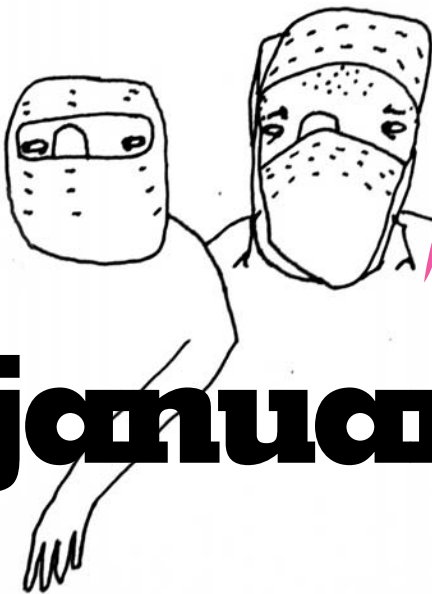


Oakland, California 2009



# UNFINISHED BUSINESS ACTS



**january rebellions**

*the oakland  
rebellions*





# UNFINISHED ACTS

# Greetings Earthlings

## We Come in Violence

### ***What you hold in your hands***

is a collective recounting and analysis of events surrounding the shooting of an unarmed 22-year-old Black man in Oakland. Oscar Grant III was executed by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police officers during the first hours of 2009 on the platform of the Fruitvale station. *Unfinished Acts* was written collectively by a group of anarchists who were and still are actively present in the rebellion following Oscar Grant's execution. We were in the streets during the spontaneous uprising in downtown Oakland on January 7th where numerous cars were torched and businesses were smashed during militant standoffs with the Oakland Police Department. We were in the many demos since, attended countless "community meetings" at locations ranging from Black churches to art gallery spaces to anarchist co-ops, and organized support and solidarity for those who were arrested during confrontational actions. In those free moments, which barely exist, we have put together this exposé on the events so far (as the story is still unfolding) and would like to share it with you.

The following pages include a few short histories of a few significant social movements to help contextualize the rebellions. This history acts as intermissions for a documentary dramatization (but factually correct!) of some of the events that unfolded in the streets during the first month of 2009. We have reconstructed the narrative and dialogue from collective stories, personal experi-

ences and videos of the rebellions posted online. We conclude with our own analysis and lessons.

The opening of this letter is not merely an empty play on words. Anarchists within the contemporary global terrain of political struggle tend to be regarded as curious creatures with crazy, irresponsible, or romantic ideas about politics and social change. From this perspective, anarchists come out of their dark caves and like vampires (or the Taliban!), ruin it, sometimes violently, for

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Anarchists within the contemporary global terrain of political struggle tend to be regarded as curious creatures with crazy, irresponsible, or romantic ideas about politics and social change.

everyone, again and again. They ruin it for authoritarian leftist organizations (self-proclaimed leaders of movements), and they ruin it in the mind controlling and numbing mass media. But outside of that narrow perspective, we simply desire political conversations and organizing with those whom we

can identify a common starting point; one that involves a push towards militant direct action driven by solidarity in the streets of our cities.

It is with this desire that we have put out this publication. We hope that it can provide a starting point to spring from, a reminder to those of us in the Bay Area and to those who are afar, a glimpse of exciting and/or tragic possibilities in US urban centers.

# A Sobering Addendum

**We** use the term “we” in this publication often. As editors and authors we made the choice to refrain from classing, racializing, gendering (on and on) the individuals involved. We don’t intend to obscure the very real differences of the people who were in the streets on the nights of the 7th and the 14th. We don’t want to obscure the very different realities we live, the very different ways that police violence impacts us. We will be the first to declare that our perspectives are very limited.

“We” refers to an underlying logic—in terms of the theatrical-formula, perhaps our ideal chorus—one that establishes an environment of rebellion and insurrection. On the night of the seventh the specific bodies included Oakland’s children: Black, Latin@, Native, Asian, white, young people, women, queers and other identities we will never know. We chose to publish remarks that we thought were the best examples of both our own underlying logic, and that of state (its police, its politicians, its businessmen, at times its activist-citizens).

Our logic looks for ways to sustain massive, participatory, visible conflict with the state. We believe this kind of antagonist conflict is the best form to see what we are, and from there, to see what we can become. For instance we do not oppose the marshaling force on January 14th only because it replicates the Prison Industrial Complex, but also because it limits conflict (page 22).

At this point in this country we have identified two traditions that develop and deepen conflict with the state: race politics and the fringe of the established activist-Left. These two different, sometimes cross-pollinating arenas have, in their best moments, pushed the boundaries of a free humanity in leaps and bounds. The up-

risings sparked by Oscar Grant’s execution refer to a long legacy of Black anti-racist politics, a language that allowed for kids to text one another with “Shit’s going down 14th and Broadway, come thru!” Anarchists were texting each other as well to come downtown to participate, also because of a common language. These are no coincidences; they are based in long legacies of social struggle.

We are given some choices. We can join the activist-Left and try to radicalize its organizations. We can join into Black Liberation/People of Color-led organizing projects or coalitions. We can try to take the best and furthest reaching of both and develop new projects like Anarchist People of Color. Or, we can choose to develop entirely new antagonisms based neither on the tradition of the Left nor race politics—identifying different poverties, making them newly unbearable. For us, at this moment in the Bay, we have found ourselves as

anarchists associated with the Left who are engaging race politics. This is where we tell our story from.

Identity is a curious subject. Perhaps we are not big enough or well-equipped enough to grapple with the deeper implications of writing,

of telling a story—in this publication we tell our own story of the January Rebellions; we put words to our experiences. Ultimately we believe we’re establishing solidarities and antagonisms within the text that accurately reflect our real-life experiences. Throughout, the dialog is transcribed verbatim from the streets, the quotation-marks refer to the state’s logic while the italics refer to ours.

For a more ecstatic addendum, refer to our concluding evaluations and interpretations (page 29).

And so it begins!

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“We” refers to an underlying logic—in terms of the theatrical-formula, perhaps our ideal chorus—one that establishes an environment of rebellion and insurrection.



# Act 1

## Scene 1:

**January 1st, 2009.** New years day. A Thursday. We hear that a Black man has been shot and killed by a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) police officer. People who took video of the incident had their phones and cameras quickly confiscated by the police. He was executed during the first few hours after midnight, while partygoers were on there way home from trying to burn a fond memory into their heads and kick off another time around the sun. They shot Oscar Grant III in the back. He worked as a butcher at the grocery store where my friend and I shop at every week. When I saw his picture, I recognized his smile. We were overwhelmed with depression, helplessness. Another person of color killed by cops in the Bay, and nothing being done about it. The general public digests the news with a frown and goes about their business. What cynical cruelty passes as normality.

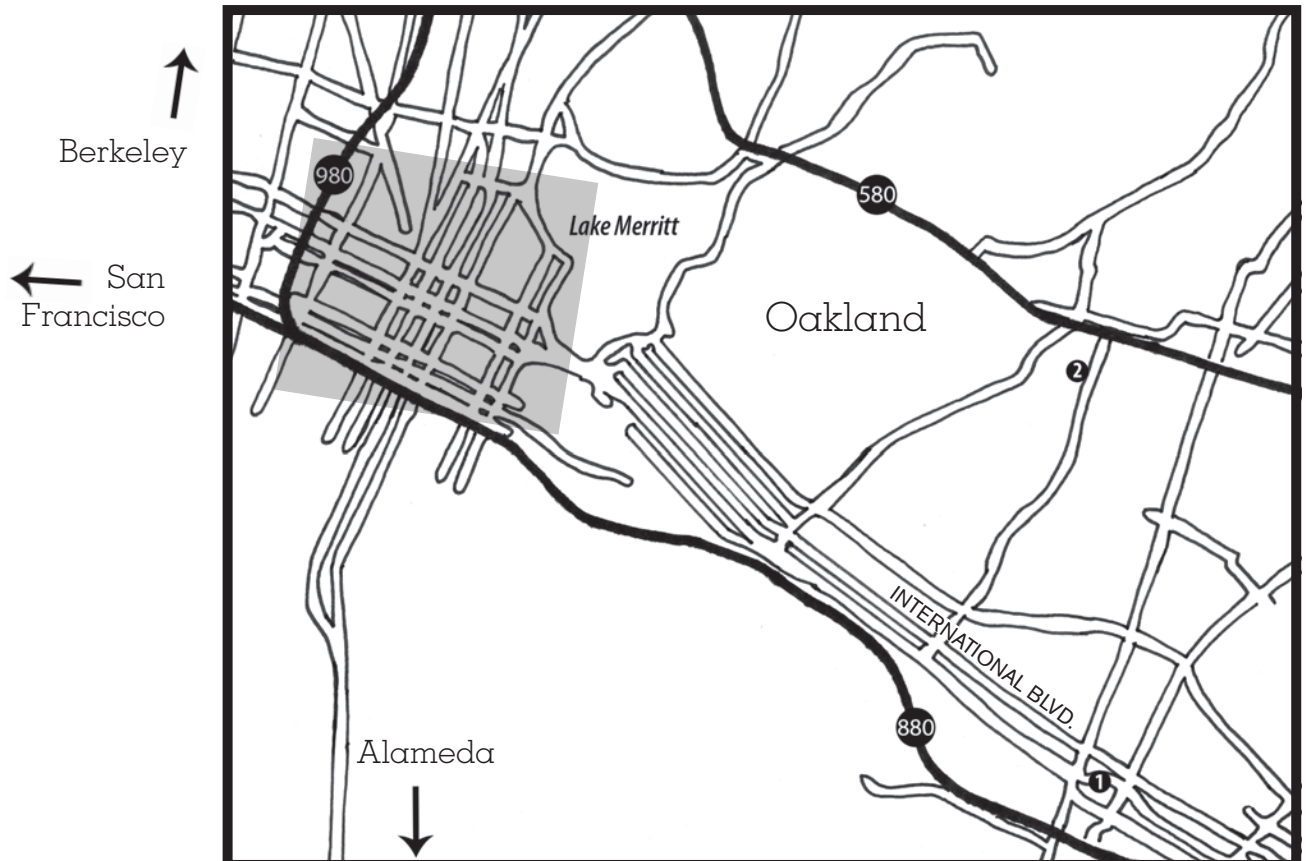
The efforts by the BART cops to completely cover up the execution started early. After spending time confiscating cell phones while Grant lay wounded, the cops tell paramedics nothing of how he was shot or by whom, withholding information that is routinely given in the interest of saving a life. The BART police

have their own interests. They wait for the bullet to be extracted and take it for "evidence." Hospital personnel have no reason to second guess their motivations. Weeks later, one health care worker who had treated Oscar after he was admitted to the hospital is still shocked:

*I had no idea he was killed by police until the next day when I saw the news.*

The hospital is only the beginning of a blatant display of corruption and arrogance by the police. Despite efforts to bury the evidence, a video surfaces after a few days, and then another, until the incident is running on local news channels. New camera angles make the execution undeniable. No action has been taken by BART or city officials. What a surprise. The thought of charging the police and exposing them as the thugs they are is avoided in the so-called halls of justice. Johannes Mehserle, this particular killer cop, refuses to go in for questioning. He sends in a letter of resignation instead. Days pass. By January 7, people –all of us– are pissed.

The stage is set.





