

Love, Rage & (Dis)Connection

This is a small collection of writings largely from loveandrage.org, Federation Bulletin, Wind Chill Factor (WCF) and (Dis)Connection. They all deal with North American Anarchism in the 1990s.

Love and Rage was originally a continent wide, North American, Anarchist Newspaper. It became a loose Network, then a more cohesive political organization. The newspaper started in 1990, and the Love and Rage Network became the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation in 1993. One of the groups who helped start Love and Rage, then split off in 1993 was the Baklava Autonomist Collective.

That year Baklava started the Autonomous Zone Infoshop (A-Zone), which in turn helped start (Dis)Connection as a radical networking journal for Infoshops and other collectives.

Baklava's 'zine was WCF, and even though I was a member of the A-Zone Collective years later, I didn't know about WCF until we were about to lose our last space in December 2003 and we were packing up our 'zine library. Similarly, I didn't know about (Dis)Connection until early 2010, when I started doing research on the A-Zone to share with others involved with the Infoshop going in Chicago at the time, La Biblioteca Popular del Barrio Pilsen.

Federation Bulletin was an internal document for the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation.

Intercollectivism: A Critical View of NAC was printed in (Dis)Connection #4. All of (Dis)Connection #4 and #5 are posted on scribd, and you can easily find links to them from

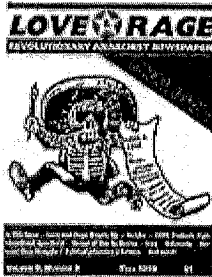
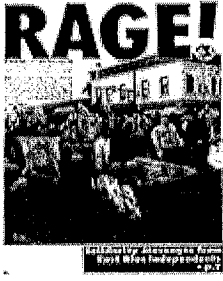
<http://apoclove.wordpress.com>

With the recent formations of the Black Rose Anarchist Federation and the Torch Anti-Fascist Network, I think a systematic study of 1980s and '90s North American Anarchism is critical to advancing the struggles we are faced with now.

d i s c o n n e c t i o n



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Letter: Fighting White Supremacy

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Comrades,

I was very excited to see a copy of Love and Rage. This is the best revolutionary anarchist publication I have ever seen, including Canada's Open Road. What I especially like is that contrary to most anarchists of the 1970s and 80's, when my revolutionary pamphlets "Anarchism and the Black Revolution" was published, your group seems to understand the dynamics of white supremacy and why it must be fought. You can't imagine the kind of "cop-out" racist capitulationism that the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) and most anarchist groups were guilty of then.

I was one of a small number of anarchists or libertarian socialists of African descent. Since I alone was not numerically powerful enough to influence events I wrote my revolutionary pamphlets on building an international social revolutionary movement, the importance of an anarchist anti-racist movement, a Black revolutionary libertarian movement, an anarchist prisoner support group (A.B.C.), and other subjects. My model for the pamphlets was "Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets," edited by Roger Baldwin. It shocks me to find that my pamphlets have been reprinted for years after I wrote them. I am now considering rewriting and updating the pamphlets, and issuing them in book form. If I can find a publisher I will push right ahead.

This is an historical period that anarchists must develop a coherent philosophy to challenge the descent of Marxism-Leninism as a revolutionary ideology, and to create a world socio-political movement to challenge existing institutions. Clearly, we must create counter-institutions to propagate the new doctrine, do mass political re-education, and challenge the capitalist authorities. This is real, not just my ideas or desires. New revolutionary formations must have the germ of the new society within the belly of the beast.

So what is this debate about "confrontationist" versus "gradualist" struggle really about in my estimation? It is about building larger, more representative "mass" formations on the one hand, and just mindless smallgroup protest engaged in by most anarchists. We should not become static "educational" societies, nor should we go over to street fighting/commando tactics as our primary approach. I am opposed to the sort of petite-bourgeois individualist anarchism that the north american movement is noted for; clearly we must be grounded in the working class. There is too much bourgeois scholasticism in the anarchist movement. I have always had ties with the Workers Solidarity Alliance (W.S.A.) and the International Workers Association (I.W.A.), along with other syndicalists, council communists, and libertarian socialists.

So, what have I been doing since my release from prison in 1983? I have been a full-time community organizer almost since my first day on the streets. I have been the president of a small activist coalition which has been fighting racism and police brutality in Chatanooga, Tennessee for years. Our struggle has driven the Klan out of the city, forced a murderous police commissioner to resign in disgrace, and to topple the local racist government. Our tactics have included civil rights lawsuits, mass demonstrations, armed self-defense, rallies, conferences, door-to-door organizing, and any other effective tactics. We have turned this small conservative town upside-down! We've got the cops and the Klan on the run!

Finally, I am writing my autobiography, and only need a publisher. If you know anybody who can do the job, let me know.

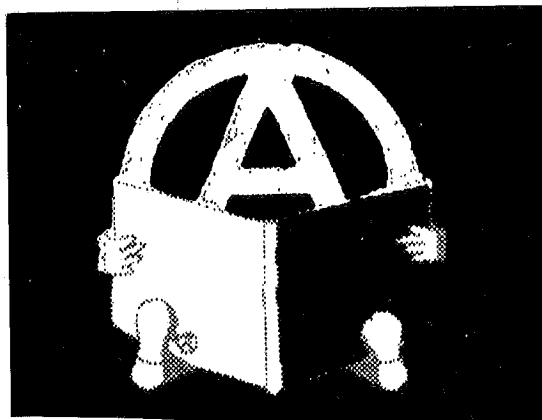
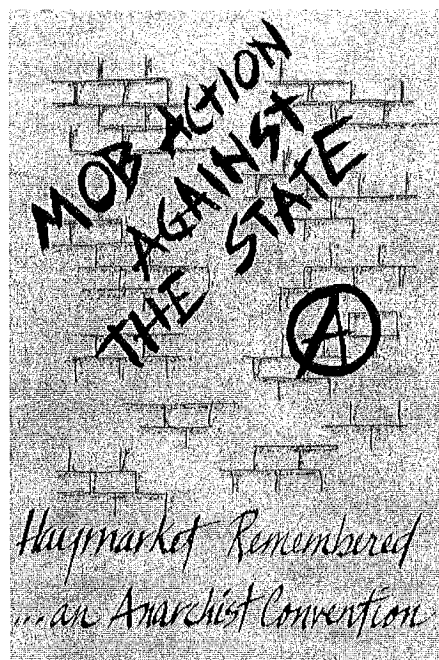
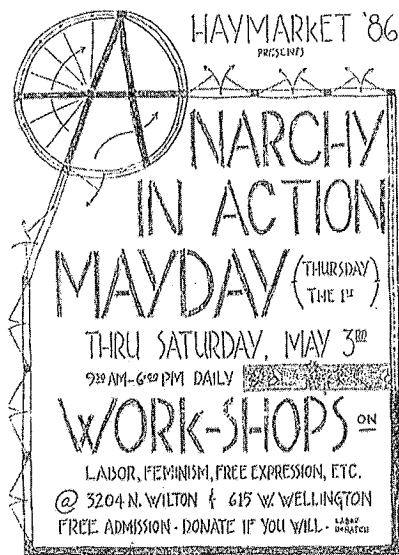
Once again, I love the paper. Please send some back issues.

