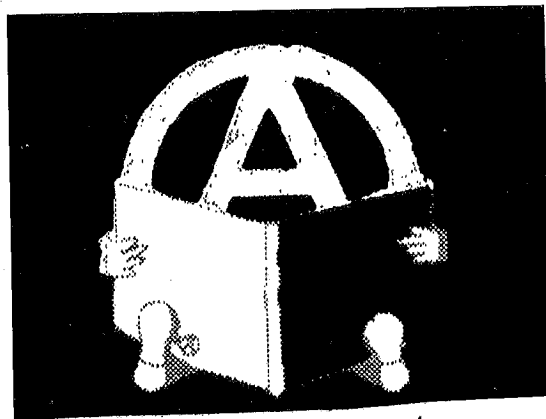


Projects range from making art, media, cooperative living, workers' collectives and running an Infoshop. This is an amazing snapshot of late '90s heartland radicalism in an area way too many people consider flyover country. Bohnert also obviously made a point of including the voices of women, people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



anarchisthistory.noblogs.org

I first read about Passionate and Dangerous while corresponding with the Anarchist History Nerd Brigade (AHNB) in early 2015. I was working with them on a second edition of my 'zine, The Autonomous Zone Infoshop: The A-Zone & a Decade of Anarchy in Chicago ~~and the A-Zone~~, and the A-Zone was very prominent in Bohnert's publication.

I visited AK Press's warehouse at the time in Oakland, and asked them for a review copy. The first couple paragraphs of this 'zine were the result, and appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of Slingshot. Though I was hella stoked on the A-Zone related interviews in Passionate and Dangerous, I was satisfied with my 'zine review and a Suggested Readings list new to the second edition of the A-Zone 'zine which included Bohnert's work.

The Slingshot Collective, which I was a member of at the time, gave me a micro-grant for a small print run of the new A-Zone 'zine, just in time for the North American Anarchist Studies Network (NAASN) Conference which met in San Francisco in 2015. Five of us from Slingshot appeared on a panel on Anarchist Media and the Continued Relevance of Print. The second day of NAASN the horrible news came: AK PRESS's warehouse had burned down and two people had died.

Here I've gasheded together three interviews with four other ex-A-Zoners from Passionate and Dangerous, two of whom contributed to my 'zine. While reading about AK Press's fund raising efforts, I saw this picture of fire damage with a stack of copies of Passionate and Dangerous right on top. This is a small contribution towards the preservation of radical history, and the importance of creating hard copies of media to not only distribute but also so people can hopefully continue to learn from this work with as little dependance on the Internet as possible.



Camille

At The Autonomous Zone

"Anarchism is the way to go—the best way to build a sense of empowerment for black people."

Camille thinks deeply about her ideas on social change and anarchism. She is involved in many groups including the Azone, Chimera (womens self-defense group), Women's Spirit Drummers, and Heartbeat performing ensemble.

Mark: What do you do at the Azone?

Camille: I'm involved with the free skool, offering classes by people who want to share their skills with other people. I coordinate that. There are no fees. We don't pay the teachers. I am a collective member, and so I go to all the Azone meetings.

Mark: What kind of classes do you offer?

Camille: Everything. Bike repair. We've had wood carving. Darrell does a video presentation, "The History of R & B: the 60's up to the 80's." How anarchism is involved with environmental issues. We've had ACT-UP classes. And belly-dancing—that's what I do. We've also had massage, a women's drawing class, and book-binding. Just whoever wants to contribute is welcome to do it. It's autonomous in that each person who sets up a class does it however they want. They advertise, but

we do have a calendar. We have classes from October to December. We take a winter break because it gets really cold here and people don't like coming out. Then we start up again around March. We have a Spanish revolutionary war study group that has been on-going for the last year.

Mark: Why did you get involved with the Azone?

Camille: I've always been drawn to what

anarchism offers. I just never really checked it out. When I was in my twenties and heard about anarchism, I made the ironic assumption that most of society makes about what it is: chaos. I've always known I did not like capitalism and classism and all the problems that go along with them. But I had not done any extensive reading to understand the

Leninists were too dogmatic for me. Very narrow. Being a leftist (using a catch-all term for everybody) usually does not mean you don't bring the baggage you grew up with from society with you. Even though these groups were progressive, Communist or Marxist whatever, they still had a lot of sexism and racism in their groups. So I was always looking for

something that satisfied what I thought society should be. When I worked at the Azone, I thought that seemed to be the best thing. I like the way they are doing things and what they are trying to accomplish. It's nice to go someplace that has books on topics that you don't see in the leftist bookstores. You don't see many books on anarchism in the leftist bookstores.

