



Rolling Thunder

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an anarchist journal of dangerous living

We know what a boot looks like
when seen from underneath, we know the philosophy of boots.

Soon we will invade like weeds, everywhere but slowly:
the captive plants will rebel with us, fences will topple,
brick walls ripple and fall, there will be no more boots.
Meanwhile we eat dirt and sleep; we are waiting under your feet.

When we say *Attack*
you will hear nothing
at first.

“Someday a real scum will come and wash all the reign off the streets.”

—Smedvig Rôbray

Welcome. And congratulations.

We're delighted that you could make it. Getting here wasn't easy, we know.

To begin with, for you to be here now trillions of drifting atoms had somehow to assemble in an intricate and intriguingly obliging manner to create you. It's an arrangement so specialized and particular that it has never been tried before and will only exist this once. For the next many years (we hope) these tiny particles will uncomplainingly engage in all the billions of deft, cooperative efforts necessary to keep you intact and let you experience the supremely agreeable but generally underappreciated state known as existence.

Why atoms take this trouble is a bit of a puzzle. Being you is not a gratifying experience at the atomic level. For all their devoted attention, your atoms don't actually care about you—indeed, don't even know that you are there. They don't even know that they are there. They are mindless particles, after all, and not even themselves alive. (It is a slightly arresting notion that if you were to pick yourself apart with tweezers, one atom at a time, you would produce a mound of fine atomic dust none of which had ever been alive but all of which had once been you.) Yet somehow for the period of your existence they will answer to a single overarching impulse: to keep you you.

The bad news is that atoms are fickle and their time of devotion is fleeting—fleeting indeed. Even a long human life adds up to only about 650,000 hours. And when that modest milestone flashes past, or at some other point thereabouts, for reasons unknown your atoms will shut you down, silently disassemble, and go off to be other things. And that's it for you.

Still, you may rejoice that it happens at all. Generally speaking in the universe it doesn't, so far as we can tell. This is decidedly odd because the atoms that so liberally and congenially flock together to form living things on Earth are exactly the same atoms that decline to do it elsewhere. Whatever else it may be, at the level of chemistry life is curiously mundane: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, a little calcium, a dash of sulfur, a light dusting of other very ordinary elements—nothing you wouldn't find in any ordinary drugstore—and that's all you need. The only thing special about the atoms that make you is that they make you. That is of course the miracle of life.

Whether or not atoms make life in other corners of the universe, they make plenty else; indeed, they make everything else. Without them there would be no water or air or rocks, no stars and planets, no distant gassy clouds or swirling nebulae or any of the other things that make the universe so usefully material. Atoms are so numerous and necessary that we easily overlook that they needn't actually exist at all. There is no law that requires the universe to fill itself with small particles of matter or to produce light and gravity and the other physical properties on which our existence hinges. There needn't actually be a universe at all.

So thank goodness for atoms. But the fact that you have atoms and that they assemble in such a willing manner is only part of what got you here. To be here now, alive in the twenty-first century and smart enough to know it, you also had to be the beneficiary of an extraordinary string of biological good fortune. Survival on Earth is a

surprisingly tricky business. Of the billions and billions of species of living things that have existed since the dawn of time, most—99.99 percent—are no longer around. Life on Earth, you see, is not only brief but dismayingly tenuous. It is a curious feature of our existence that we come from a planet that is very good at promoting life but even better at extinguishing it.

The average species on Earth lasts for only about four million years, so if you wish to be around for billions of years, you must be as fickle as the atoms that made you. You must be prepared to change everything about yourself—shape, size, color, species affiliation, everything—and to do so repeatedly. That's much easier said than done, because the process of change is random. To get from “protoplasmal primordial atomic globule” to sentient upright modern human has required you to mutate new traits over and over in a precisely timely manner for an exceedingly long while. So at various periods over the last 3.8 billion years you have abhorred oxygen and then doted on it, grown fins and limbs and jaunty sails, laid eggs, flicked the air with a forked tongue, been sleek, been furry, lived underground, lived in trees, been as big as a deer and as small as a mouse, and a million things more. The tiniest deviation from any of these evolutionary shifts, and you might now be licking algae from cave walls or lolling walruslike on some stony shore or disgorging air through a blowhole in the top of your head before diving sixty feet for a mouthful of delicious sandworms.

Not only have you been lucky enough to be attached since time immemorial to a favored evolutionary line, but you have also been extremely—make that miraculously—fortunate in your personal ancestry. Consider the fact that for 3.8 billion years, a period of time older than the Earth's mountains and rivers and oceans, every one of your forebears on both sides has been attractive enough to find a mate, healthy enough to reproduce, and sufficiently blessed by fate and circumstances to live long enough to do so. Not one of your pertinent ancestors was squashed, devoured, drowned, starved, stranded, stuck fast, untimely wounded, or otherwise deflected from its life's quest of delivering a tiny charge of genetic material to the right partner at the right moment in order to perpetuate the

only possible sequence of hereditary combinations that could result—eventually, astoundingly, and all too briefly—in you.

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The honorable orators, the gazettes of thunder,
The tycoons, bigshots and dictators,
Flicker in the mirrors a few moments
And fade through the glass of death
For discussion in an autocracy of worms
While the rootholds of the earth nourish the majestic people
And the new generations with names never heard of
Plow deep in broken drums and shoot craps for old crowns . . .

The people will live on.
The learning and blundering people will live on.
They will be tricked and sold and again sold
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,
You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.
The mammoth rests between his cyclonic dramas.

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.
There are men who can't be bought.

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for
keeps, the people march
“Where to? what next?”

-Carl Sandburg,
THE PEOPLE, YES





Rolling Thunder is a biannual journal focusing on passionate living and creative resistance in all the forms they take.

It is our attempt to offer a wild-eyed, fire-breathing, militant periodical that can cover the adventures of a dissident high school student skipping class as easily as a riot that sets an embassy aflame: that neither reduces the organic impulses of revolt to inert theory nor prioritizes conventional activism over the subversive elements present in other walks of life but instead focuses on sharing the stories of those who step out of line (that is, of all of us, in our finest moments) and sharing the skills developed in the process (not to mention the poetry) so that many more may do so and do so more boldly and so that liberty and community and all those other beautiful things may triumph.

We're desperate to receive submissions of high caliber, of course, but even more than that we want you to reconstruct the component parts of this magazine according to your own needs. One of the reasons we waste so much of the space herein on illustrations is so you can rip off these images for your own posters, magazines, and illegal murals, and the same goes for the text. Please, please don't treat this magazine as someone else's property, the way the copyright warnings in the publications of your corporate enemies urge you to; you've got your hands on it, now *do something with it*.

Found on the internet: "*CrimethInc.*, sometimes known as the *CrimethInc. Workers' Collective* or the *CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective*, is a non-hierarchical anarchist organization that publishes anti-authoritarian writings and videos and leaves vague hints that it is committing non-violent crimes, most of which seem to involve leafleting. *CrimethInc.* authors rarely sign their documents, but you can check out their web page at *CrimethInc.com*."

Cover text from Margaret Atwood's *You Are Happy*, "Song of the Worms"

Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink in Canada by Canadians. They did a great job, didn't they?

✂ Letters and images dutifully slopped together by the Paul F. Maul Artists' Group.

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Dream Alone, It's Just a Dream . . .

Is it hardship that drives people to rise up against tyranny? Can you count on people to revolt when things get too tough?

No, that hasn't been reliable: when mere survival under the whip is demanding enough, revolt is stifled as often as provoked¹. All that speculation about Bush's re-election precipitating fiercer resistance turned out to be stuff and nonsense—if anything, people in this country are more demoralized now, even as life gets more difficult.

So is it improved living conditions, which give people more time and energy to consider their situation and act accordingly? In the 1960s, when the standard of living increased along with leisure time, it seemed that people became more rebellious rather than less. Does that mean the first task of would-be revolutionaries is to be reformists? Should we focus our energy on incremental improvements, so one day things will be easy enough to undertake more fundamental changes?

Unfortunately, that hasn't proved effective either: many a generation has been bought off with a share of the spoils of oppression, even of their own oppression. As often as not, reform campaigns consume more energy than they produce. Worse, whenever revolutionary struggles come close to victory, reformists rush to hijack them, negotiating peace (i.e., a return to business as usual) between insurgents and their former masters—perhaps accomplishing some of the reforms that were impossible without open revolt, but at the cost of that revolt and the greater objectives it might have obtained. Reform campaigns are a pressure valve; at best, the momentum they build up can carry over into more thoroughgoing efforts, but it is the momentum that matters, not the material gains won—that is, unless you're one of those people who thinks it's fine and dandy for the world to be reduced to strip mines, strip malls, and strip clubs, so long as everyone can afford their wares.

¹ "I have often heard reformers say that the working class does not revolt because it is not yet wretched and starving enough, and that the sooner economic conditions get worse the sooner they will revolt. This is another wrong conception of men and conditions. Take the coal miners, the most ill-paid and ill-treated wage workers in existence. To try to describe the conditions of the miners of Western Pennsylvania is to attempt the impossible. In many places grown men, with families, have not been able to earn more than \$1.50 a week. They are herded together in miserable, filthy hovels, twelve or fifteen people occupying one room; for how else can they pay the rent? Yet these men do not revolt, and never will.

But when I reached the districts where they earned \$5 and \$6 a week, I found them carrying themselves with some pride and self respect, and open to ideas. It is therefore an unpardonable mistake to sit with folded hands awaiting the development of things to such a state that it will be too late to act. Men with empty stomachs do not fight for freedom. They fight for bread; it is useless to appeal to the overfed, but still less use to appeal to the underfed."

-Emma Goldman, "A Short Account of My Late Tour," *Solidarity*, July 15, 1898

What fuels insurrections, then, if not suffering or its alleviation? What inspires people to make dramatic changes in their own lives and the world around them?

We're betting our bottom dollar it's contradictions. When the tension between the lives people live and the lives they wish they lived becomes too great, when they can imagine alternatives and see proof that these are possible, things start to happen. When discontent is brewing but few are ready for all-out civil war, perhaps the most important thing revolutionaries can do is emphasize those tensions, intensify the contradictions with a propaganda of desire that encourages people to demand more than the status quo delivers. People are distraught and disappointed with the disasters of capitalism and patriarchy by the restless billion; everyone cherishes dreams of a better life that seems impossible. By publicly validating those desires and offering small examples of how to fulfill them, we can help each other come out of hiding.

This is not particularly complicated in communities that are overtly oppressed, although it is the most logistically difficult there: it requires demonstrating that some of the challenges of survival can be solved collectively and through collective resistance. But this approach can also be applied in other contexts—wherever a secretary stares longingly out the window, wherever a lover wishes she could speak freely about her attraction to others, wherever a grandmother languishes forgotten by her family. If our critique of wealth and power is accurate—that is, that they are not as fulfilling as sharing and partnership—everyone in this society has a stake in transformation, not just the losers of the power game.

Dear reader, don't be bashful about your desires, whether or not they make sense to those around you or fit any established revolutionary paradigm. Confide them to your friends and family as well as to strangers. Shout them from the rooftops and in your school or office or church. Paint them in bold letters on every wall and on banners for parades. Proclaim them in anonymous communiqués that coincide with heroic acts of civic-minded sabotage. Detail them in stolen photocopies and glossy-covered magazines. And don't stop there—whenever, in the course of all this, you find a kindred spirit, get started immediately on making everything you've fantasized about come true.

It's a small enough world that we'll probably run into you out there in the course of all this. We'll be the ones with crazy hair and crazier ideas, giving out fliers for the community garden or running from a flaming effigy in the middle of what had been a placid shopping day. Hope to see you soon.

. . . Dream Together, It Can Be Reality

Glossary of Terms, part III

Nihilist—One who has ceased to care about anything, i.e., one who carries on with “normal life” regardless of what is going on around him (see *Nihilism*). Giving up hope doesn’t mean ceasing to respond to the forces acting upon one—on the contrary, doing so requires extravagant quantities of hope (see *Hunger Strike*, *Desertion*, *Resistance*)—but rather that one goes on responding to them without investing any of one’s actions with meaning.

Alternately, “nihilist” designates a jaded malcontent who makes a pretense of wishing to destroy everything and having nothing to lose. Such pretensions typically contribute to an unsociable individualism and dismissal of collective struggle—though the project of destroying everything will demand more widespread participation than the carrying out of mere reforms, as most of that “everything” is cultural rather than physical. A misguided nihilist might retort that he wishes to destroy *everyone*, as well—but that’s fascism, not nihilism.

Granted, there are many different kinds of nihilism—many different things one can say “are nothing,” many different nothings to believe in.

Journalism—The world’s oldest profession

Mediatize—According to the Microsoft Word dictionary, “to take control of another country but allow its ruler to retain his or her title and have some role in governing the country.” No shit! (see also *Media*)

Moral Indignation—Jealousy with a halo

Morale—The deciding factor between passivity and action. Too many would-be revolutionaries underestimate the importance of morale in strategizing for militant struggle; in fact, it is usually a more important factor than material resources or speculative planning. (see *figure i.*)

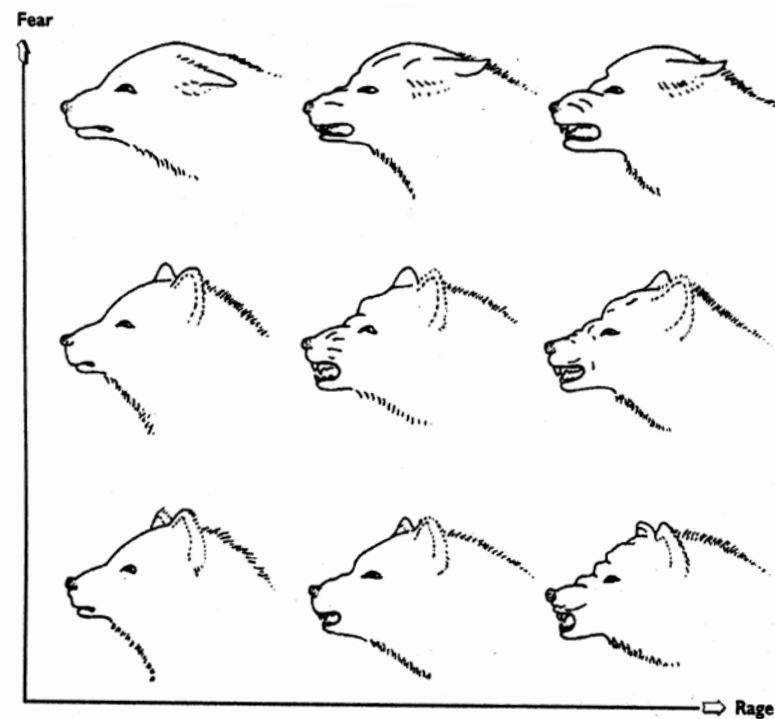


figure i

Bohemian—Taste makes waste

Civic Duty—It is the responsibility of every patriot to protect her country from its government

Conformity—The reward for it is—everyone likes you but yourself

Co-op—A cooperative venture, such as a housing project or bulk food purchasing group; alternately, a typographical error for “co-opt”

Freedom of Speech—A device for conditioning people to speaking without acting; once so conditioned, dissidents are incapable of anything save a garrulous impotence often characterized by overuse of internet discussion forums and a superstitious fixation on voting (see also *Free Speech Zone*)

Heterosexual—Straight as in “. . . and narrow”

Hierarchical Status—A measurement of worth that makes no reference to personal qualities, behavior towards one’s fellows, or capacity for self-determination, but only takes into account how much power one has over other people. In the death camps during the Holocaust, Victor Frankl heard a fellow prisoner say of a “capo” (a prisoner given life-and-death control over other prisoners by the Nazis): “Imagine! I knew that man when he was only the president of a large bank. Isn’t it fortunate that he has risen so far in the world?”

Word of the Issue: Invincibility

The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia¹ in 1999 quickly decimated most of that already battered nation’s defenses. We can imagine the soldiers in their bunkers, sitting uselessly by their antiquated weapons while undetectable airplanes rained bombs onto fortifications and hospitals alike. One night, one such soldier was killing time at an anti-aircraft position when, to his surprise, a stealth bomber appeared squarely in the middle of his radar screen. The radar system was a full half-century old; it seemed like it must

¹ Gentle reader, please don’t misunderstand our recounting of this tale as approval of the Yugoslav government or military, or any government or military. Our sympathies lie with those who oppose all bombings, and with the unknown wit who painted “Dear president, you were not at home when we needed you most” on a Belgrade wall shortly after his residence was bombed.

be an error, but all the same, in total disbelief, he fired up the obsolete surface-to-air missile launcher and took a shot at the ghost in the sky. Overhead, the US Air Force pilot, fresh from sowing the Serbian fields with blood, was jerked out of a pleasant reverie by the shocking realization that two Soviet-era missiles were headed directly at him. He ejected just in time to avoid being blown to bits along with his 45-million-dollar aircraft.

Stealth bombers cannot be detected by modern radar systems, but the only radar still working at that anti-aircraft outpost was from the 1950s, and it turns out that systems from that era detect them easily enough. The following week posters appeared across Yugoslavia reading, “Sorry, we didn’t know it was invisible.”

Outside Agitator—A term of abuse, relying on an unspoken distinction akin to the one Malcolm X drew between the slaves in the slaveholder’s house and the ones in the field. The term is generally used by lapdog radicals who hope, by smearing others, to retain their insider status, their seat at the table.

Philanthropist—A capitalist sufficiently intimidated by those he plunders to return some of the spoils

Popular—Appealing to the lowest common denominator (see *Democratic*). Alternately, a political term meaning “of the people,” always hotly contested as to who, exactly, deserves the “the.”

This calls to mind the predicament of contemporary autonomist Marxists who, feeling the anarchist movement to be too insular a social space, distance themselves from it, only to become a subculture within a subculture. There

is no returning to The Masses—once your forays into theory have borne you far enough away from them that you can descry them and the benefits of being one of them, the only return is through the process of disillusionment, by which one ceases to care about motivating The Masses and thus can be reunited with them. Likewise, there is no converting them—no matter how many people come to join you at your outpost, from up close they will never look as impressive as the distant crowds do.

Procrastination—We kill time and it kills us back¹

Property—We thieves had our revenge when Proudhon convicted the bourgeoisie of theft. (see *figure ii.*)

¹ “You want revolution now? I wish I had your patience!”

Prudence—Better feel once than think twice

Terrorist—One who uses violence to intimidate, often for political purposes (e.g., police officers, heads of state, and all who aspire to replace them); alternately, a civilian brazen enough to defend herself or others from such violence

Weather—The primary subject of conversation for those who don’t dare trust one another. Populations cringing under dictatorial rule are swept by discussions of the weather as if by a hurricane.

Youth—Lack of experience in the art of misspending one’s life—hence the preponderance of young people in resistance and liberation struggles. If youth is wasted on the young, think how it would be squandered on the old!

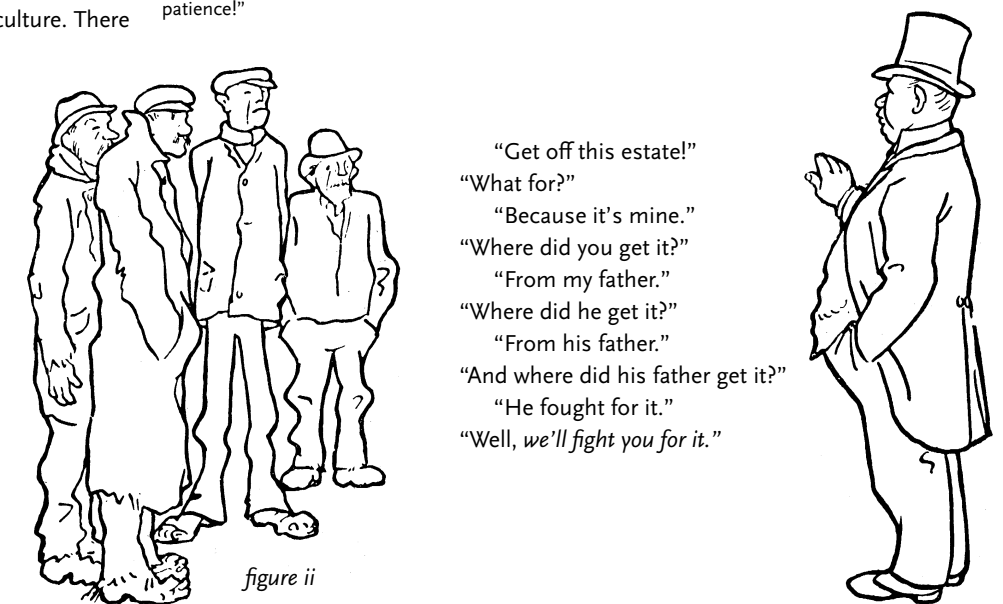


figure ii

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Why Bush is Counting on the Islamic Resistance

A follow-up of sorts to "Forget Terrorism: September 11 and the Hijacking of Reality," which appeared in Rolling Thunder #1

Today, an internet search for "Mission Accomplished"—the text on the banner that hung behind Bush on Mayday, 2003, when he announced the end of major military operations in Iraq—turns up countless smug editorials from liberal and left-wing pundits crowing about the bloody resistance to the subsequent occupation. Don't get them wrong, they're not enthusiasts of armed struggle—they're the first to oppose even the mildest forms of resistance here in the US; they just love to see things go wrong for their political opponents. However many civilians die in autonomous as well as state military operations, the important thing is that rival demagogues get egg on their faces, as this increases the chances of power shifting into their willing hands.

Anarchists, too, have largely interpreted the civil war in Iraq as a debacle for Bush and his cronies, sometimes to the point of endorsing it without bothering about what the insurgents are fighting for. Yes, it is healthy for every person living under others' power to resist; unfortunately, this does not mean that all who do so struggle against "power over" itself. Over the past year, the violence in Iraq has become more reminiscent of the ethnic strife of twentieth-century India than of an anti-imperialist liberation struggle. Regardless, everyone still assumes that this violence runs counter to Bush's designs for the area.

At the risk of venturing into conspiracy theory, let's take a moment to consider an alternate scenario. What if the Iraqi resistance is not unforeseen after all, but a potential outcome the Bush regime took into account—perhaps even the one they were counting on? This seems counterintuitive, as every statement they've made since the beginning of the war has given us to believe that they expected the post-Saddam opposition to be short-lived; but if we want to avoid

nasty surprises we'd better allow for the possibility that our rulers aren't as obtuse and inept as they seem.

What, if anything, would the Bush administration stand to gain from replacing the iron rule of Saddam Hussein over resentful Iraqis with chaos, civil war, and resentment against the US? The costs of this exchange are obvious: it makes the US government and military look incompetent, thus decreasing the Republican Party's chances of winning the next election, and it facilitates Islamic terrorist recruiting.

But perhaps the last of these effects is not so undesirable. Bush's regime derives much of its popularity from the feeling that the country is under attack; it's hard to imagine where he'd be now if not for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. It's not so much of a stretch to hypothesize that, consciously or not, he and his colleagues are pursuing a course of action that will reinforce their position by strengthening their enemies.

Islamic terrorist groups are certainly better situated today than they were six years ago. The September 11 attacks were the work of a small number of people, and the culmination of years of effort; now, with a nationwide insurgency to participate in and cull recruits from, not to mention a global atmosphere of anti-Muslim persecution, militant Islam is steadily gaining stature. At that time, it was difficult for such groups to attract notice outside parts of the Mid-

dle East; now, they need only carry out one major attack a year to remain the center of international attention. Back then, they had only managed to kill a few thousand people; tens of thousands have perished in the ensuing wars and inquisitions—and for terrorists, it is the net total of violence and horror that determines their power, not the way their losses and gains compare to those of their adversaries.

If further evidence were wanting, Hamas, one of the most militant parties in the Middle East, has now come to power in the Palestinian government. This is the inevitable consequence of the US government pursuing a foreign policy that gives the Palestinians no reason to trust its commitment to peace or justice. The accession of Hamas to government power gives the US and Israel further excuses not to work towards peace, and in turn pushes other Arab governments to take sides against them. This feedback loop of escalating conflict can only lead to more and more violence.

Some years ago, I saw a survivor of the Palestinian occupation speak. She maintained that in their air strikes and assassinations, the Israelis often deliberately targeted organizers who were willing to negotiate towards a peaceful resolution rather than the ones most committed to violence¹, presumably in order to render diplomatic solutions impossible. If her claims are true, they correlate well with other policies of the Israeli right

wing, which also seem designed to provoke terrorism by stomping out any other form of resistance to Israeli injustices.

We must consider the possibility that the long-term objective of the Bush administration is to provoke and promote Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. This would explain the otherwise senseless invasion of a crippled nation governed by a secular dictator loathed by Al Qaeda, and the otherwise botched handling of the subsequent occupation, and the current wrangling with Hamas and the Iranian government: by destabilizing entire regions, driving Muslims across the world to rage and despair, and closing off all possibilities other than autonomous acts of terrorist violence, Bush and his colleagues hope to create a new adversary for the sequel to the Cold War.

The Iraq war was not about oil alone; as the hawkish party, the Republicans need adversaries even more than they need world domination. Like the Israeli right wing, they benefit from conflict: they know that however much people complain between elections, as long as there's a war on voters will fall in line behind them when it's time to cast ballots, since the opposing party lacks the credentials for wartime leadership. (Hence, it would be most convenient for the current conflict with Iran to come to a head in 2007, though this may not be possible.) By a process of natural selection, they have come to pursue

¹ Incidentally, in my years of experience in direct action, I've often noticed a similar trend in the United States: except in cases in which they expect to be able to deliver a decisive blow, police and federal agents often go after liberal or pacifist activists before militant ones. This holds true in street confrontations and investigations alike: a black bloc trashes a shopping district while the

police are busy beating up unarmed protesters in a peaceful march; an Earth Liberation Front cell burns down a condominium and the FBI shows up at the doors of aboveground student environmentalists. Perhaps this is because the security and self-defense measures of militant activists make them less accessible or attractive targets, or because the top priority of the forces of repression is to intimidate

newcomers out of long-term commitment to the struggle—or perhaps our enemies believe that they benefit from the escalation of confrontation, and see militants as helping push things in this direction. If the last of these possibilities is the case, so much the better—we also desire for everything to come to a head; but we had better be more prepared for it than they are, and that is a tall, tall order.

policies that tend to get their supporters shot down, blown up, and kidnapped, because these unfortunate effects drive more supporters into their arms.

Mere world domination is no use to a repressive regime. As soon as there are no barbarians at the gates to point to as the greater of two evils, the subjects start getting restless—witness the decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall, when internal resistance grew and grew in the vacuum left by the Communist menace. War-without-end may make people restless, too, but it also keeps them busy reacting to it, if not dying in it, instead of cutting to the root of the matter.

Years of perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are paying off: militant Islam, once a backyard startup company, is finally a global threat, poised to replace the Communist Bloc². Western-style capitalism has extended its influence and control so far that external opposition must now come from previously peripheral corners of the world, such as Afghanistan; a few fanatics from that periphery were enough to inaugurate the new era of Terror-vs.-Democracy back in 2001, but it will take a lot more fanatics to maintain, and the current US foreign policy will produce them. The Republican Party may lose the next election as the result of public dismay over the untidiness of the Iraq occupation, but so long as they succeed in setting a long-term worldwide conflict in motion first, they can count on returning to power soon enough.

If all this speculation is correct, where does that leave us anarchists, who also struggle against global capitalism? First, we should be extremely hesitant to cheerlead militant Islamic resistance, except when we have reason to believe it will produce anti-authoritarian results. Solidarity with all

² It's interesting to note that one of the factors that helped bring about the end of the Soviet Union was a protracted war with Muslim radicals in Afghanistan, which the latter won in 1989—the year the Berlin Wall came down. In that regard, militant Islam literally replaced communism as the supposed antithesis to Western capitalism. A year later, in a surprise decision to oust former ally Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, the US moved forces into the Middle East; predictably, this outraged Al Qaeda—which had formed in Afghanistan during the war with the Soviets—and the rest is history. It's almost too convenient for the purposes of this analysis that the CIA spent the '80s funding and training the same Muslim fundamentalists that immediately went on to top their most-wanted lists.

who oppose oppression is critical for the anarchist project, but the enemy of our enemy is not always our friend: as things stand right now, Osama bin Laden and George Bush stand to gain a lot more from this conflict than the rest of us folks do. The specter of US imperialism will no doubt enable hierarchical powers in Muslim communities to strengthen their hold over others, just as terrorism has enabled Bush to consolidate his power here. We need to figure out who our allies are overseas—who fights for liberty, self-determination, and mutual aid there as we do here—and do all we can to support them.

To make it easier for people elsewhere to feel that there is hope for such a struggle, so they don't settle for joining up with the lesser of two evils themselves, we need to fight hard here at home. This is the anarchist solution to the problem of foreign terrorism and totalitarianism: if we can sufficiently cripple our own rulers, foreign powers won't be able to justify their terror and tyranny by pointing to the threat our tyrants pose.

Above all, we must seize from Bush and bin Laden the initiative to define the contests of our day. As long as the principal global conflict is conceptualized as *Democracy versus Terrorism or the West versus Islam*, it will be increasingly difficult to mobilize struggles on other grounds for other objectives. If we hope to join great numbers of people in the US and abroad in a war against hierarchy rather than each other, we will have to frame and popularize new dichotomies.

In this sense, it is significant that the US government is taking advantage of the current climate to portray activists who have nothing to do with militant Islam as terrorists. Once enough US citizens who have nothing to do with Al Qaeda are branded with that epithet, the fault lines of conflict will be drawn within this society, rather than between it and another, and it'll be a whole new ball game. Should the overzealous FBI carelessly push things past this threshold, their repression might actually help make it clear to everyone that the most important battles transcend nationality and religion; but for that to be

For further perspective on the way adversaries help to prop up authoritarian regimes, we can consult Orwell's 1984, in which a totalitarian government relies on a state of perpetual war to maintain its control. The ideal enemy is unable to win, but always able to threaten, so subjects neither feel too safe nor too fearful. The ideal enemy is a mirror image of the government, so subjects who might find fault with their rulers are more outraged by their enemies: if the government is willing to sacrifice innocent life, the enemy must be even more callous in doing so; if the government promotes a superstitious, repressive creed, the enemy must fight in the name of an equally superstitious and repressive belief system. The ideal enemy must provide excuses to justify the repression of internal foes, but must be different enough from those foes that there is no need to fear the two finding common cause.

For the empire of global capitalism, ethnic/religious terrorism is the perfect foil. A rival empire would pose an obstacle to global domination, but terrorists can threaten everywhere without ruling anywhere. Only cold-blooded terrorism can make the humiliations of capitalist exploitation pale in comparison; only terrorist aspirations to power can make the rule of plutocratic demagogues seem preferable.

possible, we'll have to be tireless in supporting our targeted comrades and fearless in openly proclaiming our opposition to the system. This is another function of militant anarchist struggle in the US: to bring the war home to such an extent that it can no longer be framed as an us-versus-them conflict with foreigners, but becomes instead a confrontation between classes within this country.

To prepare for the years ahead, we should study the past decades of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it forms the blueprint for the new world order. The fact that it has proved irresolvable thus far makes it a promising model for protracted global war... but should anyone hit upon a way of undermining that impasse, however so slightly, it might be a starting point for an escape route out of this whole mess.

The Émigrés Strike Back

Making Mayday a Threat Again

The Uprising Begins

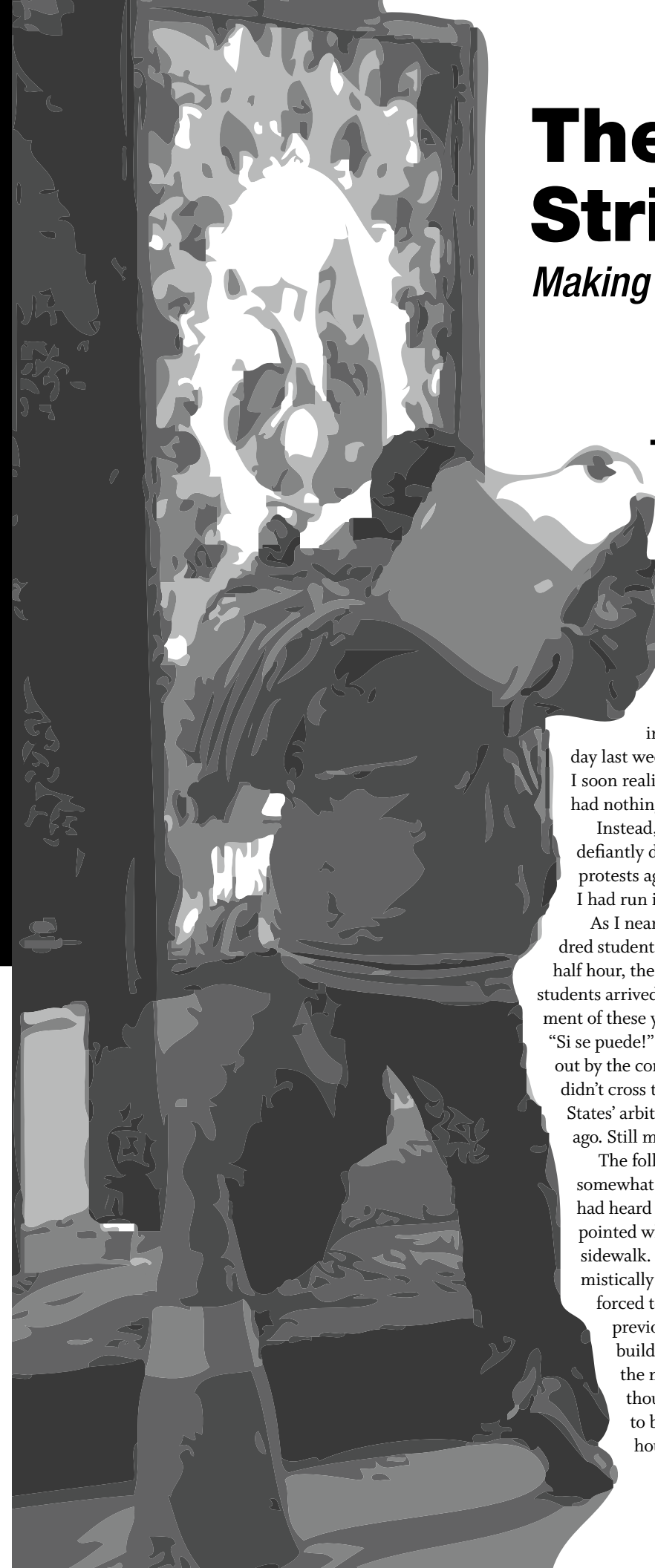
The other day I was riding my bike through downtown Tucson, on my way to write a story about recent indigenous uprisings on a faraway island in Indonesia. My mind was occupied by mundane worries: low air pressure on the rear tire, cars driving too close to me, wondering if I was getting skin cancer from so much sun.

I had nearly completed my daily pilgrimage to the office when my trivial thoughts were interrupted by a sea of people moving steadily in my direction from several blocks away. There was joyful shouting, people carrying indistinguishable flags and banners. "Wasn't Saint Patrick's day last week?" I thought to myself. As I neared the energetic crowd, I soon realized this was no state-sanctioned holiday, and it sure as hell had nothing to do with the Irish.

Instead, I saw two or three hundred mostly Latino youth marching defiantly down the street. Recalling the numerous record-breaking protests against racist anti-immigrant laws of the past week, I realized I had run into a student walkout.

As I neared the next block, I was amazed to find a group of three hundred students already rallying in front of the federal building. In the next half hour, the crowd swelled to over a thousand as more and more fugitive students arrived in groups of ten, fifty, and a hundred. The energy and excitement of these youthful rebels nearly overwhelmed me as their chants of "Si se puede!" (Yes it can be done) rang through the air, at times drowned out by the constant honking of supportive passersby. Others chanted "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us!" in reference to the United States' arbitrary heist of the northern portion of Mexico over a century ago. Still more carried signs reading "No human is illegal."

The following day I was again riding my bike through downtown, somewhat more prepared than before to run into a protest because I had heard that students were planning another walkout. I was disappointed when I encountered a small crowd of fifty kids walking on the sidewalk. "I guess they let their steam out yesterday," I thought pessimistically to myself. As I rounded the corner onto Congress Ave, I was forced to eat my words. This crowd was nearly double the size of the previous day's, overflowing the small plaza in front of the federal building into the streets. The initial fifty were just stragglers. Soon the massive crowd surged towards the federal courthouse, where thousands of immigrants are deported every year, and proceeded to block the entrance to this institute of oppression for half an hour. Meanwhile, hundreds of other students cruised the streets



of downtown in perilously overloaded vehicles, blasting the music of their home countries, waving Mexican flags, and carrying posters of Cesar Chavez. Whether or not it was intentional, these cruisers, in conjunction with the sea of protestors swarming downtown from all directions, brought Tucson's business district to a standstill.

The energy, defiance, and sheer power of these demonstrations stands in stark contrast to the dreary, well-behaved, state-approved parades put on by our country's numerous leftist organizations. "These are no mere protests," I thought to myself, "this is an uprising." This initial speculation was confirmed when I got back home and looked at the news reports. Even the mainstream press acknowledged that well over a thousand Tucson middle and high school students had dropped their pens and paper and taken to the streets to protest the government's attempted crackdown on immigration. At one school, someone pulled a fire alarm after the principle attempted to direct students into the gymnasium, ensuring their escape to the streets. At another school, several dozen students scaled a barbed wire fence after administrators locked the only exit shut.¹ Other students took their anger out on the Border Patrol, notorious for its rampant racism and sadistic abuse of detainees,² by throwing rocks at its Tucson headquarters.

Tucson was no isolated incident. In Los Angeles, thirty-six-thousand students walked out three days in a row, shut down four freeways, and several times found themselves clashing with the LAPD when the latter attempted to break up this spontaneous outbreak of rebellion. In Fort Worth, TX, not exactly a hotbed of radicalism, several hundred students walked out and proceeded to take over their city hall. The police responded by injuring several students, one of whom required hospitalization, to "restore order." There's nothing like a group of grown, armed men beating the shit out of school children! In Pasadena, CA police opened up on a crowd of one-hundred-fifty students with pepper balls in an attempt to disperse them. The students responded to this unprovoked attack by throwing rocks and bottles at the police.

In San Diego, six thousand students took to the streets in five days of class disruptions. On the final day they attempted to take over the Coronado bridge which spans San Diego Bay, but were stopped by a wall of California Highway Patrolmen. In Santa Ana several government offices, including the tax collector's office, were shut down by student occupations.

I've Always Wanted to be an Urban Guerrilla

This massive wave of civil disobedience on the heels of the previous week's pro-immigrant demonstrations that brought millions into the streets is no doubt a sign of a healthy and rapidly growing national rebellion. Where do the predominately white anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist movements of this country fit into the picture?

¹ Talk about dramatic symbolism.

² Sound familiar?

First off, gringos need to understand that immigrants to the US are for the most part fleeing the poverty, hunger, and violent repression manufactured abroad by the government of our country in order to ensure the relative comfort of our lives here at home. It is no coincidence that the "flood" of illegal immigrants from Mexico skyrocketed after the implementation of NAFTA. The human beings who are risking their lives (several hundred die every year) traversing the arid borderlands are not doing so to steal people's jobs. They are trying to ensure the survival of their families by earning slightly more than the starvation wages they find, if they are lucky, south of the border³.

Radicals in the US should extend solidarity to the immigrant rights movement in every way possible. This is not the time for professional activists to step up and "show the masses the way." The folks fueling the fire of this uprising seem to have a pretty clear analysis of the situation and an equally clear vision of how to win. The last thing they need is some know-it-all honkies to come in and tell them what to do. If you need further convincing of this fact, consider that the immigrant rights movement has managed in a matter of weeks to mobilize an enormous and militant movement that is already beginning to surpass what the anti-war movement, with the "help" of all those well-paid professional activists, has accomplished in the past three years.

Sympathetic gringos can offer direct assistance by cooking food for demonstrators, hanging posters, organizing solidarity actions, offering rides to demonstrations and meetings, acting as legal observers, raising funds for legal expenses (hundreds have already been arrested for acts of civil disobedience), and of course showing up to demonstrations.

One role I believe we have a particular responsibility to play is confronting racist boneheads such as the Minutemen who have spearheaded the massive anti-immigrant backlash. The sheer idiocy of anyone of European descent in North America complaining about illegal immigrants is maddening enough—but when these bigots start walking around with guns to protect, not so much the borders of the US, but their racist ideals, and in return receive significant backing from prominent Republicans and the media, we have a duty to stop them.⁴ Wherever these racist thugs hold a rally, we should organize a larger counter-rally. Whenever they organize a meeting, we should be there to disrupt it. Those of us who live near the border can interfere with their "civilian border patrols" by warning would-be crossers of their presence. (A megaphone and a spotlight will help.)

We can show our solidarity by continuing to fight the imperialist policies that have impoverished other countries and created this whole immigration "problem" in the first place. Shutting down the WTO in Seattle was a good start, but we totally dropped the ball on NAFTA and CAFTA. However, it

³ Even if they were just job-stealing, baby-making welfare leeches here for a free ride, as the right wing asserts, I'd say good for them. After all we've stolen from them and their countries, it's merely a matter of them coming and getting a little piece of the pie back—in other words, reparations.

⁴ Do you think if we show up to the next protest with assault rifles we'll get the media drooling all over us too?



is not too late to defeat the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and resistance to it throughout the rest of the continent is still fierce. I reckon it's never too late to get the other two repealed either. While welcoming economic and political refugees into our country is a good start, if we want to create a truly just world for everyone, we must destroy the policies that force people to make the trek in the first place.

Radicals must address the anti-immigrant sentiment that sometimes boils up within our own ranks—for example, in certain sectors of the environmental movement. Groups such as the Sierra Club have flirted for years with the asinine notion that poor immigrants are somehow a major source of ecological destruction in the US. The line of logic proceeds thus: the increase in population is causing major sprawl, and by moving to the US—hold your breath for this one—immigrants start to consume at the rate that US citizens do. If I understand this right, it's OK for us to continue consuming the world's resources at a suicidal rate, but not for anyone else to? Talk about blaming the victim! Instead of scapegoating immigrants, we should be working first and foremost to reduce our own consumption of resources.

Immigrants causing sprawl is an equally ridiculous assertion. They are not the ones building the second and third trophy homes that are eating up wilderness across the country. On second thought, they often are the ones building these homes—not for themselves, but for the exorbitant lifestyles of middle and upper class US citizens. Don't even get me started on the devastation that a massive border wall, as some are calling for, would have on the ecological integrity of the Sonoran desert ecosystem.

Radical immigrant groups that are fighting for better wages and work conditions in the US also deserve support.

Groups such as the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) have both launched numerous protests, boycotts, and speaking tours to achieve better pay in the fields. During FLOC's boycott of Mt. Olive pickles, anarchists in North Carolina helped by protesting at grocery stores (including trashing Mt. Olive products in the store), painting banners, and offering rides to FLOC organizers who did not have documentation or driver's licenses. The CIW recently won in a boycott against Taco Bell to pay tomato pickers more per pound, and have just launched a fresh boycott against McDonalds hoping to achieve the same goal. I'm sure you can think of a number of ways to help compel McD's to meet their demands.

Comida no Migra—"food, not border patrol"—is a new take on the Food Not Bombs model that is catching on in many communities across the US. Instead of serving lunch or dinner in the park, participants get up early in the morning to bring food to immigrant day laborers at the places where they wait for work. Not only does this provide folks with a little sustenance and good cheer, it also puts observers on site to make sure no one fucks with them. The Minutemen, not knowing what else to do with their pathetic lives, have started protesting at day labor sites to intimidate immigrants. Similarly, it's not unheard-of for immigrants to get picked up by some asshole, work all day, and then not get paid; even worse, there have been incidents in which racists have picked up day laborers and beaten or killed them.

There is a lot of work to be done in the fight for immigrant rights. Whether that means offering childcare to families so that they can attend meetings, translating information on workers' rights into Spanish, or blockading

immigration detention centers, there are many fronts in this battle and all of them are important. It would behoove radicals in the US to study the solidarity work people in Europe⁵ and Australia have done around immigration and asylum seeking. In Australia, activists have repeatedly broken political asylum-seekers out of detention centers and provided them refuge. In Italy several years ago, a group of activists actually dismantled an immigrant detention facility while police looked on helplessly!

There is much we can offer. The fight for immigrant rights is not about us and how radical our politics are. It is about lending our solidarity to people in struggle.

Postscript: May 1, 2006

I woke up this Mayday morning more excited than usual. The air was clear and crisp but still warm enough to sport only a t-shirt. It wasn't the weather I was excited about, though—I was anticipating this country's first nationwide general strike in several decades. The immigrant rights movement had declared this fine spring day "A Day without Immigrants." They took the right wing rhetoric to the effect that "we don't need immigrants" and replied "Ok gringo, if you don't need us, we're not going to go to work or school, nor buy or sell anything on this day. Let's see how well this country runs." Despite a number of spineless Latino "leaders" condemning the strike, saying that it would create a backlash⁶ and send the wrong message, the strike was by and large a stunning success.

Across the country immigrants and their allies walked off the job, skipped school, shuttered the windows of their shops, and refused to spend any money. In Phoenix, thousands of workers took the day off and blockaded the entrances to various Wal-mart and Home Depot stores. Nearly all the chain restaurants in the city had to close or slash their hours due to the strike. Dozens of meatpacking plants, employing thousands of workers, were closed down nationwide due to that industry's reliance on immigrant labor.

Los Angeles was possibly hardest hit, with a good portion of the city completely shut down. The port of LA, one of the country's largest, was ninety percent inactive thanks to the overwhelming majority of truckers refusing to haul goods that day. A small but rowdy portion of the more than one million people who marched for immigrant rights in LA chose to round off the day in running battles with the police, throwing rocks and bottles, dragging debris into the streets, and vandalizing outdoor advertisements. California's state legislature was forced to close when janitors, cafeteria workers, and maintenance people did not show up to work at the capitol building. Meanwhile, across the country, the New York state legislature shut down mid-session when Black and Latino legislators walked out in solidarity with the protest. Back in California, the agricultural counties

5 Check out the No Border network—a massive European immigrants' rights coalition—at www.noborder.org.

6 As if the bill then in Congress that would deport twelve million people and militarize the US-Mexico border wasn't a backlash!

were hit particularly hard, with major corporate farms such as Gallo Wines being forced to halt production for the day.

A riot broke out in Santa Ana, CA when police tried to disperse a crowd of fifteen-hundred that had taken over a major boulevard. The crowd responded by raining bottles and rocks on the cops, who were forced to retreat until a riot squad was brought in to quell the revolt. In New York City, scuffles broke out with police when a crowd thousands strong attempted to take the Brooklyn Bridge.

Nearly half a million people marched through the streets of Chicago, and another one-hundred-thousand marched in Denver, where it was reported that scuffles broke out between protestors and Minutemen counter-protestors. Several hundred cities and small towns across the country experienced demonstrations, many of them the largest those cities had ever seen.

In a sign that the immigrant rights movement may be diversifying, a Department of Homeland Security office in Santa Cruz responsible for deporting immigrants had its windows shattered overnight. According to a message posted on the internet, dozens of banks and "financial institutions" had their locks glued and ATM machines sabotaged in western North Carolina in an apparent move to support the general strike.

South of the border throughout Mexico, hundreds of thousands of people observed a sister day of protest labeled "A Day without a Gringo," in which Mexicans boycotted all US business interests. Mexico City saw a crowd of several thousand gather to listen to Zapatista leader Marcos speak and to show their solidarity with their brothers and sisters struggling north of the border. Afterwards, several hundred demonstrators took a tour of the business district smashing the windows of US-owned banks and restaurants. In Monterey, a group of women gave out free tacos in front of a McDonald's in an effort to support the boycott. Meanwhile, every major border crossing from El Paso to San Diego was shut down by groups of angry Mexican citizens on their side of the border, preventing hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars worth of goods from crossing the border that day.

All in all, this Mayday was no doubt one of the largest, if not the largest, days of protest this country has ever seen. Counting LA, Chicago, Denver, and DC alone, there were nearly two million people in the streets, with an equal or greater number joining in smaller demonstrations across the US. It was a day of protest based on the principles of direct action, the centerpiece of which was a general strike. In many places demonstrators went further, blockading businesses that exploit immigrants and engaging the police in battles when push came to shove.

It is quite fitting that it is immigrants who have brought Mayday back to its former splendor in this country. It was here, in Chicago, that this international day of workers' solidarity was born in the struggle for the eight-hour day. And it was largely radical immigrant workers, many of them anarchists, who gave their tears, sweat, and blood over a century ago fighting for a better way of life.



“ The majority sit quietly and dare to hope. Since you aren't guilty, how can they arrest you? *It's a mistake!* They are already dragging you along by the collar, and you still keep exclaiming to yourself: "It's a mistake! *They'll set things straight and let me out!*" Others are being arrested en masse, and that's a bothersome fact, but in those other cases there is always some dark area: "Maybe *he* was guilty..." But as for you, you are obviously innocent! You still believe that the police and the judicial system are humanly logical institutions: they will set things straight and let you out.

Why, then, should you run away? And how can you resist right then? After all, you'll only make your situation worse; you'll make it more difficult for them to sort out the mistake. And it isn't just that you don't put up any resistance; you even walk down the stairs on tiptoe, as you are ordered to do, so your neighbors won't hear.

And how we burned in the camps later, thinking: What would things have been like if every security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive, and had to say goodbye to his family?

Or if, during periods of mass arrests, as for example in Leningrad, when they arrested a quarter of the entire city, people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang of the downstairs door and at every step on the staircase, but had understood that they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of half a dozen people with axes, hammers, pokers, or whatever else was at hand? After all, you knew ahead of time that those bastards were out at night for no good purpose. And you could be sure ahead of time that you'd be cracking the skull of a cutthroat. Or what about the Black Maria sitting out there on the street with one lonely chauffeur—what if it had been driven off or its tires spiked? The Bureau would very quickly have suffered a shortage of officers and transport and, notwithstanding all of Stalin's thirst, the cursed machine would have ground to a halt!

If . . . If . . . We didn't love freedom enough. We purely and simply *deserved* everything that happened afterward.”

-Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn,
The Gulag Archipelago

The beast has been awakened—snarling—and wants to bite someone soon. We fear, not without reason, that it may be us. At this moment the Underground Armies of Barbarian Anarchists are getting scant attention. Still, we are on a very short list. We have recently been considered a genuine threat to national security. We have yet to be linked in any manner to the hijackers and their supporters, despite the obvious advantages that the reactionaries stand to gain by doing so. This will not last forever. We are being given a grace period, to rally around the flag and return to the fold, or else. They will connect the dots or create the dots to connect, and just because many of us are Americans does not mean we are safe.

Thus speculated the CrimethInc. Warbringer cell in *After the Fall*, an analysis published in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001. Granted, the FBI has not seriously attempted to link the domestic anarchist movement to actual Islamic terror organizations—that would be too much of a stretch, even for the geniuses who testified at Daniel McGowan's detention

hearing that CrimethInc. had published a book about Emma Goldman—but they have taken advantage of the climate of fear to equate sabotage with terrorism, initiating a new campaign against environmental and animal-rights activists. The grace period is over—in May, 2005, the FBI announced that it considers the Earth Liberation Front domestic terror threat number one—and the government hopes to use this opportunity to settle scores with the anarchist movement in general.

This has been coming all along, of course. Every generation that has succeeded in pushing its resistance past rhetoric into effective action has borne the brunt of state repression. There was no way the FBI was going to let the statute of limitations elapse on the old ELF arsons without charging *someone* with them¹. Anyone who thought there could be eco-defense without eco-defendants hadn't thought social struggle all the way through yet.

The first thing we must do in coming to grips with this assault on our community is recognize that it is not an aberration, but something totally predictable and normal—at least, normal in the context of the current absurd social order. Any effective struggle against the system of domination is going to involve arrests, investigations, and prison terms, not to mention violent attacks from both state forces and vigilantes. These are an intrinsic part of our job description as revolutionary anarchists, whatever tactics we employ on an individual basis. Just as it didn't serve us to throw up our hands in dismay when the global context changed on September 11, alarmism can only hurt us now. Let's calmly familiarize ourselves with the possibility that some of us are going to spend time in court and prison, while doing everything we can to prevent this and maintaining a realistic sense of the extent of the current threat.

The Story Thus Far

It is impossible to provide thorough or timely coverage of every aspect of this subject here, so we urge readers to consult these websites: ecoprisoners.org,

¹ In fact, the great majority of environmentalist direct action cases still remain unsolved. The FBI alleges that there have been over 1200 criminal acts carried out by underground activists since 1990, and 150 "eco-terror" investigations are still open.

www.greenscare.org, fbiwitchhunt.org, and especially <http://portland.indymedia.org/en/topic/greenscare/>. For basic context, we'll present a short summary as of this writing, but please don't stop here.

Most activists date the latest wave of repression, popularly termed the "green scare," from December 7, 2005, when the FBI carried out a series of raids around the US. Further arrests and indictments followed until a total of fourteen people were charged with various counts of arson, destruction of property, and conspiracy in the oddly-named "Operation Backfire²." Of these, Joseph Dibee, Josephine Overaker, and Rebecca Rubin are thought to be in hiding outside the US, while William Rodgers allegedly committed suicide in his jail cell on the winter solstice. Stanislas Meyerhoff, Kevin Tubbs, Chelsea Dawn Gerlach, Suzanne Savoie, and Kendall Tankersley are believed to be cooperating with the government—i.e., offering to testify against others in hopes of receiving lighter sentences. The entire case of the FBI seems to have initially been based on the testimony of one heroin addict, Jacob Ferguson, so the decision of others to cooperate with the state is particularly troubling. Daniel McGowan, Jonathan Paul, and Briana Waters are currently free on outrageously high bail³, while Joyanna Zacher and Nathan Block have been denied bail as a result of the testimony of informants. The trial is cartoonishly scheduled for Halloween, October 31, 2006.

The following month, Zachary Jenson, Lauren Weiner and Eric McDavid were

² According to the Oxford American Dictionary, a backfire is "a fire set intentionally to arrest the progress of an approaching fire by creating a burned area in its path, thus depriving the fire of fuel." This seems to confirm that the FBI strategy to suppress dissent is based on the use of agents provocateurs and false allegations, as were COINTELPRO and other programs that ended up backfiring on them.

³ Daniel McGowan, for example, was released into house arrest on \$1.6 million bail. Before his arrest, Daniel worked for a non-profit organization that helps women in domestic abuse situations navigate the legal system. In the rare circumstances in which abusers are arrested and charged (see the article on domestic violence elsewhere in this issue), how high do you think their bail is set? This is a classic example of the way the capitalist system works: violence against individuals is practically accepted, while alleged destruction of property is met with the stiffest possible penalties before even being brought to trial.

arrested in Auburn, California for allegedly conspiring to commit actions on behalf of the ELF. They were set up by an FBI agent provocateur, "Anna," who was sleeping with one of them; apparently she bought bomb-making materials and rented a bugged house for them. "Anna" had been traveling in anarchist circles since summer of 2004, attending two CrimethInc. convergences and a host of other events⁴ (in the muddled words of FBI flunky Nasson Walker, "The s/he has provided information that has been utilized in at least twelve separate anarchist cases."). Lauren was released into house arrest on \$1.2 million bail, and subsequently pleaded guilty and agreed to testify against the others—an infuriating development when her codefendants were starving in isolation cells. Two months later, the very night this article was finished, Zachary was reported to have just done the same thing.