In love and struggle

Lorenzo Komboa Erwin

Add new comment

1993 April anti-racism black liberation Letters to the Editor Lorenzo Komboa Erwin



Available for free at:

anarchisthistory.noblogs.org

Mob Action Against The State is a collection of first hand accounts of the 1986 Chicago

Anarchist gathering. One of a number of well attended, continent wide Anarchist conventions in North America that I consider to have been critical in the eventual formation of Love and Rage. Sometimes I found peoples politics appalling, other times I saw how the political movements I've been participating in since the early 2000s clearly came out of this era. Yet other times I felt sorrow at how many of the same struggles we face, & how much worse some things have gotten.

Proposal For a New Love and Rage Initiative on Race and Color

By Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

Like most of the Anarchist scene in the U.S., Love & Rage is an all-white movement, with no real conception on how to bring people of color into the movement. Although I do not think there is any deliberate policy of exclusion or hostile atmosphere at work to prevent Africans or other peoples of color generally from becoming part of the federation, it is clear that "whiteness" (i.e., white male dominance) plays its part. I think that Love and Rage has resigned itself to being a white movement, rather than take the necessary steps to build a more diverse movement.

What steps am I talking about? Well, the common-sense recognition first that an autonomous "Black" tendency will not burst forth spontaneously onto the scene any time soon, but rather that the pre-conditions for it will have to be organized within a federation like Love and Rage. Those people of color who are not already Anarchists will only learn of the social revolution within Anarchist movements in the initial phase, which means that they have to be recruited, just like anyone else. But those Anarchists of color already around need to be brought together into one place. I am trying to organize just such an anti-authoritarian tendency, with anarchists of color that I have met on the speaking tour and others interested in Anarchist ideas. They all want to participate, but they do not want to just be tokens within a larger white movement. They should not have to be token participants, if this federation lives by its rhetoric, but if I thought that it would not do so, I would not be making this proposal. This federation is best disposed, ideologically and organizationally, to be the most effective program since the early Anarchist class struggle tendencies of the last century and the first two decades of this century, like the International

Working People's Association, the IWW and others.

I am not implying that white radicals have to "teach" Anarchism to the African or other peoples of color, but I am saying that they must at least be exposed to the truth — and on a consistent basis! Because Love and Rage does not even put its newspapers and other literature in bookstores, schools and other institutions in the people of color communities, it cannot possibly win people over in those communities. What else should anyone expect? But then it magnifies this error by tailing after certain Black nationalists who have nothing in common with our tendency, or may in fact be hostile, rather than contacting ordinary Black people in the community and winning them over. This "hero-worship" of "leading Black nationalists" must stop; it is nothing but white fawning over certain revolutionists who are lions of the lecture circuit, but are not themselves organizing in the African community. This type of thing disturbs me, and it is why I have decided to take a hard-line with this organization and urge a continuation of its needed reconstruction beyond just the simple stage of creating the federation.

It has only been since the tour that I felt that Love and Rage had any serious potential for revolutionary activity, as opposed to middle-class reformism, and that I could unite with it. I have now considered that this tendency *could be reformed* even though there is a serious set of internal problems within the group. The question of if there should be a federated organization with a membership, and what it should look like never really entered my mind as a serious priority. My views in favor of federations are known far and wide; I belonged to the now-defunct Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, which existed during the late 1970's and early 1980's. The group

died because of internal contradictions, especially its failure to carry out its social tasks, and its aversion to engaging in anti-racist struggles. It opted for the "white rights" politics so prevalent then, such as anti-nuke, "utopian communes," and other nonsense favored by the white middle class. I fought a long, lonely battle to try to get the group on course, but lost, and the movement lost when SRAF died. I hope Love and Rage does not make the same errors and suffer the same fate. But it must get itself together now!

That is why unless this federation gets its shit together, and continues to act as a "support group" or "cheerleaders" for Black or other PoC struggles, instead of working toward the creation of a tendency within its own ranks, I will no longer associate with the federation. I will not join Love and Rage and then have to engage in a struggle where I have to go through this sort of white racist bullshit again like I did in the 1970s in SRAF or the IWW. Working class activists and persons of color have to be intrinsic parts of any federation. We must recruit people of color and real live workers. White middle-class men cannot speak for People of color men and women, it's as simple as that. Also this lack of diversity in its ranks dictates how serious Love and Rage is as a revolutionary political movement and even how it is structured. We are not going to participate in any movement that we do not deem in our interests. So this paper is a test of the true spirit and objectives of this federation.

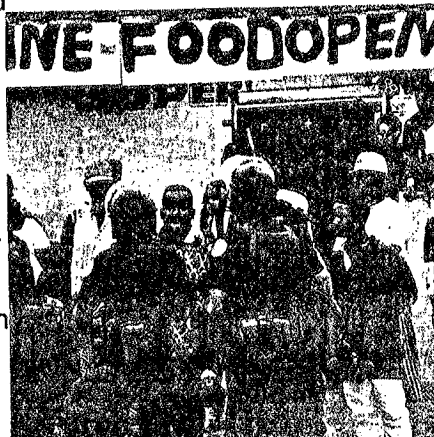
A. Creating a PoC Anarchist Tendency in the Love & Rage RAF. I have talked to a number of Anarchists of color on this tour, and this is our position: If Love and Rage wants us to take membership, or even to continue to work with the federation except in a limited way, then it must make it possible for us to build an anti-authoritarian tendency which will recruit people of color into it. This must include:

1. Creating a membership drive at the earliest possible time to concentrate on PoC communities, and making all materials and support available to people of color so that activists of color can organize their communities. We must bring in new layers of people who have not been exposed to Anarchism, instead of just continuing to concentrate on the white Anarchist community which is hostile to Love and Rage.
2. Founding a newsletter, newspaper insert, zine, or other document to be used to spread in PoC communities, and to reach PoC Anarchists.
3. Putting forth all the resources for a national conference for PoC Anarchists and those interested in the

Anarchist movement.

4. Allowing PoC Anarchists to create an autonomous fraction within Love and Rage RAF, with full rights, but also the ability to autonomously organize around issues important to our communities and even to withdraw en-masse from the federation if we so wish if our rights are not respected, and the whites continue to dominate proceedings in the organization.

