

I am  
Oscar  
Grant!

You can't  
shoot  
us all!

You Can't Shoot Us All  
On the Oscar Grant Rebellions



“There were outbreaks like this one, the footlocker incident which we’ve been telling you about all evening, where in some cases the people weren’t even... they were taking the shoes, breaking the windows, taking the merchandise, and just simply throwing it out on the street...” - News



*“I know you’ll win in the finish all right. You have a formidable arsenal at your disposal, and what have we got? Nothing. We’ll be beaten because you’re the stronger and we’re the weaker, but in the meantime, we hope that you’ll have to pay for your victory.” - A Rebel*

We have spent too many nights living in fear of the police. When we started fighting back, the world that surrounded us began to feel different. Today, we can tell the children in our neighborhoods that we stood up for our communities, that, when we all stand together, nothing seems so frightening.

Since that warm January night, we have made the mistake of allowing this movement to be confined to the borders of the city of Oakland. The BART police are a regional problem, policing in general a global problem. Disruptions are as relevant at Civic Center in San Francisco or Downtown Berkeley as they are at 14th and Broadway. The movement becoming entirely centered around the city of Oakland has confined us, it has weakened us because it defines the struggle by the borders created by the powerful instead of by the lines drawn by the outraged.

This system exists to erase memories, to evict us from our childhood homes, to incarcerate our loved ones, to execute the fathers of children too young to fully understand what happened. Our struggle has been an effort to create memories that they can never take from us.

Running toward the sunset, we have found that the horizon only moves farther away. We awake every morning to the same cycle of death and power that we escaped in our dreams the night before. Yet we continue to trudge to the ends of the earth, we continue to fight. It is when the air is still, when all seems quiet, that we are planning our next move.

At the very least, we have inflicted harm on our enemies, and because of this, we live with dignity.



Oakland, July 2010

Dedicated to the countless people who have died at the hands of the police, to those currently incarcerated for fighting back, and to the kids who jumped on top of that police car that night last winter.



When we realized that, in the eyes of the powerful, our lives are just piles of bones waiting to be shattered, arteries and veins on the verge of tearing open, hearts and lungs that stop beating and expanding at the moment they pull the trigger, the only thing left to do was to come together and make them tremble before us.

Everyone saw the video. At least it seemed that way at the time. A young father's last breaths press against a cold train platform, a cop holsters his firearm and calmly pulls out his handcuffs. Why would they kill an unarmed man with so many people around? Why don't we know how to respond?

I wanted to break windows, to set fires, to strike fear into every cop on the streets that night. I wanted to show the powerful that they, too, would learn the meaning of violence, just as we have been forced to learn it time and time again. They needed to understand that we don't forget, we needed to feel that we were still alive.

But what could we do? We were so weak then, we didn't know each other. Somewhere I heard a call for a demonstration a week later. I came alone.

A warm winter night, not too long ago. A long march and then the sun sets. Shortly after, there is a fire and kids are jumping on top of a police car, shards of glass glimmer along the asphalt, and strangers are, for the first time, coming together. To see people who hours earlier hung their heads in fear of the police, people who were afraid to step into the street, finally come together and stand up to the cops was amazing. Days earlier we ran from the police, that night, when we were all together, we ran toward them. No one will ever forget that evening; the moment those kids jumped onto the roof of the police car was the most beautiful moment I've ever witnessed.

**July 17, 8:20am:** The cops killed someone else. Once again in Fruitvale. Forty eight year old Fred Collins died after being shot multiple times when five officers from BART and OPD discharged their weapons.

**July 18, 11:27pm:** Shots fired at police from an upper floor of a high-rise building in the Acorn housing project complex in West Oakland. The officers were performing a traffic stop in the area and had to take cover when they heard the shots, however, no officers were hit by the gunfire

Today, the situation is every bit as dismal as it was yesterday. Every hour of our lives spent at work creates the revenue that strengthens the army that confronts us. In Stockton, in Livermore, in Bakersfield; the police continue to open fire on us, we continue to die. We have yet to create a force that can subject them to the misery that will one day confront them, however, we have come closer than we ever thought we would.

Until now, we believed we were fighting battles. On the day of a demonstration, we walked the streets, we fought, and we went home that night, unsure of what to do in the time until the next battle presented itself. Today, we understand that we are at the beginning of a war. Wars are protracted conflicts. Their results aren't determined at the end of the day. The police have killed again, and, as of today, our response has been less than forceful. In warfare, it is necessary to develop weapons.

We need to learn new tactics. There is still so little we really know how to do. We could learn how to blockade roads or shut down BART trains. With better communication, we could attack police property or raid supplies in places where the cops aren't waiting for us. We are working toward developing the capacity to respond forcefully every time the police kill one of us.

