singular future²⁴ and no imaginary community, either of states or 'multitudes' (or both a la Cochabamba)²⁵ can stop climate change.

Given our obvious inability to re-make the entire world the way we might like it to be, some replace the myth of 'global revolution' with a belief in imminent 'global collapse' — these days usually some mix of climate change and peak oil. As we shall see later (both in the next chapters and our future years) global heating will severely challenge civilisation in some areas and probably vanquish it in others. Yet in some regions it will likely open up possibilities for the spread of civilisations rule. Some lands may remain (relatively) temperate — climatically and socially. As for civilisation, so for anarchy and anarchists — severely challenged, sometimes vanquished; possibilities for liberty and wildness opening up, possibilities for liberty and wildness closing. The unevenness of the present will be made more so. There is no global future.

²³ *You are Now Fucked*, Natterjack Press, (www.natterjackpress.co.uk/menu/downloads.php). The title refers to a Climate Camp leaflet the front cover of which was simply the text "You are Not Fucked".

²⁴ Unless of course climate change reaches one of the truly End Times possibilities outlined well by Mark Lynas in his description of the end-Permian wipeout. This is a possibility... Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* (London: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 243.

²⁵ The 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth was called for and hosted by the Bolivian Government. For a good anarchist critique see: Dariush Sokolov, 'Cochabamba: Beyond the Complex — Anarchist Pride', *Shift Magazine* No. 9, 2010. A far more pro — if still somewhat questioning — approach to the conference can be found in: Building Bridges Collective, *Space for Movement? Reflections from Bolivia on climate justice, social movements and the state* (Bristol: Self-published, 2010).

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

tremendous new potential—when in fact that window of possibility has already begun to close. This confusion makes it difficult to know when it is the right time to shift gears to a new strategy.

We were outside at a café in downtown Oakland a couple months later. I was asking what my friends thought the prospects were for the future. “Things will pick up again when spring arrives,” they assured me.

At first I believed them. Wasn’t everyone saying the same thing all around the country? Then it hit me: we were sitting there in the sunshine, wearing t-shirts, in the city that had seen the most intense action of the whole Occupy movement. If there wasn’t another occupation there already, it wasn’t coming back.

Keep the window of possibility open while you can; if you have to split, split on your own terms.

Movements usually begin with an explosion of uncertainty and potential. So long as the limits are unclear, a wide range of participants have cause to get involved, while the authorities must hold back, unsure of the consequences of repression. How do we keep this window of possibility open as long as possible without sidestepping real disagreements? (Think of Occupy Wall Street when it first got off the ground and all manner of radical and reactionary tendencies mingled within it.) Is it better to postpone clashes over ideological issues—such as nonviolence versus diversity of tactics—or to precipitate them? (Think of the controversial black bloc in Occupy Oakland on November 2, 2011.)

One way to approach this challenge is to try to clarify the issues at stake without drawing fixed lines of political identity in the process. As soon as a tactical or ideological disagreement is understood a conflict between distinct social bodies, the horizon begins to close. The moment of potential depends on the fluidity of the movement, the circulation of ideas outside their usual domains, the emergence of new social configurations, and the openness of individual participants to personal transformation. The entrenchment of fixed camps undermines all of these.

This problem is further complicated by the fact that the top priority of the authorities is always to divide movements—often along the same lines that the participants themselves wish to divide. It may be best to try not to precipitate any permanent breaks until the horizon of possibility has closed, then make sure that the lines are drawn on your own terms, not the terms of the authorities or their unwitting liberal stooges.

As all movements inevitably reach limits, it is pointless to bewail their passing—as if they would go on growing indefinitely if only the participants were *strategic enough*. If we presume the goal of any tactic is always to maintain the momentum of a particular movement, we will never be able to do more than react quixotically against the inexorable passing of time. Rather than struggling to stave off dissolution, we should act with an eye to the future.

This could mean consolidating the connections that have developed during the movement, or being sure to go out with a bang to inspire future movements, or revealing the internal contradictions that the movement never solved. Perhaps, once a movement has reached its limits, the most important thing to do in the waning phase is to point to what a future movement would have to do to transcend those limits.

We had occupied the building for almost 24 hours, and we were starting to imagine that we could somehow hold onto it. I was about to go out for supplies to fortify the place when something caught my eye. There in the dust of the abandoned garage was a hood ornament from a car that hadn't been manufactured in 40 years. I reached down to pick it up, then hesitated: I could always look at it later. On impulse, I took it anyway. A half hour later, a SWAT squad surrounded the building for blocks in every direction. We never recovered any of the things we built or brought there. Over a hundred of us met, danced, and slept in that building, outside the bounds of anything we'd previously been able to imagine in our little town, and that little hood ornament is all I have to show it happened.

When I visited my friends in the Bay Area the following week, they were in the same state of elation I had been when I left the building: "We walk around and people see us and call out OCC-U-PY! Things are just going to grow and keep on growing!"

Keep perspective.

During a crescendo of social struggle, it can be difficult to maintain perspective; some things seem central yet prove transitory, while other things fall by the wayside that afterwards turn out to have been pivotal. Often, we miss opportunities to foster long-term connections, taking each other for granted in the urgency of responding to immediate events. Afterwards, when the moment has passed, we don't know how to find each other—or we have no reason to, having burned our bridges in high-stress situations. What is really important, the tactical success of a particular action, or the strength of the relationships that come out of it?