5. **Restructure the Love and Rage anti-racist working group as a separate organization under the management of people of color, so that it can be used to build a mass movement against white supremacy and police brutality.** It will also be used to fight against white male domination in Love and Rage itself, as well as advise the organization generally on the matters of race and class to give it a more scientific analysis.



We do not feel that white people should be setting the agenda for anti-racist struggles in this country; people of color have a whole different conception of how this struggle should go. White people have eliminated us from the struggle altogether, and reduced the issues of white supremacy down to just fighting Nazis and Klan. This is simplistic, defensive, and defeatist. We must fight for a new politic around so-call anti-racist struggles, and reject the white left political style that Love and Rage and other white

radicals have put forward.

B. Considering the New York-centric bias in Love and Rage as an impediment to a racially diverse membership. Like most chauvinistic thinking, the myth that New York is the best place to have an organization headquarters is another white radical bias which works to insure that all the daily decision-making for this organization will always be done by white people.

To its credit, some in the group recognize this, and have tried to break this down by sending its federation offices to California, which is good, but still does not prove a serious commitment to diffusion of power. We believe that if Love and Rage is truly serious, it will work for regional centers of federation organization. For instance, why not have regional organizing centers in the South (Atlanta and Houston), West (Denver and Oakland), North (New York), Midwest (Minneapolis) and so on, instead of just one office? This tends to break up the cliquishness that everybody says is a problem in this organization, but does nothing much about. This is what destroyed SNCC, the Black anti-authoritarian organization that I belonged to, after it changed its orientation to one with a "strong leader," a central committee, and all decision-making power in the Atlanta office, instead

of with the field organizers or members-at-large. So this proposal of building a variety of regional organizing centers is one that must be considered as one of expanding and keeping the organization alive.

But the most important consideration of all is that this will allow for regional organizing out of those areas, instead of bureaucratic paper-pushing or half-assed community work by young, inexperienced white radicals who think Anarchism is the absence of responsibility. We have got to get real here, and build real work units; for instance, I call for the immediate building of a Southwide Revolutionary Organizing Project (SWOP) based in Atlanta, Georgia. It has already been proven with the September 11, 1993, demo and work by myself and other Anarchists in Chattanooga that the South is an especially fertile area for revolutionary work. It is also clear that in the South exists the best chance to recruit Anarchists of color on a large scale, who will come in through mass fronts. (I am not talking Leninism here, or some sort of "Popular Front" garbage where we would unite with Liberals on a broad amorphous program, but rather "fronts" as mass groups which deal with one aspect of our work, such as anti-racism, and unites persons who would not join Love and Rage outright or might disagree on other issues). We got to get organized in the South and other areas, not just in New York.

Love and Rage will have to seriously restructure to rid itself of this New York-centric bias. I propose the Southern base-building as its first serious regional reorganization project to break down this domination by white males in New York. The SWOP can best be aided by calling for Love and Rage activists in different parts of the country to move to Atlanta, send resources to us down there, and help us open an office; we can do the rest. I think we will be more successful than New York in building a mass base on working class grounds, which is badly split on political, class and race lines. The South is a fresh territory, with its own history of struggle, but with very few openly Anarchist movements. Opposing Leftist formations are extremely weak and poorly organized. It cannot be stressed enough that it is not New York that has produced the most dynamic social struggles of the last 30 years, it has been the South. Even the Black Panther Party of California, in many ways was a creation of the South since SNCC created the Black Panther symbol and autonomous Black political style in Alabama which Huey Newton seized upon, and later SNCC even merged with the BPP in 1967 which took it from being an isolated faction in the Bay Area to a nationwide revolutionary tendency.

Its mistake and that of SNCC was not to organize the South with a revolutionary program. Don't you make the same mistake!

C. Decentralizing and Reorganizing Newspaper operations as a key to a diverse membership. It may not be apparent at first but the newspaper's reorganization may be the best and most effective vehicle to recruit people of color, restructure the group on a more democratic foundation and remove decision-making out of the hands of a clique in New York, *if such exists*.

While I propose that the NYC Production Group continue to produce the paper, that in fact a number of Newspaper Editorial Committees be created so that a steady stream of copy would be generated from collectives all over the U.S., Canada, and other places. These editorial committees would be formally structured, just like the PG is now, to produce copy. This lightens the load of writing and production in one location, and it lets others participate in the revolutionary project. This also breaks down the domination of the newspaper project by a white male urban crew in the Northeast.

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Content-wise, the paper just reeks of whiteness, movement-insider jokes, and SAWB elitist orientation. Even though it should be quite clear by now, that the "mainstream"

Anarchist movement just reviles Love and Rage and is not a significant political force anyway, the newspaper still caters to these assholes and to the white middle class "alternative" milieu which they wallow in. We must get away from this shit entirely; it is as ridiculous as the Democrats trying to "recapture" members of their ranks who defected to Reagan and the Republicans in the 1984 and 1988 elections. To me this is how Love and Rage is sure to remain white. We must use the newspaper to recruit new layers of the population to Anarchism, especially people of color and to give an Anarchist critique of the issues of the day. Enough nonsense about "Summer vacations to Mexico" (put it in the disco bull where it belongs); "Wind Chill Factor" (let them report their own shit); "Animal Liberation Front" (remember what I said about white rights?); Fierce Pussy Interview" (white rights again), IWW (hey, ain't they got a newspaper?). Look, I could go on, but the point is that much of this precious newspaper space could and should be devoted to serious issues analyzing everyday concerns and the crimes of the capitalist state, not cultural bashes or other such bullshit.

I also was very disappointed in the coverage of the book *Anarchism and the Black Revolution and the tour*. It was totally slapdash, (that picture was awful!)



and the book should have been given a review anyway. The tour was very important from many standpoints, not least of which is to let everyone know that I am close to Love and Rage's anti-racist politics, rather than the WSA's protection of white privilege, or the Anarchists' nonsense belief that I am not about federations. (How does this foolishness get started that I am anti-organization and don't like Love and Rage?) An article can still be written mentioning this, why do you think I rewrote the book? The articles on Cuba, Palestine, Kenya, and C.L.R. James were excellent, and I think is more of what we need. Everyone I showed the paper to was most impressed with this writing, and thought it should be the norm, and that they would buy it and sell it throughout the Black and PoC communities.

