

# WINGNUT ANARCHIST Collective



newsletter #1

ugust 2009-january 2011



In celebration of **The Wingnut** being active for a year (and in existence for 6 months longer than that), we thought we might give you an update on what's been done so far, and a small taste of things to come in our second year. But first, a little bit of background...

The Wingnut, a then condemned 2600 square foot house in the Southern Barton Heights neighborhood of Richmond, VA, was acquired by **Mo** in July of 2009. With the help of **Jeremy**, who arrived in August, and **Johnny Ray**, who joined us in October, we plowed through what seemed like piles of permits and inspections to get the house up to code. We finally finished **cutting through the red tape** of getting our occupancy permit in November, and immediately started putting our plans of an open Anarchist collective space for Richmond into motion. By January, we began to help facilitate the move of **Richmond Food Not Bombs** into The Wingnut, so that the organization would have the room to expand in a larger and more permanent space.

As the weather in Richmond became more tolerable, we started providing a **show space** for traveling acoustic acts, puppet shows, and local acts wanting a sober atmosphere for their shows. We stepped up our participation in the **Really Really Free Market**, which had already been active in Richmond for about two years. We built several new shelves for storage, and started taking **truckloads of everything** from clothes and books to furniture to Monroe Park for the Free Market on the last Saturday of every month. Leftovers from Food Not Bombs started being distributed to the neighborhood, and helped us begin to make **closer connections with the community** we had moved into.

From the outset of our moving into Southern Barton Heights, we were very aware of the effect that young white folks moving into a neighborhood comprised mainly of people of color can have on the dynamics of the community. It was decided very early on in the establishing of the space to **work for the**

benefit of our immediate community first, and the rest of Richmond second. Soon after we began putting out the free food, we organized a **weekly street cleanup** before Food Not Bombs, not only to clean up the area, but also to see our neighbors more often, and to make our presence as a positive addition to our community more well known. Over the summer we officially **Adopted some Spots**, and now have street signs on 2 streets that say Wingnut Anarchist Collective.

By that time, our friend **Scott** had moved in and had brought with them a weekly craft night he had organized in another part of the city beforehand. Scott's stay here was brief, but **Craft Night** became a bimonthly activity that we took on to help give the kids in our neighborhood (of which there are many) and our friends from the city **something fun and productive to do** on a Wednesday night. As time went by, Craft Night went from just a simple



gathering of friends to regularly being **organized around a theme**, whether it be banner making for a protest, zine making, or knitting workshops for anyone interested.

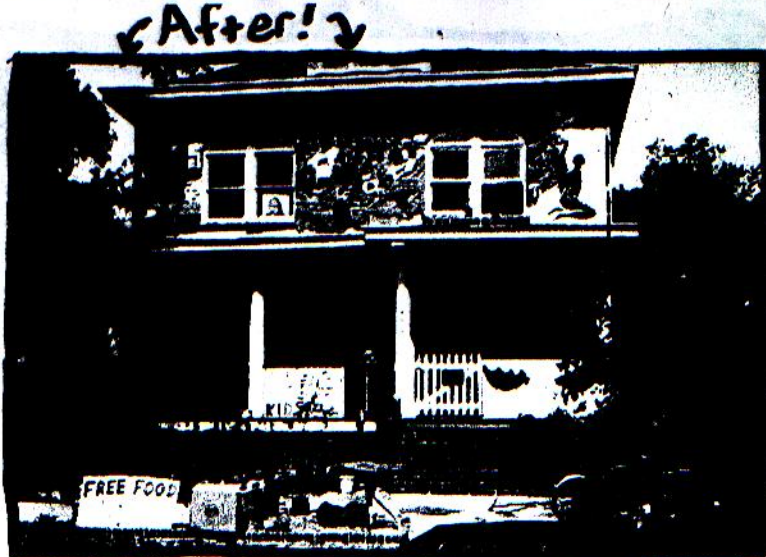
As Spring hit, **Eric** moved in and immediately **dove head first into gardening** not only for ourselves, but for the neighborhood as well. With plenty of extra lumber from construction, a hefty compost pile from Food Not Bombs, and a couple green thumbs we **built eight 4x4 planters** in our front yard, and filled them with all the seeds we could get our paws on. Across the street, on a dilapidated piece of property, we pruned back all the hedges and **tilled up the earth to plant sizable crops of potatoes and corn**. One of our friends from out of town, Big Steve, donated ten 50 gallon rain barrels for the house, and we hauled what seemed like tons of topsoil from the yard across the street to our raised beds. Our garden was soon filled with squash and tomatoes, basil and cucumbers, radishes and

zucchini, grapes, blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries. We participated with a community Earth Day party by **helping kids plant their own mint**, and gave seeds to anyone who happened by the house and wanted to do some gardening of their own.