ACT 1 **124**



- act **1** ..... page 4
- act **2** ..... page 6
- act **3** ..... page 12
- act **4** ..... page 22
- act **5** ..... page 28



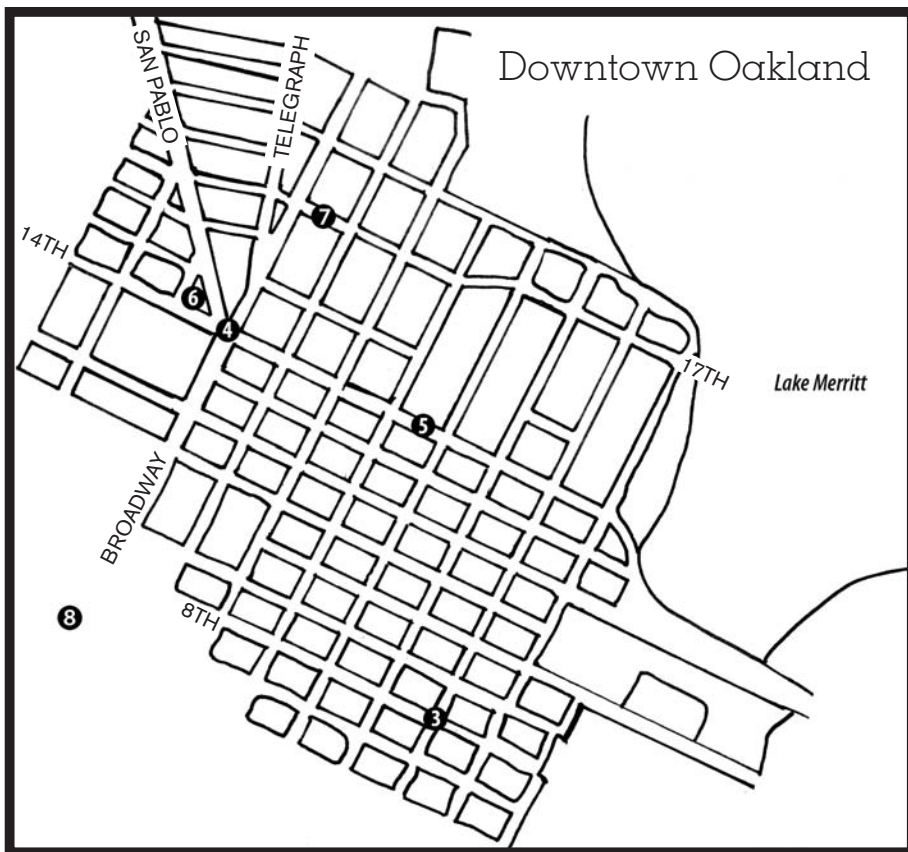
## MAP LEGEND

ACT 2 **136**

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Fruitvale BART    | <b>5</b> 14th and Jackson |
| <b>2</b> Highland Hospital | <b>6</b> City Hall        |
| <b>3</b> 8th and Madison   | <b>7</b> 17th Street      |
| <b>4</b> 14th and Broadway | <b>8</b> Downtown OPD     |



ACT 3 **45678**



ACT 4 **46**



ACT 5 **8**

# Act 2

## Scene 1:

**A crowded Fremont bound train**, evening rush hour, January 7th, six days after the murder of Oscar Grant. The train conductor's voice comes over the intercom:

*"Attention we apologize for any inconvenience, but due to civil unrest this train will not be stopping at the Fruitvale station. Again, this train will not be stopping at the Fruitvale station."*

*Didn't they just shoot somebody there?  
That why we're not stopping?*

*Uh huh.*

*"For those passengers wanting to go to Fruitvale station, there will be a shuttle departing from Coliseum station that will bring you to Fruitvale."*

*I'm not getting on a goddamn shuttle...*

End Scene.

## Act 2, Scene 2:

*I'm not condoning violence, but sometimes to get justice, you can't just sit around holding hands singing 'Kumbaya.'*  
—Organizer of the Fruitvale rally

**Masses of people had gathered** at Fruitvale Bart station, one of those rare protests where you walk around and see different people from many different organizations and ideologies. There's indignation, fear, and anger. The video of Oscar Grant is fresh, weighing on all of our minds, the speakers' words hit live wires of memory not yet sealed over, not yet forgotten into the nasty legacy of Bay Area police violence.

Video after video had come out, each with a different angle, a different perspective; each with a somehow differently devastating effect. As the first videos made it onto YouTube there was frustration, disbelief, disgust. Millions of hits later, more videos began to emerge: the cops threw sucker punches to their faces, bystanders with evidence confiscated. But according to BART police there had been no crime.

Somewhere, at some point, our disbelief gave way to rage, to anger, to a clarity of purpose and focus. The evidence was damning and the response was infuriat-



ing. We may not gather around many things publicly and collectively, but to pick up the newspaper on the first day of the new year and to read about such *old* news, so fresh, so painfully new and accessible through modern media, set the stage for an explosion of those angry with what passes as daily life, what cruelty that passes as sanity, the timeless status quo.

We are here, in the plaza by the entrance to the Fruitvale station, the site of the murder of Oscar Grant, a crowd of approximately 1000. Our friends are getting off the shuttle. 4pm. There are many banners, many faces: Oakland youngsters, youth-organizers, communists, anarchists, mostly young, and multiracial. The station is closed and the PA is very loud: the rally has begun.

Speeches are being made from the sound system in the center of the crowd. The emcee is a professional activist:

*"Listen everybody, we need to get organized and be peaceful, not let our emotions take over."*

She's greeted with an enormous silence from the crowd. She continues on, undeterred:

*"But right now we'd like to open it up to anyone who's ever been harassed by the police—would you like to come up and speak? Especially our youth, feel free to come up right now and tell your story."*

Young people begin to take the mic.

*I'm feelin pretty violent right now, I'm on some Malcolm X shit: by any means necessary. If I don't see some action, I'm going to cause a ruckus myself.*



*That's right!*

There are cheers and applause, and chants:

*No Justice, No Peace! Fuck the Police!*

*When you get bullied at the playground you don't sit down and beg that fucking bully to leave you alone! You knock his fucking teeth out. We've been bullied for too long, we've been talking too long, we gotta take fucking action, you know what I'm saying? Because you don't get results by pleading to the fucking bully, you beat his fucking ass and you let his ass know that you're not to be fucked with. That's how it goes.*

*Yes, right on!*

The crowd listens but interrupts one particular speaker:

*"Hi, I'm coming from the mayor's deputy chief of staff's office, the mayor could not be here—"*

*BOOOOOOOOOO, We want the mayor here, BOOOOOO*

*The police officer and the mayor have said that they are sorry but I'm making it very clear that we reject your apology.*

*We're gonna march tonight everyone, we'll be meeting at the "Fruitvale Village" sign over there.*

There is silence... and then chanting:

*March! March! March!*

There is the usual feel of divergence of tactics, the speakers, the organizers, the organizations standing strong to maintain a front of righteous anger while others want to move this anger to another target, to feel that this righteous indignation keep going, keep moving, doesn't just, for lack of a better idea, go home.

*End Scene.*

## Act 2, Scene 3:

*Fuck the Police, We're All Oscar Grant.*

### **Most of those tired or made restless by the rally leave to march:**

young people, communists, anarchists, neo-Black Panthers. All kinds of signs and styles of dress represent their affiliations: the fitteds of hiphop heads, the berets of the Panthers and Brown Berets, Maoists and their ubiquitous paper, anarchists and their all black clothing, but mostly it's Oakland's children: young people of color. At the front of the march is a crew on their scraper bikes. The march leaves down International Blvd, a thoroughfare that crosses the largely Black and Latin@ Fruitvale neighborhood and the largely Asian Lake Merritt neighborhood. The police presence is light, mostly staying ahead and behind the march clearing traffic. Masks are being handed out; residents and car commuters voice their support. The mood is spontaneous, loud, and unruly: groups of kids run up and down through the march, no one was solemn, tired, or quiet. The mood is electric with anger.

Police are mobilizing and blocking traffic far down the road. But they keep their distance and follow us on parallel streets.

Strong in numbers, we start to gather momentum as we move through Fruitvale, feeling that we are ready for another action. While there is a feeling of ignitable anger within the crowd, there is a feeling of fear and paranoia among police forces. Helicopter lights flash over us as we march in surreal soft evening romantic California light through the streets of Fruitvale. We are black clad figures standing out against abrasively neon banners. Shy smiles exchange in the crowd with



the flash of cellphones, teeth, scraper bikes, jewelry, and the various adornments of a million subcultures. It is getting dark.

As we move towards the Lake Merritt BART station people in the crowd chant about BART as the target. Moving off freeways and into the edge of downtown, the frustration begins to feel more focused; we're moving towards BART police headquarters. A young woman lights a bundle of paper on fire and raises it defiantly above her head. As we all move towards the BART station there's the feeling of moving as a single unit. There's the moment of confusion between taking over the freeway which is right in front of us or going for the gold: moving into downtown Oakland and wreaking havoc. Where are we going? But with so many people, with so much energy, it doesn't seem to matter.

At the front of the march kids on scraper bikes and a few individuals on foot make the decision to move onto 12th street away from where cops are gathering up ahead. We've ducked out of the helicopter's spotlight. We find ourselves momentarily without any police presence. We are now very close to the Lake Merritt station.

*Hey there is a dumpster down that block. You guys want to go get it?*

*What about the cops down there?*

*They're far away enough that they won't mess with us.*

Five people move the dumpster into the crowd and start to bang on it; cheers erupt.

At 8th and Madison a police cruiser is blocking traffic next to BART police headquarters. It becomes the focal point of

people's anger as people start to surround it. Two officers get out, noticeably concerned about the angry crowd.

*Pigs go home!*

The cops quickly grab whatever they can out of the cruiser and retreat into the lines of backed up traffic. Young folks emerge from the crowd and start to jump on the police cruiser, kicking and smashing out its windows. A rare moment of cross-racial solidarity sets in as people dance on the cruiser: Latin@s, Black folks, Asians and whites are tearing down well-guarded day to day boundaries. Owing and making real our shared fury at the police, we find a crucial point of political intersection and act on it.

A masked kid approaches the group around the dumpster on the other side of the street:

*Should I spark this shit?*

*Yeah go for it*

The dumpster catches fire and is passed from hand to hand before being rammed into the police vehicle, which at this point is almost entirely destroyed. The crowd starts to rock the police car trying to overturn it. OPD riot cops who have been gearing up a block away spring into action and advance on the crowd opening fire with tear gas, bean bag rounds and other projectiles. People are yelling and running.

Our numbers fall to 200 as we sprint away through Chinatown towards the skyscrapers of Broadway, the main street in downtown Oakland. we pull dumpsters, newspaper boxes, and garbage into the street to prevent the police from catching up and charging.

*End Scene.*





## Act 2, Scene 4: Evidence



**“Reporting live,** NBC Bay Area’s George Kiriyama is in the crowd with them. George tell us a little bit about the anger and what’s happening and what they want.”

“We kind of stopped at the intersection now near Madison and 8th in downtown Oakland. Their goal is to get to BART police headquarters to have their wishes known that they want justice for Oscar Grant’s family. That was a chant they were chanting for about 20 minutes, ‘We are all Oscar Grant!’ over and over again. That says it all right there. I just got out of the car. The crowd right now is surrounding a police vehicle, I can’t see what’s behind the top of the crowd. They are chanting ‘No Justice! No Peace.’ Motorists are stuck at this intersection and can’t get anywhere because the crowd is blocking the way to go forward. They are surrounding a police car. Now they have... it has been set on fire!”