My final criticism is about elitism and cultural bias in the newspaper. You keep writing about things which people who pick up the paper cannot understand. How about explaining Anarchism to "ordinary people" with the newspaper, who might in fact sympathize with us and even join with us? I was even talking to comrade Mike about starting a regular page, a so-called Anarchist "glossary" or formative page, to explain what Anarchism stands for and what the terms we use mean. I am sick of so much elitism and intellectual posturing in the paper, it's clear that you are writing for college graduates. Who should we be writing for, and can we change the focus to make Love and Rage a mass newspaper? **What about a page for Anarchists of color each issue? How about a page on labor issues from real live workers?** How about some more debate around serious theoretical issues like Marxism, Race and Class, gender oppression, etc., and leave the subcultural reporting to Profane Existence, which does it so much better than you?

I am asking that Love and Rage give us a page in the paper, later allow us to put a insert in the paper, and/or financially support a zine for PoC Anarchists and anti-racist activists. I believe that it will be published each month, 10-24 pages, and will have a 2,000 copy press run, and will cost in the neighborhood of \$350-500 per issue to print on newsprint and have distributed nationally. The first few issues should be fully subsidized by Love and Rage, but this will change as the paper becomes more self-sufficient.

Finally, I believe Love and Rage should change its profligate ways on production issues, and not be wedded to this idea that the paper has to be done in a union print shop in the New York area, but instead

use Black-owned and co-op printing houses down South, the cheapest in the nation, which will save you 20-50% in print costs. So what is the problem here, more Liberal moralizing instead of cost accounting? I will be happy to provide you with sources; instead of just coming out every two or three months, this will allow the paper to be published each month. I talked to Todd Prane and he liked the idea, hopefully the rest of the PG people will.

Well, these are tough criticisms, but they are also constructive criticisms, if I did not care at all about Love and Rage I would not make them. I will join when I am ready and think that there is a serious effort to bring people of color activists into the movement, not until then. I will never be some "token" Black inside a white dominated movement, so help me bring PoC Anarchists in and build a ten-

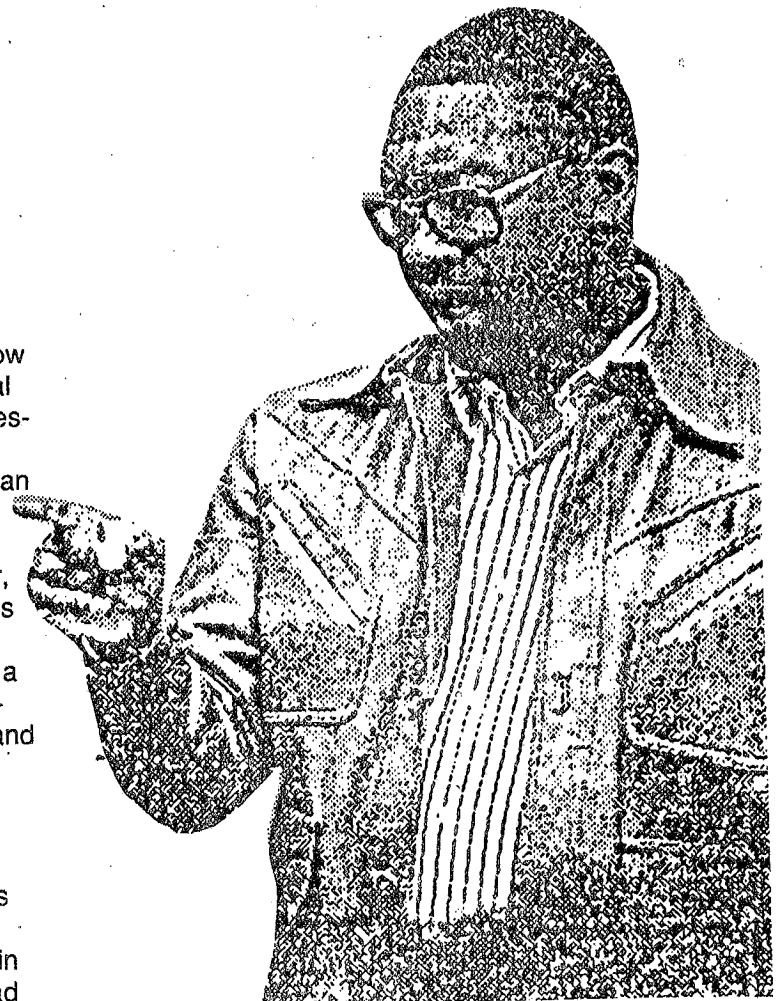
dency. There is nothing more to say.

Thank you for considering our position.

In Solidarity,

Lorenzo

Kombo Ervin



AUTONOMOUS ZONE

"One method I'd like to see experimented with is large spaces rented by a few or more people... (to) provide space for everything from printshops, organizing centers, soup kitchens and spaces for fundraisers, all in one space... if 4-6 people get a large warehouse space, furnish it & put some time in, space could be provided for such a purpose for next to nothing... if even one space like this could be used efficiently, in a multifaceted way, run collectively, with no decision making apparatus used except that which is determined by the needs of this starved society and the limits of the geography..."

That is an excerpt from an article that was written in the last issue of WCF about 3 mo's before we knew we were leaving our old collective space **Chaos House** (sobs and wailing), and the concept of attempting an infoshop was being approached with caution. I didn't come close to realizing that I was describing something that I would become a part of in a year. The **Autonomous Zone** is open and we are still proceeding with caution. Caution is good. No need to rush into anything, right?

Well there are several projects running out of the space right now and we encourage anyone to come check it out, contribute and find ways to empower themselves, their neighbors, and the community at large. This is not a simple society that we live in and any enclave you can find is a good one, as long as it doesn't contribute to the alienation. We want to free ourselves of the dependence on the patriarchal, authoritarian structure of this society to incorporate, governmental, religious or otherwise. We want to encourage that locally, and support it globally.

Recovery Alliance, a HIV risk reduction and recovery outreach program has been doing training and focus groups here, and may soon be doing their syringe exchange program here as well. **Centros Beneficios**, another HIV and SIDA awareness project that is interactive and taught in spanish also meets here. Other groups like **Anti-Racist Action**, the **Industrial Workers of the World**, and the **Coalition for Positive Sexuality** have used our space as well. Chicago has recently been introduced to **Food Not Bombs**, a decentralized project that seeks to feed anyone who is hungry to free vegetarian food and possibly even show folks cooperative and healthy food getting alternatives. There is also **Yoga with Aloma**, and occasionally computer & internet classes! In December the **JAM Crew** will start hosting dope hip-hop parties. We will also be having speakers from time to time. The **Autonomous Revolution Forum Series (ARFS)**, an open-ended series of discussions will be just plain rad.

Check the **Events Calendar** for the minor details like times and dates.

Some of the projects we will hope to start soon include a new and revamped return of **Thinking Faction** that we'll probably do with our new **Lumpen Pals**. We want to start several informal class offerings as well, the topics are varied and will always be free. We need your ideas for this.