Likewise, it is rarely easy to tell where you are in the trajectory of events. At the beginning, when the window of possibility is wide open, it is unclear how far things can go; often, anarchists wait to get involved until others have already determined the character of the movement. Later, at the high point, it can seem that the participants are at the threshold of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the high point, it seems like it will go on forever. You feel invincible, unstoppable. Then the crash comes: court cases, disintegration, depression.

Once you go through this several times, the rhythm becomes familiar. It becomes possible to recognize these upheavals as the heartbeat of something greater than any single movement.

Over the past six years, cities around the world have seen peaks of struggle: Athens, London, Barcelona, Cairo, Oakland, Montréal, Istanbul. A decade ago, anarchists would converge from around the world to participate in a single summit protest. Now many have participated in months-long upheavals in their own cities, and more surely loom ahead.

But what do we do after the crest? If a single upheaval won’t bring down capitalism, we have to ask what matters about these high points—what we hope to get out of them, how they figure in our long-term vision, and how to make the most of the waning period that follows them. This is especially pressing today, when we can be sure that there are more upheavals on the way.

To this end, we have organized a dialogue with anarchists in some of the cities that have seen these climaxes of conflict, including Oakland, Barcelona, and Montréal. This is the first in a series of reflections drawn from those discussions.

Practically all of the participants in these discussions independently reported that it was really hard for them to formulate their thoughts: “I don’t know why, but whenever I sit down to work on it, I get depressed.” This suggests a broader problem. Many anarchists depend on a triumphalist narrative, in which we have to go from victory to victory to have anything to talk about. But movements, too, have natural life cycles. They inevitably peak and die down. If our strategies are premised on endless growth, we are setting ourselves up for inevitable failure. That goes double for the narratives that determine our morale.

Movement – A mysterious social phenomenon that aspires to growth yet, when observed, always appears to be in decline.

When social change is gathering momentum, it is protean and thus invisible; only when it stabilizes as a fixed quantity is it possible to affix a label to it, and from that moment on it can only decompose. This explains why movements burst like comets into the public consciousness at the high point of their innovation, followed by a long tail of diminishing returns. A sharper eye can see the social ferment behind these explosions, perennial and boundless, alternately drawing in new participants and emitting new waves of activity, as if in successive breaths.

In Occupy Oakland, a three-week occupation gave way to a six-month decline. This bears repeating: *movements spend most of their time in decline*. That makes it all the more important to consider how to make the most of the waning phase.

After the Crest

What to Do While the Dust is Settling

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

– a **filler kid**, July 2021

Partially plagiarized from a column that appeared in [Filler Volume 2, Issue 1](#), published December 2019.

A Critique of Performative Politics & Symbolic Protest

A call to action for shifting movement actions away from symbolism and towards material disruption & abolition

against white vigilante groups that aggressively seek to carry on the legacy of their settler ancestors. Self-defense is important and we should all be down to assess and discuss with our close comrades what our capacity is for dealing with these kinds of threats, and what skills we still need to learn. Not everyone has to take part in these types of struggles, but those of us who say we want to need to be honest with ourselves about what we're willing to do.

References and Recommended Reading

- Warrior Up: Techniques for Sabotage
- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States
- Russell Means, "For America to Live, Europe Must Die"
- Russell Maroon Shoatz, Maroon the Implacable
- Yannick Giovanni Marshall, "Totalitarianism at 38th and Chicago: A Minnesotan Lie"
- Johnhenry Gonzalez, Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti
- Peter Gelderloos, "Diagnostic of the Future: Between the Crisis of Democracy and the Crisis of Capitalism"
- Josep Gardeneyes, "A Wager on the Future: Anarchist Organization, the Islamic State, the Crisis, and Outer Space"
- Movement for No Society (Philadelphia, 2018)
- Thirty-Six Strategms

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A Broader Strategy

What does this all mean for insurrectionaries here and now in the United States? While we've already discussed the need for destructive attacks and other major interventions into moments of widespread unrest, the following concepts might help develop a longer-game approach to insurrection:

- *Decentralization*: In addition to spreading out our activities during another mobilization, those of us who are drawn to this sort of thing can also study guerilla strategy and skills, as this would be the way to go up against the State (and everyday right-wing vigilantes) in the event of an actual collapse.
- *Multi-racial struggles and white “race traitors”*: Our personal visions of rebellion and our role in it should be discussed honestly within anarchist spaces, political organizations, friend groups, and/or other people in our lives, especially across racial lines if possible. The point of this is to build trust and relationships that can push back against and betray whiteness, Eurocentrism, and everything else the State stands for. As we saw last year, the State and the media aggressively attempt to worsen interracial distrust once multi-racial uprisings break out, so working on building what foundations we can in advance would help us all emerge stronger from repression and deter recuperation. We will not be able to accomplish much without figuring out how to operate together (to a certain extent) despite our significant differences.
- *Collective survival*: The authors of “A Wager on the Future” wrote back in 2015, “In whatever form, we must all start posing the question of survival. This means that the projects and activities we encourage and amplify through organization should concern themselves with the self-organization of life; that they should be useful for us as well as for other people; that they should support and augment our capacities of struggle, understanding struggle as a basic aspect of survival for people who desire liberty” (45). Survival-based strategies and fighting-based strategies (similarly to social and anti-social insurrectionalism) are most effective when they complement one another in a kind of ecosystem of struggle. The authors cite as an example: “As a Mapuche comrade said, explaining a project for generating electricity in a community in resistance, ‘We don’t want to generate our own electricity just to achieve self-sufficiency. By making our own electricity, we can attack and sabotage the infrastructures of the State and the companies that occupy our territory, infrastructures we currently depend on’” (46)
- *Land*: Taking back land from the United States and restoring it whenever possible to Indigenous stewardship is an aspect of the “collective survival” strategy discussed above, but such a foundational one that it merits its own discussion. Capitalism, or civilization more broadly, relies on cutting people off from self-sufficiency, a major component of which is the ability to grow food and access water. Restoring these abilities is crucial to ending capitalism and all other forms of social control; it broadens the possibility of autonomous survival. Indigenous people are at the forefront of this effort not just for ethical reasons, but for practical ones, since many still carry traditional knowledge of how the land works. As Dunbar-Ortiz writes, “Indigenous peoples offer possibilities for life after empire” (235).
- *Repression on multiple fronts*: While we are familiar with State repression and the well-known Leftist betrayals of revolutionary undertakings in the 20th century, we are also up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