This is a unique place for me in Chicago. A place where you could go and observe the ideas, buy a book and become involved.

Mark: You're heading in this direction: what is the role of an infoshop in a revolutionary social change movement?

Camille: Two-fold. It's informational as a

clearinghouse and a place where people can come and get information to learn more about anarchism. And have open discussions with people on anything. A place where you will have events going on. A comfortable open atmosphere where you can come in, sit down and read, and ask questions. I also see it as being a place



"Free Skool: skill sharing-workshops-learning" / Tony Doyle

connections between capitalism and classism, racism and sexism. Capitalism fosters all these negative ideas that divide people up, preventing us from-making the world anarchist. Anarchism is as close as I've ever come to being involved with a group that reflects my political tendencies over the years.

In the 60's I was involved in many groups. Usually the Marxists and

that contributes to the community and is aware of the issues and the community it happens to be in; a place that the community feels comfortable coming to and having meetings in.

Mark: *A meeting space or similar to a union hall?*

Camille: Along those lines. An open place where groups can come and have their meetings. As long as there is the general understanding that we are anarchist, which means that we are anti-authoritarian. We believe in consensus decision-making. As for groups that are involved in electoral politics, it would not be a place for them because we don't believe in electoral politics. But if they would meet there once, they would realize what we are all about, and they probably would not want to be there anyway. That's how I see it.

I see us really reaching out to various communities. But traditionally most leftist communities have not drawn people of color and women on a consistent basis. Certainly there have been active women in the past—Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman and the wives of the men who were killed in Haymarket—but it hasn't been reaching out to other communities of color. So we are constantly discussing that and figuring out better ways of doing that. Most leftist groups have not. Go to any Communist or Marxist group, and you're not going to see a lot of black or latino people there.

Mark: *Have you been making special effort to spread anarchist ideas outside of the usual circles?*

Camille: Until the last couple of years, I have not felt comfortable presenting my views—I have been reading and learning so that I can hold a conversation and explain it in a way they can deal with. So I slowly try to bring groups in. I'm part of a women's percussion group that is mostly black. They have done a couple of things with the Azone and that has made them aware of anarchism.

Mark: *That was going to be my next question: how do you bring anarchism to the black community?*

Camille: Bill and Darrell have gone to various metro stations that are on the south side and handed out literature. We go to festivals and hand out leaflets, inviting them to come to the Azone. There are activists who are black that are aware of us and come to events. We just had an anarchist from Nigeria, Samuel Mbah, speak.

There are cultural barriers between the Azone and black people. In the past, any "white" group or leftist group that tried to come into the black community, tries to take over.

Mark: *You mean like with their own agenda and lead people in a certain direction?*

Camille: People who think they know all the answers. With this history there is a certain distrust. As anarchists, we certainly don't believe in doing that because we don't believe we have the answers. We believe in approaching groups, listening to what they consider their problems are—not being a leader but rather a guide. Giving information when it is needed. There are people that develop their own philosophies so it is not a matter of us coming into their community, thinking we know everything and giving them the answers. It's a different approach. Hopefully with different results. It takes a lot of time and effort and sticking to it.

Mark: *Have you worked with any tenants' or renters' groups?*

Camille: I have not. But there are some in the Autonomous Zone who have in the past.

Mark: *Would that be a good approach?*

Camille: A tenants' group has had their meetings there in the past. That is one way to go about it. But I don't personally have the organizing skills that others have. But I am able to talk to and relate to people. So if someone with good organizing skills were to go to a renter's group, then I would be a good complement to that person. That partially has to do with time and energy—I really don't have it. So I have to pick and choose what I do. I raise a daughter and she's 25 now. So she's on her own. I'm in my late 40's and am trying to have a balance between what I do for myself and what I do for others. If I were 20 years younger and not married, I probably would have jumped right in.

Mark: *I'm 29 and have few responsibilities, I work at a cooperative bakery and have a lot of free time.*

Camille: We are all contributing. You are contributing by working in a different way at a cooperative bakery. I'm relating to people by associating myself with the Azone and talking to people. Everybody contributes in some way to the society we want to live in.