The **Autonomous Zone Free**

School would like to offer: Spanish; Yoga; G.E.D.; First Aid; Self-Defense; Theater; Creative Writing; Quilting Bee-In; Secret Chicago History; English as a Second Language; Confronting Police Violence; Printmaking; Drawing; Homebrewing; Graffiti Art; Music; Kropotkin's "Mutual Aid"; Computers; Self-Publishing; "The Technological Society"; Wild Edible Plants Foraging...and so much more. We're looking for folk interested in teaching and/or participating in classes starting in January. Give us a call!

There are also big walls in here with lists of things and posters of demos and events. There is a **Library**, that's right, you can borrow a book, just like downtown! Lot's of free stuff too: leftover **Food Not Bombs** food; clothes; books; coffee; lots-o-zines. We are out of control with **FREEDOM**. Radical literature and alternative music up the wazoo.

You can find an article in this info-bulletin about the **Womyn's (Only) Space** on Sunday nights.

There will be as many descriptions of this place as people that you ask so you have to come see it, ok? It has grown out of necessity as well as desire. We are trying to interact with our community and make this a true community center. We have lots of new friends and alliances and we want to be a part of creating counter-institutions. We welcome you to visit and hopefully participate.

AUTONOMOUS ZONE 1726 W. Division (2 blocks W of Division L on O'Hare line) (312) 384-2991 -- Call for info, updates on events, or just to chat.-sedov trevor lucien, proceeding with caution-

NO BOYS ALLOWED

Since nearly the beginning of recorded history, wommin have had to deal with a patriarchal society in which their voices have largely been lost. And since the start of "law", and "government", their opinions have been received with derision, or a light little pat on the head or a conciliatory chuckle, if they were received at all. So with centuries of socialization, and generations of learned behavior, wommin have been "taught" that their opinions and feelings are less important than a man's and should be repressed. What we here at the Autonomous Zone have been working to create is a space where any womyn can feel comfortable expressing her thoughts, feelings, or ideas without men around, and therefore without the almost unconscious fear of censure. So every Sunday, from 7 pm until close, we have a space in which wommin can, if they so choose, participate in discussions, book readings, conversations, potluch and companionship. Or simply use it as



EVENTS

Every Saturday: Clinic Defense at American Women's Medical Center, 7am-noon, corner of Western & Diversey. Join us against the anti-choice bigots!

Every Sunday: Wimmmin's Space: 7pm-Midnight at the A-Zone, 1726 W. Division. Bring food. **WIMMIN ONLY!**

Every Thursday: **FOOD NOT BOMBS** serving free vegetarian food, 2pm, at the A-Zone 1726 W. Division.

Now 'til Dec. 24: Holiday Sale at the Gallery/Store of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican POW's and Political Prisoners, 1112 N. California. (312) 278-0885. Hours M-F 2-5, Sat 12-4.

Dec. 18 (Sat): A-Zone Benefit with the Jaks, Think & Da Bad Kidz (radical rap), and the Grussors (hip hop), and possibly more. With open mike & vegetarian potluck! 8pm.

Dec. 21 (Tue): ARF on INFOSHOPS AND AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY CENTERS, featuring a slideshow on Rosebud Commons in Portland by Squirrel, and hopefully other Midwest infoshop-center activists as well. 7pm, at the A-Zone, 1726 W. Division.

Jan 12 (Wed): on PRACTICAL STRATEGY FOR ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN REVOLUTION, with speakers (from several different viewpoints, including anarcho-syndicalists, feminists, autonomists, and others) and discussion. 7pm, at the A-Zone.

Jan. 26 (Wed): ARF on Feminism, details tba.

Future: ARFs on Prisoner Support & Prison issues, and a series on Revolution in West-Town, spotlighting Gentrification, Housing, Gangs, Confronting Police Violence, and more!
Note: Phone first! Events subject to change.



read in peace if they so desire. Suggestions for other activities are always welcome, and will serve to make wimmmin's night the truly diverse and supportive place it is meant to be. So wimmmin, come on in, and share your ideas and tasty vegetarian dishes.
Thanx, love eaty

cont. from page 2

the more we talk about "constitutional" rights the more we prop up this illegal government for having claimed them. these rights and privileges have existed and been fought for long before the constitution was framed, the fact that we have to speak of these things in legal and formal terms is enough proof for me that we are allowing them to escape us. all i desire to add at this point is that the prison society encroaches every human at this moment. more prisons and malls are being built at the moments that i write and you read this. the prison society is on many humans. identify.

razed in chicago
addendum: i would like to reiterate the fact that we are losing the war against racism and deceit. here in chicago the police torture and the wealthy want to develop the river. cabrini green is target for gentrification. we are witnessing a "recolonization", at this point it is just an attempt. apathy and inaction is complicity.

Intercollectivism: A Critical View of NAC

At last December's More Fun Than Santa conference, I wound up in the position of agreeing to compile a Network of Anarchist Collectives mission statement or statements to propose at the Toledo conference this summer. So far, perhaps largely due to the disorganization of our organization (NAC), since MFTS I have not received so much as one word of suggestion as to what our mission statement should look like or contain. But this is understandable, because as my cohort in this effort, Sprite of Chicago's A-Zone, so deftly wrote in the MFTS "After Words" booklet, "It's pointless to describe our politics when we haven't even discussed strategy among *ourselves*." (emphasis added)

So I have taken it upon myself to jot down some ideas on what NAC should and should not be, as well as to propose a mission statement based on the discussion of "Political Direction and Strategy" in which I participated during MFTS. On the pages of *(Dis)Co* and at the Toledo convention in June, these ideas can and should be discussed/disputed/adjusted, or even tossed out the window. Nevertheless, I am answering the call to analyze our network's politics, and perhaps to help incite further discourse.

Solidarity

The Network of Anarchist Collectives needs to remain just that: a *network* of autonomous *collectives*. I see no need for us to come up with some all-encompassing statement of politics, beliefs or perspectives to which each individual member should be able to consense. Surely we are networking for a common objective, but we are not an Establishment-toppling movement. Let Love and Rage and all the other *federations* fulfill that role. Our concern, as I perceive it, is in *networking* for *communication* and *mutual aid*. When a federation speaks of "solidarity," it implies methodological or ideological uniformity. It is referring to some outward goal, based on an abstraction. In that case, solidarity is necessary in achieving a common objective the federation, including *all* member groups, seeks.

In our case, solidarity takes the form of mutual aid. We do not *all* have to prescribe to the same specific set of politics. That's for federations. In a network like ours, we merely need to subscribe to a common method and structure of organization, ie collectivism (and this only because it helps guarantee that our over-arching association will remain nonhierarchical and as decentralized as possible, and because we want to promote collectives).

