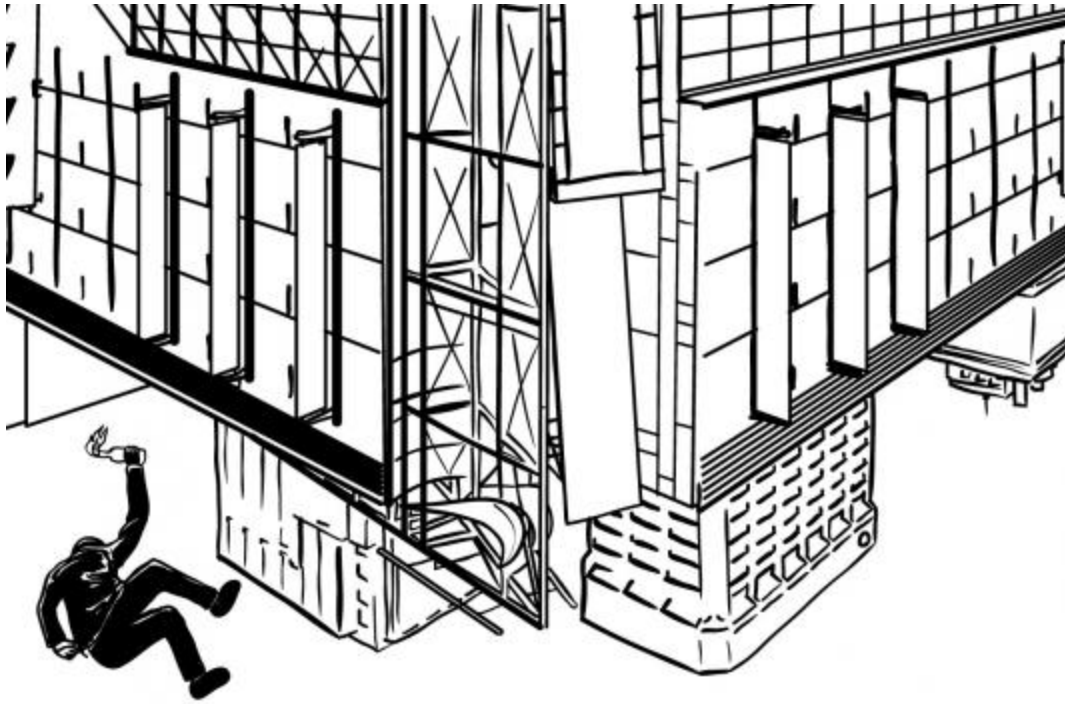


# CONFLICTUAL WISDOM

*Revolutionary Introspection  
Towards the Preservation of the  
Anarchist Individual & Community*



*Published, Compiled, & Written By:  
An Array of Anonymous Anarchists*



*Some years ago at an event I threw, a comrade visiting whom I respected a great deal asked me how I continue to be committed to preserving my life as an anarchist in struggle. I told them,*

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### **Conflictual Wisdom**

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*“What the fuck else am I going to do or feel?  
I mean when you analyze this society for what it is and how it works  
as a system of domination and exploitation, what other approach  
can you take unless you begin to advocate for it.”*





# DISCONTENT

## **\*BEFORE ANYTHING**

- \*Anti-CopyRight*
- \*Independent Distribution Strongly Encouraged*
- \*For Entertainment Purposes Only (ACAB)*
- \*Not for Profit Publication*
- \*Steal As Needed (We Did)*
- \*Slowly Put-Together 2016-2018*

## **DEDICATIONS**

- Dedicated to those in prison or who have lost their lives resisting the world imposed upon us.*
- Dedicated to those who choose integrity over inconvenience (stop snitching!).*
- To those who choose the hard route.*
- To the excluded, unsponsored, and unwelcome.*
- To the stressed, confused, and struggling.*
- To the sincere, passionate, and unforgiving.*

*Made with love and rage.  
Spring 2018*

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# ON WHAT WE



# HAVE HERE

*“Want to see the face of a coward?  
It’s the back of his head as he runs from the battle.”*

This project was an attempt at public introspection. It was an attempt to reach out there and see what I got in response to asking questions and sharing contemplation on public forums and private discussions. I didn’t get all the answers I wanted, but the path I’ve chosen is a path of permanent struggle and conflict, and resolution isn’t something I can expect.

Living within a society you don’t approve of that coerces you into hypocrisy, or never experiencing a free society yet fighting for one through an inner desire or theoretical dream of something else, or being forced to constantly compromise and degrade ourselves in order to simply survive, not to mention simultaneously struggle; is a recipe for inevitable confusion.

However I have gotten some insightful responses, and in the process of trying to coordinate the organization of this publishing project, I have discovered many ways to challenge my disappointments for the better, or to challenge my own self-criticism for the more constructive. I have had deep conversations with people outside of these pages, and while I question if there is enough here to answer any of the questions that lie at this project’s foundation, I still pushed myself to put something together hoping to push for more dialogue on the subject of preserving our movements and individual struggles for the long term (especially in light of Trump, climate change, and so-called hopeless end times).

I honestly don’t even know if this project will help or confuse. I think it helped me, but I’m still confused. However, I accept this inevitability, and at least I have some tangible things to blame for my confusion, or to understand what prevents me and those I love from our full potentialities as revolutionaries and as free people.

I don’t know where life will take me. Maybe to the countryside in search of a happier escapist-ish autonomy. Or maybe to the countryside to feel happier with my environment, yet also stand up to the rampant rural fascism that goes un-confronted in the states. Maybe I’ll remain in the cities in search of contributing to more visibly active anarchist struggles, or to feel more aware of the world as it is.