Mark: *What are some of the future plans and goals of the Azone?*

Camille: We are going to have a retreat. We will be talking about what we want out of

the Azone. It may be changing. We would like it strictly to be a clearinghouse. People can use the computers, get information. We would have some books and have a library, but downplay the bookstore aspect. There are so few of us and we are doing so many things—it's a matter of energy. Some of us are in our late 40's and 60's. Others are in their early 30's. Some are 18, 19 and 20. So it's a matter of pulling together all those energy levels. You certainly have a different energy level at 21 than you do at 47. Any viable group needs that disparity. Different generations. You need some that are extremely energetic and full of ideas and people who have been around a little longer so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. To bring some perspective and history and temper some things. It's a matter of pulling together our human resources and planning our future. But at any given time we so have few people who are really active.

We are also talking about buying a building with apartments. We could have the bookstore and a cultural arts space. I could do my dance and drumming. Have a kitchen.

Mark: *Perhaps it would be more sustainable, if the renters pay for some of the expenses.*

Camille: We've had to move from place to place and pay high rent because the community the Azone is in is gentrifying. It will be difficult to find a place we can afford, with so few people involved. We get grants from Crossroads, a local funder, but I don't know how much longer we will be getting those grants. You have to have committed people. And people in their twenties like to travel, which is fine. On the other hand it is hard to have a project without a core group of people who are committed and stay in town. The other challenge is money. If you can get some, you have to make sure those who put in more, do not have too much influence.

We need to build a community. Some people have children. We have one person in his 60's. We have to look after each other.

The Azone is informational as a clearinghouse and a place where people can come and get information to learn more about anarchism.

What is going to happen to me and my husband in the next 10 to 20 years. This society throws away its older people.

Mark: I'm 29 and already starting to think about that.

Camille: It gets very difficult to survive and afford insurance. With a cooperative project, we learn how to care for each other. We look out for each other.

Mark: Going in a different direction, do you feel that the black community would be more open to anarchism than leftism?

Camille: I think anarchism is the way to go. The best way to build a sense of empowerment for black people. The problem with spreading anarchism is certainly cultural. The movement is perceived as white. Part of the problem is that the church is very strong in the black community. We have to learn how to work around that. There are some anarchists over the years who were religious, but...

Mark: The Catholic Workers?

Camille: Yeah. But most anarchists don't believe in God. It's like the state. It's very hierarchical. That is a barrier to break through for the black community because that has been the salvation for the black community. Because you're constantly hitting your head against a brick wall everyday when you're out in society. All the bullshit and racism everyday. So the church has been a sanctuary.

Mark: A way for people to come together.

Camille: Right. It's very hard to break through that. You have to work around it by talking to groups, seeing what their goals are, and presenting a different way of doing things. Consensus-based as opposed to voting.

This whole thing about embracing leaders; I've certainly respected Martin Luther King, Malcolm X. Anarchism questions that whole mentality of leaders, some who know more than other people do. Anarchism seeks to empower people—they are so used to being told what to do for decades and centuries. Anarchism tries to present this idea that "you can do this" without someone telling you how. Once they do this and they feel empowered, you've accomplished something. Anarchism offers the best way. The electoral system will never work. It's a rigged game. The other leftist philosophies still believe in the state. They are too narrow in their thinking. Particularly the RCP, here, which is homophobic. The RCP-organized march against police brutality allowed several people to speak who were clearly homophobic which is unacceptable.

It's a matter of outreach. Dispelling the myths of what anarchism is and what anarchists are. We should really move when an opportunity presents itself, whether a march or rally or some issue where we look at it the same way as the march organizers. Like some school issue or some company closing where we can find something common to fight so that we can influence how things are done. This is very hard to do. Bill and I worked with a group on the south side. The leader was very charismatic—similar to Fred Hampton or Malcolm X. He was very authoritarian.

Mark: What kind of group was it?

Camille: They had rehabbed a house on the south side that was like a "war zone." The leader of the group was flawed. All of us are flawed. He had a very good class analysis but he beat his girlfriend. You find this dichotomy. Bill and I were part of a multi-ethnic support team for this group for a while, but things got bad. He ran it in a military style. As anarchists, we did our

best, but it didn't take. It was a learning experience.

Mark: How do you make the connections between respecting women, fighting racism and attacking capitalism?