In March, six activists associated with the animal rights group Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, which has driven an animal testing corporation to the brink of bankruptcy, were found guilty on charges of using their website to incite attacks on Huntingdon Life Sciences and their business partners. Some of them face up to eleven years in prison for making use of their supposed right to free speech.

All the while, grand juries—secretive government interrogation organs established to gather information about alleged crimes—have been convened around the country, indicting anyone with connections to activist communities, jailing those who won't speak, and nosing around for further leads in the war on dissent. FBI agents have announced that anarchist groups such as Food Not Bombs and Indymedia are near the top of their terror watch list. Whether or not anarchists are ready for it, we are now being targeted as public enemy number one.

⁴ University of Miami sociology professor Linda Belgrave reports that "Anna" was in Florida posing as a medic at a protest on June 6, 2005; when an elderly woman who was apparently suffering from heat exhaustion approached her for aid, "Anna" offered her a sip of Gatorade, then declined to assist her further. The woman collapsed and an ambulance was called. If any doubt lingered as to whether the FBI is concerned about human life, their insertion of incompetent frauds into medic teams serving law-abiding protestors should settle the matter.



Together, these various cases spell out a cohesive message: *Don't act, you will be caught. Don't associate with dissidents, you will be framed. Don't trust your comrades, you will be infiltrated. Don't publicize others' actions, you will be imprisoned.*

This message is the most important part of the FBI campaign. Even with all the anti-terror funding in the world, they can't infiltrate every anarchist circle and pin charges on every prominent activist. They hope that, by staging this massive display of force, they can intimidate the rest of us into silence and passivity, just as the excessive and unsustainable police presence at the FTAA protests in Miami November 2003 was calculated to put an

end to the era of anarchist mass mobilizations by giving an inflated impression of the power of the state.

The Radical Response

The responses of the anarchist media can be divided into two basic camps. The first camp, exemplified by the more theoretical journals such as *Fifth Estate*, reacted by printing news about the arrests and charges followed by vague afterthoughts to the effect that one must not lose hope. It could be argued that publicizing repression without offering concrete proposals for how to respond assists the FBI in their

work. To their eternal discredit, *Anarchy: A so-called Journal of Desire Armed* set the low-water mark for this sort of thing in implying that the current situation is simply the result of a "fetishization of security culture" in anarchist circles. Thankfully, more action-oriented publications and websites such as *No Compromise* and *The New York Rat* have provided practical information on how to support targeted activists through letter-writing, fund-raising, and solidarity actions. Sad to say, this issue of *Rolling Thunder* falls into the former category, but we hope to remedy that next issue by sharing all the skills for prisoner and defendant support that are being honed in our community right now.

Participation in anarchist legal aid and prisoner support projects has increased over the past months, though not yet enough to exert a great influence over the course of events. This increase is ironic, given that a year ago some of those now targeted by the state were trying to figure out how to reinvigorate prisoner support in North America. The pivotal question now is whether or not anarchist organizers, so used to working in the limited context of their own communities, will be able to muster widespread public outrage over this witch hunt. Without that, this round may end badly for the accused, and that will encourage the authorities to initiate another roundup.

What Does It All Mean?

It is of the utmost importance that those currently being targeted receive the funding and community support necessary for the best possible legal defense. As on every other front, every inch should cost our persecutors as much as possible, whether or not we win individual battles. Good legal support has proven indispensable in keeping mass actions viable; for example, the legal defense and countersuits following the protests against the IMF meeting in Washington, D.C. in 2002 not only cleared hundreds of protesters of charges, but also tied the hands of the D.C. police for several protests to come. The struggle in the courtroom is not the postscript to the struggle in the street, but that struggle conducted by different means; it is not the end of the story unless we give up and

make it so. The same goes for the struggle in prison, for those serving sentences: a community cannot foster long-term commitment to militant struggle unless it supports its prisoners of war; conversely, those prisoners have power to the extent to which their comrades outside maintain enough momentum to exert social and political leverage.

While we're at it, let's postulate a few other lessons from the initial phase of this wave of repression. First, every activist group should be prepared to be targeted, with resources (a lawyer, money, a network of potential supporters) and a game plan ready. Second, in times of increased surveillance and repression, we must be cautious without letting fear immobilize us. We're powerful because we act, and because we're connected to others; being frightened into passivity and isolation can only weaken and endanger us. Third, now more than ever solidarity means constructive criticism, not speculations ("That arson? I bet that was Alphonse—he's into macho tactics") or accusations ("She never does anything—she's just a lot of talk"). You never know what situation a person is in: she might be a wanted fugitive who can't respond to your thoughtless words without endangering herself. Likewise, "innocent" activists may be accused of others' actions, and even go to prison for them; but this is the fault of the government, not on the ones who act, so long as they don't stupidly put others at risk. Finally, much of the evidence in recent cases is based on informants wearing microphones into conversations. Activists should consider the possibility that even trusted companions could be wired; don't ever reminisce needlessly over past illegal actions, don't assume old cases are closed even after a decade of silence, don't work with people you're not sure you'll trust ten years from now. Meet a person's family and friends before joining in illegal activity.

And above all, DON'T TALK TO POLICE OR THE FBI. No matter what, it can never help you. They wouldn't ask you in the first place if they didn't need your help to ruin your life. Remember: *"I am going to remain silent. I would like to speak with an attorney."*

But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.



“They can't get inside you,” she had said. But they could get inside you. There were things, your own acts, from which you could not recover. Something was killed in your breast; burnt out, cauterized out . . .

“Sometimes,” she said, “they threaten you with something—something you can't stand up to, can't even think about. And then you say, ‘Don't do it to me, do it to somebody else, do it to so-and-so.’ And perhaps you might pretend, afterwards, that it was only a trick and that you just said it to make them stop and didn't really mean it. But that isn't true. At the time when it happens you do mean it. You think there's no other way of saving yourself and you're quite ready to save yourself that way. You want it to happen to the other person. You don't give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself.”

“All you care about is yourself,” he echoed.

He was not running or cheering any longer. He was back in the Ministry of Love, with everything forgiven, his soul white as snow. He was in the public dock, confessing everything, implicating everybody. He was walking down the white-tiled corridor, with the feeling of walking in the sunlight, and an armed guard at his back. The long-hoped-for bullet was entering his brain.

But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

—George Orwell at the bitter end of 1984

Brutal assaults from the state should come as no surprise. The most troubling aspect of this story is that some of those arrested—and even some who were not arrested, who are not even facing the threat of life in prison—have agreed to speak to the authorities, putting others at grievous risk.

Imagine the situation of an activist who has agreed to testify against her former comrades. All the experiences that made her an anarchist, from childhood on, come back to haunt her as she betrays her own values and commitments, siding with the bullies, the rapists, the snide executives and sadistic police. Whatever tremendous feats she has accomplished, whatever personal qualities she took pride in, now she will be remembered as a informant and must live with the knowledge that she is one.

In return for the potential of one day rejoining the defeated herd she fought so hard to escape, she must tell herself the same lies that once outraged her: that people are essentially selfish and untrustworthy, that complicity in injustice is inevitable and acceptable, that one can simply look out for number one in a disastrously unsustainable world. She does not even know how much leniency she

can expect; the government can hardly let her off the hook when they've worked so hard to find her. On the other hand, as a snitch, she can be sure that if she goes to prison her fellow inmates will terrorize her. This gives the state even more power over her. Perhaps she considers breaking off collaboration, but to do so would only leave her isolated from all directions; the die is already cast. One can hardly imagine a worse position to be in.

Let us phase out the masked figure lobbing a molotov cocktail as the idealized image of revolt; there is a time for that, and the sooner it comes back around the better, but it is not the ultimate stage of struggle. Henceforth, when we think of resistance at its most courageous and romantic, let us picture someone like ourselves in an interrogation chamber, not masked but handcuffed, being threatened with life and death in captivity and still refusing to render herself and her fellows into her enemies' hands.

Facing the threat of incarceration, we must redefine freedom and safety as factors under our control, not external circumstances. Freedom is not a matter of how many fences happen to be around you, but of following the dictates of your conscience no matter what. Safety is not the condition of being temporarily outside the grasp of your enemies, but of trusting yourself enough to know that your friends will never come to harm because of you and you will never become something you despise.

We Can Win: Success Stories from the Struggle against Repression

Not only is it critical to fight in the courtrooms as well as the streets—it's also possible to win those fights. A brief look at our own recent history shows countless cases in which activists have beaten charges and even come out ahead in counter-suits. Such victories not only discourage our enemies from taking us to court, they can also provide needed resources for further organizing. Throwing up one's hands in panic as soon as someone gets arrested is not only counterproductive, it's also needlessly pessimistic. To offset the doomsaying of the inexperienced and

easily demoralized, let's reflect on a couple recent victories won by activists forced to fight within the legal system.

At the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia summer of 2000, Camilo Viveiros and two others were beaten and arrested by a group of police that included John Timoney, then Police Commissioner of Philadelphia. Charged with numerous felonies (as a rule, you always get charged by the police for whatever they do to you) and demonized as violent extremists, the activists came to be known as the Timoney Three; Camilo himself faced more than thirty-seven years in prison and \$55,000 in fines. They awaited trial for four years, while Timoney jet-setted around the world giving presentations on how to repress protesters and serving as Chief of Police in Miami during the FTAA ministerial in 2003. It seemed certain that anyone charged with assaulting someone in such a position of power was doomed to go to prison. Yet when the trial finally came, Timoney and the other officers made fools of themselves, offering wildly conflicting testimonies; after the defense presented a videotape that revealed the testimony of the police to be mere fabrication, the three were declared innocent of all charges. In an excellent article in the March-April 2006 issue of the *Earth First!* journal, Camilo outlined the lessons of that trial for those currently facing government repression.

One of the most important trials of the preceding generation of environmental activism ended in an unconditional victory over the mendacious, murderous authorities. In 1990, Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney were nearly killed by a car bomb while on a speaking tour to promote resistance to corporate logging. Rather than investigating the bombing, the FBI charged the two with making and transporting bombs. They also took advantage of the opportunity to carry out a nationwide smear campaign against Earth First!, and sent agents to create dossiers on over five hundred activists associated with the organization. To this day, it remains unclear whether the bombing was the work of freelance vigilantes or of the FBI themselves—in the weeks before it, FBI agents instructed the local police on how to make bombs exactly like the one that nearly killed Judi and Darryl. The charges failed to hold up in court, and the two initiated a counter-

suit against the FBI and Oakland Police Department. Although the FBI managed to delay the trial for almost eleven years, during which Judi, who was crippled by the bombing, died of cancer, Darryl and others continued pressing the suit. Finally, in 2002, a jury found the FBI and Oakland Police guilty and ordered them to pay \$4.4 million in damages.

When the struggle in the courtroom fails, there are always other means of resistance. On November 2, 1979, after giving birth in prison only to have her daughter taken away in less than a week, Black freedom fighter Assata Shakur managed one of the most impressive jailbreaks of the era. After almost a year in a West Virginia federal prison for women, surrounded by white supremacists from the Aryan Sisterhood prison gang, Shakur was transferred to the maximum security wing of the Clinton Correctional Center in New Jersey. There she was one of only eight maximum security prisoners held in a small, well-fenced cellblock of their own. The rest of Clinton, including its visiting area, was medium security and not fenced in.

According to news reports, Shakur's escape proceeded as follows: Three men—two black, one white—using bogus driver's licenses and Social Security cards requested visits with Assata four weeks in advance, as was prison policy. Apparently, prison officials never did the requisite background checks. On the day of the escape, the three met in the waiting room at the prison entrance, where they were processed through registration and shuttled in a van to the visiting room in South Hall. One member of the team went ahead of the others. Although there was a sign stating that all visitors would be searched with a hand-held metal detector, he made it through registration without even a pat-down. Meanwhile, the other two men were processed without a search. As these two were being let through the chain-link fences and locked metal doors at the visiting center one of them drew a gun and took the guard hostage. Simultaneously, the man visiting Shakur rushed the control booth, put two pistols to the glass wall, and ordered the officer to open the room's metal door. She obliged.

From there, Shakur and her companions took a third guard hostage and made

it to the parked van. Because only the maximum security section of the prison was fully fenced in, the escape team was able to speed across a grassy meadow to the parking lot of the Hunterdon State School, where they meet two more female accomplices, and split up into a “two-tone blue sedan” and a Ford Maverick. All the guards were released unharmed and the FBI immediately launched a massive hunt. But Shakur disappeared without a trace. For the next five years authorities hunted in vain. Shakur had vanished. Numerous other alleged BLA cadre were busted during those years, including Tupac’s step-father, Mutula Shakur.

In 1984, word came from ninety miles off the coast of Florida: the FBI’s most wanted female fugitive was living in Cuba, working on a masters degree in political science, writing her autobiography, and raising her daughter. She still lives there today.

Our Strategy from Here

This is a somewhat quiet phase of resistance in this country, as everyone waits out the end of the Bush presidency; we can afford to focus a lot of energy on benefit events, prisoner support groups, and public outreach. When things heat up again, we’ll benefit from having done this work, and in the meantime it offers us a rallying point.

In addition to supporting our targeted comrades, we have to protect the infrastructure of our community. In Italy, where the brutal state repression of the past decade has succeeded in paralyzing many of those who bottomlined anarchist projects, police and fascists have been able to shut down some of the social centers, publications, and protest campaigns that formed the lifeblood of a vibrant anarchist movement. We must not allow that to happen here. The government will target those who are most active and visible; when one of us is immobilized by legal problems, it’s up to the rest of us to take up the slack. Our infrastructure is not just made up of formally organized groups; it also consists of and depends on our social networks and culture of resistance. If people cease

to come together at politicized entertainment events and community potlucks, or cease to work through conflicts and share emotional support, that will be just as devastating as the loss of an infoshop or Food Not Bombs.

As for our proactive tactics, how should we adjust them in the light of this offensive? It’s worth pointing out that, with the exception of Rob Thaxton⁵, no anarchist in recent memory has served more than a couple years in prison for participation in mass actions—this is impressive, given the high level of confrontation these have sometimes reached. It seems to be harder to make charges stick in mass action scenarios, perhaps because they involve so many suspects and so much chaos, and also because investigating them at great length would overextend the resources of the state. The police are forced to grab whomever they can—usually not people who had any major role in the actions—and charge them with crimes for which there is little evidence.

Ironically, in the wake of September 11th, anarchists backed off militant mass actions in fear that they would meet stiffer repression. Consequently, we have less leverage and morale—and we are still being targeted as domestic enemy number one! The FBI and the whole apparatus of repression are after us whether or not we skulk around in the shadows, so we may as well organize openly. If we’re all headed for court anyway, we have little to lose, and we stand to gain much-needed visibility and momentum. If enough of us stick our necks out, they can’t target us all, and the more people of all walks of life are familiar with our struggle the more allies we can hope to find. Now is the time to form accessible anarchist structures, to speak publicly about our opposition to capitalism and domination, to organize large-scale anarchist actions. Far from endangering us, this may actually make us *safer*.

As for those who prefer more covert tactics such as arson and sabotage, the clearest lesson of the current phase of repression is that the government is in-

⁵ Rob just finished serving a seven year sentence for throwing a rock at a police officer during a Reclaim the Streets in Eugene, Oregon, June 18th, 1999.

terested above all in mapping networks of resistance⁶. If you are not connected to the current pool of suspects, doing as your conscience dictates is no more dangerous now than it was a decade ago, provided you practice flawless security culture and pick prudent comrades who will never buckle under pressure. Indeed, as the trials of the current defendants play out over the coming months, we will be given valuable insight into how the FBI investigates crimes of this nature. This should, if anything, make it easier for activists to engage safely in militant direct action.

Our enemies are wrong to hypothesize that we can be frightened into passivity. If the prospect of living in a world of domination and despair was bad enough to catalyze us into action, think how much less appealing it is to be silent knowing our comrades can be taken from us at any time. As they escalate this conflict, we can only respond in kind.

⁶ In January 2006, a fifty-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of damaging over a dozen cars and two buildings at an automobile dealership in Newport, Oregon. The buildings were spray painted with the letters “ELF,” and two local news stations had received calls claiming the action in the name of the ELF. However, as reported by the *Newport News Times*, “Police could not establish any connection between MacMurdo and the ELF organization. It is believed his actions were retaliatory in nature and not any kind of political statement.” He was charged with criminal mischief and his bail was set at \$32,500, a miniscule amount by eco-terror standards. What does a guy have to do these days to get charged as an eco-terrorist? Obviously, he has to have the right friends.



“Hey you! Stop!”

Those words marked the beginning of a year and two month journey that will end in three days when I report to the Fort Dix Federal Prison. In the dark, early hours of January 31st, 2005, I found momentum pushing me to go ahead with an action that I had very poorly prepared for. I had come to the Bronx that night after having scouted out an Army recruiting station next to Westchester Square in the eastern part of the borough. With a few lighter-fluid-soaked rags, I hoped to put some small dent in the huge military machine. I failed pretty miserably.

I arrived that night with no lookout and a poorly thought out escape plan. The feelings in my stomach, which I should have seen as a warning to turn back, I interpreted as general nervousness. I would just go ahead with the action and any kinks would work themselves out. After hammering out a section of the glass door of the building, I took out one of the rags, lit it, and tossed it inside on the carpet. I like to think it was the adrenaline that made me think that lighting

the carpet on fire would burn the place down. No matter the reason, I was very, very wrong.

Quickly, but without running, I made my way across the street and was walking down my escape route when I heard those three aforementioned words. I turned, saw two cops coming down the block towards me, and ran. I could hear them running behind me and after half a block I looked over my shoulder and saw both of their guns pointed at me. In retrospect, I should have just taken off because they probably wouldn’t have shot me, but at the time it seemed like I was in imminent danger. This seems like a problem more mental preparation could have solved.

I’m cuffed and led back to the building. The fire department gets called. Detectives get called. One cop, seeing my tattoos, suggests the gang detectives get called (the others ignore him). All the while, pigs were asking me “Why did you do it?” or other questions that implied my guilt. I steadfastly said nothing and just glared at them. At this point, they had taken my jacket and sweater so I was left standing in the bitterly cold air with just a t-shirt and pants on. Even though I was shivering violently and my teeth were chattering so loudly that I could barely hear anything else, no one would give me my coat back.

Within an hour the crime scene was crawling with firefighters and pigs of all ranks, and I was brought to a cop car to sit in. Two cops asked me more dumb questions that I refused to answer, one of them sitting with his baton an inch from my side. When he started talking about his relatives being in the military, I got visions of him cracking my ribs (he didn't). We waited at the scene for a total of maybe three hours before I was finally driven to some precinct building in the Bronx.

After being patted down six or seven more times, I'm finally put in a brightly lit cinder block cell with a single wooden bench. More waiting. Cops sporadically come in and out of the room that the cell is in, to look through paper work relating to my case. Eventually my fingerprints and a photo are taken. Then my stay began to get a bit more interesting. "Hello David, I'm with the FBI."

I had heard cops talking about my case "being transferred to the feds," but most of them shrugged it off. I just kept hoping and hoping that it wouldn't be. I guess that night wasn't my lucky night. He came up to the bars of my cell and asked if I wanted to talk to him. I said, very politely, that I wanted a lawyer first. He tried to convince me for a couple more minutes, I just repeated myself and he left. This back-and-forth happened two more times. After the second time, a couple regular beat cops came in the room and opened up my cell door. "Come on out."

I walked out to them and they led me to this smaller room with the door already open. One of the two cops put on latex gloves. We all walked into the room and they pulled the door closed behind us. One turned to me and hesitantly said, "Okay, take off your pants." I looked up at them and as I painstakingly slowly unbuttoned my jeans, I gave them the most shocked/frightened look I could possibly muster up, and just as I was undoing my zipper one of them said "Okay, never mind, you can go back to your cell." Success.

I don't know if they specifically meant that incident as a way to intimidate me, but not long after, the fed came back again. I said I wanted my lawyer, as always, and then he started to take the "bad cop" approach. He got a little angry and let it be known that he was part of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and that I was facing potential terrorism charges if I didn't talk to him. When the "T-word" was dropped, I'll admit my heart rate quickened. He started talking about prison sentences of 10 or 20 years, and that if I talked now I would make it easier for myself.

Now, I had read so many different 'zines and articles about how talking to the feds or police will never, ever improve your situation. On an intellectual level, I knew that for sure, but my gut was yelling out that I was fucked if I didn't. Before my arrest, I had never speculated about what jurisdiction my crime would be under if I was caught. It never occurred to me that I would have to face federal charges with mandatory minimums. If I had thought out the consequences of being caught, rather than ignoring the possibility, I would have been in much better shape in that prison cell.

After a bit more arguing with the fed, I finally capitulated

and was brought into the interrogation room. The fed that I had met before and his partner asked immediately about my connections with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF). I said I had none. Additionally, there was a long line of questioning, that apparently had come from Army Intelligence, about the group Solidarity. They were asking because I have the word "solidarity" tattooed on my stomach, and they were convinced that meant I was a member of some socialist group based in New York. I hadn't even known that it existed before that. On an embarrassing note, their office ended up getting harassed by the FBI a week after I was arrested, all because of my tattoo. Sorry folks.

In the course of about an hour in this small, brightly lit, windowless room, the feds played the "good cop, bad cop" game a bit in the beginning when I was still talking about my lawyer, but once I told them my story, they quit. I told them about how I did all of the planning and execution of this action alone, how I didn't know anything about other vandalism that had taken place at an army recruiting center that night. They said how the only thing that could really improve my situation was if I agreed to cooperate with them in prosecuting other "radicals." I told them I didn't know anyone else who had radical politics; that I was just a college kid.

If I had mentally prepared myself for the possibility of being caught, I could have dealt with refusing that interrogation a lot better. To understand the consequences of your action and be able to deal with them is priceless. Also, I can't repeat this point enough: talking to cops or feds is never, ever, ever beneficial. Never. The fact that I talked with the feds didn't prevent them from charging me with the harshest crime that they could (Arson 3, with a mandatory minimum of 5 years). I spent the whole rest of my case trying to work around the fact that the feds had a statement from me admitting my guilt.

Once the interrogation was finished, I got brought back to my cell. I stayed there for the next couple hours trying unsuccessfully to sleep, because the light was so bright, and the bench so uncomfortable. Luckily, I wasn't there for much longer. One of the feds (the "bad cop") and one of the cops who had originally arrested me came to my cell and told me we were leaving. I turned around, they slapped cuffs on my wrists, and we walked out of the precinct to the fed's beat-up, unmarked Crown Victoria.

The sunlight was glaring, so I figured it was about mid-day, since they didn't have clocks anywhere in the precinct. The fed sat up front and the cop sat in the back with me. I made some remark about not being able to get my seatbelt on to the fed and he told me to shut up as he lit a cigarette. Then we were off. We headed down the FDR and I looked around at the city and tried to memorize everything I saw because I had no idea when I'd get to see it all again. We made it to the Jacob K. Javits federal building in downtown Manhattan, and the fed parked on the street.

We went up into the FBI offices, where they put all of my information into their computer, including pictures of all my

tattoos. It was sort of funny making up explanations for them, like my answer regarding the meaning of my tattoo of a man throwing a book with a fuse coming out of it at the Federal Reserve building: "It means knowledge is power." Right.

After going through the FBI's offices, I was given to the US Marshals and brought to their separate offices to be put into more computers. All of this took a few hours, with all of the waiting handcuffed to chairs. It was incredibly disorienting, considering I was never told what was going to happen next or where I was or what time it was. In fact, I suddenly found myself handcuffed to a chair in this hallway where I was to meet with a lawyer minutes before seeing a judge.

Following my brief meeting with the attorney, I appeared before a federal judge. The prosecution asked for bail to be set at \$250,000 and my jaw dropped (I didn't realize you only had to put up 10% of that amount). My lawyer countered with something significantly less, and it ended up being set at \$150,000. The Legal Aid lawyer I was assigned was really sweet, so when I turned to him and asked "What now?" he put a hand on my shoulder and said really softly that I had to go to prison for that night. I was quickly led away by the marshals after that.

I was moved from cell to cell for the next few hours, neurotically thinking about the different paths my life could have taken, imagining myself as a typical college student just "playing the game" as my dad always called it. The thought of how stupid it was not to have a lookout often came up. It was frightening, but more because I had no idea what to expect. That's why the procedures for moving prisoners around are made to maximize the feelings of anxiety that stem from not knowing what's coming next. It makes you feel really powerless.

I ended up in a cell with a group of maybe eight men, most in their mid-twenties, all people of color. We were all in shackles, our hands and feet cuffed with a chain connecting the two sets. No one looked angry or upset, even, just exhausted. They all had that weary look in their eye, like they were looking at something in the distance. No one talked. A few people looked at the half-sleeve tattoo I have on my right arm and gave me a half a nod. Then a couple of marshals came and led us to a van with bars on the windows that I found out later would be taking us to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn.

Pulling up to the jail was pretty ominous, given it was the middle of winter, night, and there were high walls all around us with spotlights shining down. Moving in our shackles, we were led into more cold holding cells with other people waiting. This whole experience is about waiting. Then moving somewhere else to wait some more. Over and over again. In one of the first waiting rooms, I was stripped down, had my anus examined, and was given a tan, ill-fitting, itchy jumpsuit and the cheapest shoes I've ever seen. They then gave us the choice of donating our clothes to the prison, or sending them home. I laughed when they told me this, and said that they weren't getting my clothes.

No longer in shackles, me and a bunch of other guys

were moved around some more, given ID cards with our numbers on them, and then finally led up to the cell blocks where we'd be staying. While I was waiting before we got there, some guys in the cell talked to me a bit, I think because I was one of the youngest guys there. They kind of reassured me and said that I should just try not to cry, and I'd do okay. I managed to do exactly that until I got to the cell I was assigned to. The other guy in the cell was already asleep on the bottom bunk, so I awkwardly climbed onto the top bunk, buried my head in my pillow, and bawled until I fell asleep.

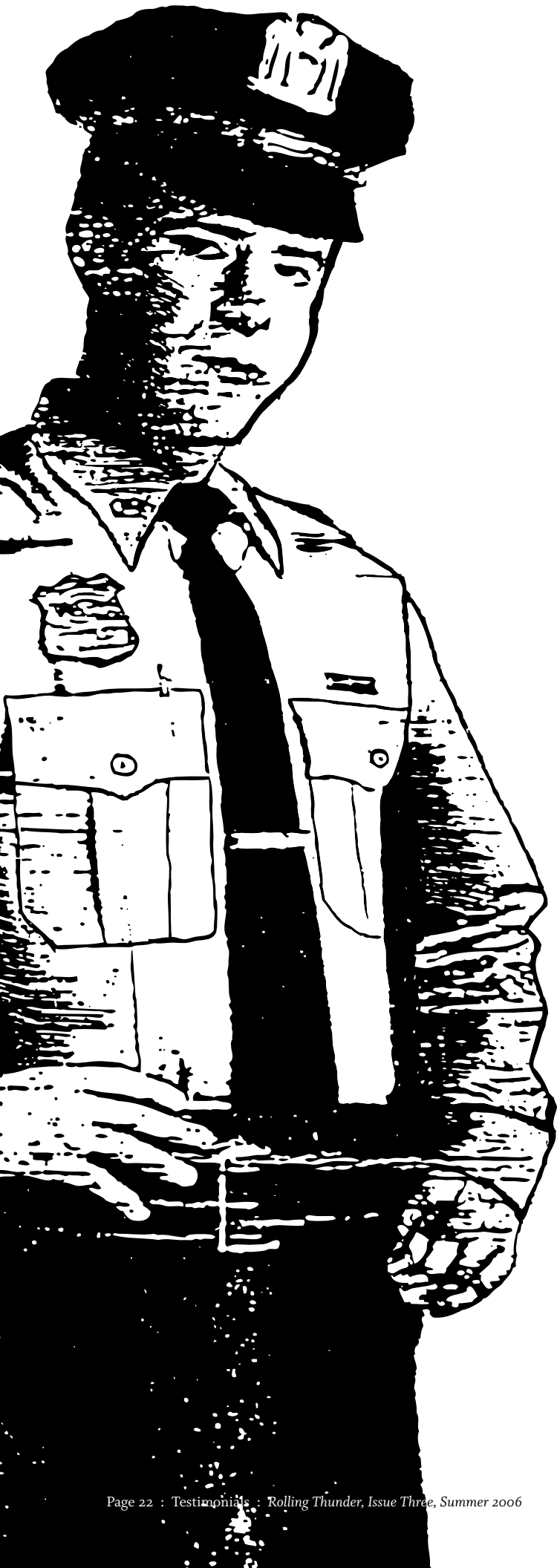
Early in the morning, my cellmate woke me to tell me it was time for a count. He was my age, maybe even a year younger, and seemed as unsure about the whole experience as I did. We both stood by the small window of our cell door as we waited for the guard to come by and make sure we hadn't escaped. Then it was time for breakfast. I asked my cellmate if I actually had to go and he shook his head, so I just went back to sleep. Lunch came and I woke up, looked around, and went to sleep again.

As dinner rolled around, I found that no matter how hard I tried I could not sleep a single second longer. I managed to rouse myself, jump down and use the toothbrush that I'd been given the night before. I finally saw the cell, and it was sparse. A toilet, sink, tiny window, bunk beds and two small lockers giving not much in the way of comfort.

I ventured out into the main hall. It was a big, open space with tables that had the food serving area on the left, a basketball court in a connected room, and circling three quarters of the room were two tiers of cells with two staircases leading from the top tier to the floor. When I came out of my cell, there was a line of inmates snaking around the room waiting for dinner. I jumped in line and once I got to the food realized that the only vegan options were corn and white rice, neither known for their nutritional value. No matter, I didn't have that much of an appetite anyway, after thinking about my legal predicament.

With little else to do after finishing, I pulled up a chair in front of the two televisions, and read the subtitles that were scrolling below. I was dying for something more substantial to read but there was nothing in sight. The whole time I sat there, I was hoping my name was going to be called to tell me I had been bailed out. I had my lawyer's business card with me, so I kept leaving messages on the legal aid voice-mail service asking him what was going on with my case, even though he couldn't have responded.

As I was watching TV, I heard somebody calling "Hey you" in my direction, and when I looked up I saw this guy beckoning me over. A little hesitant, I got up and sat down at a table with him and three other guys. They all had been looking at the tattoo on my arm and wanted to see it up close. All of them were impressed, and started talking about their tattoos. When they got around to asking me what I was in for, I told them that I was accused of setting fire to an Army Recruitment center. They all started cracking up. "Yo, why'd you get your crime tattooed on your arm?" I couldn't help but laugh.



We bullshitted for a couple more hours (mostly them spouting sexist rhetoric) and they gave me advice which amounted to obeying the concept of “doing your own time.” In other words, minding your own business and getting through your sentence without causing a stir. Although I was more interested in finding ways to radicalize prisoners, I just nodded and agreed. While talking to people helped get my mind off my situation, it all came rushing back once it was lights off at ten. Then all I had to occupy myself with was my thoughts, and I inevitably ended up crying into my pillow again until I fell asleep.

By the next day, I had resigned myself to the idea of not getting out on bail. I hadn’t had my name called to go to court or anything, so I guessed that my parents had heard what happened and were disgusted. Memories came rushing back of the time my dad refused to pick me up after I fell asleep at the wheel and wrecked my car. I started trying to find ways to fill the time besides TV. I worked out a little bit in my cell, borrowed a newspaper from someone, left messages for my lawyer, and wandered in circles around the cell block. As far as food went, I kept asking the guards about vegetarian meals and they just ignored me, so I had a tiny piece of breaded chicken along with the soggy, limp vegetables at dinner. I didn’t understand at the time the potential outside support that existed for vegan prisoners. I just figured I was going to starve to death. That night I managed to only cry a little, as I started to get used to the idea of prison.

As it turned out, I wouldn’t have to get used to it. At about five in the morning, the guard came into my room and woke me up to tell me I was going to court that day. I literally jumped out of bed, threw on my shoes and stood in front of my door looking out the window waiting for the guard to come and open it up. An hour later he finally came back and I moved out into the main hall to sit with a few other guys who were going to court that day. It took at least another hour and a half before we were finally all shackled and ready to load into the van to go back to Manhattan.

It was well past noon by the time I stood before the judge. My lawyer informed me that my parents and my sister had been cosigners to my bail and the terms of my release were decided. When my next appearance date was set, concluding the hearing, I figured I would be allowed to go free. On the contrary, I ended up being led back to the cell that I came from. Everyone else in the cell told me how I was definitely going to have to spend the night in prison again because that was normal procedure. Then I just had to wait there, not knowing what was going to happen.

The guards would show up periodically taking someone from the cell with them, and they finally came for me. All of a sudden I was in a room where my literal and figurative chains were taken off and I was given a pile of clothes that my mom had brought from home. A marshal stood outside and kept shouting at me to move faster, but I knew there was nothing he could do to me since I was getting out, so I just ignored him and it felt great.

Finally, as I stepped out of one last door, I saw my mom standing there. I didn’t really know what to say so I just gave her a hug and we walked out. Luckily, my attorney had told her that she should never discuss the case with me so I never had to have any awkward conversations about my actions, which made the ride home a lot easier. Before we could leave, though, we had to stop at my lawyer’s office. There he laid out the whole situation for me. I’d be looking at a mandatory minimum of five years under the federal laws regarding arson. As he explained it to me, the only way to get around that was to agree to inform on people for the FBI. I told him what I had told the feds before: “I don’t know anybody who’s into politics.”

So, when my mom and I left the office that day I was facing a mandatory five years without any apparent way around it. Over the next few months, I came down for various status checks with the judge, but most importantly, I was introduced to Marty Stolar. A friend of a friend called me and said it would serve me well to have Marty as my lawyer, instead of someone from Legal Aid. There was a lot of wrangling with my parents over the issue since they were afraid that Marty would turn it into a “political case.” I was kind of at a loss to understand how it could not be a political case, but I just said that with the Legal Aid attorney, I was just waiting it out until I could start serving my five years. With Marty, at least we’d have a fighting chance of getting a deal.

So, with the tuition money my school had refunded me after they kicked me out (at the request of the ROTC), my family and I retained Marty as my attorney. It was the best decision I’ve ever made. While I worked doing landscaping in Connecticut, Marty was busy hounding the Assistant District Attorney for a plea bargain, which they were initially refusing to even offer. At the same time, my friends from New York were calling me and asking what they could do to help, which at the time wasn’t a lot since Marty wanted to keep everything as low profile as possible. The best support the anarchist community in NYC gave me, though, was making me feel so welcome when I would come down to visit on my days off. There is no way I would have been able to stay strong throughout my case if I hadn’t had such a supportive group of people. With my future being so unsure, and me being isolated in Connecticut, I just wanted to feel like I was not alone with this, which I never did.

After some failed attempts at getting a plea bargain, due to intense resistance at the Washington level, Marty finally had a breakthrough; I would plead guilty to felony “malicious mischief” which didn’t carry a mandatory minimum. The maximum sentence was ten years, though, which would give the judge a lot of leeway. In order to help my chance of getting a short or suspended sentence, Marty and I put together a packet of letters from professors, teachers and others speaking highly of me, as well as a psychological evaluation that said I was on sound mental footing.

Once again, there was more waiting in the dark to deal with in this portion of my case as well. It would be months before I would hear of any new developments from the

government, so I would just do my best to live my life in Connecticut, visiting NYC when I could (the only two regions in which I was allowed to travel). While I was waiting around, I kept hearing reports of anarchists being arrested all around the country, including NYC, as part of the FBI’s intensified campaign against us. Even though I was upset over my own situation, when I heard of people having possible life sentences levied against them, my case didn’t seem so dire. Then, nearly a year after I had first broken the glass of that Army recruiting center, I traveled to downtown Manhattan to appear at my sentencing.

In the course of berating me for my actions, Judge Richard Berman remarked that my plea bargain was the “most extraordinary he had ever seen” and that I probably deserved worse. I ended up receiving a six month sentence, followed by four months of house arrest as part of three years of supervised release, along with some assorted fines. Additionally, we had the judge write that I needed to be given vegan food. The entire time this was being read to me, I thought of the others who had committed crimes not much more effective than mine, but were in the process of serving much more lengthy sentences.

I was lucky in a lot of different ways. I was lucky to be both white and upper middle class, to have the resources available to hire a private lawyer and a family that was willing to let me stay with them as I was weathering this out. I realize that these things are rare and that the outcome of my case was dependent upon them. At the same time, I know that had I not been supported by the anarchist community not only in New York, but in Connecticut and Kansas and other places, my sense of self and direction would have been completely lost. If you are wrapped up in the legal system for committing a politically motivated crime, and you are without a group of people to help you sustain your identity and beliefs, you’ll be adrift.

It’s easy to slip into tunnel vision and lose sight of the bigger picture of worldwide resistance to oppression when you are facing such specific repression. Without that greater picture, though, it’s a lot easier to lose your hope and conviction that led you to commit the act in the first place. Whether you are behind bars or free, you have to place yourself in the context of a broader movement. That’s the only way that you can stay strong when you are completely unaware of what’s going to happen to you. I only hope that others who have been subjected to the repression of the state have the help of their local communities to do exactly that.

note to the FBI:

*you can catch an arsonist
but you can't catch fire
(or can you?)*

Anti-Nationalist Nationalism: The Anti-German Critique and Its All-Too-German Adherents



Deutsch anti-fascism—
—or anti-Deutsch ...ism?

Back in the 1990s, answering mail for the 'zine I used to publish, I noticed that Germans—even German anarchists—responded strangely whenever the conflict between Israel and Palestine came up. Every time anything related to the issue appeared in my 'zine, I got a lengthy letter from an irate German accusing me of Palestinian nationalism or even borderline anti-Semitism. I never once received such a letter from citizens of any other nation, even though the 'zine was distributed as far as Israel, nor did I ever receive one from a Jewish reader of any nationality. From my perspective, the positions in the 'zine on that issue were not particularly controversial: like most others in the anarchist community, I deplored the violence and racism of the Israeli military and the Zionist settler movement, while remaining suspicious of those seeking to capitalize on what I considered understandable Palestinian desperation. At the time, I interpreted these letters as nothing more than an overzealous effort on the part of some Germans to be sensitive about issues affecting Jewish people.

I returned to Europe last fall for the first time in some years. In the course of my travels, I discovered that what had seemed like a minor blind spot in the German radical milieu had evolved into what I regard as a really problematic strain of thought: the “Anti-German Critique,” a reactionary nationalism that masquerades as radical anti-nationalism. For adherents of this ideology, the important thing is not to oppose capitalism, racism, and hierarchy everywhere, but to oppose Germany

and anti-Semitism specifically, even to the extent of supporting other capitalist nations and other forms of racism¹. Revolutions being unforthcoming, Anti-German antifascists settle for supporting the current government of Israel, all the injustices it perpetrates notwithstanding, on account of the injustices perpetrated by its opponents.

At first, I only came across hints of this. Climbing the immense stairwell of the EKH, Vienna’s longstanding squatted social center, I came upon a little exhortation scrawled on the wall: “Support Zionism.” That’s strange, I thought to myself: here, in an anarchist stronghold, graffiti urging people to rally to a cause already receiving more support from the United States than any other government in the world, and responsible for the displacement and repression of an entire population of people of color. In the ageless tradition of marker-bearing squatters, I added a little message of my own: “down with all isms—support people, not nations.”

The following week found me staying

¹ The word racism is used in this text to call attention to the double standards so many white people bring to their considerations of the Palestine/Israel conflict. One must be a racist to compare the living conditions of average Palestinian and Israeli families today and not see injustice, however things stand in the gang war. It’s also impossible to describe the policies of the Israeli government, which disenfranchise, dominate, and humiliate Palestinians the same way apartheid did native Africans in South Africa, as anything less than racist. Some Palestinians might also be described as having racist ideas, but they are hardly in a position to subject Israelis en masse to such dehumanizing treatment.

at a social center in Dresden. Among the other occupants of the space were two Israelis, who—like many young Israelis I had met upon earlier visits to Europe²—were traveling the continent in order to avoid the draft that compels Israelis to serve in the military. I fell to talking politics with one of them. He declined to take a position on the Israel-Palestine conflict—an admirable enough stance for a person coming from such a complicated situation, who had accepted exile rather than risk killing or dying for a cause in which he did not believe.

Others in Germany had not respected his decision, however. He recounted to me his experience traveling for a few days with a German band; when it came out that he was avoiding military service, another person on the tour—a German gentile, otherwise committed to revolutionary politics—was outraged: “You mean you wouldn’t serve to protect your people? You coward!”

Scarcely two days later, during an antifascist action in Leipzig, I had my first brush with Anti-Germans. I’ll spare you the details of my participation in the event—suffice it to say my friends and I spent hours wandering around peering at photocopied maps, followed by a few exhilarating minutes being pursued by riot police through cordoned-off streets

² Among others, I had spent time with members of the band Dir Yassin, an anarchist and anti-Zionist band from Israel. They were interviewed in the anarcho-punk magazine *Profane Existence* in 1998, and with luck you can still find the interview at www.angelfire.com/il/deiryassin/peinter.htm.

and over spiked fences, and in the end the scheduled fascist march was thwarted. After traveling throughout southern and eastern Europe, where fascism is gaining more and more power, it was a real relief to see it being held at bay somewhere. It was not so encouraging, however, to see US, Israeli, and British flags being unloaded at the departure point of an antifascist march.

I went immediately over to the young men unloading them. My German friend had urged me not to waste my time, but whether or not they would listen to me I was curious what they had to say for themselves.

“What are you doing with that flag?” I gestured at the stars and stripes one young fellow was pulling from the truck.

“We are going to march with it.”

“I’m from the United States,” I began, “and I can’t fucking believe you would march with a US flag at this rally. Don’t you know what this flag means?”

“But it is different here! Here, this flag is a symbol of the antifascist struggle.”

“Listen, everywhere in the world that flag represents the same things: Hollywood, Coca-Cola, the absolute power of the capitalist market. What does that have to do with freedom?”

His answer was almost plaintive. “But Britain and the United States beat the German government! They were the only ones who could do it. We carry their flags to remember this.”

“They fought that war with their armies segregated into black and white divisions, and Japanese citizens in internment camps! They weren’t fighting for freedom, but for their own national power—just like in the genocidal wars against the Native Americans! That flag is stained with the blood of millions!”

“But they were the only ones who could stop the Nazis here,” he repeated, almost sheepishly. I hadn’t caught myself a particularly fierce Anti-German.

“That war only happened because people were willing to march under flags in the first place, and we could have won it without flags if people like you didn’t insist on them. If you’re going to march with that flag, count me out, and every antifascist like me in the US would do the same.” I left to find my own route to block the fascists—hence the crazy chase scene involving the spiked fence.



In these pictures you see
(circle all that apply):

- a. a Jewish parent and an innocent child
- b. a Jewish parent and a prospective soldier
- c. an Arab parent and an innocent child
- d. an Arab parent and a potential terrorist

That night, sporting a limp that lasted for weeks, I stayed at a squat in Erfurt. Here, someone had gone around to every poster that had read “Antifascist” and blacked out “fascist” to replace it with “Deutsch.” What kind of people thought it was more important to take a stand against Deutschland than against fascism?

It wasn’t until Hamburg, my last stop in Germany, that I got to have the discussion I’d wanted with a real live Anti-German. It was someone I knew: back in the ‘90s, he had booked my old punk rock band at a social center in Germany. He was thinner now, with a more haughty, intellectual air about him and a pencil-thin moustache.

“Yes,” he was saying, “but your new band is... not so good, yes?” He nodded to me, eyebrows raised.

“We’re a new band,” I replied, gamely. “We’ve just learned new instruments. Over time, I hope we’ll improve. But yes, right now, perhaps we are not so good.”

“Your last band”—he paused for dramatic effect—“did not improve with time, I think. I saw you at the beginning of your last tour, and then at the end. Do you remember?”

“Yes, of course. I agree.” Humility is the better part of celebrity, if you want to last an hour in punk circles.

“You know,” he said, leaning his head back and looking into the middle distance, “I think when I first started to lose interest,

it was when the record came out with the song about Intifada³.”

“Aha!” I exclaimed, practically pounding my fist upon the ubiquitous foosball table—the game is known as “kicker” in Germany, and heaven help any foreigner who takes on even the drunkest of native players. “An Anti-German! I’ve been waiting for this! Let’s get down to business.”

³ The offending song, named “Called Terrorists by Terrorists,” was explained thus in the liner notes: “The title of this song refers to the well-known murder of United Nations mediator Count Folke Bernadotte, who was killed on orders from future Israeli politician Yitzhak Shamir. Bernadotte was appointed in 1948 to negotiate between the Palestinian natives and the Zionists who were attempting to establish an Israeli state in their homeland; he was the former head of the Swedish Red Cross, and had risked his life to save thousands of Jews from concentration camps during the second world war. After months of studying the situation, Bernadotte concluded that in the interests of human decency if the Zionists were to eventually be given sovereignty over a part of Palestine, Palestinian refugees who had been driven out by Zionist violence should be given two options: they should be allowed to return to their stolen lands, or else receive compensation from the new nation of Israel for what had been taken from them. The day after he made his proposal, he was killed by Zionist terrorists carrying out Shamir’s instructions. Years later, supported by a media blackout on the past and the fact that history is always written by the victors, Shamir was able to join other world leaders in referring to the Palestinians who still resisted the racist repression of his regime as ‘terrorists’ without anyone bringing up his own blood-soaked past.”

“Yes, I think there is a lot where we do not agree! But maybe there is no reason even to talk about it.” He darted me a sidelong glance. “For example, you said you live in the woods—you are against technology and civilization, yes? But for us, you know, we think that technology is just something that works. It spreads, because it works.”

He had my complete attention now. “And other peoples who are less, shall we say, advanced...?”

“Ah, I see what you suggest. Yes, some might say that this is a Western-centered view. But people around the world are taking up this lifestyle as fast as they can.”

“But you really can’t argue that everything that spreads is a good thing. You know, a plague also spreads. A plague spreads because it works! And anyway, I am not against all technology—just technologies that promote hierarchy or water down our experience of life. Besides, if everyone lived the way people in Germany and the US live, the planet would be wrecked in one generation.”

“A plague spreads because it works,” he repeated, nodding in slit-eyed appreciation of my clever rejoinder.

I learned later, in my research into Anti-German thought, that indeed, some Anti-German writers conceive of world history in terms of the progress of civilization (i.e., Western civilization), with the implication that other cultures are primitive. This is an old-fashioned Marxist analysis, in which capitalist technocracy is a stage of human evolution that must be passed through on the way to communist utopia; this was the excuse the Bolsheviks and Maoists gave for forcing millions to give up their traditional lifestyles in order to join the machinery of industrial communism. “There is something worse than capitalism and bourgeois society: its barbarous abolition,” writes one Anti-German, and he goes on to make it explicit that he is referring to Arabic nationalism as well as German fascism. Thinking this way makes it easy enough to pose Israel and the United States as the flagships of culture and progress, and those dirty Arabs as the savages to whom the torch of Nazi irrationality and brutality has been passed.

But let’s return to the conversation in Hamburg. “But what are the US flags for in the demonstrations?” I demanded.

“Ah, they are a joke, to wind people up,” he explained. “There are certain people it is important to piss off with these flags. You know, in Germany, the right wing exploits the whole anti-American thing for its own purposes.”

“But isn’t it totally reactionary to carry them just because they bother your enemies? Does that mean you have to embrace the flag of such a destructive, oppressive nation?”

As I discovered later in my studies, if he had been a true hard-line Anti-German he would have explained to me that, because the US provides Israel with the money and guns to hold the entire Middle East at bay and do to the Palestinians as they please, it is not a destructive nation at all, but the foremost protector of peace. Instead, he opted for a more conciliatory approach: “This is a German thing, special to our German context. Here, where the holocaust took place, our most important job is to fight German power, and for this the flags are good.”

I reflected a minute. “Isn’t it very German to claim that in the German context, you have a special privileged perspective that justifies actions that don’t make sense anywhere else?”

As their name implies, Anti-Germans put quite a bit of energy into establishing the special status of the German nation-state as an evil more terrible than any other. Accordingly, my companion launched into an explanation of why the Holocaust happened in Germany, why it could only happen in Germany, and why it was worse than any other atrocity in history. To hear him tell it, the status of the German state as perpetrator of the most terrible of all crimes grants certain special rights and powers of observation to its citizens: knowing anti-Semitism better than anyone else, they can see more clearly than others that it is still the most serious danger facing the world.

I wasn’t able to follow his argument this far, though, as I was still getting over my shock at his dismissal of others’ racist oppression and slaughter. “Wait, what about the extermination of the Native Americans?”

“That was different: that was simply a conflict over land and resources, and it was concluded when the last of the Indians surrendered. The Jews were law-abiding

“The idea that an understanding of genocide, that a memory of holocausts can only lead people to want to dismantle the system is erroneous. The continuing appeal of nationalism suggests that the opposite is true: that an understanding of genocide has led people to mobilize genocidal armies, that the memory of holocausts has led people to perpetuate holocausts. The sensitive poets who remembered the loss, the researchers who documented it, have been like the pure scientists who discovered the structure of the atom. Applied scientists used the discovery to split the atom’s nucleus, to produce weapons which can split every atom’s nucleus; nationalists use the poetry to split and fuse human populations, to mobilize genocidal armies, to perpetrate new holocausts.”

—Fredy Perlman, *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism*

German citizens, and were singled out for purely racist, ideological reasons. You’ll probably say that there were people in the death camps besides the Jews; but the Jews were the real targets of the Shoah⁴.”

“Of course, Jewish people now have the means to talk about their experiences in the death camps, whereas the Romani people, who are still oppressed and dispossessed everywhere, are unable to get a hearing.”

“Don’t you think that sort of rhetoric is a little anti-Semitic, like saying there is a worldwide Jewish conspiracy?”

“It’s very convenient for a gentile like you to call everyone who disagrees anti-Semitic! You’ll recall that the last time I was here with a band that talked about Israel and Palestine, half of us were Jewish. Anyway, what about my earlier question? Isn’t it nationalist to consider Deutsch culture a context unto itself apart from the international context? What ever happened to ‘no borders, no nations’?”

He answered me with a phrase that summarized everything for me: “But that does not take into account our special situation. Here we say, ‘destroy all nations, but Israel last.’”

In this formulation, we arrive at the central fallacy of the pro-Zionist position: the idea that nations protect their citizens. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of

⁴ “Shoah” is a Hebrew word for the Holocaust.

the way state power works. Each government argues to its citizens that it exists to protect them from other governments; but when nations fight, it is not governors that die, but their citizens. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of Israelis have died since the formation of Israel in 1948. Former terrorists such as Shamir and Sharon have risen to power upon waves of fear, assuring their constituents that if anyone is to suffer, it will be Arabs—but their policies have continued to result in the loss of Israeli lives, while they die of old age⁵.

Compared to the aforementioned Romani people, who are still persecuted across the whole of Europe, one might even say the Israelis have it worse: thanks to billions and billions of dollars from the United States, they are able to maintain an artificially high standard of living, but at any moment a suicide bomber may kill them or their loved ones. One must wonder if, given the opportunity, most Romani people would opt for power and luxury beneath the sword of Damocles over their current circumstances. Had they somehow been chosen by destiny to force a people out of their homeland and carry on a US-financed war against their neighbors for the past half-century, the results would surely be similar.

Neither fate, of course, is desirable. If Jews today were in the same situation as the Romani, that would also be a terrible tragedy. But let us not imagine that those are the only two possibilities for survivors of the Holocaust. Such a lack of imagination, that reduces all questions to a matter of picking the lesser of two evils, is at the heart of all the impasses that face us across the world today. It is the same lack of imagination that led people to mobilize around Kerry against Bush, rather than opposing the US government itself; it is the same lack of imagination that induces the Anti-Germans to side with the state of Israel against its enemies,

⁵ With the exception, of course, of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a Zionist Jew for fear he might make progress towards a peaceful and just solution to the conflict. One would think this, if anything, would have turned the Israeli public against militant Zionism—but no, he was succeeded in power by a right wing hardliner.

rather than with us against nationalism and enmity themselves.

To be sure, most of the Jews who have been murdered worldwide over the past six decades have been killed by anti-Semites. Anti-Semitism has flourished among Arabs; much is made of this by the Anti-Germans, who trace Arabic nationalism back to early connections between certain Arabs and German Nazis. But these few connections would have been meaningless if Arabic anti-Semites had not been able to make use of Israeli atrocities in the years that followed to recruit converts. The violence in the Middle East today is not the direct successor to the Nazi Holocaust; rather, it is the result of the violence committed by survivors of that Holocaust, who became abusers in their turn—as survivors of trauma all too often do.

Until now, we have barely touched upon the number of Palestinians and other Arabs who have suffered at the hands of the Israeli state. If one is making an argument for nations as protectors of human beings, one must take all human beings into account, not only the citizens of certain nations—unless one believes the others to be subhuman. Here we can see that the cost of the establishment and perpetuation of the state of Israel has been colossal in terms of the suffering and death of both Israelis and Palestinians.

As anarchists, we can find the explanation for this not in the innate bloodthirstiness and anti-Semitism of Arabs (nor the imperialistic machinations of Jews, for that matter), but in the way nationalists and nation-states pit human beings against one another. For us, the answer is clear: we must struggle against the governments of Israel and Palestine, as well as those of the US, Germany, and all other nations. So long as one intolerant, violent, self-interested government is able to carry on unchallenged, it will be all too easy for rival governments to muster frightened adherents to commit murderous acts as well. So-called pragmatists who insist that we must support one or another of these gangs would have us perpetuate the whole mess into eternity. We can find our solidarity with all Palestinians and Israelis who struggle



against their own rulers on the basis of a recognition of each other's humanity⁶.

Before we conclude, let's revisit the origins and mentality of the Anti-German ideology, as it exemplifies many of the potential pitfalls for radicals in today's global context. Long before the Nazis came to power in Germany, opposition to capitalism and the rich was often directed against caricatures of "the International Jew." Many German nationalists considered the proletariat to be composed of non-Jewish Germans, who were supposedly preyed upon by Jewish money lenders; the impli-



Look at all those Israeli flags! When you hate your country for what it did to others, and therefore must struggle with the question of whether you should hate yourself, identifying with the descendents of those "others" is one solution—and maybe the quickest way to accomplish that is to choose the same enemies they have, even if they did not choose those enemies.

cation was that by getting rid of the Jews, the capitalist system could be symbolically cleansed of its parasites. Anti-Semitism was taken for granted in many revolutionary circles: Bakunin made anti-Semitic remarks, and Mussolini himself started out with an interest in anarchism. Revolutionary working class activism was co-opted by national socialism such as that of Mussolini's blackshirts no less than by nationalist socialism such as that of the Bolsheviks. This checkered heritage makes it easy for the Anti-Germans to read anti-Semitism in the radicalism of their contemporaries, whether it's there or not.