Our Anarchism

I personally do not know why the word "Anarchist" is included in our title, but I was never consulted during the naming process. It occurs to me that the word "autonomous" — not "autonomist" — would be better for our purposes. How do we define "anarchist," anyway? I mean, do you have to believe in smashing the state to smithereens to be an anarchist? Or can you just be someone who has little or no interest in such far-reaching vision but who, nonetheless, understands that nonhierarchical, face-to-face, decentralized organizing is the optimal method of working for social change, or merely living one's life? For instance, Syracuse's on the Rise bakery, a women's economic collective, would never refer to itself as

"anarchist" in ideology (or as anything, really); still, I can't think of a better example of sustainable, nonauthoritarian organizing. But why would they want to be part of NAC? They are not (all) anarchists, and perhaps a few of them don't even understand what "anarchism" means (do we?). But the involvement of such successful collectives would improve NAC in countless ways.

So by what criteria do we judge who's "anarchist" and who is not?

If we use the word "Autonomous," we will not be ideology-specific. "Collectives," however we decide to define the term, can encompass the points that member groups must be nonauthoritarian (ie, anarchist) in structure, but not necessarily in vision. "Autonomous," then, can refer to the relationship between the collective and the Network — each collective is autonomous *from* the Network and its other members. (Autonomism implies individualism, which is an issue I don't even want to touch here.)

Autonomy

NAC needs to guarantee and preserve the autonomy of all individual collectives. As soon as we say we are committed to "fighting this" or "creating that," we risk (a) alienating potential member collectives which do not share that specific goal in their own operations or (b) infringing upon the autonomy of any such collective which is already a member of NAC. Indeed, if we are to achieve a mission statement via consensus process, we will never come to one which describes our specific politics, visions, strategies and tactics *and* remains consistent with those of all member collectives.

So why bother? Why exact conformity and ideological homogeneity?

The main problem with having NAC generally agree on a "politics" is that NAC doesn't, as an entity, need a strategy. We need to function — we need to get things done — but we don't need to be sure that NAC itself will change the world. That's up to its members. NAC will hopefully facilitate world change brought about by member collectives, but that's different. (I will add a qualifier. It is important that all member collectives state and discuss their own goals, tactics, etc (ie, perspectives, visions and methods) in an open manner. We need to know who we're working in association with. Further, if a neo-nazi collective were to exist and want to join NAC, for instance, I should hope there would be ample opposition.)

If NAC has any "strategy," it is providing a means by which member collectives can better achieve their own strategies and objectives. Through communication and mutual aid, between and amongst member collectives, each can further itself along the lines it sets for itself. For NAC, "progress" towards goals will be determined by how well mutual aid and communication are facilitated.

If one NAC member collective repeats mistakes previously made by three other collectives in different cities, then NAC either has not done its job or said collectives have not used NAC the way it is intended to be used. It's that simple.

There is an intercollective dynamic with which we need to concern ourselves in deciding the perspective and function of NAC. Do we want the collective to relate with the Network, or do we want the collective to relate with the other collectives? Do we want some sort of tangible entity in NAC, or do we want it to be a general affiliation, itself not manned by anyone (except to carry out certain activities of maintenance, such as publishing *(Dis)Co* and other resources). Love and



Rage Federation is a tangible entity. It is an organization which supposedly joins the forces of autonomous groups toward a common agenda other than mutual support. It is in and of itself a counter institution. There's nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't seem that's what NAC is intended to be.

Collectivity

Many of us believe that in our social change organizing, we must create microcosmic models of the society we wish them to foster. All collectivists believe that face-to-face, nonhierarchical, leaderless, decentralized, small group structure and participatory, egalitarian processes are the optimal methods of organization, whether their vision is of world revolution or more immediate reclamation of communities, workplaces, households, schools, and so forth.

But if NAC wants to become part of a collectivist movement, it must have some way of aiding and abetting the creation of such organizations. Part of our outward focus needs to be a dedication to filling the gaps in society where Collectives do not exist -- ie, almost all of society! How do we, as a network, respond when a 16 year-old high school student in Kansas writes to say she would like help in establishing a collective on her campus? Are we prepared to offer that kind of assistance? Do we just mail her a few pamphlets and a copy of our journal and wish her luck? We need to do something, and that means we need collectivization apparatus in place which will send as much help as we can possibly muster, in as many forms as we can conjure, as soon as possible -- without acting as anarcho-missionaries. This won't be easy. It will require thought and practice. As I see it, we aren't even close to being able to accomplish such a task.

Counter-what?

We also need to recognize that NAC and most of its member collectives are *not* counter institutions (XIs herein). That's a term that has been tossed around very loosely by "dual powerists" in NAC circles to describe infoshops and the like. But (at least most) infoshops are not XIs. They are solely alternative institutions (AIs herein). There is a difference. XIs must, by definition, actually counter the Establishment they oppose. But infoshops and publishing houses and community centers do not do this, and they don't need to. AIs exist to provide alternative space (be it in the form of actual physical space, services, resources, or whatever) to activists; space in which they can work to develop themselves to better *counter* the establishment. An alternative book store provides resources to other AIs and to protest and direct action organizations (real XIs), but it does not itself actually counter the Establishment. It seems those who insist that infoshops are counter institutions might be suffering from an acute case of vanguard envy. If you want to counter the Establishment, you need to leave the relative security of your infoshop and actually do some countering. If you don't want to do that, fine -- but don't call your infoshop an XI.

This is what the dual power concept misses. In his short essay on "The Logic of Alternative Institutions," Howard J. Ehrlich stated that "An alternative institution must always be a counter-institution." (*Reinventing Anarchy*, H.J. Ehrlich, et al, eds; p346) Other than that insistence, Howard's description of the AI is outstanding, claiming that it "must provide its community with a genuine service," and "do so in an openly-politicized context." But why should a collective bookstore or

youth center, which no doubt provide genuine services and are often politicized, be engaged in direct confrontation with the Establishment? Can we really expect every AI to also be an XI?

Certainly we can demand the reverse. That is, all counter institutions should also be alternative institutions. They should not be purely outward-focused, always trying to accomplish *objectives* and ignoring the *subjective* development of their members. The XI collective should provide alternative space and simultaneously counter the status quo.

In order for dual power strategy to make sense, a second duality must be recognized. First, in the classical sense of the term, there is the building of an alternative society "in the shell of the old." But that "shell" is not as inanimate and decrepit as the metaphorical cliché implies -- the "old" society will remain a threat until it is destroyed. So, without falling into the trap of nihilistic adventurism, we need to recognize the constructive/destructive duality which Howard alludes to, without going so far as to demand that every actor and organization simultaneously create and destroy.

