



PLAIN WORDS

ANARCHIST COUNTER-INFORMATION IN BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

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FREE

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PLAIN WORDS



Plain Words is a website and publication that focuses on spreading news and developing analyses of struggles in and around Bloomington, Indiana. As anarchists, we approach these struggles from an anti-state, anti-capitalist perspective. However, we aren't interested in developing a specific party line – even an anarchist one – and instead value the diverse forms resistance can take. Our anarchism is vibrant, undogmatic, and finds common cause with all others who fight for a world without the state, capital, and all structures of domination.

All texts and images in Plain Words are taken from the internet or submitted to us by others. **We are not an organization or specific group**, but simply a vehicle for spreading words and actions of resistance in Bloomington.

As such, **we actively seek collaboration**. If you have news, images, reportbacks of actions and demonstrations, communiques, event information, publications, analyses of local trends and situations, updates on projects and campaigns, or anything else coming from an anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist perspective, please get in touch.

If you have comments on or critiques of anything we've printed that you'd like us to publish, feel free to send them our way.

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BLACK DECEMBER

Memory is a weapon – one we too often neglect to brandish in our battles. It is easy, trapped as we are in the tides of progress, to forget what and who came before us, who burned paths that serve now as trail markers for insurgents. To forget is to be lost in a forest. To forget is to have no history.

The act of remembering is a defiant gesture. Against our lobotomization by technology. Against the sterilization of history by the state's schools. Against the pacification of revolutionary lives by official history and its narratives of progress. Against the amnesia that would erase the examples of those who paid for freedom with their lives. To begin to fight this society, its rotten authority, and its poisonous ideologies, we should first remember.

December hangs heavy upon us, but also lights inextinguishable fires.

We mourn **Alexandros Grigopoulos**, 15 year old anarchist murdered by police in December 2008 in Athens, whose death set off weeks of open war against the Greek state.

We grieve for **Sebastián Oversluis** – “Angry” – irrepressible anarchist killed on December 11, 2013 by a bank's paid dog while attempting to expropriate money in Santiago, Chile.

We seethe with rage over the

December 1986 prison death of **Kuwasi Balagoon** – former Black Panther, soldier in the Black Liberation Army, and New Afrikan anarchist.

We burn the night to call forth the spirit of **William “Avalon” Rodgers**, earth liberationist who committed suicide on the 2005 Winter Solstice while in jail on charges of bringing fire to the pillagers of the wild.

To honor these fighters, we do not just cry. We do not merely fold our hands and lament the brutality of the state against our comrades. We do not flinch in fear over their deaths. We act. We keep alive their struggles by continuing to fight. Whatever our means, whatever our context: through intransigent revolt our comrades' hearts still beat.

For Alexandros & Angry
For Kuwasi & Avalon
For all things wild, peace by piece

As to the seventy-five years i am not really worried, not only because i am in the habit of not completing sentences or waiting on parole or any of that nonsense but also because the state simply isn't going to last seventy-five or even fifty years.

KUWASI BALAGOON,
DECEMBER 9, 1983

To my friends and supporters to help them make sense of all these events that have happened so quickly. Certain human cultures have been waging war against the Earth for millennia. I chose to fight on the side of bears, mountain lions, skunks, bats, saguaros, cliff rose and all things wild. I am just the most recent casualty in that war. But tonight I have made a jail break – I am returning home, to the Earth, to the place of my origins.

WILLIAM “AVALON” RODGERS,
DECEMBER 21, 2005



DEER: 1
COMPUTERS: 0

A disoriented 250-pound deer broke through two glass doors at an east-side computer store, thrashed — bleeding — through the business and flung a police officer over its back with its antlers before being tranquilized.

Indianapolis Metropolitan State Terror Department described the buck as “going berserk” and “terrorizing employees” before the wanna-be cops at Animal Care and Control could subdue it.

“You just don’t think of this type of thing happening in the city,” said Bob Collins, the head capitalist at Key Computer, 9040 E. 30th St. “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Collins said the surprise customer arrived at 10:30 a.m. Friday by breaking through the plate-glass front door that leads to a reception area. Inside the vestibule, the deer rooted about, frantically trying to escape but instead busted through another

glass door leading to the 5,000-square-foot store, where it continued its rampage.

“Maybe he didn’t know there was glass there or saw his reflection and was running toward it,” Collins said.

There were no customers in the store so Collins and his five employees rushed to a separate office, locked the door and called police. Filth arrived within minutes but were unable to corral the animal. A paid thug of the state wrote in his report that human scum Justin Callahan was injured when the deer ran down the hallway and “was able to gore Callahan, stepped on his right foot and, with its 8-point antlers, threw him over its back.”

When two animal control officers arrived later, their tranquilizer darts agitated the deer but didn’t knock it out. The deer eventually sprinted out the front door and ran to a wooded area across the street, where it was captured.

Callahan suffered only “bumps and bruises,” and was not hospitalized, said IMPD Sgt. Kendale Adams.

No employees at Key Computer were injured but broken glass was everywhere, a desktop computer was destroyed and blood was splattered on the walls, equipment and carpet.

“We had a lot of cleaning up to do,” Collins said. “It was very scary but it could have been worse if there were customers.”

Stay wild & free!
Fuck Computers

MIRROR KALEIDOSCOPE DAGGER

WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

“The subject is not whether we accomplish anarchism today, tomorrow, or within ten centuries, but that we walk towards anarchism today, tomorrow, and always.”