Today, fascists in Germany and other nations have similarly muddled issues by adopting environmentalist and anti-globalization stances. It would be nice to stop at the conclusion that the Anti-Germans have simply been provoked by their enemies into thoughtlessly adopting contradictory positions, but the fact that they have crossed into nationalism and borderline racism suggests something more insidious: that in setting out to resist fascism, they have been infected by it, perhaps as a result of the same German predispositions they aim to oppose. In studying their example, we can recognize the importance of developing a nuanced critique of power relations, but we are also reminded of Nietzsche's dictum that those who do battle with monsters must take care lest they become monsters themselves.

Every holocaust justifies itself on the pretext of protecting innocents. In the US, during the extermination of Native Americans (and, later, during the segregation era), white women were said to be threatened by colored savages; in Nazi Germany, citizens of pure "Aryan blood" were fetishized as victims of a worldwide conspiracy of degenerates. In coming to see the Jewish people as a category—"the" endangered, "the" victims of oppression—rather than committing to a struggle against injustice everywhere and in all forms, the Anti-Germans set the stage for themselves to end as abettors of racist, nationalist war. It is easy to see how German radicals, eager to distance themselves from their nation's anti-Semitic history and desperate to oppose a resurgent fascist movement, might prioritize Jewish concerns over others. But this is sometimes how new atrocities occur: the survivors of persecution become

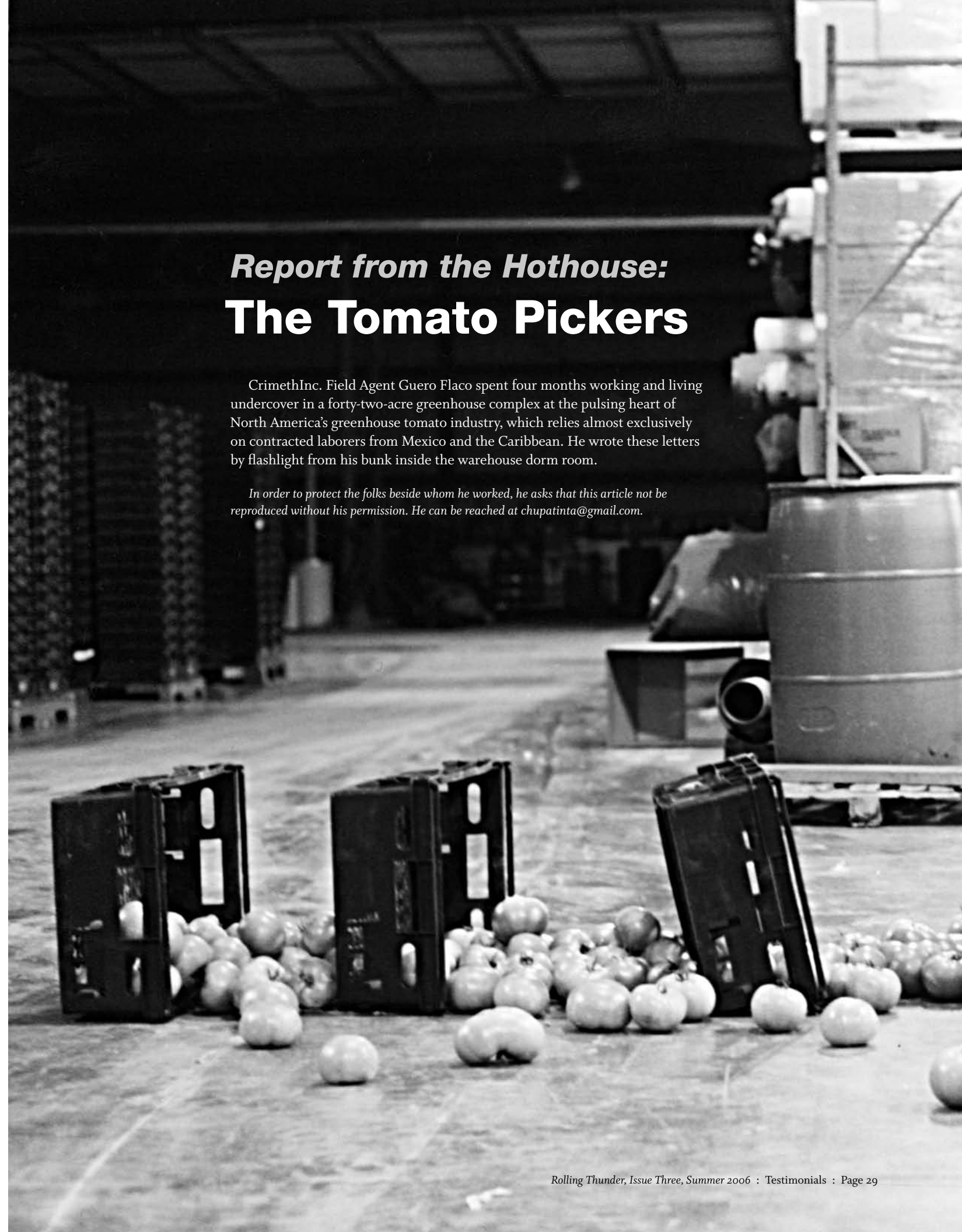
persecutors, and others, anxious to atone for condoning their former persecution, turn a blind eye.

Anti-German partisanship for Israel, once set in motion, did not lack justification and encouragement: there is an entire propaganda industry given over to rationalizing Israeli policy, just as there is another given to taking advantage of it to mobilize Arabic resistance groups. Zionist Israelis are indeed victims in the Israel-Palestine conflict, as are Palestinian suicide bombers; the problem is that both fight not to end the conflict but to win it. The Anti-German phenomenon should remind anarchists not to hurry to pick sides in national and ethnic strife; we must, rather, side with whatever parts of those struggling resonate with our desires to supercede the terms of such conflicts, however buried those parts may be. We can intercede in the manner demonstrated by Rachel Corrie, the US activist killed by a bulldozer of the Israeli Defense Force while fighting to protect Palestinian homes: not so that one side may triumph, but to help human beings survive an inhuman conflict.

All this is complicated, for sure. In a world in which seemingly everybody is lined up on one side or another of such conflicts, it seems those who would take sides with everyone against conflict itself find themselves apart from everyone else, even at odds with them. But again, let us learn from the Anti-Germans: those who resign themselves to the failure of revolutionary prospects turn, defensively, into the very monsters they so recently opposed.

⁶ In that spirit, I'd like to conclude this text with a poem by leading Israeli author Aharon Shabtai:

I, too, have declared war:
You'll need to divert part of the force
deployed to wipe out the Arabs—
to drive them out of their homes
and expropriate their land—
and set it against me.
You've got tanks and planes,
and soldiers by the battalion;
you've got the rams' horns in your hands
with which to rouse the masses;
you've got men to interrogate and torture;
you've got cells for detention.
I have only this heart
with which I give shelter
to an Arab child.
Aim your weaponts at it:
even if you blow it apart
it will always,
always mock you.



Report from the Hothouse: **The Tomato Pickers**

CrimethInc. Field Agent Guero Flaco spent four months working and living undercover in a forty-two-acre greenhouse complex at the pulsing heart of North America's greenhouse tomato industry, which relies almost exclusively on contracted laborers from Mexico and the Caribbean. He wrote these letters by flashlight from his bunk inside the warehouse dorm room.

In order to protect the folks beside whom he worked, he asks that this article not be reproduced without his permission. He can be reached at chupatinta@gmail.com.

Strange Dreams

This place breeds strange dreams. After my first week of work, I dreamt that Sylvio, the owner of the greenhouse, was showing me around. We were inside an enormous warehouse. Sylvio was dressed like Laurence Fishburne in *The Matrix*. His footsteps echoed as he escorted me towards a large radiant doorway. Beyond the doorway was a vast greenhouse that stretched to the horizon in every direction. I could smell tear gas, and the heat was stifling. I saw stooped figures below, tending what I first thought were tomato plants.


I looked more closely and saw that the vines were as thick as trees, and what I thought were tomatoes were large red sacks filled with fluid. Each sack held a human being curled like a fist. They were all unconscious, and fed intravenously on the dreams of some giant machine.

One of the workers looked my way, and spoke to me in a language I didn't understand. He had darker skin than most of the people inside the tomatoes. I looked again at the people in utero and began to recognize friends and family members. I spoke, but couldn't hear my own voice. Sylvio said, *Welcome to the greenhouse of the real*. And I woke up before dawn in a room with twelve bunk beds, in the middle of a warehouse. Someone was blasting *norteño* music, and it was almost time for work.

Living Quarters

I live with forty-four Mexican men in one of the company's three packing warehouses. The same number of Mexicans live in a second warehouse, and Jamaican and Vietnamese workers share rooms in a third. All forty-five of us sleep in four bunkrooms upstairs inside the dimly lit warehouse. There are no dressers in the bunkrooms; we keep our clothes in crates and boxes, or hang them from rods strung to the exposed heating and cooling pipes above our heads.

To get to the washroom and the kitchen, we pass down a long hallway, descend a metal staircase, and cross the warehouse floor. The washroom sports a sign reading "MENS." Directly beside it is a door marked:

 CHEMICAL ROOM / DANGER / KEEP OUT
POISON / CHEMICAL STORAGE.

There are forklifts and golf carts parked here and there on the warehouse floor. Crates and flats are stacked to the ceiling, two or three stories high. It's hot and loud because of the enormous boiler, and flies buzz all around. A single picnic table is pushed against one wall beside two coca cola vending machines that read *THIRSTY?* This is our living room. When the phone on the wall (our only incoming line) receives an incoming call, it automatically switches over to a squealing fax machine after one full ring (it doubles as the company fax line), and automatically hangs up after two. Apart from the payphones in town, this is our only link to the outside world.

The kitchen isn't big enough to accommodate everyone at once, so we take our breaks and our lunch hour in shifts—half of us eat at noon, half at one o'clock. One wall

is lined with propane stoves; another with fridges, washing machines, and dryers. A third wall sports a long trough sink, and the fourth, rows of tomato crates stacked on shelves, where we keep our food, utensils, pots and pans. There are no cupboards, and due to the lack of space, about a third of us have to keep our groceries and utensils on the floor.

Our kitchen, incidentally, is infested with cockroaches. They nest under the tablecloths and packages of food on the floor, and skitter over and through the crates where we store our food. This morning one crawled out of my corn flakes as I was about to pour the milk in. Not without sympathy, my friend Kiko, who sits across from me at breakfast, remarked that cockroaches have been around since the time of the dinosaurs and would be here long after humans had disappeared, so I might as well get used to them. Accepting the wisdom of his remark, I ate my cereal, not wanting to start the day hungry.

We work ten to twelve hours a day, except on Sundays, when we usually work a half day. In the vines we chatter back and forth as we move quickly up and down the rows, picking tomatoes and clipping off the attached stems. The Mexican workers teach me Spanish and I teach them English—a few useful words and phrases here and there. As the day wears on and the temperature rises, we gradually fall into a silence broken only by the clipping of stems, the rattle of carts, and the roar of the forklift engine.

This particular greenhouse, I should add, is nowhere near the worst of the workplaces that employ migrant farm labor. My co-workers aren't hit, or kicked, or ridiculed at work. We are almost always paid on time. As long as we work fast, no one yells at us to work faster. We never have to work a 20-hour day, or a 100-hour week. As many of my co-workers can testify from first-hand experience, all of these things have happened on other farms and greenhouses not so far from here. Constantly reminding themselves of this fact, my co-workers keep their heads down and endure the overcrowding, the infested kitchen, and a host of other small and great indignities. *It could be worse* is the constant refrain, as I know it is on most farms. The knowledge that they could be sent somewhere *worse* does more to keep workers in line than any threat the boss could make.

Palm Pilot Panopticon

Maybe it's the heat or the long hours, but it isn't only in my dreams that this place reminds me of *The Matrix*—a place where computers have achieved complete and seamless control over human life. I feel like I've taken the red pill and broken free of something, seeing for the first time the gears of the machinery of modern life that usually remain hidden from those of us privileged enough to be ignorant of such things.

This is by far the most technologically sophisticated workplace I've ever seen. The environment inside the greenhouse is entirely computer-controlled, heated with steam and hot water from an immense system of boilers and pipes and cooled with fans and mechanized louvers. The tomato vines grow unnaturally long, sustained by compli-

cated life-support systems: automatically watered by tubes, rooted in "Horticultural Rock Wool," doused in chemicals, stretched and swollen by fertilizers, strung up on strings and pruned of leaves, stripped of suckers and pollinated by bees that live in cardboard box hives stacked here and there like miniature condominium developments. The hives inevitably dwindle as the bees succumb to the pesticides; they are replaced by new stacks of cardboard box hives.

The entire complex is effectively under 24-hour lockdown. We use round magnetic "keys" to enter and leave the warehouse, and a piercing alarm sounds whenever a door is held open too long. Every employee is given a plastic timecard, and we swipe in and out at the beginning and end of every workday. A sign beside the time box warns us, NO PUNCH NO PAY.

Most ominous of all, we are all issued palm pilots sealed in aqua packs. We wear them on strings attached to our belts or slung over our shoulders, and as we work we record everything we do on them. Every morning I enter my employee number, my task, and the greenhouse and row number. The thing then starts timing me, and continues until I tell it I've finished the row, or taken a break, or switched to something else. Then, if I'm picking, I enter how many crates I've picked. Crate by crate, row by row, every minute of the day is precisely accounted for.

After work each day we line up to place our palm pilots on metal pads in front of the office, from which the data we've generated is uploaded to some giant database. Our machines (this is what we call them—*nuestras maquinas*) then give us an "efficiency rating" expressed as a percentage. "109," my machine might blip at the end of a particularly hard day, meaning I've performed 109 percent of some arbitrary measure of an acceptable day's work, as determined by some English-speaker in a business suit.

When the "machines" were first introduced a few months ago, before I started working here, the supervisor told the workers that whoever had the best efficiency rating each week would get a paid day off. It's difficult to convey how threatening this "incentive" was to the workers' culture of solidarity. In the vines, everyone moves at more or less

the same pace (except me—I bust my clumsy, privileged ass and can rarely keep up at the best of times). The faster workers slow down to help the slower workers with their rows, and everyone emerges almost simultaneously, with their crates full of tomatoes. It's "even keel" like this on every farm I've visited, whatever the task, and it makes a lot of sense: in this strange land where few people understand the boss's instructions, and where anyone can be (and occasionally is) sent back to Mexico, the last thing people want to do is to draw unnecessary attention to themselves by standing out as faster or slower than the rest.

But for a short while under the new palm pilot regime, the protective anonymity of moving at even keel was destroyed, and workers ran themselves ragged to improve their percentage, or (more commonly) began to resent those who were making the rest look bad by chasing unrealistic scores. Finally, everyone got together and refused to use the palm pilots at all. An uneasy truce reigned for a few days, until management retaliated by sending six suspected leaders back to Mexico and revoking the prize for the fastest worker. Similarly, at another greenhouse nearby, the workers went on strike when the palm pilots were introduced, and 23 workers were sent home to Mexico. In both cases, the workers who were sent home were replaced with contract workers from Jamaica—a blatant (and effective) divide-and-conquer tactic. And in both cases, the remaining workers caved in and began to use the palm pilots again.

Curiously, though, the six Jamaican workers who now work here were never given palm pilots. When I ask my friend Christopher why not, he tells me bluntly that it's "because they know we would smash them." Maybe so. It's a bloody shame the Mexicans didn't do that.

The palm pilots are so effective that we rarely see (and almost never hear from) the English-speaking white folks in charge. Human supervision becomes almost irrelevant. The control is complete, seamless, and practically invisible. A regime like this is a corporate Human Resource department's dream. It's Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, gone digital. And sooner or later, I swear on my aqua pack, it's coming to a workplace near you.



The Only *Guero* in the Greenhouse Considers His Career Options

I am the only *guero* (whitey) in the entire greenhouse. I speak Spanish with the Mexicans, English with the Jamaicans, and French with a Vietnamese man in his seventies everyone calls *tio* (“uncle”). *Tio* was once, long ago, an officer in the French colonial army. He spent five years in a Viet Cong prison. Every morning he and I greet each other the same way: we say *bonjour*, I ask him *comment ça va, monsieur?*, and he invariably replies, with a toothless grin, *ça va mieux*—it’s getting better.

As more and more of the Mexicans finish their eight-month contracts and return to their homes for a four-month “vacation” with their families (most will return next year because there is no work for them at home), the greenhouse begins to hire more casual workers to take their places—often “illegals” brought in by contractors who skim a portion of their wages. In the last few weeks, I’ve worked alongside Indonesians, Somalians, Salvadorans, and a few others who just stare right through me if I’m thick enough to ask them where they are from.

It’s very hard for my co-workers to understand why an English-speaking *guero* would work here at all—everyone here is either a foreigner or a boss. I’m an anomaly. I’ve frequently been offered sincere and kindly career advice: “You should go look for work in the city; I bet you could find a good factory job there,” or “Come to Jamaica—it’s beautiful, and you could get a good teaching job there *real easy*.” Or, when Christopher learns that I’ve been chosen to spray pesticide on the tomatoes (with inadequate protection, of course), he tells me with the same bitter irony he brings to every situation, “Them no good, man; that’s black man’s work.” And then, I suppose in an effort to console me, he adds, “You keep working here for a couple of years, they’ll make you a supervisor.” I’m having a hard time convincing people that I never want to be a supervisor. It’s especially hard to explain to the illegals what the hell I’m doing here, someone with citizenship, spraying pesticide in a t-shirt and a painters’ mask like the others do.

It’s a fair question, really, but a difficult one to answer. I’m here, I suppose, to learn something about responsibility and dignity—because the people around me exemplify them all in ways I’m only beginning to understand.

Talking Babel

In the kitchen after dinner one night we got to talking about languages—a worthy topic, given how many of them are spoken in the greenhouse. Someone asked why people speak so many different languages, so my friend Guadalupe told us the story of the Tower of Babel: how, once upon a time, everyone used to speak the same language, but then some, in their arrogance, tried to build a tower to heaven, so God smashed the tower and scattered the people across the face of the earth and made their words strange to one another.

“And that,” Lupe concluded authoritatively, “is why people speak different languages.”

It occurred to me that the Bible, as usual, had got it backwards, so I asked my *compañeros* if they had heard the one about the Greenhouse of Sylvio. They shook their heads *no*, unsure what I would say next. I told them how, once upon a time, there was a very rich man who wanted to build a greenhouse as big as the whole world. He brought workers from every nation to work on it, and treated them very badly. He tried to keep them divided with threats and rumors, but the workers started talking and complaining together, more and more each day, until one fine day they all understood each other’s words. Then, with one voice, they smashed the greenhouse to the ground and built a city of laughing and dancing from its ruins. (Blame the silly phrase *a city of laughing and dancing* on my patchy bunk-house Spanish.)

In the silence that greeted my story, the propane burners on the stove continued to throw their small, focused flames, long after all the tortillas had been heated.

“No,” Lupe announced finally, with a grin. “I hadn’t heard that one.”

A Possible Course of Action

The selective and temporary importing of cheap labor to the affluent North has been accelerating rapidly for years, and this invisible industrial workforce in the so-called “post-industrial” North is increasingly the engine driving wealth accumulation. Legal mechanisms limit their freedom of mobility and enforce compliance with threats of dismissal and deportation, while vast amounts of wealth are extracted from their labor while they struggle, far from their families and communities, against fatigue, depression, loneliness, isolation, discrimination, and worse. At the same time, their availability drives down wages for more established and organized sectors of the working class.

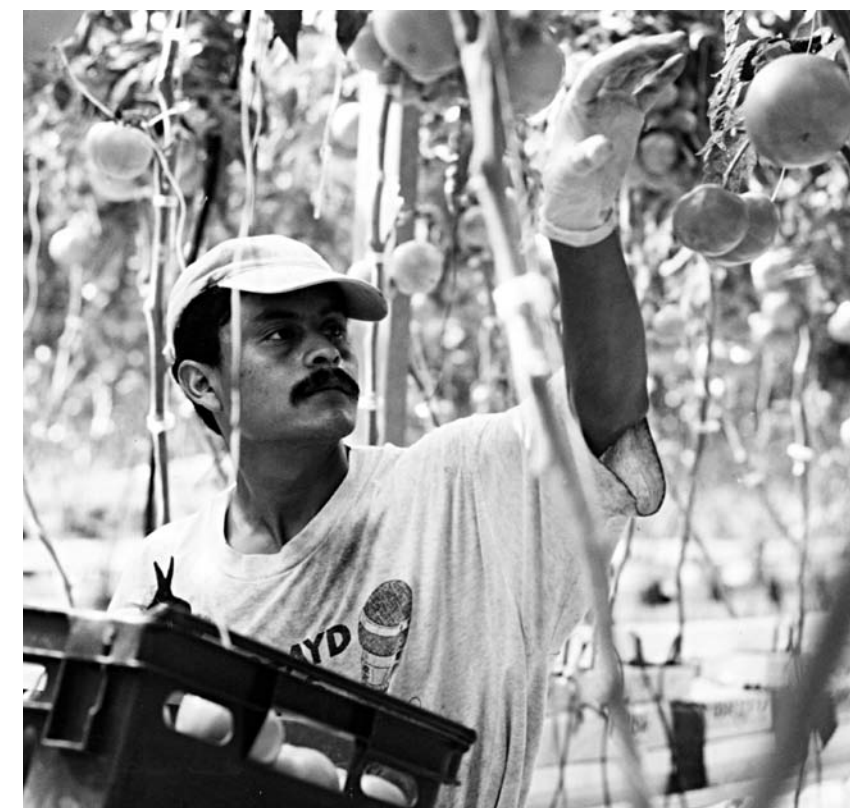
I wish I could say that shutting down workplaces like this one is as easy as a few bouts of direct action under the cover of darkness. Greenhouses, made of thin plastic, are stupidly easy targets for sabotage, and so are the electronic systems used to run them. But as worthy a target as these vegetable factories may be, cutting a few holes in a plastic wall or dropping a few palm pilots into rain barrels barely makes a dint in the company’s bottom line, and won’t change either the structure of oppression or the economic system that has workers from the global South (their local economies decimated by neo-liberalism) clamoring for work in the North. The precarity of their situation, carefully manufactured at every step along the way, is precisely what keeps the system humming.

Pardon my cheek for presuming to prescribe a possible course of action, but if we hope to change any of this, that precarity (as infuriatingly intangible as it is) must be our first target. If you’ve got a few months to spare, and don’t mind trading in your comfort for a glimpse of the reality most folks can’t easily escape, here’s a suggestion for what you can do.

Go where migrant farm workers or factory workers are (hint: they’re everywhere, even if you’ve grown accustomed



to not seeing them), and spend a season planting tobacco, plucking chickens, or harvesting field vegetables. Learn the language. Make friends with your co-workers. For every minute you spend talking, spend at least ten minutes listening. Think hard about what it means to be an ally. Don’t take yourself too seriously; remember that you experience things differently, knowing you can leave at any time. Take note of every time your privilege smoothes your way for you, of every gift you are given. Don’t let your politics be a filter for making sense of your experiences; let your interactions with the people around you inform your politics. Share what you learn with friends and family back home. Sharpen your indignation at the injustices you witness, and twist your useless First World guilt into a vow to live differently. The workers—the ones who are there because they have no choice—will do the rest. You’d do well to learn to speak their language so that when the time comes for them to call on their allies, you’ll understand what they’re asking of you.





The Craziest Walk Ever

A Tour of Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001

“Have you heard the news? Those motherfuckers just killed somebody in Italy!”

“It’ll be our turn next in DC. And Genoa is nothing compared to the heart of the beast. It’s fucking war, and somebody’s probably gonna die.”

Time always gives one a strange sense of perspective on events. Nothing has fundamentally changed. The enemy is still the same, and so is what I want, which is of course anarchy. Five years ago we were ready to die. We weren’t really sure what that meant but I’m pretty sure it was at least a distant cousin to what embittered young men and women in Palestine feel. I don’t know. Those who die for the cause don’t come back to tell the tales.

Down to the nitty-gritty. It was September 11th, 2001, and I was hungry, dirty, exhausted, and utterly fucking happy. I awoke in my dusty sleeping bag on the encrusted (in what, I dared not ask) floor of an intensely strange little basement, beside two of my comrades, who were still asleep. Not only was I hungry, but I also had to piss, ideally in some sort of vaguely hygienic container. Next door—although to be exact there was no literal door, only a sort of a metaphysical door where a more corporeal door should have stood—I could hear the rough grunting, panting, slapping, and moaning of two people engaging in an extremely vocal act of passionate revolutionary love... and blocking my path to the bathroom and the kitchen.

While the details escape me, and in fact I’m pretty sure I never knew them to begin with, I had somehow ended up in this apartment preparing for total war against capital and the state. It was a pretty big apartment, enough to fit about a dozen scouts for the upcoming anti-IMF protests. Our job was simple—we were making propaganda for everyone who was showing up: posters, leaflets, wheatpasting material, and the inevitable badly photocopied and confusing map of downtown D.C. We hoped to improve that last one.

So, I was utterly fucking happy. Often life is a hard thing, full of difficult decisions, personal tragedies, and the dreary weariness of a meaningless job. In more cheery cases there was no job, and the task was figuring out where the nearest dumpster with some vegetables was and a place to put my sleeping bag that wouldn’t involve getting too wet. Yet here I was, with both of those problems solved. The basement apartment, offered to us through shadowy means by a friend of a friend of a friend, was the perfect hideout. It was within spitting distance of the White House and most of downtown, and like all good hideouts had a distinct lack of windows—it was camouflaged by anonymity in a dehumanizing tenement block. The food problem was solved by the cornucopia of dumpsters in the nearby suburbs, where a certain organic food chain was literally overflowing with bread products and vegetables that were barely beginning the process of decomposition—and large amounts of decidedly vegan-unfriendly sugary treats. Dumpster crack, we called it.

And I was addicted.

I began engaging in all sorts of lewd fantasies about my upcoming breakfast. Orange juice and bagels—with those little onion bits that I normally detest—would be perfect. Some sugary smashed pastries would be perfect. I could imagine bathing in orange juice and building castles of bagels. The noises next door finally came to a dramatic conclusion. Despite their temporary nonviolent blockade of my route to the kitchen, I was so overwhelmingly filled with feelings of good will for my fellow woman and man (except cops and politicians, fuck those bastards!), including the two lovebirds next door, that I could not even hold my delayed breakfast against them.

The woman in particular impressed me. I had previously written her off as a sort of well-meaning yet utterly clueless reformist who had been giving workshops on nonviolence a few months ago, yet she seemed to have transformed overnight into a bloodthirsty revolutionary with a plethora of creative—and decidedly not non-violent—ideas about how we could defend ourselves against the inevitable clash with the D.C. police. Love and revolution were in the air, and I tiptoed to the kitchen.

I am not normally a morning person. That day, I was so brimming with happiness that I felt positively empowered. After all, when in life is the mission so simple? People were coming to try to shut down the center of neo-liberal depravity that is the IMF, and we had to make sure they all had maps to get to wherever they needed to get to. Thanks to my magical Kinko’s free copy card, which a friend had manufactured by drilling a little hole into it, and the benign negligence—or was it complicity?—of Kinko’s employees, my job was pretty easy. My simple life was absolutely overflowing with meaning—but I needed help. After all, maybe fifty thousand people were going to show up to this protest, and that was more photocopies than I could make single-handedly. In the kitchen I concocted a fantasy in a fit of anarchist evangelism: I would go to the Starbucks only a block away, sit down next to the first pasty, tired, middle-aged bureaucrat of the Global Capitalist Death Machine I could find and say, “Look, buddy. I know you hate your job, waking up nine-to-five and being a minor accomplice to all sorts of nastiness. Secretly, you realize your life is meaningless. Drop that cappuccino right now, ‘cause I got meaning to spare. Forget this whole capitalist job deathtrap and join me in Kinko’s.”

My reverie was interrupted by the dull roar of the trash compactor. Fuck, and no one had taken out the trash! I grabbed the black trash bag and stumbled out the door into the bright sunlit morning. I waited by the trashcan, and within a few minutes the smiling trash collector, wearing an orange jumper, took the trash off my hands. He leaned over, as if to tell me a secret:

“You heard, then? They just drove an airplane into the World Trade Center!”

“No shit! Well, you know, things are crazy nowadays.”

I just smiled and waved goodbye to the trashman. Man, the things people say in the morning. It was sort of inter-

esting how he, the legitimate morning trashman, had his counterpart in me, the illegitimate midnight trashman. Our jobs had the same slogan: Get the Trash. I only hoped that I had lightened his load by removing enough of the trash from circulation to make up for the trash that I had just given him. Anyways, I was never one to let a good breakfast or even meaningful anticapitalist activity get in the way of going back to sleep in the morning. So, I tiptoed past the post-coital embrace of my pals, and slithered back into my sleeping bag.

“Get up, man! You gotta run upstairs!”

Just as I was about to get back to bed, the crazy toothless landlord peers in and wakes me up, putting me in a distinctly bad mood. I feign grogginess, and he all but drags me out of my sleeping bag.

“They just blew up the World Trade Center! There’s bombs going off!”

To think that I had doubted the trashman. There went my peaceful morning. Not realizing the full impact of these events, I grabbed another crusty bagel and shambled upstairs with my comrades to our landlord’s personal enclave, where, surrounded by cigarette butts and porn magazines, he had a small TV perched strategically on the file cabinet across from his desk. Yes, the trashman was right. On the screen there appeared to be some sort of James Bond movie playing. Or perhaps War of the Worlds. Except that the news reporter seemed to be actually panicking, uncertain how to comprehend, much less provide an advertising-friendly light chatter about a thousand people being incinerated. The building was on fire, and there was definitely some sort of gaping hole in the World Trade Center. Then I heard a shriek from the news reporter. The tower just crumbled in place, like a demolition. Except that it was full of people, many of whom had been running the financial apparatus of global capitalism, pushing the buttons that calculated the numbers written in the blood of the poor.

Emphasis on the past tense.

I sat transfixed by the spectacle on the television. There were undoubtedly any number of janitors and cooks and window washers in there, even if they were in the minority. No, this was not good. I wasn’t horrified, really, not sad, not scared, not surprised; this was just not something that I had expected to happen this morning. My brain was racing, yet somehow a useful analysis of the destruction of a sizeable portion of New York City evaded me. The landlord, still in his boxers, just stood there slack-jawed. Behind me, the two lovebirds started cheering, including the person I had met just a few months earlier giving a nonviolence training. How times change!

“Well, I sure don’t think that was us. I mean, no one told me about that. That was someone who was really fucking angry. Uh, Palestinians?”

My logic is less than razor sharp in the morning. My good friend Colin had a serious and grave look upon his face.

“Those kids are not thinking clearly,” he said, rolling his eyes in the lovebirds’ direction. “We’ve got to figure out what to do, and quick. This definitely changes our plans.”

Before Colin could get another word in, a report came across the screen that the Pentagon had been hit with an airplane. There was a quick cut to the Pentagon, which now featured a burning hole in its side.

More cheers erupted.

“Jesus Christ. That’s not too far away. I mean I can’t say they didn’t have it coming. The Pentagon’s full of fucking murderers. But this is getting a little too close for comfort.”

Suddenly my razor-sharp deductive powers put it together that there might be even more planes in the sky that could be crashing into other parts of the U.S. power complex. It seemed quite logical that another plane was going to crash into the White House, from which so much sheer horror was perpetuated throughout the world. We were literally a few blocks from the White House. Fuck, the plane could miss and hit us! What about the debris? I wasn’t exactly sure what happened when a plane crashed into a city, but it seemed likely to hold ramifications for everyone nearby. All of downtown D.C. was more or less worthy of being destroyed in the eyes of many people on the planet, and we were unlucky enough to be in the middle of downtown. I wished I could put a black flag on the roof so whoever the fuck was behind this would know we were anarchists trying to fight capitalism and the state, who had no great love for the U.S. government—so please don’t kill us, thank you very much!

The television at this point was stuck on what appeared to be an infinite loop of the planes ramming into the World Trade Center, over and over and over again. Just in case we had missed it. The news reporters were babbling and stammering. They mentioned that the death counts could be five thousand, ten thousand, fifty thousand. Another airplane had apparently been shot down somewhere near Pittsburgh. Fuck, we had friends in Pittsburgh. Then they mentioned that there was something like thirty more planes flying around unaccounted for somewhere.

“We’ve gotta get out of here.”

“Look, my family has some land out of state. We can go there and just lay low,” suggested the former nonviolence trainer.

“And I have a small car, we can fit everyone inside.” someone else chirped up. The landlord was glued to the screen, entranced by the images of endlessly repeating explosions. He seemed oblivious to our conversation.

“Fuck, but we have to drive by the White House—is there a way out of the city from here without going near it or the Pentagon? Who’s got a fucking map of D.C.?”

Well, we had several thousand of them, albeit as photocopies with housing locations for out-of-town activists on them. Oh yeah, and these maps also listed major corporate and government centers with little notes about their heinous deeds and connections to corporate globalization. There was going to be a clampdown.

“We gotta burn the maps.” Colin read my mind.

The news now had footage of how the collapse of the World Trade Center appeared from the streets of New York. There were people covered in grey dust, screaming, running

down the street away from clouds of debris bellowing from the collapse. People were dying somewhere in those clouds, and there was a lot of screaming on the television. Then, on the blue scrollbar, it was announced that there were bombs going off outside the State Department.

“Wait a sec, if we try to drive out of here, what if a bomb goes off near our car?”

“There are going to be thousands and thousands of people all trying to get out of D.C.—it’s gonna be a complete clusterfuck. What if they target that?”

“Now we know how the Palestinians feel every day,” said Colin. It was probably the most sensible moment of the entire conversation.

After the hubbub had settled down, we decided it would be best to stay put for the time being. One of us went downstairs to burn everything a police officer could hold against us. It was unclear what the future held, but martial law definitely seemed a none-too-remote possibility.

Lacking anything better to do, we all sat around and watched television. The news reporters and television commentators had gained some sense of composure by this time, and had begun pointing fingers.

“The government suspects Middle Eastern terrorist Osama Bin Laden, whose terrorist group previously attempted to blow up the World Trade Center.”

It sort of surprised me that there was no commentary by our esteemed leader George W. Bush, or really anyone at all in a position of power. They must have all been hiding beneath their desks. The television just kept looping the segment of the World Trade Center falling, over and over again. We started flipping channels, and the same picture was on almost every channel. Death tolls varied widely, but seemed to be in the thousands at least. There were more reports of the car bombs going off outside the State Department and maybe elsewhere in D.C. The news occasionally flashed an aerial picture of the Pentagon pierced with a burning hole. Apparently the corporate media had already realized that even the American public had less sympathy with the Pentagon than with the World Trade Center.

“We have to do something other than just sit here.” Colin growled.

“How many chances do you get in your life to see the Pentagon on fire?” I asked.

“Let’s walk to the Pentagon,” said Colin, always a fan of walking.

Not a bad idea. How many chances do you get to see the Pentagon on fire? I had always sort of imagined triumphant anarchists storming the Pentagon, driving out the murderous number-crunchers and paper-pushers. Probably we would light things on fire—I mean, how else to dispose of a place that had caused so many affronts to human dignity? Here we were and someone else had set the Pentagon on fire. I wished that whoever had been behind the attacks had at least noticed that we had a rather important—dare I say penultimate, as the momentum for it seemed to be increasing at an exponential rate in the wake of successes in Seattle and Quebec—protest coming up in mid-October.



If they could have only waited a few weeks, we might have overthrown the U.S. government in downtown D.C. itself. Alas, the U.S. anti-globalization movement was apparently not on the radar of whoever had done this.

“Yeah, I’ll go with you.”

Why not? After all, there was nothing we could do to affect the situation by lurking about in the basement, and given the number of sketchy characters that had been hanging around, I would not have been terribly surprised if the police knew it was there. This would be a great excuse to clamp down on us anarchists. If they knew that a quorum of us could be found a few blocks from the White House we would be up shit creek—our little hideout was not nearly as safe as my companions seemed to think. Or maybe I was just being paranoid. Either way, a walk outside could only help. So Colin and I got our things together, and headed out into the light of day.

It was still pretty early, and the sun was shining. The streets around our block were strangely eerie and silent. I guessed that everyone was inside glued to their televisions, as paralyzed as we had been just moments earlier. We walked around the corner, and within minutes approached downtown D.C. Total panic was in full swing. All sorts of white men in suits, no longer drinking their lattes as usual as they calmly ordered the full-scale rape of our planet, were trying desperately to get the fuck out of their buildings. It was extremely bizarre watching out-of-shape capitalists trying to hoof it down the sterile streets, stumbling and

panting and heaving. Secretaries and the occasional woman commissar were now hamstrung by their skirts and high heels, unable to break into the full panicking run that some of their male colleagues and females with more sensible footwear had managed to attain.

We walked by the White House, and I half expected it to burst into flames before my eyes. Instead I got to witness the evacuation of the White House cooking staff. I saw a chef with a huge Swedish Chef hat perched precariously upon his head break into full gallop, presumably leaving the Little Boy Prince of the World to finish cooking his own steaks and foie gras. The whole thing didn’t look like tragedy, it looked liked absurdist comedy. I half expected Bush to come running out in his underwear clutching hundred dollar bills in his hands. Whatever security forces were supposed to be present were clearly also busy getting the fuck out of there and were not in any way attempting to maintain law and order. It struck me that now would also be the perfect time to rob a bank.

We passed through downtown and kept walking. We kept running into people panicking, and yet in other parts of D.C. life was going on as normal. On blocks containing government buildings, it was like an outtake from the Soon-To-Be-Upcoming Revolution with employees running desperately down the streets. In the poorer neighborhoods, however, it seemed like life was more or less continuing as usual, although most businesses were shut as everyone was home watching events unfold on television. Overall, it was

a fine autumn day, and the pure strangeness of the situation seemed to dispel some of the inhuman gloom that lays upon Washington, D.C.

We headed south until we finally arrived at the end of the road. On the other side of the river lay the Crystal City, the complex of glass-encased high-rise apartment buildings and fancy hotels that served the military bureaucracy of the Pentagon. On the other side, I could see columns of smoke rising up from the Pentagon. Reaching in my pocket, I discovered an old instant camera. I took it out and snatched a picture of the Pentagon on fire. I thought to myself, damn, this really is a once in a life-time event. Well, hopefully twice in a lifetime. I asked Colin if he wouldn't mind taking our picture together in front of the burning Pentagon. So, we snapped a quick picture. No one saw us. I later lost the camera before developing the film, which is probably for the best.

As we approached the dreadful hulk of the Pentagon, full scale insanity became apparent around us. There was absolutely no order here. From what appeared to be one of the main doors to the building, Pentagon officials poured out in a mad rush, grasping their suitcases with looks of shock and awe upon their faces. At the center from which the world's most fearsome military was directed, no one had any control. Smoke continued to billow ominously from the wreckage; the building was clearly burning up,

and most employees appeared to have no fucking clue what was going on and were basically pissing their pants. It was sort of ironic seeing terror in the eyes of the functionaries of an establishment that had inflicted so much terror upon so many people throughout the world for so long. Were they really surprised that their misdeeds had come back to haunt them? Oh, how the mighty had fallen.

We watched the madness from afar at first, then crept closer. There weren't even any cops in front of the entrance to the Pentagon, no barrier between us and the burning building. We, two avowed anarchists, were only a few yards from the Pentagon, an institution we had both committed our lives to destroying. This institution was on fire, and all of the people who worked there were running away from it. A brilliant thought came upon us. This was our once-in-a-lifetime chance. We could run into the Pentagon. Who knows what we could find? We could probably destroy computers, steal files, wreak all sorts of havoc. With no police presence, we might even be able to get away. A quick look at Colin and it was clear he was thinking the same thing. So, I leaned over to his ear and whispered to him.

"Should we do it?"

"I'm not sure. It might be the only chance we ever get."

We stood there mulling over the prospect. We took a few deep breaths, taking in the destruction around us. Running into the Pentagon to do something—anything—did seem

tempting, especially as one employee ran out with a handful of papers and a laptop. It took all I had not to turn around and punch him in the face. These fucking murderers were actually surprised that they were getting a taste of their own medicine! By this time the police had finally arrived and started trying to cordon off the Pentagon. Our chance was gone. It occurred to me that we were in a precarious position, since we appeared to be the only people present who were not running away.

"We don't have the slightest excuse to be here. I mean, fuck, we don't even have an excuse to be in D.C."

We really didn't. What would the police do if they ID'd us? We were both your proverbial out-of-town agitators with arrest records at various anti-government events. Wasn't it a bit mysterious that we just happened to be hanging around the Pentagon at the very moment it burst into flames? If they put us in the back of a car would anyone ever see us again? This moment would be a ripe time to pick off two smelly weird-looking guys with Charles Manson beards creeping around the Pentagon while it was on fire.

"Fuck, we should get out of here. They're gonna shut this whole fucking area down."

That was observant—the police, who had been conspicuous in their absence for the entire duration of the madness around the Pentagon, had finally arrived. They seemed dazed and confused, but I expected they were going to start asking questions any minute, and I sure didn't want my name associated with any of this—much less my camera with the picture of me in front of the burning building! Fuck! We walked coolly away, until we were just out of sight. What if we were stopped on down the road? Looking around to make sure no one could see us, we began a mad sprint to get as fucking far away from the Pentagon as we could.

The way back was not nearly as easy as the way there. Like a beast that was slowly awakening from being dealt a near-lethal blow while asleep, the machinery of the state began kicking into action, confused and angry. The buzz of police sirens could be heard in the distance. We could see the road we had walked there in the distance, too, and it was swarming with police.

There was an entrance to the interstate nearby, so we ran up onto it as quickly as we could. What followed was straight out of a post-apocalyptic zombie movie: not a soul was on the highway, and we walked straight down the middle of I-95 for what seemed to be an eternity without a car in sight. In the distance smoke was rising, bodies were burning, police sirens were wailing, but we had found the straight and narrow road the fuck out of Dodge. The highways crossed over each other like twisting snakes, and again, we heard the sirens howling behind us. Did they see us? Were they coming for us? Were they busy with something else? Maybe they were closing the highway down! We scrambled off the road into the traditional hiding spot of robbers, outlaws, and anarchists: bushes. We waited for the coast to clear, hearts beating out of our chests and God-speed You Black Emperor! blasting in our heads. When the sirens passed, we ran out of the bushes and straight up an

embankment. At the top of the grassy embankment was a fence, which we leapt over in desperation, only to end up in Arlington cemetery! Judas Fucking Priest!

We ran, through the countless rows of white crosses standing mute in the autumn sun. We ran through the flags and the fields, with the lamentations of legions of restless ghosts blowing in the wind beneath our feet. We ran until we came to a hill, and we climbed the hill. We climbed the hill, and there, sitting at the top, were two men. Their clothes were even more tattered than our own. Their bodies were even filthier than our own. Their beards were even more Mansonesque than our own. They were swilling malt liquor from a forty-ounce bottle in a brown paper bag. They were homebums, and they were watching the Pentagon burn.

"Sit down, brother," one of them suggested. The other extended his arm, his meaty fist clutching the forty, wordlessly offering me a swig from it.

I shook my head. "Thanks, man, but we're lost. How in fuck do we get out of here?"

The first homebum gave us surprisingly lucid directions out of the cemetery, and we turned to leave. At the last moment he looked me dead in the eye and intoned, "But be careful. There's guns, guns, GUNS IN THE GRAVEYARD!"

With this last piece of disquieting information ringing in my ears, we fled back down the hill. The homebum—who had filled a role in my afternoon comparable to that played by the one-eyed oracle in ancient Greek tragedy—proved more or less accurate in his assessment of the local geography. We crawled through more bushes, jumped over more fences, and somehow ended up in the idyllic backyard of a suburban home.

At least now we just appeared to be two maniacs who were getting ready to break into a house, as opposed to two maniacs at the scene of a national catastrophe surrounded by police. We crept around the yard to the road and beheld a great crowd standing at the top of an embankment overlooking the highway. Not a soul looked at us or even seemed to notice us. Instead, with the air of a macabre neighborhood barbeque, everyone from small children to grandmothers was staring into the distance, watching the Pentagon burn. It seemed almost festive; people did not appear upset—perhaps surprised, if anything—and most seemed happier than your average employees at work. It was, after all, a pleasant autumn day. There seemed to be a spirit of racial harmony that contrasted sharply with the usual terrorizing racism of Washington, D.C. Black, Latino, Anglo-Saxon—it didn't matter, everyone was in their front yards watching the Pentagon burn. In almost dead silence, with a bit of small-talk here and there. After a moment, we bid adieu to the assembled neighbors and continued down the street.

We were totally disoriented at this point, with little idea where we were or how to get home. It was getting later in the evening, and I was still feeling a little paranoid. It seemed that if we ran around the streets of Arlington, VA too much longer while full-scale chaos was in motion, we were almost guaranteed some trouble. While I usually



welcome a tussle with the cops, today was not going to be a good day for that sort of thing. So, what to do?

Cheap Chinese! There are few better things to eat after a pleasant walk to watch the Pentagon burn than cheap Chinese food. Usually vegetarian, often vegan, and sometimes even without MSG, we also suspected that the restaurants offering this fare might be ideal for laying low. And around the corner was a classic Chinese restaurant in one of the rundown strip malls that litter America, and the Chinese joint was—miracle of miracles—still open for business this September the 11th. I emptied my pockets, counted the quarters and nickels, and managed to scrape together enough for some vegetables and rice. The lone employee seemed to be happy some customers had appeared, and didn't even appear to find us strange. An irrepressible fan of Chinese hot mustard, I covered my portion in the yellow tangy substance and turned around to watch the TV.

It seemed as if nothing had changed from this morning. Our dear President George W. Bush was still nowhere to be seen. Instead, the footage of the falling towers (with shots of the Pentagon infrequently intermixed) was being played over and over again as if with the intention of inducing hypnosis. The talking heads of the media seemed to be somewhat more in control of themselves than earlier, and were now repeating "Middle Eastern terrorists" and "Bin Laden" over and over again, although there seemed to be no concrete evidence yet.

I was relieved that they were not mentioning the word "anarchists," as this gave us a little time. However, it was pretty clear over noodles and fortune cookies that this would be the perfect excuse for a witch hunt against us and anyone else the government considered a threat. Colin and I sat, mostly in stony silence, trying to figure out the implications of this day for the movement—and how the hell we were going to get home.

"We should eat slowly. Look, we're pretty safe here. No one knows we're here. We can just sit here and eat until it gets dark and we can get home."

"Fuck, that's going to be a while yet."

"Well, better safe than sorry."

When night finally began to fall, we bid a fond adieu to our host at the Chinese joint and proceeded down the road. We asked the few pedestrians we encountered for directions, and eventually found our way home through endless alleys and bridges and back streets. When we arrived at our little hideout, we looked around to make sure we weren't being followed, then employed various comical anti-surveillance techniques that mostly involved walking in circles, before finally stepping inside. Apparently the landlord had gone back into his porn- and cigar-laden cocoon, and our friends were inside chomping at the bit as they planned their getaway.

Colin and I argued that we had to compose some sort of anarchist response, and quick. There was only going to be a short window of time between September 11th and the inevitable government clampdown. If we could manage to pull together a quick response, we could at least get our

views out there. People were confused and terrified, easily manipulated by the heartless mindfuckers who were surely going to launch some sort of war in the not-so-distant future. Right at that moment, however, the US power structure was utterly paralyzed. If we had our act together, we could do something inspiring and historic then and there before the government even had time to respond with its witch hunts and wars.

There were a host of practical questions to discuss: should we carry on with the IMF protests, should we flee underground before the roundups began, should we go to the public with our own answers about why some people had hated the US government and corporations enough to ram a plane into their headquarters? There was so much to do, and so little time.

"When those bastards declare war, we gotta march in the streets of Washington, IMF or not, just to show people everywhere that we're against the fucking U.S. government, too."

"Then we really gotta get the fuck out of dodge."

"Man, that was the craziest fucking walk I've ever taken."

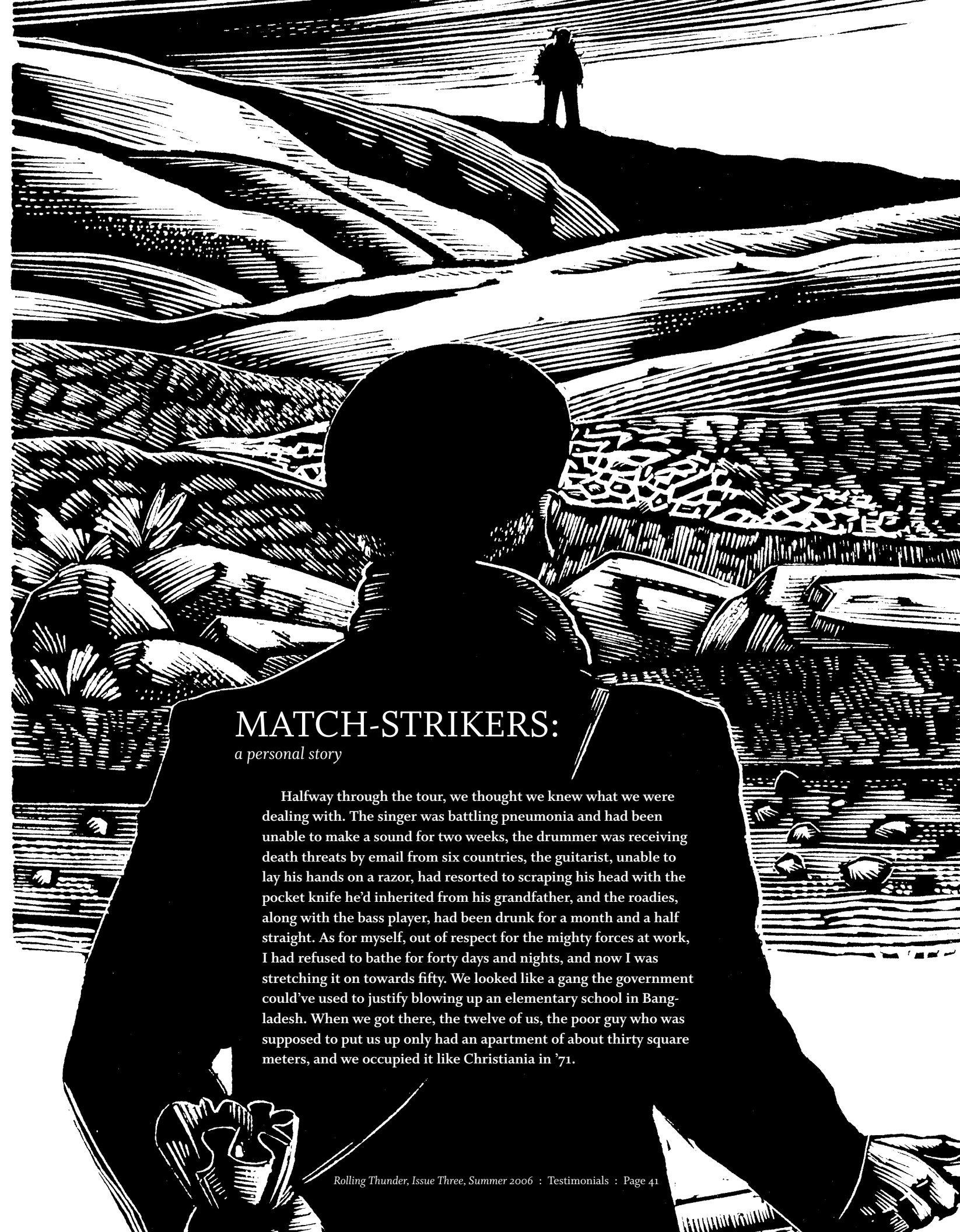
Five years ago we were ready to die. Or more precisely, to be murdered in cold blood by the state, as had happened to Carlo Giuliani in Genoa. That was a price worth paying for our dreams of a more compassionate world. We thought, not entirely without reason, that they were going to shoot at us, and we were headed to the front lines anyway, to lay down our lives if it came to that. And then history outpaced us—not, I fear, for the last time—and our thunder was stolen by people with drastically less concern for human life than ourselves.

Is the world a better place? Are we any closer to the revolutionary situation we dream of as a result of the decisions we have made or failed to make? And at whose feet can be lain responsibility for this sorry state of affairs, and for all the bloodshed and sorrow that took place that day and the days before it and the days after? Ours, theirs, the corporations', the governments'? Five years ago we were ready to die. For better or for worse, there is no doubt that the years to come will provide us with many more opportunities to ask ourselves if that is still the case.

Gentle reader, the rest is up to you.

Postscript

Shortly after September 11, 2001, a cell of the Crime-thInc. Ex-Workers' Collective produced a text entitled "After the Fall" in an attempt to analyze the causes and ramifications of the events of that morning. It can still be found in the "Miscellaneous" section of the reading library at www.crimethinc.com. Those days—and these—demanded much more than words in a newspaper or on a computer screen, but we still stand by this piece of writing as possibly the most clearheaded and prescient statement to come out of the anarchist milieu at that time. The future is still unwritten.



MATCH-STRIKERS:

a personal story

Halfway through the tour, we thought we knew what we were dealing with. The singer was battling pneumonia and had been unable to make a sound for two weeks, the drummer was receiving death threats by email from six countries, the guitarist, unable to lay his hands on a razor, had resorted to scraping his head with the pocket knife he'd inherited from his grandfather, and the roadies, along with the bass player, had been drunk for a month and a half straight. As for myself, out of respect for the mighty forces at work, I had refused to bathe for forty days and nights, and now I was stretching it on towards fifty. We looked like a gang the government could've used to justify blowing up an elementary school in Bangladesh. When we got there, the twelve of us, the poor guy who was supposed to put us up only had an apartment of about thirty square meters, and we occupied it like Christiania in '71.

Such was the state of affairs upon my arriving in Stockholm for the first time. The kid who let us crash at his place was incredibly generous. We had been forced to cancel almost two weeks of shows and he allowed us the use of his flat in the meantime. It was November. Conditions were ripe for pneumonia, or worse. The cold driving rain and perpetual darkness kept us, for the most part, inside. We were constantly on the edge of calling the whole thing off. Beaten back by the pack ice, like polar explorers. People were calling home nightly without calling cards, checking out the possibilities of new housing arrangements and the costs of changing flights; never mind that we had shows booked across Europe all the way to New Years. The poor singer, in his madness, had taken to staring at himself in the mirror for several hours a day opening and closing his mouth, trying to push air through his acrid, broken vocal cords. After a week and a half of this behavior, I approached him.

“Can I take a shit in here?” I asked.

“Did you hear that?” he looked at me with feral eyes, not even whispering, barely breathing the words.

“Hear what?”

“I made a noise.”

“Oh,” I thought, “Okay.”

“I made a low note,” he said, and smiled. “I’ve been in here working on it for a little while.” His eyes sung a thousand verses. When he wanted to say something, he would lean in really close to your ear, breathing and moving his mouth. Then he would step a few feet back and wave his hands wildly for emphasis.

“Well,” I said, “that’s one small step for [name of individual], one giant leap for [band in question].”

“No, for mankind!” he breathed and gestured excitedly.

“You know, we’re in a small bathroom near the end of the world...” I said. Back then, Stockholm really was quite close to the end of the world—that is to say, near Russia.