Dual power is a sensible strategy only when we look at the actors as being possibly separate in which aspect/s of the second duality they wish to participate in: building alternatives and/or tearing down the norms. If dual power means that every collective, or even every activist, must somehow participate in countering the Establishment, we will fall on our faces.

This is not to suggest that XIs cannot also be members of NAC or similar networks. They should be just as welcome to share resources with other collectives as are AIs, of which NAC mostly consists. But it is the federation which consists predominately of XIs -- is itself an XI -- and that is an important distinction.

Community

Howard Ehrlich's point about community service must not be overlooked. The collective should, first and foremost, serve the community in which it exists. This is the second intercollective dynamic with which we must grapple. Do we want collectives to be looking inward, toward the Network, or should they be expending the vast majority of their energy doing work for their own communities? If we get to a point when we are thinking more about the Network than about the communities in which we live, something has gone wrong. The activism must take place locally.

Conventions and Network-wide events like Active Resistance definitely have their place. But as we have begun to realize in Syracuse, the real stuff of sustainability is found in our immediate surroundings. Sure, I got a lot out of the Antioch gathering last summer, and much more out of MFTS last winter. But since then I have noticed that I don't need to travel 8 or 13 hours to the Midwest to find that kind of radical community feeling. There is plenty of it right here, waiting to be fed and harvested.

For example, a handful of local radicals -- people we hardly knew six months ago, and totally without the assistance of anyone in the EWAY or Pet Roach Press collectives -- have started an anarchist artists' group. At their last meeting, 21 people were in attendance. A month ago, I would hardly have believed there were 21 politically conscious artists in Upstate New York, much less that many anarchist ones in Syracuse alone who want to work together!

There is so much radical potential in this small community. And, to be honest (if there weren't so damn many cute





people in NAC), it would be insane for me to put any more effort than I am into working on continental organizing when the local seeds, as fertile as they are, will grow miraculously with just a little nourishment.

Networking

Let's take a look at Active Resistance. This is a project that was first conceived by folks at the Chicago A-Zone. The event itself is huge, though, and the A-Zone realized from the beginning that in order to pull it off right, they'd have to network with many other collectives with various specialties. Several collectives and individuals from around the country are participating in a variety of ways, to varying degrees of involvement, in making AR happen. So while we can and should all claim a portion of ownership and agency for AR, we also need to realize that it is a perfect example of large scale network activity, but remains the baby of Chicago's A-Zone.

Not all NAC collectives have to participate to the same degree in making AR happen. We won't all have to bear the same amount of burden on *any* NAC projects. Actually, not all member collectives will have to be involved in (or even supportive of) every project that comes along. It wouldn't make any sense. For instance, the Syracuse collectives have taken on a significant amount of work in support of AR. But how could we possibly put in as much work, even proportional to our membership numbers, as the A-Zone crew is? After all, they are the ones in Chicago, a thousand miles away, and they are the primary hosts of the event. At risk of sounding marxian, we should offer what we can to NAC, and take from it what we need.

The problem with the current perception of NAC and AR happens to be that Chicago doesn't see themselves as "inside the loop," while many of us on the outside are wondering why the loop isn't bigger. I think we all need to realize that there is a loop, that no amount of pretending is going to change that fact, but also that it's okay -- so long as the loop is temporary. How do we ensure it's only temporary? By wresting management of NAC away from Chicago. This won't be a war or factional fight; it will be a big relief for the A-Zone folks come this summer. It will take the same kind of initiative on our parts, and on the parts of the many new member collectives we'll hopefully accumulate this year, as it took Midwest/Chicago-based folks to get the ball rolling in the first place.

Active Resistance is a great example of how, in the process of working in support of the A-Zone, the rest of us can achieve substantial amounts of personal and collective fulfillment. As August approaches, I think AR will demonstrate to us that the line between "our" projects and "their" projects (whoever we and they may be) becomes very much blurred when we act as a network.

Nor does the fact that most collectives in NAC are participating in AR mean we are a federation. AR *is* largely an objective event, having effects (more than ripples) outside the Network. And it *is* something we are doing largely as NAC. But there are no real demands on any of the collectives except the A-Zone, without whose involvement AR wouldn't happen. With federations, on the other hand, out of necessity to avoid centralization, member collectives have to share equal or at least proportional amounts of work, and all must participate in everything the federation does — after all, the federation's solidarity depends on service of the federation's objective goals.

None of this is a critique of federation organizing. I think federations have their place in revolutionary strategy, and that place will actually grow as we move further along the road to revolution. But NAC is being confused with a federation. For those who think NAC needs an overall vision and strategy for revolution, perhaps the discussion should turn to whether NAC should become FAC.

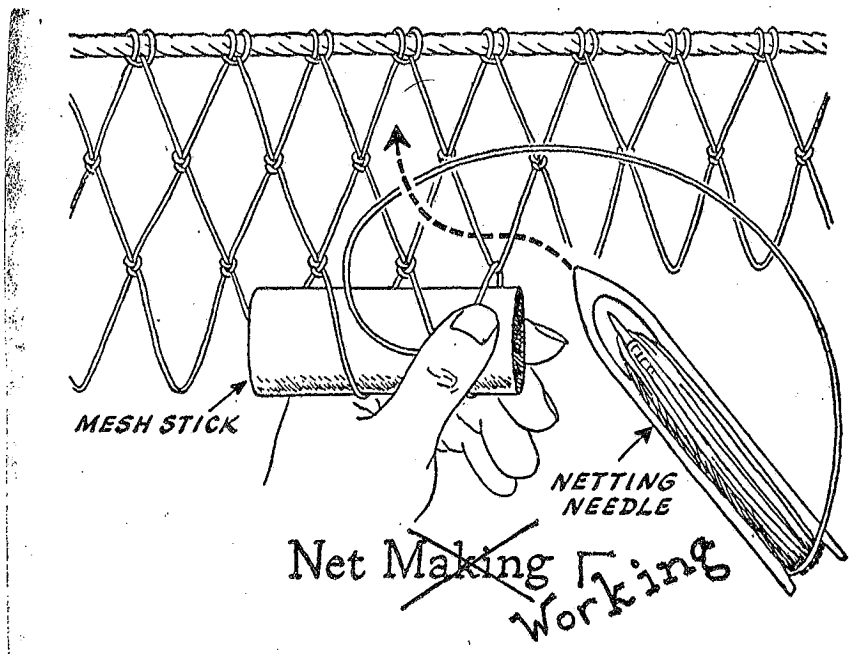
If all this seems like a matter of semantics, I think you've missed my point. There are fundamental differences between what some people appear to want and what a network of autonomous alternative institutions can actually be.