Camille: It takes a lot of work. A lot of talking. Really sitting down with people one-on-one and taking them through the process. Sometimes you have an issue you are working around, and the realization comes a little faster. Outreach—going to others meetings. People may make the connection between racism and the government or sexism...but they feel if they

fight the individual "ism" everything will be ok. Capitalism uses all of that to divide people up to keep people fighting among themselves. It's the nature of capitalism. It's all connected. Racism, sexism and homophobia are all connected. There's a cross analysis that needs to be done to see where the connections are. More and more people are realizing that, although society is getting more conservative and patriotic. More people of color are seeing the connections and seeing that we are basically all in the same boat. ~~XXX~~

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Storefront location: 2012 W. Chicago



"More fun than Santa" Emma (Active Resistance planning guide) Tony Doyle

People who consider themselves revolutionaries sometimes have problems with balance because they have their whole lives taken up with political issues. I'm big on balance. You have to take care of yourself, take care of your body, and nurture your mind and spirit; otherwise, you're not a complete human being. So my dance and drumming balance that all out. It renews you and is pleasurable. Confronting the system is very stressful. Dance and drumming are political in their own way. Anytime you engage in dance or drumming, you free your spirit. -Camille-

CHICAGO

Darrell

On Black Queer Anarchist Activism

"It's a struggle to be a queer African-American anarchist."

Mark: You're involved with the A-Zone.
Darrell: Yeah, I've been involved with the A-Zone since the beginning.

Mark: Really? Wow. What has been your interest in it?

Darrell: Well, it was an anarchist run space. To me it was a way of staying plugged in to what was the best of the anarchist scene in Chicago. I've been an anarchist for a long time. That was my initial interest. Then I gave a lecture on the politics of Rhythm and Blues for the Autonomous Zone as a part of their Thinking Faction weekly informational series. As time progressed I became more and more involved.

Mark: What do you think has been the purpose of the A-Zone since it started?

Darrell: Well, that's been open for discussion ever since it started. I think the purpose was to organize an info-shop, a bookstore for the people, and a library, and a community for people to meet and organize politically.

LeAnne: How did the Azone people originally come together?

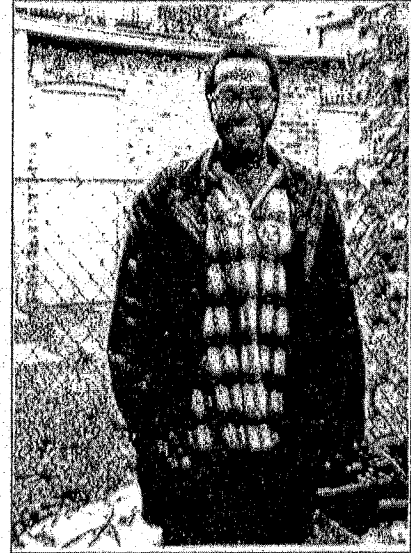
Darrell: Well mainly people came who were active in 1991 against the Gulf War. It used to be called Baklava Collective. They used to organize anarchist coffee houses at other people's homes. They decided to organize a space to take part in what was going on in other cities—the anarchist infoshop movement.

There were also people from the punk scene. There was a conflict with people who were more into the music scene, but not necessarily the political scene. And the other way around. The A-Zone has gone through different stages in its five year existence.

Mark: Do you reach out into the community a lot? Do you co-sponsor events or build coalitions?

Darrell: Yeah, the group does. I think we could do a lot better with outreach to the community in the immediate area, especially with minorities and people with less to gain from the system. Chicago is very segregated; so it makes it difficult. People in the A-zone and, in general, tend to stay within their own scene.

We just endorsed the National Day of Action for Women. I'm involved with that



"I don't want to be perceived as a liberal."

along with the Coalition for Positive Sexuality (CPS). With CPS, we handed out a booklet (*Just Say Yes!*) about safe sex, birth control information for teens. It's pro-queer and pro-feminist.

The A-Zone is going to support the Day of Action Against Police Brutality on October 22. But we are not going to endorse it because it is organized by the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party) and they're very heterosexist. We've had to struggle to get a queer representative to speak. The RCP doesn't want that to happen.

Mark: So you're involved with CPS? What have you specifically done with that group?

Darrell: Well the Coalition for Positive Sexuality, who are mostly women, hand the informational pamphlet, *Just Say Yes!*, out to teenagers as they enter high school before first period.

Mark: Does that get you in trouble?

Darrell: Yes. With parents and administrators. We usually get kicked out. But we do get some support from parents. We're told to move farther from the school or they call the cops.

LeAnne: Can't have sexuality, can we?

Darrell: That group came together out of the AIDS movement and the Reproductive Rights Movement, ACT UP (which I was part of), Queer Nation, and Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition,

No More Nice Girls and so on.