“Exactly!” he breathed, “give me my voice back and I can move mountains!” and marched out into the hallway, pen and notebook in hand, practically vibrating.

I sat down, thinking, “These are the good times. The times when mountains move within people and one might walk away a completely different person.”

He had spent the previous forty-eight hours coming to terms with the permanent loss of his voice. I was so wrapped up in my own world, I spent most of my time on the living room floor, with my head under a pillow, listening through headphones to recordings of Kerouac readings. Like newborns, we sucked whatever teats were offered us.

Beneath this mangled exterior was a pure beating heart, pumping raw, thirsty blood. We were out after the new world, and having taken a beating, were now willing to endure anything to get a closer look. We knew it was there. We would’ve set ourselves on fire if we’d thought it would get us a step closer to our goals. Living then was like standing in the center of a mob, pushing forward. Pushing the people in front of you, able only to see the small sliver of ground at your feet, and if you were lucky the person behind you

“Having cleared the hurdle of problem definition, we were in flight over solution. Some of us stumbled and fell; I may be one of those who did. Whether anyone is ever destined to land is another thing; but that’s not what’s important, is it? There’s a joy and a glory in the take off, I think, and a joy and a glory in the fall too. The simple fact that our arcs exist is enough to keep us facing forward, or at least it should be. You never know what will catch, but you can damn well keep your tinderbox tidy and keep trying.”

—the physicist Richard Feynman in a letter to Arline Greenbaum, the love of his life, three years before beginning work on the Manhattan Project

would have her hands on your back and you’d be pushing together. And lo, if there were five or six people around you pushing, you could feel like you were getting somewhere, like the mob was moving. All the while you coveted the sacred dream of the mob, the stone-faced mob, breaking into an all-out run across a grassy plain like buffalo, or through city streets like waters through a sluice. Beyond that, no one could imagine anything.

The kid said—the kid we were staying with, I mean, Sven we’ll call him—Sven said to me one night, “Let me know if you get bored and I’ll drum up some excitement.”

“Okay,” I replied, “I’m bored.”

Sven scratched his head. It seemed for a minute like he wasn’t really prepared for an immediate response.

Fifteen minutes later I was chasing him down a long damp wooden staircase somewhere in Stockholm. “We’re going to go down into the hole when we get to the bottom of the stairs,” he had said, and we were off.

We were practically running down, but it was a long way. I looked around at the ordinary Stockholm night. Street lights, damp pavement reflecting, passers-by, standers-around, all quite normal. We neared the bottom of the stairs; I didn’t see any holes. “I have no idea where this man is taking me,” I said to myself, “I have no idea what is going to happen next!” and the notion thrilled me. Sven turned a quick corner after the last step and dashed into the wet bushes; I followed. We kept low and moved quick, dashed along onto a rooftop; I slipped and fell and covered myself in slick mud. The kid behind me helped me up. Then we came to the hole: the rabbit hole.

We were putting our backs into it. And as we labored, if a labor it can be called, we were making friends. As anyone who has ever truly invested themselves in a project knows, the connections you make in these acts are of some of the strongest and most durable stuff. Emboldened and in motion, we can ask things of each other and share things with each other that would normally, in the kind of relationships you can get away with under the system’s watchful eye, be stopped at the gate. Daring and intimacy are confiscated at the security checkpoint before you can even enter the marketplace where our personal relationships are negotiated. But we had broken through and were out now, and

the echoes of our old socialization sounded to us like the croakings of dinosaurs. We were slitting connections as quickly as we were making them, and whole foundations for the choices of our lives were evolving. We were charging, wielding a newfound power and control over our decisions and over our lives that somehow seemed to encompass the entire world. Our words and gestures were laced with an authentic passion that in some ways resembled a fatalism. *Do not embrace us lightly; we will be with you forever.* But for godsakes embrace us!

And thankfully, there were some who did. So I was never alone; through all the treacherous twists and turns of the road, I was never without a hand to hold. And though no one single person could have followed me the whole way—indeed I shed the most meaningful relationships of my life like they were sacks of sand—there was always someone there willing to hold me for a time. And if I try to trace the trajectory of my life, the boldest strokes across the grid go back to those tremulous days with those maniacs in those bread boxes of apartments, across Europe, across America. More importantly, that epoch, the crazy time we had in Stockholm, became the context for choices that truly took me off the map and one step closer to the world we craved, however undefined it remained... and the thirst in my blood was quenched, for the time being.

Sven switched on his headlamp and went under first. The “hole” turned out to be a gap between the soft wet ground and the roof of a small underground chasm. I slid myself between them and my feet dangled; I jumped and landed square a foot or so below. It was dark and dirty; there was various and sundry trash around, old spray-paint cans and soda bottles. We peered out into the darkness like little gollums. For a moment I thought I was surrounded by stalactites and stalagmites, until I clicked on the flashlight someone in the band had loaned me and saw that I was standing in a thin chamber between a cinderblock building and the rocky cliff that had been bombed to make way for it. The gap above was covered by a tin roof, but kids had been down there mining the place. It looked almost lived-in.

We followed the chamber, descending. I felt very much like Alice. We followed a sort of path through holes and cracks, boulders and crevasses. The shadows were deep enough to contain god-knows-what. I felt everything with my hands and feet, not really believing my eyes. We passed walls of concrete, the only straight lines to be found, covered top to bottom with weird street-art posters. Now and then a strange howling echoed softly through the cave, like the death rattle of some forgotten Babylon. After a few minutes of twists and turns, we came to a ladder. When I poked my head through the hole at the top of the ladder, I saw the others standing on the first flat surface we had encountered.

Two years after my first visit, I returned to Stockholm. I had kept in touch with the kid with the apartment and followed his story through letters. I was tired of traveling with bands. I wanted to get out into the space beyond tourism, beyond the van, beyond the shows and the scene. Having sensed the infinity out there, I wanted to cast myself into

it and find a spinning raw abandon that would take me out of the world. By then Sven had participated in starting a revolutionary collective which had as its specific goal to rip out the dead heart of the world and electrify it. When he invited me up to participate, I set a course for Stockholm. Through a contact at a major airline, I obtained for myself a companion-traveler ticket good for a return trip to Amsterdam. I would hitch in three legs to Stockholm, by way of Hamburg and Copenhagen. I would clear my inner vision, open my third eye, I would use whatever postures available, I would whirl. And when in the end I came face to face with my reflection in the ice wall, I would dive into it and be transformed. Whatever you are out there, bring it on.

We walked a few hundred feet into a space where the cave opened up and there were wall paintings. Beautiful. There was an old table with small candles. Sven lit them and sat down. He told us the story of an artist who organized a show down there and got a hundred people into that cave. He told us it was a “real art gallery.” I had the sensation of being buried under a million pounds of rock and soil, at the center of a great mountain—but we were only in the caves surrounding the subway in Stockholm, Sweden. We sat for a while and listened to the trains.

Sven guided us around a little. We climbed up to a platform from which we could watch the trains zoom below us. We heard the echo of voices; we heard feet shifting on the platform, people waiting for their trains, discussing and joking amongst themselves. We were in the very meat of the city, watching the black blood of civilization course through its dirty veins. We smelled the drugs it ingested. We felt the tremors of its secret longings. Then we crawled out through a service duct into the bright backstage of the station. We walked quickly through the gate and were out again on the pavement. Then boom, the effect hit me. We sprinted out through the street. There was a light drizzle. It was wonderland at last.

So I quit my job, which seems to be how all such journeys as these begin. I was working nightshift at a hotel, carrying bags and bringing people toothbrushes at two in the morning. Thankless. The manager and I parted on good terms: I told him he could shove his two weeks notice up his ass and he told me to get the hell out. Perhaps at most workplaces it would have seemed a trifle inappropriate to address your boss as “shit face,” but at this particular hotel, everyone was so constantly frustrated by the crushing wheels of managerial hierarchy, including the managers themselves, that it was simply part of the vernacular. The general consensus was that the place would’ve been better run by monkeys. After passing through this rite of passage into the world beyond paychecks, I tidied up my home as best I could and, making sure my sublet was installed and comfortable, packed my bag with all the things a hitchhiker might need—and set out.

Day One I spent hitching to Washington, D.C., without incident. The airline let me on the plane after I handed them the bundle of papers I had received from my contact on the inside; after deliberating for fifteen minutes over

whether it was mildew or dust on my shoes, the flight attendants finally agreed to let me into business class. Shocked at how the rich have it when they travel, I stuffed everything that wasn't chained down into my satchel. I knew the whole time I was getting away with something, but I wasn't quite sure what. So far all was fair weather and the winds were in my favor.

Looking back on it, I have a hard time putting myself back in the mindset of those fertile days, but I will try to describe it for you as best I can. We were like match-strikers. We threw out small flames of ourselves all over the place, waiting for the ultimate bonfire upon which we could finally pour our fuel. "Light it up" was our motto. This is really the most authentic explanation I can give, and it is accurate. But let's be clear on one thing: this article is a testimonial, a mythology, not a description of a time passed. I want to romanticize the past only to the extent that it empowers my present life. Let us remember we are free to choose what colors we paint our histories with. So when I write now about "back in the day," let's keep in mind that it's not a point on the line that extends infinitely behind us, but a small piece of the ever-evolving character of our movement, and as much a part of my present self as it ever was.

Days Two through Six I hung out in a small Dutch farming community, shooting peashooters with my best friend's little brother and canoeing in the irrigation canals. I visited a friend at his squat and we took in some punk shows and scammed trains around Holland. I felt like a person on vacation; but I kept my eyes open for holes in the tourist fabric of space time through which I could duck out of sight and do some damage. When things seemed to have run their course in The Netherlands I set my sights on Germany. I had a few friends in Hamburg who promised me roofs and sweet popcorn and more punk rock shows. And after all, I was heeding the call and didn't want to get distracted.

I don't remember much about my stay in Hamburg except that I saw a squatter outside the Rota Flora balance on top of fourteen milk crates and that I had a hell of a time getting out of the place. After being told to "get the hell off the road" by an irritated gang of green-clad police, I made my way to a street corner where there was a line of hitchhikers a mile long. "Just great," I thought and sat down on my bag. I think by this time it was already past noon. The kid next to me was slick. "I'm a chimney sweep. You know what that means?"

He had on a black button-up shirt with a sliver dragon on it. "No."

"Means that seeing me is good luck for you!"

He was flirting with the cars like hell.

"Oh yeah?" A car stopped and picked up a girl on her way to a town in another direction.

"She was going to Kiel," said the kid, and he started to explain to me how the system of license plates works in Germany. From the first two letters on the plate you can figure out where the car is registered. "That way," he said, "you know which cars to really smile at," and with that he

flashed me a grin that would make Chris Rock lose heart. Soon the chimney sweep was on his way. I was glad because his finesse and sense of ease was getting me down. When he was gone I felt a little more capable, and I started trying to flag down cars that seemed to be heading for mainland Denmark. Eventually I got picked up by a reefer-head who took pity on me and drove me to a gas station north of town. From there I got picked up by a trucker who played CCR and drove me all the way to Flensburg, and somewhere around there I passed the boundary where backwards starts to be longer than forwards; that felt good.

Waiting by the side of the road in Odense, I got picked up by one of those enthusiastic types, folks that pick you up so they can share things with you... you know the ones I mean. When we stopped for gas, he came back from the mini-mart (as far off the map as I felt I was, it was still a long way from escaping mini-marts) with a colorful bag, and out of it he put two small rocks in my hand that were black and sandy like asphalt. He popped a couple into his mouth and chewed, smiling, his teeth turning grey before my eyes. I was game for anything. Hell yeah, I thought, and ate one. I had never put something so disgusting in my mouth before. It tasted like rat vomit. It tasted like horse ass. He watched for my reaction. When I opened my mouth to reply it felt suddenly like my throat was twisting in an acid-soaked noose. My head shrank into my neck, my eyes teared up. I swallowed the lump like a pill, just to put an end to the torture. "Ikk... good," I said, my brow wrinkled like I was staring into the sun. "Ghq... yeah," I nodded, "What the fuck is it?" I stuck out my tongue and made a sound like a cat coughing up a hairball.

"It's Turkish Pepper!" he said, and held out the bag. "It's the most Danish thing you can do right now, I think."

I thought I had been drugged.

"Here," he said, holding out the bag, "have some!"

There I was in the common hitchhiker's dilemma. Do I dare refuse the man's kindness? To what depths will we degrade ourselves in order to keep the field level? Here the man is, graciously driving me around Denmark for free, totally without motive... the least I can do is eat some ass-flavored candy for him.

"Aight," I said, "Lemme hit dat shit."

"What?"

"Nothing, it's good!" I took the bag and ate another piece and cringed. I thought *My god! Turpentine! Turpentine candy!* and retched silently. Ants with needle toes crawled along my tongue and throat. I was relieved when he finally stopped staring at me and turned on the ignition. We pulled out into the night and I put the bag on the dash. He ate several pieces as he drove and we resumed our chat about windmills or whatever. He told me about his job inspecting the cleanliness of Denmark's coastal waters. The man had much to say. Then the strangest thing happened. The Turkish Pepper had an aftertaste! And somehow, deep within the aftertaste was a craving for another piece. I looked at the bag. No, I told myself, don't. It's disgusting. The man was telling me about pH levels and salt water and prawns.

Nasty, I thought, and found myself reaching out to the bag. I ate another piece and felt like I was licking the sharp end of a knife used to slice jalapeños. But this time, incredibly, it wasn't so bad! Before he let me off in Copenhagen, we had eaten the whole bag between us. He gave me his business card and I shouldered my pack for Norrbro. It was after midnight. Since then I've always had a taste for that hot salt licorice. It reminds me of grassy fields and broken road signs. And windmills.

My state of mind was intense as I gradually made my way up to the high latitudes. Stockholm seemed like a roaring cauldron. I was receiving email messages telling of great things to come. All the signs I could possibly read, in the stars and the leaves and in the wings of birds, were telling me to *Go! Go!* Whenever I showed my true excitement and ambition to people they backed away with looks of bewilderment, which I was always able to take as a compliment in those days. I felt like a prophet, though I was only preaching the gospel of myself, to myself.

I left Copenhagen on a grey, dreary morning. "Keep on," I assured myself and waited under a bridge with my sign until I was picked up by a dump truck on its way to Sweden. We crossed the strait together and he left me in the middle of the city of Helsingborg. I made my way by foot towards the outskirts of town, flashing my Stockholm sign to cars that passed by. By this time I was showing visible signs of, as they call it in the Bible, "the Rapture." I wore my feet like a set of wings. The closer I got to Stockholm, the more I understood the possibilities at hand. I had left orbit and was heading for unknown things. The thousand distant suns beckoned and I was showered with starlight and courage. Something in that country, for it was still then an unknown country, was wrapping its arms around me. And I relished the embrace of the world.

In the evening I was standing beside an on-ramp of the A4 outside Linköping. Stockholm was suddenly looming large on the horizon. I looked over the directions that Sven had given me. They were vague, filled with sentences like "walk into the area of houses after the bus stop." I folded up the paper and put it back into my pocket. I looked out across the farmland. The sky folded over on itself in depths of grey upon startling white. Above the horizon there was a strip of fading blue and the clouds were lined with golden light. There was a chill, damp wind. A car pulled over.

The driver who picked me up was a pilot with a clean-shaven head and a nice car. He was also a Yankee. "Yeah... I changed my passport out," he explained, "a couple of years back," and gave me an overview of the process. "You have to

renounce your American citizenship," he said. I watched the fence and the side of the road. He said he spent his time now flying back and forth to the States for Scandinavian Airlines.

"Don't sound too bad," I said.

"The benefits are good."

"I bet..." I said, watching the fence. Like an endless stream extending as far as I could see in both directions, and nothing on it.

I'm no longer in the car with the pilot. It's autumn now, in another part of the world, in another time. I'm still traveling. There have been no major problems. Getting the car seat was the trick, finding one and having the wit to buy it. Trips with Arwin. Arwin is his name. I will be glad to arrive home again. A welcome relief. St. Etienne. Maintain concentration. After the plane, we drove a long way to Angers. We stayed off the expensive highways. When we came to Angers the show was about to start. We stayed there with Arwin for a time, until the first band began to sound-check. Then Atilla, Arwin, myself, and a friend of the promoter walked to the flat where Arwin could stay during the show and where he and I and Atilla could sleep that night. He was then quite tired. It was raining outside.

Atilla had been smart enough to grab some of the food from the show; as he unpacked it I said goodbye to Arwin, who was interested in the food. I had been thinking that he might not want to be left there in a strange environment after hours upon hours of travel with only Atilla to tie him to the known universe; but he didn't flinch. I ran back to the show in the damp French evening just in time to be handed a set list. And we commenced.

I've noticed that it's almost easier for me to let myself go and play my instrument when Arwin is with us on tour. I'm not sure why. It could be that I feel things more acutely with him around. Or I just want more than ever to transform the world. But when I stand there before all those solemn-faced people, I really want to grab them, make them understand, make them feel how real and true this struggle is. I really want them to choke with it and come up gasping for air, ready to flip over cop cars.

After the show I stayed at the venue and waited for dinner, which was served around 10:30 or 11:00. When I returned to the flat, Arwin was asleep on the floor in his clothes. Atilla and I folded out the bed and I changed Arwin into PJs and a new diaper. Atilla reported no problems. The three of us slept there in our sleeping bags and Arwin with his blanket until nine. The next day we all went back to the club to eat breakfast and it was still raining. We ate along with the others and loaded in the stuff and set out for Bordeaux.

Living then was like standing in the center of a mob, pushing forward. Pushing the people in front of you, able only to see the small sliver of ground at your feet, and if you were lucky the person behind you would have her hands on your back and you'd be pushing together. And lo, if there were five or six people around you pushing, you could feel like you were getting somewhere, like the mob was moving.

“Okay if you just hop out at the light?” We were approaching an intersection. I looked around and saw the lights of the station on the opposite corner.

“This’ll be great,” I said, “thanks alot!”

“No problem, good luck!”

“Alright . . .”

“Alright!”

I shut the car door and backed away as it rolled on into the twilight of the city. I took the paper from my pocket and read it again. The first direction was to get into the subway system and head for a station called Duvbo. I heaved the other strap of my bag around my shoulder and jogged across the street.

Day 12. I arrived at Sven’s house, the revolutionary collective known as the Demon Box—at its peak, a boiling cauldron of intense idealism, a catalyst, an honest, heartfelt attempt to clear the hurdle. Powerful. And I devoured the place.

Almost immediately, my pre-Stockholm life seemed distant and remote. The number of resources was overwhelming. The second day I

was there the doorbell rang while I was washing dishes in the kitchen. I opened the door and was greeted by an oddly shaped man of about thirty-five. “Könuget uåmagott foordönåäpt,” he said, to which I replied “English, brutha, English . . .”

“English,” he stated plainly. “A palette for you.” And he handed me a piece of paper to sign.

I scribbled “Alexander Supertramp” on the dotted line and looked outside. Stacked by the door was more soymilk and oatmeal than I had ever seen in one place before. There were also five boxes of books from Active distribution, one box of error t-shirts from Fruit of the Loom, and three mysterious boxes containing god-knows-what, simply and elusively marked “MNW Music Network.”

It was warm outside. All the members of the collective and I had been sleeping outside on the courtyard, huddling in blankets through the cold night. We awoke to blazing sun, took off all but the most necessary clothing, and lay like crocodiles or whales on the beach, storing up vitamin D for the dark winter ahead. It seemed to me that if I lay like that in the sun back home I would be burned to a crisp in fifteen minutes, but here there was so much atmosphere for the sun’s rays to pass through before reaching our skin that after nearly seven hours of direct sun my skin still retained the pasty complexion of halibut flesh just behind the gills. It was a different world.

I was treated to tours of the city. I discovered abandoned buildings with people who wanted to take me exploring. I walked the streets and conducted “drifts” before I was too familiar with the city to be able to wander honestly. On

one such excursion I unconsciously made my way uphill. I walked among cobblestones and warm-colored buildings. I spotted a bridge high above the street that extended out from the side of a mountain, towering over a populated square where streams of people swarmed in lines among buses and vegetable stands and advertisements. It went straight out of the mountain and met an enormous building, continued around the building, passed it, and on the far side, joined with a tower consisting of an elevator running down into the pavement below. Beyond the elevator was a vast expanse of water specked by ships and islands, and I watched as birds came and landed in nests at the apex of the tower.

I made my way up to the bridge and walked out. The entire north end of the city could be seen. I studied the horizon, seeing all the black chimneys and spires and church towers. My gaze swept past the square and the subway station and the endless trains of the faithless and the plodding and sordid crowd; I followed it in a line to the foot of the mountain—and saw it there at once! The staircase! Up the mountain side! To the very foot of the bridge where I was standing! And down at its base was the back of the station. I saw the bushes and the low tin roof, and

I felt like the evil and trepidation I had known in my life up to then was parting before me like the Red Sea before Moses. I walked down there at once and had a look at the hole in the fresh light of day.

We organized a Reclaim the Streets and I helped Sven jerry-rig a 500-watt sound system on a flatbed truck. Well-known hip-hop artists with revolutionary pretensions let it bump as we paraded through the city two thousand strong. I helped out by driving a smaller van with about fifty pounds of pasta salad and a backup generator. I followed the crowd in low gear until I was pulled over by the cops, who didn’t quite know what to make of the situation when they saw I was wearing a full-length bright pink evening gown. The cop looked over my NC driver’s license and wrote down my passport number and told me I couldn’t drive in the bus lane.

Fear couldn’t reach me. I wasn’t afraid, even in situations where a little fear might have served me well. I was swept away by a feeling akin to love, but more complex or perhaps even beyond mere love. I felt like I was dealing in wares not mentioned in the Bible or the Constitution of the United States. There was a woman with me, and a relationship was starting to take shape. What that relationship could mean or which events would descend from it, no one could tell at the time. But what was eternal at that moment was more than enough to justify all blindness to the future.

We printed books and released full-length records. I sat in the office for hours and hours, without restriction, learning how to use design software. Freaks were sitting beside me with headphones plugged into computers, staring at enlarged wave form displays of chord progressions and melody

lines. We had humongous parties. Punks, weirdos, and miscreants of every sort came in droves to drink long-neck bottles of beer and sit in the sauna until five in the morning. The DJs pumped dance music at volume levels that denied the laws of physics, and we always listened to The Bangles while we were swabbing the decks after sunup the next day.

We went after gender in the house like monoclonal antibodies on the hot scent of cancer cells. The women devised a master list of issues to be addressed, and the men went with it into the high towers of the house to discuss what the hell was going on. We used role-play and storytelling techniques to enlighten ourselves; we studied the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Kajsa Wahlström. We confronted each other in low-lit rooms and walked each other up rooftops where we could sit and study and talk in honest voices and watch the clouds in the evening.

Day 35, we went on tour. There were high-profile musicians living at the collective—the architects of entire movements, called by higher voices to author entire genres. Composers. Engineers. Filmmakers. Publishers. Demon Box had more singer-songwriters per capita than Nashville. A recording studio was under construction in the basement. The office above housed the most powerful computers available at the time, and also a full-scale screen printing operation. I’m talking about the big machines professionals use, not the little rigs we used in Greensboro. There were scanners, laser printers, a xerox machine, drafting tables. . . World famous street artists produced the landscapes of cities while we ran around, sleep-deprived, photocopying manifestoes. Who could sleep at such a hub? “Let’s take this show on the road,” we said, and started making arrangements.

There were people living there who had connections. They started making calls, dropping names, cashing in the favors everyone owed them. Artists beyond the circle of the collective were called in. The presses were running around the clock, churning out buckets of proclamations and incendiaries. We scavenged long cords of lights and flags; we took the big diesel-powered generator and baffles to isolate the sound. We took the vacuum cleaner, one of those big industrial ones that have no filter and can suck up water and aluminum cans. We gathered instruments from the four corners: electric pianos and wind instruments, guitars, drums, slide-projectors, movie cameras, gallons of paint, a full PA system, turntables and crates of records inscribed with the fattest beats known to man. We packed it all into a fifteen-person van with a horse trailer and set out to raise the fucking jams across northern Sweden.

For nine days we tried our hands at majesty. We went from village to village like faith-healers, lighting matches and spinning them flaming to the ground. We played to a hundred kids at a youth camp in Örnsjöldsvik. They looked at us fresh-eyed, wondering who we were and where the hell we had come from. We played a punk show in Umeå to kids with long dreads and stretched earlobes, and we were doing a harrowing cover of “Jolene.” The next night we improvised a show at the top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere, carried on till the sun came up at three in the

morning, and we sold cheap food and beer to recoup gas expenses. At Höga Kusten we shut ourselves in a tiny cabin and played only to each other, sitting at all angles in the room, letting our talents all the way out, stopping only for meals and dips in the lake. Outside the Urkult Festival we tore an old fire museum level with the fucking ground and the thirty or so of us in the room came out baptized, ready to put our clean feet on the earth and lift the sky. By the time we returned to Stockholm, I was beyond in love with one of the members of the band—and unbeknownst to us at the time, we were having a baby.

I stopped counting the days about a month later, when the news truly broke. I realized my adventure was only beginning—and it would never end. Many things entered my life at that time. I traveled farther down dark roads than I care to disclose, and found courage beyond reckoning. The words of poems long recited came crashing down around me, falling like the bricks of bombed buildings. Life was real, and it terrified everyone. I strode through a litany of crushed hopes like a kid in a field picking flowers, or like the Reaper collecting souls. The days were holy at last.

Here it was, after so many years. The great fire. The floor of the Demon Box ignited; flames spread out from where I was standing. And the ease with which it engulfed the world was startling. Greensboro burned to the ground before my very eyes. The fire, when it finally catches, changes everything. Nothing in my life went untouched by it. All my friends and my family, everyone and everything I knew. And as if all my experiences in life had secretly prepared me for this moment and it was all finally coming true, I got up, tied my shoes, and went out into the flaming heap like some newfangled version of a Sufi priest.

My brother picked me up at the airport in Washington, D.C. and we drove through the night back to Greensboro. I felt like I’d been gone a thousand years. I should have had a long beard with snow in it or an old worn-out robe or something, like a wizened monk back from a pilgrimage to the ends of the Earth, casting harrowed glances at the trivialities that surround us. . . Yeah, well, I’d been living in the lap of luxury in Sweden and not paying for a cent of it!

Bigger hands than ever were reaching at my throat. Now I needed to get my ass a job and collect my wits. It was going to take more than garlic to keep the bad spirits away and more than a punk show at the Handy Pantry to make me feel like we were getting somewhere. I had a long list of things to do. “Sell possessions.” “Call the Embassy.” I was home from my trip. My friends were glad to see me. “Find good parenting books.” “Learn Swedish.” It was a heavy fucking list! Needless to say, I hit the ground running. I had to get back there quick, to experience as much of the pregnancy as possible, and to establish myself so I could be ready when my son was born. There was no time to lose. I carried with me everywhere the longing to return; I was never for a moment unaware of Stockholm and the world awaiting me there. I was driven like never before to get back there, to shake my fists at the sky, make it rain, and see what green things would grow in the new soil.



Languages of Legitimacy

The Legal System, Anarchists, and Violence Against Women

In the heart of the Midwest, a local news broadcast reported that ten juvenile facility correctional officers were accused of sexual misconduct and the rape of young female prisoners. The news team briefly interviewed one woman, now twenty-one, who was assaulted when she was fourteen by some of these guards. After the standard five-second sound bite about how the abuse haunts her life, another five seconds were dedicated to showing her mug shot and a list of her crimes: theft, shoplifting, something else.

Viewers are left with a hollow feeling. What message have we been sent? Are we outraged at the abuse of these children? Are we concerned by the oxymoronic “abuse of power?” Are we or are we not supposed to believe this young woman? Are we concerned about this woman being loose on the street, considering her sticky-fingered history? There are more signals here: in this racially charged city, this young accuser (only one of many) is white, and all the guards are black. Is this going to raise eyebrows? Are local politicians going to have to figure out new ways to dance around these sensitive issues? Which issue will prevail? Will this city, like Durham¹, get lost in racial politics over the assault? Public defenders rush up to the podium to declare that they don’t have enough funding to protect juveniles accused of crimes; then they quickly step back down when they realize they will be defending these guards. The prosecutor announces the charges and states that this will *not* be tolerated! But the prison superintendent has to step down

1 In spring of 2006, an African American dancer was gang-raped by white members of the Duke University Lacrosse team after she danced at a team party. Political mayhem erupted around the crime, not because of the sexual assault per se but more because of the races involved. Race may have been an aggravating factor in the attack, but certainly, as in all rapes, gender was also a prevailing motive in this hate crime. However, the corporate media quickly lost sight of the issues of gender and violence against women, which were seen as too commonplace next to the racial tensions of the situation.

because, well, she had known about it for years and it actually was tolerated. There is a flurry of talk: people line up on the sides they need to occupy to preserve their jobs or their vision of the world. After all, a very public trial is coming.

Amidst all this, the young woman and what happened to her, her experience, is lost. We can’t even remember her name. The gruesome act of a hard penis pushing and tearing a girl open, the handprints left on her upper arms from being held down, her face covered with tears, the soreness for days on her cervix, her vagina... this is all gone.

Too dirty to speak of, too typical to care about.

It is hardly radical to say that the system isn’t fair. Judges shrug their shoulders and apologize for “re-victimizing the victim.” Scholars obfuscate behind terms such as “burden of proof.” Feminist agencies rush in to stand next to those being re-victimised, but never to get in the way. Still others say “I told you so” and use a woman’s plight as proof of the need for revolution or reform, but never offer a helping hand.

A collective sigh passes from our lips; what is to be done? Meanwhile, the women who are trying to escape abuse are left standing in the shooting gallery of the criminal justice system.

It is not just a matter of Kobe Bryant’s defense team bringing up his accuser’s sexual history² in court and the media, nor that “court is scary” and there are not enough “hand holders” to go around getting survivors to court. It is

2 Kobe Bryant, a super-famous basketball player, faced rape charges for the sexual assault of a concierge at a hotel where he was staying. Bryant said he did have sex with the nineteen-year-old woman, but that it was consensual. As soon as the charges were made public, a smear campaign was launched on fan sites and across the media against the woman. Details of her sexual history, mental health, and so on were broadcast publicly. The charges against Bryant were dropped after the woman said that she would not testify. A little later, a Bryant fan was convicted and sentenced to nine months in prison for making more than seventy threatening phone calls to Bryant’s accuser, threatening to kill her.

IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY, gender is constructed according to a binary system in which men are seen as dominant and women as submissive. Historically, this has been encouraged, even enforced, by the legal system, the church, the media, and more subtle social forces, and has been made concrete by the power these structures have given to men and the constraints they have imposed upon women. By confining people to unchosen categories, this binary construction does violence to everyone, but specifically sets up one class of people—those who don’t fall into the traditional understanding of “male”—to bear the brunt of its repressive violence.

This article is written specifically about violence against women with an understanding that gender is not rigid and that even when the genders of people do not fit into the “male=aggressor,” “female=submissive” formula, violent interactions are influenced by the social construction of gender. This article is not intended to belittle or ignore those whose experiences with violence fall outside this male/female binary (there are many of us!), but to encourage a focus on the roots of violence within our society’s construction of gender.

The process of evaluating the impact of gender on our intimate relationships must occur simultaneously with the dismantling of gender.

that the legal system itself is cruelly against women. There is a deadly patriarchal grip on the legal system that promotes an ideology so utterly irrelevant to women’s lives that it could be laughable if it weren’t partially responsible for so many deaths.

A History of Paternalism and Indifference

It should be no surprise that the legal system is not made for women. United States law is based on English common law. For a brief period in the Puritan colonies, the existence of “stable” family life was relied on to knit together small communities, and the state was allowed to mete out discipline and handle “family disputes.” After the American Revolution, however, the stick was put back in the husband’s hand. Thus, the legal dialogue over the last couple hundred years has been a drawing and re-drawing of the line of who gets to punish whom, with the only constant being that that line consistently runs down the middle of women’s bodies.

Under English common law a man was given the right to punish his wife’s transgressions—more importantly, he was given the power to decide what constituted a transgression—but by the end of the 19th century, the Victorians were turning their backs on the “rudeness” and “brutality” that accompanied the privilege of beating one’s wife. Laws were enacted that upheld a man’s right to teach his wife “duty and subjugation,” but the more sophisticated implored those less civilized to control their households with more dignity and less primal aggression. Laws commonly known as “the rules of thumb” were adopted, restraining men from beating their spouses with anything thicker than the width of

a thumb. Such laws helped men retain an air of sophistication³ while never compromising the control they felt they deserved over women.

So it continued. The legal system either encouraged, enabled, or turned a blind eye to the acts of terrorism and genocide that were occurring at the hands of the power-hungry male populace. Rape and abuse became socially accepted and engrained, keeping all women—whether direct victims or not—in their place through intimidation.

At times, the legal establishment expressed its benevolence towards women by pursuing ridiculous remedies like the “anti-seduction laws” of the mid-1800s. These laws punished men who “seduced” women into “relations” without then marrying them. This benefited the jilted maidens’ fathers who needed to marry off their daughters, but still left unwed mothers to encamp in homes for wayward women or, worse, in the seedy taverns where more such “seductions” were bound to take place. The protections the laws offered to women were not those of justice, but more akin to draping sheets over bedding plants to protect them from a spring frost.

Perhaps falsely empowered by the right to vote, or maybe encouraged by Rosie the Riveter, but most likely just acting out of a gut instinct to avert their own extinction, women in the mid-1900s began to lay low in the trenches and plan. Actions against abuse had been taken before. At the turn of the century, the campaign for prohibition was led by women trying to avoid drunken beatings. Knowing that no one would care about their plight per se, these women employed notions of “morality” and “purity” and Christian ideals to float their cause into the mainstream, where it became the now deceased 21st Amendment. Likewise, Margaret Sanger⁴, Emma Goldman, and others promoted birth control—in part to give women the ability to choose whether or not to bear children, and in part to obtain for women the right not to carry the products of marital rape. But these movements were peripheral. They were designed only to limit the impact of abuse and to de-escalate torture. By the 1970s, women were ready for something else. They were ready to leave.

Leaving an abusive man is not an easy task. The vast majority of the violent assaults and murders of women occur when they are leaving or have left their abuser. This makes sense if we understand violence against women as a means of maintaining power and control. A man is most likely to “lose control” and escalate his tactics when he feels his control over a woman is slipping. It is not that leaving never crossed the minds of Colonial, Victorian, or Depression-era women; there was simply no safe way to do so. If a paternalistic legal establishment supported by the church is waiting to return you to the hands of your abuser and your society offers few or no options for you to survive on your own, you

3 They also helped to foster a class mythology that still infests our perceptions of abuse today—think of the typical depiction of the slovenly man in a trailer park wearing his “wife beater.”

4 See the first issue of *Rolling Thunder* for a selection from her magazine, *The Rebel Woman*.

“Abuse is the most intimate form of capitalism. When we talk about power and control in partner abuse, we are discussing the same dynamics that play out between an individual and the state, a worker and a boss, an animal and a vivisecter.”

may well choose to try your luck at the age-old women’s survival technique of “keeping him calm.”

In Phoenix in 1973, the first shelter opened for “families of alcoholics.” In 1972, a group called Women’s Advocates had started the first collective phone service offering information about resources available to women; this same group opened an early shelter called “Women’s House” two years later. These services only made public what had been developing for a very long time: an underground network for hiding, supporting, and housing women on the run from abusive men.

It seemed as if the nation suddenly had an “epidemic” on its hands; in truth, women were just beginning to say what was being done to them. Over a decade earlier, feminist writer Betty Friedan had documented the drudgery and consumerism of a suburban woman’s life in *The Feminine Mystique*—a weighty volume and a good read. Yet somehow, Friedan failed to mention that a near-majority of women were being beaten and raped in the very same home trap she painstakingly detailed down to every kitchen gadget. In the 1960s, women had protested Ms. America pageants and bras and argued for their turn in leadership from the boardroom to SDS, but missed the violence that was literally killing their would-be allies. It was only when *Ms. Magazine* published a woman’s battered and bruised face on their cover—giving a face to this violence—that the feminist movement and the nation at large acknowledged domestic violence as a substantial concern. Maybe some suddenly realized that men were overwhelmingly, ritualistically violent towards women as a matter of privilege, but clearly most people were already intimately familiar with this. Perhaps for the first time in American history, there was a movement that spoke to the experience of one in three women—and thus one in three men, not to mention millions of children hiding in their bedrooms at night. The problem was always there, being silently suffered, but the epidemic began when someone said it out loud.

One could argue that the importance of a movement can be measured by how much repression and backlash it must endure. Upon the appearance of the battered women’s movement, psychologists and psychiatrists started trotting

forward a myriad of contradictory scientific claims from the bizarre suggestion that women are masochists who enjoy abuse to dodgy insinuations that women abuse men as frequently as men abuse women. The scores of victimized men failed to materialize out of the woodwork and allegations of masochism failed to explain men’s violence, but it was enough to muddy the waters. The judicial system adopted such phrases as “domestic dispute” to remove gender from the equation—though it was gender that made the equation in the first place. Self-help gurus and psychiatrists came forth to “treat” women, as if the real problem was a mental condition of their own. Judges spoke of “anger management” classes for abusers—ignoring the intimate relationship between violence and control, not “anger.” Finally, after a brief snooze to recuperate from the sixties, liberal feminists pranced into the center of attention equipped with their egalitarian middle-class sensibilities, to guide what would have been a grassroots movement under their much more “professional”—that is to say, bureaucratic—gaze.

When you are dealing with a movement for which thousands of potential allies are created daily by acts of murder, rape and battery, you feel a certain urgency. This urgency is not experienced by those who support victims that live overseas rather than next door; it is unfamiliar to those addressing long, slow processes such as global warming that play out over decades rather than coming to a head in a matter of seconds. Urgency spurs action and makes people stand up and pay attention. This immediacy would be an advantage, if we were not talking about a toll of human lives. Unfortunately, that same sense of urgency pushed the battered and raped women’s movement to attempt to work within the structures that were already in place—namely, those of the legal system. A great deal of energy was spent begging police departments and lawmakers to help the cause, and begging is rarely a means of empowerment.

But there wasn’t time to theorize or moralize when every passing moment another woman was injured. The response was a direct needs-based movement—a search and rescue mission, if you will. Pressure was put on police departments, judges, prosecutors, and lawmakers to hold abusers accountable. Many states didn’t even have domestic violence or marital rape laws on their books until well into the mid-1980s, and when these laws did exist, they were often accompanied by a no-arrest policy (break it up, tell them to quiet down), or a dual arrest policy (if someone complains, kids or no kids, they are all going to jail).

Surely many women were helped—the knowledge that survivors could turn somewhere and that abusers were not the only “authorities” in town must have helped in many cases—but the “justice” system also laid out its claws. It quickly became apparent that the rights of women and children often come into direct conflict with the so-called rights of the state.

The Law Is Useless to Women

In Connecticut in 1983, Tracey Thurman left her husband Charles after a brief and violent marriage. Tracey took her son with her. Charles harassed Tracey for months, and publicly threatened to kill her as he smashed her car windshield with her inside. Charles was arrested and put on probation for this act, but Tracey knew this was only going to make him angrier. When Charles repeatedly violated his probation, the police refused to make an arrest, stating that they had already “held him accountable” by arresting him the first time. On June 10th, 1983, Charles stood outside Tracey’s apartment yelling. Someone called the police, but the dispatched officer stopped by the police station first to use the toilet, then sat in his car while he watched Charles chase Tracey and grab her by her hair, slash her cheek with a knife, stab her in the neck, and then stab her twelve more times. Another officer came and took the knife from Charles, but made no attempt to arrest him. Charles attacked Tracey again. This time he crushed her neck and then ran into the apartment to get Charles Jr., dropping him on Tracey’s limp body. As a finale, Charles kicked Tracey in the head. A few more officers arrived, and took Charles into custody as he had, finally, gone too far—perhaps he had crossed the Victorian line between “discipline” and “brutality”? The courts achieved their “justice” for Tracey, though, and sentenced Charles to twenty years.

Tracey Thurman survived, though partially disfigured and paralyzed, and it was clear to her how perverse the concept of institutionalized justice is. Tracey sued the City of Torrington and twenty-four officers under the 14th Amendment with its clause, “nor shall any state . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of its laws.” This amendment had successfully been used for cases of racial discrimination on the part of police. Tracey claimed that the police failed to provide the same protection to abused women as they would victims of a similar assault outside a domestic relationship.

A federal court agreed with Tracey. Overnight, Connecticut changed its domestic violence arrest procedure and the following year domestic violence arrests increased 93%. For a moment, it appeared that there was due process—that so long as the laws could be created, the system could be forced to protect people with them.

But if anyone believed a victory had come from Tracey’s abuse and disfigurement, they didn’t for long. The same year that Tracey sued the Connecticut cops, across the country Randy DeShaney beat his four-year-old son into a coma. This wasn’t the first such beating. After prolonged abuse, little Joshua could no longer function, so he was put into an institution and Randy DeShaney was convicted of child abuse. So the system worked just as it was supposed to by punishing the culprit. Surely there were plenty of handshakes and pats on the back after the verdict, even as Joshua lay in an institution never to recover. The handshakes stopped, though, as word came that Melody, the little boy’s

mother, had filed a lawsuit against the Department of Social Services for being complicit in Joshua’s abuse.

Randy had been given custody of the infant in 1980 because Melody was seen as “incompetent to care for a child” due to the series of beatings she had endured at Randy’s hands. Randy’s next wife warned the police about Randy’s abuse of Joshua. Social Services investigated the case but then closed it. One year later, Joshua was admitted to the hospital after a beating. Joshua was put temporarily in the custody of the state, but soon was returned to Randy. During the next fourteen months, Joshua was seen in the emergency room three more times—the final time was when he was in a coma. Melody claimed that the state had failed to protect Joshua.

But the courts disagreed. They declared that the state could not be held responsible for the actions of individuals—that even though they refused to give Melody custody and repeatedly returned Joshua to Randy, they were not at fault. Immediately, the Thurman case was overturned as well by the DeShaney decision.

Last year, a US Supreme Court revisited these same issues. Who is responsible to protect whom? A mother whose boyfriend injures her child can be charged as an accomplice, or with “failure to protect” her child—so what happens when you have asked the state to help you protect yourself or someone else? In Colorado in 1999, Jessica Gonzales obtained a protective order against her husband to protect herself and her three daughters. When her estranged husband kidnapped Jessica’s daughters out of her yard, Jessica called 911 as she had been told to do. She told them about the protective order, and was told to “wait and see” if he brought the girls back. Jessica waited, and when the children were not returned she called the police again. She called them over and over as the night wore on and she grew increasingly worried, but each time she was told that the police would not enforce the protective order and she should “just wait.” Late that night, Gonzales’ estranged husband showed up at the Little Rock police department and opened fire on the building. The police returned fire, killing him. When they went to his vehicle, they found that he had already murdered his daughters—their bodies lay lifeless on the backseat. Gonzales sued the police department, arguing that they failed to protect her children and failed to enforce a court order. After she won the original suit, the town of Little Rock appealed—and won the appeal.

Thus it happened that in spring of 2005 this case found its way to Washington, DC, where the US Supreme Court ruled that the LRPD was neither negligent nor at fault for the murders of these little girls. Of issue was whether or not Jessica’s concern was enough “evidence” for the police to take action and whether or not the police had a “binding contract” with Jessica due to the protective order.

The answer to all these questions was a resounding “no.” The court argued that the police simply could not be responsible for all crimes occurring in their jurisdiction—the burden was too much. In fact, the court stated that if a police officer sees a person being injured in front of him, the officer has no “duty to act” or intervene.

What Do We Do?

For the millions of survivors of rape and abuse, it's not news that the police and courts don't care. These cases and legal precedents are detailed here not to bog the reader down in legislative matters, but to provide concrete evidence of how utterly useless and irrelevant the law is to women—and, if I may expand, to all people. When we read Thurman, DeShaney, and Gonzales, or even sit in our local court on a divorce case, these jargon-heavy legal arguments go against our gut instincts and sense of justice.

It's a gut instinct to stop abuse. If someone is being hurt, it makes sense to intervene. This instinct does not come naturally to the legal system because the legal system is not natural. Arguing that the state should protect people is like arguing that the desert sun should water peonies. Not only is protection not the role of the state, but further the state strips the rest of us of the right to protect each other, leaving no one able to care for anyone. (What the role of the state is should be obvious by process of elimination.)

The law is unfamiliar and superfluous to everyone except those who make their livelihoods from it. It has as much to offer in terms of safety, problem-solving, and redemption as a gentlemanly cockroach race. It is a binary response to multi-faceted problems. The law operates like a sports game: two sides duking it out to the end, with a few rules enforced by a referee. The focus is on winning, and when one wins the other loses.

This makes for a great spectacle, but it is insulting to the very real trauma of abuse. Rarely does a woman feel she is in an "either/or" situation. Women have known their abusers as lovers and as assailants. They have felt hope and compassion in those relationships as well as fear and pain. A woman knows exactly what happened to her—but in a not-guilty verdict, simply because certain levels of "evidence" have not been reached, her experience is entirely erased. In fact, survivors often begin to doubt their own experiences after not-guilty verdicts. The court is not a place many women would turn for true resolution.

So where does one turn? Where did the young girl who was repeatedly raped in prison turn? She turned to the media, only to have her rap sheet aired. Gonzales et al. fought to the very top of the legal system only to be tossed back. Thousands of women dial 911 everyday, and occasionally the police make arrests. Jailing abusers is helpful to the extent that it gives women time to hide or rest, but the verdicts, even when favorable to the survivors' stories, do little to heal wounds, empower women, or change what happened to them, let alone put an end to the war against women.

It is hard to find anyone beyond the legal system addressing the issues of violence against women. (When I say "legal system," I am lumping in most domestic violence shelters and such, as they are increasingly funded by and linked to local criminal justice systems). Some communities that have already developed a healthy disrespect and skepticism for all things police and all things government have waded into the shallow part of the waves and poked around for

some alternatives. Interestingly, however, radical communities and anarchists often imitate the legal system when dealing with violence against women.

While the battered women's movement spent most of the 1970s trying to convince the police to do more than mediate "domestic disputes," the anarchist community is obsessed with mediation—perhaps because it seems to conflict the least with ideals of collectivity and consensus. But when we step back and look at the situation, what is there to mediate? Mediation implies two or more parties sitting down to "meet in the middle." It is a good option for competing business interests, not for gross violations of another person's body and autonomy. Should a survivor of violence have to make concessions to her abuser? Should an abuser be able to complain about what is "hurting" him after he has assaulted someone? Especially in situations of intimate abuse, the abuser holds a disproportionate amount of power and control over the mediation process, serving only to further the abuse of the survivor. Mediation tends to downplay the severity of the atrocity that has occurred—just as the court system often relegates "domestic cases" to civil court, interpreting them as personal disputes rather than crimes.

When presented with an allegation of abuse, we insist on interpreting it only as that: an allegation. We ask for objective facts and evidence, and the burden remains on the survivor to provide us with information we can evaluate. In essence, the community decides whether or not to validate her situation. The right to define what happened to her is taken from the survivor, and she is forced to interpret her experience through the eyes of those evaluating her story. For example, if the abuse she has endured is most significantly emotional but the community needs her to present "evidence" they can understand, she may feel pressed to focus on more physical elements of the abuse, or recant her allegation altogether. She may come to feel that she didn't experience "enough" abuse to warrant the community's attention. Women dealing with the criminal justice system experience the same alienation, as very few elements of abuse are actually arrestable crimes like battery. While an act of physical violence can be reported, financial, emotional, and frequently certain types of sexual abuse are non-issues to the police and courts—and, more troublingly, sometimes to anarchist communities as well.

Typically, in response to abuse, a band of individuals will form around the abuser (acting as the defense) and another around the survivor (the prosecution), and present the "evidence" until a verdict of opinion crashes down. Communities are often distrustful of survivors. This distrust is another trait many radical communities have in common with mainstream society and the legal system. The burden is on the survivor to prove that the abuse occurred and that she didn't deserve it, instead of on the abuser having to prove that it didn't occur. This is bizarre, as study after study show that false reports are extremely rare, while abuse and rape are uncomfortably common. Why would we think it is any different in our communities?

Still, the typical questions arise as to the survivor's motives, her desires, her past, her behavior, her need for attention, her complicity. The level of suspicion is much higher in this circumstance than in any other in a radical community: how wary are we of an accuser's motives when calling out an "infiltrator" or a suspected cop? How skeptical are we of allegations that someone "didn't hold the line" at a protest? Worse, however, there seems to be more discussion of the survivor and her behavior than of the perpetrator. The survivor has nothing to do with the abuse. Essentially, we recreate the courtroom and criminal justice system in cases of abuse within our ranks, just without donning robes. By doing this, we render ourselves completely useless. If we don't mimic the state's "trial" and "justice" approach, we mediate. If we don't use either, we cyclically discuss the situation in small groups, until the issue slips back into the "private sphere."

What we are not doing is addressing the issue of violence against women. The shortcomings of the current anarchist discourse are exactly the same as those of the legal system. We isolate our conversations about abuse into black/white conversations about particular people in particular circumstances. Just like in a courtroom, a trial is held concerning one abuser, one victim, and one act of abuse—and the full scope of the oppression of women and the culture of violence is lost. We need to be having these conversations publicly, discussing abuse in terms of capitalism, statism, and patriarchy. We get wrapped up in "responding" to situations—situations that undoubtedly need a response but demand far more than that—and forget to discuss these issues theoretically.

When we do talk about violence against women, we often muddy the waters and distort the issues. We carefully repeat that women can also abuse men, men can abuse men, women can abuse women, trans folks can abuse trans folks, and so on. And while all of these factors do need to be discussed in our intimate relationships, it is important not to lose focus on what is key here. There is a pattern of accepted violence and abuse towards women so intense that all women, whether survivors or not, are affected. We have to address abusers' actions beyond establishing whether or not abuse occurred in the first place, and discuss why they chose to use their social power to dominate others. We need to talk about patriarchy and authority. We need to make it clear that abuse, sexual assault, and any other form of violence as control are not mistakes or moments of poor judgment or phases men might go through. We must clearly declare that abuse is not anarchist and will not be tolerated.

Anarchist fumbblings around abuse are largely due to the lack of consideration the topic is given. There has been an increase in the number of "Community Response to Sexual Assault" workshops, but while important, these do no more to eradicate abuse of women than "Shoot the Rapist" shirts fire bullets. Not only do we have to change our focus from "responding" to "preventing," we must shift from a criminal-justice-centered interpretation of "crime management"

to understanding abuse in the context of patriarchy. This change would allow us to confront abuse and confront abusers, not mediate with them, not make excuses for them. We've got to talk about abuse and deal with abusers like we truly don't want this to ever, ever happen again.

The good news is there are no anarchist rapists or abusers. That is not to say there are no rapists or abusers who haunt the anarchist community. It is time, however, to step up and realize that abuse doesn't come from social baggage and poor coping skills, but is a decision to attempt to dominate another human being. Let's focus and not make excuses. Meat eaters aren't vegan. Vivisectors aren't animal liberationists. Stockholders aren't anticapitalists. Abusers aren't anarchists.



The Struggle Against Domestic Violence: Interview From The Front Line

How did you come to choose your current line of work?

I'm a survivor. When I was eighteen I married a man I had been living with. Very soon after we got married, he became abusive. He began losing his temper, breaking things, and hitting himself. He would get worked up, and demand sex to calm him down. I don't know where the line was crossed, but soon the sex wasn't consensual. Quickly, it became forceful and violent. I didn't know what to do—there is no way to prepare a woman for a life like this. We lived at a small farm college, and I know others there knew what was going on, but no one would say a word to me. I was a feminist and raised by radical parents, and I didn't know how I ended up in that situation. It was a long time before I finally told someone and filed for divorce. A year after the divorce, he attacked me again—pushing his way into my apartment and raping me. I moved out of the state the next week. It was then that I realized that if I felt alone, and I lived in such a radical, strong community, then other women must be utterly isolated. So I have made a life around advocating for survivors. You don't really have much choice but to fight this once you realize what is happening to women's bodies and lives.

What is your job description, exactly? And how does your actual work differ from that?

We call ourselves “advocates.” What this means is we build relationships with survivors of abuse. We advocate for them in whatever fashion they ask, whether that means talking to their bosses to make sure they don't get fired, arguing with the caseworkers at child protective services or the food stamp office to protect their benefits, or explaining the dynamics of

domestic abuse to the police who threaten to arrest someone “if she calls them one more time.” We help find safe places for them to go, we help change the locks on their doors. We are there to stand by her. To advocate for someone is to allow her to determine what she needs, and help her achieve that. We can help her learn about the systems she might be facing, but we will never do anything to lead her or block her. Regaining autonomy is the most important thing to most of the women I work with. The last thing I want to do is dominate them like their abusers have been.

So I work in a tiny four-person not-for-profit. I alone meet with about two thousand women a year who are fleeing abuse. I write the grants to keep our program running, and coordinate our work as best I can with other local groups that run shelters and other counseling services. I counsel women and children, I run a support group, I argue a lot with judges and lawyers and cops.

A lot of our grants are from the federal government. They ask us to “counsel women” and “assist them in going to shelter.” This is bunch of shit. These women don't need counseling—there is nothing wrong with them. And no one wants to go to shelter, nor should they. Luckily I get to write our job descriptions—they basically say “support survivors and believe survivors.”

How do you establish contact with women?

At first, we didn't know how we were going to find the women we wanted to help. But we figured that if one in three of our neighbors was being abused, it couldn't be that hard. So we just started talking. We started talking in the neighborhood grocery stores, churches, we started holding awareness events, we went into the

women's prison (where the vast majority are survivors). We made a safety plan and resource list and put it in tanning salons, hair dressing shops, public restrooms. It wasn't hard finding people, but it was very hard to find a safe place to talk to them and help them. A lot of women can't take literature and bring it home, in case their abuser finds it. To solve this, we made the cards tiny—so you can hide them behind a drawer or, as one woman did, in the lint trap of her dryer. And a lot of women can't just come up to you and talk to you in public.

Finally, we realized that the vast majority of these women were having interactions with the police—either they called 911 or a neighbor did. The police would say it was a “civil matter” and tell everyone to get a protective order. So we went and started hanging out in the halls by the protective order court. Years later, the clerk in the protective order court gave us an old closet to work out of, so we can speak to women in confidence. Now, we easily meet twenty to thirty new women a day. There have been times when it has gotten so overwhelming, I have hid in that closet, unable to hear any more, and cried.

But if you go out to a playground, or a grocery store, or just your front porch and announce loudly that you are against abuse—shit, no one really says that out loud except when they feel they are supposed to (i.e., when asked)—someone will come up to you. It may take a while, or she may come back to you weeks later... or she may turn to someone else. But you break that wall, just by talking. If you see a woman with a black eye—don't pretend it's not there. If you know someone who has been raped, don't assume that it's uncomfortable to talk about. Chances are, the discomfort is yours.

Violence against women is sanctioned and encouraged by the state because it helps to normalize the restricted freedoms governments try to sell us.

Given that “counseling” and shelters are useless or worse for most people in that situation, what do you think a truly useful community support system would look like?