“They’ve set what on fire?”

“They’ve set a dumpster on fire in the middle of this intersection and now they are on top of the police car, they are jumping on the police car. This crowd has gotten rowdy now.”

“George, where is the police officer? WHERE IS THE OFFICER?”

“The officer... I can not see over the top of people’s heads. Now they are throwing stuff, they have just thrown what appears to be a rock at the police vehicle, they are vandalizing; they are damaging the police vehicle.”

“This has obviously taken a very ugly turn at this point, we can see the fire, which is in that dumpster you were talking about, on the police car. Uh... George can you move closer and give us a better perspective? We can see them rocking the police car now.”

“The police car is getting trashed by the protestors. They are throwing stuff. They have broken the windows. They look like they wanna topple this police car. If they do that it may hit some

of the cars in this intersection here. Some of the cars are backing up right now because they are afraid that if this crowd topples over the police car it is going to go on top of their car. This crowd has turned ugly in the last few seconds. They have brought the dumpster to within feet of where the cars are right now. The dumpster is totally on fire right in front of the police car.”

“George do you have any idea where the police officer is, what is the status of the officer?”

“They are just... right... looks like the poli...wow... I GOT HIT, I got hit by a...”

“George you’ve been hit !?”

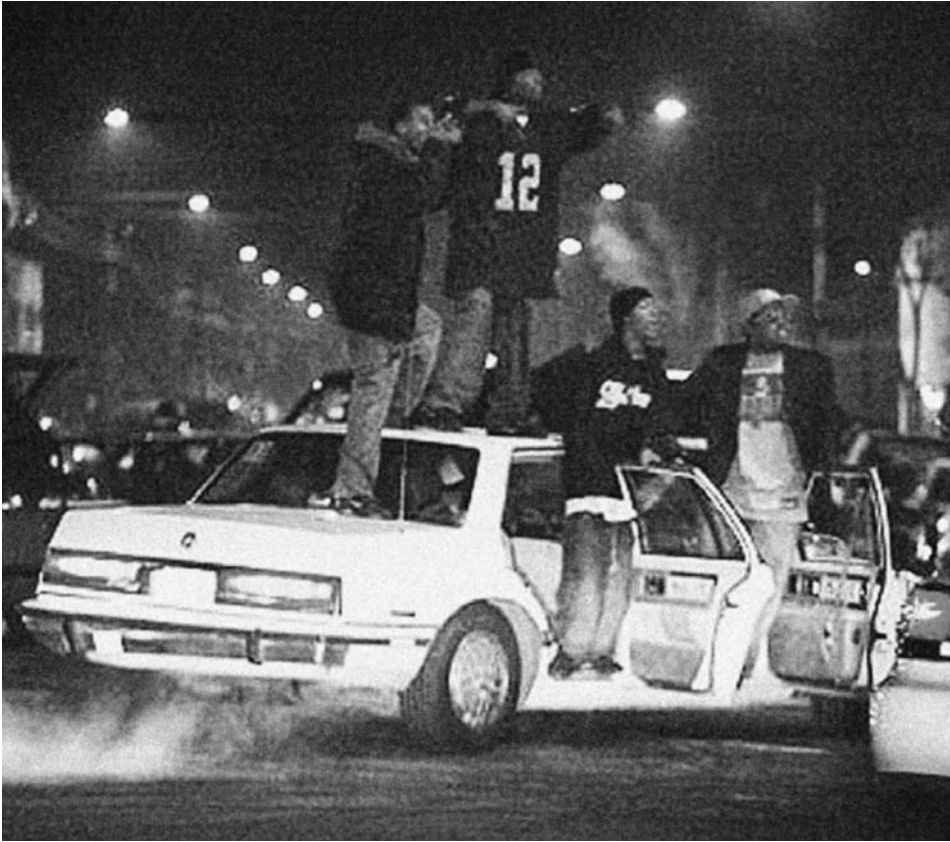
“I got hit by a beanbag in my arm! The police are shooting into the intersection! The police are shooting into the intersection to disperse this crowd! I just got hit in my arm!”

“George you need to move away. You need to back away! Move away George!”

End Scene.



# Sideshow: talk of the town



*As long as I was old enough to go out and mingle, people been sideshowin'. Every weekend there's a sideshow somewhere. Every club, every event, somebody gonna start a sideshow.*

*-Mac Dre, hyphy legend*

hyphy slang includes "go dumb," "thizz," and "get stupid" (drinking or drug references).

*if yo shit was hella clean, gold was involved, beat, all that, candy paint, you didn't really have to swing yo shit...*

*If you didn't have no beat, if a nigga didn't have no clean ass rims, you got to tear yo shit up to get some respect.*

*-Veteran sideshow goer Richie Rich*

The gatherings are considered illegal, and the Oakland police spent several years trying to shut them down. At the peak of sideshow activity in the mid-2000's the police and the state promoted all types of legislation to criminalize spectators at vaguely defined sideshow gatherings.

For the police, this criminalization of "sideshow activity" is justified in order to better target social gatherings that they otherwise would have no chance of stopping. In a city with an average of well over 100 homicides per year for the past six years running,

**sideshow (sīd-shō) n.** A spontaneous gathering on a street or in a parking lot of young people in cars performing intricate car maneuvers, including one called spinning donuts, in which drivers spin their cars in a circle leaving black, donut-shaped tire tracks on the street while spectators cheer them on.

Sideshow culture is related closely to the Hyphy rap movement, which originated in the Bay Area, and is full of unique terminology that is used to describe its activities. "Ghost-riding the whip" brought this movement into the limelight nationally in 2005 to the point that white kids from the suburbs started mimicking sideshow activity in their parents' sedans and SUV's. Other





sideshows are an easy scapegoat for violence that routine policing never diminishes.

*It's mobile. If it's occurring at High and Foothill, and we go there, they simply get in their cars and go to another location where we're not. We can't be everywhere.*



–Oakland Police Lt. Charles Gibson

*The big message we want to get out is Oakland is no longer the destination for nighttime cruisers. We want them to know that if you swing it [do donuts] or booze it, you will lose it.*

–Oakland Police Lt. Dave Kozicki, referring to Oakland's aggressive towing policy.

Participants of sideshows describe a general atmosphere of fun, not fear:

*It's 3:18 [am] but now the sideshows fittin to start up... we got everybody gatherin in one central location. Everybody gettin together, that's what the sideshow is all about.*

–Youtube video sideshow spectator 1

*All he's doin is swingin his car, know what i'm saying... He ain't killin nobody. See him killin somebody? All he doin is swinging. And leaving, see him leavin? He gone.*

–Youtube video sideshow spectator 2

One tactic in the war on sideshows has been to associate sideshow activity with drunk driving, murder, and fatalities, such as the death of U'Kendra Johnson, who died in a car crash near the scene of a sideshow in 2002. An article about a law that was spun into effect to crack down on sideshows following the tragedy highlights this tactic:

*It is against Oakland Police Department policy to "chase" an individual accused of a non-felony crime, as was the case in the U'Kendra Johnson death, when Oakland police officers went after a car which they had observed "doing donuts" in the middle of Foothill Boulevard near Seminary. So to keep from admitting that they broke OPD policy and "chased" a driver for a minor traffic violation, the police officers involved and OPD officials have consistently said that police did not "chase" the driver, but only "pursued" him. The difference in wording meant little to U'Kendra Johnson, who died instantly when the "pursued" or "chased" car ran a stop sign on Seminary Avenue and plowed into the side of the car Johnson was riding in. But the difference in wording meant Oakland police were able to get away with not breaking an OPD policy that directly led to the death of an innocent Oakland citizen...*

*In Oakland, the original "U'Kendra Johnson Memorial Act" was designed to go after participants in Oakland's sideshows, but since "sideshows" is not a term that is defined in state law, this has become a moving target aimed in many creative ways by Oakland police.*

–J Douglas Allen-Taylor, local journalist.

PHOTOS: GHOST RIDE THE WHIP DOCUMENTARY, 2008



# Act 3

## Scene 1

**We tired of calm.** *That's that We Shall Overcome shit over there. We're doing some thing different over here—we're taking action.*

If we must stress anything it is that the rebellion is tender. We make quick friends with one another: we share laughter, water and tips on police maneuvers, saving all rage for the police and the city. We care for one another in ways Oakland never sees on a day-to-day level. We hope we don't sound trite, but a rare public solidarity exists this night between us all.

We are now on Broadway approaching Oakland Police Headquarters when riot police charge the crowd dispersing them through the streets of downtown.

There is dispersal and reconvergence. Groups of friends storm across Broadway, from Chinatown into an area of commercial downtown Oakland. The police are setting up lines now, there is some yelling. A rumor finally passes around that we are all gathering back up at 14th and Broadway.

We reconvene at 14th and Broadway, the main intersection of downtown Oakland. Trash cans are lit on fire and knocked into the streets. There is festivity. Young people and communists take turns on the bullhorn berating the line of riot police. Some people lay down in front of the police symbolically, the same way we all watched Oscar executed. The media takes pictures. We are looking for something to do.

The police have blocked us from heading south on Broadway but have not surrounded us. There are moments where panic spreads and people sprint to get away, but there are others who yell, "Don't run! Stay calm!" The mood is always in between panic and ferocious ecstasy. That liminal mood keeps us there.

The police are charging now, but they don't sprint. After we burn all the trashcans, young folks on skateboards begin smashing windows on 14th. The police come and they stop, hesitant. We are unyielding: glass bottles are thrown, a car is set on fire and flames reach high into the Oakland sky—our very own skyscraper. We roll dumpsters into the cop line. We see groups of friends, old and new, gallop like horses over parked cars, dancing and stomping on hoods and windows.

Just past the shattered windows of a McDonalds, one small crowd of 50 or so turns down Madison as police re-form their line and seal off 14th Street. Folks get on the phone, spreading the word about the cars that went up in flames and the people they saw get snatched up, and then abruptly:

*I gotta go, po-po!*

One of us tugs up his baggy pants, picks up a large palm branch, and hurls it towards the cops. Another chucks a water bottle at the line. We haphazardly occupy the street. Our attention is quickly turned to oncoming traffic, insistent upon getting by. The occupiers first blockade the cars, then a window rolls down.