Errico Malatesta,
“Towards Anarchism”

What is anarchism? The question itself opens like a budding flower, exposing further questions. Do we speak of anarchism as a political theory, with its corresponding list of important books and figures? Or of anarchism as an approach to life, a way of living one’s days in a way that is liberating? Anarchism can be both of these — and much more — because it is elusive, defiant of orthodoxy and final words. Let us not speak of anarchism in the dead tongues of Great Men, the dusty language of library shelves, or the meaningless prattle of the artistic avant-garde. In defining some basic principles, let us cut new paths away from definitive pronouncements.

Anarchism as mirror

It is impossible to envision a free world when our everyday lives are poisoned by Power: from above (police, prisons, bosses, courts, landlords), from others (the cy-

cles of abuse that plague our relationships, the petty snitch mentality), and from ourselves (our own acceptance of and participation in the above). Anarchism offers us a mirror with which to evaluate ourselves, to recognize faults and, ultimately, to make changes.

Am I capable of living without authority? This question breaks through all hand-wringing about utopia, bringing our ideal world into dialogue with our own behavior. Are we slavish, sycophantic, submissive? Are we exploitative, dishonest, manipulative? Are we dominating, uncaring, sadistic? Are we living our lives, now, in a way that opens doors for experiments in freedom — or has all of this world’s bitterness diminished our capacity for simple human kindness?

The mirror exposes us for what we are, and only through this will we change. Anarchism does not wait for “material conditions” or the “contradictions of capitalism” to transform us — it demands we sow the seeds of a new humanity now.

Anarchism as kaleidoscope

As our daily lives are impoverished by systems of power, so too are our dreams deadened and constrained. Political ideologies — with their dogmas,

“strategic thought,” and “objective conditions” — strangle our unrestrained daydreams of cooperation and free life. The beauty of anarchism is that it has dispensed with ideological certainties, scientific measurements, and grand plans, favoring instead the limitless possibilities that can spring forth from the unknown. Each turn of the kaleidoscope — this way and that — brings new arrangements of light, unique and vibrant colors, evanescent and determined by the movements we, ourselves, make.

Anarchism as dagger

Much has been made of the anarchist as wild-eyed bomb thrower, and much more has been vomited in response by those “anarchists” who fall over each other to distance themselves from any tinge of violence. Whatever one’s personal inclination toward or against violence, the reality of our lives within capitalism and under the state is one of ruthless brutality and exploitation. This will not be done away with by simply wishing it were so, or by loving the hand that beats us. To retaliate against the violence of work and law, property and alienation, is self-defense. More importantly, it is a small assurance that those who wish to violate us will not do so without repercussions. In the face of



the violence of the system, dignity is to be found in the counter-violence of our direct action.

Having traversed some fields and forests with you, I will leave the “justification” for anarchism to others, as so much has already been said about the human history of free cooperation and mutual aid. Neither will I dwell upon the intricacies of an anarchist society (who will take out the trash, etc.), because I find such questions impossible to answer in the midst of this social prison. Besides, there will not be one answer to such questions; systematic thinking is what has ensnared us in the barbed wire for so long. What to do with a world of total freedom will be determined by those who live in that world. The best we can offer are visions, small experiments that summon that world in our immediate lives, and audacious actions to rid ourselves of Power and its footsoldiers.

Anarchism is a path made by walking. It is a tension: against Power, toward unknown freedoms.

Without map, we traverse the wilderness. We do not fear the dark; it hides us from our enemies. We do not fear the wild beasts; they are our companions. We do not fear hunger; the trees are plentiful. We do not fear disease; many among us are healers. We do not fear each other; tenderness abounds. We know not our destination – only that behind us the city without silence consumes the horizon with its cataractous glare. In the darkness we can see the stars. They are so beautiful.

Margot V.

Some tapings on the cell wall

- *Anarchism and Violence: Severino Di Giovanni in Argentina 1923-1931* by Osvaldo Bayer
- *Armed Joy* by Alfredo M. Bonanno
- “Black Anarchism” by Ashanti Alston

- *The Bonnot Gang* by Richard Parry
- *Direct Action* by Ann Hansen
- *Franco’s Prisoner* by Miguel García
- *The Haymarket Tragedy* by Paul Avrich
- *If Beale Street Could Talk* by James Baldwin
- *Into the Forest* by Jean Hegland
- *Letters of Insurgents* by Fredy Perlman
- “Maroon: Kuwasi Balagoon and the Evolution of Revolutionary New Afrikan Anarchism” by Akinyele Umoja
- “Resistance to Civil Government” by Henry David Thoreau
- *Sabaté* by Antonio Téllez
- *Sasha and Emma* by Paul Avrich
- “The Sun Still Rises” by Conspiracy of Cells of Fire
- *We are the Birds of the Coming Storm* by Lola Lafon
- “What is Green Anarchy?”
- *Without a Glimmer of Remorse* by Pino Cacucci
- *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson

SOLIDARITY WITH MICHAEL KIMBLE



Michael Kimble is a gay, black anarchist held captive by the state of Alabama. In 1986, Michael and a friend were attacked by a man spouting racist and homophobic slurs. Refusing to be another victim of white supremacist, heterosexual violence, Michael fought back, killing the man who attacked him. For this, he was given life in prison, a term which he continues to serve to this day.

Throughout the ‘90s, Michael came upon revolutionary literature – initially identifying as a communist. Eventually, he came to anarchism, inspired by individuals like Black Liberation Army fighter and revolutionary anarchist Kuwasi Balagoon. In Michael’s own words, “anarchism is not about building a hierarchical structure for liberation somewhere in the distant future, but about living your life, now, in a fashion that’s liberating.” This politicization was accompanied by active engagement in struggles going on in Alabama prisons. For decades, Michael has participated in collective battles against prison slavery and brutality by guards, as well as individual action in defense of other prisoners and against the prison authorities. As prison revolts in Alabama spread throughout 2016, Michael

was present in C-dorm, the epicenter of incendiary attacks by prisoners against their captors.