for all when we shift away from symbolism and performance and instead, towards material disruption and abolition.

A few other points that we want to reiterate:

1. We want to push back on the predictability of protests and marches. If there is no element of surprise or an assessment of local power relations to act upon, these actions become easy to repress by cops and fascists. Instead, how can we intentionally channel these demonstrations to attack material targets of oppression (i.e. condos, warehouses, police precincts, frat houses)?
2. What does actual material subversion look like? We suggest looking up and learning these methods (look them up using DuckDuckGo search engine, on a Tor Browser, or on CrimethInc.'s website): sabotage, blockades, squatting, black blocs, monkey-wrenching, occupations, tree-sitting, expropriations, and other direct actions and autonomous projects.
3. We should stop over-directing community resources on bail funds for non-impactful "intentional arrest" actions. Let's save that for Black/queer/trans funds, where they are really needed.
4. If there's no foreseeable direct, material change as a result of the work being done, we should question its effectiveness. A good rule of thumb to gauge performativity is to ask yourself who the action is for and whether it directly benefits them. For example, posting a black square in honor of #BLM but not doing any other work for Black lives does not benefit the Black community. (We are NOT equating relevant, behind-the-scenes work to useless, performative work. Keep educating yourself when no one is looking, joining reading groups, having low-key meet-ups with comrades, etc. even if the effects of these aren't immediate.)
5. Keyboard warriors would benefit from putting their phones down more often and meeting real people. Tweets and statements are valuable only when accompanied by action and change, and when they're written by people who are actually doing the work. The oversaturation of commentary online based on theory and opinion detracts from relevant anecdotal evidence and analysis provided by people who are actually on the ground. Practice is the best teacher.
6. Asking celebrities and people with accolades (i.e. doctors, lawyers, legislators) to co-sign your action literally does nothing except display an attempt to be palatable to the public. We don't need "distinguishable" acceptance for our demands to be valid and, instead, need to reject respectability in all forms.
7. Petitions do NOT guarantee anything because they appeal to legislators and politicians who already don't empathize with our struggles. Like statements, petitions are only useful when they're accompanied by other actions to legitimize them. In fact, online petitions (such as those Change.org petitions that have been circulating) can instead document/publicize your information (name, zip code) if you forget to sign anonymously.
8. As mentioned previously, things like sit-ins, group-chaining, op-eds, etc. are purely performative. We'd also like to reiterate the problem with labeling protest actions as "peaceful"

Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, with regard to the willful optimism shared by liberals and many radicals: "Those who seek history with an upbeat ending, a history of redemption and reconciliation, may look around and observe that such a conclusion is not visible, not even in utopian dreams of a better society" (2).

Moreover, while individual racists unfortunately exist all around the world, a specific kind of white supremacist vigilante violence has played a key role in establishing and upholding settler colonies like the United States. Dunbar-Ortiz writes: "Western empire was brought about by 'small groups of frontiersmen, separated from each other by great distances,' i.e. settler rangers who autonomously destroyed Indigenous towns and food supplies. America's values of democracy and dispersed, self-sufficient individualism continue to encourage its citizens to independently take initiative to enforce its racist order — the white vigilante mobs we see today are the continuation of a foundational traditional that is critical to the operation of the United States.

Peter Gelderloos (and many others) have argued that this makes the framework of "anti-fascism" insufficient in a context like the U.S. — settler states encourage a diffuse model of white supremacy, rather than fascism's centralized model, "because the entire point is to get all people who are classified as white to reproduce it voluntarily" (35). As Yannick Giovanni Marshall writes, "The right to go on a racist expedition to stop, harass, and kill with effective impunity was not invented by the modern police but was woven into the settler project of the US colony. It is an assumed birthright in settler culture."