*"I live right down the street, I gotta get my kids home and to bed..."*

*Ay, let 'em thru! Get out the way!*

*End Scene.*



## Act 3, Scene 2: Evidence

### **A Participant's Account of the 14th Street Rampage:**

*I arrived at 14th and Franklin an hour later, just as police were backing up the crowd that had gathered a block up on Broadway.*

*As I looked around at the diversity of the people who were gathered in the intersection I realized the profound potential of what was beginning to unfold in the streets. An older Black woman was screaming at the police. A group of young Latin@s were standing in front of the police line refusing to be moved off the streets. A white 30-something-year-old was being dragged away behind police lines. These were "everyday" people, indignant, refusing to be moved.*

*Everyone was out together, defying police orders and screaming their disgust at the system. The police first corralled us on three sides. Then they charged in the crowd, grabbing people and making arrests.*

*Some of the moments when solidarity among strangers and defiance to authority were most felt was during unarrests. Throughout the night, unarrests were made unflinchingly and without second thought by all sorts of people who came together in the streets and knew that their common enemy was the police.*

*As the police continued to move their line down the street, a sudden tactical decision spontaneously swept through the crowd. People turned around and began heading the other way down 14th Street, with the police behind them. It was then that the first SUV went up in flames, and windshields of lines of cars began get kicked in.*

*The crowd moved quickly and hit a McDonald's on the way. The riot police, confused by the burning SUV, stayed behind to order people away from the car that was now engulfed in towering flames. Suddenly an armored police truck came tearing wildly down*







*the street toward the destruction at the McDonald's, sending people running in all directions.*

*People began to casually regroup fifteen minutes later. Another SUV had been set on fire, and police were still trying, and failing, to get people off the street.*

*Before a group of us turned and ran down side streets, I was struck by the image of a dozen white police officers tackling a Black man to the ground while behind the orange flames licked the evening sky. For some unknown reason, almost every cop on the streets that night was white, and at one point while they pulled Black youth from the crowd, I heard someone shout, "What? You looking for a race riot now?"*

*I was one of the only white people running down the street with about 50 Black youth. More cars were being destroyed and the helicopter with its intrusive floodlight wasn't anywhere near us. We were alone in the streets and we thought we were in the clear.*

*In the chaos of the group trying to decide where to turn and nearly running into a deadended courtyard, we almost didn't get away. I felt a billy club sting the back of my head and a sharp pain shoot down my spine. All at once I felt blows land all over the right side of*

*my body. Instinctually, I put my arms over my face. My right arm was swollen for days after the riot.*

*Every car on Lakeside Avenue was being smashed. People were walking casually, from car to car, with two-by-fours or poles in their hand, smashing out windows. From above we heard a gunshot from someone on a balcony, most likely watching their car be destroyed.*

*When we saw the armored vehicle appear again, two blocks behind us, we all split up. I headed up towards 14th Street. The adrenaline from the police beating I had received earlier was beginning to wear off and I winced with pain as I walked. I need a cigarette, I thought. Walking to the next corner, I came across two men with masks on, casually standing around smoking. I bummed a cigarette and told them where I had last seen the police. "I don't care about no police," one of them said. "We got this shit tonight."*

*Practically limping from the blows to my right leg, I continued to head up 14th without a plan. Then I ran into the Mayor...*

*End Scene.*





## Act 3, Scene 3:

**Riot cops still stand idly** for the most part, awaiting orders. The armored carrier is still roving around slowly. A crowd has formed in a circle, and it appears they stand around one man in particular. He is a head taller than most people in the crowd, a very light complexioned Black man with white hair and a white beard. More and more people push their way toward him.

Mayor Dellums, Vietnam-era anti-war activist turned mayor, tired, stoic, old. His presence in the street results in the crowd growing again, to upward of 75 people. The number of police also swells. The crowd is now widely varied in age, race, and gender. The mayor stands amid a mounting media blitz, hunched over while someone speaks into his ear. They confer and move together, dragging the crowd along with each slow step. The mayor prepares to give a statement. After calculating his words, he alerts the presses.

Predictably he condemns the destruction; he asserts that this type of violence isn't what we should be teaching our kids. He ignores the fact that it is largely kids who enacted the so-called violence.

*"Earlier today, a representative from my office... blah blah blah BART investigation blah blah blah Martin Luther King, non violence blah blah blah people should be civil..."*

*Why we always gotta advocate peace when they killin us?*

*It's been seven days and no charges were filed. Seven days!*

*What's wrong with that, Mayor? You've been a congressman. You've been a lawmaker before. What's wrong with the law right now? It's not working for the people, man. You can sell that [be civil] stuff to people that really don't know, but the intelligent people here really understand.*

*"Earlier today I did talk with the district attorney's office."*

*We were there, we were with the district attorney too.*

*"My sense of it is, the reason that people are out here, for whatever reason, right or wrong, people have lost confidence because they haven't been communicated with. I said (to the DA) that I believe that we need to communicate and convey what this process is all about... Then I went to the police and I said I want you as the police department to investigate this homicide the same way you would investigate any other homicide. We gotta do what we can do—"*

— Ron Dellums

*Police brutality is a problem all over this country, it's not just here in Oakland!*

*There's an attitude among police! There's an attitude among government as it relates to people of color!*

*We were at the same meeting. The attitude of the DA was horrible! We have it on tape. He put his hands on his hips and he basically said it's his decision, and he wasn't gonna talk to no one*

*We were at the same meeting. The attitude of the DA was horrible! We have it on tape. He put his hands on his hips and he basically said it's his decision, and he wasn't gonna talk to no one*



*I mean people were nearly left in tears... You had Black men at the District Attorney meeting shocked!*

*What was impressive today was that the citizens realized for a change that they have the power to tell the government what to do... I witnessed today the citizens and the community coming together and telling the government that we need to talk to you, that we need answers to these questions.*

The mayor hears these concerns and tries to come up with a response that isn't a regurgitation of soundbites. Meanwhile a riot police snatch squad on the next block chases yet another protester, seemingly at random, and suddenly the crowd is on alert. The police line stands poised.

*Look! LOOK! Mayor, call them off!*

*We need help today! Not tomorrow!*

*My little cousin is looking out his window and watching peoples' head get crushed to the ground!*

*About 15 minutes ago, at the steps of the Oakland library... this big six-foot-five Latino man snatched her by her hair and hit her.*

*It was cop?*

*It was a cop that did it! And her crime was, she told this little kid to run! And when she did that, they grabbed her beautiful ponytail, slung her to the ground, and HIT HER SEVEN TIMES! This is evil! I been to Mississippi. THIS is Mississippi! I saw young people of all races, they were telling the police in a very positive way that they're sick of it, and they're taking their streets back! You got police running around—*

*With shotguns!*

*Twenty deep in the armored vehicle, jumping off, just chasing kids. They [the police] are provoking this! I'm 40 years old, but everybody else out here, these are kids!*

*"I've asked the police to step back, the armored vehicle is gone. Lets remove these symbols of confrontation. This is what I'm asking: Let's disperse."*

*When they leave, we'll leave. That's what it should be about!*

*"I'm asking you to disperse."*

*We're not leaving until we find out who they took. They took three or four people!*

*"Let's demonstrate how big we can be in this moment."*

*Release all the protestors!*





*I got a question! Mr. Dellums. Excuse me.*

*"Please go home."*

*Just ask your question*

*Why do you let your police officers kill Black people?*

Applause and an "amen."

The mayor fails to disperse us and begins to head back towards City Hall. A leisurely procession follows him back down 14th Street alongside a line of cars with smashed windshields. The fires have been vanquished.

A heated discussion is heard nearby about the car that went up in flames.

*You don't know me! This is my community. I agree that we gotta organize and mobilize out here. But it's gotta be directed. Why don't they shut down the BART station one day during rush hour? That'll get the attention of the people in Piedmont coming home from work. But this ain't working!*

*Fuck the car, someone DIED! Do you know the difference between a LIFE and a Lexus? Did you see the person get killed? He was lying down and they shot him in the back! A car is not the same as a human life. I'm sorry you don't understand that. You're lucky it was just a car! ONE CAR!*

The procession stops near a BMW with its windshield kicked in. A familiar chant starts softly, but grows... *no justice, no peace, NO...*

City Hall. It sits back from the intersection of 14th and Broadway, separate from the street by a large square called Frank Ogawa Plaza.

The mayor stands on the steps to address crowd, now numbering over 100, one last time. He repeats his lines on non-violence and homicide investigation and is booed.

As he turns to head inside, we run through Frank Ogawa Plaza.

Two onlookers stay put near the steps, and debrief.

*Yo, dats da mayor?*

*Yup.*

*I never new dat nigga wuz so white!*

We erupt in laughter.

*End Scene.*







# Black Panthers

## On the prowl for pigs

**Oakland** is the birth place of what was the most revolutionary and militant organization in the United States during the second half of the 20th century: The Black Panther Party (BPP). In the two years after its formation the Black Panthers grew to 5,000 active members and eventually 31 chapters across the country. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover labeled them “the biggest threat to internal security in the US.” The Panthers would become one of the primary targets of the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and ultimately disintegrated under covert intelligence attack.

In October of 1966, Oakland City College (now Merritt College) students Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale decided to form a new revolutionary organization after gaining experience in Black Power political organizing in the Revolutionary Action Movement and the North Oakland Neighborhood Anti-Poverty Center. Originally named The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Panthers were primarily concerned with countering the para-military style presence of the Oakland Police Department within Black neighborhoods. Newton and Seale wrote the founding document and manifesto of the BPP, their Ten Point Program.

The original Panthers were well versed in the minutia of their legal rights and made it a point to assert them, most notably in the form of unconcealed shotguns and other firearms while patrolling their neighborhoods and during political rallies. In one of their most notorious actions a delegation of about 30 armed Panthers entered the state capital building in Sacramento on May 2, 1967 in order to demonstrate their opposition to the Mulford Act which made it illegal to carry guns in public, a measure taken to counter the popularity of the Black Panther’s neighborhood patrols.

The militant anti-police stance of the Panthers was at the forefront of their platform and they can be credited for the now ubiquitous labeling of police as pigs. With militant chants and songs such as “There’s a pig upon the hill/If you don’t get ‘im, the Panthers will,” interspersed with their rousing speeches, the Panthers sent a clarion for self-determination that the Oakland Police Department and other pig headquarters in the US did not take lightly.

On April 6, 1968, the OPD attempted to pull over some of the founding members of the BPP while driving in Oakland. Amongst them was Lil’ Bobby Hutton, who joined the BPP at 16, making him the youngest member. A high ranking panther named Eldrige Cleaver and Lil’ Bobby Hutton escaped into a nearby basement while more than 50 pigs rained bullets into the building. After teargas was launched into the house both Cleaver and Hutton came out into the police floodlights. Pigs shot Lil’ Bobby 12 times even though he had taken his shirt off to show that he was unarmed. This execution took place the day before a scheduled rally in honor of



PHOTO: THE LEGACY OF THE PANTHERS 1995



Martin Luther King, Jr., who had also been shot a few days earlier. Regardless the MLK memorial took place at De Fremery Park, on Adeline and 14th Street, today renamed Lil' Bobby Hutton Park.

The BPP emphasized autonomy for their community and implemented services for survival purposes while working towards revolution. Perhaps the most popular of these was their Oakland Free Breakfast Program. According to BPP member David Hillard, "The breakfast program provided a free hot and nutritionally balanced breakfast for any child who attended the program."