Michael remains active in the struggles at Holman prison, always seeking to push away from compromise and reform towards revolt and the destruction of the state in its totality.

Self-defense against bigots requires no justification, and we should stand with those rebelling against the overseers of the modern-day slave plantations called prisons. Uncompromising solidarity is the flame we carry forth until Michael, the prison rebels at Holman, and all captives of the state are free.

If you would like to contact Michael or read more of his writings, visit:

ANARCHYLIVE.NOBLOGS.ORG

NIGHT OWLS DISRUPT YELLOWWOOD STATE FOREST TIMBER SALE

On the morning of Thursday Nov. 9th, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR)’s Division of Forestry sold the timber rights to 299 acres of the Yellowwood State Forest Back Country Areas that are some of the oldest and most diverse in the state. Nearly 2000 trees were sold to Hamilton Logging, who have a long history of shady business practices and timber theft.

Despite over 200 people showing up to protest the sale, months of organizing against the planned logging, and a recent protest encampment being established on private property adjacent to the public land to be logged, the DNR insisted on selling another piece of some of the most wild and beautiful land in the state – for a mere \$108,000.

So during the weekend following the sale, we painted hundreds of additional trees to match those the DNR had marked for removal in two of three tracts on the chopping block. We did this to obscure the trees Hamilton Logging bought, and to force the DNR Division of Forestry to redo the work of marking these tracts, thus delaying when logging can start.

We understand there is a risk that these additional trees could be cut down, but only if the DNR Division of Forestry and Hamilton Logging show unprecedented, intentional negligence, by letting a group of pranksters mark the trees for them. Logging all currently-marked trees would be a violation of the contract between the two parties, which only includes the trees the DNR chose to mark, not the hundreds more we

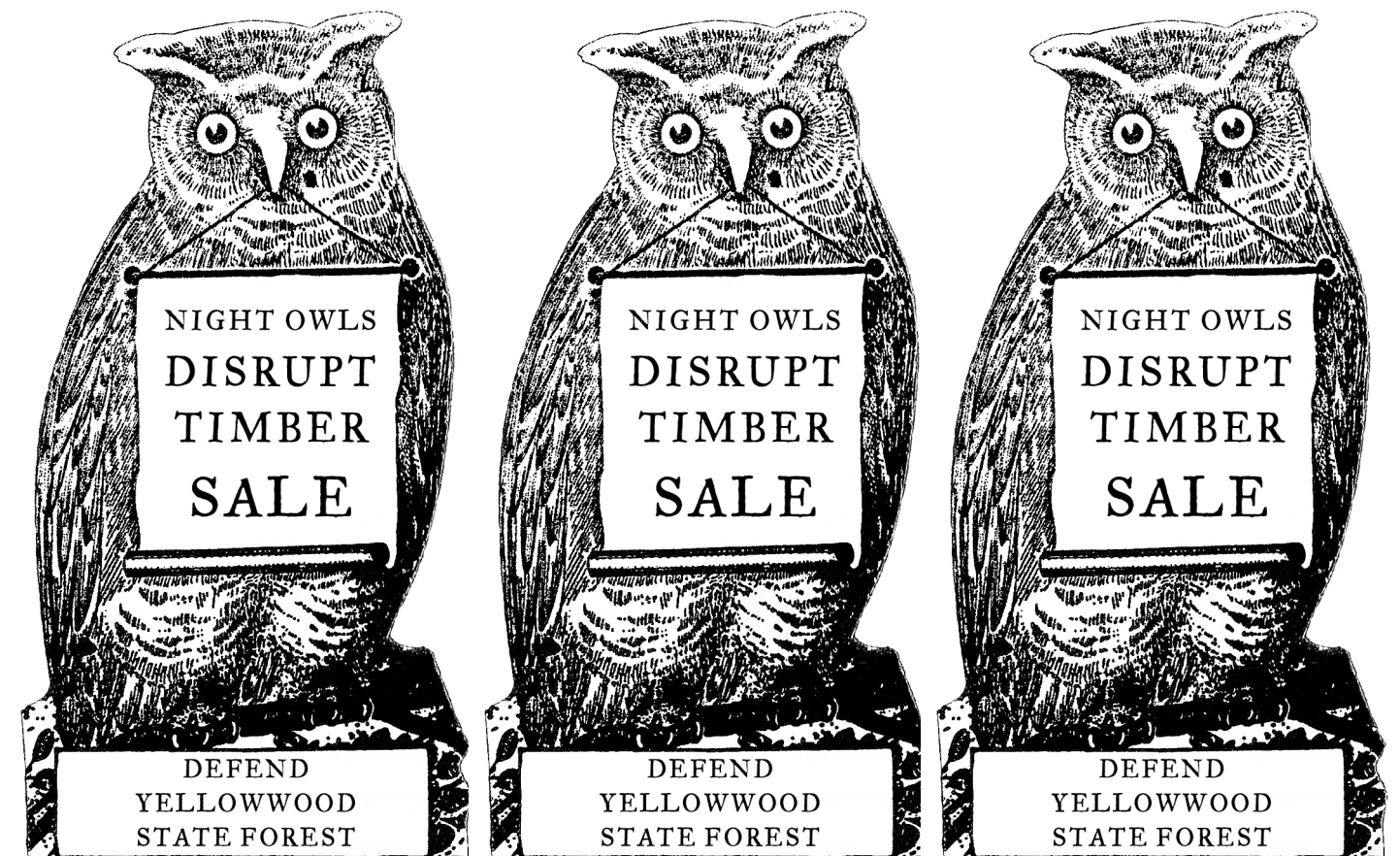
marked with identical paint and markings. We hope that by painting these additional trees we can stop them from taking any of them – or at least slow them down.