As hot pants and river season set in, we planned for the annual **May Day parade**, and spent our time outside making flags, banners, dinners, and all manner of noisy things in preparation. The Food Not Bombs crew showed up in force, and the weekend of workshops, marches, shows, and friends went off without a hitch.

At the house, we had been working on the long neglected **Richmond Anarchist Black Cross**, and started holding monthly meetings to help revitalize an organization crucial to any urban area. Our first event, back in February, was a spaghetti **fundraising dinner for the AETA 4**, not only to help in whatever small form in paying for their legal fees, but also to bring more attention to the continual escalation in "Green Scare" legislation aimed at terrorizing animal rights organizations around the country. Over the summer we hosted **movie screenings** and **letter writing nights**.

In 2010, there were five inmate deaths at the Richmond City Jail, many of which were directly related to atrocious conditions within the aging and vastly overcrowded facility. Anarchist Black Cross **organized an anti prison rally** to bring attention to the unarguable inhumanity of the prison system of the United States. This event coincided with the Oakland, CA case against the officer who murdered Oscar Grant, who was unarmed and restrained when he was shot in front of a crowd of onlookers. We marched from City Hall to the jail, "**Tear Down All The Jails**" banners in tow, and raised a ruckus as riot cops waited in the courthouse across the street. So far, the city has proposed as a solution to the overcrowding of



the jail: the building of a new jail, in the same location, to be built in part by the prisoners on work duty. **This fight will be continuing well into 2011**, as the Mayor pushes to have the prison construction get under way.

By the time Memorial Day rolled around, **Daveigh** and **Kayla** had become the newest Wingnuts, and we had begun to make good friends out of the neighborhood kids and adults alike. In doing so, and also from being outside more in the permitting weather, it became more and more apparent to us the heavy traffic of police in our community. As in any urban neighborhood where people of color make up the majority, **police oppression is a major issue**. Southern Barton Heights is no different. Thusly, being more than slightly **antagonistic when it comes to the pigs in blue**, we decided that Memorial Day in our neighborhood would be not a celebration of those killed by the state in war, but those **murdered by the state** in ours and every other community.

We booked any band that would stop through and play, dumpstered at least 5 grills, and **finished a fire pit in the backyard**, and then proceeded to invite every person in our area to come have a community cookout with us. The crowning achievement of the day was the **unveiling of a mural**, spanning the entire second story of the house, to commemorate all those killed by the state. Though feedback from friends and neighbors alike was mainly positive, with many folks being prompted by the plea to share their stories of police repression, the pigs themselves were less than enthused to see a **ten foot depiction of a pig in uniform** on their daily beat.

The few weeks following Memorial Day were filled with **negative interactions and intimidation**, mostly passive, with the RPD. We got used to them blocking our street as they took pictures and stared, and it was a strange night that spotlights and blared sirens weren't coming through bedroom windows at night. The website had been well in place for a while, and it was not uncommon to be called by name by

police when walking to the store, or to have local kids tell us that they had been asked by the police about our activities. In response we bought a camera and a notebook, and **Richmond Copwatch** came into existence as a formal organization.

The police were not amused, but the reaction from the community was overwhelmingly supportive. Not ones to be satisfied with any singular triumph, we took the summer by storm with more activities for kids including lending out the lawnmower for those who could bear the heat, and board games and movies for those who couldn't. Now that school had let out for the season, the foot traffic at The Wingnut seemed to have increased ten fold. At a high point we hosted two shows a week, a **free kids breakfast**



**every friday morning** (to help out with kids no longer getting breakfast through school programs), the daily fixing of bikes in the front yard, and the **continual noise of power tools** being used to complete any number of projects left over from the construction phase. Mo got their contractors license, and we helped alleviate the pains of having a mortgage by starting **Punkstruction**; a collective run and owned contracting company. We did everything from trash hauling to house painting to drywall installation, and used any extra money to start on our next project.

Southern Barton Heights, almost as a rule, has nothing going for it when it comes to things to do for any age group. Empty storefronts line the main thoroughfare, and when it comes to places for folks to congregate as a community, the options are slim to none.