Mark: *Have you done other gay activism?*

Darrell: Yes I have over the past 20 years. Last night I went to an action against gay bashing. I was with some members of the Anti-Racist Action in a march. There's been a lot of abuse of gay men in the last few weeks. There was a small turn out, I would say sixty, seventy people. There's not much of a movement these days. In the last three years I organized a contingent of queers of African descent to march in African Liberation Day Parade on the West Side that's organized by the Black United Front, which is sort of a liberal nationalist organization. They were sort of opposed to us marching in the parade; that is, they didn't want us to have a banner. The A-Zone was there for support which was a good thing.

LeAnne: *Did you end up getting to hold those banners?*

Darrell: Yes we did.

Mark: *So, as an anarchist, what do you bring to queer black activism?*

Darrell: Well, it seems I'm the only African-American gay anarchist activist in Chicago, so I'm alone. It's really hard. I kind of stick out like a sore thumb. I do it in writing and speaking. What I'm fighting for is a free society in which people can make real choices regardless of economic situation or sexual orientation.

Mark: *We talked to Christian last night about the queer scene in Chicago. He says as an anarchist he tries to get people to 'out' themselves and to address who has the power and how they use it. Do you have any comments on that?*

Darrell: Well, I guess as far as the A-Zone is concerned, I seem to be involved more in the political gay scene. I guess Christian is more involved in the cultural and social service aspects. I have a problem with the way the A-Zone marched in the Gay Pride parade. I wanted a more clear anarchist presence. People were a bit tepid about that. I think people were afraid of alienating the anarchist community.

LeAnne: *So you wanted them to be a little more outspoken?*

Darrell: I wanted them to be a lot more outspoken (laughs). I wanted them to be a lot more political. For example, the last time the A-Zone had a contingent at a parade, the focus was something about

fast food. It was so silly, it didn't have much relevance. The people watching the parade didn't really get it. The parade seemed to serve more of a social function—apolitical.

Mark: *So you wanted to have banners that said "Abolish Capital, We're Queer"?*

Darrell: Or "Abolish Queer Assimilation". The Gay and Lesbian movement has been co-opted into consumerism by the professional white middle class gay men and to some extent middle class white lesbians. They wrecked the original post-Stonewall movement. The same thing is happening right now with the AIDS movement. Though there are still ACT-UP groups in other cities, ACT-UP went under in Chicago in 1995. People thought AIDS should be a single issue white gay male fight. The AIDS issue should not be connected with racism or sexism or classism. Especially now that AIDS is

I try to push for anarchism and queer liberation as opposed to gay and lesbian rights which are about assimilation—to be a part of the system. To look like our oppressors.

hitting more folks of color. Not to mention that once Clinton got elected, they thought that Democrats would save us. I wanted a contingent in the Gay Pride parade that said "We're against Assimilation" from the A-Zone. We're against gays being police officers or in the military. Marriage is assimilation.

Mark: *Why don't you tell us more about the talk you're giving tonight?*

Darrell: Well, I'm going to be giving a talk about the state of the AIDS movement. I was a founding member of ACT UP Chicago and what I want to talk about is how ACT UP Chicago started, which was actually out of an organization called DAGMARR (Dykes and Gay Men Against Racism and Repression) and what led to the downfall of the AIDS movement. I'd say 1990 was about the peak of the movement.

Mark: *The split between people who wanted to use direct action and talk about capitalist repression versus people who just wanted to talk about AIDS?*

Darrell: Mainly they wanted to talk about AIDS as a white gay male disease, so to speak. No race, economic, or gender issues. They just wanted to go to the bars. It evolved into more of a social scene that

didn't want to lobby. Then there were the activists who saw the links between issues. So the split kind of peaked when ACT UP didn't want to participate in the protests against the Persian Gulf War. Queer Nation participated in these protests.

Mark: *So what do you think is your main focus as an anarchist?*

Darrell: I don't think I have one focus. I guess I want to liberate people and create a better life for all of us. I've been involved in queer and economic issues. The issue for me is smashing the entity of the police department and military.

Mark: *What kind of African-American organizations have you worked with?*

Darrell: In the past I've worked with African American Women in Defense of Ourselves. The problem is that Chicago, and nationally, the organizations of color are primarily Democratic Party organizations.