To other defenders of Yellowwood: there are many more trees left untouched. All it takes it red or blue marking paint, and some careful navigation. We wish you luck and look forward to all the other creative and inspiring ways you’ll think of to protect the land.

<3 N.O.P.E.

Night Owl Paint and Exteriors

*posted to Earth First! Newswire,
November 13, 2017*



TO A TRODDEN PANSY

REMEMBERING LOUIS LINGG



Louis Lingg was born on September 9, 1864 in Mannheim, Germany. Early in his life, he began working as a carpenter, eventually involving himself in revolutionary struggles. His politicization compelled him to evade military service, so he fled Germany for Switzerland, only to be expelled in 1885. That summer, Lingg immigrated to the United States, settling in Chicago, one of the epicenters of the vibrant German-American anarchist movement.

On May 3, 1886, police attacked a strike at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company plant, killing two workers. The following day, during a rally against this brutal repression, police attacked demonstrators. In the melee that followed, an unidentified person threw a bomb into the crowd of police, killing seven of them and injuring many others. At least four other people were killed in the ensuing firefight between police and demonstrators.

In response, police, with little evidence, began rounding up anarchists who they claimed played a part in the bombing. Eight prominent anarchists – among them organizers, orators, and editors of popular anarchist newspapers – were sought by police: August Spies, Samuel Fielden, Adolph Fischer, Albert Parsons, Michael Schwab,

George Engel, Oscar Neebe, and Louis Lingg. Initially evading capture, Lingg was discovered in hiding on May 14. Not one for willing submission to the state, Lingg fought the two police who tried to arrest him – first with a gun, then with fists.

While Lingg was not present at the Haymarket the day of the bombing, the state's dogs claimed he was involved in making the bomb. Though no evidence links him to the bomb thrower – whose identity remains a mystery to this day – Lingg was a prolific producer of bombs and an intransigent enemy of authority. In a search of Lingg's apartment, investigators discovered two spherical and four pipe bombs.

After a notoriously prejudiced trial, the judge sentenced seven of the Haymarket defendants to death by hanging and Oscar Neebe to 15 years in prison. At his sentencing, Lingg remained defiant, proclaiming "I die happy on the gallows, so confident am I that the hundreds and thousands to whom I have spoken will remember my words. When you shall have hanged us, then they will do the bombthrowing! In this hope do I say to you, I despise you, I despise your order, your laws, your force propped authority. Hang me for it."

On November 10, 1887, the day before their execution date, the Governor of Illinois commuted Samuel Fielden's and Michael Schwab's sentences to life in prison (Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe would all be released six years later after being pardoned by Governor John Altgeld). Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, and Adolph Fischer were murdered by the state on November 11, 1887.

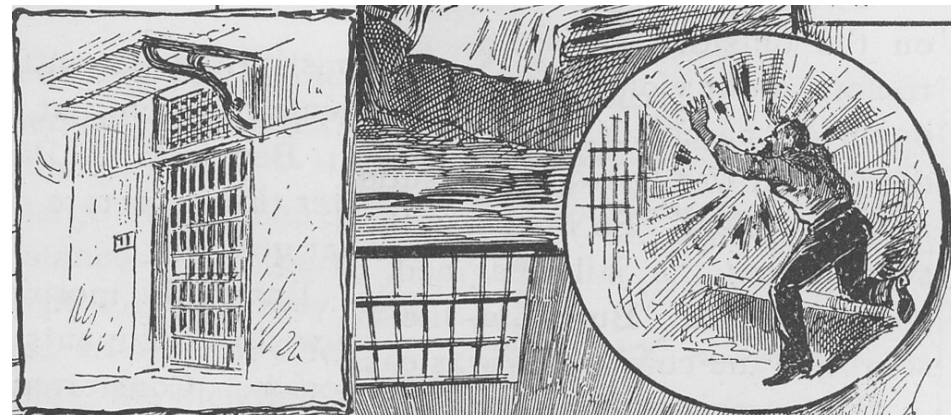
Louis Lingg chose a different response to his impending execution. Days after four bombs were discovered in his cell, Lingg placed a lit blasting cap in his mouth, blowing off his lower jaw. Before the guards could enter his cell, he scrawled "Hoch die anarchie!" ("Hurrah for anarchy!") on the prison cell stones in his own blood. Lingg died six hours later, refusing with his own suicide state authority's control over his life.

For more information on Louis Lingg and the Haymarket, read Paul Avrich's exhaustive and engaging book *The Haymarket Tragedy*.

To honor Louis Lingg's rebellious life, we present an unpublished poem he wrote in 1886, discovered in the Labadie Collection.

TO A TRODDEN PANSY

A broken stem, a pansy blossom crushed
In dirt, yet naught in all of Nature's store
Revels in scorn at what we all deplore
In it. Wert thou where careless footsteps rushed?
'Neath wanton lust wert thy fair petals brushed
E'en when thou smiled thy loveliest, before
Dark destiny had rolled its shadow o'er,
Ere yet thy innocence for cause had blushed?
Canst we read naught not writ in Custom's scroll?
Living and human, cast in a finer mold,
E'en while we mouthing boast a 'deathless soul,'
Yet still more wise than Nature, far more bold—
Regarding what in Nature is no loss
E'en while Hope's brightest mintage we call dross!