Moreover, in contrast to the disciplined adherents of a fascist government, the white mobs of a settler society often seemingly "conflict" with the official views or practices of the government (as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has outlined), but ultimately align as two complementary strategies of enforcing racial order with and without the law. For example, "the regular army provided lethal backup for settler counterinsurgency in slaughtering the buffalo, the food supply of Plains peoples, as well as making continuous raids on settlements to kill or confine the families of the Indigenous fighters" (Dunbar-Ortiz, 220). Hence the apparent conflict between white mobs and the U.S. government — most recently with the notorious January 6th Capitol takeover — which in reality serves the U.S.'s white supremacist project, while allowing the State itself to look relatively innocent in the process.

themselves rather than working for others. They withdrew from the market economy by squatting former plantations, moving to remote mountains, and literally hiding their farms from view. This land-based strategy was coupled with armed resistance from below — setting fire to slave huts, sugar mills, and other plantation infrastructure, plus continued practices of West African voodoo and secret societies, which nurtured traditional spirituality and the lifeways of a culture. Johnhenry Gonzalez notes that by seeking refuge in the hills and appropriating land on which to grow their own food, they gradually undermined the plantation system and ultimately destroyed it. Gonzalez argues that these land- based approaches made Haiti a “maroon nation” that lived outside the world economy of its day.

The original Indigenous inhabitants of what is now the United States also managed to maintain their distance for generations despite state aggression. This history has many potential lessons and ways of reshaping our worldviews, and we can't do it justice here. The most fundamental lesson, though, is again about the primacy of land — the United States remains a settler-colonial nation that is all about maintaining its hold on land that it stole.

This is technically true of any nation-state (that its fundamental goal is to take and hold territory), but in a settler-colonial one like the U.S., it means, first of all, that the U.S. has specialized methods of taking and controlling territory that it continues to use on all the populations it controls domestically and attacks abroad. James Grenier calls this the “American way of war” — a type of irregular warfare “whose purpose is to destroy the will of the enemy people or their capacity to resist, employing any means necessary but mainly by attacking civilians and their support systems, such as food supply...[It] encouraged attacks upon and the destruction of noncombatants, villages and agricultural resources ... in shockingly violent campaigns to achieve their goals of conquest” (Grenier, quoted in Dunbar-Ortiz 58, 219).

It also means that the U.S. remains in a (mostly hidden) ongoing war with those it stole the land from, many of whom are still here. We can approach our insurrectionary aspirations in part by making that war more visible and taking a side in it, and with the understanding that the land has been devastated by settlers and needs to be restored to those who have historically shown they are committed to more responsible relations with it. Moreover, many radicals' utopian ideals or notions (such as “the commons”) are at best tone-deaf to the realities of Indigenous people, and in many cases perpetuate settlers' hold on the land instead of taking steps to end it. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes in her introduction to *An*

and the effects of the enforcement of peace at these actions. Demonstrators will lose interest if they see a call to action that does not result in material change. When an action is just a street performance that asks for political leaders to empathize, we should question who we're doing this for and why. (People who aren't ready to get rowdy should not feel forced to, but a protest should be a place that allows rowdy protestors AND peaceful ones. The absolutism and enforcement of the “peaceful” label is the problem here; P.L.U.R. is cool for music festivals, but not for shutting down the system.)

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

Towards abolition and nothing less!

Signals of Disorder

Sowing Anarchy in the Metropolis

have certainly been many white radicals and anarchists who took immense risks to fight American oppression, the most forceful and effective resistance has by necessity always been by Black people and Indigenous nations directly threatened with extinction by the U.S. Studying these historical successes and their limitations can offer us some important insights into how insurrection could spread in the United States.

Though we can call very few revolutions or struggles “successful” when global capitalism and colonization are still in effect, the experiments of insurgents demonstrate pretty conclusively the limits of centralization and the advantages of decentralized fighting when it comes to winning particular battles or regaining stolen territory. Russell Maroon Shoatz, a formerly BLA-affiliated political prisoner and theorist, argues that the Maroon tradition in North and South America shows over and over again the efficacy of decentralized warfare, rather than a centralized party or vanguard: “Throughout the western hemisphere, we witness these collective Maroons developing and using a very effective form of decentralized organizing that not only served to help them defeat their former enslavers, but has helped them remain autonomous from all unwanted overseers for hundreds of years – until our time” (110).

As Shoatz points out in his discussion of the history of Suriname, the Africans who had been brought there and then became Maroons were from many different backgrounds from one another. This was another reason it was crucial to organize in a decentralized manner; they managed to stick together through a “collective focus on defeating their enslavers’ attempts to control them” (110). This was the only thing like “centralization” that brought them together, given the significant differences among them. Decisions were made democratically, according to Maroon’s research, then coordinated and carried out by decentralized groups. Decentralization, as many insurrectionary anarchists have also tried to point out, does not have to mean a lack of coordination. These formations prevented imperial powers like the Dutch and English from being able to target a particular group or leadership and thus take out the whole movement. Decentralization is the only way to make an insurrectionary movement unbeatable against a resourced and centralized State power.

The Haitian Revolution from 1791-1804, which is the only revolution in which an enslaved population rebelled against their imperial captors and won, also used decentralized elements. Once the revolution was over, its leaders came into power and sought to tie Haitian peasants to plantation agriculture once more and force their participation in the global economy. Ordinary Haitians resisted this throughout the 1800s, acquiring land for

get there. Moreover, if things eventually do get completely out of the State's control, how would we then help hold whatever it is we've gained? Especially if defending a city like Philly involves opening up resources on a massive scale, so that the State can't creep back in because it turns out people can't live without it. It also involves protecting comrades against right-wing mob reaction and intervening so that certain other groups can't swoop in and turn it all into some kind of disgusting authoritarian socialist paradise. It's not possible, nor is it desirable, for us to plan these things in advance, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't think and dream and prepare for them.