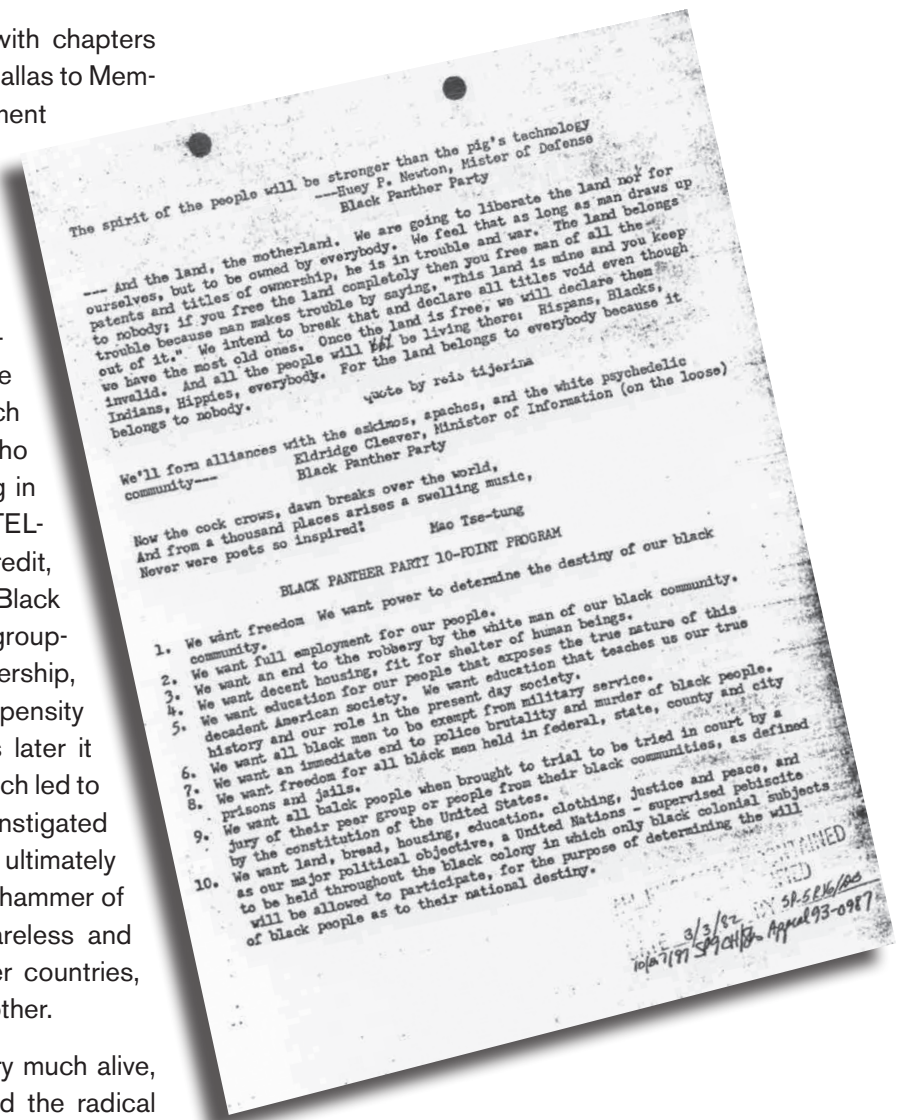
By 1969 there were hundreds of breakfast programs around the country. A top government official was forced to admit, "The Panthers are feeding more kids than we are." They also gave away free food, published a newspaper, and operated clinics where diseases and illnesses that were primarily present in the Black community were emphasized, tested, and treated.

The BPP quickly spread across the US with chapters stretching from Atlanta to Chicago, from Dallas to Memphis; bringing to the Black Power movement a coherent and militant organizational structure. The politics of the BPP matured as the organization grew: initially an explicitly Black nationalist group the Panthers started to move closer to revolutionary socialism with cross-racial alliances. Pig departments responded to the threat of Panthers with deadly force such as the execution of Fred Hampton, 21, who was gunned down while he was sleeping in his Chicago home. The FBI used COINTELPRO to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of Black nationalist hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder." Decades later it was revealed that most of the conflicts which led to the fractionalization of the Panthers was instigated by people working for the FBI. The BPP ultimately disintegrated under the covert yet steady hammer of COINTELPRO as members became careless and paranoid, sought political asylum in other countries, and waged sectarian wars against each other.

Today the legacy of the Panthers is still very much alive, especially among Black communities and the radical

Left in Oakland. There are still many political prisoners including radical Panther journalist on death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal; two of the Angola 3 Prisoners, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace—still in prison after being kept in isolation for 36 years in Louisiana. Most recently, cases have been filed against eight Black community activists, some whom were Panthers, for the shooting of a police officer in San Francisco in 1971.

The system and its symptoms the Panthers fought still persist, even with a Black president in power. Police continue to murder Black and Brown youth in cold blood, serious malnutrition is prevalent in Black communities where there are more liquor stores than vegetable markets, and crack cocaine has been pushed onto youth to effectively dumb any rage that boils. The recent Oakland rebellions show us that the instinct to fight back exemplified by the Panthers can be subdued but can never be killed.



## Act 3, Scene 4:

**After Dellums marches himself back into City Hall**, we pick back up where we left off.

People scream:

*Round Two! Round Two!*

There are 150 of us, new faces, just outside of the downtown square. There's shouting, and the police decide to shoot tear gas. We are running, but without fear, and with wide smiles across our faces. After the few block sprint we looked behind us and realized the pigs didn't follow.

*Shit, they thought we'd scatter like scared rats.*

*You realize, we can do ANYTHING...*

The world, as it is always upside down, is tonight, finally, right side up. Somehow, cars are trampolines and windows are smashed. Someone ghostrides their car, beats pouring out adding rhythm to our step.

There is one dumb-as-fuck white yuppie man who thinks now is a good time to confront us. He tries to use his dog to threaten us. A verbal fight carries out, but we do not smash him. He is advised to go inside; he scurries back indoors. His poor, poor windows.

*Hey! We got to get shit into the street!*

A dumpster is pulled into the street and people gather around it, pulling trash bags apart.

*Who has a light?*

*Here. Anyone have matches?*

*Damn. We need to be better prepared.*

The police roll down tree lined 17th street. It is a war zone. Every storefront and every car are hit, trash cans and dumpsters are on fire, smoking debris litter the street. We scatter and disappear. We do this over and over: evading cops, pulling things into the street, windows broken, jokes cracked. We turn each corner quickly.

*Enough is enough!* is the messaging. But not in the form of signs or anything stated to a reporter. *Enough is enough!* says the dancing on the cop car. *Enough is enough!* says the broken windows up and down 14th and 17th Streets. We outrun the police, we laugh at them, we taunt them. *Enough is enough!*

By this point most of the anarchists and the wider Left have disappeared, either because they are sketched out or because they thought the night had already come to a close. We are running with an entirely new crew of people; it doesn't seem like anyone from the initial rally. Many join in from text messages, or from seeing shit unfold before their eyes.





## Act 3, Scene 5:

***It is some time later*** that 100 of us are rounded up and mass arrested on Broadway under the lights of the Paramount theater and police helicopters. It's the rubber bullet gun that looks like a rifle in the hands of the anxious pig that puts our untouchable mob into a frenzy that makes us vulnerable. Maybe we are too cocky. Maybe the fact that we are mostly young and inexperienced in street tactics is becoming apparent. Whatever the reason, most people panic and the OPD takes its opportunity to close in on us.

A hundred of us enter into the custody of the State. We are partially booked on the street. We wait about two hours. Shivering as one by one we all remember our obligations for the next day.

*Hey officer! Do you think I'll be out by 10 am? I gotta go to work.*

*"I don't have any information for you."*

*What about three? I'm definitely getting fired for this shit...*

*Lemme call my mama. She thinks I'm getting my sister from school tomorrow. No one's going to be there to get her. I need to call my mama! Goddamn it! I don't give a fuck if I'm 26. I gotta call my mama!*

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People give us props, excited about our riot charges, which seem out of place. They'd all seen it go down on the news and say they wished they'd been there too. Congratulations.

There is no security culture. A few people are enjoying their braggadocio—all sorts of who's and what's and where's. We tell each other to keep quiet, talk about other things.

Other people occupy themselves by trying to slip out of the zip-tie cuffs. Freeing a wrist is a small joy.

Later in the holding cells we continue shivering on cement blocks as we try to get some rest and wait for our release. We are all too grumpy and tired to congratulate one another. It isn't until newly arrested people join us and ask us what we are in for do we glimpse how significant the riots are. People give us props, excited about our riot charges, which seem out of place. They'd all seen it go down on the news and say they wished they'd been there too. Congratulations.





# Act 4

## Scene 1:



**The march and rally on January 14th is much larger** than the one on the 7th, more people and more energy, more cameras and more expectation for action. Meserlhe was arrested last night in Nevada and the DA is filing murder charges. The timing with today's mobilization is no coincidence. There is still the lingering memory of the 7th: the freedom of large throngs of people roaming abandoned streets, working in cohesion with a total, terrifying freedom, a line of people standing together against the cops, deflecting anger and testing resistance, fleeting conversations, holding a line, each exploding new car making police push us backward, crews of friends methodically wrecking windows, beginning with a kick, a punch, a key mark.

But that was last week. At the end of the permitted march lined by protest-marshals, these self-appointed guardians of revolution force us to walk from a rally at City Hall, to the courthouse for another rally, back again to City Hall to tell us to go home. They are trying to wear us out. Their rallies say little. Lawsuits, healing spaces for businesses, how charming of a man Oscar was, and of course: "Stay peaceful!" They mean to say, "Stay the same," or "Don't act up," or "Now's not the right time." They are little Napoleons trying to domesticate a new world.

We suppose we are too uppity.

Back at City Hall groups are split on either side of the street. We are divided somewhat racially. Members of the sponsoring organizations try to disperse us:

*"OK everyone, it's time to go home. The rally is now over, so you can go home."*

*"Take your people, and go home. They are not going to arrest you, it's going to be those kids over there, it's going to be youth of color who are arrested when y'all do something STUPID."*

*"Go home, please go home. Go back to Piedmont, Castro Valley, SF, or wherever you came from"*

Lines of "organizers" in electric colored vests link arms, attempting to push people out of the streets and onto the sidewalks, telling us over and over again that the rally has ended. Everyone, the marshals, the would-be rebels, everyone is tense, the unity from the 7th felt tenuous as "politics" emerges on the street.

*"We support the demands of the Grant family. The Grant family has advocated for peace. The Grant family does not want violence. Please go home."*

Some people move onto the sidewalk, others remain in the streets, still others cross back and forth, dodging organization security, but no one seems ready to go home.

*End Scene.*

## Act 4, Scene 2:

*We are too uppity.*

Finally groups settle onto either side of the street as the protest marshals shuffle in between.

A scuffle breaks out on a far corner, a group runs past. The spark is lit, people laugh as they realize everyone has come together to run off a bunch of evangelical Christians that feed off of public demonstrations.

Protest police move to surround us as we shift to the next corner. We are again broken up on various sides of the street. Someone tries to smash a bus stand, and then suddenly what everyone is waiting for, the loud crash of a breaking window.

Wells Fargo's windows go first. A deliberate shift from the small businesses from the night of the 7th, or maybe just the best target available.

Protest marshals and police storm towards the windows, and people run again. A small crowd funnels into the an outdoor concrete mall filled with Jamba Juices and Radio Shacks. There is an eerie feeling of too much power at first: we wait for the other shoe to drop and the police to materialize at the other side of a dead end.

*Get out! Get out! They're gonna box us in here!*

They do not and we are overcome with disbelief and laughter; we continue running.

Large potted plants and small signs are picked up and thrown through windows in the mall, people kick at whatever they can as they run by. The media crews are running with full camera regalia to get in

on the action. There must have been a memo to tell them to wear jogging shoes.

*Cover your face!*

When we find a moment, we remind one another to remain invisible to be seen.

Outside of the mall groups splinter and reform again and again, in smaller numbers than the 7th. Patrons in a downtown restaurant stare, or deliberately avert their eyes as if eye contact would make them the next target.

We run down the streets through a maze of bewildered business patrons, spontaneously reforming lines of riot police, and media. A street full of parked cars has their windows smashed in, kids jump up and down on them. A woman with a gigantic camera jogs to film the wreckage.