SOLIDARITY WITH GRAND JURY RESISTERS

Grand Juries are an investigative tool often used by the state against people engaged in liberatory struggles. Towards the ultimate goal of securing indictments, they compel testimony (i.e. snitching), under threat of imprisonment. It is illegal to refuse to cooperate with a grand jury, and penalties range from empty threats to months or years in prison. In this way grand juries can be massively disruptive to organizing efforts and ongoing struggles even before a single indictment has come down. There is a long history of refusing to testify to grand juries (and an equally long history of those who don't refuse to testify getting, at minimum, expelled from radical communities, projects, and spaces).

Inspiring stories of grand jury resistance in the recent past range from New York City to Salt Lake City, Standing Rock, and the Pacific Northwest; from anarchist to animal liberation and indigenous struggles.

Most recently, two separate grand jury subpoenas have been served to anarchists in North Carolina, Katie Yow and Jayden Savino. The grand jury targeting Katie seems to be part of an investigation of what the government has described as a bombing at the GOP headquarters in Hillsborough, NC last fall. Because of the secret nature of grand juries, it is not yet clear what the investigation of Jayden is related to, but they appear to be different. However, the timing and location suggest a trend of increasing, coordinated state repression.

Both Katie and Jayden have openly and unequivocally refused to testify:

I cannot begin to explain what defending the land and the people I call home means to me, but I want to express that my resistance to this grand jury comes from my fierce love for them. I was raised in movement by bold and resilient elders, inheriting histories of resistance that taught me what it means to fight from where you stand. I know people here will respond to this as we do the many other challenges we face: with care, creativity, joy, humor and resolve. Our struggle is long, and our lives are spent in commitment to it. I have spent over a decade organizing and building family with some of the bravest and kindest people I could imagine knowing. I have known, long before now, the depths of our strength, and it is with honor to that strength that I say that there is nothing on this earth that could compel me to degrade my integrity by testifying in a grand jury.

Katie Yow

The FBI is attempting to make myself and my community feel isolated and fearful. Unfortunately for the FBI, this harassment has done the opposite for myself, my community, and my family. This type of FBI repression is not a new phenomenon, and the state's efforts to target activists and dismantle movements is as American as genocide. While it is unclear what exactly is being investigated, I will continue to embody my sol-

idarity with the resilient herstory of state repression resisters, along with those who will continue to resist after my time. There is no greater betrayal or humiliation to our movement and the Earth than to cooperate with the state.

Jayden Savino

We made this banner and posted this picture to show Jayden and Katie that we care, that we are paying attention to their resistance to the state's attempts to coerce them, and that we will support them if repressive measures are escalated against them.

Whenever repression comes down on people in and around our struggles, it is important to support them for many reasons. Besides the obvious ethical responsibilities of having our comrades' backs, when they see they are supported, it signals to them that they are not facing the repression alone. This decreases the chance of them cooperating with the state, increases their capacity for defiant resistance, and demonstrates to those looking in on our movements that we are strong enough to resist the state's attempts to foil us.

The confidence that people will have your back if the state comes down on you helps people to both take audacious offensive action, and resist grand juries or other forms of repression and coercion.

FUCK YOUR SELFIE

ON THE SPECTACLE OF RESISTANCE FROM BLOOMINGTON TO HAMBURG

The following article was written in the wake of the recent riots in Hamburg against the G20. I'm republishing it with additional commentary because I feel it raises questions that transcend its specific context, questions essential to developing a culture of direct action in Bloomington. To open further discussion, I'll discuss two points: anonymity and spectacularization.

It is dangerous to engage in openly confrontational or (potentially) illegal action with your face visible or only partially covered. The state, and non-state enemies like the Alt Right, can and will use any images obtained from demonstrations to doxx, investigate, or prosecute demonstrators after the fact. Even in the case of seemingly "legal" demonstrations (let's not forget that unpermitted marches in the streets of downtown are not exactly legal), there is a high risk of illegal action in self-defense (ex: defending your comrades against cars that attempt to run down protesters, as happens at virtually every march in town). By refusing to hide our identities, we are stating from the outset that: a) every demonstration we engage in plans to refrain from illegal action of any sort; and b) that we are willing to leave ourselves open to both state repression and doxxing by the Alt Right. Putting aside the purely theoretical/moralistic defenses and critiques of mask-wearing or anonymity, this is simply not a strong strategic position from which to struggle, as it sacrifices both offensive possibilities and



defensive safety. (For those seeking tips on safely protecting your identity at demonstrations or actions, see "How to Mask Up" in *Plain Words* #1 or online.)

The second critique – of turning all action into a spectacle for social media – is equally important. We so often find ourselves at demonstrations surrounded by smartphones, with people taking selfies, sending texts, and livestreaming. Rather than pushing street actions in more creative or interesting directions, many of those who join us in the streets seem more concerned with documenting the *image* of the moment than actively participating in it. This results in a *theater* of resistance, in which the same old symbolic protests that make for good photo ops take priority over actions that may materially challenge or disrupt systems of power. Kept within the realm of social media and its corresponding ideology of pacified *appearance*, these demonstrations lose any possibility of putting us in touch with our collective ability to think, feel, and

act. Trapped by the spectacle as in amber, we *appear* much but *are* little.

I'd like this to be a catalyst for conversation. What role, if any, should social media serve in our projects and initiatives? What role does documentation play in demonstrations? How do we protect ourselves from the surveillance state and Alt Right doxxing? How do we develop forms of communication that do not rely upon Facebook, Google, Instagram, Twitter, or possibly the internet at all? How do we develop a sense of collective responsibility for our safety, and generalize this knowledge so as to avoid the media-constructed division of "masked anarchists" and "good protesters?"