In the Bay Area, radicals have taken up a use of clandestine attack that, while not happening at exactly the same time as mass protests in the streets, capitalizes on popular sentiment against governance and directly targets those responsible. In July 2020, as resistance swelled around the crises of policing and housing, vandals targeted the mayor of Oakland's home; in January 2021, Nancy Pelosi's house in San Francisco was vandalized along with that of Mitch McConnell in Kentucky, expressing widespread rage at the time about the U.S. government's failure to give us our money. Also in January, more than 30 anti-racists attacked San Francisco's ICE office, expressing an intention "to initiate what will hopefully be the first in a series of breaks into and out of prisons and detention centers throughout the country." It remains to be seen if more of us will dare to emulate (and take much further) actions like these that directly target State institutions and the individuals in charge, especially in moments when the destabilizing context of mass protests might exponentially multiply such attacks' effects.

The Context of Anti-State Struggle in the United States

The picture I've been painting of black bloc anarchists stepping into a Black neighborhood that's already on fire leads us to some bigger questions about the context in which most anarchists find ourselves in this blood-soaked, colonized, white supremacist continent. When we ask the deep question — how could an insurrection actually happen here? — and begin to prepare ourselves to participate in its answer, we must take into account several things.

The United States is an enemy as such, but also insofar as it is still the primary manager of a capitalist world system. Less acknowledged and even less understood, the United States is also a settler colonial project that depends for its existence on an ongoing legacy of chattel slavery. Certain populations on this continent have been at war with the settler project, whether to maintain territory or evade forced labor, since its inception. While there

In an article in the recent book, *We Are an Image from the Future: the Greek Revolt of December 2008*, I briefly made a point that a friend convinced me needs to be elaborated. The idea is that of "signals of disorder," and their importance in spreading rebellion.

As far as Greece is concerned, the argument is that by carrying out attacks — primarily smashings and molotov attacks against banks and police stations, which constitute the most obvious symbols of capitalist exploitation and State violence for Greek society — insurrectionary anarchists created signals of disorder that acted as subversive seeds. Even though most people did not agree with these attacks at the time, they lodged in their consciousness, and at a moment of social rupture, people adopted these forms as their own tools, to express their rage when all the traditionally valid forms of political activity were inadequate.

An interesting feature of these signals is that they will be met with fear and disapproval by the same people who may later participate in creating them. This is no surprise. In the news polls of democracy, the majority always cast their vote against the mob. In the day to day of normality, people have to betray themselves to survive. They have to follow those they disbelieve, and support what they cannot abide. From the safety of their couch they cheer for Bonny and Clyde, and on the roadside they say "Thank you, officer" to the policeman who writes them a speeding ticket. This well managed schizophrenia is the rational response to life under capitalism. The fact that our means of survival make living impossible necessitates a permanent cognitive dissonance.

Thus, the sensible behavior is not to reason with the masses, to share the facts that will disprove the foundations of capitalism, facts they already have at their fingertips, and it is not to act appropriately, to put on a smiley face, and expect our popularity to increase incrementally. The sensible thing to do is to attack Authority whenever we can.

Attacking is not distinct from communicating the reasons for our attacks, or building the means to survive, because we survive in order to attack, and we attack in order to live, and we communicate because communicating attacks the isolation, and isolation makes living impossible.

Why do signals of disorder constitute attacks on capitalism and the State? After all, the police are basically the punching bag, the shock absorbers, for the State, and one of the limitations of the insurrection in Greece was that anarchists focused too much on police, rather than on the State in all its manifestations. And what about smashing insured bank windows? Creating a signal of disorder could even involve mere spraypainting, or hanging

out on street corners. Isn't this just the ritualization of aimless and impotent rebellion, as the naysayers are so quick to say?

Turns out, the devil is in the details.

In a way, the idea of signals of disorder is an inversion of the Broken Windows Theory of policing. Wilson and Kelling's article, "Broken Windows," first advanced the policing theory of the same name in 1982, but it wasn't until Kelling was hired by the NYC Transit Authority later in the decade that this flagship of minute social control was launched. When Rudolph Giuliani was elected mayor of New York in 1993, Broken Windows policing took on city-wide dimensions, and it soon spread to the rest of the country. By the early '00s, Broken Windows was being adapted for the social democracies of Europe.

Among the technocrats, Broken Windows is controversial, because it easily blurs causation with correlation: just because broken windows and other signals of disorder often accompany higher crime rates does not mean they are the cause of crime. Occasionally, you'll hear a whimper that without proper sensitivity training, Broken Windows policing encourages harrassment of minorities.

All this misses the point: the State is not interested in reducing crime, the State is interested in increasing social control, and Broken Windows policing is a critical expansion of its arsenal. Giuliani's reign of "zero tolerance" didn't just go after fare-dodgers, graffiti writers, and the squeegee men. Under his stewardship, the NYPD became the first ever police department in the history of the world to log more arrests than reported crimes. Entire neighborhoods became depopulated of certain demographics as young black men were shipped to the prisons upstate. A policing that targets the petty details of every day life, that criminalizes our minor strategies to cope with the impossibilities of life under capitalism, is part and parcel of an expansion of police power as a whole.