I guess I wouldn't say they are useless, they are just a shitty concept. They shift the blame from the abuser to the survivor. And most women refuse to allow that. A shelter can keep people physically safe if needed. Many of the women I see are facing homelessness as a result of physical and economic abuse, so sometimes they just need a place to stay. But to put a woman and possibly her children into a multi-bed institution with “lights out” rules and mandatory counseling? That's the sort of thing these women are trying to leave. A more effective alternative is to create housing, but based around autonomy and community. The general idea would be to get an old apartment building—or, better yet, a whole neighborhood—and make it into affordable or no-cost housing. Depending on the safety needs of those involved, it might have to be a secret location. I have been hooking up some women I know to live together collectively . . . this way they can address some of their common needs together. They can help each other with transportation and child care so they can work, they can share bills, they can share other tasks like cooking, and, finally, they can build a community based off of survivance. This answers the “need” for counseling too, as it brings built-in support. When we have support, our abusers back off.

The most dangerous time for a woman is when she tries to leave. Abuse is about control, and when he senses he is losing control, he can become very dangerous. Think about the police at a protest, what they do when they see all the protesters whispering to each other. An abuser uses

the same power and control and coercion tactics. If leaving is the most dangerous time for her, we have to think seriously about where she is going to be and where her children are going to be. Shelters are being built now with bulletproof glass and huge security systems. If a woman stays at my house, she is not getting that. So we have to talk to her and see what she wants, and what would make her most safe. There is nothing worse than people who feel a certain amount of bravado and machismo saying “Come here, I will protect you” to a survivor. I would choose to say “no, thank you” to someone who thought they alone could “keep me safe”—and then kick them in the nuts. We can learn a lot about survival skills from these women, we need to just ask them what we can do.

Most women, obviously, want to stay in their homes. This is why we need community support systems that simply don't exist right now. We need neighbors who give a fuck about each other and come out of their homes when they hear yelling next door. We need friends and family who speak out against violence and don't second-guess survivors. We need men who stand up and tell other men that they won't tolerate patriarchy. If our neighborhoods were talking like this, if we were letting men know before something happens that the community will respond to his actions... then they would be a safer place for survivors, a safer place where hopefully “survivor” and “woman” would not be synonymous.

How does most of the money the government throws at this issue get used?

Money is a huge problem in this movement. Most people would say we don't have enough. But I feel it is the concept of money that is the problem. When we

feel we need money, we create bureaucracy. Bureaucracy creates a dehumanized systematic response that “controls” the “problem” of abuse instead of fighting to eradicate it. Money enforces top-down hierarchies that simulate abusive relationships. Sure, if you gave me money today, I could call a hundred women and get them moving trucks and move them out of state; I could buy their kids food and clothing; I could pay for their child care; I could hire them lawyers so they don't lose their kids. We use money because we are operating within the systems that exist and we have to save people's lives. Women are being killed daily—scrap that, hourly—and we can't wait until we have overthrown the system. But it is imperative for us to understand the ways in which capitalism and authority perpetuate abuse. The reason the battered women's movement needs money is because it is marginalized and doesn't have community-powered support. There is nothing we do that “needs” money—if every woman just had one sincere ally, she could be safe. But the bureaucracy that has been created by the grants and funding has also ordained that “professionals” and “social controls” are needed to handle this epidemic, and friends and families use this to wipe their hands clean of responsibility.

Most government funding comes from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). You can only get this funding from the federal government if your effort is sponsored by a local government entity. Basically, the federal government writes a check and hands it to a local government person, who disperses it to you. The problem with this is that this “houses” a lot of anti-abuse agencies with the local government—and for some ridiculous reason, most of these agencies choose the prosecutors' office or the police department. This creates a very

We need community support systems that don't exist right now. We need neighbors who come out of their homes when they hear yelling next door.

unnatural "alliance"... and it really hurts the women we work for.

I am working with a woman right now, for example, called Tejuana. Tejuana is the mother of three children, the younger two with Mark. Mark is a piece of shit. He is very abusive—the first time I met Tejuana, her mother came in with her because she couldn't see where she was walking, since Mark had punched her repeatedly in the face, swelling both her eyes shut. Tejuana left Mark emotionally years ago, but she still lives with him physically. She has complicated techniques to calm Mark down—from taking the blame for everything (recently including his wrecking of their car while she was at home) to giving him money to pay prostitutes and buy drugs. Mark is sexually abusing their six-year-old daughter. Tejuana is sure of this. Mark's abuse didn't use to be as severe—he would hit her and bite her under her clothing, but nothing that showed. But now Mark has found that the police have become his ally in some fashion, even though he gets picked up here and there on PI charges and has spent his fair share of life incarcerated. Tejuana has a long criminal history. The last time she called the police, they arrested her for an open warrant and left Mark behind (even though he had broken her arm) in the home, because they didn't want to "leave the kids unattended" by arresting them both. Tejuana didn't go to court, so she now has another warrant and cannot call the police when things get violent. She also cannot go to ANY of our local shelters, because they are partners with the police departments, and she can't go to counseling, because the only "openings" are with a woman whose office is in the prosecutors' office. Tejuana is terrified of

her kids being given to Mark or being put into foster care, so she doesn't want to call child protective services—they will report her location and have her arrested too.

Oh, and by the way, her open warrant? It's for failing to pay a traffic ticket in 1998.

Describe your interactions with police, judges, and lawyers. How do you see their role in this society, as it relates to this issue? What specific roles do you often play? How do they see your activity?

If you had told me that I was going to be dealing with all these people ten years ago, I would have assumed you meant I was going to be in prison. When I was with my ex-husband it did not once occur to me to call the police. I didn't even know how that would work.

My job is struggling with the system that survivors are forced to deal with if the community isn't stepping up. As an advocate, I do what my clients want and I never second-guess them. It's not the time to promote pretty abstract-seeming theory about anti-statism—not that they would disagree with me (most of them agree with my ideas), but it can be irrelevant to immediate needs. If she wants to prosecute the abuser, I will go with her to the prosecutors' office and to court. If she wants to fortify her house to keep him out, I have a hammer and can help. Unfortunately, we do live in a culture based around submission and the lack of self-sufficiency—abusers and government both in turn reinforce this. We are told that we have to call the police—if you take matters into your own hands, you are likely to get arrested. That's the way the system works.

So I deal with cops, lawyers, judges every day. I have had to spend hours on

a friend's front porch with my cell phone, citing all the legal reasons why a cop could and should arrest one guy for violating a protective order, and having to go on to explain all the legal action I would help the survivor take against the cop if he didn't (the cop finally arrested the guy—he was released two hours later and burned down my client's garage). I have stood in front of a paternity court judge and read a "Domestic Violence 101" brochure explaining why the father's tying up the mother might indicate that he shouldn't have custody of the child (he got full custody, and my client was locked up for contempt for yelling "What the fuck?" at the ruling). I have met with a prosecutor literally in a dimly lit bar so she could explain to me how her boss was trying to make her coerce victims into signing papers saying they lied when they wanted to drop charges against their abusers. I have had to testify against a police officer for stalking his ex-girlfriend in his police cruiser when she was trying to flee to my office.

What I mostly find myself doing is, even though the "laws" on the books denounce domestic abuse and sexual assault, constantly trying to "prove" to everyone that abuse occurs. I have to tell the police—even those specially assigned to domestic task forces or sexual assault units—that it really does happen. I have to explain to judges that my clients have nothing to gain by lying. I have to explain to my friends that this doesn't have to be the case, and that this is going on every minute of every day. I am so sick of trying to convince people that it actually is happening when for all these women it's not even a question. I want to stop abuse, but I'm stuck trying to tell everyone that it matters.

We need friends and family who speak out against violence and don't second-guess survivors. We need men who stand up and tell other men that they won't tolerate patriarchy.

My role as an advocate meets a lot of mixed reactions. I have one judge who gives me the names and phone numbers of survivors she has seen in her court so I can offer them my support. There is a deputy who has emailed me asking me to come out to his beat and go door to door with him, talking about abuse. But then there are others.

Last fall, I had a nineteen-year-old girl named Stephanie come into my office. She was crying so hard, her sister had to explain the situation to me. Stephanie had been living with her boyfriend Brian. She had a two-week-old son with him. Since giving birth, Brian had cracked her ribs and locked her in the bedroom. His "reasoning" was that now that she had regained her figure after the pregnancy, she would cheat on him. So, she snuck out the bathroom window, and went to her sister's house. They called the police, who told her that they would not escort her to get her son, and she had to get a protective order. So, we got an order and she went back to the police. The same officers showed up, and soon I got a call on my cell phone from Stephanie. Stephanie was saying that since she met the officer back at the house where Brian and the baby were, the officer was trying to arrest her for violating the protective order. I got on the phone to the officer, and kindly explained that she couldn't violate her own protective order, and that Brian had no legal rights to the child. The officer told me to shut up and that he was going to "take care of" Stephanie. Stephanie came down to my office again, and I called a missing persons detective, who agreed to meet Stephanie near the house and go get the baby with her. As Stephanie pulled up to meet the detective, a squad

car pulled between her car and that of the detective, and the same officer from before got out and cuffed Stephanie. He asked to see her license; she handed it to him, and he broke it in two and arrested her for driving without ID. Stephanie didn't get processed at the county jail because that wasn't even an arrestable offense, and she got to ride back to her car in the wagon and get dropped off again.

At that point, three days had passed since Stephanie had crawled out the window, and it had become pressing to find a breast pump since she hadn't been able to feed her baby in all that time. After that, we drove out to the house, and again called the police. I was carrying a law book that specifically stated that Stephanie was the only one who had any legal rights to her son, Brian's extensive rap sheet including multiple arrests for crack and meth, and a car seat. The responding officer came out and got the child for us. However, officer friendly from the days previous then showed up and announced that Stephanie smelled like marijuana, and, while he could not arrest her, he declared both Brian and Stephanie unfit and called Child Protective Services to take their son to foster care. Stephanie was then charged by CPS for "failing to protect" her son because she left him with Brian, who poised a potential danger to the baby.

So, Stephanie is in jail, again, the child is in foster care, and the last I saw Brian, he was watching "Scrubs" on TV in his home. I went to the police department and requested to speak to the chief, and he told me to wait outside the roll call room. Thirty minutes later, after all the officers have been briefed on what was described to me as "a little situation that has arisen," the door from roll call opened and the officers

began to file out. One by one, about forty officers passed me, each in turn muttering "Cunt" to me as he passed, with a handful, embarrassed, looking away.

I understand that at one point you took it upon yourself to date police officers as a kind of anthropological field work. How did you decide upon this project, and how did you go about it? What did you learn?

Oh, yeah . . . that. I did do that, didn't I! I think that one of the best ways to get over our fears of authority, or to dismiss the idea that any authority exists over us, is to make fun of it. A lot of cultures have done this—mocking their oppressors in their art and theater, for example. Dealing with police pretty regularly, I was struck by how human and silly they all were, and I became fascinated by the idea of these guys' "lives beyond the badge" and what those might consist of. In truth, it all came out of me tearing into this police officer after he editorialized in court about how he felt that my client must like the abuse since she kept going back. I tore into him in the hall outside the court; I don't remember everything I said, but I remember it ended with "... and that is why you are a bad person." So, a few days later, he calls around to get my office phone number, and asks me out to dinner! At first, I was pretty sure he wanted to lure me some place alone to dismember me, but then I started to think that he might just hate himself, that in some masochistic way he needed me to insult and reprimand him. That was way too intriguing to ignore.

So I went on dates with cops. Most of them were pretty nice dates, if you are into that sort of thing—you know, dinner and a movie. On one date I experienced my first-ever legitimate bar fight, which

It is imperative that people understand how capitalism and authority perpetuate abuse. The battered women's movement only needs money because it is marginalized and doesn't have community-powered support.

Bureaucracy creates a dehumanized systematic response that "controls the problem" of abuse instead of fighting to eradicate it.

culminated in the officer telling me to wait in his truck and letting me know that if I needed it his service revolver was under the front seat! What? Another date got a key to the roof of the court building; we stood on the roof at two in the morning, and I convinced him to join me in spitting on cop cars twenty stories below.

I did learn some interesting things, sociologically speaking. I would prepare questions that I wanted answered on the date—sometimes my friends would help me think of things. I learned that most cops don't know much about statutes and law, but do know a lot about police protocol. So—for all those people who do legal trainings, that's good, but we also should be getting our hands on the protocol of each local police department, so as to find out exactly how a cop will react to a given situation. As you might guess, they are pretty big rule followers. I did find that most of them, when trying to convince me that they weren't all law-and-order, would tell me that they smoked a lot of pot. That sort of thing hasn't impressed me since I was twelve.

My final thesis on this project was that there are two types of cops: asshole cops and Richard Scary cops. Asshole cops are the majority. They want control. They are the ones who push the domestic abuse statistics up to a 40% perpetration rate among officers. They thrive on authority; they asked me out because they liked the challenge of proving the feminist wrong. Richard Scary cops are the cops represented in those children's books with the worm and the cat family. They became police to help people cross the road. They expressed to me a big concern about locking people up because it didn't prevent or

stop crime. They talked about how they avoided hanging out with other cops. They talked A LOT about their children and their own childhoods, which tended to involve trying to protect someone from abuse. When I got arrested most recently, it was one of these guys who walked my bail through and got me out. Don't think I wasn't spared a typical "cop lecture," though. You all know how those go: "getting off easy this time/consider this your warning, blah blah blah."

Finally, a friend came to me and said he was scared for my safety doing this. I guess I hadn't thought about that. I was just enjoying pissing them off and refusing to go on second dates. I'm glad I did it, though, because on long car rides there is always someone in the car who thinks this shit is hilarious.

Since that time, I've worked with a number of women who are abused by police officers. What I can't do in those situations is just shit-talk cops. Even though they are being abused, there is still a reason they got involved with an officer. So it would alienate them for me just to say, "Well, that's not a surprise." I guess we have to remember that these women have experienced these men as officers and as abusers, but also at times as lovers, as parents to their children, as friends, etc. It's important to remember when talking to survivors that this isn't a simple question of good and evil, but it is very complex emotionally.

What advice would you give to someone starting from scratch hoping to focus on supporting survivors and putting an end to abuse? What do you think are the most effective ways to apply energy? Are there

any things you know now that you wish you had known when you first started working as an advocate?

There are a million things I wish I had known, but they aren't things I could have known not having spoken with the thousands of women I have now met.

There are two things I would stress for people who want to stop abuse. One is to try to stay as grassroots as you can. This is probably easier for people who don't have financial issues or who are doing this sort of work part time. The biggest problem facing the survivor's movement is institutionalization. It is only healthy for this to be a community issue, not a government issue or social service issue solely. People working in not-for-profits are doing good work, but they are bound by grants and by reputation (if you make the courts really mad, for example, they may take it out on the next woman you try to help). So if you can, lend support to those not-for-profits and shelters, but not as a volunteer for their actual agency.

Collectives and groups of friends can do amazing support work. You can collect deadbolts and give a phone number to a local agency so their clients can call and have you come change the locks and keys to their homes to keep their abusers out. You can collect old cell phones to give to survivors—any cell phone can be used to call 911, even if its service has been discontinued. You can start a location-centered support group, non-affiliated with any other group so it can proceed as its participants want it to.

The second thing would be a pretty obvious one: speak out. I know this is said about every issue—but think about what you are doing when you hang a flyer in a

grocery store or put abuse on a community agenda. Not only are you opening dialogue, but you are also affirming the experiences of hundreds of women who will read that poster. Communities need to establish this conversation before something happens. We have too many workshops about "community responses to sexual assault" (and less frequently to "domestic violence"). While a good discussion to have, all that does it make it feel like what we can do is respond to, not stop, abuse. Communities need to know what they are going to do about abuse, in their community, in their neighborhoods, before it comes up—before people get uncomfortable because they "know him, and he seems like such a nice guy" or other irrelevant distractions arise. If you and your family, or you and your housemates, or you and your infoshop, or you and your school, or you and whomever, haven't had this conversation, sit down and have it now.

If there is one thing I wish I had realized when I started this work, one thing that I would encourage others to think about, it is that I wish I'd known I wasn't going to have an answer. Once immersed into the pain of these stories, you realize what complicated beasts patriarchy and capitalism are. Sometimes I feel like my work is just running my head into a brick wall trying to tear it down. My head is bloody and throbbing... but the wall has a few dents too. Too many people, myself included, have insulted the experience and trauma of survivors by saying, "This is happening because of capitalism, which is the real problem," or "This is because of class anger" (the most bogus statement I repeatedly hear). These responses aren't smart, nor are they answers to real peo-

ple's problems. We need to be careful not to superimpose other issues over abuse to qualify it as relevant to revolutionary struggle. Let these women speak for themselves. We don't have the answer, but this shouldn't stop us from this work.

How does this work intersect with your other undertakings as an anarchist and anticapitalist warrior? How are they relevant to it, how do the two inform each other?

Not long ago, a close friend asked me, "well, what does your work have to do with anticapitalism?" I got really mad, then I cried. To me, it is glaringly clear.

Anarchists are oddly concerned with labels and qualifications. I often feel like I am being asked to legitimize my work according to an "anticapitalist" framework. While I have no trouble doing this, I also dream that one day "anticapitalist" work will have to be legitimized as "feminist." It may not be in vogue, but it is crucial—you cannot eliminate capitalism without eliminating patriarchy (and visa versa).

Abuse is the most intimate form of capitalism. When we talk about power and control in partner abuse, we are discussing the same dynamics that play out between an individual and the state, a worker and a boss, an animal and a vivisectioner. False notions of "authority" exist in all these circumstances. I use the expression "violence against women" instead of "intimate partner abuse" deliberately, for very specific reasons—not to cover up the fact that men can be victimized too, but to refocus the discussion. We are not talking about random incidents here, but patterns of abuse that are endorsed by our society to control an entire segment of the population.

When we speak of abuse and violence against women, we are discussing threats and coercion that are nearly identical to those used by the state or police to maintain "order." More than half the women incarcerated in the US are in there for crimes related to abuse: crimes they were forced to commit by their abuser, or that they committed against their abuser in self defense. At one point I was running a prison support group for survivors. The similarities between prison and living with an abuser were not lost on those women: their every move was controlled, they were "kept in line" by threats of violence, they were isolated and emotionally stripped.

Violence against women is sanctioned and encouraged by the state because it helps to normalize the restricted freedoms governments try to sell us.

Abuse is not just a "woman's issue," and neither is fighting it—it is intimately connected to fighting the state and all other forms of authority. We are in the midst of a war against women. Women are emotionally and physically terrorized to maintain hierarchies that are convenient for men, the government, and the economy. Batterers are the footsoldiers upholding the company line, and rapists are the shock troops.

Working with survivors is crucial to my vision of anarchy. I am able to give and receive support. We create a community based on shared experience. Don't underestimate what a powerful force this can be. Unlike most people I know, survivors have learned how to throw a punch. As Valerie Solanas said in the SCUM manifesto, someone had the dumb idea of trying to relegate us to the kitchen, which is where all the knives are.

THIS IS FOR EVERY TIME I'VE BEEN CALLED FAGGOT!

Direct Action in Queer Resistance Struggles

A people without a history can be made to do anything. They will submit to any degradation because they have forgotten the possibility of something different. This is why colonial powers have always hurried to erase the history of those whose resources and labor they wish to steal: language and culture are either twisted to fit colonial paradigms or eliminated entirely by processes at once simple and extremely subtle. If these processes are successful, the billy club need never be raised, and the State can

maintain its image as a neutral peacekeeper. This is what is currently happening with the assimilation of queer people in the United States. While we are not a “colonized” people in the traditional sense, queers in this country have historically been forced to the back-alleys, brothels, and “bad” sides of town of this culture.¹ It must be said that this marginalization has never affected all of us equally: there have always been lesbians hiding in mansions while bull-dykes risk their lives on picket lines and factory floors, just as there are poor transwomen who sell their bodies to buy hormones while wealthy representatives of the Human Rights Campaign flatter the political parties who deny free health care to those same women. In this sense, not only are queers not a “colonized people,” it can hardly be said

¹ In this article, the term “queer” refers to anyone who identifies with or historically has been in some form of opposition to gender and sexual norms. This could include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered people, two-spirit folks, sex workers, polyamorists, and those opposed to the institution of marriage. While the author recognizes that many of these people do not personally identify with the term “queer,” nor does this term mean the same thing to all who do identify with it, it is used here for its umbrella-like quality.

that we are “a people” at all. We are many, not one. Nevertheless, “we” do have multiple histories of resistance, which have been created and maintained not only by those in the streets, but also by those who continue to document them. Efforts to cover up these histories have recently increased—and they are no longer just the work of Christians, politicians, and text-book companies, but also the most privileged of “us.” In order to accumulate privilege and power for themselves, wealthier, predominantly white gays and lesbians and the politically powerful organizations that represent them are doing their best to erase the rest of us. This is certainly not new—but more than ever middle- and even working- and lower-class queers seem to be going along with it as well. Not just national but also grassroots groups all over the country are obsessed with electoral politics, marriage, and military service. Accordingly, they are distancing themselves from their own histories, which generally challenge these institutions and have often run parallel to (or even “ahead of”) various anarchist struggles.

This article can serve as a starting point for those who need to rediscover radical queer history and apply its lessons to the problems anarchists currently face. I hope it can also demonstrate to straight folks who wish to act in solidarity with queer people(s) that there is an alternative to begrudgingly supporting gay marriage or some other nonsense. Many queers refuse to acquiesce to the assimilation and submission being pushed by the privileged

sectors of the gay “movement,” and I can only hope that anarchists will be on the forefront of this refusal.

Stonewall Was a Riot

Any look at radical queer history has to include the Stonewall Riots. Queer resistance did not begin with these riots: from the female “support networks” within the early settlement house movement to the body language, style, and “camp” of early gay performers and the quiet but courageous protests of the early Mattachine Society, there has always been a subtle resistance. But it went public at Stonewall in a big way.

Throughout the early 20th century, and especially after World War II, bars were increasingly the cultural and social centers for Americans gays and lesbians. While this was the case across the board, it was especially true for working-class gays and lesbians. Consequently, police often focused their repression on these bars, resulting in the extremely violent and sometimes deadly raids described by Leslie Feinberg. In New York State there was a statute ordaining that women and men had to be wearing at least three items of clothing “appropriate” to their birth sex. In other words, it was often those who were the most gender-variant who would receive the worst abuse.

In New York City, many gay bars were owned by the Mafia, and it was routine for the owners to bribe the police in order to be informed when the raids would happen. On June 28th, 1969, though, an unanticipated raid on the mostly male gay bar Stonewall Inn resulted in riots that shook Greenwich Village for five days. It’s not clear what sparked it all, but according to some, a dyke who “had to be more butch than the queens” started to rock a paddy wagon back and forth. Then, “a leg in nylons and sporting a high heel shot out of the

back of the paddy wagon into the chest of a cop,” and people began unarresting those in the paddy wagon. According to Martin Duberman’s account of the beginning of the riots,

The crowd, now in full cry, started screaming epithets at the police—“Pigs!” “Faggot cops!” Sylvia and Craig enthusiastically joined in, Sylvia shouting her lungs out, Craig letting go with a full-throated “Gay power!” One young gay Puerto Rican went fearlessly up to a policeman and yelled, “What you got against faggots? We don’t do you nuthin’!” Another teenager started kicking at a cop, frequently missing as the cop held him at arm’s length. One queen mashed an officer with her heel, knocked him down, grabbed his handcuff keys, freed herself, and passed the keys to another queen behind her.

The mob, made up largely of the queer,

“The cops picked out the most stone butch of them all to destroy with humiliation, a woman everyone said ‘wore a raincoat in the shower.’ We heard they stripped her, slow, in front of everyone in the bar, and laughed at her trying to cover up her nakedness. Later she went mad, they said. Later she hung herself...”

I’m remembering the busts in the bars in Canada. Packed in the police vans, all the Saturday-night butches giggled and tried to fluff up their hair and switch clothing so they could get thrown in the tank with the femme women—said it would be like ‘dying and goin’ to heaven.’ The law said we had to be wearing three pieces of women’s clothing.

I never told you what they did to us down there—queens in one tank, stone butches in the next—but you knew. One at a time they would drag our brothers out of the cells, slapping and punching them, locking the bars behind them fast in case we lost control and tried to stop them, as if we could. They’d handcuff a brother’s wrists to his ankles or chain him, face against the bars. They made us watch. Sometimes we’d catch the eyes of the terrorized victim, or the soon-to-be, caught in the vise of torture, and we’d say gently, ‘I’m with you honey, look at me, it’s OK, we’ll take you home.’

We never cried in front of the cops. We knew we were next.”

-Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

homeless, Latino youth who frequented the bar, used bricks, broken bottles, and coins from parking meters uprooted nearby to force the cops back into the bar, which was then set ablaze. Riot police came to their rescue, but when they tried to disperse the crowd it simply reformed behind them, throwing bricks, lighting trash cans on fire, and taunting them with chorus lines of mocking queens kicking their legs in the air and singing:

We are the Stonewall girls
We wear our hair in curls
We wear no underwear
We show our pubic hair
We wear our dungarees
Above our nelly knees!

Rioting and block parties went on for four more days after the initial riots. Word spread rapidly across the city and then throughout the whole country—and before long, the beginning of the gay liberation movement was at hand. While straight groups and individuals were slow to catch on and often extremely homo- and transphobic (one participant in the Stonewall riots, Jim Fouratt, remembers calling and asking his straight leftist friends to come out, none of whom did), Stonewall helped spark a new wave of groups like the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), and the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) and also helped reenergize the already existing “homophile” movement. These groups forced tremendous changes in local laws and police behavior, set up support networks and social services for gay youth, established gays and lesbians as a visible and unashamed presence in American culture, fought side by side with groups like the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, and instilled a sense of pride and self-esteem in a people who had been taught all their life that they had no right to exist.

“Tree Limbs, Parking Meters, and Pieces of Asphalt”

The White Night Riots occurred in San Francisco on May 21st, 1979 in response to a verdict practically exonerating the murderer of that city’s first openly gay

supervisor, Harvey Milk. Dan White, an ex-cop, assassinated both Milk and Mayor George Moscone on November 27th, 1978, but was let off with a four-year manslaughter sentence, largely due to the fact that Harvey Milk was gay.² According to one participant, “the entire city was in shock.” Over a thousand people took over Castro Street shouting “City Hall!” and started marching in that direction. By the time the crowd reached the Civic Center it was even larger; people began to attack the building’s doors and windows with iron bars, finally setting it on fire. According to another rioter,

For some reason they had parked police cars at the other end of the block. No one really wanted to destroy City Hall. They just wanted to make a statement. However, when the activists went after the cars, cheers of approval came from the crowd. A dozen police cars were torched. Car horns and sirens from the burning cars added a chaotic note to the smoky night air.

Hand to hand fighting with police broke out, with protesters using “tree limbs and parking meters and pieces of asphalt” as weapons. The street fighting continued on into the night when police returned to the Castro district, where it became clear even to those who were not involved in the fighting near City Hall that, according to one participant, “We were at war with the police! We had been pushed beyond our ability to swallow any more hatred and we did what we had to do.” Another recalls, “I remember seeing a six-foot tall drag queen in high heels throwing bricks at cops, screaming, ‘This is for every time I’ve been called faggot.’”

Only twenty-two people were arrested that night, out of thousands of participants. Probably the best testament to the White Night rebellion is the journal entry of Chris Carlsson, who wrote,

The riot had progressed, as San Francisco riots do, from the initial angry crowd (in this case, of gays) to a gradual influx of angry young black and brown men spoiling for a chance to even the odds with the cops. The amazing sense of community

² Milk’s openly gay sexuality was exploited by White’s defense during the case in order to gain favor with the jury. White’s lawyer also presented his habit of consuming large amounts of Coca-Cola and twinkies as evidence of extreme depression and therefore temporary insanity. This is now mockingly known as the “twinkie defense.”

that had existed during the riot evaporated within 24 hours. Many of us were confused by the contrast: the riot's euphoria temporarily intoxicated us with the sensation of true community. The aftermath returned us with a hard thud to a city full of barren crowds of disconnected people.

A Legacy of Direct Action

In addition to spontaneous insurrections like the Stonewall and White Night riots, groups like the GLF, GAA, and especially ACT UP went on to create a tremendous legacy of protest, community organizing, and direct action. GAA, for example, devised the tactic of the zap, the predecessor of today's flash mobs. Hoping to get hustling queer teenagers off the streets and frustrated with the transphobia of the Gay Activist Alliance, Sylvia Ray Rivera helped found the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries to provide food and shelter to local homeless queer youth. Their first collective house was a squatted trailer in Greenwich village, which was driven off in the middle of the night by its owners (with people still inside!) and had to be replaced by a Mafia-owned building. STAR folks covered the rent by hustling on the streets nearby. In 1988, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) formed to use direct action and civil disobedience to focus attention on the AIDS epidemic, which was being written off as "the gay disease" by straight society. We owe much of the medical progress in fighting this disease to the amazing lockdowns, human blockades, community organizing, and social programs provided by this incredible group that forced straight society to take AIDS seriously.

This legacy continues in today's new wave of radical queer organizing. Along with groups like Queer Nation and the Lesbian Avengers, who helped shut down the WTO in Seattle in 1999, groups like Gay Shame, the Pollinators, Queer Fist, Fed Up Queers, FIERCE, and the Gender Mutiny Collective have used direct action, street protests, and community programs to further local queer struggles. In addition to focusing on gentrification, police brutality, and healthcare access, these groups have increasingly found themselves obliged to target gay groups like the Log

Cabin Republicans³, the Human Rights Campaign, and the Gay and Lesbian Task Force for their assimilationism and betrayal of "the rest of us."

Last fall, for example, the president of the Log Cabin Republicans Patrick Guerrero was paid to speak at one university by none other than the campus GLBTSA group. To counter this outright betrayal, activists from the Gender Mutiny Collective tabled the event with anarchist and radical queer literature and handed out hundreds of official-looking "An Evening with Patrick Guerrero" pamphlets at the door. While Guerrero began his speech, audience members opened what they took to be his official program to find fierce anarcho-queer critiques of the Log Cabin Republicans and resources for local radical queer organizing. Guerrero's speech was then deliciously interrupted by a pie to the face followed by a well-coordinated fire alarm. Forced by the alarm to leave the building, the Log Cabin Republican president and his bewildered audience were confronted by a two-hundred-square-foot banner reading, "Queers Bash Back" with a circle A.

Queers in Your Neighborhood

Many of the individuals and groups comprising this "new wave" of queer struggle consider themselves anarchists or directly acknowledge their anarchist influence. There is a wonderful flexibility and anarchic character to the word "queer"; both it and anarchism are labels imbued with paradox. Just as anarchism is a political movement of a fiercely anti-political nature, so too is the label queer the ultimate anti-label. Just as anarchism simultaneously encourages both autonomy and collectivity, so too does queer expose social constructs such as gender roles while refusing to allow them to dictate who we are. In this way anarchism and queer are able to exist beyond these dichotomies, embracing these tensions as necessary parts of each other.

Queer has also influenced anticapitalist movements around the world. From the pink fairies who used hockey sticks to slap-

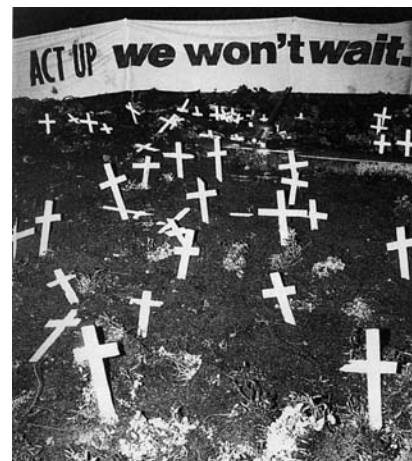
³ The Log Cabin Republicans is an organization of gay Republicans. Unfortunately, this is neither a joke nor a contradiction in terms—but feel free to laugh, all the same.

shot teargas canisters back at riot cops in Genoa to the militants who catapulted teddy bears over soon-to-be-destroyed security fences in Quebec, it's clear that queer camp and carnival have found a new home. For many of us, it is less important to analyze whether anarchism as an abstract ideology has all the answers for queer people than it is to identify the potential of queer youth tapping into the global networks of resistance that can be characterized as "anarchistic."

Part of this potential is the simultaneous reinvigoration and destruction of a GLBT "movement" which is so stale and stagnant that it has practically ceased to exist. We may occasionally fall under the shadow of the Human Rights Campaign dinosaurs and the sexist corporate beer sponsors of Pride marches, but our hearts remain loyal to the riots of Stonewall and the direct action of ACT UP. This is not just a "political" loyalty; our radical past created the very language by which we know ourselves, and those struggles provided the access to safety, warmth, and health which kept us alive.

This overview is little more than a starting point for those wishing to learn more on their own, but it offers a glimpse of a queer politics with a markedly different orientation towards the "political," in which patriarchy is not met with ballots and compromises, but blockades, bricks, and broken bottles. Let us never forget that the first brick at Stonewall wasn't thrown by a white gay man in a fashionable suit, but by a pissed off Latina drag queen who turned tricks to get by. These are our roots.

For further reading, try *Stonewall* by Martin Duberman, *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* edited by Mattilda, *The Trouble with Normal* by Michael Warner, and *Virtual Equality* by Urvashi Vaid.



JOIN THE SISTERS & BROTHERS OF THE GAY LIBERATION FRONT

Barcelona, June 2001

THE WORLD BANK CONFERENCE THAT WASN'T

In June of 2001, the World Bank was scheduled to hold a conference in Barcelona. Previous meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, notably in Washington, D.C. and Prague the previous year, had been disrupted by fierce direct action, and thousands were expected to protest in Barcelona as well.

In the decade since the 1992 Olympics had been held in Barcelona, the squatting movement had gained momentum as squatted social centers proliferated throughout the city. The squatters joined others in coordinating preparations for the protests on an international level. After reviewing the security plans of the Spanish police, World Bank officials announced on May 19 that the conference was cancelled for fear of disruption.

This was hailed as a major victory for the anticapitalist movement. In the UK, *The Guardian* reported that "the World Bank was clearly angry that its conference would now have to be held over the internet," adding that "the Barcelona meeting had been meant to improve the image of the World Bank." Caroline Anstey, head of media relations and chief spokesperson for the World Bank, whined that a violent minority was taking away the World Bank's right to free speech—yet when questioned by Indymedia reporters about the exclusion and violent repression of thousands at the meetings in Washington, D.C. and Prague, she denied any knowledge of these, despite having been present at both events¹.

Many saw the cancellation as evidence that mass mobilizations against capitalist summits could actually impede the progress of corporate globalization. Arguing that resistance should be intensified now that their opponents were on the run, organizers called for the demonstrations to continue as planned. For the first time since the Reclaim the Streets action in London on June 18th, 1999 that inaugurated the era of anti-globalization mass mobilizations, there was to be a major mass action without a meeting to protest.

¹ In D.C., police raided and shut down a convergence center days before the protests were to begin, and went on to beat and arrest some 1300 people. In Prague, permits were revoked, people were detained at the border and deported, and thousands reported unbelievable torture and abuse at the hands of the Czech police. All of this was thoroughly documented by independent media and resulted in extensive legal action against the police. The accepted norm for summit organizers and city officials is to instruct police to use excessive force, turn a blind eye while they do, then respond to the subsequent outrage with hollow apologies and cover-up campaigns.

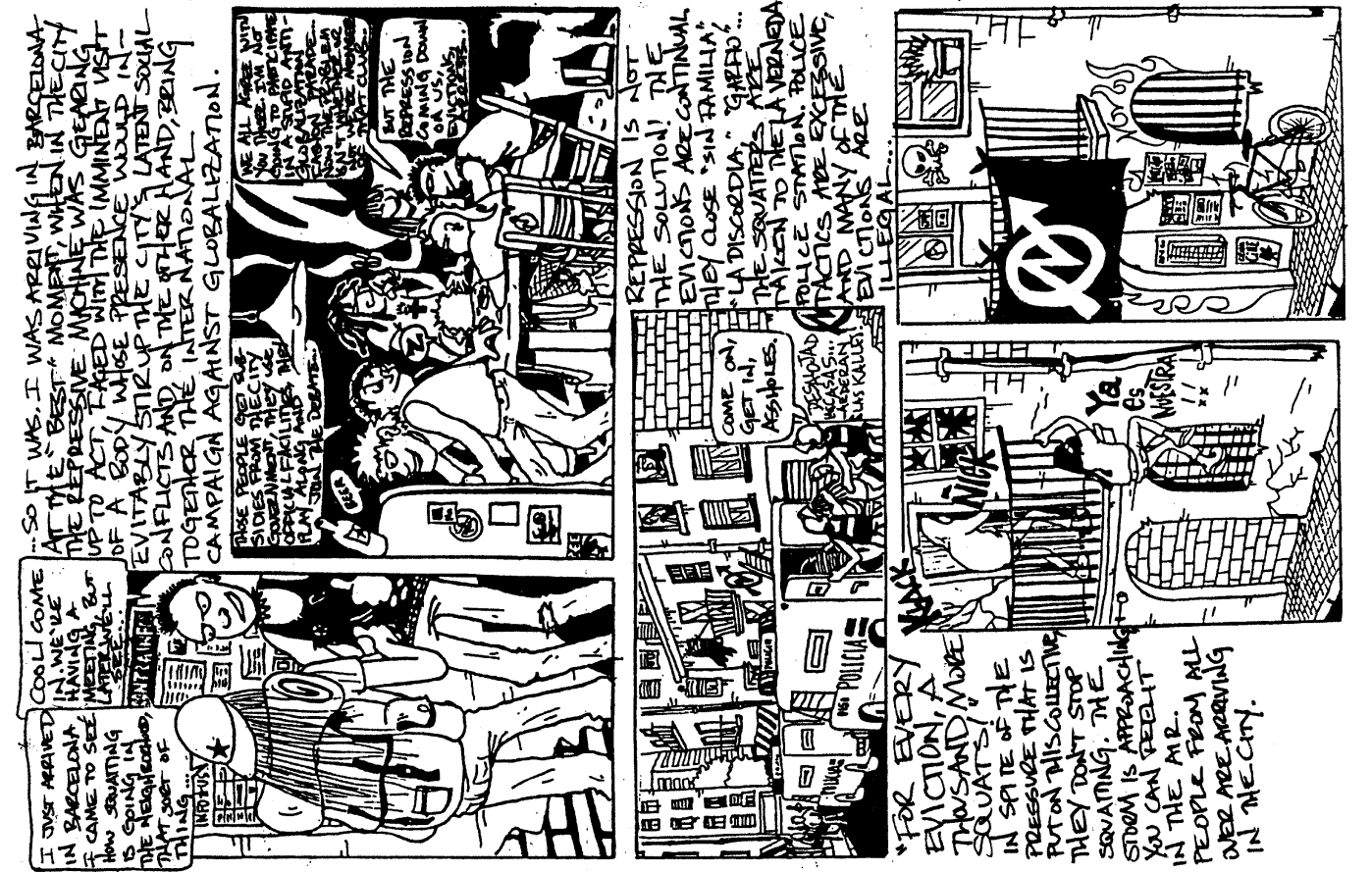
In retrospect, one could describe the cancellation of the World Bank conference as the high point of the anti-globalization phase of the contemporary anticapitalist struggle. For a few months, state and capitalist summits were met with massive and militant resistance everywhere they took place. The protests at the FTAA summit in Quebec City the previous month had reached the highest level of mass confrontation seen in North America since the Los Angeles riots in 1992, and the protests against the European Union summit in Gothenburg, Sweden were right around the corner. At the G8 summit in Genoa in July, tens of thousands joined in shutting down the city and decimating corporate shopping districts, meeting police repression that did not stop short of cold-blooded murder². Demonstrations planned for the joint IMF-World Bank meeting in Washington, D.C. scheduled for the following September were expected to escalate the conflict further, but the attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred first, shifting the course of history³.

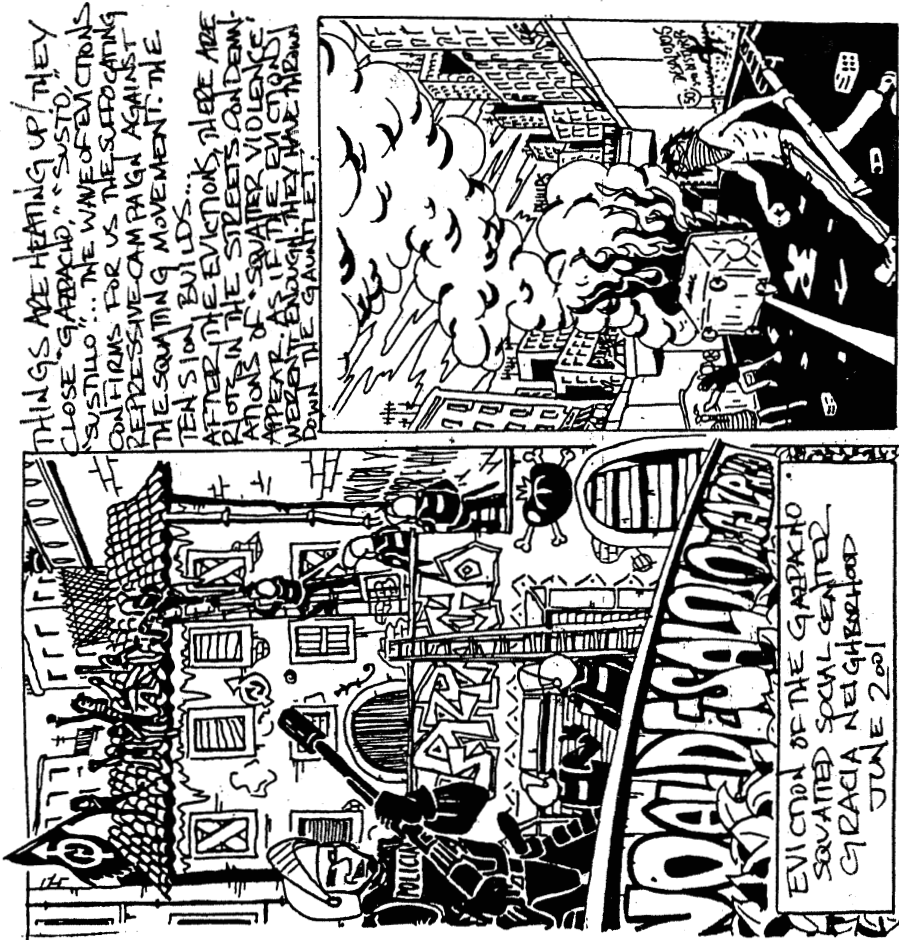
Even at the time, the drawbacks of summit-based resistance were obvious: as a strategy, it was essentially reactive, and cost a great deal of energy without doing much to build long-term community or effect immediate change in daily life. With several years' hindsight, we can also identify the advantages of the model: it brought great attention to the anarchist movement, it won victories—however symbolic—that raised morale for oppressed peoples everywhere, and above all it provided a point of engagement, an opportunity to join in collective struggle and thus call into question the legitimacy of the capitalist world order. Whatever its shortcomings, the era of anti-globalization mobilizations is part of our contemporary anarchist heritage, and as such it can provide us with both concrete lessons and a general sense of what we can accomplish.

The accompanying comic and account chronicle the demonstrations that took place in Barcelona during a brief period when we had the power to thwart the plans of the World Bank itself. Let it not be the last.

² R.I.P. Carlo Giuliani, shot in the face and then run over by a police jeep while protecting lines of protesters from police attacks. All charges against the police officers who murdered him were dropped and no trial ever took place.

³ See "The Craziest Walk Ever" elsewhere in this issue for an eyewitness account.





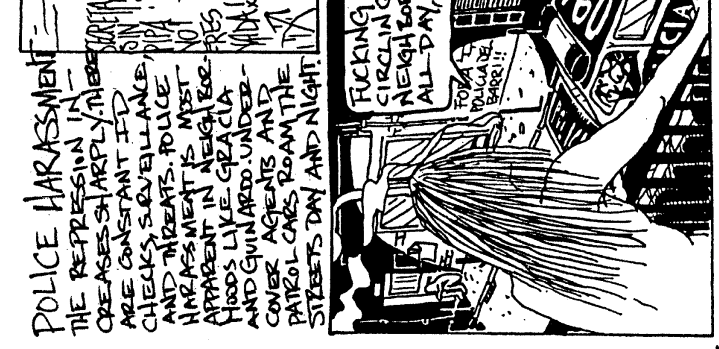
THINGS ARE HEATING UP! THEY CLOSE "GRACIA," "SUSTO," "SUSTILLO"... THE WAVE OF EVICTIONS CONFIRMS FOR US THE SUFFOCATING REPRESSIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SQUATTING MOVEMENT. THE TEN SION BUILDS... AFTER THESE EVICTIONS THERE ARE RATIONS OF SQUATTER VIOLENCE APPEAR AS IF THE EVICTIONS DOWN THE GAUNTLET.



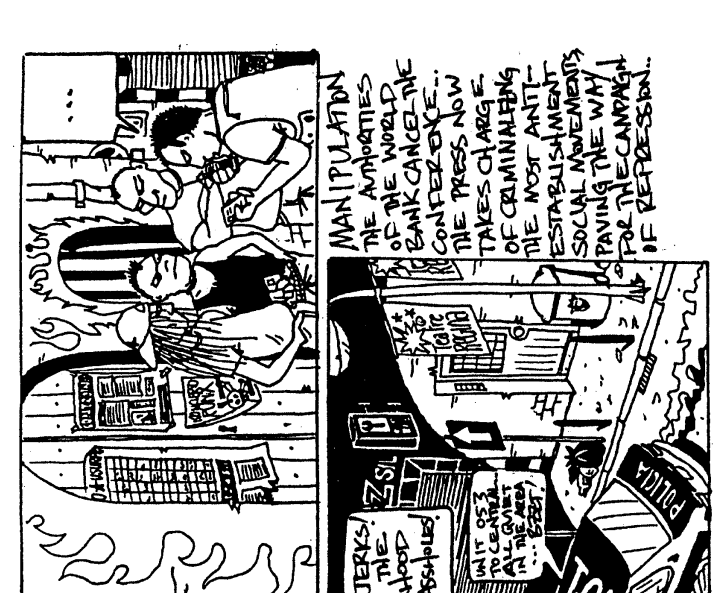
IN SPITE OF THE TENSE ATMOSPHERE EACH TRENDA, THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE WORLD BANK ORGANIZED BY THE ANTI-CAPITALIST PLATFORM MOVES FORWARD VARIOUS EVENTS, DEBATES, AND ACTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT TO DENOUNCE THE CONSEQUENCES OF CAPITALISM... THE ANTI-GLOBALIZATION BALIATION GRACIA HAS BEGUN!



LET'S NOT LET SNEAKY GLOBALIZATION IS NOTHING MORE THAN CAPITALIST CONTER LA SQUATTING GLOBE RECLAIM THE STREETS TO SQUATERS

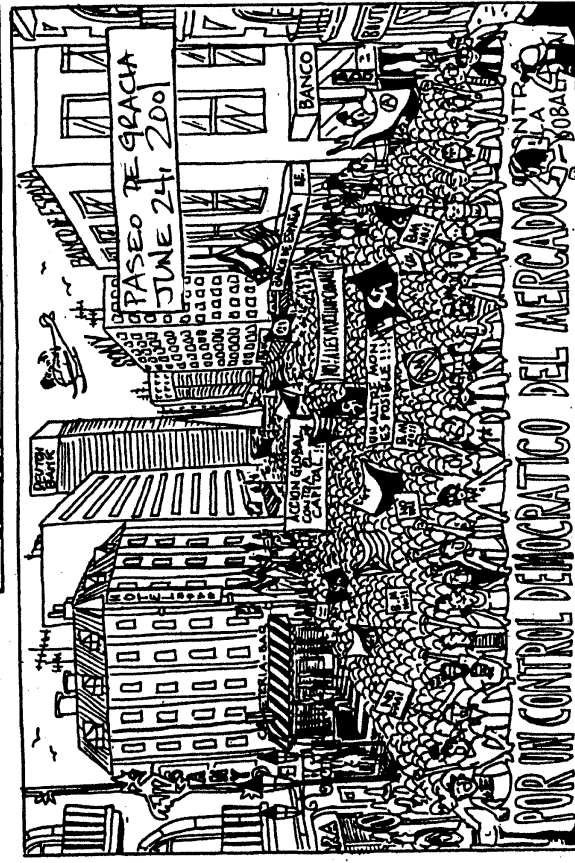


SO THE MEDIA AND POLICE DEPLOYED IN THE CITY ARE USED, WITH THE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST GLOBALIZATION AS THEIR TARGET, TO TRY TO ANNUL ALL RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS ESPECIALLY THE STRONG, DEEPLY ROOTED SQUATTING MOVEMENT.



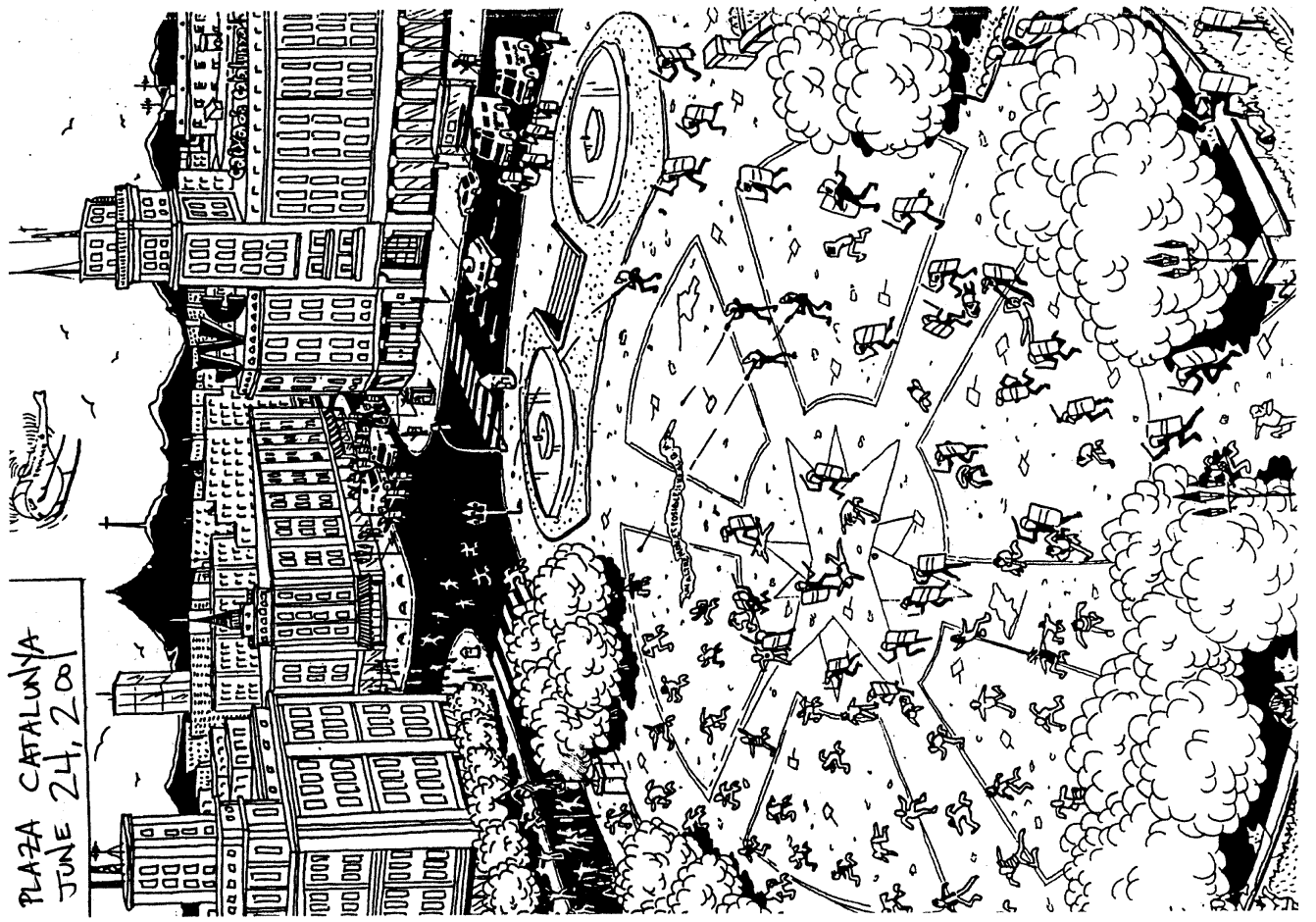
RESISTANCE!

EVEN WITH THE CANCELLATION, THERE ARE STILL CAUSES FOR THOSE WHO STRUGGLE... THE CAMPAIGN MOVES FORWARD, DENOUNCING THE INJUSTICES INFLECTED UPON US BY NEOLIBERAL POLITICS AND THE EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEM IN WHICH WE LIVE...



SO WHEN THE DRY ARRIVES ON WHICH THE WORLD BANK CONFERENCE WAS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE, SOME PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE DOWN TOWN. IN THE END, THE ARRESTING BULK OF THE DEMONSTRATION CAN BE FOUND IN THE PARTIES AND UNIONS OF THE REFORMISTS, CARRYING SIGNS CONDEMNING THE UNCONTROLLED ADVANCE OF CAPITALISM MEANWHILE IN THE REAR OF THE MARCH ARE GATHERED EXPLICITLY ANTI-CAPITALIST INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED NOT TO CONTROLLING CAPITALISM, BUT INSTEAD TO DESTROYING IT.

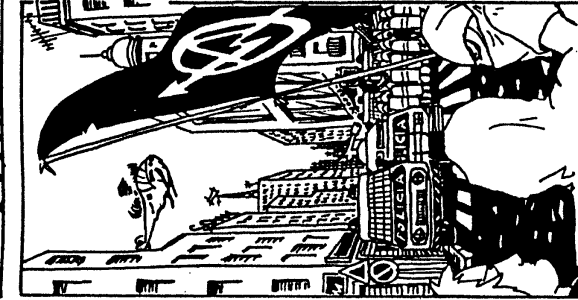
PLAZA CATALUNYA JUNE 24, 2001



BANCO



IN THE FACE OF THE COMPLAINTS OF SOME ANARCHIST DEMONSTRATING AND THE DISASTROUS CASE OF THE UNDERCOVER COPS, THE ZARKE OF THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM FINDS DELIGHT IN DESTROYING IT SYMBOLICALLY WITH THE WINDOWS OF FINANCIAL ENTITIES GUILTY OF THE DEATHS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PLANET.



PROTECTED IN THEIR ARMED VEHICLES HELMED AND SHIELDS WEARING NEW RIOT GEAR AN ASSAULT NUMBER OF POLICE STAND IN FORMATION BEFORE THE CROWD THE TENSION GROWS WHEN UNDERCOVER COPS ARBITRARILY ARREST AN ACTIVIST AFTER WHICH THE RIOT POLICE, AS IF IT HAD BEEN PLANNED IN ADVANCE, BRUTALLY CHARGE THE PEOPLE CLATTERED CHILDREN, OLD PEOPLE, ONLOOKERS, TOURISTS...