Margot V.

Much remains to be said on this topic, so please feel free to email Plain Words at [plainwordsbloomington\[at\]riseup\[dot\]net](mailto:plainwordsbloomington[at]riseup[dot]net) with your own thoughts.

'About the holidays in Hamburg': selfies, disorders and the tyranny of images

A month ago in Hamburg, Germany, a G20 summit was beginning, and with it mass protests against it, with demands for a more 'human' running of capitalism, up to the total destruc-

tion in a position of passivity where we are set in receiving mode while being flooded with images, archetypes, and stories. TV is both bad in its own right, and in how it stymies revolt and keeps people from taking action against the nightmare world around them.

Isolation & Ideology, Inherent in the Technology

Capitalism breeds isolation. In no other society in history has humanity experienced such separation between themselves and others. This has come to be because divided people are easier to control. Where people regularly encounter others, potential exists for a variety of interactions, behaviors, and relationships to develop over time. In these spaces it becomes possible for people to build trust, share frustrations, and maybe take rebellious action together. Strikes, riots, and the building of subversive bonds need these spaces to unfold. There is a reason why totalitarian societies enact laws forbidding more than a certain number of people from converging in public. TV is liberal democracy's work-around for this problem, in that it draws people towards voluntary isolation.

Capital, which can roughly be defined as "money invested in something to make more money," over time increasingly colonizes the world, transforming it so that investments can be profitable. This process includes the evolution of technologies in directions that support the status quo and the cementing of habits and cultural norms that benefit it. We go home exhausted after work and the most attractive option is to collapse on the couch, a significant other next to us maybe, while amusing spectacles on the screen pass the time until we go to sleep and recharge our bodies enough to trudge back to work. This is not natural. It is the environment that's become dominant over time because it is suitable for capital: this is capitalism.

Sitting back and watching a show is especially seductive because it requires virtually no effort. It is the easiest option to relieve boredom and to distract from anxiety. Contrastingly, socializing with others requires active listening, emotional energy, and a sense of obligation towards performing social niceties. The potential to say the wrong thing, to embarrass oneself, or to be made upset by something someone says always exists. So TV, being much easier, draws us away from the social and in towards sep-

arate private worlds.

Good TV kills creativity, because there is no reason to think or struggle with what to do with your time when screens can connect you to instant entertainment. What to do with one's time is hardly a question people need to grapple with, because TV fills in the empty slots in one's daily routine. There is no urgency to deal with a society that is destroying everything via environmental catastrophe, war, and oppression, because the ability to distract or easily entertain ourselves always exists.

People have rapidly been losing the talent towards communicating with each other face-to-face. This tendency, hundreds of years old, gets worse every generation with the increasing mediation of information technology. It's a common cultural trope to notice that people hardly really communicate with each other, they instead talk at each other. In our era, the lure of mediating technology or voluntary isolation via staying home and watching shows is a result and further cause of this phenomenon. The more awkward we are, the more we want to stay inside, and the more we stay inside, the more awkward we become.

In addition to pulling people towards isolation, television and similar media forms like movies present the world unquestioningly as it is. The portrayals of life mimic the structure of the lives we live now, and therefore reinforce the hegemony of this way of life in our minds. This is not an intentional strategy of elites scheming in a smoky corporate boardroom, rather it is built in to the technology itself.

Daily life, social relationships, value systems, technology, and even the geography of infrastructure are specific to capitalism at this stage of its development. The daily experience of waking up, commuting, working, commuting, watching Netflix, and going to sleep is only one of millions of forms of life that could exist. Capitalism has colonized the world to prevent us from discovering and creating almost any other. But the characters in shows and movies have somewhat similar daily lives as us, and their relationships look like ours. If things deviate, it is in specific genres like fantasy or science fiction where the deviation is part of the appeal. When viewing these spectacles on an ongoing basis, the rhythms and forms of daily life under capitalism are cemented in our minds, so that it doesn't seem like life could be any different.

To be clear, television does not

"defend" this conceptualization of life, in fact specifically does not do this. Rather, it presents images caricaturing our daily lives, our relationships, and the way we conceptualize everything as normal. Like all ideology, it camouflages itself as natural. Any benign intentions for producing subversive content using TV, and visions of TV existing in a post-capitalist world, would unknowingly create these same conditions of isolation and ideology.

Conclusion

I want television, and the world that it mirrors, to be totally razed to the ground. The world I dream of surely has stories, roleplaying, and other similar forms of play, but not in such a mind-numbing form as television.

I don't know what I want readers to take from this essay. I don't know what anybody's life is like but my own, and I'm not interested in telling people what to do with their daily lives or how to engage politically. But I do know that this society mystifies what it's doing to people, and I'm interested in pointing these things out when I see them. Since television sucks roughly five hours of life every day from people in the US on average [1], it seems like an important thing to notice and think about. Especially for those of us that want collective revolt and to develop lives of our own subversive desires.

[1] <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/business/media/nielsen-survey-media-viewing.html>



ficult and naïve attempts at reform can be. *The Sopranos* was a commercial success, *The Wire* not so much outside of liberal and academic circles, but both demonstrated to the television industry that viewers were interested in shows that had effort and care put in to them, and wanted more than mindless entertainment. Hence shows like *True Detective*, which boast numerous literary and philosophical sources and references.