I've been involved in the Coalition for Adolescent Risk Reduction. I think it was an experiment initiated by the Center for Disease Control—this coalition of social service organizations across the U.S. It's mostly a black and latino environment. I try to push for anarchism and queer liberation as opposed to gay and lesbian rights which is about assimilation—to be a part of the system. To look like our oppressors. Fighting for legislation was a mistake in the 60's African-American movement, which got legislation but was far from liberation. Things have gone backwards since then.

Mark: *Do you think you've had some success? Are there two "sore thumbs" in Chicago instead of just one?*

Darrell: It's a struggle to be a queer African-American anarchist.

Mark: *You must have some influence when you tell people, "I'm an anarchist."*

Darrell: I don't want to be perceived as a liberal.

LeAnne: *You mentioned that the civil rights movement went backwards....*

Darrell: It concentrated on the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. It continued with poor people march, it concentrated on being a part of the capitalist entity. The difference between the black community in the 60's and now is that they don't see much hope. In the 60's there was a radical movement but all that got smashed or got co-opted by Jesse Jackson or others. [X]

Coalition for Positive Sexuality, 3712 N. Broadway #191, Chicago, IL 60613 773-604-1654 cps@positive.org <http://www.positive.org/cps>

Bill and Tony

At the Autonomous Zone

"By working collectively we are experimenting with running our lives collectively. Our experience proves that you don't need bosses."



James Mumm: Why did you get involved (help start) in an Infoshop? Where does it fit into your strategy for revolution?

Bill: I was involved in all of the four Azone spaces, but got fully involved in the third space. I was in SDS and Weatherman for a short time — those groups were based on a lot of theory and talk. I didn't see many institutions being built, although a lot of action of an illegal nature took place. I didn't have the experiences of having a free space back then. I saw the infoshop movement as something tangible, very different from other anarchists in Chicago that simply put out fliers and had discussions. I was very excited about the idea of having a space where people can come together and have community.

Tony: I wanted to have a physical space that people could come to and get familiar with anarchist ideas—a small place where people could have solidarity with each other. That solidarity feels more real because of the physical space. The Azone is an attempt to set up the community that you would like to see in larger society — non-hierarchical relationships, appreciation of the individuals involved and a real respect for people. Community can be a focal point for resources that you can share. By working collectively we are experimenting with running our lives collectively. Our experience proves that you don't need bosses to organize society. Our work here is a small example of what can be done without hierarchical relationships.

Bill: The infoshop movement has a

...an ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, cultural and political needs and aspirations... based on values of COOPERATION, responsibility, equality and SOLIDARITY...

historical continuity with the anteneos (workers centers) in Spain. My strategy for revolution starts with building concrete institutions based on peoples' needs (food, shelter, info, etc.). Infoshops can meet some of those needs. A lot of people don't like to go to meetings, but they do enjoy building culture together — concrete, real activity. When you have a space that can offer that sense, it can bring people together — just look at churches. Infoshops offer a community base for people. This doesn't mean you don't build for revolution in other ways. Infoshops are just one part of a revolutionary strategy. There must also be outreach beyond the infoshop, community organizing, health collectives, alternative schools, etc.

Infoshops are simply the easiest to get off the ground, in large part because you don't need special expertise. Just get a space, get some books, and have a willingness to talk and be with people. Those are the first steps in the right direction.

Tony: Infoshops are important as a primary way of educating people about anarchism. The biggest thing that anarchists should be concerned with is solidarity with working class folks—and bringing middle class people to a class conscious perspective. Just because you were born into the middle class doesn't mean you can't reject the middle class—reject the value system and become conscious of the nature of oppression. This brings an awareness of the root causes of suffering. We're here to show that you can do things without using an oppressive hierarchical structures to get things done. Together with infoshops and other alternative institutions, there has to be an emphasis on oppositional politics.

Bill: An infoshop is a space in which people can relate to each other in a way that they can't anywhere else. This has an impact on people's everyday lives (family, work, etc.), through relating to each other in a consensus way. At the Azone we work in common on issues and problems. This space allows people to address issues that

are a part of their everyday lives in a new way. This is revolutionary.

Tony: A working class focus doesn't mean you ignore race, gender, sexuality, etc., when analyzing oppression. We're building class consciousness in the working class, class traitors in the middle class, and throughout dealing with identity issues so that those issues do not become a stumbling block to class action and the ability of people to run society in a non-hierarchical manner.