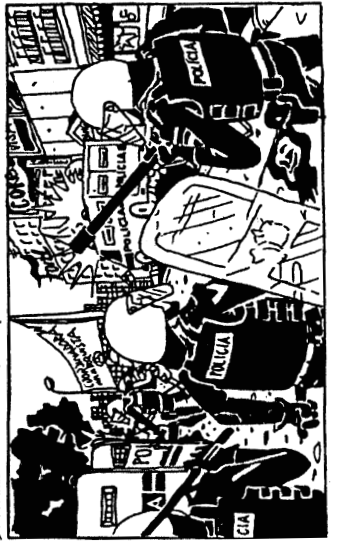


YOU'RE FUCKED, KIDS. YOU'LL FIGHT THAT ONE IN THE POLICE STATION.

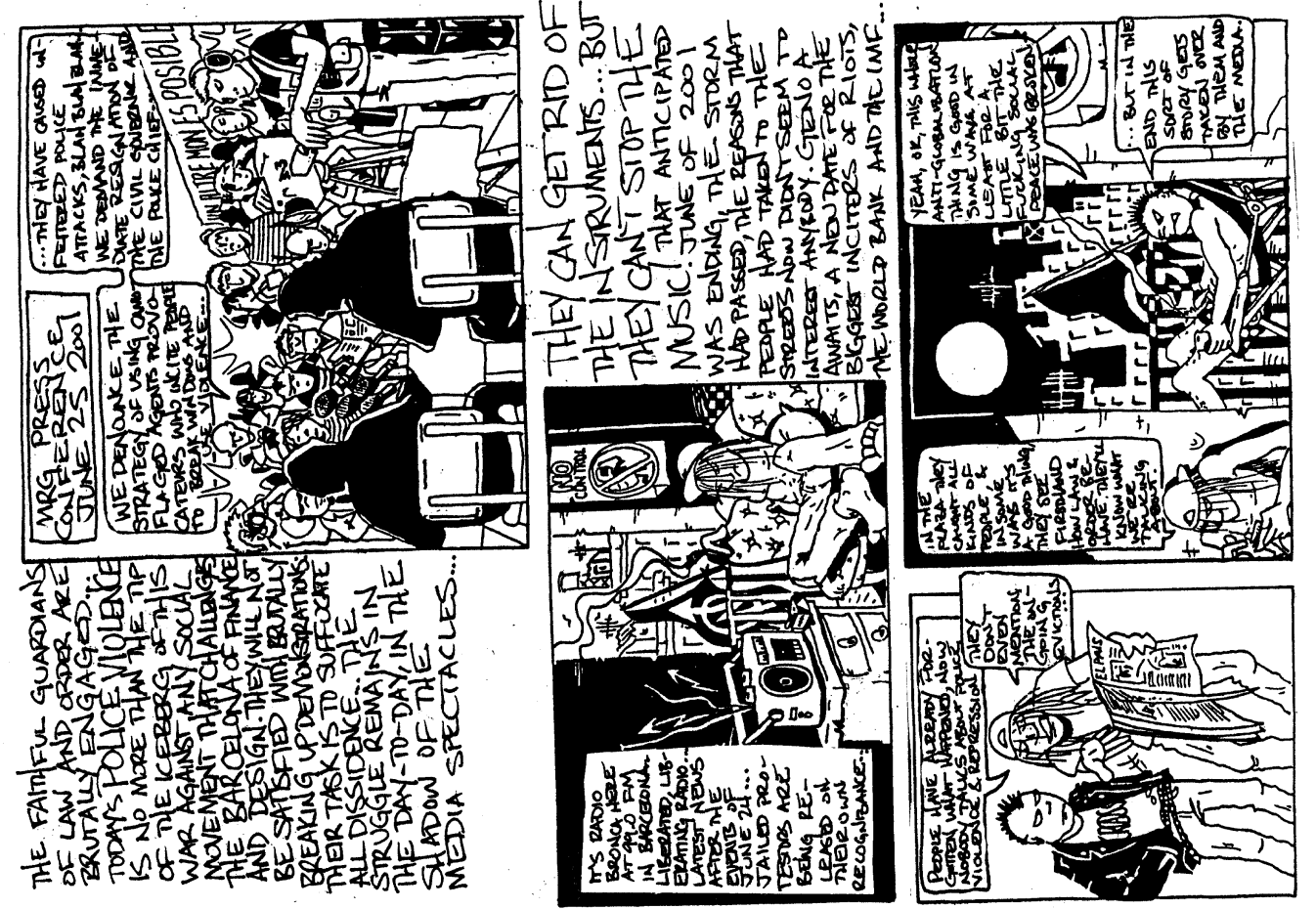
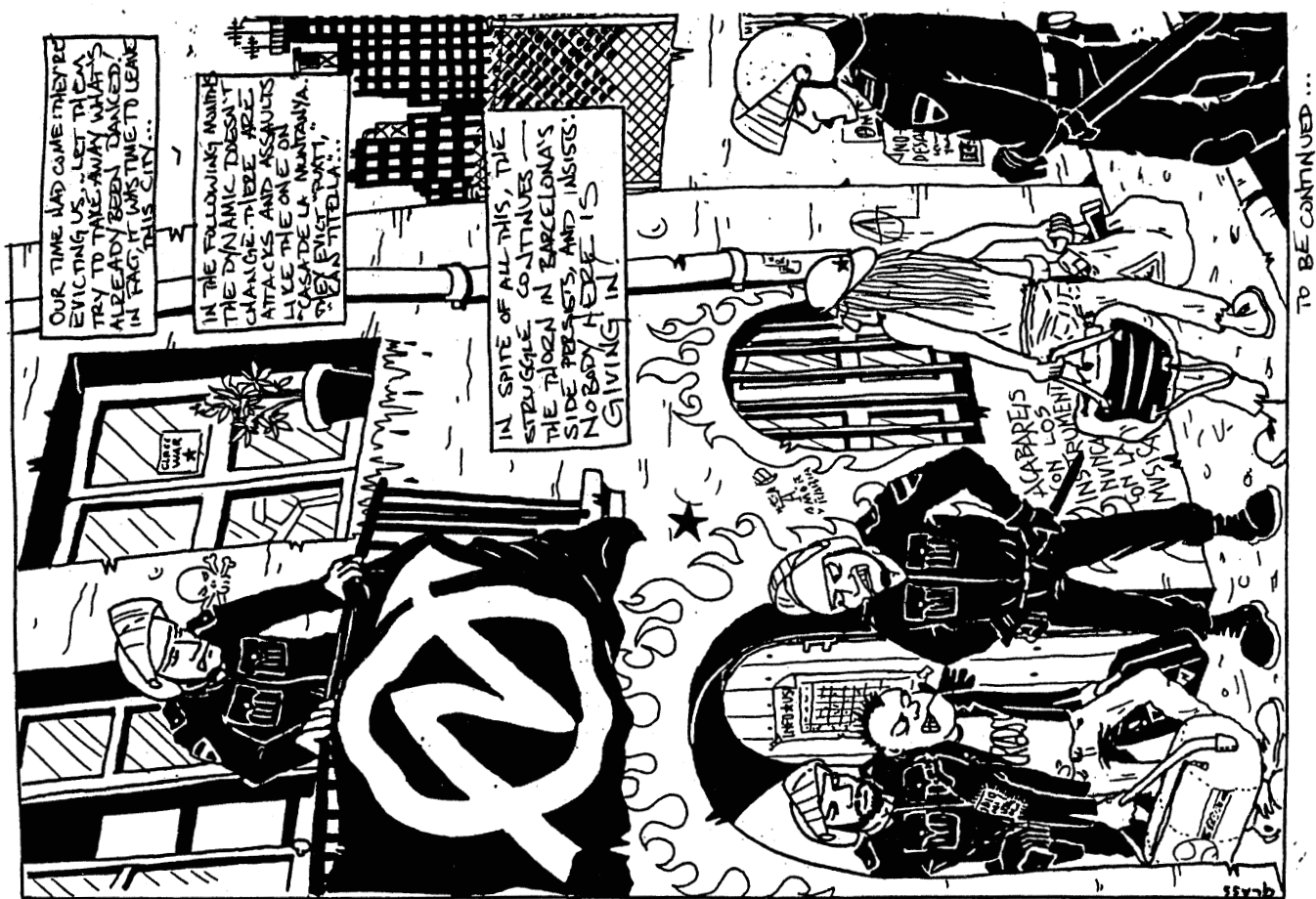


YES, COMMISSIONER, WE'VE GOT A COUPLE OF PINKOS. ONE'S A MINOR. OVER.

... AND AFTER THE STAMPEDE AND PASSING OF BLOWS LEFT AND RIGHT, A GROUP OF UNDERCOVER COPS ARMED WITH PISTOLS AND CLUBS, WITH HUMILIATIONS AND THREATS, PREPARE TO ARBITRARILY ARREST ANYONE WHO HAPPENS TO BE AROUND. THEY ARE LIKE SCAVENGING VULTURES. IT APPEARS TO BE A NEW POLICE STRATEGY. IN THE END SEVERAL ARE ARRESTED CHARGED WITH ASSAULT ON AN OFFICER, DISORDERLY CONDUCT, AND PROPERTY DAMAGE. ALL OF THEM ARE TAKEN TO THE HUGE POLICE STATION LA VERNEDA.



THAT SAME AFTERNOON THE ANARCHIST GATHERING IN THE PLAZA IN VERNEDA IS SYSTEMATICALLY BROKEN UP BY THE RIOT POLICE, WHO DON'T EVEN GIVE PEOPLE TIME TO REACT. AFTER THE ATTACKS, RANGING CADES ARE PUT UP IN THE STREETS. THOSE WHO AREN'T WEARING WARNING SHIRTS... MANY ARE WOUNDED IN THE SO CALLED 'POLICE BRUTALITY' LAUGH! THEY CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT THEY'VE EXPERIENCED. THEY'RE SHAKING OUT ABOUT THE FORCEFULNESS AND THE LEVEL OF DEPRESSION IN THE POLICE HAVE AROUND AT THE STRATEGY'S CLEAR ZERO TOLERANCE.



A Summit Protest Without A Summit

Testimony from a British Participant in the Mobilization against the Cancelled World Bank Meeting in Barcelona, 2001

"Another World is Possible"

Despite hangovers from the Sant Joan night festivities, there was something unusually empowering and positive in the procession down Paseo de Gracia and into Placa Catalunya. The 40,000 strong crowd was a mass of jugglers, bands, flags, costumes, a coffin (for capitalism, hopefully), a cardboard "TV camera for Africa," and banners proclaiming everything from "No World Bank" to "The revolution is today" and, in massive letters right at the front, "Another world is possible." Small teams of masked individuals engaged in property damage as we progressed, and this escalated until the symbols of the old world were being thoroughly wrecked. The veneer of the legitimacy of business was destroyed with their signs, the pretence of the inevitability of capitalism shattered along with shop fronts, and everywhere graffiti proclaimed the crimes of the old world and our revolutionary alternatives. We should perhaps offer thanks to the police agents who, evidently fearing imminent revolution, switched sides and helped smash things. As we arrived in Placa Catalunya, the atmosphere was relaxed yet confident; we seemed to be in control of the massive square and the surrounding area, and it felt as though, under that blistering sun, we were winning.

The illusion was very brief.

"The choice is never between violence and nonviolence, but about how and when to use violence. As long as there is a police force, nonviolence, as an absolute, is not an option."

The organizers had been determined that Sunday's events would pass off without any trouble. They had applied for permits; when I asked at the convergence center if they could suggest a lawyer, I was told it wasn't necessary as Sunday's events were legal and there would be no arrests. We have to remember that the law is a device used by the state to ensure the continuation of the existing social order. Sometimes we need to use legal devices to protect ourselves against the law, but it is a mistake to rely on the law to protect us against the other devices of state control. This was beautifully illustrated in Placa Catalunya. Agent

provocateurs staged a scuffle in front of riot police', and this provided an excuse for the police to attack the crowd with an extreme degree of force. Firing rubber bullets and wielding big sticks, they were able to clear the square in a matter of minutes. In every direction, people stampeded trying to escape the violence: parents ran with terrified children, people dived into bars, others tried to erect barricades. During this rout, the police were able to injure scores of people, including a tourist they apparently shot with a rubber bullet. We returned to Placa Catalunya and found it filled with riot police. People were holding up bloodied clothes while others were being loaded into ambulances. The police looked very satisfied with their work, but they really hadn't done anything to be proud of.

We joined a group that was pressing against police lines at one entrance to the square. People raised their hands and went very close to the police to try and stop them from firing rubber bullets. In this way, they were able to push the lines back, while on the other side of the square the police came under fire from bottles. This state of affairs was short-lived, however, and a fresh line of riot police turned up and started beating those at the front of the crowd. Some brave people sat down or lay down in front of the police, but they were beaten until they had to move.

After a while, we took a breather in a bar. One thing that was very strange compared to the UK was that even amidst police charges, Barcelona continued as normal: bars stayed open, often with people sitting at tables outside. We decided to head to Universitat, where an anarchist demonstration had been planned for four o'clock. On the way there, we met a comrade who told us that the gathering had been attacked with great force and dispersed before the demonstration had even begun. In light of this, we instead attended an open-air meeting that was to discuss what had happened and what to do next. The meeting, of perhaps a hundred people, took place in a confined space with no escape routes. We didn't think it was a good place to meet, given the police behavior, so we left and headed up to Universitat. We heard that this meeting was attacked very violently after we had left, so we regret not making our concerns more vocal, although it is difficult when you do not speak the language.

1 According to one journalist, "Observers said the police appeared to stage the scuffle in order to use the fighting as a pretext to storm the park. The masked assailants, some apparently wearing earphones, had gathered in groups on the fringes of the protest march as it arrived at the park. They were wearing knapsacks and carrying sticks, but were able to walk freely past police, pull on their masks, and position themselves between the edge of the crowd in the park and the police lines twenty-five yards away. The fight began when one man grabbed another and pulled him to the ground. Others from the same group began kicking and hitting each other. When demonstrators saw what was going on and joined the fight, the police charged into the park. The men and women involved in the original scuffle then walked through the police line and boarded the vans."

The police spent the rest of the afternoon attacking and dispersing any sizeable gathering of people. During the disturbances, properties damaged included Deutsche Bank, Banco De Santander, Caja Madrid, Halifax, Yanko, BBVA, Ibercaja, Cymbeline, Pronovias, Chanel, Armani, Caixa de Terrassa, Mango (two different ones), Marella, La Caixa, Banco Pastor, Banc Sabadell, Zara, Furest, Dunkin Donuts, Gonzalo, Comella, Burger King, and Swatch, among others. Unfortunately, there were scores injured and dozens arrested.

In reflection, I think it is a mistake for anyone to organize a strictly legal, nonviolent event. That is certainly not to say that every action needs to kick off; rather, it is to recognize that no group can, or should, control what happens during an action. The police may create an excuse to attack, as happened in Barcelona; likewise, a crowd might spontaneously take the offensive. Our revolution will be built on passion, not obedience. In organizing a non-confrontational action, our concern should be that those who do not want to be involved in a physical confrontation do not have to be, while others, should the need arise, are able to defend themselves, other participants, and members of the public at large who are trapped in the area. In Barcelona on Sunday, those who didn't want to be involved in a physical confrontation were attacked by the police, while those who might have been prepared to defend themselves and others were caught in an impossible situation—in a grid of wide streets without bottles, sticks, stones, shields, masks, padding, and cobbles, without an organized confrontational bloc committed to self-defense.

“The liberal fantasy is that there could be some way to get positive media coverage without the hassle of a demonstration.”

Spanish police are inclined to use a degree of violence in public order situations exceeding that employed by police forces in most wealthier countries. They really are a violent bunch. A surprising number of them resemble the guy from the Village People. More importantly, they are some of the stupidest individuals I have ever encountered; for example, their agents provocateurs openly fraternized with their uniformed mates, and sometimes didn't even manage to conceal their earpieces. It's a miracle these clowns remembered to take their badges off. Consequently, the press broke the conspiracy of silence that had long surrounded the Spanish use of agent provocateurs, and pictured Barcelona's finest involved in various illegal acts.

The police being exposed in the media as having started the trouble before attacking the crowd very violently is, of course, every liberal's dream. At some point on Sunday the leadership decided to cancel Monday's action. It is possible that one of the reasons for this was that if we turned up prepared for a physical confrontation and caused a lot of trouble, the police tactics of the day before would seem more justified. Who needs direct action when you can get sympathetic press coverage? One day activists will learn that we do not need to convince people that the police are violent

bastards because, believe it or not, the police don't reserve their violence for political activists. We need to demonstrate that we can do something to stop their violence, and canceling our actions doesn't help achieve that. Regardless of the reasons, any decision to cancel the action should have been made collectively by all the participants in the action, not by a totally unaccountable group. It is alienating to be unable to participate in the decision-making process of an event you are committed to participating in.

“While there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”

On Sunday night we were able to gather back in Placa Catalunya. It was good to be able to regroup despite the events of the afternoon, and the mood improved significantly as first the samba band entered the square, followed by a sound system. As some danced around the sound system, others made their way to the jail where those arrested during the afternoon were being held. At about 11.30 pm, the samba band began to lead people out of the square. It was quite tense for a bit as there were only a few hundred of us and we were followed by swarms of police vans, but we left them behind by heading down into the metro station. Every staircase and every landing was filled with people chanting, dancing, shouting, and clapping to the samba music that echoed powerfully around the station. The security guards looked bemused as we danced over the turnstiles, packing every carriage on the train. It was very empowering. We got off near the jail and joined those already outside. Loads of food and wine were available, thanks to a great organizational effort. Some people tried to get a little sleep, while others continued to make noise, clapping, chanting, and playing instruments. Hopefully this raised the spirits of our imprisoned comrades.

“Sometimes you can do too much listening; then you want to shout and scream until your voice is hoarse.”

At 8.30 Monday morning, the helicopter that had circled relentlessly on Sunday took to the air once more. At nine am, oblivious to the event's cancellation, I turned up to Universitat ready to take on the stock exchange. However, by 9.30, there were still only about a hundred people standing around with banners and watched over by four vans of riot police, so we headed into the convergence center where there was to be an assembly. This took an age to get started and was then dominated by discussion about making legal claims against the police and holding a press conference. You could see the frustration on the faces of many who would rather have been participating in direct action than listening to the leadership discuss every agenda item except the possibility of autonomous activity.

Eventually, the question of a street action that day was raised and received a very positive reception. In a little over an hour, there were about two thousand of us assembled outside, including about one hundred of the best equipped

white overalls² I've ever seen. Very slowly we progressed, led by the samba band, to the stock exchange. There was a bit of a standoff, but eventually we were able to surround the exchange, though our reduced numbers and the huge presence of riot police made any attack on the building unwise. There was celebrating, dancing, and nudity. It was a totally different situation from the previous day, and this was partly because this time we had come prepared for physical confrontation. About this time, a small group broke away and we traveled some distance to a side street where we painted slogans against the police and for revolution. When we rejoined the carnival, people were dancing in a fountain, spraying water over the crowd; it was a celebratory atmosphere.

The white overalls left us to remove their protection. We had seen a little glimpse of what the people on the street were capable of; it is impossible not to conclude that we were held back by an unofficial leadership preoccupied with the media and the legal system. If our actions are not to be frustrated repeatedly by self-appointed leaders, we have to work harder to challenge implicit power structures

² A sort of defense-oriented variant on the Black Bloc, consisting of a coordinated group equipped with shields and body armor.

and demand that those in powerful positions—those with the most resources, contacts, and time—respect the ideals and desires of the participants in events rather than, as has happened too often, repressing and distorting the struggles of thousands according to their personal reformist agendas. On a similar note, there were apparently many groups who, objecting to the liberal ethos of the organizing group, dropped out of the weekend's events. I think it would have been more constructive for those groups to have articulated their objections and challenged the aspects of the organizing that troubled them.

The carnival, led by the samba band which was so inspirational throughout the actions, meandered through the center of Barcelona and ended up by another building where prisoners were being held. We waited on one side of the building, where banners hung describing the police as fascists and demanding the release of the arrested. Graffiti was sprayed: “No World Bank,” “Police rob banks” (sic), and “Another world is possible.” The actions were ending as positively as they had begun. On the other side of the building, hundreds awaited the release of those arrested on Sunday while other groups set off to embark on autonomous actions.



Computer Security: IP Addresses

Somewhere in this country right now there is an FBI branch office, and in this office is a cluttered desk, and on this desk is an investigation manual, and in this manual is a chapter entitled “Investigating Political Crimes.” And the first thing this section says is “Track the communiqué.”

Since perhaps the inception of direct action, militants have composed and released, by various means, statements explaining their actions. These communiqués, which are of the utmost importance to a campaign of “propaganda by the deed,” can be dangerous to the authors as well as their opponents, and have often turned out to be fatal stumbling blocks in what might otherwise have been ingeniously conceived and executed plans. The communiqué often serves as the first piece of evidence directly connecting the individuals involved to the crime under investigation. Because of this, the direct action enthusiast must be extremely cautious with communiqués, lest her words of inspiration to the masses become her downfall.

The methods by which communiqués have been delivered have varied across the years. Perhaps the first one was carved into the body of a fallen crusader and catapulted over a castle wall. Who’s to say? Ever since, new technologies have provided new opportunities and new risks for dissidents getting their message out. The internet is the most obvious modern instance of this.

The internet offers many advantages to agents in the field (that is to say, our agents in the field). Most obviously relevant are the internet’s capability of swiftly reaching a large number of people and the sense of anonymity that it provides. It is this sense of anonymity that has caused trouble for some. In this recipe I will explain why this sense of anonymity is little more than an illusion, and then go on to show how—like many illusions—it can be made real with a little effort.

IP Addresses

Each time you open a web browser and type in an address, you’re asking your computer to contact another computer and retrieve certain information. It’s like getting in a cab and saying “Take me to Barthélemy’s Bar.” In order to get to the bar, the driver has to process this information into something actually usable—such as an address, or an intersection. Your computer does the same thing: it translates the domain name you typed in into what is known as an IP address. Every computer connected to the Internet has an IP address. An IP Address is a set of four numbers ranging from 0 to 255 separated by decimal points: e.g., 64.128.0.14. Think of this like the street number attached to your house, or your telephone number. Unlike street addresses and phone numbers, though, your IP addresses can change, and in a typical setup will do so often.

Every time you visit a web site, send out an email, or carry out some other task online, the IP Address your computer is using is logged. Even though this number might not be your number in the sense that your phone number is your number, it can still be traced to you. If, for example, you were using a dialup or broadband Internet account with someone’s name attached to it, then the Internet Service Provider can determine whose account the address was attached to at the time you visited the site. Even if you use a publicly accessible computer, your activities can be traced.

Let’s say, for example, an anarchist writes a communiqué on a computer at a public library. This library is a little less conservative than most these days and doesn’t require users to log in with an ID or library card. So, the anarchist in question thinks she’s free and clear. She is, of course, mistaken. The first thing the Feds would do is find the IP Address of the computer that sent the email, or posted the message on a message board or whatever (this is a trivial task). Next, they would check publicly available records and find out that the IP Address is owned by the library in question. The Feds would then go to the library and ask their computer technicians which library terminal was using the IP Address in question at the specified time. With this information, the Feds would probably proceed to confiscate and fingerprint the equipment, and check any video surveillance to determine who was using the terminal at the time. It may be that the Feds get nothing from this information, but did our anarchist really need to take that risk?

Luckily, there are better ways. One of these came with the advent and proliferation of wireless networks. They’re everywhere these days, in homes, cafes, corporate offices, anywhere you can think of. Many of these networks are totally wide open for public use¹.

Using a wireless network offers some strategic advantages to someone seeking anonymity online. First, because the user is not bound by wiring, they can be physically distant from the actual internet connection. Right now, for example, this author is using a homemade antenna to steal covert internet access from a neighbor down the street. An additional benefit comes from the network architecture typically used in a wireless network. Remember how I said an IP Address consists of four numbers ranging from 0 to 255? Well, this means that there are a limited number of IP Addresses available. Considering that the internet is a worldwide resource, this number is actually relatively low. Because of this fact, a system was developed whereby multiple computers could share one IP Address. For the record, this is known as Network Address Translation. A system set up with NAT consists of a computer that has a real IP Address, known as the server, and a number of computers that have fake addresses, known as the clients (these addresses tend to be 10.x.x.x or 192.168.1.x with “x” being a number between 0 and 255, but they need not be). The server receives requests for internet content from the clients and then requests that information from the internet, when the internet responds with the requested content, the server determines which client asked for it, and then sends it to that computer. The important thing to note is that any client under such a system has no unique IP Address, and most wireless networks use this kind of setup!

So, let’s revise our example above. This time the anarchist uses a laptop to access an unprotected wireless network made available by a public library. In order to avoid suspicion and detection she accesses the network from a bench in the public park next to the library, well out of sight of the surveillance cameras. When the Feds get wind of it, they will, once again, be able to trace the communications to the library. This time, however, the library’s computer technicians won’t be able to tell the feds much because they have a publicly available wireless network, and the feds will gain little from surveillance footage. Quite an improvement!

Alas, this second scenario is still not good enough. That is because of a nefarious little piece of information known as the Media Access Controller Address, or MAC Address. The MAC Address—sometimes referred to as the Network Address or Physical Address—is a number that is intended to uniquely identify the piece of hardware you are using to connect to a network. If an IP Address were the license plates on a car, then the MAC Address would be the VIN number². Every piece of network hardware, including your wireless adapter, has a MAC address, and unlike an IP Address, this unique identifier is passed on and recorded even across a network using NAT. Luckily, it is nearly impossible to track a known MAC Address to the person that owns that piece of hardware. It is possible, however, for an investigator to compare a known MAC Address to the MAC Address on any Network Interface Cards a suspect might own.

So, in the example I just gave, our anarchist may not get off altogether. Since the author of the communiqué made no effort to conceal her MAC Address, the feds will learn it. Let’s say our protagonist lives in a relatively small town, and is known to belong to a small community of anarchists there. Our anarchist may come under suspicion for the actions claimed in the communiqué just by virtue of already being on the law enforcement’s radar. If this is the case, the investigators are likely to confiscate this person’s computer and compare the MAC Address to the one used to issue the communiqué. When they find that the two match, our friend could be in serious trouble. All is not lost though: with a bit of knowledge and practice, one can learn to hide one’s MAC Address.

¹ Those that are password protected are usually very easy to break into. I encourage the reader to explore software programs such as Airtort and Kismet for detecting and gaining access to hidden and protected networks.

Pro Tip: When writing a communiqué, be aware that law enforcement agencies have various methods at their disposal for analyzing writing. They can, for example, take something known to have been written by a suspect and linguistically compare it to a communiqué to determine whether the language matches. It may, therefore, be advisable to attempt to vary the writing style you use in a communiqué from the style you use normally.

MAC Addresses

² The Vehicle Identification Number, which is more subtly and indelibly marked into the car.

Hiding your MAC Address in Windows XP

The process for changing your MAC Address in Windows is relatively straightforward, but first-timers and/or those intimidated by computers may find it baffling at first. I urge you, dear reader, to look over these step-by-step instructions and the accompanying diagrams several times. After you think you understand them, be sure to practice a few times before you need to do this in a “real-world” situation.

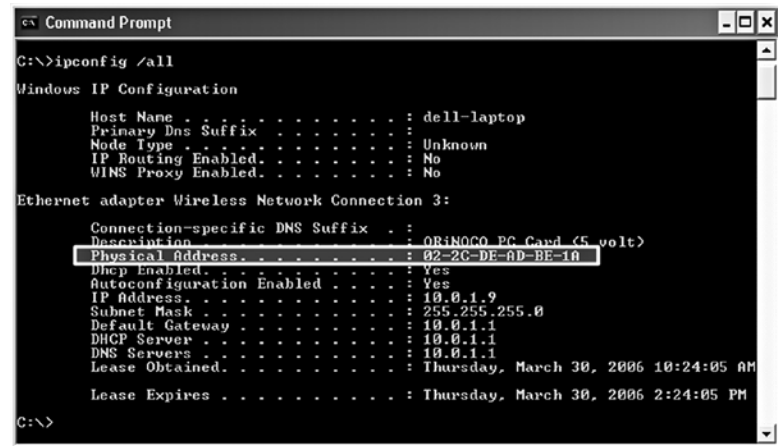


figure 1

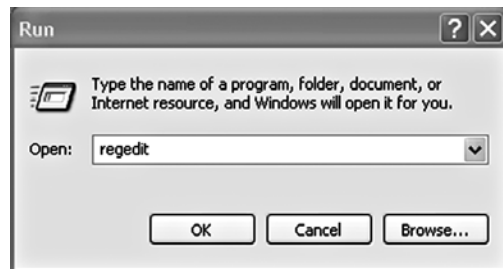


figure 2



figure 3



figure 4

3 If you are unsure of the make/mode of your wireless card, right click on the “My Network Places” icon that is either on the desktop or in the start menu. Click properties. A window will pop up with several icons. One of them should say something like “wireless network connection.” Right-click this icon and click on properties. Under the “General” tab click the “Configure” button. Some information on your card should appear.

STEP 1: To give you a feel of what we’re going to do, go to Start-> Programs-> Accessories-> Command Prompt. A box with some text and a blinking cursor should come up. Type this command: ipconfig /all. You get a bunch of information regarding your network connections. Somewhere in this information will be a line that reads “Physical Address...” (see figure 1). This is your current MAC Address—write it down for reference. It will be a series of 6 numbers represented in hexadecimal format (this means that a digit can be 0 through 9 or a through f—a through f represent 10 through 15). Our goal is to replace these numbers with different ones. In order to do

this, we need to edit the registry.

STEP 2: The registry is a repository of data that is used by the operating system. Typically the user needn’t worry about it at all. In Windows we can edit this data by using the regedit program. Click Start-> Run. A text box will pop up; type “regedit” (figure 2) and hit OK. The registry program will open (figure 3).

STEP 3: Look at figure 3. On the left side of the window, you will see various expandable folders. These work just like the file browser included in windows. Folders open up to new folders in an expandable tree. The difference is that these folders contain different keys, and each key contains different data.

The data we want to change can be found in the key located at: [HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\ControlSet001\Control\Class\{4D36E972-E325-11CE-BFC1-08002bE10318}]. To get there, click on the little plus sign next to “HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE,” then the one next to, “SYSTEM,” and so on until you find the {4D36E972-E325-11CE-BFC1-08002bE10318} folder. Click on the plus next to this folder and you will see a number of subfolders that run in sequential order. When you are done with this step, the tree on the left side of the regedit window should look something like figure 4.

STEP 4: Each of these folders represents a different network device. In order to determine which one correlates to the network card you want to change the MAC address on, you will have to click on each one. After you click on each of these subfolders, examine the data that appears in the box on the right. You should find some lines with descriptive information such as the manufacturer’s name. Usually you can find manufacturer and model information printed on your card³. Continue looking through the sub-folders until you find a match. On my computer, under folder 0016 I find a string entitled “ProviderName” and its corresponding value is “Lucent Technologies”; there’s another string called “VendorDescription” and its value is “ORiNOCO PC Card (5 volt).” These clues tell me that this folder is for my Lucent Technologies Wavelan PC card which is based on an ORiNOCO microchip.

STEP 5: When you have found a match, look in the window on the right under the “name” column for a string called “NetworkAddress.” If none exists, you will have to create it. Right-Click in the box on the right and click New-> String Value. Name this string “NetworkAddress.” (figure 5)

STEP 6: Now, all you have to do is give “NetworkAddress” a value, or alter the value already there. Double click on “NetworkAddress” and in the value field enter a string of 12 characters ranging from 0 to 9 and a through f—e.g., 022CDEAD4e2c. (figures 6 and 7)

STEP 7: Close the regedit program and restart your computer.

STEP 8: Let’s see if this worked. Open a command prompt (Start-> Programs-> Accessories-> Command Prompt) and type ipconfig /all. You should see that the fake MAC Address you provided is displayed. (figure 8)

STEP 9: If your MAC Address did not change, or if your internet connection ceases to work, you may have provided an invalid MAC address. Another possibility is that there is more than one entry in the registry for your wireless card; look through the subfolders under [HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\ControlSet001\Control\Class\{4D36E972-E325-11CE-BFC1-08002bE10318}] again and see if there’s another folder that describes your card. In either case, repeat steps 2 through 8. Once you see that your “Physical Address” has changed by issuing the ipconfig /all command in the command prompt, you are done.

STEP 10: Send your communiqué, or do whatever it is you don’t want the feds to know about. Whatever sketchy thing it is you are doing, make sure that is the only thing you do with your fake address. If you check your email, mspace account, chat rooms, message boards, or any other place you normally frequent on the web, the Man might be able to link your fake address to you.

STEP 11: Repeat steps 2 through 9 to change your MAC Address again.

For anyone using the Linux operating system⁴, the process of changing MAC Addresses is fairly simple. I am going to assume that the reader already has a running Linux machine with a functioning wireless adapter. If this is not the case, there are numerous resources online that can help in this regard. Please note, that some of these steps may vary slightly given different Linux distributions and wireless cards⁵.

STEP 1: Open a terminal. This process will be different for all distributions of Linux. Most Linux distributions now default to a graphical user interface that includes a desktop, icons, and other doodads. Typically there will be some sort of application menu. If you can find this, look for terminal, xterm, konsole, or something of the sort. If all else fails, consult the website of the distribution you are using. Once you have a terminal open, log in as root. This can be accomplished by issuing the su command and entering the root password when prompted.

STEP 2: Type the iwconfig command in the terminal window and hit enter. You will see various information regarding your wireless device and any network it may be connected to (see figure 9). Note the name of the device on the left side. In my case, my wireless device is named “eth1”; this may vary depending on your setup.

STEP 3: Now type ifconfig <device name> (where <device name> is the name we found in the last step) and hit enter. Ifconfig will display a variety of network information (see figure 10), but what we are worried about is the

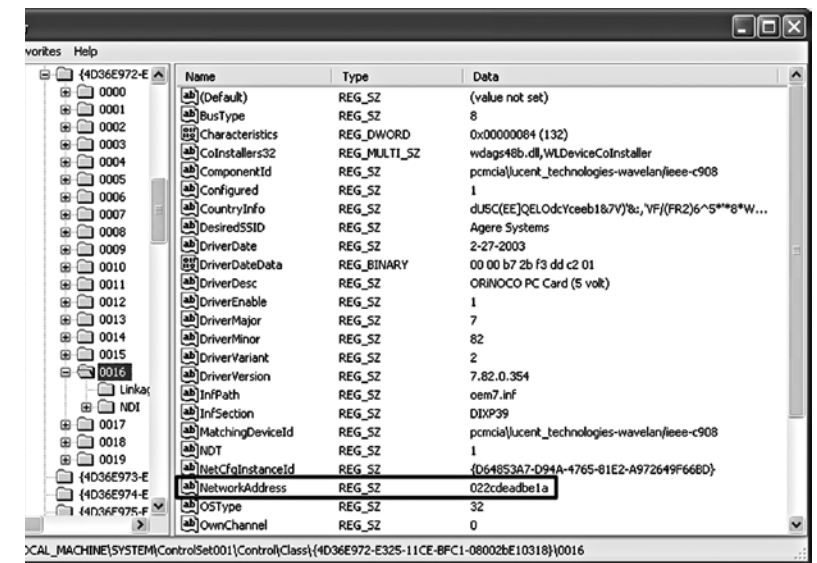


figure 5



figure 6



figure 7

Hiding Your MAC Address in LINUX

This process may be somewhat similar on Macintosh systems running OS X. I have not included a section for Macs however, as I do not own a machine to test on. Mac users should be able to find similar tutorials online.

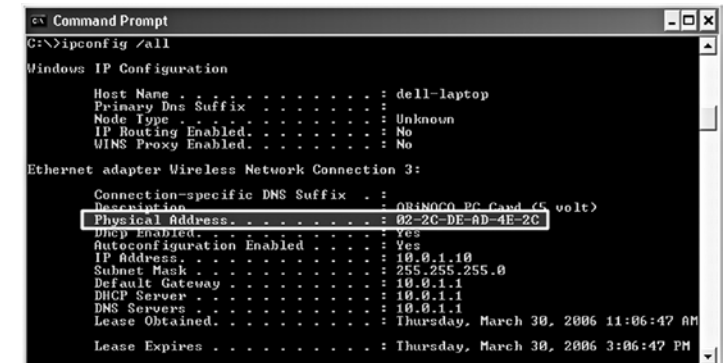
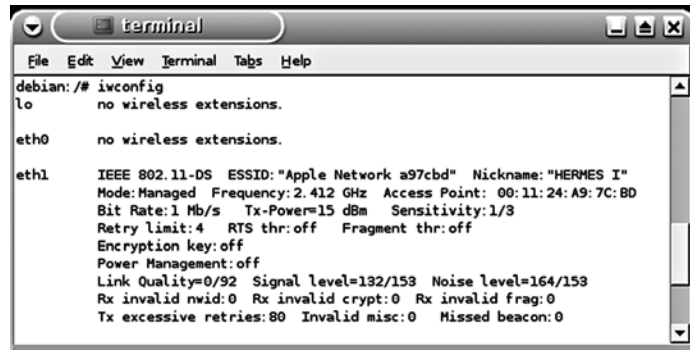


figure 8

4 The author would like to take this time to strongly endorse the use of Linux over Windows. This article is proof of how much easier it is to do some tasks in Linux than in Windows. Plus, it’s free! I won’t even get into what a good thing open-source is.

5 The author is using the Sarge release of Debian Linux and a Lucent Wavelan Gold PC card.

Going to College

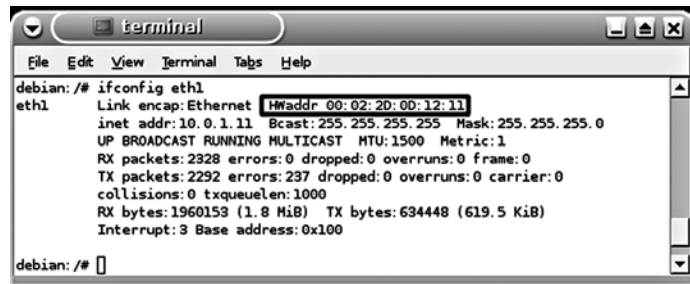


```
debian:~# ifconfig
lo        no wireless extensions.

eth0     no wireless extensions.

eth1     IEEE 802.11-DS  ESSID:"Apple Network a97cbd"  Nickname:"HERMES I"
Mode:Managed  Frequency:2.412 GHz  Access Point: 00:11:24:A9:7C:BD
Bit Rate:1 Mb/s   Tx-Power=15 dBm   Sensitivity:1/3
Retry limit:4    RTS thr:off   Fragment thr:off
Encryption key:off
Power Management:off
Link Quality=0/92  Signal level=132/153  Noise level=164/153
Rx invalid nwid:0  Rx invalid crypt:0  Rx invalid frag:0
Tx excessive retries:80  Invalid misc:0  Missed beacon:0
```

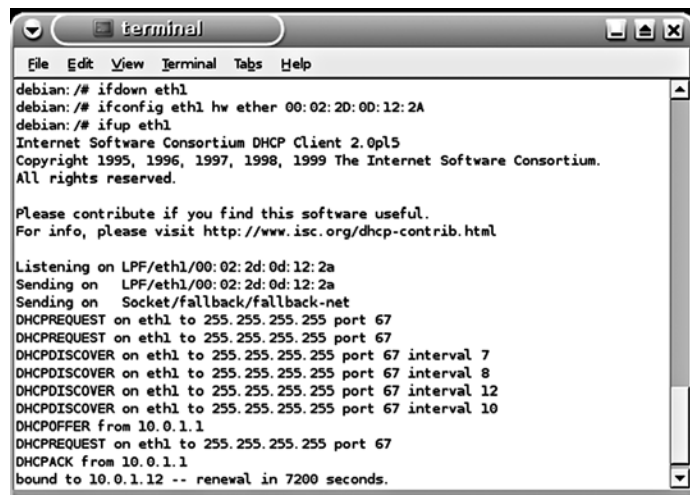
figure 9



```
debian:~# ifconfig eth1
eth1     Link encap:Ethernet  HWaddr 00:02:20:00:12:11
          inet addr:10.0.1.11  Bcast:255.255.255.255  Mask:255.255.255.0
          UP BROADCAST RUNNING MULTICAST  MTU:1500  Metric:1
          RX packets:2328 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0
          TX packets:2292 errors:237 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
          collisions:0 txqueuelen:1000
          RX bytes:1960153 (1.8 MiB)  TX bytes:634448 (619.5 KiB)
          Interrupt:3 Base address:0x100

debian:~#
```

figure 10

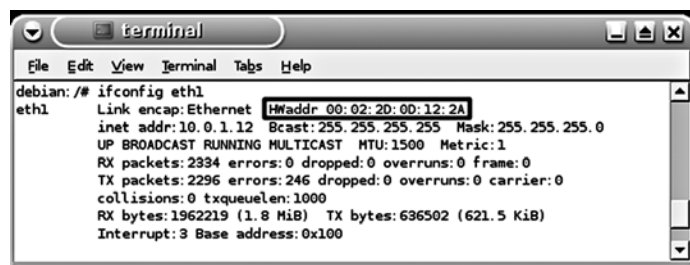


```
debian:~# ifdown eth1
debian:~# ifconfig eth1 hw ether 00:02:20:00:12:2A
debian:~# ifup eth1
Internet Software Consortium DHCP Client 2.0pl3
Copyright 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 The Internet Software Consortium.
All rights reserved.

Please contribute if you find this software useful.
For info, please visit http://www.isc.org/dhcp-contrib.html

Listening on LPF/eth1/00:02:20:00:12:2a
Sending on LPF/eth1/00:02:20:00:12:2a
Sending on Socket/fallback/fallback-net
DHCPREQUEST on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67
DHCPREQUEST on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67
DHCPDISCOVER on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67 interval 7
DHCPDISCOVER on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67 interval 8
DHCPDISCOVER on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67 interval 12
DHCPDISCOVER on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67 interval 10
DHCPOFFER from 10.0.1.1
DHCPREQUEST on eth1 to 255.255.255.255 port 67
DHCPCACK from 10.0.1.1
bound to 10.0.1.12 -- renewal in 7200 seconds.
```

figure 11



```
debian:~# ifconfig eth1
eth1     Link encap:Ethernet  HWaddr 00:02:20:00:12:2A
          inet addr:10.0.1.12  Bcast:255.255.255.255  Mask:255.255.255.0
          UP BROADCAST RUNNING MULTICAST  MTU:1500  Metric:1
          RX packets:2334 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0
          TX packets:2296 errors:246 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
          collisions:0 txqueuelen:1000
          RX bytes:1962219 (1.8 MiB)  TX bytes:636502 (621.5 KiB)
          Interrupt:3 Base address:0x100
```

figure 12

string that follows “HWaddr”: this is the device’s MAC Address. Write this down for reference.

Step 4: Turn off your wireless adapter. This is typically done by issuing the `ifdown <device name>` command (see figure 11).

Step 5: Change your MAC Address by issuing the following command: `ifconfig <device name> hw ether xx:xx:xx:xx:xx:xx` where each x is a digit from 0 to 9 or a to f (see figure 11).

Step 6: Turn on your wireless adapter. This is typically done by issuing the `ifup <device name>` command (see figure 11).

Step 7: Check your work. Issue the `ifconfig <device name>` command again. You should see that the MAC Address has changed (see figure 12). If this is not the case, or if your internet connection stops working, you may have entered an invalid MAC Address. Repeat steps 4 through 7 until it works.

Step 8: Send your communiqué or do whatever you want. But remember, whatever it is you want to do anonymously online, do only this. If you check your email, or do anything else you would normally do online, law enforcement agents might be able to determine it was you using the fake address.

Step 9: Change your MAC Address again by repeating steps 4 through 7.

With a bit of luck, some effort, and perhaps a little help, you should be able to get the above instructions to work satisfactorily. If the precautions I have mentioned are taken, the likelihood of the government being able to pin you to your online activities is very low. For an example, let’s look back upon our fictional anarchist.

Let us imagine that our anarchist used the wireless network from the park just as before. This time, however, she read this article, and having done so, forged her MAC Address before writing the communiqué. After she was done she changed it back. The FBI huffed and puffed all over town. They dragged in our anarchist and all her friends. They interrogated them up and down, but no one snitched. Upset by this show of solidarity, the agents seized our anarchist’s computer and those of her comrades. Unfortunately for the state, none of the MAC Addresses matched. Finally, the Bureau left town with its tail between its leg, and our anarchist was—at long last—free to plan another . . . IMPACT!

Colleges and universities perform a vital role in maintaining a society based on exploitation and hierarchy. Public universities take tax money from a state’s base of poor people and use it to pay for extravagant educational resources for a small, much wealthier minority. Private universities use money exploited from working people by wealthy capitalists, who, through a process called “philanthropy,” funnel it to an even more exclusive minority of people, who in turn are trained to rule and maintain the current system of exploitation. These institutions research and develop ever more efficient ways to make war, destroy ecosystems, and maximize profits, channeling people into those industries and infecting graduates with their ideologies. The problems created by this system present a new niche for colleges to fill by training idealistic young people to make careers out of addressing them in isolated and piecemeal ways. Universities also specialize in the specialization of knowledge, creating obscure academic jargon to increase dependence on “experts” in everything from economics to medicine to “political science”. At the same time, these institutions offer little more than poverty wages and miserable conditions to the janitors, kitchen workers, and groundskeepers who keep them running, sustaining the legacy of colonial relationships between wealthy institutions and the surrounding occupied territory.

Clearly, anarchists should attack universities on every front. The good news is that some of these attacks can be rewarding. The glut of resources can provide a clever trouble-maker like you with the tools to undertake nearly anything, whether or not you look like a twenty-something college student. Colleges won’t sell you the rope by which to hang them—they’ll give it to you! Here follows an abridged compilation of tips, tricks, secrets, and entry points into the wonderful world of college scams. If there is a college or university near you, don’t hesitate to dive into the delights of free food, computers, entertainment, funding, and whatever else you can find. Exploit the exploiters!

Free food is one of the key attractions of your standard college campus. The best spots are the cafeterias, which are usually readily scammable. For all-you-can-eat cafeterias, students usually have a card to swipe with a certain number of meals programmed into it. If you stand by the cafeteria entrance and inquire as to whether anyone has a meal to share, many college kids—whose guardians have taken care to prevent them from ever interacting with poor people apart from those in service roles—will be surprised enough to swipe you in. Watch out for managers, who may hassle you—you can usually recognize them by their ties and stern looks; in some places, they’re the only white employees. If generosity is not forthcoming, it’s often easy to sneak in—try running up a down escalator, taking a service elevator or side stairwell, or entering through the exit². Wear a backpack, explore, and if someone hassles you look confused and say you’re trying to find a bathroom. You can often expect sympathy from employees, who generally hate their bosses and don’t care much for students either. Many workers won’t care if you steal or sneak in so long as their bosses aren’t looking—they might even assist you.

Once inside, don’t hold back. With a good backpack full of tupperware and smaller bags, you can do your or others’ grocery shopping for a full week. Keep an eye out for industrial-size food containers, if you’re ready to go pro—they may be in closets or even more accessible locations³. Here’s another tip: if you find yourself inside without a bag and you have access to a rest room, check under the trashbags in use in the trash cans or paper towel

1 If a science is a field in which objective observation can yield truths, it seems an empirical study of politics would lead any unbiased observer to conclude that every political system based on centralized government by an elite is ultimately destructive to human life and happiness as well as ecological stability. Instead, “political science” involves teaching an elite group that elites are necessary—and how to con the rest of us into believing it, too.

Food

2 At one college, the cafeteria was on the second floor but included a balcony that looked out over a foyer on the first floor. Unbelievably, one could access the cafeteria by climbing up to the balcony from the foyer, in full view of everyone coming in and out of the building and the students already seated above—who would often cheer and clap for climbers who had hoped to avoid attracting attention.

3 Another heroic tale from your editor: at one college cafeteria, the managers had the daft idea of decorating the salad bar with multi-gallon tins of peppers, onions, and like. Those all disappeared one evening, some to stock the local Food Not Bombs pantry and others to be traded to an independent burrito shop in return for a lifetime subscription to their leftovers.

receptacles there—often workers will save themselves trouble by stashing extra bags under the ones in use.

Events on campus frequently include free food, especially towards the beginning of the semester when organizations are recruiting. Ten minutes of Campus Crusade for Christ may be worth it for the three pizzas you walk out with afterwards. You can also look for weekly discussion groups, fancy public speaking events, and large department or organization dinners that advertise free food. Some colleges even send out email lists compiled by student activities offices or individual students announcing all the free food events on campus.

Educational Opportunities

Classes

By auditing classes, you can learn a language, study transnational feminism through film, or learn about the history and practice of creating free schools for kids!

Most colleges offer a tremendous number of classes every semester or quarter—and it would be silly if they were just for students! Often you can sit in on (or “audit”) classes without having to enroll or pay money to the university. Start by scanning the college website for the course catalogue and browsing by subject to find things that interest you. Many professors are more than happy to have someone who actually cares about learning sit in, and if you ask them on the first day of class or email them in advance, you can often secure a spot. In huge survey classes of a hundred or more students, you probably won’t even need permission—just hang out in the back, and try to restrain yourself from throwing spitballs.

Libraries

You don’t need to pay tuition or be authorized by a professor to learn about any subject that interests you!

Perhaps the resource most unique to colleges is their phenomenal libraries. At many, non-students can get cheap library cards that offer access to millions of books and other resources. Even if you can’t get a card, the extended hours and comfortable seating make libraries ideal for hanging out working on projects all day. Take the time to look into all the different libraries in a university’s system and what each offers—often there are music libraries with thousands of CDs, records, and printed music collections; huge selections of US and international newspapers, journals, and magazines on every topic; map libraries with local topographical and train maps; “media resource” centers with thousands of videos and DVDs; and even children’s book collections! Many libraries stay open up to twenty-four hours a day, but some check student IDs during nighttime hours to keep out the riffraff.

Funneling Money and Other Resources out of the Ivory Tower

Computers and Printing

Computers and printing comprise another major asset of college libraries and universities in general. Most large libraries or student unions include some public computers with internet access that do not require passwords. For printing, you might need a student ID and password; you can either make friends with a student, ask someone to sign you in, or wait in a lab until someone leaves without logging out of the computer. Often you can print practically limitless quantities of material—but watch out for meddlesome computer lab employees. You should be able to find computers with most any program you need to use⁴, and even free scanners.

Photocopies can be tough to get for free. You might be able to arrange this through a connection to a student organization; alternately, you could just use the scanners and free printing. One private college hosts a legendary “student appreciation week” at the end of each semester, during which eight free, unsupervised photocopiers are made available to anyone who can get to the student union for seven glorious days. People have sustained entire literature distributions through judicious use of college resources, without ever spending a penny.

⁴ The entire two-hundred-page reunion issue of the 'zine *Inside Front*, which was in some ways a precursor to *Rolling Thunder*, was designed with pirated software on library computers.

Often students are permitted to check out equipment of various kinds on a use-by-use basis. If you can befriend a student, you may thus be able to get access to sports gear, projectors with which to show movies to the public (and rooms in which to do so), and even more far-fetched items such as musical instruments, amplification systems, and camping equipment. Teachers often have access to yet more resources. It might not be impossible to impersonate one just long enough to obtain something for a deserving community group that lacks state funding; be sure to clean the item up beyond recognition once you’ve got it. Alternately, it might suffice to learn where the administration keeps all this stuff, and how well-guarded it is.

Liberal student groups tend to attract young idealists with a fervent desire to get involved in meaningful projects; more often than not, those same groups end up disillusioning them permanently with ineffective and alienating brands of so-called activism. This tragedy can be averted through infiltration, outreach, and shameless recruiting: flouting for unpermitted marches at the meeting of an anti-war group, for example, or chatting about clinic defense with liberal feminists after a film screening, or tabling with anti-civilization 'zines at an Earth Day rally. Such efforts can broaden perspectives and save well-meaning students from apathy and liberal inefficiency.

Campus campaigns most frequently occur in reaction to specific outrages, such as a gaybashing, a sexual assault, or the firing of a popular worker for attempting to organize a union. Suddenly appearing, these campaigns spark an immediate firestorm, burn with ferocious energy for a short time, then blink out around exam time. With radical allies among students, workers, and professors, anarchists in the community can provide valuable support to meaningful campaigns, especially in times of low student energy, and radicalize others in the process.

When the inertia of college activism seems to overwhelm the potential for radical activity, remember that student groups frequently have access to resources that can easily be funneled into more fulfilling, community-driven projects. Student organizations can easily extend their opportunities to other local groups: some literature distributors have flourished because student groups have donated stacks of zines and even whole books provided by the unlimited photocopying at their schools, while other groups have shared their access to free long-distance phone calls and conference calls to facilitate organizing across state lines. Colleges can provide a wide variety of practical and logistical resources: space in classrooms and auditoriums to hold meetings, shows, and performances; access to large vans or buses for traveling to conferences and protests; all the supplies required to set up independent workshops for community members on silkscreening, bike repair, and anything else you can think of; and, of course, money itself! Student organizations usually receive a budget, and they can request funding to pay for supplies or bring in speakers. Student groups are constantly paying exorbitant quantities of money to bring organizations and individuals to their college to speak on issues, facilitate workshops, show movies, or give performances—and you don’t have to have a fancy website or a manager to qualify. If you’re not a student, you can offer to be a speaker or guest performer and donate the money you receive to local projects.

Students usually have healthcare plans covering many services for free or at a low cost. If you can befriend a student and borrow his or her ID, or obtain a student ID number⁵, you too can attain access to services from gynecology and counseling to physical therapy and prescription drugs. Because most colleges get funding for sex education programs, condoms, lube, dental dams, and all sorts of safe-sex supplies and information can be acquired on most campuses in endless supply: check the student health building or student

To maximize your printing ease, find a lab or time of day free from supervision.

Student Organizations and Activism

Student groups organized around particular ethnicities, sexualities, or obscure interests can help anarchists find other people who share mutual interests and identities—whether you are South Asian, transgendered, a Dungeons and Dragons enthusiast, or all of the above!

Many universities, when issuing individuals large sums of money through a student organization, will request a social security number for tax information. You can either cash the check and then not give that information—which can be a felony and is not always an option—or have folks who don’t make much money or don’t file taxes receive the money.

Health Care

⁵ We’ll leave it up to our entrepreneuring readers to figure out how to do so—although we’ve heard that some people will tell you anything when you’re doing a survey.



center. STI testing is also available on many campuses. Some colleges offer confidential testing, and because ID can't be required for these tests, anyone who knows where to go—which can usually be ascertained by means of the internet—can get tested. Additionally, at universities with medical or dental schools, cheap or free medical services can be obtained from students in need of practice patients. Schools often offer free teeth-cleaning and x-rays, while more intensive procedures and surgeries cost a minimal amount.

Similarly, many college campuses with medical schools or large medical research departments carry out medical studies which can be both lucrative and informative. For instance, at many universities across the country, there is a herpes vaccine study in which the first round of testing simply requires one to fill out some paperwork and get tested for herpes. That's a free STI test that you get paid for! All kinds of other testing can be found—much of which involves exposure to sinister drugs—advertised on department websites or on fliers around student unions and university bathrooms.