Why does the city government in San Francisco want to criminalize sitting or lying in the streets? Why did the city government in Barcelona ban playing music in the streets without a license? Why did the government of the UK prohibit a detailed list of "anti-social behaviors"?

Because the goal of the State is total social control. Because the trajectory of capitalism is towards the total commercialization of public space. Every time we identify another invasion of State and capitalism into the minutiae of daily life, every time we confront that

is understandable why the intentions of a group of white people in bloc roving around a riotous Black neighborhood, the residences and existences of whom have already been under threat by white people for generations, are not automatically trusted. And when we are mostly barely keeping up in the streets, and are not really capable of defending ourselves from attack by people we thought might be comrades, does the militancy of the all-black aesthetic really still feel appropriate for us?

The geography of the city is complex and also worth considering along race and class lines, whether in the context of mass rioting or autonomous demos. On the first night of the riots following Walter Wallace's death in October, the big march that gathered in West Philly split between protesters who headed east to the more gentrified University City area, and others who turned back west to the precinct where Wallace's family was gathered. Tension erupted in this split between people who felt that everyone should follow the lead of the grieving family and people who wanted to target UCity because it was a whiter and wealthier neighborhood. In the end, the UCity march did significant damage to police stations in that neighborhood and marched victoriously back west to 52nd Street, where by that time rioting and looting had already been initiated on a massive scale by residents of that area.

Beyond the Riot

Anarchists are not necessarily the most militant rioters or looters, then, but we have visions of a future free of oppression, and of how to get there, that others may not. With regard to street fighting and action, this means we can think purposefully and in advance about what we might target in moments of mass uprisings. As the Seattle anarchists and others have pointed out, we can intentionally decentralize our attacks so as to make it harder for police to do their job. This can prolong riots and expand the scope of an uprising's destructiveness, but let's not lose sight of the fact that the most desirable outcome of this approach would be to ultimately make that job — policing — permanently impossible. In order to do so, we must again think not only about decentralizing our actions, but also what our actions target. What elements of the State might we be able to take out that, coordinated with a sustained crisis of policing, could take mass uprisings over the precipice of State collapse?

These questions might feel like a total nosedive into the realm of fantasy at this point (sorry to the Philly nihilists reading this), but I think it makes sense for those of us who talk about destroying the State and are out in the streets about it to think about how we might

As white radicals we can only get more answers to these questions by having more honest conversations about how we relate to and carry ourselves in the midst of a struggle that is fundamentally about and carried out by Black people. As a multi- racial anarchist space, we can look for additional answers by considering how we as anarchists can contribute to destabilizing State power in ways that only we as anarchists will want to do (this aspect is addressed in the following section, “Beyond the Riot”). In the case of white radicals especially, it would benefit us to pay closer attention to what non-anarchists are saying, since our subcultural isolation can lead us to make mistaken assumptions about what we have in common with other rioters. Anarchists often see riots as some kind of confirmation of our own desires and ways of seeing things, for example, when in reality there is probably a lot going on there that is well out of the scope of our experience and understanding. This doesn’t mean compromising our core principles, it just means that none of us know everything and we can benefit from being more flexible and creative, something we pride ourselves on as anarchists anyway.

One example would be to consider the conditions under which something like black bloc emerged and why we tend to react so defensively whenever that tactic is questioned. The bloc has been a major point of identity for most of us anarchists in the U.S. since, to my knowledge, the anti-globalization struggles of the 2000s. In the era of summit-hopping, anarchists would form a massive bloc within an even larger, more liberal march. This allowed them to signal militancy while also using the bigger, more liberal crowd as a shield. This use of bloc continued in bigger cities more recently, for example in New York during the Occupy era.

It's also accustomed us to having to constantly defend the use of bloc — to liberals — since it is now (usually correctly) associated with an intention to escalate or to support escalation in the context of a public demonstration. Despite these interminable arguments, bloc has still been the best way to keep ourselves safe while we engage in property destruction or otherwise break the law. Everyone wearing the same color provides anonymity on a whole different level.

But what about when the larger crowd around us is not a bunch of (mostly white) liberals and pacifists, but Black or other non-white people who are for the most part attacking the police and businesses much more intensely than the individuals in bloc? When people from those populations are threatening or attacking us for arriving dressed all in black, maybe that is no longer the safest outfit for us. Maybe more conversations and propaganda will open up understanding as to why we dress that way, but in its absence, it

invasion, we are potentially fighting for revolution. As Authority increasingly manages us at the nano level, the can of spraypaint, the rock, the molotov, deserve the same significance as the AK-47.

Spreading signals of disorder accomplishes a number of things. It increases our tactical strength, as we hone a practice of vandalism, property destruction, public occupation, and rowdiness.

It interrupts the narrative of social peace, and creates the indisputable fact of people opposed to the present system and fighting against it. It means the reason for this fight, the anarchist critiques, have to be taken more seriously because they already exist in the streets. In this way, the attacks create the struggle as a fact in a way that would otherwise only be possible in times of greater social upheaval and movement. To have this effect, the signals of disorder need to explicitly link themselves to a recognizable social practice, one that would otherwise be ignored or chopped up into disconnected eccentricities of lifestyle. People in the neighborhood must know that the graffiti and broken windows are the doing of “the anarchists” or some other group that has a public existence, because signals of disorder that can be isolated as phenomena of urban white noise can be legitimately and popularly policed with techniques reserved for inanimate objects and aesthetic aberrations; they would rub us off the streets with the same chemical rigor as they clean graffiti off the walls.