*What the fuck are you doing filming this? You should be filming the cops!*

"Hey, we're just trying to make sure no one gets hurt!"

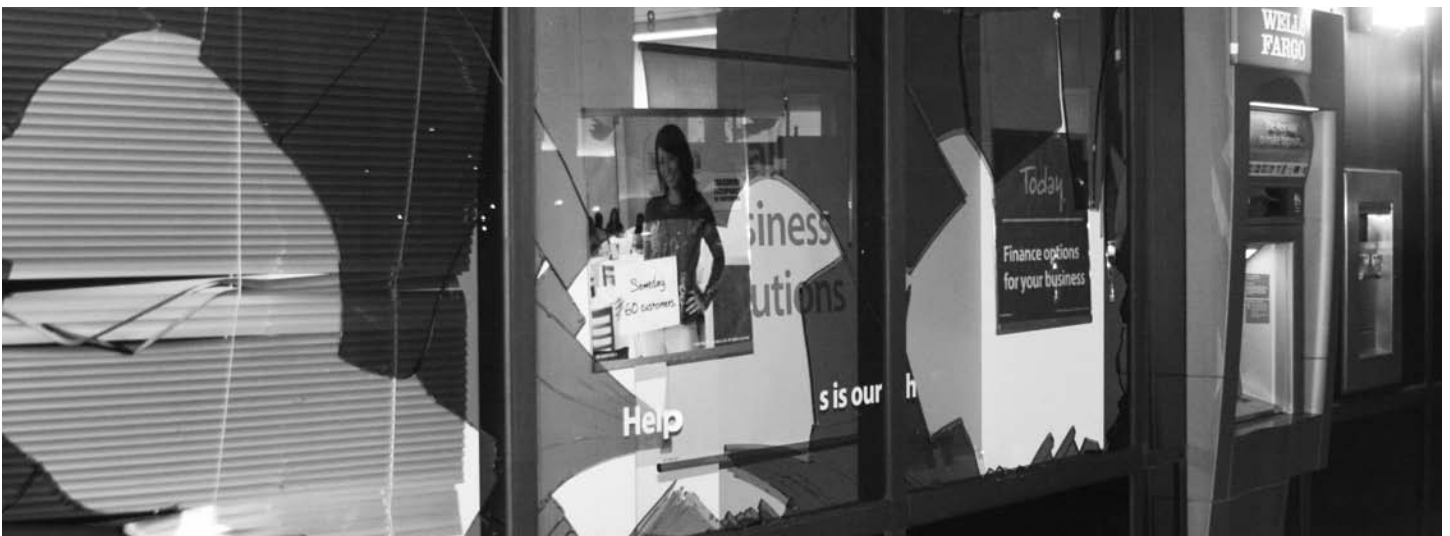
*You're going to GET people hurt with that shit!*

The police announce that downtown Oakland is officially closed to the public. Unmarked cruisers filled with pigs in riot gear roam the streets, their back doors cracked open. One rebel shouts with a huge smile across his face:

*Welcome to downtown Oakland.*

*Welcome.* Welcome to the city that holds contempt for its own youth and is cruelly complacent in our deaths. Welcome to the joy of the street, where each and every time we are able, we stand up with one another.

*End Scene.*



## Intermission: Critique of CAPE Security

At the Coalition Against Police Execution's (CAPE) January 14th rally in response to the execution of Oscar Grant by BART police, several Bay Area based nonprofits and organizations were called on to provide "security" in order to ensure a "nonviolent and peaceful" protest. The struggle that unfolded at the intersection of 14th and Broadway around 7:00 pm was both predictable and shocking. It was not surprising given CAPE has defined the route to "Justice for Oscar Grant" primarily by calling for the city of Oakland to arrest and prosecute Grant's murderer. This notion of justice has the potential to reinforce –not to significantly challenge– the violent ways Oakland already responds to violence, and to strengthen our dependence on a system that promises little more than more policing, an intensification of surveillance, and increased incarceration. However, this particular situation was also startling because of the relationships individual security volunteers have with the protestors they were policing. As CAPE's January 14th program came to an end, a loud voice repeated, "We don't need the police, we can police ourselves," over the sound system. While we agree that we don't need the police, we have to wonder: is "policing ourselves" necessarily what we need to be doing?

Despite conflicting opinions between individual security volunteers, the security team that CAPE assembled used a variety of state- and police-reinforcing strategies and policing tactics. These tactics created a complicated, disheartening, and hurtful environment that sent the message that this team's role was as much to *work with the police* by fighting the protestors, as it was to maintain a nonviolent atmosphere. These tactics are examples of how we, as activists and/or people actively policed and intimidated by the state, can be seduced into using the very tools of political suppression that police and politicians use every day, tools of suppression that keep us from taking over the streets every time the police shoot, beat, or arrest anyone; tools that continue, each day, to deny us our self-determination.

Some of these tactics include:

**Self-appointed authority:** CAPE had people appoint themselves as authorities, empowering themselves to tell other people what to do. By wearing bright orange vests to separate themselves from protestors, it was clear who the security team was supposed to control. To their credit,

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The violence perpetuated by the security team at CAPE's rally is not a consequence of one organization, or a few individuals, but of the ways that many of us, regardless of what uniform we're wearing, help the pigs in blue and riot gear.

CAPE made sure to ask representatives from a spectrum of community-based organizations to ensure that those who attended the rally would recognize at least a couple of those designated to be security. While this could have been a positive attempt to make sure protestors felt surrounded by those they recognized, because of the nature of policing, this tactic created an incredibly uncomfortable and disheartening dynamic where would-be protestors instead took on the role of policing the movement. Becoming "movement cops" by asking friends, allies, and potential collaborators to police each other, the security team created a situation where, in order to protest, activists would have to actively work against their friends, allies, and comrades.

**Border patrol "for our own good":** Around 7:00 pm, the security team created two borderlines between protestors and police when a brief altercation resulted in at least one person getting arrested at 14th and Broadway. This border patrol drew more people to the scene than the arrest did. As protestors understood what was going on and stood their ground, many members of the security team were trying to convince us that they wanted to "ensure our protection" from the police.

**Threat and intimidation:** Security volunteers repeatedly shouted, "*Leave or you will be arrested*" over megaphones at an anti-police rally.

**Shaming people into nonviolence and passivity:** Some security volunteers attempted to use guilt to convince protestors to leave, insisting that this rally was for Oscar Grant. If we cared about the Grant family, they argued, we would go home and stop ruining their protest.



A few of these movement police effectively shamed protestors into following their orders of nonviolence and tolerance, while a large majority of security team members remained absolutely silent and made no noticeable effort to question or intervene in the policing.

### **Using hierarchies to determine who is allowed in**

**the street:** Security volunteers shouted and argued with protestors, starting a slippery competition over who was allowed to claim authority over the entire demonstration. This competition was typically based upon assumptions of who was the most oppressed and who had experienced the most suffering. Two people on the security team fueled a dangerous exchange of sarcasm, anger, and ridicule, saying: “I know it’s easy to hate me because I’m Black, but I love you anyway.” Another security member aggressively got in protestors’ faces, loudly shouting: “How many people did you bail out last week?!” exclaiming unless he knew you and the work you do, you couldn’t be here, positioning himself as the authority over the entire demonstration.

Based on how you looked, security members assumed whether you were or weren’t capable of making good decisions; whether you should stay or whether you needed to go home. Security volunteers tried to justify themselves when making assumptions about protestors’ capability to make informed decisions in the streets against the cops, but these assumptions were clearly based on race, gender, age and dress. The security team did what the police do every day—profiled and treated people like children, assuming we would be up to no good.

### **Denying self-determination and freedom of expres-**

**sion:** On January 14th, many protestors wanted to be in the streets and face the police as they did on Jan. 7th. Playing “movement cop” in a situation where people wanted to stay in the streets and face the cops enabled the security team to literally perform the police’s job. The security team effectively dispersed people who were in rage and wanted to express their anger at the state, denying people self-determination and freedom of expression. These movement cops stripped away the power and momentum that had been established in the January 7th uprising by separating people while police in riot gear formed blockades throughout downtown, preventing those involved from developing the kinds of solidarity, collaboration, and informed decision-making needed to



take an effective stance against the police.

When confronted on their tactics by protestors, some security volunteers explained they wanted to be between the people and the police in case the police decided to rush the crowd. This defense raises some key questions that security team members failed to acknowledge during the span of the night: *If they were on the side of the people, then why did they face the crowd with their backs to the police?* Oscar Grant himself, we need to remember, was shot in the back; the police are no force to turn your back to, literally or figuratively. *Why didn’t the movement cops face the police like the rest of us that night? Who were they really fighting?*

Through these state-based tools of policing, the security team tried to suppress protestors into peaceful nonviolence, which is exactly why police come to any protest. If the security team’s purpose was to prevent property damage and help the police protect and serve private property, it failed as some people still enacted their will later that evening on the storefronts of Wells Fargo, Sprint, and various other multi-national corporations. If the security teams’ intention was to prevent protestors from being arrested, it was also unsuccessful, for at least 20 people were arrested January 14th. Clearly, policing does not work to create real safety.

We need to ask ourselves: How does deploying state-based tools of policing and control against one another help us in any way? How does using these tools make us any safer? The state uses the threat of arrest and imprisonment every

day to make us fear being in the streets and standing up to the state. It is these forms of intimidation and the criminalization of young people of color and communities of color that led to the executions of Oscar Grant, Gary King Jr., Andrew Moppin, Mac “Jody” Woodfox, Lesley Xavier Allen, Vernon Dunbar, Hector Jimenez, Anita Gay, Rosalynne McHenry, Casper Banjo, Jose Luis Buenrostro Gonzalez and many more at the hands of police in Oakland. These tools of intimidation and criminalization that result in police executions are what we need to unite against in the streets.

Further, the tactics used by CAPE’s security have much larger consequences than creating an unfortunate situation for one night. These tactics raise serious questions and show us how necessary dismantling and opposing the state, in all its forms, is in order to end police violence and build healthy, stable communities. Most people don’t want to admit it: there would be no “Oscar Grant Movement” as we know it if it wasn’t for the rebellion that occurred on January 7th. If youth across racial and political lines did not come together to disturb the calming edifice of the Oakland police state, if the dynamics of direct action did not replace the illusion of the paper petition, if the flames of rage did not burn into the streets of downtown, then there would be no Oscar Grant Movement. Despite the call for a dynamic and unified movement across gen-

der, racial, political, and economic lines against police violence, certain members of various community organizations wanted a passive, predictable, and controlled effort in which people would quietly return home after the planned march. This raises an urgent question for us in the Bay Area: *who owns the Oscar Grant Movement?*

Let us remember: the execution of Oscar Grant is not a consequence of one bad cop, rather it is a horrifying symptom of the violent impact policing has on our communities here in Oakland. Similarly, the violence perpetuated by the security team at CAPE’s rally is also not a consequence of one organization, or a few individuals, but of the ways that many of us, regardless of what uniform we’re wearing, help the pigs in blue and riot gear. January 14th is an example of where passivity gets us, and how it tears down a movement. Rather than negotiating ways of working with the police and the city to respond to Oscar’s execution and the events of its aftermath, we need to look towards each other and practice self-determination right now here in Oakland, and collectively create responses to violence that don’t involve the state’s tools of policing, surveillance, and incarceration. We are capable of doing this. The moment we attempt to pacify one another is the moment the state can declare victory. Let us learn from the events of the 14th and instead turn to one another against what is actually our common enemy: the police state.