Mission Statement

So I've babbled on long enough. Here's the suggestion of yet another white boy. This is as simple as I can make it, but I tend to complicate everything. Some of the vocabulary is heavy and left mostly undefined -- but I wanted to keep it short and still cover all bases (sports metaphor -- 20 points!). Please do with it what you will. No need to be gentle:

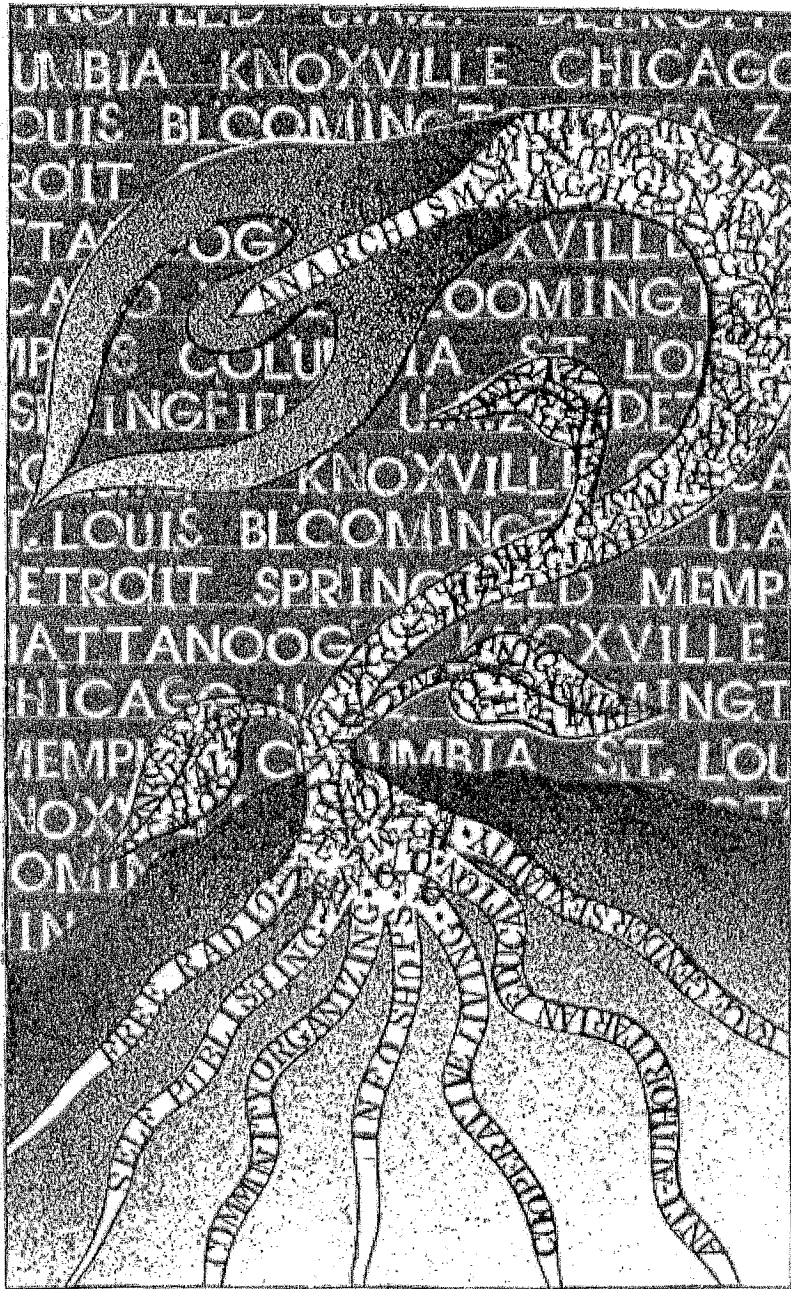
"The Network of Anarchist Collectives (NAC) is a decentralized, nonhierarchical, continent-wide affiliation of in(ter)dependent alternative institutions. All member organizations are community-based and collectively structured. In the interests of autonomy and solidarity, the purpose of NAC is to provide a means of mutual aid and communication between and among its members without confining them to always working in the shadow of the Network at large. It is our mission to aid in the creation and maintenance of collectively organized social change institutions of all kinds by providing, not imposing, support."

Brian is a member of the EWAY and Pet Roach Press collectives, and publishes a zine called Dissident Scrapbook (\$2 to Behind Enemy Lines Publications, Pet Roach/BEL, PO Box 7073, Syracuse, NY 13210-9711; email: badomnic@lbbs.org).



PASSIONATE AND DANGEROUS.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MIDWESTERN ANTI-AUTHORITARIANS AND ANARCHISTS



edited by Mark Bohnert, distributed by AK Press.

Comprised mostly of interviews done in 1998 and '99 with radicals from Chicago and Springfield, IL; St. Louis and Columbia, MO; Detroit, Bloomington, rural and urban Tennessee, and one undisclosed location; there are also a couple interviews with national and international activists Peter Schumann of Bread and Puppet Theater and Food Not Bombs co-founder Keith McHenry, and an excerpt from ex-Black Panther Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin's *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*.

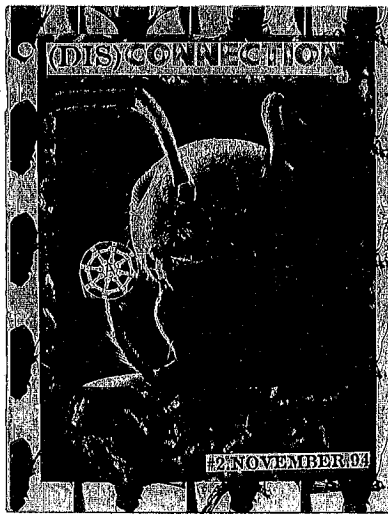
Projects range from making art, media, cooperative living and running an Infoshop. This is an amazing snapshot of late '90s heartland radicalism in an area way too many people consider flyover country. Bohnert also obviously made a point of including the voices of women, people of color and queers in a non-tokenizing fashion. A couple of historical pieces show how these movements were grounded in long standing traditions.

After the fire at AK Press's warehouse, I decided to put together a short 'zine with the three A-Zone related interviews from Passionate and Dangerous, as a step towards helping preserve the stories that Bohnert had recorded.

The Anarchist History Nerd Brigade offered to post the 'zine for free at <http://anarchisthistory.noblogs.org> along with a number of other radical publications.

Towards a Bay Area Anarchist History Nerd Brigade

If you would like to see more 'zines like this one, the periodical archive at the Long Haul Infoshop in Berkeley, California is just one of many great places to work on such a project. Please write artsandcrust@hushmail.com if you are interested!



A special thanks to: the Taala Hooghan and Long Haul Infoshops, Anarchist History Nerd Brigade, AK Press Collective, Media Island, public libraries especially in Flagstaff and Olympia, Chicago Underground Library, and comrades everywhere, past, present and future!