Signals of disorder are contagious. They attract people who also want to be able to touch and alter their world rather than just passing through it. They are easy to replicate and at times, generally beyond our control or prediction, they spread far beyond our circles. They allow us, and anyone else, to reassert ourselves in public space, to reverse commercialization, to make neighborhoods that belong to us, to create the ground on which society will be reborn.

In a neighborhood where the walls are covered with anarchist posters, beautiful radical graffiti stands alongside all the usual tags, advertisements never stay up for long, the windows of luxury cars, banks, and gentrifying apartments or restaurants are never safe, and people hang out drinking and talking on the street corners and in the parks, our ideas will be seriously discussed outside our own narrow circles, and the state would need a major counterinsurgency operation to have just the hope of uprooting us.

Whenever we can break their little laws with impunity, we show that the State is weak. When advertising is defaced and public space is liberated, we show that capitalism is not absolute.

But at the same time, we cannot make the mistake of exaggerating the importance of the attack, of signals of disorder. At times it may be necessary to be a gang, but if we are ever only a gang, if at any point only our antisocial side is visible, we are vulnerable to total repression. There is a lot of rage circulating, without an adequate outlet, which we resonate with through our attacks. But there is equally a lot of love that is even more lacking in possibilities for true expression. People desire the community and solidarity that capitalism deprives them of, and our way out of this labyrinth of isolation is to go looking for the others and meet them where they're at. To encounter people, in our search for accomplices.

Except in the magical space of the riot, we cannot safely find spontaneous accomplices for the attack. But in the stultifying oppression of everyday, we can find accomplices to share in the little gestures of defiance, the small tastes of the commune we are building — a random conversation, a flyer someone is actually interested to read, the passing around of a stolen meal, collaboration in a community garden, the giving of gifts.

The anarchists must simultaneously be those who are blamed for acts of startling indecency, of inappropriate extremism in all the right causes ("they burned four police cars at our peaceful march!") and those who are around town cooking and sharing free communal meals, holding street parties, projecting pirated movies on the sides of buildings, running libraries and bicycle repair shops, and appearing at protests ("oh look, it's those lovely anarchists again!").

We will be safest from the right hand of repression and the left hand of recuperation when everyone is thoroughly confused as to whether we are frightening or lovable.

I think it's important in these moments to be clear about how exactly this might move us towards collective liberation. Is the idea to take a kind of vengeful pleasure as the cops become spread thin and helpless, lacking resources and publicly losing their shit? Regardless of whatever else happened, I think a lot of us experienced that particular type of joy last summer. Is it to experiment with our capacity to attack, pitting ourselves against the vast resources of the state? Is it a kind of practice for an insurrection, with many more steps yet to be taken? Could it itself lead to an insurrection?

Anarchists' Role in the Riot

In Philly, anarchists were far from being the main character of the 2020 uprisings. Most anarchists attended the Walter Wallace riots around 52nd St in October in an observational or supportive role, joining the fierce street fighting initiated by the majority-black residents of that neighborhood. In that context, those who arrived in black bloc were met with skepticism and occasionally with violence. At least one group of anarchists in bloc got jumped near 52nd St, while another pair were accused of being cops, then agitators, and narrowly avoided being attacked.

It was heartwarming to see multi-racial groups of people coming together to fight cops in the streets and set things on fire — this happened especially in May, when riots erupted in the wealthier downtown, commercial zone where none of us had anything at stake and everything felt up for grabs. The antipathy towards anarchists in bloc, though, when the riots moved to West Philly — a gentrifying neighborhood where many of us live, but are not originally from — shows us that these multi-racial moments of struggle are far from doing away the real hierarchies and differences between us, even in the joy and chaos of the moment. Many of us who are white anarchists severely underestimate the extent to which non-white people, whether rebels or reactionaries, distrust white people, regardless of what they hear us say about our politics. This distrust is heightened when they see us in their places of residence.

This brings up questions of how (or whether) to participate in such uprisings, and how to present ourselves in the process. One approach would be to show up in a role that's clearly supportive and shows solidarity — handing out rocks and bats to people fighting cops, offering assistance to people getting tear gassed while looting. Others have pointed out the importance of responding to accusations against us in the moment, when possible, and engaging in conversations about what we're doing there and why.

part in some kind of guerilla strategy, if the State reaches a certain point of instability. The April 12th attack on Portland Police Bureau cars in their parking lot, while a demonstration was attacking cops head-on at the sheriff's headquarters elsewhere, is an example of moving towards this type of anarchist contribution to a mass uprising.

The communiqües accompanying these actions seem to be thinking through some of the limits of Portland's ongoing street-fighting strategy. One communique notes that "the cops have made public statements addressing how they are not responding to 911 calls due to their focus on brutally attacking and arresting protesters," implying that this frees up possibilities for anarchists to attack outside demos. The writers additionally note that "the police are not (and should not) be our only target" ("Starbucks and Whole Foods Attacked for Night 100"). Another communique reports removing and destroying dozens of Amazon Ring and Google Nest doorbell cameras, encouraging us to expand our understanding of law enforcement to include these elements of surveillance.