# Act 5

## Scene 1:

### **January 30th. Bail hearing for Mehserle.**

The court house is grey and sits on a quaint lake. Six blocks from 14th and Broadway, a block or two outside of Chinatown. A sunny Oakland day.

This edge of downtown is usually sleepy, tranquil—office buildings, often empty small businesses, wide streets, and the looming and always quiet downtown library.

But today is different: representatives of the Left are out in force, so are the unaffiliated, and the young. Three weeks after the initial uprising Mehserle faces his first bail hearing. Family members of Oscar Grant and those who can fit fill the courtroom. Everyone else rallies on the street corner with a generator mic and a makeshift stage. There's sloganeering, chanting, and threatening allusions to the price that the city will pay if Mehserle is released. Petitions are signed. *Why Riot?* flyers are handed out.

The rally is interrupted when someone announces:

*They're fucking letting him out! Those motherfuckers! Three million dollars! That's three hundred thousand with bond!*

*If those courts aren't gonna get him, the people out here are gonna get him!*

The crowd's immediate response is to block the entrances of the building but soon folks are yelling and taking the streets in the direction of 14th and Broadway. 150 are now moving towards the police station on the opposite side of downtown. Kids are getting out of school, folks yell at us from bus stops and street corners. One man brandishes a gulf club and says through his smile:

*Tonight shit's gonna get fucked up.*

Legal numbers are scribbled onto flyers and onto each other's arms. Cops are scrambling to put on their helmets and riot gear as they form a quick line in front of their headquarters. There is a momentary standoff—some yelling, mad dog stares. The sun is still shining. There are not many of us but there is still energy.

We decide to head back up Broadway against traffic. The crowd threads through the lines of idling cars and cop cruisers. We move towards a grey SUV that is filled with five cops. Someone darts out of the crowd. A quick warning to friends:

*Alright, watch out everyone!*

The back window of the SUV is smashed and we scatter, cheering. The cop driving immediately opens his door, steps out and throws a handfull of flashbangs and small tear gas grenades over his shoulder in the direction we are running. They bounce off cars and explode at our feet sending an older man flying to the ground. We help him up and get away from the gas.

Armored personnel carriers and police SUVs are deploying riot cops around downtown and they quickly block intersections dividing us up. Eight people, mostly high school students who have joined the crowd, are brutally arrested in a standoff next to the McDonalds.

The police are nervous. We are in broad daylight.

*End Scene.*

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## *Evidence:* **OPD Rough Riders**

**September 2002 - September 2003:** Infamous year of the Oakland "Rough Riders," a gang of police officers who routinely beat down, arrested, and planted drugs on residents of West Oakland. Three of the Riders were acquitted of eight felonies and the remaining 25 felonies were declared mistrials. The fourth alleged leader of the Riders fled the country and remains a fugitive to this day. Pig District Attorney Tom Orloff responded to the verdict: "I'm disappointed, maybe even frustrated, but I accept it. And on a sort of abstract basis, I respect it because I have a tremendous amount of respect for our criminal justice system." Throughout the Townhalls and Town Business meetings during the January rebellions many folks referred to the Oakland Riders. This nasty bit of Oakland history remains a very real, visceral memory for us all.

### **October 1, 2008, Oakland "Rough Riders Part II":**

Although cops everywhere routinely brutalize, falsify evidence, and otherwise exercise their power to protect the wealthy and their property, it's worth noting when the cops become so cocky with their swagger that internal affairs has to notice to save face. In October twelve Oakland Police Officers are charged with falsifying evidence. Case is still ongoing.

**Jan 27, 2009:** Oakland Police Chief resigns due to incompetency.

**Feb 3, 2009:** After complaints of sexual harassment, Oakland Police Deputy Chief is placed on leave.



# Anarchism & the Borderlands Between Everywhere and Nowhere

*intermission*

Here is our attempt at an outline of contemporary anarchists in the US and their practices. We acknowledge our own biased desire to spread specific ideas and tactics in writing this. Our aim is to make clear a lowest common denominator for anarchists in order to contextualize and demystify their role in the January Rebellions.

Anarchism encompasses theories and attitudes that consider the state and its allied forces to be unnecessary, harmful, and/or undesirable, and promotes the elimination of the State, Capitalism and their pervading logics. Anarchists also push towards the unraveling and elimination of class society, white supremacy, patriarchy—indeed all forms of domination and coercion—and have done so for the past 150 years, through various methods.

For many, anarchism is synonymous with the Black Bloc: a group of individuals dressed mostly in black clothing with identifying characteristics concealed in order to prevent individual identification during demonstrations and public actions. This is often perceived as a fashion statement, but the tactic functions as a form of revolutionary solidarity as well as enabling members of the bloc to commit actions outside the law with less risk to themselves and their comrades.

The past decade has seen a reemergence of these tactics (and Anarchism in general) on the global political landscape. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, anarchists helped lead the assault on corporate globalization at now infamous protests such as Seattle 1999 and Genoa 2001. More recently, anarchists formed an impressive national network in advance of the 2008 presidential conventions and mobilized disruptive actions in St. Paul and Denver. Anarchist tactics and ideas also heavily influenced the uprisings in Oaxaca during 2006 and Greece at the end of 2008. These represent the most successful examples of contemporary insurrections.

*“What occurred in the Battle of Seattle...became an example of the challenges that hierarchical organizations face when confronting networked adversaries with faster reaction cycles.”*

—J Sullivan, LA County Sheriff’s Office (from *Gangs, Hoo-*

*ligans, and Anarchists*, 2007).

The swell of activity over the last decade has made anarchists the targets of state repression once again. Smear campaigns—which distinguish “anarchists” as separate from “legitimate protestors” in the description of forces that oppose the State and allies—as well as infiltration, are among the tactics used to marginalize anarchists. Largely due to the perceived threat of anarchist presence, large summits have seen steady increases in funding for security (reaching \$50 million at last year’s RNC).

In early January, when word got out about Oscar Grant’s execution, many anarchists in the Bay were inspired by the popular uprisings and occupations in Greece, which had erupted a month prior and raged on after 15 year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos was shot in cold blood by Greek police.

Immediately following the January 7 rebellion in Oakland, reports began to circulate via the corporate media and professional activists that ‘outside agitators’ were responsible for unleashing the violence. The narrative quickly developed and placed blame on opportunistic white male anarchists from the suburbs looking for their adrenaline fix and who cared little for the people of Oakland. Anyone who actually participated in the rebellions recognizes this as divisive nonsense intended to obscure the antagonisms the rebellions made so clear. Anarchists played an important but relatively small part in the rebellions and they reflected the diverse participants of the movement.

Anarchists in the US have largely occupied an ambiguous place in politics and society. On the one hand they are intrinsically bound to political social movements and on the other, marginalized. While there exist notable examples of popular and general anarchist social movements they are often cast into the anonymity and limbo of political borderlands. This loosely defined collective identity allows for anarchists to be everywhere and nowhere at once. Their work is found in projects ranging from labor-based federations to global networks of collectives, rape-crisis centers to anti-border campaigns, urban hooliganism to community mediation.

# Farewell

## We Leave You in Peace

*Anarchism in the Bay, like many places across the country, fits neatly into a social circuit with many events to attend throughout the month. We are present for a couple hours here and there at public events we organize and at the end of the events people get up and leave. Little carries on. These events often take place in spaces that are not explicitly anarchist but are liberal/progressive: sympathetic bars, bookstores and art-performance spaces. We become part of the entertainment that is the liberal Bay Area. This is not to say that we should stop having events all together, but it is to say clearly that **we own nothing**.*

### I: Origins.

It makes sense to gauge the success of an uprising by using two measuring sticks: the amount of confident, strong, and rebellious relationships and anti-capitalist experiences<sup>1</sup> we build with one another, as well as the duration and scope of public, participatory conflict we are able to build between the “we,” those of us who toil in Oakland, and the “them,” the wealthy, the state, and all of their institutions. That is in its most generalized sense. There are many fronts because there are many wars. Sometimes we don’t say the wealthy, we say whiteness; sometimes we don’t say the state, we say patriarchy. But we fight them all simultaneously as agents or co-conspirators, depending on who we are. We believe in autonomous organizing that creates intersections because our every day condition is much greater than capitalism. These intersections gave us the January Rebellions.

Anarchists have always struggled to build meaningful relationships with one another during a time when public, participatory, and militant actions were few and far between in the Bay Area. Many of us did not know one another except in passing, seeing one another at this event or the other. The Obama frenzy in particular, along with

the massive amount of leftist attention routinely paid to the myriad of California and city propositions left us as it does every election cycle: with low energy and low tolerance for activism. Anarchists in the Bay often end up having strong ties to the activist/non-profit left. We have social circles filled with people that lack a rounded understanding of the crucial place of militancy in the legacy of Bay Area social struggles.

But in the here and now, we can say that the January uprisings gave us a clear point of reference for how (in this case, spontaneous) militancy has the power to push police and politicians back on their heels in ways that wishy-washy liberals and other myopic, unimaginative assimilationists could never dream up. It sounds trite, but when we run the streets, when we win tactical victories, our actions create a contagious fever. We do well when we run the streets. We get to know one another.

### II. Lessons in Retrospect.

#### When the politicians regret

**something**, they call it “Monday Morning Quarterbacking” on the evening news to diminish retrospect. We admire retrospect because it gives us a history in a world without memories—we don’t criticize because we want to be down on ourselves, we say it out of a deep optimism.

The uprisings did not last indefinitely. At least it has yet to feel that way. It’s a continuing story but we feel we must draw some conclusions while we can.

We did not have strong anarchist crews. There is not a culture here of routine street confrontation organized in small crews of people that trust and support one another.<sup>2</sup> Most of the crews that do exist either lacked practical experience or were out of practice. Almost all of us ran in groups of two the night of the 7th. With two people we could accomplish one dumpster in the street, or one trash can, but longer-lasting tactics such as build-

ing effective barricades on the fly to slow the police was impossible without an organized effort. Straight up, we were unprepared. Even though the uprising was unexpected, we should have been more prepared to escalate and sustain the rebellion.

A sustained fight would have brought more and more people into the streets. Shifts of people came and went throughout the night. An invitation was sent out: we are grateful, as much as we despise the atomization of cell phone culture, for text messaging; we are grateful for the 6 o'clock and 10 o'clock news on the night of the 7th showing the joy of people in rebellion. In the end we failed to sustain a street fight, but we still had choices. For example we could have attempted even one well-exercised public occupation in downtown Oakland a day or two after the initial uprising. This would have provided and furthered visible conflict with the state.

### III. Lessons in Boundaries.

**When the liberal and reformist Left intervened** and criticized the rioting, we attempted a minor counter-propaganda campaign to further distance the Left from the riots. When the gulf between the Left and rebellious youth widened in the weeks that followed the uprisings, the Left was forced to check itself and shift. Instead of pandering to the various leftist anti-violence/youth-organizer/white-ally/etcetera forces, sitting through endless meetings, reading through painful emails about leftists feeling bad for being cops at the Jan 14th rally, we should have focused more of our attention on alienating and sidelining sidelining the left and others who remained critical of the property destruction. This isn't a "fuck you" to the Left; we are friends with many leftists<sup>3</sup>, we are friends with those who acted as marshals, we only believe that they individually can and must become more than what they are. *More* in the very basic way that they should not act as the police. *More* in the way that they should never treat young people as though they cannot protect themselves, as though they cannot make their own decisions, live through consequences, ask for support, reflect, and ultimately be the ones who change society in meaningful ways. Through a more focused propaganda campaign, we could have prevented the January 14th rally from having marshals. We should have borrowed the tactic of the parents of the Argentinean

disappeared called Escrache<sup>4</sup>, and publicly shamed the volunteer-marshals. If nothing else, we can make some thing unacceptable, *not stylish* amongst our own.