While they are not always as deep as *The Sopranos* or *The Wire*, there has since been a proliferation of “series” which are ongoing stories, like the soap operas of the past, except with more care put into crafting characters and plot, as well as higher budgets in designing sets and hiring actors. Unlike episodic shows where everything more-or-less returns to normal at the end, these shows are similar to novels where each episode is a chapter. Episodes often end in a cliffhanger or with some dramatic moment

taking place, creating buzz and anticipation for the next one. Or they are released a season at a time, so they can be “binge-watched.” Contrasted with a banal-yet-anxious life under techno-consumer capitalism, these shows with ongoing stories give the viewer an escapist fantasy of a life of adventure and intrigue, but from the safety of the bedroom or couch.

Likely resulting from instant viewer feedback in internet forums and social media, market researchers for these media companies have honed in on both what they did poorly in the past and how to now tailor shows to specific demographics. Additionally, cultural critiques produced by academics in the ‘90s detailed ways that shows and movies were racist, homophobic, and sexist. This material, including the tumblr-sphere which criticizes shows along these lines practically in real-time, is all easily accessible for marketers to study in order to market

their products to the millennial generation that seems to be interested in social justice. This has led to certain shows now having a higher percentage of actors of color and characters that are queer, which can widen their appeal, especially when targeting younger audiences.

For those interested in liberation from oppression, exploitation, and other systems of control, good TV is bad news. Television is a technology of social control, and the world would be a better place if it was destroyed. But it seems like the opposite is happening, and people are increasingly drawn to spending significant amounts of time watching these shows. Whether good TV or cheesy ‘90s sitcom, these technologies isolate people from each other and thus further the loneliness and anxiety of capitalism. They frame this society and all its ugly mechanisms and social relations as natural. And they kill the imagination by putting us

tion of the system in order to build a more ethical world where there would be a place and respect for all, where there would be no repression or hierarchy, where the earth would be protected and the insatiable thirst for empty benefits on which this society is based would disappear from our values and life goals.

You can read about what happened during the 3 days of the summit and the demonstrations in many websites, including this blog [actforfree.nostate.net], if you look in the corresponding posts (starting from the month of July, for those who are curious); and as I couldn’t go to Hamburg (and I’m sorry about that) for reasons that are irrelevant here, I won’t comment on what happened or go into detail. The comrades who were there have talked about that and continue to do so.

I’d like to talk about a particular aspect of those demonstrations, which I think occurs too often in this kind of context, and which seems a serious problem, at least to me, and one that annoys me. It’s what is known as the ‘tyranny of the image’.

In today’s society the spectacle covers everything. Our lives are being transformed into a compulsive traffic of images, stereotypes and identity markets that nourish profiles, a projection of ourselves, often altered, fictitious, but with which we somehow make up for our deficiencies and the aspects of our real lives that don’t satisfy us (instead of trying to change them, we cover them with images), just as happens in most

social networks. It doesn’t matter who you are, but who you seem to be. People must see a photo on the screen that confirms everything, if it doesn’t appear on TV or in the internet it doesn’t exist. Just as the modern liberal nouveau riches take photos of their luxuries and share them on the internet so that the world can see their exclusive lifestyles and admire their ‘success’, in the anti-capitalistic, antiauthoritarian, revolutionary milieus, the same dictatorship of appearance is reproduced. In the midst of disorders many people want their own souvenir, their own photographs, like those who pay a few extra euros to get a picture of their adventure in a leisure park while whooshing on a roller coaster. Images circulate frantically on social networks, blogs, mass platforms of videos and photos, for the joy of the police and the media; and if they didn’t arrest anyone it will be sufficient to search the internet to find succulent photographic material for their files, and if unfortunately they later arrest one of these people, it will be enough to check their cell phone (which they usually do when they lock you up in a cell and your telephone and documents remain in their hands) to find evidence of so and so’s presence at those demonstrations, which only they and their comrades should have known, evidence that can be used during the trial. On the other hand, the mainstream media also get busy, with activists who serve them up with perfect photographs for sensational items of news on a silver plate.

I don’t understand either the ne-

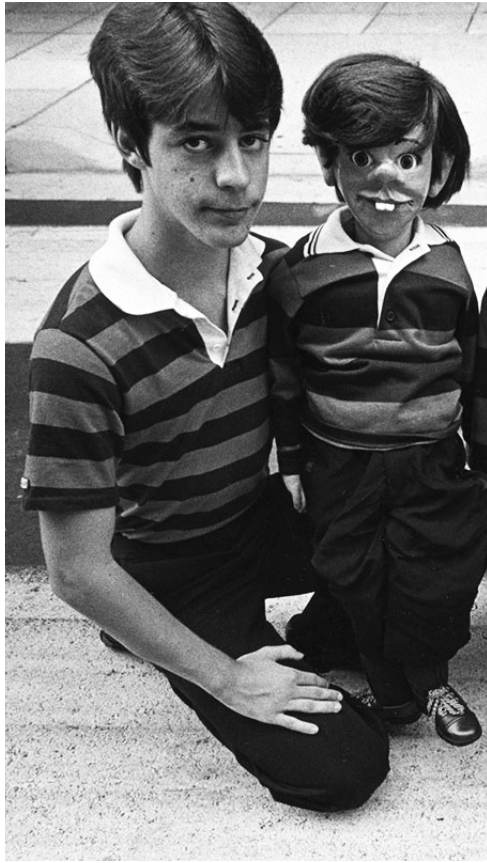
cessity or purpose of photographs like these.

What do these people want? A beautiful memento to show to their grandchildren? I don’t want to deny the importance of documenting this kind of event also with photographic and audio-visual material; because often, if it wasn’t for people passionate about videos, who gather and record all this, or as part of press collectives close to social movements or alone, we wouldn’t know many of the things that happen. But it is important to maintain a culture of safety and above all to bear in mind that when you photograph yourself you are not only exposing yourself only but also the people around you or other comrades who at that moment are taking part in the events, and maybe don’t want to be part of your irresponsible fetishism.