The goals expressed in this communique and others, though, are themselves limited to spreading action across the city — which in reality is not a goal, but more like a strategy for getting to one. We tend not to name the goal itself — insurrection? — maybe because it seems so far out of reach, or because we believe that insurrection is an ongoing process, rather than a one-and-done event like the "revolutions" of the past. It remains to be said, though, that going out to fight the cops head-on night after night is not a limited strategy because it doesn't stretch the cops thin enough — although that is certainly true — but because it seems unlikely to destroy what we ultimately want to see destroyed.

While radicals in Portland seem to be concentrating on escalating street-fighting tactics and honing their ability to do targeted clandestine attacks, anarchists in Seattle have proposed broadening these approaches through decentralized action. "Decentralized Action: A Brief History and Tactical Proposal" (published on Puget Sound Anarchists in November 2020) describes the regular marches as "daily actions tying up and attacking the infrastructure which maintains the white-supremacist American police state" and notes that the "high visibility of these ongoing actions opens up considerable space for decentralized militant actions to occur away from the public callouts." The proposal emphasizes decentralizing action in order to minimize police efficacy (with examples ranging from incidents during the George Floyd rebellions, to attacks on fascists, to prior years' May Day calls for autonomous actions). It proposes attacking targets elsewhere in the city at the same time that mass public mobilizations are happening.

Toward Insurrection

Anarchist Strategy in an Era of Popular Revolt

Introduction

What role can anarchists in the United States play in popular uprisings like the ones of 2020? While many of us made solid contributions to the riots, the events of last year also highlighted some of our significant deficiencies. Anarchists' attempts to show up to riots in the ways in which we're accustomed, at least here in Philly, often felt ineffective and at best out of touch with those around us. I still believe that anarchists have the potential to contribute in crucial ways to destroying this system and making another end of the world possible. At this point, though, a willingness to reflect on and question our views is needed in order to really move in that direction.

This question of anarchist participation is fundamentally intertwined with issues around race and whiteness, and the past year's discourse on the topic has felt typically inadequate in addressing these questions. Leaving the bad-faith nature of many of the critiques aside, many white anarchists have found it easier to dismiss criticisms by automatically conflating them with liberalism or political opportunism. While this is often accurate, it shouldn't allow us to not take questions about our relationship to whiteness seriously. Whiteness isn't just a skin color that non-white people happen to be skeptical of. It's also a particular kind of colonized (and colonizing) mentality that restricts our imagination and can affect everything from how we interact in the streets to what we as individuals personally envision as our insurrectionary future (or lack thereof).

Aside from the anarchists who were radicalized over this past year, most anarchists today came into radical politics through resistance to Trump's presidency (which centered on an "antifa" that was majority white in the public imaginary, and often in reality), an Occupy movement dominated by white progressives, or what are now called the anti-globalization struggles of the early 2000's. Throughout these movements, anarchists of color have also appeared alongside white anarchists in the streets, though not necessarily identifying with them, and have tried to carve out space for the primacy of anti-racist struggles. But this past year has been a visceral and unavoidable reminder that Black (as well as Indigenous) radical struggles against the state have always been and continue to be far more powerful than most anarchists' occasional vandalism, or even our more targeted (but isolated) acts of property destruction.

This article tries to take seriously the claim that white people, including white anarchists, will not be the protagonists of liberatory struggle in the United States — not in order to marginalize anarchists' uncompromised visions of freedom from the state, capital, and

white supremacy, but instead to reveal some underexplored strategies for how we might actually get there. Today we face an unprecedented crisis of capital and the state, and despite our best efforts none of us can predict how any of it will shake out. Despite the Biden administration's best efforts to restore order and recuperate rebellion, it feels like the chaos that boiled over last year is fated to return, especially as ecological and economic collapse creep closer and the everyday executions of Black people continue with no particular changes that we can observe. In this context, we look around and take our inspiration from the resistance we see actually happening, even if it counteracts some of our inherited assumptions and desires. Right now, all possibilities are on the table.

This essay begins with some brief reflections on anarchist activity in the context of uprisings in several cities in the U.S. over this past year. In cities like Portland and Seattle, anarchist activity has shown both the potential and the limits of some tried- and-true tactics of the insurrectionary anarchist approach that's been established in the U.S. over the past couple decades. The rest of the essay explores other traditions that might expand our sense of how insurrections occur and how we might personally participate in moving things in that direction. We also include [not in the online version] a Philly-specific map that we hope will provide a useful resource for readers in Philly. Maybe it'll also inspire others elsewhere in how they approach future moments of potential insurrection and State collapse.

Anarchist Strategy in the Streets

Unlike cities like Philly, where open conflict with the cops erupted for only a few days and was quickly followed by weeks of peaceful protests, Portland protesters kept rioting against the police all summer and have been an inspiration for their bravery and dedication in the streets. For the past year, black blocs have consistently done "direct actions" in which they marched to a police building or until they were met with a line of riot cops, where fighting and destruction would ensue.

From afar, it also looks like clandestine actions have been on the rise in Portland since at least the fall of 2020. The recently published zine "This Rose Has Thorns: A Year of Anarchist Attacks in So-Called Portland" compiles communiques from these actions, including one that reports setting an unattended cop car on fire overnight (it also references the four police vehicles that were similarly targeted in Philly in August 2020). These acts seem strategically important, not necessarily in their immediate impact, but at least in developing skills that can help take riots to the next level or prepare people to take