Housing Most on-campus residences are dormitories; these are usually full of college students, and thus make inhospitable living environments. However, on some campuses, buildings not labeled for housing feature empty unlocked rooms or even whole floors of unused rooms perfect for squatting. It's different in every place: building doors lock at different times, housecleaning staff make different rounds . . . but if you can squat your own office (see the first issue of *Rolling Thunder*), you can surely squat someone else's college.

Entertainment Colleges work hard to keep their students entertained so as to perpetuate the illusion that life in the college bubble is interesting and sophisticated. Movie screenings are common, and often either free or require a borrowed or copied student ID. Drama troupes stage plays throughout the year—one can generally get in free by impersonating a drama student or volunteering to usher in return for a ticket. Dance performances, concerts, cultural festivals, and more take place all the time and are often free or easy to sneak into. College radio stations often have massive CD and record collections, which can be burned or taped to your heart's content if you can get into the studio. They also give away concert tickets all the time, in predictable patterns—listen by a phone in the late afternoons.

Also, all kinds of assholes give lectures and workshops on every subject imaginable, and these events can be interesting opportunities to learn or to hone your pie-throwing aim—but that's a whole different recipe⁶! Look on the internet for event listings and calendars, and find spots on campus where flyers are posted.

⁶ See "Pie Throwing" in *Recipes for Disaster*, another CrimethInc. publication.

Making the Grade These are just a few of the innumerable ways we've found to squeeze resources out of these bloated institutions. Student allies can provide insights you might never find on your own, so make friends and ask. Depending on the homogeneity of the student body, you may find it fairly easy or completely impossible to blend in; if you wear a backpack and smile, people may look at you funny but will rarely ever directly interfere with your scam-o-rama. Find loopholes, dissatisfied employees, accessible rooftops, secret hideouts, and other mischievous means of harvesting the bountiful cornucopia of the university.

Extra Credit

- Take a stroll through buildings on campus. Often, stacks of discarded books, errant chairs and furniture, dry erase boards and markers, extension cords, and other odds and ends are stashed in hallways and stairwells, waiting

for loving homes. New rolls of toilet paper can be found in most bathrooms. Light bulbs, office supplies, projectors... the list is endless.

- Most campuses have courtesy phones scattered throughout campus, especially in student centers and libraries, which often offer free calls to all local numbers. Try dialing a "9" before the number if at first you don't succeed. Such phones are perfect for contacting your comrades in illegal activity without leaving your enemies any record of who talks to whom. (Don't speak about said activity on the phone, of course—just call your friend and express that you'd like to meet somewhere.)

- Art departments often have darkrooms, screenprinting materials, and other excellent resources available to art students and anyone else who can get at them. Some art buildings are accessible twenty-four hours a day for those late-night bursts of artistic inspiration.

- Most colleges offer exercise facilities ranging from soccer fields—weekly community soccer!—to gyms that can be accessed by means of a borrowed ID or a clever move. Likewise, most campuses have an indoor or outdoor swimming pool, or both.

- If you're looking for a target for some community-minded direct action, you rarely need look further than the nearest college. Most campuses feature National Guard offices or buildings, and many also have vivisectionists and other ne'er-do-wells working on the premises. College campuses usually have their own police, but ironically this sometimes makes them safer areas. During the FTAA ministerial in Miami, when the entire city was infested with riot police, the campus of the University of Miami was as placid as ever—hence the massive amounts of wheatpasting and stickering that took place there that week.

- At the end of every school year, when thousands of students move out of their dormitory rooms, a week-long dumpster bonanza opens up with literally inconceivable bounty bestowed upon all wise enough to partake. Find out where the dorms are, especially those populated by first-year students or athletes, learn when exam week takes place, borrow a pickup truck if you can, and go to town! Rugs, plastic furniture, packaged food, futons, small appliances, clothes, and books are especially common. We know a community organization that nets about \$400 every year by having a yard sale with their post-semester dumpster finds. At the end of the year, abandoned bikes can also be found in abundance across college campuses and can come home with you for the cost of a pair of bolt cutters. All these resources can be redistributed to the community at large at the next Really Really Free Market.



Some years ago, I myself was an accursed college student, sleepwalking through my daily routine—or sleeping through it—unfulfilled by my classes and uncertain of the necessity of it all. Nighttime found me alive and active, invested in my friends and projects, but still I questioned my place at that school... until I discovered the college scam. Slowly, I began to see all of the treasures I could sneak out of that blind behemoth of an institution, all of the ways I could steal and cheat my heart back and root it in the people around me. I delved into all the secret sources: I found the dresser full of light bulbs in the student center, the janitorial closet full of tools in the science building, and the empty math department whose office supply cabinet never could stay locked. I learned to find all the access points to hidden resources, how to secure the supplies and money to drive the projects that were actually making things happen.

I was a part of two or three or sometimes four student groups that applied for money from the school; one of the groups was actually defunct, but served

Account

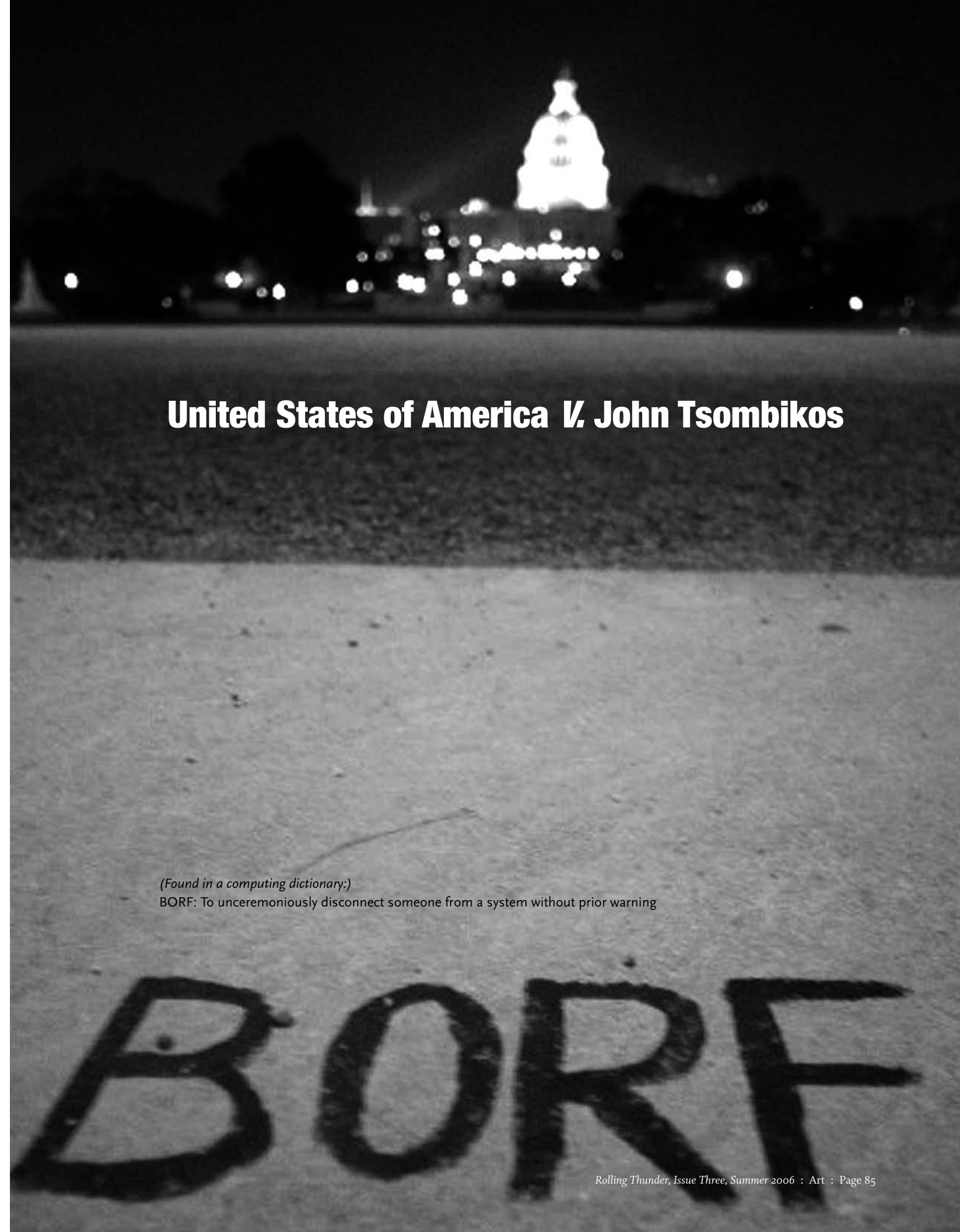


as a front to ask for more money. Every semester we would get together over a potluck or in the park and dream up the most fantastic, amazing things we could do, then figure out how to ask the university for funding in such a way that they would comply⁷. We helped fund our friends' punk bands, puppet shows, and health collectives, inviting them to perform at the school or give workshops there while on tour. We also funneled resources into our own local infrastructure. We started small, accumulating all kinds of tools—silkscreens, paint, knitting and sewing supplies, bike tools, building tools, speculums and more—by staging workshops to justify these needs. We learned the slick language, describing events as drug- and alcohol-free entertainment or highlighting the ways we were working with other groups. We started a literature distribution, got hundreds of dollars from the school to buy books, and gave them away or sold them at minimal prices. We built a rapport with the money-givers, and had the newspapers report on our events to add to the charade. We asked for more money to get materials and bring in local “celebrities”—and the school gave us more.

At my school, the system for getting money was complex. Student organizations wrote their requests for all kinds of programming months in advance. Then, interviews were held by some council to determine how much money was to be allotted; we always asked for twice as much as we wanted and got almost as much as we needed. All of this money was itemized, broken down into speaker fees, travel expenses, this much for paint, this much for building supplies, this much for fabric, and receipts were expected for everything. Then at the end of the year, each organization was audited, and all the money that hadn't been used was returned. It was a bureaucratic clusterfuck. There were forms and paperwork and signatures required. I learned to be the treasurer; I knew all the players, had a sweet smile for each of them, and somehow we skipped audit after audit. Every semester there was extra money, pleasantly unaccounted for, building a little mountain in our bank account.

All the while, a new community space-infoshop-amazing collective project was coming together just beyond the reach of the school. We were painting and building, learning and teaching, working with all of our friends to set up and use the tools and supplies we had acquired. We turned the distribution into a library. We had shows, poetry readings, and community meals—we built up momentum. The plans were laid and the potential created. Finally, I knew what I was doing there, and by the time I left the school, we had thousands of dollars set aside to sustain the new space.

⁷ This is not to insinuate that all the fantastic, amazing things we wanted to do required money. Many things look different with access to money; I want to pursue all the options available to me and develop my abilities to make wonderful things happen in any context.



United States of America *V.* John Tsombikos

(Found in a computing dictionary:)

BORF: To unceremoniously disconnect someone from a system without prior warning

BORF

Throughout 2004 and 2005, BORF entered the public consciousness as a sort of illegal, inscrutable publicity campaign. In addition to being virtually omnipresent in the Washington, D.C. area, BORF graffiti was sighted throughout New York City, North Carolina, Florida, Indiana, San Francisco, and even Greece. The name and associated face appeared in a myriad of forms: life-size BORF “soldiers,” traditional graffiti pieces, twenty-foot-tall letters painted-rolled onto seemingly inaccessible walls, smiling eyes staring down from interstate signs above six lanes of speeding traffic, images stickered, wheatpasted and stenciled on every imaginable surface.

BORF received coverage in independent and corporate media including the *Washington Post* and the *Raleigh News and Observer*. The images and enigmatic messages, not to mention the feats of bravado by which they were presented to the public, were discussed far outside the usual circles of graffiti aficionados. Was BORF an anti-gentrification offensive? A secret cult? An elaborate surrealist prank?

After an investigation spanning over a year, the DC metropolitan police finally made an arrest in the BORF case¹. Shortly thereafter, *Rolling Thunder* conducted a series of interviews with the defendant to gain some insight into the BORF legend.

Can you start by telling us who you are?

My name is John Tsombikos. I was arrested for BORF graffiti last July and I was a close friend of BORF, Bobby Fisher.

Can you describe who and what BORF actually is?

BORF was a friend of mine, Bobby Fisher, who killed himself in October 2003 when we were sixteen. Then it turned into a graffiti campaign, which consisted of me and some of his other close friends and acquaintances putting up his face and the name BORF wherever we went and on anything. I guess it's kind of a campaign for us to deal with his death and to damage things we identify as contributing to our misery and loneliness. It also serves as a tool for communication. It's a nod or wink to all the other kids that feel as worthless as we do because of the way our consumer society is set up, and all the ways corporate

America takes what we make and sells it back to us in fragments of what it originally was. And to communicate that destroying property can be a lot more fun than destroying yourself or the people around you. As Raoul Vaneigem says, “We've got a world to win . . . and nothing to lose but our boredom!”

How did this manifest itself as a graffiti-based project? Was graffiti something Bobby was into as well?

Back in the day, when we were in middle school we would spend weekend nights walking around the suburbs where we lived vandalizing places, tipping over porta-potties, TPing trees, egging cars, or just throwing any combination of gross stuff at cars and running away. So this delinquent mentality had been prevalent—but, also, the graffiti came out of frustration with other ways of trying to be heard. When I was in my junior year of high school, the day after he died, I started this student club at school called Responsible Individuals of Tomorrow, R.I.O.T. and we tried to organize around how our 4th amendment rights, protection from illegal search and seizure, were being violated at school. The cars we parked in the spaces we bought for the year were subject to search and seizure without probable cause. We tried

to organize kids around that, but nothing ever came of it because of the bureaucracy in the school system and all the, you know, compartmentalizing of resistance or whatever, and how they have all these things set up to make it really hard to make any change... so I figured instead of screaming at a wall, why not vandalize it?

So this started out of a sense of frustration and continued to grow. Would you say it started with raw frustration, anger, and sadness and then grew into something more intentional and specific?

For sure. At first I was just doing it because it made me feel better, but now I think our motives have been established and for the most part, we know what we want. Now we're not limiting ourselves to graffiti because basically, the court system and my legal situation are forcing us to move on to something bigger. For a while, I got caught up in the graffiti aspect of it, got caught up in stupid graffiti beef here in DC. There were times when I'd go on the Red Line [of the metro, the local public transit system] to paint something and I'd have to carry a nightstick to protect myself from other writers who were painting over my stuff and trying to kick my ass... I think the graffiti was mostly just cathartic, the same thing as when you're angry and you break some dishes or whatever, but instead I was taking it out on property owners in the belly of the beast.

So the project began in October 2003? When was it that BORF started to appear more prominently around DC, and when did the public start reacting to it?

I don't know about the other kids that write BORF, but when I started getting up, that was probably near the beginning of 2004, when it all started setting in—like me realizing that Bobby's death was something real, that he wasn't coming back, and looking to my surroundings and seeing what the cause of that was. Because our society puts all this emphasis on the individual, it's the responsibility of individuals to address their issues and it doesn't deal with the environmental, or circumstantial, reasons for them having these emotional problems or depression issues or whatever. It's the same in disability studies. People with disabilities are pressured to overcome them because they're seen as undesirable;

there's a stigma attached to them. So instead of people asking for societal change, like putting in ramps for wheelchairs for example, people are expected to learn how to lift their wheelchairs and hop over curbs and stuff, and the same is evident in psychology and how we feel—we have to overcome how drab our cities are and how bored we feel in the suburbs, you know, so I just looked around and tried to see what needed some changing, aesthetically at the very least.

What kinds of reactions did you see from people?

Everything on the spectrum from random people chasing me down the street to try and catch me to people seeing me put up a sticker and striking up a conversation about why I was doing that and how much they supported it. Some asked me for copies of whatever I was putting up. And then there were internet debates where yuppies and others of that sort would complain about this kid or group of kids that was vandalizing their so-called “community.”

You spoke of alienation and I think that's interesting, as far as the reactions you received... I remember reading on the internet about people I might describe as yuppies who were commuting to work, whether it be the Pentagon or their law offices or whatever, who seemed to really connect with BORF graffiti and felt it really livened up their commute, that it took them—for a few seconds—out of the drudgery of the everyday. Did you get a lot of reactions like that from people you wouldn't have expected them from, or from outside the scenes that have traditionally supported graffiti or radical politics?

Yeah, I think the whole thing with this BORF stuff, the BORF graffiti, is that it reached beyond the usual suspects. Normal people, even tourists, would see it and take pictures and post it on the net. They'd think it was funny, from what I'd read. But I think there is something in all of us that is trying to escape the daily routine of like, you know, go to work, fucking sit in traffic, go to sleep, maybe watch TV or whatever. And I tried to express that, as did everyone else who did the graffiti, we tried to express that in the whole grown-ups vs. kids thing. Grown-ups are the ones who

try to destroy all the fun for kids, call the cops on parties or report suspicious things and people to the authorities, and the authorities themselves, the bureaucrats, you know, the people in the capitol, the White House, those are all grown-ups. I think there is a child in all of us. I've heard this quote, probably from someone in the Situationists; they say the moment of revolt is childhood rediscovered. We are just bringing out the spontaneity that we have naturally in childhood.

You talked about some of the different people who supported the BORF work they saw on the streets. How much do you think that support manifested itself in people feeling inspired to put up work of their own versus just being entertained by the spectacle of it? Do you think people outside the BORF crew started tagging BORF, inspired by what they saw, or doing similar things around the city?

It's funny, because most of the people I inspired to do graffiti and take part in shaping their surroundings were people totally against BORF graffiti. I've seen people write FUCK right over some of the BORF tags around town, people crossing





it out. This one dude was caught last year writing "BORF is a do..." He got arrested by the MPD before he could finish and spent a night in jail. It turned out he was just some twenty-seven-year-old yuppie trying to insult BORF graffiti.

Do you consider BORF to be a form of art?

Hell no. From the start, it was never a crass artistic exploitation of our friend's death, but simply a group of juvenile delinquents engaged in a war on the culture of alienation. One way to differentiate between art and graffiti is that in graffiti there is never a product to sell. Graffiti writers don't make paintings to put food on the table the way most artists do; we don't conform to any bourgeois concepts of what "art" is. All the BORF graffiti was the fruit of an adventurous night or a walk to a friend's house or a bored wait for a bus.

What contemporary graffiti or street artists are you inspired by?

I detest "street artists." I could probably even say that most graffiti writers hate street artists. The streets are not a tool for advertising! I'm inspired by people who write for their own enjoyment and the enjoyment of their community, people who beautify and retool the landscapes where they live and work. As far as writers I really like, I'd say KEGR from Denmark for constantly changing names and raising the standard of quality in style even in the most risky and illegal of spots. Using different names is a nice way of preventing the fetishizing of one name. Other writers in the past have done this, too, like DONDI in the 70s and 80s; but unlike his predecessors, KEGR maintains his illegality by painting on the streets, in a number of cities around the world. I'm also inspired by REVS, who destroyed both New York City and the paradigm of spray paint as the only medium used by graffiti writers. He extended the arsenal of tools for getting up to include paint rollers, wheatpasting, and stencils. More recently he's been creating steel sculptures of his name and installing them in public spaces, further breaking down the paradigm of graffiti. He also does graffiti just for the love of it; in his words, "...once money changes hands for art, it becomes a fraudulent activity." Instead of easily exploiting and capitalizing on his notoriety as a legend in

the world of graffiti, he works as a union ironworker for a living.

Is graffiti inherently political? What makes it political?

I guess, in a sense, any criminal activity can be construed as political. But I think it's a stretch to say that graffiti is inherently political, especially with the new wave of corporate marketing through stencil work. I'd say the sense in which graffiti can be political is a matter of individual motive. A broken window isn't going to shut down a corporation, but the catharsis and excitement could change that person's life. I think it's important to remember, though, that graffiti doesn't build movements. Any political strength it can muster is limited.

Is BORF an anarchist project?

It's a project of anarchists, but if you are asking whether it was to promote the political aims and message of anarchism, then no. I think that would cheapen the ideas and make them less personal for both the people who participate and the people who see the results.

I should clarify what I mean in describing BORF as a project of anarchists, as well. I have, for the most part, been an anarchist throughout my life, even before I knew what anarchism was. The delinquent impulse in all of us is anarchist. Children do not have concepts of hierarchy, gender, property, and so on—that's why it takes over twelve years of schooling and conditioning to break their spirits.

In DC, the graffiti seems to have had an impact on real estate developers and those in the business "community," and perhaps has even been a thorn in the side of gentrifiers and those who attempt to "beautify" neighborhoods for their own economic gain. What role do you think graffiti can play in combating gentrification?

I think it's a minor part of the offensive against gentrification. As long as it's grimy, everywhere, and the writers are determined and come back after the city cleans it, graffiti is pretty effective in pissing off city officials, developers, and other uptight bureaucratic types. Consider graffiti the visual harassment of yuppies; its effectiveness can be likened to strewing trash in the street or yelling abuse at them, both of which can be effective at scaring peo-

ple away and lowering property values, but don't really change anything beyond that. The only radically effective weapon against the fuckers is community organizing and agitation: protests and rallies that publicize the effects gentrification has on lower-income communities, lock-downs that force evicting landlords to remove you physically from your home, support for those sorts of actions, even just talking to the people in your community. I think the reason the fuckers get away with gentrification so easily is the degree to which we are alienated from each other. The simple act of engaging in friendly conversation with someone on your block or in your apartment building is dangerous to them. Graffiti is merely a passive-aggressive means of personally letting off some steam, and maybe letting other people in the neighborhood know that they are not the only ones that feel a certain way.

On another note, the description of speculators and developers as "those who would attempt to 'beautify' neighborhoods for their own economic gain" can also be applied to careerist street artists.

Do you have a particular affinity for DC that made it the landscape you chose to retool, as opposed to the suburbs of Virginia where you are from? What makes DC an area you chose to work in? Do you feel an affinity to the city?

Yeah. I think this is probably one of my favorite cities. I've spent a lot of my time in the area and I think I relate to it in that it's kind of alien from everywhere else in the country—it's not a state, people don't have voting rights—and in how run down most parts of the city are. Well, that's changing now, I guess, with gentrification. But I can identify with DC as a city... I don't know, 'cause I've never felt like I was a part of this country, or part of a national identity either. I've never felt, ever, that I was part of anything at all, you know, I just felt like... it's hard to articulate.

I ask this because one thing that seemed common in the media coverage and court proceedings is that you were called an outsider—you were from Virginia, and how dare you come into this city and deface property here.

I think it's just one of their fallback mechanisms or whatever, they just have



these ready to fall back on when they don't have anything else to criticize someone for. The *City Paper* did this article about this person they called "Borf's Nemesis." He's this guy that comes in from Roslyn, Virginia, to DC to paint over every piece of BORF graffiti he sees; he's my antithesis. They wrote that whenever he passes a piece of BORF graffiti he cringes and grinds his teeth and cusses out loud. He comes back later that day with some gray paint and paints over it. So it's okay if you're coming from outside city limits to paint over graffiti, but don't come in here to do it, that's just horrible, unthinkable.

There were a lot of contradictions in what the judge said to me when I was sentenced—like I'm a rich kid coming in to DC to paint on property in poor neighborhoods, when developers who happen to own half of the city own these buildings. It's funny because the judge made it seem like she was this mouthpiece for all the disenfranchised and poor people of DC that she sentences to years and years in jail for non-violent drug offenses. All of a sudden this white, affluent woman in a huge position of power is telling me on behalf of all these people she puts in jail, whose oppression she perpetuates—she's telling me that I've turned into what I hate, which is basically her.

She's suddenly developed a class analysis.
Yeah, suddenly. It's very convenient.

I've heard you comment about how destructive drugs and drinking have been to the graffiti scenes in specific cities, and mention that you abstain from these things. Could you expound on that, and speak to how it relates to your beliefs as an anarchist?

Tupac said it best: "Think of the damage we could do . . . if we wasn't high." It's the same for a lot of subversive communities, and definitely isn't exclusive to graffiti. In DC graffiti, a lot of the best writers from the early and mid-90's came out of the hardcore scene; a lot of them were straight edge. The most prolific writers were either straight edge or "party animals" who didn't give a fuck. The latter usually only got caught because they were drunk or high (not giving a fuck is an important quality for any prolific graffiti writer). To have a high-status, destructive writer arrested is a serious blow to any graffiti scene.

That's one of the reasons BORF is good for your liver.

The ironic thing about the BORF graffiti is that it kind of turned into my addiction; whenever I was feeling bad or whatever, I would just go out and write something.

Is that an example of how an addiction can be healthy? How one can be high on things that aren't harmful, and how you can define for yourself what you can do to get "high"? So when you're down, you use that energy to . . .

Yeah, instead of destroying my health, I refaced property and hopefully made people laugh about it. A lot of the kids in the DC graffiti scene do a lot of drinking, they smoke and all that, while BORF was one of the most destructive (or productive) writers in recent memory according to some news outlets.

I remember asking you once how so much BORF stuff got up, and your answer was that because you don't drink, smoke, or waste your time with other things, you just went out and put things up instead.

Yeah, that's where most of my energy went—to graffiti, to BORF.

Invincibility seems to be a common theme in the BORF work. One thing I took this to mean was that we can get away with so much more than people in power want us to believe we can... but with something like graffiti, maybe with anything that involves legal risk, maybe not getting caught can also make us feel larger than we are. Can you talk about that a little?

Yeah, I think that's what got me into trouble. That's what, you know, that feeling larger than we are, kind of influenced my talking to the *Washington Post*, which was a stupid thing to do. But, yeah, whatever you do, it's on the streets for people to see, and every little thing you do is visible to every passerby, drivers, pedestrians, it's kind of this "hey look what I can do" thing—I climbed this building and spent like two hours up there painting...

As far as trying to draw different lessons from your experiences, what do you think was a mistake about talking to the Washington Post? Do you think it was the way you did it, trusting them at all, or what came out in it?

Trusting them at all was the biggest

mistake. Trusting anyone outside of my friends is a big mistake. The whole point of graffiti is getting your own message out by your own means. You don't need anyone or anything but a can of paint to get your message out. They'll stab you in the back without thinking twice; they don't give a shit, they're just careerists. They'll do anything to forward their careers.

In July of 2005 you were arrested in DC. Can you tell us anything about what happened that night?

Basically, I was out painting with some kids that didn't really know what to do in that type of situation or how to carry themselves on the streets without being conspicuous as a suspect. One of the kids I was with, this homeless person asked us for change and my friend engaged him in a conversation and asked him to look out for him . . . and from there, the homeless person used seeing my friend commit a crime as leverage to try and get more money from us. I didn't have any money and my friend, I don't know, but he wouldn't give it to him if he did. And then the guy flagged down a cop, and we went up an alley. I ditched my paint, and then a bunch of cops came and surrounded us after we climbed a bunch of fences and ran for a while; they had a helicopter and motorcycles and trapped us.

Do you think that they knew you were related to BORF when they were going after you? Helicopters and such seem a little excessive . . .

I think they knew that it was BORF. I even overheard them talking to each other, like "Man, what if this was BORF? We could go district."

What were some of the things you were feeling when you were arrested, while you were being held, waiting to be released, and going through the booking process?

I was feeling like an idiot and, you know, just basically regretting getting caught, going over what I should have done differently, the usual, but also fearing what was going to come out of it.

And what followed the arrest?

The morning after my arrest, a lot of media showed up at my doorstep asking for interviews, and asking me or my parents to talk.



Could you take us through the timeline of your arrest? You were arrested—did you spend the night in jail? What happened when you got out? How did the whole media thing come about?

Yeah, so we were in custody . . . they took us to the hospital to see if we wanted treatment because we had cuts on our hands from climbing fences, and we refused. One of my friends refused to give his name, so I guess the procedure is that they keep you overnight until arraignment, when you can choose to give them your name. I don't know how that works. We stayed there overnight and got shipped around three times to different holding cells. Basically, we were really bored. When morning came, we went to the court building and waited all day until the judge called us, which was around five o'clock. Then we got out, had to do a drug test, and went home.

When you got home, what did you discover had transpired while you were in jail?

My mom had talked to the *Washington Post* some more, which was bad—that hurt my case a lot. She basically admitted, or revealed, that I was connected to the BORF phenomenon somehow, through my friend who died. I didn't get a call in jail, so I couldn't call her and tell her not to talk to anyone.

Was that an issue you'd ever talked to your parents about before? Are there any lessons that other people who might be involved with something similar could learn from this? For instance, do you wish you ever spoke to your parents about the possibility of the media contacting them before this and about the proper way to respond so it wouldn't jeopardize you?

I mean, my relationship with them isn't too good. But I just wouldn't tell anyone anything about what you're doing. I wouldn't talk about BORF graffiti at all with them, they just somehow connected things.

Can you tell us a little bit about what happened between when you were arrested and your next court date?

I went to arraignment right when I was getting out of jail, and they basically read my charge, which was a misdemeanor, and then I went to a status hearing in misdemeanor court . . .

What was the misdemeanor charge?

I guess it was "defacing public or private property." And I went to some status hearings to get my trial date. November 18 came and I was indicted on two felony counts, one "destruction of private property," and the other I guess was the same, "defacing private or public property." The next week my house was raided by the Department of Justice and fifteen or so federal agents. They took whatever was lying around, anything electronic, all my computers, my camera, all that type of stuff². From there, in December the

² Dear readers—if you're ever in a similar situation, don't leave this stuff lying around at home!

prosecution offered a plea agreement and knowing that I had been arrested in NY on November 15, on some more graffiti stuff, I thought that it would be better to take a plea than to go to trial. That plus all the other pressure they were putting on me, all the evidence they had just gotten from my house, and threatening me with federal charges for tagging highway signs. My lawyer made a counter-offer for a plea deal and I decided to take it and agreed to pay \$12,000 in restitution, do 80 hours of cleaning up graffiti, and 120 hours of community service. I pled sometime in mid-December. A 'show-cause' hearing was set up to show why my release should be revoked because of my arrest in NYC. They didn't have probable cause for that, so the judge kept me on personal recognition but banned me from the District of Columbia until sentencing, and I wasn't allowed to have art supplies on me except when going to school. Come sentencing, which was February 9, she put me in jail for 30 days, gave me a suspended sentence of 17 months, and put me on three years probation. Right now I'm getting drug tested twice a week.

And you still have to make restitution and do the community service?

Yeah.

Before you made the plea, what was the maximum sentence you were being threatened with?

When it was a misdemeanor, the maximum sentence was 180 days in jail, and/or a \$5,000 fine. When it was a felony it was ten years in prison and I dunno, a \$10,000 fine, a \$1,000,000 fine...

What were some of the things you had to weigh specifically when you were considering the plea bargain? What were some of the things that were helpful to you in deciding whether to fight the charges or take a plea?

Through this whole process I had a lawyer doing this pro bono, for free. One reason I used him was that I didn't want to have a huge legal cost I couldn't afford. I didn't want to go through my parents to pay for a lawyer and whatever else, so I was thinking about that and how much it would cost to go through years of litigation and probably new charges. Even if I won

this case, they could have brought even more felony charges and maybe even tried to move them up to federal charges. So that was in the back of my mind, and also just wanting to get it over with. Being in that situation is really stressful, there's a lot of pressure on you. So wanting to get it over with and trying to weigh what would happen in the future if I won this case, which kind of looked impossible at the time. One thing my lawyer said was that I'd probably be spending \$12,000, if not way more, on future legal fees if they brought more charges back, but I could just pay the same amount in restitution now and get it over with. He also said that I could possibly get what's called the Youth Act—if I completed my probation without any problems, they'd erase my record and the felony conviction.

Did you get that?

Yes.

So you served 30 days in jail. What did you feel initially going in?

Basically the night before and the morning of court, that day, I was preparing to

go to jail, and even months before, I just figured I was going to jail automatically. So I was mentally preparing mostly beforehand to deal with this, to be comfortable with going to jail for however long. The first week in jail was the hardest—talking to the other people in jail, they agreed that the first week or two is always the hardest. Just adjusting, coming from the outside into this highly regimented and controlled living situation. Being processed into the DC jail, a bunch of the guards and other inmates recognized me or found out who I was, why I was in there, and gave me a lot of props for it, commending my work and sizing me up to other inmates so I wouldn't get fucked with. Some guards even wanted to shake my hand 'cause they liked my work so much. In jail I would do a lot of drawings of people's families for food I could eat, like candy bars or vegetable sides from dinner or lunch or whatever. Overall no one fucked with me that much, except for verbal harassment.

One thing you mentioned was that you didn't really get harassed or bothered that much. Did you expect to get bothered more?

Yeah. They put me in protective custody, where you're locked down in a cell for twenty-three-and-a-half hours per day, only coming out for a shower and a phone call. The deputy warden decided that I should be there, against my will, so I couldn't interact with other inmates.

Did you have any preconceived ideas about jail that changed after serving the time you did?

The only things I knew about jail beforehand were what I saw in movies and on TV and what friends and other people who've done some time told me. What I gathered was that, overall, it's a scary and stressful place with awful food. None of those preconceived ideas have really changed, although my time in DC jail wasn't too stressful or scary, I guess because of the weird position I was in.

Tell us more about your jail experience, share some things you felt, you learned, you experienced. How did you deal with the situation?

Mostly, I just missed my people and breathing fresh air, seeing trees, hearing birds, feeling the warmth of the sun. Some-

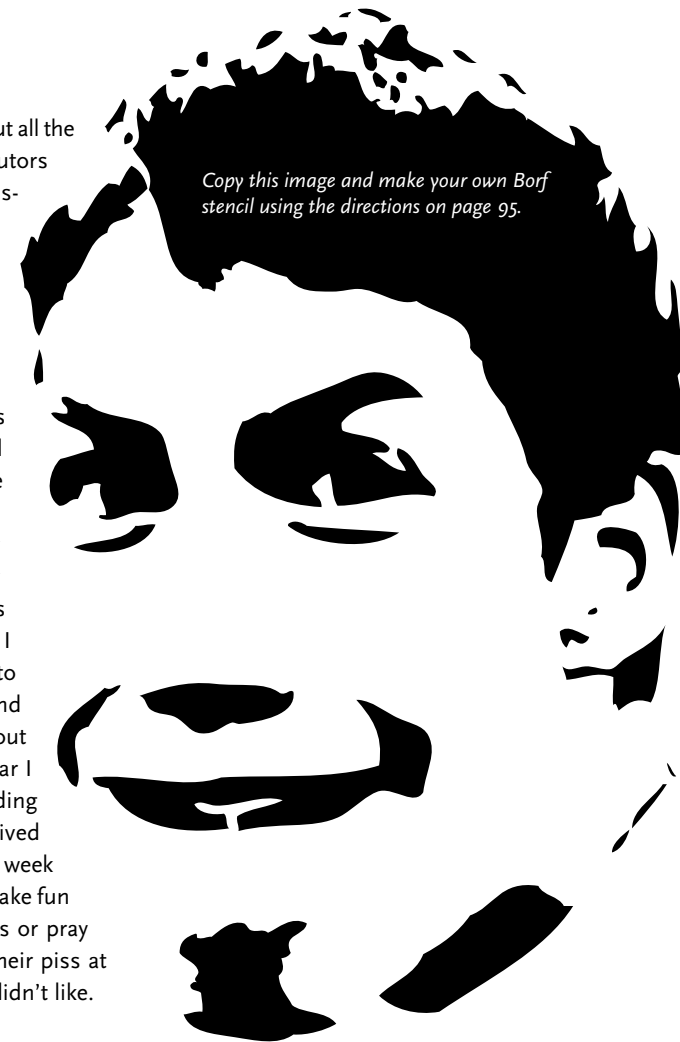
times I'd start thinking about all the fucked up shit the prosecutors had done and all the bulls—hit the judge said to me before sentencing and all the snitches and reporters that fucked me over, which got me feeling completely powerless.

To overcome those things for the moment, I would draw or write and maybe listen to the other guys on my tier talk about what they were gonna do when they got out. There were things everyone did to stay sane. I would try as best I could to live from meal to meal and look forward to crossing out another day on the calendar I had made for myself. Reading all the great letters I received was the highlight of every week night. Other guys would make fun of guards or other inmates or pray or write poetry, or throw their piss at snitches and people they didn't like.

In an interview while you were in jail, the Washington City Paper said you "felt lucky to have been able to meet the people" you met in jail and then quoted you as saying: "People with my background, my skin color, and my age don't get to talk to these people and really get to know them." Can you explain that more?

There are the economically and socially marginalized, and then there are those who are physically marginalized—people physically taken out of society and forgotten—and I got to talk with and listen to them on an inmate-to-inmate level. There are countless barriers set up to keep people on the outside separate, no matter how close we are geographically. I felt lucky to have met those folks, because the majority of them were people who've been beaten down from all directions for most of their lives and are only in there for trying to get out of the gutter through their own means. They are in the worst possible positions, facing decades in prison, and somehow continue to dream and keep their chins up. The guys on my tier taught me how to hang in there and how to not take shit from people in power or people trying to

Copy this image and make your own Borf stencil using the directions on page 95.



intimidate me. It made all of my self-doubt and lack of confidence seem petty and shallow. If they can do it, I can do it.

And what did you feel upon release?

It was a fucking beautiful day. When they did the final ID verification and opened the gates, the two guys I was released with and I sprinted up the hill to the street as fast as we could. The sky was blue, the sun was setting, the birds were chirping, and I felt nothing but relief and a newfound excitement about life. To think I was only in there for a month!

What have you been doing lately?

A whole lot of community service, and trying to catch up on schoolwork I missed while I was in jail, and trying to paint and draw more.

Any idea what's next for BORF, after all that has happened?

Nope. The BORF Brigade has kicked me out of the group for too much media exposure and for losing my anonymity. It's all up to them now, I guess.





The following text was used as evidence in a motion by the U.S. Attorney to revoke the defendant's conditional release pending trial:

How to Be Invincible: Tips for Not Getting Caught

If you are under 18, you are already invincible. If not, maintain the spirit.

DON'T ATTRACT ATTENTION TO YOURSELF: Disguise yourself and your materials. For example, cut stencils out of the bottoms of pizza boxes or paper bags.

HAVE CONFIDENCE: Always look like you know exactly what you are doing, as if you are "supposed" to be doing it. Most people won't think twice about you if you display enough confidence.

WEAR GLOVES: Always keep your hands and clothing clean. Hands covered in paint or clothing with paint stains can breed suspicion in cops or other passersby, and may incriminate you in court.

USE LOOKOUTS: This is really important. With your friends keeping watch, the chances of someone witnessing you in the act are a lot smaller. If you are not caught or seen, it is extremely difficult to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that you are the culprit.

KEEP MOVING: Never stay in one area for too long. If you feel sketched out by something and aren't finished with what you're doing, move on and come back later. Painting fast is important on the streets.

STAY CALM UNDER SUSPICION: Police approach to graffiti varies from city to city. In Washington, D.C., if a pig slows down his car and stares at you while you're walking or stops right in front of you when you're crossing a street, he's not necessarily going to hit on you, so don't run right off. They do this sometimes to see if you'll run; running is the equivalent to yelling "I'm a criminal!" During this frightening period of being followed, you should be preparing a story to tell if the officer gets out of his car and detains you. It's important to be creative under pressure.

HAVE YOUR STORY STRAIGHT: If you are out with other people, make sure you have your stories straight with each other in case you are stopped by police. Remember, you don't have to tell them

anything, and it's generally best that you don't. Sometimes, however, if they ask a simple question, like what you're doing out so late or where you're headed, a quick and straightforward answer might allay their suspicions. If you give a fake name, make sure you don't have ID in your pocket that says otherwise, and that your pals know the name you give.

BE PREPARED TO RUN: It is always smart to run from irate citizens, security guards, vigilante scumbags like the "Guardian Angels," and police when you think you really need to.

DESTROY THE EVIDENCE: If you feel like you are about to be confronted by a lunatic vigilante or pig, dump your paint and destroy or hide your stencil. If you can't dump your paint without drawing attention to it, remove the spray caps from the cans and dispose of those. Without the caps, you can't spray the paint, so how could you have been the one that did that graffiti? Also, keep your car and house clean of any graffiti-related paraphernalia in case of searches.

NEVER ADMIT TO ANYTHING: That means never. Don't talk about your work over the phone or on the internet.

SNITCHES GET STITCHES: This is enforced. It is never okay to implicate others in illegal activity. Even harmless gossip can be very dangerous. Keep what you know about the activities of others to yourself.

How to Make a Stencil

Choose an image and enlarge it to the desired size. For life-sized prints, you can go to Kinko's and use the self-service enlarger that prints out onto paper either 24 or 36 inches wide. Fold up the big sheet of paper and put it in your pocket or backpack. If a Kinko's employee tries to stop you, simply say "BORF sent me." Then run.

1) The easy approach is using Photoshop and going to Image>Adjust>Brightness & Contrast and move the Contrast bar all the way to the right.

2) Glue the paper with your image directly to the material from which you're cutting the stencil. Cardboard is a common medium because it's easy to obtain, free, and durable. Non-corrugated cardboard,

like that used for political posters or file folders, is easiest to cut.

3) Use an Exacto knife to cut the stencil.
4) When your stencil is done, spray through it from a distance of 8-12 inches, moving quickly (spraying too close or moving too slowly could mean lots of drips). Make sure the stencil is flat against the surface you are spraying. If any part of the stencil comes off of the surface even a little bit, underspraying will occur, making your finished product look blurry. You can avoid underspraying by using spray adhesive or taping the edges of the stencil down.

Communiqué #1

Borf is not caught.

Borf is many. Borf is none. Borf is waiting for you in your car. Borf is in your pockets. Borf is running through your veins. Borf is naïve. Borf is good for your liver. Borf is controlling your thoughts. Borf is everywhere. Borf is the war on boredom. Borf annihilates. Borf hates school. Borf is a four letter word for joy. Borf is quickly losing patience. Borf yells in the library. Borf eats pieces of shit like you for breakfast. Borf is digging a hole to China. Borf is bad at graffiti. Borf is ephemeral. Borf is invincible. Borf. Borf ruins everything. Borf runs near the swimming pool. Borf keeps it real. Borf writes you love letters. Ol' Dirty Bastard is Borf. Borf knows everything. Borf is in the water. Borf doesn't sleep. Borf systematically attacks the infrastructure of the totality. Borf is a foulmouth. Borf eats your homework. Borf brings you home for dinner. Borf is the dirt under your fingernails. Borf is the song that never ends. Borf gets down. Borf gets up. Borf is your baby. Borf is neither. Borf is good for your heart, the more you eat the more you. Borf is. Borf destroys. Borf is immortal. Borf pulls fire alarms. Borf scuffs the gym floor. Borf is looking through your mom's purse. Borf is M. Borf is the size of Alaska. Borf likes pizza. Borf is in general. Borf ain't nothin' to fuck with. Borf runs it. Borf has reflexes like a cat. Borf is immortal. Borf sticks gum under the desk. Borf is omnipotent. Borf is flawed. Borf is winning.

Art is dead. Long live Borf.



A WORKING CLASS HERO IS SOMETHING TO BE

A Brief History of the United Freedom Front and a Somewhat Belated Eulogy to Richard Williams

There is a lot of talk these days about the “Green Scare,” and about the FBI’s clumsy attempts to bully the anarchist, environmentalist, anti-globalization, antiwar, and animal liberation movements into inaction and passivity. Those of us who struggle in the trenches of these movements would do well to be reminded that history is replete with examples of people who have remained steadfast in the face of far worse repression than anything we are dealing with right now. To that end, this is a good time to briefly pay our respects to our brother Richard Williams, whose spirit passed to the other side on December 7th of 2005.

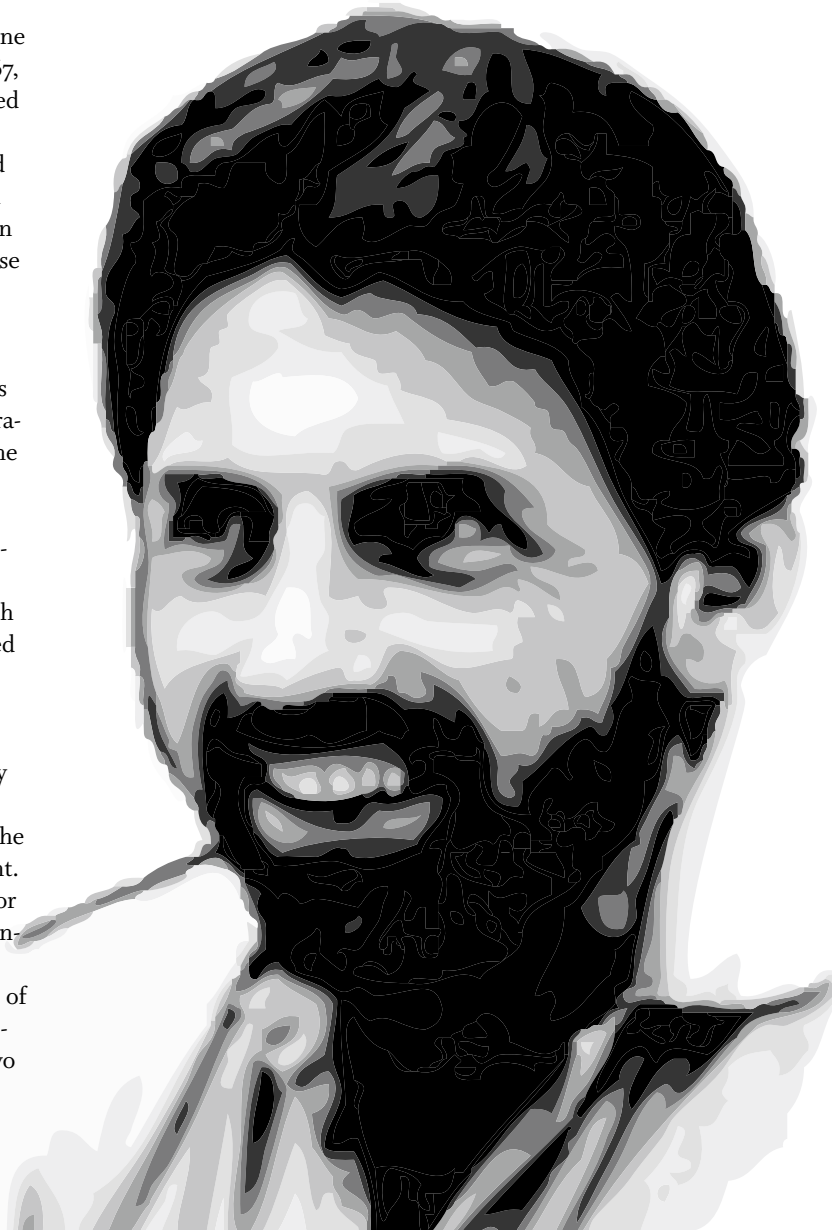
Richard Charles Williams was born on November 4th, 1947, in Beverly, MA, the son of a seamstress and a machine operator. He was arrested for marijuana possession in 1967, and went to jail rather than go to Vietnam. He was arrested again for burglary in New Hampshire in 1971, and was sentenced to seven to fifteen years. He became politicized while in prison, participated in food and work strikes and protests for better conditions, and was elected chairperson of the New England Prisoners Association. After his release he was part of the Amandla Concert in Harvard Stadium in 1979, which featured Bob Marley and raised funds for anti-apartheid groups in South Africa. He also provided community security, house-sitting for people when homes were being firebombed by racists during the school integration and busing crisis in Boston and in the aftermath of the murders of demonstrators in Greensboro, NC by the Ku Klux Klan. In 1981 he disappeared from view.

On November 4th, 1984 Richard was captured in Cleveland, OH, along with Raymond Luc Levasseur, Patricia Gros, Barbara Curzi, and Jaan Laaman. On November 25th of 1985 Carol Soucier and Thomas Manning were captured in Norfolk, Virginia. These arrests brought to an end the incredibly illustrious ten year career of a tiny clandestine group known as the Sam Melville/Jonathan Jackson Unit, and later the United Freedom Front, which had absolutely bedeviled the authorities since 1974. The United States’ government labeled the pursuit of these seven people as the largest fugitive hunt it had ever conducted up to that point. During those ten years the group claimed responsibility for no less than twelve bank robberies (netting some nine hundred thousand dollars) and nineteen bombings, mostly in the vicinity of Boston and New York City, including those of two courthouses, the office of the Massachusetts Commissioner of Probation, the First National Bank of Boston, two

army reserve centers, two naval reserve centers, a South African Procurement Office, and the corporate offices of Mobil Oil (three times), IBM (twice), the Honeywell Corporation, the Motorola Corporation, General Electric, and Union Carbide (twice). A succession of communiqués explained that these actions had been carried out to punish these corporations and institutions for their complicity with the regime that maintained apartheid in South Africa and the covert wars in Central America, and also in support of the Puerto Rican independence movement and in protest of racism, economic injustice, and the prison system.

No one was ever injured during any of the UFF actions, and property damage was extensive. Nineteen people were injured, however, during the first SMJJ bombing, at the County Courthouse in Boston. The SMJJ Unit accepted responsibility for this mistake, stating that their warning call had been ignored. Twice over these years members of the group outmaneuvered police in firefights and successfully escaped capture; in one incident, a New Jersey State Trooper named Phillip Lamonaco was killed following a traffic stop.

Upon arrest, these people came to be known as the Ohio 7. They were three married couples and a single father,



Williams—by all accounts devoted parents who had raised several children during their years underground. In contrast to many of the radical groups of the time, they were white people from working class backgrounds who had cast their bets with the oppressed and downtrodden people of the world. Levasseur and Manning were Vietnam veterans. All of the men had been to prison, and had worked much of their lives in factories, logging camps, steel mills, construction sites and the like.

The Ohio 7, needless to say, spent much of the next few years in court. Manning, Laaman, Levasseur, and Williams were convicted for five of the UFF bombings in Brooklyn, NY in 1986 and got fifty-three years apiece. Gros did three-and-a-half years for harboring a fugitive, Levasseur—her husband and the father of her three children. Curzi did seven years. Manning and Williams were charged with murder in Somerville, NJ in 1987 in the death of Phillip Lamonaco. Manning was convicted, and got another eighty years, but not before winning a hung jury for Williams when, in what must be hailed as an extremely selfless act of brinksmanship, he testified unequivocally that he had in fact shot Lamonaco, and that Williams had not been involved or present. It also came out in the course of this trial that Mr. Lamonaco had been implicated in other shootings, and that he had shot at Manning at least six times with an unlicensed, unregistered “drop gun” (i.e., one which is available to be planted at a crime scene) before Manning killed him.

This was followed by one of the more epic trials in American legal history, when all seven were tried in federal court in Springfield, MA under the rarely applied charges of *Seditious Conspiracy to Overthrow the Government of the United States by Force* and of belonging to a *Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organization*. Another defendant at one point in this case, Kazi Toure, was the first black person to ever face these charges in this country. The trial lasted two full years, involved testimony from two hundred witnesses, saw one-thousand-seven-hundred pieces of evidence introduced, and cost taxpayers an estimated sixty million dollars between the prosecution’s legal expenses and the massive daily security apparatus. Ray Luc Levasseur represented himself, stood by everything the SMJJ and UFF had done, and spoke movingly about his life and the experiences which had transformed him into a revolutionary. On November 27th, 1989 the jury refused to convict the Ohio 7 of a single charge. Levasseur’s statements to the court have quite rightfully been floating around radical circles in pamphlet form ever since. In 1991 Williams was retried, and this time convicted, in New Jersey in the death of Phillip Lomanaco.

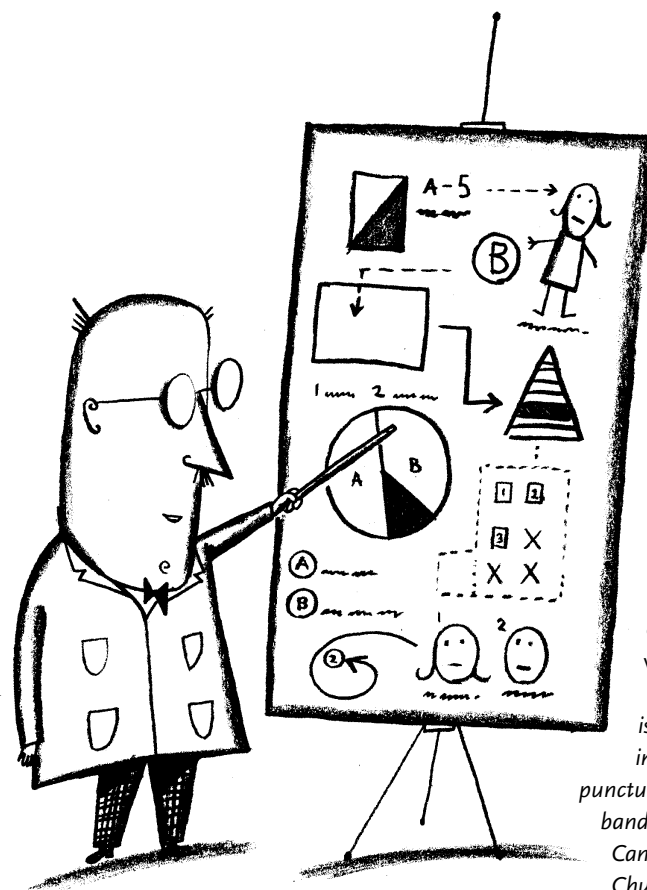
Ray Luc Levasseur walked out of prison on November 2nd, 2004 after more than twenty years in several of the harshest penal institutions in the United States, much of it in solitary confinement. He had written at one point that “those of us convicted of United Freedom Front activities were guided by our political commitment, good conscience, moral obligation, and responsibilities under international law, including the Nuremberg Principles. It

was the intent and purpose of the UFF actions to expose U.S. government and corporate complicity with apartheid, and encourage the American people to do everything necessary to end this criminal partnership.” He stated on release that he and his friends “stand on the side of history that will vindicate our actions to alleviate the suffering of those most used and abused by a system that prioritizes profit over human needs.”

Tom Manning and Jaan Laaman can make a legitimate claim to hold the distinct honor of being the last anti-apartheid combatants held in prison anywhere in the world. Laaman’s state sentence will run out soon, and he has said that he will appeal his federal sentence. He would be overdue for release if successful in this. He is trying to raise money for this appeal. Assistance toward that end can be made out to the Jaan Laaman Legal Freedom Fund, PO BOX 681, East Boston, MA, 02128. Manning will undoubtedly spend the rest of his life in prison unless, as many of us consider likely, the world changes soon enough to forestall this eventuality.

Richard Williams died in the Federal Medical Center in Butner, NC, on the very same day that the FBI’s current set of roundups began. He had been in increasingly poor health due to Hepatitis C and complications arising from cancer treatment. His family has stated that the health problems leading to his death were greatly exacerbated by the fact that he was systematically denied adequate medical treatment and exercise by his captors, who basically left him to die in solitary confinement. There are no words or excuses which can mitigate a crime such as this—that a man of Williams’ caliber should die in prison while the murderers who bankrolled the Salvadoran death squads walk free. However, lest our enemies use his death as a deterrent to those who would finish his work, let this never be forgotten: Richard Williams outlived the apartheid system that he fought against so bravely. Those currently under indictment on Green Scare charges may also live to see the rapacious industries that they are accused of opposing grind to a halt. History has mercifully forgotten most of the despicable names of the functionaries who managed the slave plantations, but it has remembered those of John Brown and Harriet Tubman. The day will come when it will honor that of Richard Williams.