This movement has never had leaders. It is composed of independent and often disconnected groups of people. These groups tend to operate outside of the typical political and social justice networks. So far, their autonomy, their lack of reliance on both the non-profit world and the radical political scenes, has been a strength. We all come from vastly different places, and many people may not be willing to work with one another. Therefore, the point isn't to try to bring everyone together into one organization. What is important is to begin providing supplies to people to assist their ability to continue to struggle autonomously.

distinguishing the “good” elements from the “destructive” elements. This time, it seems that the primary division they created was not between the “peaceful” and the “violent,” but a racial division wedged between groups in the uncontrollable elements in an attempt to neutralize our collective strength.

I, identifying with a man whose photograph was not unlike my own reflection, wondered if people who did not see themselves in Oscar Grant at least saw in his image their friend, their neighbor, their classmate, someone whose life was worth fighting over. I hoped that there were white people who, after watching a video of a black man being murdered by the police, would be angry enough to break windows. In time, I met these people, because they fought alongside us, throwing bottles and chunks of concrete, cursing the police and writing the names of the dead along the walls of the city.



For an instant, we realized that we are strong, watching the police tremble as they cowered on the other side of the intersection, we got a glimpse of our potential.

Later that night, as the cars were still burning, we talked with friends, discussing ways to keep fighting, ways to ensure that the memory of the dead continues to haunt the living. In the following weeks, we continued to fight in the streets.

It was on those warm January nights, evenings which now seem so distant, that I met some of the greatest people I have ever known. Our friendships have created the foundations of a network of struggle and formed basis for a different kind of community.

We learned so much from the courage of some of the youngest people on the streets in those nights.

For weeks after that first night of outrage, everything felt different. People held their heads higher and the feeling of anger toward the police was finally out in the open. The violent and repressive nature of the police was the main topic of discussion everywhere I went. People openly disobeyed and insulted the police to their faces every day and the cops were on the defensive.

We could finally breathe.

**July 8, 9:30pm:** A jewelry store is being looted. 30 people tear apart the riot gate and flood the store.



Across the street someone is writing a message about Oscar Grant on the wall of a business. A block away, people continue to fight with police, in some places separated from the advancing lines by small fires.

We're moving slowly away from the center of downtown. On Broadway the crowd is extremely thin, about 80 people spread across two blocks. Police are everywhere, yet are unsure of how to bring the situation under control. A bank window shatters and 20 people rush inside attempting to take anything that isn't bolted down. Nearby, a fire is burning inside a department store. Two blocks east a larger crowd is advancing near the lake, tailed closely by armored police as they break the windows of stores and throw their contents into awaiting hands of the crowd that surrounds them.

That night, the night of the verdict, we were reminded how little our lives mean to this system, and that police officers do, in fact, get away with murder.

Demanding justice is not enough. The concept of justice for an individual doesn't address the need to dismantle the system that murdered him. It doesn't prevent any of us from being killed by the police. What is important now is not speaking in terms of justice, but attacking and weakening the institution of policing that continues to wage war against us.

For people who hold the weight of the earth on their shoulders, the fastest way from the bottom to the top is to turn the world upside down, to throw the property of the rich into the street and to dance on the roofs of police cars instead of riding in the back seats.

*"When the South has trouble with its Negroes – when the Negroes refuse to remain in their 'place' – it blames 'outside agitators'" – James Baldwin*

The term "outside agitator" was popularized during the civil rights struggles of the 1950s, when southern politicians would blame the growing unrest in exploited black communities on the presence of (often white) radicals from outside of the city. Presently, it is a term used by Oakland politicians (and aspiring politicians) to try and keep the situation under control, to prevent local marginalized people from realizing the power they have.

Today, we face enemies that we could have never conceived of before this. Sometimes, it's the people that pretend to be on your side that are the most dangerous enemies. The non-profit world has, for 18 months, waged a campaign against this movement.

Many non-profits that function independently of the local government have disparaged us. They oppose collective uprisings and spontaneous activity because they feel the need to control the movement. These organizations view themselves as they saviors of the downtrodden; when dominated people rise up on their own terms, it threatens the position of leadership these organizations occupy in their imaginary worlds.

We have also come under attack from non-profits that operate entirely under the influence of the city government. One of these city-funded non-profits has taken up a full fledged assault against us, using some of the \$2 million in city money they have received to wage a propaganda campaign against the unity we have found with each other through this struggle. They have even used city money to pay young people to come to their indoctrination workshops where they speak of the evils of people coming together and standing up to their enemies.

They have also helped to spread the absurd logic of the Mayor's Office that only people born and raised in Oakland have the right to take to the streets. This micro-nationalism is an attempt to foster collaboration between disenfranchised people and their exploiters in a unified front against the enigmatic "outsiders."

It is incorrect to assert that non-profits of this type have motivations of their own. They are simply the hip mouthpieces of the city government that funds them. Their agenda is the agenda of the Mayor's Office and the police department. They use the language of "peace" to try to preserve the institutions that created them. We have never been concerned with their peace. The peace of the powerful is the silent war waged against the dispossessed.

In the past, our enemies have attempted to divide movements by