It’s important to reflect on this, and not fall into an ambiguous or passive position of the sort ‘everyone does what they like’. Some comrades take their anonymity very seriously, as they are persecuted and controlled, while others play at revolution between flashes and ‘selfies’. Everything is heroism and publicity, aesthetics, top-models of the revolt, until the police come to your door and then with all your might you wish you had never taken that damned photo...

For a culture of safety and responsibility. Against the fetishism of images and hoodies.





DESTITUTION & TROLLING

In the grip of modern capitalism we face destitutions both material and social. Precarious employment, debt, exorbitant rent, and a diminishing welfare safety net are complimented by ubiquitous information technology that hinders the development of real life social skills, perpetuating neurotic anxiety and self-loathing which follows perceived failures to meet expected social roles. Both destitutions can be seen as “falling through the cracks,” where people fail to meet society’s norms in achieving a middle-class income, and/or fostering relations of affection, friendship, and love. One can imagine that these destitute people see themselves as losers, and hence gravitate towards opportunities to be in power relations where they are the ones on top, or at least higher than they are now.

In revolutionary times, the collective power inherent in massive and combative struggles may be seductive enough to draw these people in to the anti-politics of liberation. But with no horizon of revolution in sight and the limits of current collective struggles, the destitute will take what they can get. The easiest and most accessible opportunity for power, especially seductive for men with lighter color skin, are the sectors of the internet where far-right trolls specialize in tormenting marginalized

people through social media. As the popular adage about bullying goes, the weak become the strong by preying on others that are weak. At the moment, and conceivably in the future, the formula is:

Privilege – Power + Humiliation
+ the Internet = Far-Right Trolling

In the past, those who capitalist society shaped to be losers and nerds would rectify their powerlessness by becoming an authority on a commodity or spectacle of their choice. Developing encyclopedic knowledge of video games, music genres, and Star Trek episodes while being condescending to those not in the know replicates a feeling of authority, and instills a fleeting sense of confidence about something, regardless how pathetic. This way of asserting power over others is passive and somewhat harmless, adopted only because it’s within reach.

Contrast this with the typical images of racial hatred in the post-war period: southern brutes drunkenly assaulting civil rights demonstrators, or a horde of working-class whites in the urban north converging on a house newly moved into by a black family to harass and attack them. The aforementioned losers, having too little confidence in themselves and their strength,



would likely not be participants in such blatantly confrontational acts.

But different opportunities arise with the internet’s anonymity and everyone being “within reach” due to social networks. Every powerless person who occupies a position of even marginal privilege now has the easy ability to go to 4chan, participate in a coordinated harassment, perhaps of a black celebrity or any visible Trans people, and feel the deranged psychological benefit of asserting power over another. Similarly, men who have been trained to see women as objects, intimidating ones they are incapable of talking to without being creepy, can use social media to lash out in their impotence by tormenting, doxing, and threatening them.

The internet has created an easy pathway for the powerless-yet-privileged to become monsters in a vain reach for power. Who would have thought that hell would be participatory and decentralized?



“GOOD TV”

AS A ROADBLOCK TO BECOMING UNGOVERNABLE
(OR ANYTHING ELSE REALLY)

Become ungovernable” is a slogan anarchists like to use these days. It sounds cool and fits the anarchist aesthetic of revolt and spectacular conflict. It doesn’t immediately mean much, but that’s the beauty of it, the meaning shifts with each person and the specificities of their lives. With no revolution and lots of environmental catastrophe, state violence, and “active shooter situations” on the horizon, rather than despairing at our no-future future, it instead contains a path forward: to refuse submission to law, duty, and passivity in daily life.

But “become” ungovernable? As in, transform your life into one of ungovernability? This is where things get tricky. Capitalism and the technology developed through it have created conditions that hinder the creation of long-term life habits outside those of passivity and consumption. The toys of information technology are small but contain terabytes of distraction, ever pulling their users’ attention towards them, like a tiny black hole’s massive

gravitational well. Bursts of energy and spectacular moments responding to a crisis generated by capitalism may draw people away from the daily grind for days, weeks, or even months, but the system has tools to pull people back in. That’s a lot to dissect here, but this essay is going to stick to one element of it: good TV.

We are living in the era of “good TV” or the “golden era of TV,” a relatively new phenomenon where TV series are being praised as intelligent, gripping, and even works of art. Until the last decade, “the idiot box” has had somewhat of a bad reputation. While most of the masses were sucked in by it as they are today, it seemed like people back then knew even as they watched it that it was mindless entertainment, and rolled their eyes at all the laugh tracks, game shows, and sentimentality.

Since TV was a vehicle for commercials, shows were crafted to appeal to the lowest common denominator, and therefore contained the least controversial and most normative portrayals of charac-

ters and life. They featured almost exclusively attractive white actors playing static and one-dimensional cliché characters. With “good TV,” shows have compelling ongoing stories, comedies have become sharper, and characters have a wider spectrum of emotions and are no longer just straight white people. Additionally, niche audiences are targeted with subcultural anecdotes, political jokes, aesthetic, and tone which prompt viewers to more easily identify with specific shows. In other words: TV’s reputation has gone up, and it is not seen as something to avoid or try to disconnect from.

The “good” quality of programming rose out of the success of HBO’s *The Sopranos* and *The Wire* in the early 2000s. The dark, moody *Sopranos* used subtle literary techniques and complex symbolism while telling stories about organized crime as more broad metaphors and critiques of contemporary American life. *The Wire*, similarly pessimistic, detailed the intrigue and contradictions revolving around the Drug War in urban America to point out how dif-