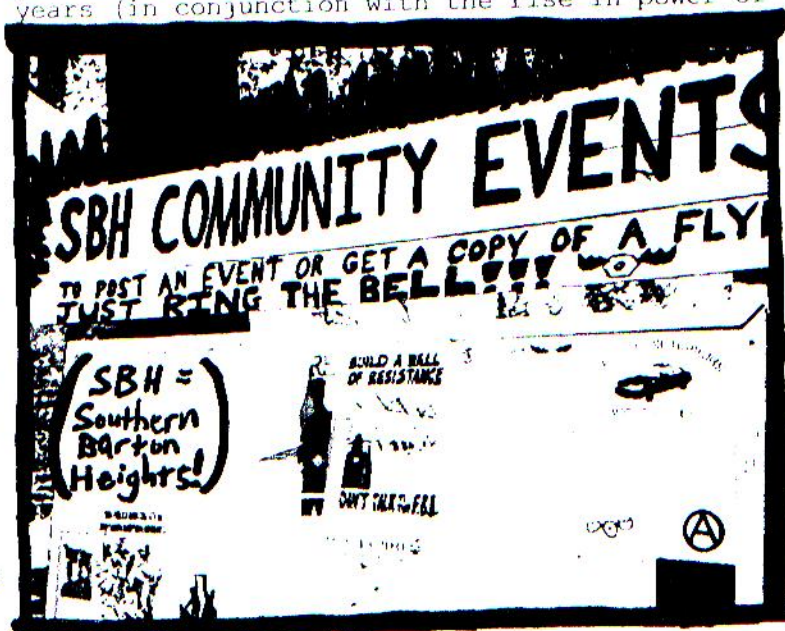
Realizing the stigma that comes along with having your home also be a public space, we decided to take one of the empty restaurants in the neighborhood and transform it into a **collective coffee shop** and gathering place for any who wanted to use it. We found an old restaurant with a three bedroom apartment above it, and we immediately knew it was exactly what we wanted. Prices were given, inquiries

made, loans applied for, and miles of red tape put into place. It's a difficult pill to swallow, knowing that you are ready to tackle something as laborious as opening a restaurant, and have it slip between your fingers because of landlords, everchanging agreements, and lack of transparency. But that's what happened, and **the infoshop idea went on the backburner** for the time being, to be tried again when the opportunity arose.

The heat of the summer finally let up, and things began to slow down a bit around the house, making time for **planting fall crops**, writing zines, planning new events, and getting the house ready for winter. We began borrowing a projector from **The Flying Brick Library** on a weekly basis, and tied sheets to the front of the house every Friday or Saturday for **screenings of kid friendly movies** for anyone who wanted to watch, and there wasn't a showing that didn't have half the neighborhood children hanging out in the front yard or playing in the street around us.

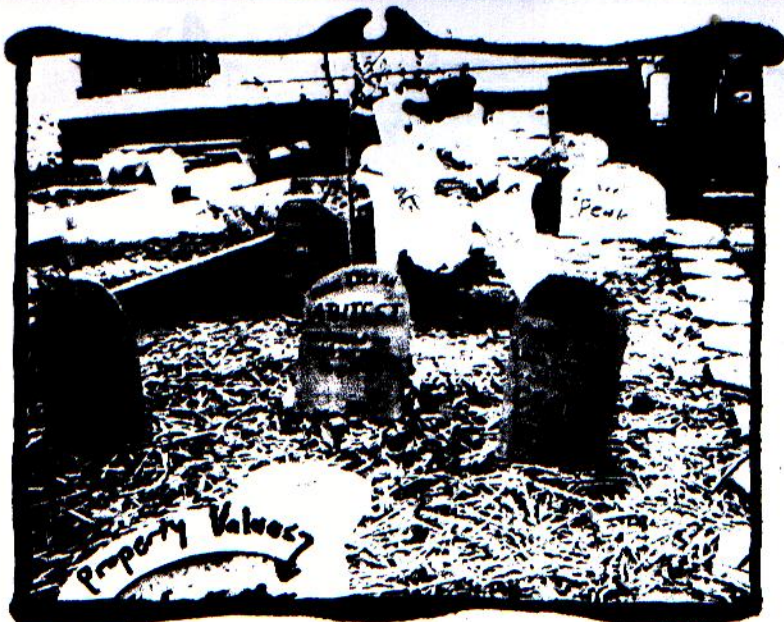
We also joined up with the Richmond Food Bank in July, and **organized a grocery giveaway** on the last Saturday of every month for people in the community. After being involved with the project for several months, over 700 people in Northside Richmond and beyond receive free food every month, and over 175 families are represented. One of our many goals for the coming year is to help folks in other communities around Richmond set up the same program for their neighborhoods.