Following Williams’ death, the Los Angeles chapter of the Anarchist Black Cross Network wrote that “Richard went through life with open arms but closed fists; prepared to embrace the world but also to fight for what is right and just. Richard can now relax his fists. It is time to close ours.” These words, and the actions that they suggest, seem as good a tribute as any to a man who more than did his part throughout the course of a truly epic life.



The Fine Art of Criticism: A How-To Guide for Aspiring Journalists

Those who can, write; those who can't, write reviews. Writing reviews is the surest shortcut to a sensation of power for those who lack the dedication necessary to create something of actual worth. In passing judgment on others' work, the reviewer experiences a fleeting high of self-importance cheaper than any other.

And fortunately for the next generation of hacks, after squandering the best years of our writing careers composing purple prose for the throwaway tabloids of yellow journalism, we've finally perfected this most elusive of literary forms. Deceptively simple and mundane, reviews are often assumed to be easy to pen; in fact, it's almost impossible to compose one worth reading. To save you the trouble of suffering through this learning process yourself (and your potential readers the risk of suffering along with you), we present here a surefire

failsafe handy guide to the most rightly unappreciated literary form of the twentieth century. Mix yourself a stiff metaphor, cultivate an air of supercilious indifference—a prerequisite for any reviewer worth the salt he hopes to pour in others' wounds—and read on.

The Comparison

This is the most common convention in the reviewer's repertoire, and the most swiftly, thoughtlessly trotted out. It comes in three basic varieties:

A is like B: "Orwell's 1984 is basically a rewrite of Zamyatin's *We*, right down to the use of punctuation marks." "Like any other band with guitars, bass, and drums, Cannibal Corpse owes everything to Chuck Berry."

A is like B + C: "The sequel to *The Matrix* is the bastard child of Nintendo video games and MTV's *The Daily Grind*." "Dragonforce sounds like Richard Marx with double bass."

A is like B (perhaps + C) under extenuating conditions: these can include, for example, drugs—"Jackson Pollock is like, uh, Matisse on serious methamphetamines"—violence—"Baudrillard offers the sort of insights Foucault would have hit upon if he'd suffered severe head trauma at an early age"—evocative locations—"Imagine Tolstoy's *War and Peace* if it was set in a Soviet gulag across only three days; there you have it, Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*"—or, for maximum cliché action, all three: "Muppet Burger's new album 'Fuzzy Massacre' sounds like Sun Ra and Sinead O'Conner, cranked out of their minds on cough syrup and banana peel blunts, beating the stuffing out of Morrissey in a dark alley while humming *La Marseilles* to themselves."

The Fawning Accolade

A critic should not tender a positive review unless he believes he stands to gain in some way. Sometimes demonstrating one's superiority by exhibiting prescient taste can be as gratifying as the more direct approach of simply declaring something

inferior. Of course, the power dynamics shift as soon as the spotlighted upstart gains a certain amount of attention: then, glorification accrues to the artist rather than the reviewer, so one must return to scorn and ridicule.

Things are not usually even this complex: a guest list and bar tab beckon, a senior editor threatens, advertising dollars await, Public Opinion counsels that this is going to be a Hot Item this year and those who fail to get on board do so at their own peril. One must give positive reviews to something, after all, and it never hurts to kill two birds with one stone.

Sometimes it does occur that a neophyte, carried away by actual passion unbecoming of the serious journalist, expresses honest appreciation. Please, resist this temptation. We've all got mouths to feed in this business, and a certain professional standard of restraint and objectivity is only common sense.

The Interpretation

The critic does well to cast himself as the artist's interpreter, a modern-day successor of the priests who explicated the drugged ravings of the Oracle of Delphi. This relationship places the critic in the more essential role: any damn fool can get hooked on heroin and put a few chords together, but it takes a Greil Marcus to construct meaning out of the resulting cacophony and go on to trace its lineage to the Anabaptists. Artists are idiot savants who achieve greatness by unhinging themselves, as Rimbaud himself insisted—that's why the best of them die young; does it make sense to allow such people to speak for themselves? Besides, as a dancer, asked by a journalist to speak about her newest work, once rejoined, "If I could tell you about it, I wouldn't have to dance it."

For best results, select the most incoherent and opaque artwork, rewarding artists and movements that produce this with positive coverage. Ideally, the public, knowing themselves unqualified to do, feel, or think anything on their own, should bypass the artwork completely, coming directly to the critics. It goes without saying that any creative person who makes concrete statements—the musician who speaks between songs, the poet who dares write about a current war—should be decisively ignored, or at least dismissed as superficial.

This policy worked fabulously for art critics throughout the twentieth century, and indeed may explain the evolutionary trajectory of Western art across that era.

The Personal Anecdote

When a reviewer feels the itch to hold forth about his own extensive experience as a widely traveled citizen of the world, he need not stick to the matter at hand. Many a frustrated travel writer, philosopher, religious mystic, and misanthrope has found a lasting career as a reviewer—not least because it is one of the few writing jobs in which it is not important that anyone actually read your work.

Hearsay and Speculation

Reviewers have to worry about their facts being checked about as much as federal agents at a bail hearing. Any old thing you heard or might have heard is fair game. It's your job to keep things interesting, so don't hesitate to spice up your review with a little scandalous gossip: *I used to be a card-carrying member of The Anarchist Movement, until I heard Bakunin was actually a paid agent of the Czar.*

The Stream of Invective

This can range from a simple insult (regarding Jack Kerouac's claim that he wrote *On the Road* in a matter of days, Truman Capote quipped, "That's not writing, that's typing") to a veritable torrent of abuse—which, in some cases, may be well deserved:

Imagine Def Leppard if Wesley Willis was the principle songwriter and their vocalist sounded like a character from *The Flintstones*. Now imagine whatever you just imagined, only worse. There you have it, the debut from Andrew WK, "I Get Wet." This makes the stuff they play over the public address systems at professional football games seem bookish and highbrow. The lyrics are pathologically tautological ("you can't stop what you can't end"), the riffs sound like cheap radio advertising jingles with some of the notes played wrong, the end of every song sounds like a television being switched off. For that matter, the beginning of every song sounds like a television being switched on! My friend Gabe says this makes

him feel like he's at a keg party at a frat house, but there are no women there, just drunk, belligerent jocks and brain-damaged football players wrestling the furniture and shouting each other down about the stock market. Myself, I can't help but imagine this blaring over the speakers in the personnel bay of an army helicopter as GIs are airlifted into an Iraqi village to slaughter mothers and children—and as if in anticipation of this, Andrew has recorded a track in which he sings over and over "You better get ready to kill, get ready to die." Even if you didn't have serious doubts about the future of Western civilization before you heard this release, one listen will make you a revolutionary in the tradition of the Dadaists and Situationists who set out to put an end to art itself—that is, if it doesn't reduce you to utter nihilism.

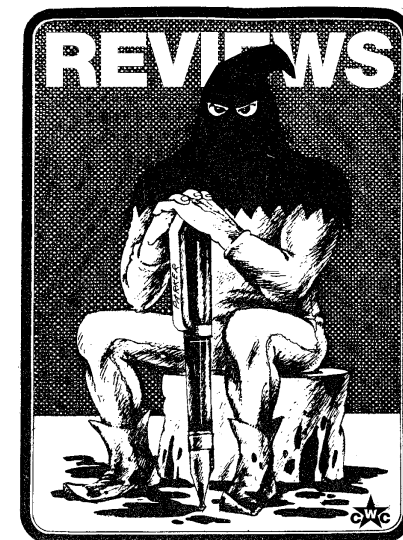
Absurd Allegations

When it's not possible to unleash a well-founded Stream of Invective, but the reviewer still desires to maintain the readers' attention, he must fall back upon what philosophers call the straw man argument: he must concoct the most ridiculous make-believe version of the subject of the review he possibly can, and display his great strength and prowess by painstakingly tearing it apart.

In ideological circles—including certain anarchist camps, strange to tell, where so much talk of solidarity would lead one to expect constructive criticism to be the order of the day—this approach is even more common than the Comparison. Those who believe—often correctly—that their ideas can only be of interest if all other ideas are entirely bankrupt must remain ever vigilant, ready to pounce upon and discredit other thinkers by any means necessary.

The Irrelevant Digression

The digression comes in two forms. In the more common form, it is a sort of verbal smoking break in which the writer gets up from his desk, takes a breath, and stretches his legs, all without ceasing to address the reader. Reviewers who wish to curry favor with discriminating readers should throw in as many of these as possible: the less attention they pay to the



subject of the review, the more bearable their writing is bound to be.

Alternately, the digression can be an underhanded way to slip in Absurd Allegations, when there is no more straightforward pretext for introducing them. For example, in the midst of a review of the thoroughly utilitarian *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook*, which is simply a collection of direct action tactics, the *Anarchy Magazine* reviewer can, as if remaining on topic, stray into such ramblings as:

Their interpretation of social change seems to be that 'good people' can, and should, be agents of social change. The material conditions of that change, the horrible consequences of 'bad people,' and the history of social change that doesn't conform to the 'good people' model are all outside the scope of CrimethInc.'s approach. It is as if they have made a good and right choice and aren't going to let reality interfere with it.

Sample Exercise

Dash off a review of this issue of *Rolling Thunder* and submit it to *Clamor* (keith@clamormagazine.org) for publication. Whether you compose a Stream of Invective, an Absurd Allegation, or an Irrelevant Digression, and regardless of whether you have ever undertaken to write a single word before in the English language (or have even read any part of this magazine other than this sentence), your review is bound to be more balanced and informative than anything that would appear in that publication otherwise.

Ron Sakolsky Creating Anarchy

Fifth Estate Books, P.O. Box 6,
Liberty, TN 37095

In honor of the author's taste for surrealist play, rather than review this book in pedantic abstractions I have picked four sentences from it at random which serve well enough to illustrate its strengths and limitations.

First, my finger happens to fall upon the opening sentence of the publisher's preface: "The book you hold is mind medicine to heal the ills of social mediocrity." Show us, don't tell us, why don't you! The publisher means well enough, but evidently hasn't mastered the fine art

of restraint; perhaps we can't hold the author accountable for this, but it does say something that he keeps this sort of company. (On the other hand, his work is being reviewed in *Rolling Thunder*, so I suppose little more need be said.) In this light, anyway, the snatches of poetry and collage art that illustrate the essays and occasional interviews will come as no surprise.

Flipping to the center of the book, I come upon another sentence, informing me that "surrealist Robert Desnos, at seventeen, was involved with a band of anarchists that included former Bonnot gang members." Is this interesting to you? It is to me—though I don't know a whole lot about Desnos, my punk band reworked a line of his poetry to serve as the closing lyrics of one of our songs ("we've raised anchor forever—the world lies in our wake; and that ache, there is nothing so sweet"), and the parable *The Astrologer* that appears elsewhere in this issue is ever-so-loosely based on his life story. Despite this passing acquaintance with him, I had no idea he rubbed shoulders with the so-called Bonnot gang, the anarchist bank robbers who terrorized France with their invention of the getaway car and who—as I never tire of pointing out—prefigured many anarchists today in their commitments to sobriety and vegetarianism. If historical tidbits like this fascinate you—and they might not, in this context, unless you are already minimally familiar with surrealist history, twentieth century jazz and blues, and the recent

misdeeds of the FCC—*Creating Anarchy* has much to offer.

My third arbitrary selection offers more insight into the author's personality and background: "During the 1970s and 80s, I had luckily been able to receive Cuban records in the mail from a friend in Poland in exchange for Chicago blues sides." This is Ron Sakolsky in a nutshell: his tireless

curiosity and internationalist anti-authoritarianism have long inspired him to small-time subversive activity, though this largely takes the form of creative investigation rather than confrontational militancy. He sees the surrealist Eruption of the Marvelous in early blues music the way the Situationists saw the revolutionary reappropriation of life in the Watts riots—and the former is more up his alley, it seems, based on what he includes and omits.

Not to say Sakolsky isn't down for the revolution. Flipping back to an earlier page in the book, I come across the hypothesis that "any resistance movement, in order to attract large numbers of people, has to be romantic." This statement is noteworthy not because it is typical of this author—he's a romantic, we already knew that—so much as for the way it reveals an underlying tension in an entire current of anarchist thought. At first, it seems to extol romanticism, but at second glance it turns out that this romanticism is recommended for very pragmatic reasons. A true romantic would probably frame things the other way around: for example, "any movement of large numbers of people, in order to be truly romantic, has to involve resistance." On the other hand, perhaps this hard-nosed pragmatism is itself a symptom of a deeper-seated romanticism: nowadays, only quixotic dreamers are drawn to the project of building a resistance movement of large numbers of people.

I'll close with what, to me, is the highlight of the whole book, a passage in which Sakolsky recounts the story of a Chicago bus driver who "announced to his passengers that he could no longer endure the monotony of his job and was about to drive the bus that they were on to Florida. Any of the nine or so passengers who wished to accompany him were welcome to stay on board. Two passengers immediately exited, then another,

but the rest evidently decided to go to Florida, or at least to see what would happen next. Several hours later, in southern Indiana, the bus was pulled over by State Police, and the driver arrested and returned to Chicago." Sakolsky goes on to quote his colleague Franklin Rosemont at length, and I can't resist doing so myself as well:

"Notwithstanding its disappointing conclusion, this story has remained for me an unending source of reverie and inspiration. Here were seven people casting aside all the fetters of everyday routine, pursuing every risk for the pleasure of realizing, however fleetingly, something of the splendor hinted at by fairy tales and heroic adventures. Is not all that we have in the way of hope founded on the premise that some day, and perhaps not such a distant day, thousands and even millions will come to approach life with this same ardor for discovery, this readiness to abandon everything but the consequences of desire? Some day there will be no State Police, or any other police, to obstruct the free play of the walking dreamers! Some day the Halsted Street bus will reach Florida and will set out from there to new destinations! From Halsted Street to Easter Island to the Garden of Eden!"

Bus riders and authors alike, one more effort to be revolutionaries! It's one thing to long for, write of, and even seize upon such points of departure; it's another thing entirely to fight off the State Police and keep that bus on the road. On the back cover, the publisher touts this book as "a brick for hurling through the windows of despair," but today those windows are made of real corporate plate glass; trading the real bricks of anarchist vandals for the conceptual bricks of anarchist pundits is a step backward, not forward. One can't help but long for a Robert Desnos who stuck with the bank robbers, so he didn't have to go to the death camps and die of typhoid fever. None of this is Sakolsky's fault, exactly—on the contrary, he deserves great praise for sticking with the anti-authoritarian project for so long, and contributing such visionary history and prose to it; but carried away by those visions, a heart such as mine (talk about romanticism!) can't help but grow impatient for more discussion of how we can defend and extend them.

Regina Spektor, Begin to Hope CD

Begin to Hope is Russian-born, partially-American-raised Regina Spektor's fourth album, second widely-released recording, and first major label release.¹ She has made a name for herself over the past several years with her virtuoso piano playing and dynamic vocal presence combined with delightfully eclectic lyrics as part of the 'anti-folk' movement in NYC.

While many indie musicians hide behind the fuzz of lo-fi recording, Spektor shines here in the lavish production afforded by her label's deep pockets. While not abandoning the spare songs consisting primarily of piano and voice, she does take advantage of having more access to resources to craft an entirely new sound for many of her songs; of the twelve on *Begin to Hope*, six are composed with additional instrumentation and samples. This has caused controversy among her audience, but, well, sometimes people want you to stay the same way forever, for them. Regina isn't making music for them.

She masterfully walks the line between creating art to please an audience and creating art that is satisfying for the artist to create. Too much of either can sink the best of efforts, but the songs here range from spontaneously engaging to rewarding a decent amount of effort on the listeners part, and all shine with the lustre of pure joy and gratification found in their creation. She is having fun, but not at our expense.

A classically trained pianist, hammering away at the keys since the age of eight, Spektor creates songs that have an effortless complexity. She doesn't settle for the simple verse-chorus-verse structure, and her songs never lower themselves to repeating the same melodies over and over again. Nearly every song is dynamic and constantly modifies its refrains and

¹ While an artist's decision to go the major-label route is always a little sorrow-inducing, on the plus side it enables one to pirate the recording with no guilt, as the only alternative is to support the RIAA and their legion of extorting lawyers. *Begin to Hope* is very much available free of cost on Bittorrent.

melodies as it goes, tweaking, adding, subtracting, discovering what else is possible in this or that direction. This is evident also in her amazing vocal phrasing, where even choruses with the same words are sung totally differently within the same

song—most musicians are lucky to find a single good phrasing, while Spektor can devise new ones that fit perfectly at every intersection. As a songwriter, she clearly doesn't believe in "good enough." The dynamic quality found in her songs also extends itself to the content

of the entire album. Spektor explores the various timbres of her voice, including a breathy, angelic high register and a Billie Holiday-like lower register that she often allows to break into a trumpet-like tone quality. She often uses a jazzy vibrato and sliding tones in her voice's middle register.²

Her lyrics also vary highly by song, each to fit its own unique purpose, from oblique to personal to fanciful. She is wise without resorting to cleverness, and often tells stories that resolve in unexpected ways. It is a love affair with the world and she tells it like this, "Now this is how it works / You peer inside yourself / You take the things you like / And try to love the things you took / And then you take that love you made / And stick it into some / Someone else's heart / Pumping someone else's blood / And walking arm in arm / You hope it don't get harmed / But even if it does / You'll just do it all again."

In Lieu of a Review: "A for Anarchy" Responds to V for Vendetta

Whenever Hollywood stoops to cash in on discontent with movies such as *Fight Club*, certain elements of the radical milieu paralyze themselves in spectators' debates about whether this can help breed and mobilize opposition. Hollywood wouldn't make any money on these movies if they didn't speak to something in people, but

² Thanks Wikipedia!



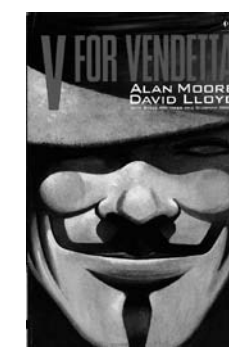
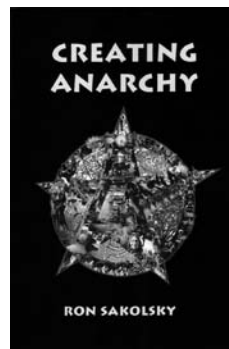
the capitalist media won't organize a revolutionary struggle for us, either—there are few less empowering activities than sitting in collective isolation with your fellow consumers watching your dreams disfigured on a silver screen. It's pointless to debate the revolutionary potential of corporate depictions of resistance—the important question is what we do to take

advantage of whatever opportunities our foes give us to organize ourselves.

When Hollywood released its adaptation of Alan Moore's comic book *V for Vendetta*, a small network of anarchists set out to seize that opportunity. In the book, a masked insurrectionary anarchist, "V," takes on a fascist government and in-

spires an anarchist revolution. The movie dispensed with the explicit anarchism and much of Moore's finesse, but retained the essential storyline of a lone genius struggling to topple a totalitarian regime. In the current climate of intensifying state repression, this plot could be expected to draw people with a bone to pick with those in authority.

As moviegoers exited Manhattan theaters on opening weekend, they were met by "V"—an individual in a tall hat, smiling Guy Fawkes mask, black clothes, big belt, cloak, and daggers—who handed them anarchist propaganda complete with panels from the graphic novel. Throughout the city, posters for the movie were decorated with word balloons declaring "V For Vendetta? A For



Anarchy!" The handouts were posted online along with tactical tips for distributing them, so others could try this approach in their own communities.

In cooperation with Spanish anarchists who had initiated their own campaign, the "A for Anarchy" group went on to coordinate an international day of action timed to coincide with the release of the film overseas. This happened to be tax day, providing a point of departure for street theater in downtown New York City. These and other actions received corporate media coverage; one participant spoke about anarchism for twenty minutes on a Canadian radio station. Inspired by their experiences, some participants took to staying in costume on subways and buses to provoke further discussions.

If the review section of every anarchist periodical was full of stories like this one, we might stand a chance of getting the anarchist alternative out there as the primary opposition to capitalism. This kind of engagement with mainstream culture will get us a lot farther than reviews of other anarchist projects, which degenerate all too often into insular bickering. The latter are important insofar as they sustain today's anarchist community, but we have to be thinking a lot bigger than that if we're going to save the world.

For further information on this particular project, visit www.aforanarchy.com. Moore's book is also worth reading, or at least passing on to your nephews.

The New World

At the most simplistic level this is a retelling of the Pocahontas legend, though loosely followed to such a degree that the female lead is never called Pocahontas or by any other name. But the film is not plot driven, and though there is a plot to follow, the focus of the movie is on the characters and the ways they interact with circumstance. It is a movie about loss, decay, and death, and also of course about life and birth—and perhaps most of all about the ambivalence of the natural world towards all of these things.

Director Terrence Malick's films (*Badlands*, *Days of Heaven*, *The Thin Red Line*) are genuinely unlike those of any other filmmaker, and this is especially true in regards to the movies that played alongside this one at your local multiplex. With each film he gets closer to rendering his vision, deftly defying genres and the traditional expectations of feature films.

The story-telling skips from moment to moment, not always showing the path from *a* to *b*. It shows the tiny details, nearly always disconnected from the linear events that would proceed or follow, as if to say, *the procedure is not important: this, here, is what happens, and here, it is happening*. The films begs you to meditate on what you are seeing, to fit what you see into your

life and your world, to see how its beauty and horror reflect on your own. Malick desperately wants you to consider the film as an indistinguishable part of everything else. He tries valiantly to get out of the way of his movie; he wants the movie to tell itself as truly as possible, and to shape it himself as little as possible.

For this film, Malick and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki shot over one million feet of film, of which 12,000 made

it into the final cut—just over 1%. I would guess that Malick's style of filmmaking is to get all of the elements assembled, throw them together, and film everything, using the editing process to create the narrative and to take advantage of every happy accident and unplanned synergy. A story from the set supports this: during a scene between two of the

leads, a grasshopper leapt into frame and Malick told the actors to forget about the scene, directing the female lead to chase the grasshopper around while the handheld camera followed her until the film ran out. The grasshopper chase made it into the final cut.

As in *The Thin Red Line*, the natural world is a major character and the film constantly reminds us of the setting of all the events with magnificent, flowing shots of the land and equally rigid and arranged shots of the English capital and royal gardens.

Malick does not hide behind irony or use unnecessary cleverness to appear more unique than he is—this film is not about unique ideas, but primal ones. As with any great truths, elemental notions about life cannot be narrated or dictated but only evoked, as with a poem.

We anarchists tend to analyze failure, sadness, and dysfunction as symptoms and look for solutions as well as places to lay blame—someone needs to do that, right?—but this movie is best viewed without that political eye. The loss here is not a political loss, but the inevitable loss of life. At the end, when the protagonist says to the mutineer during a sober and sad reunion, "Did you find your Indies, John? You shall," and he replies, "I may have sailed past them," we know what he does not—that there was no other way for it to be.



Fill in the blanks according to your infighting needs. Guaranteed to provoke endless sectarian bickering wherever applied! Not for use with mutual aid, constructive criticism, or intelligent debate. Keep out of reach of those freshly exposed to anarchism. For best results, apply in conjunction with extended internet use.

Ad Lib Polemic



Once again, another ___(1) from ___(2). Will these ___(3) ___s(4) ever cease spewing their brainless endorsements of ___(5)? Perhaps ___(6), but that doesn't justify their descent into total ___(7). As usual, they equate ___(8) with ___(9), deviously misrepresenting the case for ___(10). But from ___(11) to ___(12), we've seen that all who espouse ___(13) end up ___(14). Those who deny the centrality of ___(15) will always end up serving the enemies of ___(16); any intelligent ___(17) must concede that there is no ___(18) but the ___(19) ___(18, again).

Instead of learning from their mistakes and profiting from the criticism of those more intelligent than them, these misguided ___s(20) persist in ___(21). How any principled ___(22) could still consider them to be part of the ___(22, again) milieu in the first place is inexplicable.

___(23) and ___(24) will never change the world, and neither will ___(25) ___s(26). The kind of ___(27) professed by ___(2, again) only alienates ___(28). As ___(29) once said, only a ___(30) made up of ___(31) ___(32) can possess the ___(33) ___(34) necessary for the triumph of ___(35).

ALL ___(36) TO THE ___(37)! ___(38) ___(39)! FOR ___(16, again) AND ___(10, again)!

1. Project or undertaking
2. Adversary of choice
3. Synonym for "privileged"
4. Invented category (e.g., "lifestyle anarchists," "organizationalists")
5. Noun with "ism" fastened incongruously on the end
6. Statement of obvious fact
7. Deplorable or untenable philosophical position
8. Worthwhile activity
9. Indefensible activity
10. Ideological position ending in "ism"
11. Distant historical event or era
12. Recent historical event, identified only by the name of the city in which it took place
13. Invented creed (referring back to "4," above)
14. Gerund signifying unconscionable lifestyle choice (e.g., "working on Wall Street")
15. One aspect of current human relations (e.g., "the market," "gender")
16. Abstraction guaranteed to receive applause
17. Synonym for "person"
18. Synonym for "struggle"
19. Adjective relating to "15," above (e.g., "economic," "sexual")
20. Insulting noun
21. Gerund phrase signifying particularly barbarous and stupid behavior (e.g., "running with scissors," "conflating Marx's critique of capital with Hegel's phenomenology of the spirit")
22. Noun ending in "ist," signifying a believer in one's faith of choice
23. Embarrassing activity
24. Pointless activity
25. Insulting adjective
26. Insulting noun
27. Synonym for "nonsense"
28. Social demographic one glorifies above all others
29. Man whose analytical writings or military deeds are more widely known than his sexism and pomposity
30. Synonym for "army"
31. Adjective denoting the quality one most prefers in one's followers or employees
32. Member of "28," above
33. Adjective sure to be incomprehensible to readers (e.g., "ontological")
34. Synonym for "force"
35. Some group, doctrine, or state of affairs that, should it gain ascendancy, will sow misery for generations to come (e.g., "communism," "wild nature")
36. Noun denoting something one wants all for oneself (e.g., "power")
37. Front group or abstraction representing oneself
38. Imperative verb associated with violence (e.g., "smash," "destroy," "abolish")
39. Abstraction with negative associations

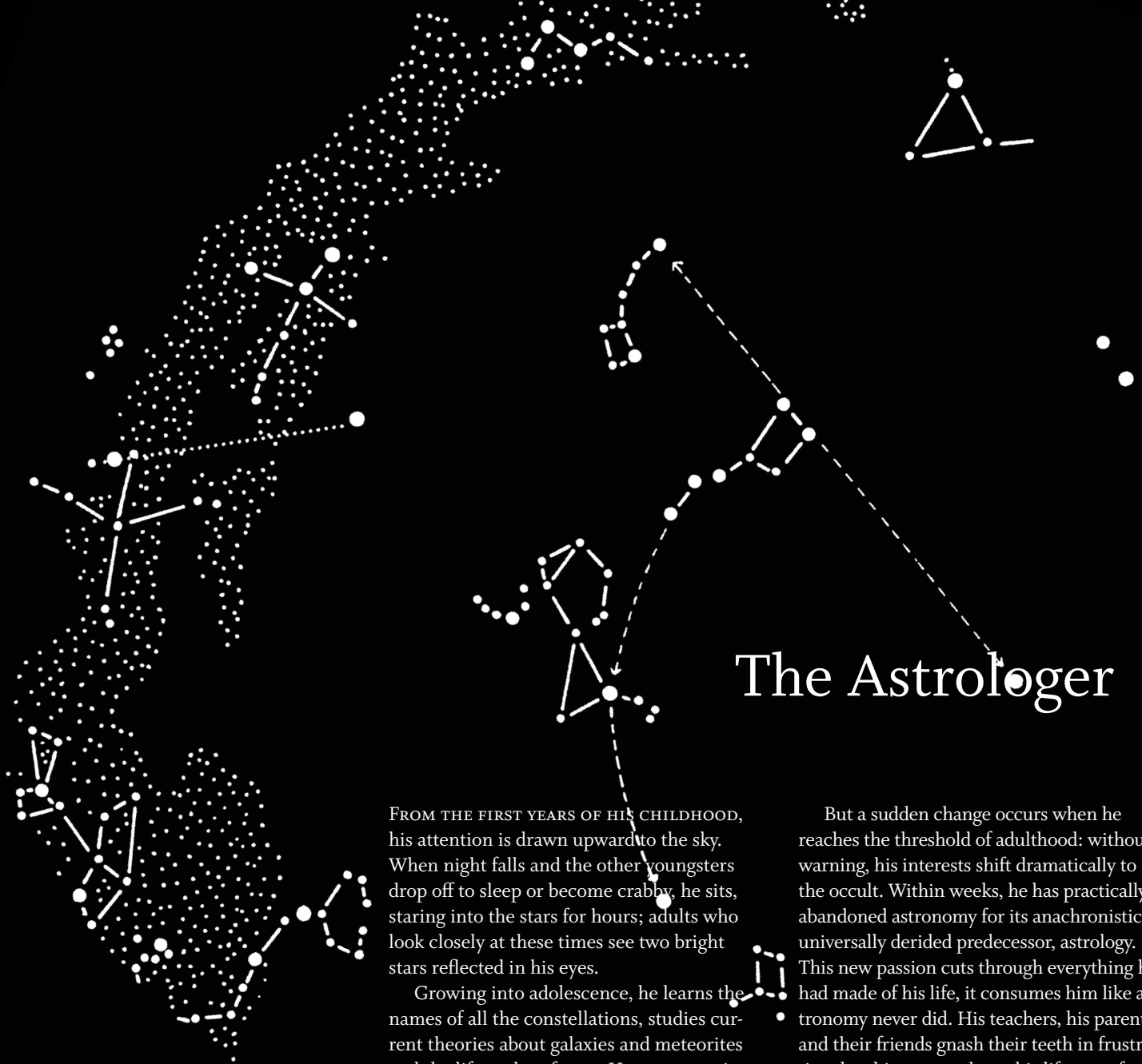
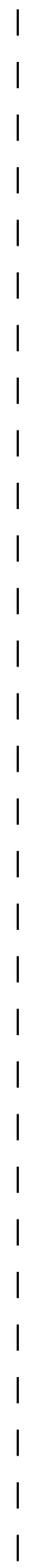
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The Astrologer

FROM THE FIRST YEARS OF HIS CHILDHOOD, his attention is drawn upward to the sky. When night falls and the other youngsters drop off to sleep or become crabby, he sits, staring into the stars for hours; adults who look closely at these times see two bright stars reflected in his eyes.

Growing into adolescence, he learns the names of all the constellations, studies current theories about galaxies and meteorites and the life cycles of suns. He goes camping in the hills to see showers of shooting stars professors predict; he persuades his parents to take him to visit observatories on his summer vacations. His mother and father, simple working people, are encouraging, and for his thirteenth birthday, a friend of the family gives him a rudimentary telescope.

Soon he is the most promising of a new generation of amateur astronomers. Every night, he is out scrutinizing the heavens through squinting eyes, filling notebooks with observations and interpretations. He writes to professionals in the field, and attracts attention for his precocious skill. Institutions pay travel fare for him to present his research at their junior symposiums. Everyone is excited about the career that awaits him: he will be the first of his family to leave the village and enter academia.

But a sudden change occurs when he reaches the threshold of adulthood: without warning, his interests shift dramatically to the occult. Within weeks, he has practically abandoned astronomy for its anachronistic, universally derided predecessor, astrology. This new passion cuts through everything he had made of his life, it consumes him like astronomy never did. His teachers, his parents, and their friends gnash their teeth in frustration, beg him not to throw his life away for superstition and hocus pocus, but he is deaf to their disapproval. And so he grows up to be a minor figure in this small and obscure field, rather than the celebrated and successful scientist he was to become. His mother shakes her head sadly whenever she hears news of the schoolmates who pursued the calling in which he should have eclipsed them.

Years later, in the death camps, the stars these astronomers studied so scientifically look down upon their plight in silence; gazing up, the learned men see nothing above but the smoke of their murdered colleagues, hanging like a guillotine's blade over them all. But the astrologer, using the arcane arts he has mastered and remembers, tells the fortunes of each fellow inmate every morning, giving them futures to live for when all hope seems gone.

CrimethInc. Far East Mailorder Catalog

Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook

A 624-page handbook for do-it-yourself subversive activity, illustrated with photographs, technical diagrams, and firsthand accounts. The sixty-two recipes run the gamut from *Affinity Groups* to *Wheatpasting*, stopping along the way at topics as disparate as *Hitchhiking*, *Sabotage*, *Behavioral Cutups*, and *Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence*. \$12

Rolling Thunder #2, winter 2006:

The preceding issue of this magazine featured an extensive critique of dropping out as revolutionary strategy, coverage of last summer's protests against the G8 in Scotland and mountaintop removal in West Virginia, a retrospective on squatting in northern Europe, and a couple heartrending works of fiction. \$5

Rolling Thunder #1, summer 2005: Our first issue included a massive analysis of the past decade of direct action at demonstrations, feature articles on consent in sexual relationships and alternative conceptions of education, and testimonials from maniacs who squatted their own workplaces and set themselves on fire while fighting police, inter alia. \$5

CrimethInc. Guerilla Film Series, Vol. One—Our first DVD release features two discs loaded with some of the best films in modern anarchist filmmaking: three feature-length documentaries (*Pickaxe*, *Breaking the Spell*, and *The Miami Model*) and five short films (three documenting various thinktank experiments and two CrimethInc. essays brought to life by SubMedia). New commentary tracks recorded by the filmmakers are included for the films *Pickaxe*, *Breaking the Spell*, and *Auto-Revision*. (312 Minutes). \$10

Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners—Your ticket to a world free of charge: the famous invitation to the adventure of overthrowing capitalism, hierarchy, and everything else, by turns wild-eyed, romantic, and prophetic. \$8

Evasion—The controversial chronicle of one boy's saga of willful unemployment, crime, and vagrancy. \$6

Off the Map—A punk rock vision quest in the form of a travel narrative, detailing the

exploits of two women squatting, hitchhiking, and dreaming their way across Europe. \$3

Rusty String Quartet—Raegan Butcher's new collection, several hundred poems long, chronicling the first few months following his release. \$10

Stone Hotel—Raegan Butcher's poems from prison: straightforward, harrowing, and sometimes uplifting. \$10

Requiem "Storm Heaven" CD—In nine songs ranging from mournful, muted beauty to operatic hardcore punk to the apocalyptic marching drums of street rioting, they pit raw fury and yearning against everything ugly in a desperate bid to rescue punk rock from its own inertia—not to mention the rest of us from ours. \$10

The Spectacle "I, Fail" CD—This is the brand new recording from the Norwegian band we consider to be the best playing hardcore today. It's slower, darker, and even more carefully refined than "Rope or Guillotine." \$10

Zegota 7"—Two new songs from the long-running flagship band of eclectic and idealistic hardcore punk: an unabashed street protest anthem entitled "Anarchist Cheerleader Song," and a spine-tingling cover of the traditional spiritual "Sinner Man" à la Nina Simone. \$4

Umlaut "Total Disfuckingcography" CD—38 songs and 80 pages of depraved terrorist punk rock and propaganda from the most

Finnish band of all time. Features sworn enemies of Catharsis. \$9

The Spectacle "Rope or Guillotine"

CD—This album picks up where Catharsis, His Hero Is Gone, early Gehenna, and Godspeed, You Black Emperor! left off. \$10

Zegota "Reclaim!" CD—The third wide-ranging full-length album from these expatriate artistic geniuses. \$8

Face Down In Shit "Passing Times" CD—These tortured maniacs twist the punk and stoner rock traditions into something somehow at once ugly and beautiful. \$10

Sandman "The Long Walk Home" CD—Chris Sand plays achingly personal country folk music, sweet and pure and simple. \$6

Countdown to Putsch "Interventions in Hegemony" double CD—C-to-P blends punk rock, free jazz, and radical theater to create one of the most daring experimental works to come out of the do-it-yourself milieu. \$10

Blacken the Skies CD—This was Stef's band between Catharsis and Requiem; imagine early Zegota as a d-beat crust band. \$9

Zegota "Namaste" CD—Seventy-one minutes of improvisation, medley, and soul. Many still consider this the defining Zegota recording. \$10

Catharsis "Passion" CD—Even seven years after it was recorded, what can be said about this album? We hoped it would destroy the world and remake it utterly, and for some, it almost did. \$10

Prices include postage.

CrimethInc. Far East
P.O. Box 13998
Salem, OR 97301 USA
www.crimethinc.com

CrimethInc. Shareholder Report

An Incomplete Report on and Critical Analysis of a Decade of Activity

On April Fool's Day, 2006, we announced the third printing of our free anarchist primer *Fighting For Our Lives*. This printing of 150,000 brought the total print run of that pamphlet to 500,000 copies, the target we'd set for the project three and a half years earlier. Some of us took advantage of the occasion to compile a review of the activity that had taken place under the CrimethInc. moniker in the preceding decade.

That report is reproduced here in its entirety in hope of inspiring or outraging others into ambitious activity of their own. As an accounting, it is necessarily incomplete; it only covers the most obvious and quantifiable activities that could be discerned from the vantage point of the CrimethInc. Far East distribution hub. All the same, it may help to establish the scope of what has been accomplished and of what yet remains to be done.

A Mediocre Record

As of April 1, 2006, to our knowledge, CrimethInc. operatives produced, distributed, and/or organized:

Free Material

- 500,000 copies of the free pamphlet *Fighting For Our Lives*
- 5 issues of the free paper *Harbinger* at up to 100,000 copies each
- at least 6 other free newspapers at up to 35,000 copies each
- at least 3 newsprint booklets at up to 40,000 copies each
- at least 4 23"x15" double-sided newsprint posters at up to 75,000 copies each
- at least 6 11"x17" printed posters at 5000 copies each
- at least 10,000 photocopies each of the 'zine versions of *Off the Map* and *Evasion*
- countless copies of innumerable other 'zines and posters, almost all at the expense of corporate franchises
- an unknown number of cassettes and burned CDs and DVDs
- at least 500,000 stickers for anti-corporate vandalism

Commodities

- at least 10 books totaling over 100,000 copies, ranging from a children's book to a tactical direct action manual
- 2 issues of the journal *Rolling Thunder* at 3000 copies each
- the final 7 issues of the magazine *Inside Front*, each with an accompanying CD or vinyl record, at 3000 copies each
- at least 30 CD or vinyl music releases at up to 5000 copies each for bands from three continents; some of these bands have toured those continents extensively, distributing literature in the process and sometimes offering workshops
- at least 1 videocassette and 1 two-disc DVD (the latter compiling several films previously released individually) at 1500 and 2000 copies, respectively

Outreach and Engagement

- at least 12 multimedia tours, in which over 75 people participated
- 4 national convergences, the last of which attracted approximately 200 participants (and at least 1 FBI infiltrator, whom we count neither as a participant nor as a human being)

- an unknown number of festivals, speaking engagements, gatherings, presentations, workshops, guerrilla "book signings," and other events
- involvement in several nationwide campaigns, including the protests against the Iraq war and the FTAA agreements, as well as the "Don't Just Vote, Get Active" campaign that culminated during the 2004 elections; ELF actions were also claimed by CrimethInc. splinter groups, though no other CrimethInc. operatives have had knowledge of or involvement in these actions

Accessibility

- at least 10 websites, the most widely used of which received at least 2 million unique visitors; of the 25 posters, pamphlets, and papers available on it as of this report, the most frequently accessed was downloaded over 150,000 times
- corporate coverage from the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* to *Newsweek*, despite a policy of non-cooperation with the capitalist media (granted, this coverage dealt with the supposed threats CrimethInc. poses to civil society as often as it focused on specific projects)
- contributions to countless other independent media projects; in the punk underground, for example, this included pull-out sections in *Slug and Lettuce* and *Profane Existence* and a column that appears regularly in *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* for 6 years running
- CrimethInc. material appeared in at least 12 languages, either as new material or in translation; *Harbinger* alone has appeared in German-, Portuguese-, and Spanish-language versions, each in a print run of thousands and the last of those being a collaboration between groups spread across three continents
- CrimethInc. material has been stocked by well over 150 US libraries and used, ironically enough, in countless high school and college courses

This is what you call mass production; some of these figures really put the "Inc." in CrimethInc. An economist might say that by distributing our wares free of charge or for the production costs alone and operating with a highly motivated staff that works entirely without pay, we are breaking new ground in free market

competition. Ironically, we oppose mass production, economists, markets, and competition—but we're not interested in simply keeping our hands clean.

Nor are we interested in personal gain. To this day, no participant in any of these projects has received a dime for his or her efforts'. Everything that can possibly be distributed for free is, and all proceeds from sales go immediately into further projects. All our projects are either funded by their own sales, the sales of other projects, criminal activity, or donations². This is a stark contrast to radical publishers who must give away much of the press runs of magazines they hoped to sell, not to mention miserly communist splinter groups that sell even their outreach material.

We do almost all our own distribution, working out of a few main hubs and a scattering of other nerve centers; this enables us to make sure that our material is always available through independent channels before we use corporate and institutional means to get it to those who might not otherwise see it³. We produce everything without barcodes, regarding them as a noxious concession to the corporate market⁴.

The limited accounting above, of course, leaves out the best endeavors, the unique and irreproducible ones. I recall a letter from a young person in a small town in the Midwest, reporting on the activities of the local CrimethInc. cell over

¹ That Reagan Butcher, whose poetry first appeared in the CrimethInc. Letters series while he was in prison, has received \$253 in royalties (as documented in his poem "My Publishers")—hardly enough to ease the difficult transition from incarceration to wage slavery, we fear—simply identifies him as a fellow traveler who contributes to projects without actually acting as part of the collective. This should be clear anyway, as he writes under his own name.

² Rumors that CrimethInc. is financed by trust funds or foreign governments are malicious fabrications.

³ For the record, Wal-Mart has CrimethInc. books on their website not because they stock them but because they list as "available" all books they can order through corporate distributors. After initially balking at working with such distributors, we eventually had to compromise so that libraries that do not work with independent distributors could obtain our books.

⁴ Approximately 5% of our books have been sold with barcode stickers on them, to make things easier for distributors, such as AK Press, who have requested this.



the preceding months: these included distributing free pirated CDRs of Rage Against the Machine and Ani DiFranco to middle school students and pushing over a bike cop (and getting away with it!). Likewise, the "workshop" at the Youth Liberation conference in Florida at the end of 2000 that ended in the participants dancing naked around a fire in the rain, while remembered by many as a high water mark of excitement and transformation, remains invisible to history.

These are just the projects that have taken place under the CrimethInc. moniker, not to speak of all the other activities of those who have sometimes participated in these. Everything described here has been achieved in collaboration with countless other groups and individuals—to be precise, it is all the result of the collaboration of various groups and individuals, sometimes under the CrimethInc. name and sometimes not. Some have accused CrimethInc. of being elitist or alienating, but it is precisely the radically participatory and decentralized aspects of the CrimethInc. experiment that have enabled it to be this far-reaching.

This is not to say there is no room for improvement—far from it! But this record should satisfactorily refute the charges of certain ideologues that informal networks and autonomous cells are incapable of sustained, effective activity. Whatever anyone might say against decentralization and voluntary association, they work for us. Likewise, our work over the past decade attests to the tremendous power individuals can discover in themselves and their communities when they extract even a part of their lives from the machinery of capital-

ism to invest in the liberation struggle. You can accuse us ex-workers of many things, but idleness is not one of them.

Abject Failure

All this productivity and activity, of course, indicates only one thing: the cataclysmic defeat of the CrimethInc. project thus far. We set out to raze Western civilization to the ground, and stocked its libraries instead. We began as iconoclasts, and became icons. Our first forays into the media were calculated to cast doubt upon themselves as well as all other media (hence the misattributed quotes, recontextualized images, and vicious sarcasm); our more recent mass-produced tracts unironically adopt a tone of earnest proselytizing, as if the ideas and skills thus conveyed could somehow outweigh the negative effects of mass production and mediated communication. Starting out free of ideological commitments, we eventually settled into anarchism because it seemed the most free of dogma, only to become a mainstay of that milieu with all the usual responsibilities of good citizenship. Our quixotic assault on history has become a part of history—and now here we are making it easier on the biographers with a retrospective!

We have achieved moments of liberation in which we leave behind the world of hierarchy and powerlessness and despair; these cannot be discounted. But thus far, when the dust has cleared after each such departure, the old order has reestablished itself—and we have accrued more inertia, slowly becoming a part of the world we wish to destroy. Today, an internet search for "CrimethInc." turns up more results than "crimethink": like so

many other organs of resistance, we run the risk of supplanting the original object of our struggle.

Of course, this is not necessarily for the worst. Destroying CrimethInc. will be no more difficult than destroying the capitalist system that gave rise to it. The CrimethInc. vehicle—a memberless underground, a front group for those opposed to front groups but in need of anonymity—was created to be abandoned, and none of us is foolish enough to conflate this fabrication with the unique and amazing human beings we all are in real life. Unfortunately, as capitalism, hierarchy, and miserablist indifference still hold sway across the world, all no less noxious than CrimethInc. itself, we are not ready to set fire to our Frankenstein's monster just yet. The perfect murder-suicide, to extend the metaphor as far as our reluctant pacifist hearts permit, will require long and careful planning.

Besides, every numbskull announces that "[fill in the blank] isn't like the old days!" as soon as he learns to talk. Black Star North, an obscure and short-lived splinter group that otherwise would probably never be mentioned again, once issued a demand that CrimethInc. disband—an appeal akin to calling on Food Not Bombs to quit serving, as if it was just a matter of beseeching the board of directors to call the whole thing off. That was at the beginning of 2001, when we had accomplished so little of what lay before us! However disillusioned we are with our own efforts, we are even more disillusioned with disillusionment and capitulation—strategies which, sad to tell, have been tested over and over in radical circles, always with the same effects. No, we are not done yet—we have hardly com-

pleted the first phase of this experiment, and distributing 500,000 papers is hardly comparable to the full-scale revolutions in which we hope to participate.

Going Through the Motions

Resistance as a whole is an ebb and flow of movements that replenishes itself from the undifferentiated masses⁵ through the same processes by which CrimethInc. has been assimilated into today's anarchist milieu. All who have thus far constituted the CrimethInc. experiment emerged from this uncommitted mass; we have made our ways to resistance individually or in small groups, developing certain skills (and failing to develop others) in this process, eventually finding one another and establishing common cause and reference points as part of a broader social current.

Unfortunately, just as the masses from which we appeared are characterized by inertia, circles of resistance suffer from inertia of their own. This symmetry does a lot to explain the persistence of the status quo: as long as a society is divided cleanly into opposing camps, each rigid and predictable, it remains essentially static.

When contradictions deepen between the lives people lead and the lives they desire and believe to be possible, the resulting tremors dislodge new dissidents from

⁵ For the purposes of this analysis, the only common quality that unites this mass is the fact that none of its constituents consider themselves to be revolutionaries. This is precisely the formless, infinite mass that certain organizers so ardently wish to win over to the revolution; by definition, this is impossible, for whenever an individual or group joins the resistance they step forward out of that mass. No wonder whenever one of those organizers looks around a meeting, he fails to see The People he believes to be the proper object of his efforts.

the ranks of the complacent; transforming themselves, they wash in waves into the camps of resistance. The fundamental goal of most CrimethInc. projects, accordingly, has not been to fortify one camp, but to deepen the widespread contradictions that give rise to social instability. One might argue that it is not resistance movements themselves that make social change so much as it is contagious examples of transformation; working from this proposition, one might further hypothesize that those actually in the midst of transformation have more to offer to the project of revolution than partisans of revolution who have not changed in thirty years. The former may not have thought through all their politics and tactics yet, but their inconsistency and awkwardness are balanced out by flexibility, momentum, and optimism, not to mention the relationships they retain from their former lives. Once their new identities as radicals have crystallized, the roles they play in social upheavals are likely to be less and less dynamic: they can still fight, of course, perhaps with increasing expertise, but only from a fixed position⁶.

Hence the antagonism towards the established radical milieu that characterized early CrimethInc. projects: it was the bravado of rebels savoring weightless freedom while they still possessed it, knowing they were doomed to be isolated and immobilized within that milieu eventually. For good or ill, that phase is over now. CrimethInc. is a known quantity. The original vague inclinations towards liberation have solidified into a concrete program, and in the process much that was muddled

⁶ Earth First! is one of many radical institutions that began as unique, if problematic, manifestations of discontent only to be slowly absorbed into a more homogeneous culture of resistance.

or just plain juvenile has been dispensed with—but from this point on, CrimethInc. must do without all advantages save those of perseverance and pervasiveness, or else somehow defy the chains of causality to wrest free from history and repeat the process of development all over again.

This is one of our hard-won lessons: in order that resistance remain diverse and organic, upstart dissidents should preserve as long as possible all that is autonomous and anomalous about their revolts. Whenever a new dissident individual, group, or tendency appears, established radicals rush to engage them in dialogue; in the course of this dialogue, however contentious it may be, the reference points of the neophytes shift slowly towards those of the old guard and away from those of the rest of the population. Those who desire to resist being quarantined in the existing radical milieu should be sure that the bulk of their dialogue takes place with others who do not yet have rigid political commitments.

Above all, it is necessary to pick the right enemies. One's enemies determine one's actions more decisively than any other factor, and there are always petulant radicals ready to incapacitate others by locking them in irrelevant debates. Those who wish to keep their hands free for the struggles that really matter must learn when to protect themselves by refusing to defend themselves, just as they must learn to benefit from criticism even when it is not intended constructively. CrimethInc. exists to engage capitalism in a fight to the death, not to battle it out with other radical splinter groups in a war of attrition.

We have learned to keep the radical community behind us, as it were, to draw ideas and inspiration from it while facing outward to the rest of the world. Experience

has shown that little constructive criticism can be expected from ideologues with fixed agendas—their critiques of CrimethInc. material, which almost always bypass content to focus on reputation, show that they literally *cannot read*—but it is still of paramount importance to learn from and coordinate with others, and to collaborate whenever possible. Even the most entrenched can create unpredictable situations by joining forces with unlikely allies.

Low Points

Among other things, CrimethInc. has been an experiment in structure. In adapting the decentralized, radically participatory approach of Food Not Bombs and the Earth Liberation Front to the project of propaganda outreach, we have attempted to put whatever notoriety we win for ourselves at the disposal of all. The objections of traditionalists that this approach could not provide enough *control* over who acts as CrimethInc. have not been borne out by reality: neither fascists nor communists nor liberals have attempted to hijack the CrimethInc. bullet mid-trajectory⁷.

On the contrary, while thousands have associated themselves with the CrimethInc. banner, comparatively few have taken ownership of it to the point of carrying on long-term activity beneath it. To some extent, we are victims of the success of a few well-known CrimethInc. nuclei, whose efforts have raised the bar so high as to obscure the efforts of other CrimethInc. cells and the possibility of more such efforts. While our decentralized structure and emphasis on anonymous participation have served to protect participants from the various hazards of celebrity, they have not sufficed to collectivize CrimethInc. entirely. This should not come as a surprise: it is not an insignia that enables people to do things, but access to resources, experience to draw upon, and above all the feeling that one is entitled to act. Until the more established CrimethInc. cells are able to do more to extend these resources to others, it will be optimistic to expect anything different.

So, like most other revolutionaries to date, we have failed to decentralize power

⁷ Perhaps those who are still concerned about this issue should suspend their notions about intellectual property long enough to publish something as CrimethInc. themselves, to show us the error of our ways!

within our own ranks as well as within society at large. Fortunately, unlike the Bolsheviks after the Russian Revolution, we hardly have a monopoly on power—most of the power in this society is still in the hands of capitalists and, less obviously, the dutiful citizens who serve them. Our strategy is not to seize that power ourselves in naive hope of redistributing it, but to share tactics by which others can seize it themselves. Whatever we're doing wrong, others can do better.

And now (drum roll, please), the single greatest shortcoming of all our efforts thus far. No, it hasn't been our contention that those who can should experiment with confrontational unemployment as a means to focus on revolutionary struggle—seriously, would it have been better if we'd spent all these years working *for* the man? Nor has it been our failure to address the needs of "the" working class: those who desire a monopoly on the political organizing of working people would hardly waste so much bile on us if our efforts were of no interest to their target audience.

Far worse: all too often, we've failed to follow up our outreach efforts with concrete opportunities for people to connect with one another. Of the scores who have traveled to various CrimethInc. addresses hoping to join a standing army of revolutionaries, of the thousands who have written letters to those addresses beseeching the recipients to direct them to radical communities in which to take control of their lives, few have received more than words of encouragement for their pains; our resources were stretched thin enough as it was just collating stolen photocopies. Nobody can save anyone the trouble of developing initiative and experience for herself or himself; but people develop their abilities in communities, and more often than not we have failed to bring people together so this could take place. Whenever we have been able to do so, the results have been explosive; this makes all these missed opportunities all the more tragic.

We have counted on anarchist communities at large to be available to those who are inspired by our projects, but all too often this has not been the case. The focus on lifestyle as an end in itself among passive consumers of CrimethInc. literature, which has maddened its authors as

well as their critics, has probably stemmed from this dearth of other points of departure. This is the great failure of the past ten years, the one that has perhaps made the difference between agitation and insurrection. Simply publishing and agitating is not enough; those of us who are already active need to put more energy into fostering networks and keeping them accessible to new participants. This must be an even higher priority than propaganda and outreach if the latter are to be of any use—that is to say, if the efforts of the next ten years are to produce different results than those of the past ten.

The Anti-Climax

Over the past decade, CrimethInc. has at some points been literally one person alone, abandoned by all, desperately struggling to crack the code for collective liberation before starving to death—and at other times, a crack team of seasoned comrades maintaining long-term projects, a crowd of hundreds suddenly erupting into the street, a vibrant international network of thousands. If anything, we have learned the value of dreaming big, of patiently maintaining our spirits through difficult periods and going all out when the time is right.

We still have some tricks up our sleeve—perhaps we've lost the element of surprise, but we never thought we'd live to see the opportunities we have now. Even so, we won't be the ones to win this struggle. The weapons we're fighting with cannot win it. 500,000 unique anarchist projects could pose a real threat; the fact that we have to make 500,000 identical copies of a single one is an admission of defeat, albeit an optimistic one. The only real value CrimethInc. can have is as a challenge to provoke others into more ambitious revolutionary action. This is our plea to you, if you care one whit for liberation, whether or not you've ever been fond of any of our projects: put everything we've done to shame. Don't waste your breath criticizing our efforts—there's work to be done. Demonstrate approaches that work better than the ones we've employed, and we'll gladly take them up.

Perhaps it is necessary to put all this in plainer language for those who are still reading as spectators and critics rather than comrades-in-arms. So if you please, dear friends:



PULL OUT
THE STOPS!
FILL YOUR
SPINE WITH
GUNPOW-
DER! LIGHT
A MATCH
IN YOUR
BRAIN!
OUTDO US!
OUTDO US!
OUTDO US!

Some of you have labored
hard, as have we—
but perhaps it would be
better to trade all our
calluses for dynamite.
We may yet have the chance.

OUR NEWSPAPERS ARE INSTRUMENTS OF WAR

Iceberg, most of it submerged