Bill: Infoshops exist to create social revolution. The key is in the nature of our social relationships—how we relate to each other, how we relate in groups, how we meet our material needs, etc. All mainstream institutions are hierarchical, infoshops move beyond them by offering a place to get information, practice new social relationships, and then carry the experience to anti-authoritarian relationships beyond the space. How do you build consensus? How is the debate framed? How do you change the environment in order to change the relationships? Consensus process can be used as an organizing tool that alters peoples' way of behaving—from authoritarian to anti-authoritarian.

James: How has your Infoshop evolved since it began? How is it run? How has all that changed over time?

Bill: On a biological level, we have a smaller toilet than ever before.

Tony: I've been involved at the Azone for two years. We have made a real attempt to make this new space [the Azone's fourth] a very nice place to be. We're trying to be accessible to a broader range of people. People have, and rightfully so, biases against peeling paint and dirt, messy, filthy, sloppy—apparently disorganized—spaces. So we're now experimenting with being aesthetically accessible. There are currently ten people in the Azone collective, all volunteer.

Bill: There are historic problems with anarchism being deliberately misunderstood and misrepresented as unstructured, so spontaneous that people do whatever

they want whenever they want. Mackno's more centralized organizational structure leads to greater organizational discipline. We can build a culture in the anarchist movement that has structure, consensus and responsibility. Consensus process empowers people because of the equal responsibility to give and take. When people understand that they have a responsibility to themselves and other people it creates a value structure that builds self-discipline. Such discipline does not have to come from people who are seen as leaders. Discipline is something we share with each other—recognizing that answers can come from the people who are quiet or slow. This is the third way.

James: Who is your membership?

Tony: We currently have a fairly decent level of diversity, unusual in the anarchist or punk movements. There are 2 African-Americans, 1 Latino, 2 Polish immigrants, and 2 people over 55. The average age at our last meeting was 40, ranging from 18 to 63. There are queer and bisexual people, although we do need more women involved.

Bill: The women that have stayed involved are strong, articulate, aggressive women.

Tony: I felt there was a greater egalitarian element a few months ago, but that dwindled away recently. I have come to realize that shifting leadership is okay. I would like to see a more participatory group.

Bill: We need to find a way to do away with informal hierarchy. The Azone has had a core of leadership since the very beginning.

Mainstream society conditions us to accept relationships that reinforces hierarchy. In order to equalize power, people need opportunities to participate fully in groups. The Azone uses a consensus process, but what does that mean in terms of taking a role in a meeting? The goal of consensus is everybody facilitating the meeting together.

James: Who are your constituents?

Tony: The Azone started off closely tied to anarcho-punk culture, but now that element isn't as strong. Lately though we've been tabling at Los Crudos shows, so we've actually been getting back into it a bit. Many of our current collective members wouldn't go to a punk show. We have a broader representation of society than ever before. Our constituents are people who know people in the Azone. We get some random people in to the space, and a lot of travelers. Many people know about the Azone because of its connection to the broader infoshop movement. There is still a strong counter-cultural youth element. We need to have more folks coming in. In order for more people to be a part of the Azone, it needs to relate to their agenda.

Bill: We now have a greater ability for people to call themselves anarchists instead of anti-authoritarians or autonomists. We are reaching out to the whole city—not just the neighborhood.

In terms of relating to the people in the neighborhood, we are still doing it through other groups—like the West Town Tenants Union. Vic has been talking about setting up a drop in time for tenants' rights counseling. This might be a concrete way for WTTU to use the Azone. It is necessary to fight for day to day reform—as long as you have your eyes on the prize of revolution. When you think you have everything good and don't need a revolution—then there's a problem. For example, the Spanish

anarchists fought for working conditions reform. They synthesized a revolutionary vision and with a practical approach to dealing with everyday problems. In order for infoshops to take on this role people need to get a lot more serious. I understand this from working at Metropolitan Tenants Organization—dealing with a broad range of people: folks on public assistance, food stamps, people with subsidized housing, etc. I work with a very diverse group of people, diverse racially and economically. As anarchists we need to relate to ordinary folks. Many people see anarchism as a great idea, but unfortunately it's seen as a social club. Anarchists feel alienated and also alienate people. We have to be appealing and open to people who may eat meat, make sexist comments, act or think in other oppressive ways.

Bill: The Black Panther's breakfast program is the classic example of radical social service. Volunteer projects should be built so that others can run with them. I come from a grassroots

organizing, labor organizing perspective. I first got involved as a youth outreach worker in the projects with the YMCA. The way to make anarchism a practical thing is to bring it to where people are at. You have to show people that anarchism is about food, shelter and clothing. We have to show people that our process is a different way than they are used to.