Southern Barton Heights, and Northside Richmond as a whole, have been the spotlight for "redevelopment" for some time now. Though bringing attention to the issue of blight and vacant homes is and has been an important aspect of our role in the area, it is no secret that **when someone mentions "redevelopment," what they are usually referring to is gentrification.** For the last ten to fifteen years (in conjunction with the rise in power of

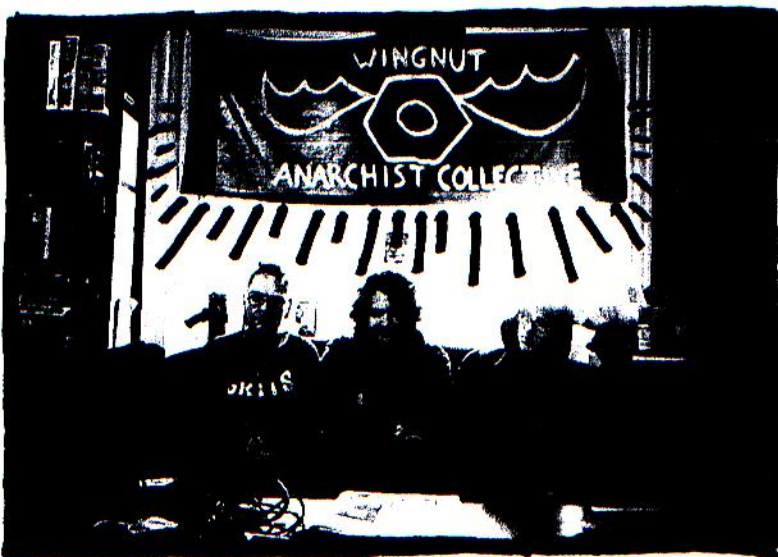


Virginia Commonwealth University), classist community development has crippled several Richmond neighborhoods, including Jackson Ward, Church Hill, and Oregon Hill. As the students move in, rent goes up, and those without the means to stay in their homes are forced to move further and further towards the counties.

Recently, however, there has been a push to "invigorate" business in Northside, particularly in the Battery Park and Southern Barton Heights area. So when ACORN (Association to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods; this group, though founded on some good ideas about preserving the history of historic areas, is a force of gentrification in Richmond) organized a walking tour of Southern Barton Heights as a way to boost interest in our area for developers and new home owners alike, we decided to make our voice heard as well. We put our house on the tour, so that people could get an idea of what we do in our community, and



halloween coloring books, capture the black flag, pin the tail on the sabo-cat, and 14 homemade pinatas that the kids helped us make and paint at Craft night FULL of candy.



In November we started working on having open hours and a radical lending library. For want of a community center, or a geographically close place to check out radical books, we decided to get to building shelves. We moved our books into the new library and began collecting more titles. We now have open hours on Wednesdays and Fridays from 4-9pm. Neighbors and others are welcome to come over to use the internet, check out a book, browse our zine collection, play a game, get out the kids toys, put together a puzzle, or just hang out. We also make our space available for organizations who want to have meetings or events. We are excited about any donations of radical literature, or any volunteers who want to help bottomline and expand open hours.

flyered the area with "Neighbors, Not Developers" literature. We also chalked in front of the houses on the tour with messages like "Keep Out Yuppie Scum". There were the expected run-ins with pro development folks (mostly upper middle class, and white), and we made some new friends with ACORN who were sympathetic to our views on gentrification.

In August we hosted many travelling friends and enjoyed the heat and humidity of Richmond. We also lost a housemate, Johnny Ray, and we wish him the best in his future endeavors. Love you Johnny Ray!

In October the Wingnut hosted the zine reading and potluck event the night before the Richmond Zine Fest. We also tabled at the Richmond Zine Fest and facilitated a workshop on Richmond Copwatch and one on Security Culture.

We celebrated our favorite holiday by throwing a giant Halloween Party for the neighborhood. In a local park we had a BB, bobbing for apples, pumpkins for painting,



With all that goes on here, and the vast amount of radical literature in RVA, it's a regular pain to try to keep track of who is taking

what, where, and when. Eric, in response to this lack of broader organization, created the **Richmond Radicalendar**, an online resource representing the radical activities going on with a number of groups in Richmond including **Food Not Bombs**, **Richmond Earth First!**, **IWW**, and more. So far, the idea has taken hold, and we hope to expand the capabilities of the website and debut a paper version in the coming months.