Ultimately we don't have to change the reformist Left by joining their organizations—especially in a situation of massive, even temporary, upheaval. For the Left we are vampires, or that drunk motherfucker who starts shit and won't leave the party—but as much as we're disliked we are still privy to resources reserved for activists: office meeting rooms, copy machines, and sometimes even funding<sup>5</sup>. Since so much of the liberal left has dogmatic methods and mentalities, and at the same time have so many resources, we would do well to re-appropriate those resources as much as possible.<sup>6</sup>

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Even though the uprising was unexpected, we should have been more prepared to escalate and sustain the rebellion.

Today, there is consensus amongst the Left in the Bay Area to support the riots both because it was hard to ignore that the uprising forced a response from the city and because groups like the innocuously named Oakland 100 Support Committee consistently and publicly declared support for the rioters<sup>7</sup>. We did well but with a little more focus we could have hit harder and helped to maintain the initial momentum. We could have gotten groups to dedicate money for bail so that next time there is less support work to do and we can concentrate on ways to sustain street rebellions.

Finally, although the city's responses were motivated by gutting and de-escalating the anger of the riots, the reformists finally got what they could never achieve through their rallies:<sup>8</sup> the city arrested Mehserle and BART began to have open hearings. This is not what we wanted. This rebellion is inspiring because it is not just about Mehserle, BART, or even Oscar Grant III. It is fundamentally about fighting back against the police force, white supremacy, the dead-end of school and work in a capitalist society—in short, it is about creating humanity in a dehumanizing culture.

### IV. Lessons in Self-Recognition.

*I've known few people who have survived the tests of pain and violence—a rare feat—with their capacity for tenderness intact.*

—Eduardo Galeano, 1978.

**Immediately after the first week of actions**, anarchists largely drew into temporary organizations like



the Oakland 100 Support Committee. We rightly saw that there was little support for the arrested rioters,<sup>9</sup> but we also fell into the often symbolic support roles<sup>10</sup> of fundraising and legal aid because we felt alienated from our primary craving for militancy. Some leftists and their followers consistently posed baiting questions to friends of ours like “Can you ask your anarchist friends to stop putting the kids in danger?” Perhaps we’re talking about fundamentals: “What is safety?” We don’t toe the line that more funding for schooling, more private homes, or a better public transportation system is safety. But we do believe that the state has normalized their consistent violence against us so that any violence we use to target the state appears *dangerous* when in fact our everyday status-quo environments are full of danger already. Even though we are not opposed to violence<sup>11</sup>, ultimately anarchists in the Bay do not carry the burden of violence: we have not executed anyone, we do not run the prisons and detention centers, we do not create contracts for businesses to dump toxins into the air and the bay, we do not run food distribution, we do not run housing; we struggle to deconstruct deeply entrenched racialized and gendered violence, we do not hire and fire, and *no*, we do not militarize downtown Oakland<sup>12</sup>.

**Our struggle has been to stay certain in moments of rebellion without being closed to questions and criticism.** Learning to take responsibility for our actions does not mean not acting. We were most useful when we supported the rioters in the streets, when we helped to create situations that sustained the street fighting. We were most useful when we helped to un-arrest strangers. Our role is to further make visible the tension between the state and humanity’s best dreams and desires—nothing less—and when we forget this we clown ourselves. But simultaneously we will struggle to be tender while remaining aggressive and irrefutable. We will carry this contradiction as far as possible.

#### **V: Crisis and Climax.**

*I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away she doesn't expect to arrive.*

—Jorges Luis Borges, 1925.

**And next time?** Next time will be very soon. And the time after that will be even sooner. The fault lines and

cracks in this world are undeniable even to those at the helm. Let us be ready to create visible occupations, barricade intersections with anything we can move, and carry out strong propaganda campaigns to upset the state, the wealthy, and at times the Left. We recognize that attack alone will never give us heaven but that decentralized and well-organized attacks on the state during moments of uprising can sustain the fever of uprising. Such flames can create a reverberation across the Bay and sometimes, across the world.

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We will struggle to be tender  
while remaining aggressive and  
irrefutable. We will carry this  
contradiction as far as possible.

In between uprisings we must consistently build participatory spaces that allow for groups of people to practice illegality, and plain old human joy, small or large. Whether those spaces are in the public eye of a combative

street party or in the private darkness of mural painting in an abandoned warehouse, *let's do everything to build solid crews*, let's redouble our efforts. We grieve often that at this very moment we may not be able to *Block Everything*<sup>13</sup>, but let us be ready by practicing small tasks with friends: banner drops, organized shoplifting, symbolic violence, creating new aesthetics of rebellion, skillsharing graphic design, drafting open letters of reflection. We have this admittedly naïve but very certain faith: the more our crews are skilled and comfortable with illegality, the more we trust and learn to depend on one another, the more determined we will be in militant actions, the more our efforts will be contagious. If we find ourselves or our friends only motivated within the contexts of activist campaigns then let's have no shame and create or join campaigns—but of course let's remember to not sustain organizations for the sake of organizations. If, on the other hand, we find that activist campaigns drain us of our creativity and capacity for militancy then we should feel no shame or guilt in abandoning them totally. Nothing in this culture holds people together meaningfully, so above all—and this proves year after year to be the most difficult task—let's sustain our loyal, rebellious, and loving friendships<sup>14</sup>, learn to always build new ones, and drop the rest.

*We can't possibly get old... Because people are old only if they love no one but themselves.*

—Nazim Hikmet, 1947.

## **VI: Denouement in the Cities.**

*People destroy commodities to show their human superiority over commodities.*

—Paris, 1968. *Exarchia*, 2008.

It might seem petty in comparison to the enormous task we have ahead of learning how to build honest relationships with one another, but at this moment in history in our cities, destroying business, state, and private property in the wide open cannot be ignored. We are humbled to say that visible, participatory, and victorious street battles seem the best vehicle so far to building strong relationships with one another as human beings. “Antagonism can help tell us about what we are but it can’t tell us what we can *become*,”<sup>15</sup> is almost true: only through knowing what we are can we even begin to name what we must become. Call it what you want: to radicalize, to “empower,” to fuck shit up, to organize, to build Black and Brown unity, to be an “ally,” to build a social movement, to say one big no and many yeses, to build a war with two sides. Finally that convoluted quote makes sense: “your only safety is in danger.” We only build meaningful relationships within this culture through taking risks together. We are learning.

In conversation,

Unfinished Acts

March-June 2009.

### **END NOTES**

- 1 “Anti-capitalist experiences”—yes, it’s vague and clumsy in our mouths but only because we’ve tasted so little of it. When the world feels as though it is becoming ours through the grit and determination of our struggles we are overwhelmed with a tenderness for and happiness with one another. It’s a tenderness that is suffocated in our daily routines of making individual ends meet, running errands, standing in line, watching a movie, playing on the internet, eating a burger, drinking a beer. Happiness is nothing if not shared.
- 2 Where in our country are there routine street confrontations? Of course the events that transpired in Greece during December 2008 have been an enormous inspiration. An explicitly anarchist insurrection in our lifetimes is not some thing to ignore. Our victories and shortcomings here in the Bay will be held in comparison to an insurrection that sometimes feels very close and sometimes feels very far away.
- 3 We might even call ourselves “leftist” when and where the term is meaningful.
- 4 From an impartial journalist: “These events aim to make the neighbors of the Escrache target very aware of what kind of creep they live next to. The goal here is to make it hard for the asshole to move around without people calling him out for the dick he is. These Escraches involves targeted flyerring, noisemaking, graffiti painting, and mass rallies at the fucker’s own home. It’s a public justice thing.”
- 5 Funding that no doubt carries baggage.
- 6 That drunk motherfucker has the most fun at the party anyway.
- 7 The best thing about Obama was that on inauguration weekend many professional activists could not be found. They all flew to DC. January 20th allowed for the Town Hall meeting and radicals to define itself. There was a nice break from the calls for “healing spaces” between

the “community” and the 17th Street businesses that had their windows broken.

- 8 Here we are referencing the case of Gary King Jr. a twenty-year-old shot and killed by Oakland police in 2007. A series of weekly rallies were held in front of Oakland City Hall. An internal investigation by the Oakland Police department cleared the murderer, Sergeant Patrick Gonzalez, of all wrong doing.
- 9 Notably members of Critical Resistance, Revolution Club Berkeley and Prisoners of Conscience Committee (P.O.C.C.), were either vocally or materially supportive.
- 10 We do not mean symbolic in the way that it is meaningless. Only that the primary purpose of fundraising events is often education and not the actual funds-raised. Nonprofit organizations sit on grant money when it could have been used as bail. None of us had the actual legal skills to do court representation and we ended up helping out groups like the NLG.
- 11 We often engage the Left in unending conversations about non-violence and violence and find ourselves defending ridiculous positions like: “property destruction is not violence” because we allow the Left to frame that conversation. It is better if we say, “yes, property destruction is violence, and that’s fine.” It is best if we are able to disengage from that conversation entirely so we can figure out what our relationship to violence is among ourselves and articulate a clearer idea of violence and its different forms. As *Against the Corpse Machine* points out, we become limited to actions up and to including property destruction as “non violent” and thus politically acceptable.
- 12 We are not exaggerating about the state’s monopoly on violence and we hope that you’ve found the statistics throughout this magazine as unbearable as we do. We hope you’ve recognized our entire condition is unbearable.
- 13 To blockade everything is a prescription from *The Coming Insurrection*. On November 11th 2008, French Anti-Terrorism Police arrested around twenty people, mostly in Tarnac, a small village in the Corrèze region of central France. Nine were subsequently accused of “criminal association for the purposes of terrorist activity” in connection with the sabotage of train lines which had caused delays on the French railways, all but one of them have since been released on bail. Very little evidence has been presented against them, but central to the prosecution is their alleged authorship of a book, *The Coming Insurrection*, and their association with what the French government has termed the “ultra-left” or “anarcho-autonomous movement.”
- 14 By friends we certainly include your grandmother, your gay aunts in Korea, your father from Paraguay, your big sister in Georgia. We deeply admire social struggles that have longer traditions than we have, longer histories with wisdom we only hope to achieve. Let’s not cut off these connections, but let us not also fall prey to feeling as though we must have the approval of “elders” before we act—we all live simultaneously. One of our lessons has been to stay very certain but also very open to questions—that is, sometimes we must hit hard, stay confident, and live/thrive through the consequences.
- 15 *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast* published by England’s Turbulence Collective in 2008.

We sat in the frigid holding cell in an OPD station the night of the 7th. Hunger began to set in as we speculated on the charges they would try to put on us. One arrestee spoke up, but didn’t have to say much to keep moral high:

***“In 10 years...nah fuck it, in six months, you ain’t gonna remember sitting in here right now, all you gonna remember is the night the Town stood up.”***





*Banners at Fruitvale Bart Rally, January 7, 2009.*







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