Tony: People are isolated out there, some may read *Maximum Rock 'n Roll* on a regular basis, some may feel part of a community that makes sense to them. We can find those people and they can find us. We are definitely looking for more people to get involved. I think that our experience mirrors that of others across the country. We want the Azone to be an open and inclusive place.

Bill: People that are anarchists or inclined to anarchism need to be building an anarchist movement. Recently, I have seen a number of anarchist-minded people working in solidarity with state-oriented people. But those anarchists are not involved in the decision-making process like they would be as part of an anarchist process. Outside of the consensus

process there is very little room for criticism. People find themselves always on the outside looking in.

Tony: I believe in the theory that in a world of oppression you find the most oppressed and work with them.

Bill: I believe in the theory you have to start with your own oppression. If you get involved with people who do not share similar oppressions, then there is not a real relationship taking place.

Tony: Maybe we've let people down, come short of what we claimed to be, not provided what they want, and so they're fed up with this particular place—they go somewhere else.

Bill: This says something about us, and it also says something about them. In the end it's nothing but liberalism. When you find other people who share your oppression and you work on it together—then you're about real revolution. Otherwise it's not a real relationship.

James: What is the ideal role for an Infoshop in the revolutionary movement?

continued on page 52



Emma on the beach/Tony Doyle

continued from page 54

Tony: The ideal role for infoshops is that of a sparkplug of sorts. Infoshops are a place to practice new roles and social relationships, a place for information, a place to make you feel sane, less isolated and alienated. The Azone can build self-confidence through experience, perhaps even encouraging people to start up their own workers collective. To make all this happen we will need a greater number of people taking on greater responsibility. This means spreading out responsibilities - people can stay sane, feel involved and participate. Everyone should feel that their role is important, ideally without some folks feeling like they have a major role and others a minor one. We must also have a real serious approach to publicity. I think that many more people would be interested in anarchism and the Azone-if they knew about it. ~~XXXX~~

Interview by James Mummu, October, 1997. Azone contact info with "Capville" interview.

52

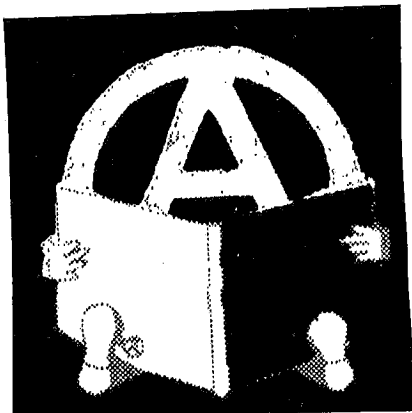
A SPECIAL THANKS TO: The Anarchist History Nerd Brigade, AK Press, the Long Haul Infoshop and Slingshot Collectives, Media Island and the Timberland Regional Library where I finally got this together for the 2015 24 Hours 'Zine Thing.

Neither East Nor West NYC (NENW-NYC) was a group that formed in the 1980s to form relationships of solidarity with comrades in the East. They organized, published, and otherwise raised awareness of repression in the East. With a focus on political prisoners, in many ways, NENW-NYC functioned as a de facto anarchist black cross.

We're excited to share this history by Bob McGlynn as part of our larger project of uncovering recent anarchist history.

NEITHER EAST NOR WEST NYC

a De Facto Anarchist Black Cross History, 1980-1994



anarchisthistory.noblogs.org

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these & other
titles, please go to:



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<http://anarchisthistory.noblogs.org>

In this second edition of "The A-Zone and A Decade of Anarchy in Chicago," editor Alex Iwasa and other contributors share reflections on The Autonomous Zone (or "A-Zone"), an infoshop that existed in Chicago in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In many ways, the A-Zone was typical of the experiments in counter-institutions and infoshops undertaken by anarchists in the 1990s and as such the writings within cover an important aspect of recent anarchist history. It gives an interesting snapshot of the infoshops of the 1990s and the related anarchist milieu. Beyond the A-Zone, the zine talks about the Love & Rage anarchist federation, the anarchist networking project (Dis)Connections and the related Network of Anarchist Collectives, the Chicago-based projects Baklava Collective and Wind Chill Factor. Also covered are Food Not Bombs, Anarchist Black Cross, and Anti-Racist Action.



The Political Pre-History of Love & Rage:

Anarchist struggle in the 1980s and 1990s

The A-Zone & A Decade of Anarchy in Chicago 2nd Edition