In December we hosted Gal Lugassi, an Israeli anti apartheid activist, as a stop on the **Anarchists Against The Wall speaking tour**. Anyone who wants to find out more information about their efforts in Palestine, or if you just want to show them some love and support, you can find out more about AATW at [www.awalls.org](http://www.awalls.org). It is a great hope of ours to host more groups as they tour the U.S. in the coming months, whether they be musical, lecture based, or otherwise.

Another long term project we are working on is **producing more anarchist literature and increasing the presence of anarchists in our neighborhood and the city**. We have found a

distinct lack of solid fliers and pamphlets and zines that are accessible and interesting, so we are trying to work on **new ideas and approaches** in anarchist literature.

To close out the year with a bang (and start the next one off right), the Wingnuts, along with our friends from Atlanta, staged a **noise demonstration outside the city jail on New Year's Eve** in solidarity with those locked up, as well as in conjunction with several

other prison demonstrations around the world. We showed up with bucket drums, boombox, and megaphone, and **rang in the New Year as loudly as we could**. Though the turnout this year was relatively low, we hope to make this only the first of many New Years demonstrations in the years to come.

What's in store for the Wingnuts in 2011? We hope to maintain and expand the projects we've started, as well as experiment with new ways of creating a more autonomous community in Southern Barton Heights and Richmond as a whole.

Love and solidarity from RVA!

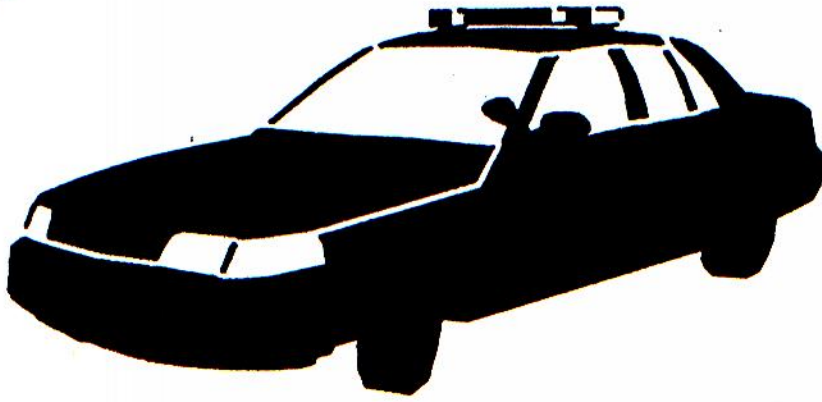


Eric!

DAVE! + Mo' Kamage

Gramps

# TALK TO NEIGHBORS



## NOT TO COPS

CUT HERE



WANT TO BE A  
WINNUT??!!  
HOLLER!!

### (A)D LIB MIRANDA RIGHTS!

- 1) ADJ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) VERB \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) PLACE \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) NOUN \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) NOUN \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) VERB \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) NOUN \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) BODYPARTS \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) VERB \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) NOUN PL \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) ADJ \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) NOUN \_\_\_\_\_

You have the right to remain ④ \_\_\_\_\_  
Anything you ② \_\_\_\_\_ can and will be  
used against you in a ③ \_\_\_\_\_ of ④ \_\_\_\_\_

You have the right to a/an ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_  
If you cannot ⑥ \_\_\_\_\_ a/an ⑦ \_\_\_\_\_,  
one will be appointed to you.

You can decide at any time from this  
moment on to waive these ⑧ \_\_\_\_\_

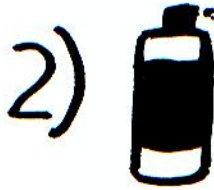
Do you ⑨ \_\_\_\_\_ each of these ⑩ \_\_\_\_\_ I  
have explained to you?

Response:

"I am going to remain ⑪ \_\_\_\_\_

"I want to speak to my ⑫ \_\_\_\_\_!"

This is a stencil that we like, and  
hope you will too! Get this design in  
YOUR neighborhood, it's easy!!



**THIS IS** our first newsletter. It covers a  
lot of ground, but we want to make them more  
frequently. And we want to hear back from you!

Write to us at:

**The Wingnut**

2005 Barton Ave  
Richmond, VA 23222

(804) 303-5449

wingnut\_collective@yahoo.com



And check out our website at :

<http://wingnutrva.org/>