Am I doing enough? What degree of inconvenience to my survival is ethical for me? Do I even have such power or privilege to make a choice on the matter? Is it possible to feel any happiness in a society that I know to be so awful? Will I end up in prison? Will I die young (still a bit young-ish) or old?

Contemplation is frustrating when we are all so alienated. And while we are told that anything is possible these days, the infinite possibilities with which we are presented with leave us rootless and confused, overwhelmed, desensitized, and alienated. Even amidst this so called infinite realm of technological and consumer possibility, I will always take pride in my choice to seek more openings towards a free life and society, on my own terms (even if such attempts never materialize in the absolute, this sort of pride and willful disobedience is a victory in and of itself).

Regardless, this project and its creation come at a very troubling and existentially challenging time for me, and for the world. The endless questioning can leave you feeling bleak and helpless. We are questioning our enemy so much, that we sometimes turn against ourselves, in the sense of trying to understand why it is we are so pathetic in our resistance (even if such an assumption is mathematically flawed considering the technological apparatus of oppression and repression we face).

It's not just our own questioning and constant struggle to keep our eyes on the road. It's dealing with the constant threat of imprisonment, judicial intimidation, and general consequences of our choice to be in permanent conflict with domination. Of our choice to essentially be anarchist revolutionaries. This can lead to panic attacks, substance abuse, and a need to take a step back in order to hold it together. This project intends to address issues such as this with the intention of understanding such a step back as a necessary tool in self-preservation, but never grounds for betraying our movement, communities, or integrity.

This project culminates not necessarily with conclusions but with a hope of provoking or humbly guiding those sharing these struggle.

I present this to the world with all its efforts, and finish it firmly establishing that I still know I am on the right side of history. This is a victory for me, and something to get out of bed for in the morning. I feel nothing will break this commitment of my mind and heart.

I send love to those I love. I send hate to those I hate.

For an existence defined by passion, depth, desire, and struggle, for a community that is borderless and there for each other, let's heal each other's wounds and prevent each other from burning out, or at least keep a consistent dialogue on the subject in order to better shape our communities to be stronger against the will of our enemies. In whatever way we do this, we must get creative and challenge our hyperbolic traditions by making time for humble realities and discussions. We have to do this before it's too late and we lose one another to the cancerous inflictions of social alienation.

The name of this project is indeed corny. Yet wisdom is defined as having intelligence or insight based on experience, and conflict is something that defines anarchists. Anarchist struggle is a relentless unforgiving permanent conflict with all facets of domination. Therefore the intention here is to provide voices of experience in the pursuit of remaining in permanent conflict. Hence, such wisdom can lie at the foundation of our battles, and in this case, the preservation of our movement.

*-Anonymous / 2018*



# THE CALL OUTS

*'To My Comrades' &  
'A Second try' :  
Seeking Conflictual Wisdom*



*Two online call-outs were made for this project. One was made in 2016 before the election of Trump, and the other was made in 2017. The call outs are printed here to help to provide a context behind the intentions of this project, and for the chosen texts, original contributions, and responses received.*

## PREFACE 2016

This letter (or rant) was originally meant as a therapeutic stream of consciousness for an existentially confused revolutionary anarchist. It is now being presented as a letter or call out requesting written contributions on the subject of 'burning out', or a broader community goal of creating a diverse and revolutionary dialogue in opposition to the drop out culture that can be associated with the term.

The letter below was not necessarily written by those coordinating this project. It was anonymously submitted at a political meeting somewhere in the United States.

We expect and desire a diversity in the responses made, both from the perspectives of those writing them, as well the advice or reactions shared. This letter is being shared both privately and publicly. It is being sent to comrades in the states and abroad, and we hope to put together something that can both help strengthen the confidence and passion of existing anarchists, and help to create a dialogue that will aid in preserving the strength of revolutionary communities and individuals of the future.

## TO MY COMRADES

What does it mean to grow older as an anarchist; feeling the same discontent, yet, growing to see even more confusing challenges in not surrendering to it? I have always privately explored these types of concerns and questions with peers who share in my years of being in permanent conflict with this society. Those with whom I find affinity in facing the inevitable existential challenges that come with maintaining such a stance in everyday life.

Publicly, in writing or propaganda, I have never imagined myself using the attention of our movement, community, or milieu (whatever you call it) to help solve such personal, and potentially whiny internal strife. But in contrast to the hyper-academic and escapist "Nihilistic"\* trends sweeping specifically American anarchist circles, I am asking these questions with a goal of making my sight more clear and my discontent less debilitating. I ask these questions with the goal of overcoming the counter-revolutionary considerations of this volatile "realist" thinking, to become a stronger anarchist; stubborn as ever.

I do not expect victory; I recognize that to be an anarchist, to advocate for the destruction of all facets of domination, is a far fetched desire, which doesn't culminate in winning or losing. Struggle is defined in a refusal to forfeit a stance and side, especially if the odds are against you. But with growing older, with repeated loss and depression, my stroll down this trajectory of struggle could use a helping hand.

I have been active for over half my life. Well we could say I have identified formally as an anarchist in some way or another for over half my life (which does not mean always being active). I became an anarchist at a very early age. I have been imprisoned, assaulted, and harassed by an array of everyday life enemies and high figure authorities over choosing this stance and staying true to it. I don't

regret one moment of this. I feel that through these years there have been times where I have been forced to question my own sincerity. When I had to ask myself would snitching ever be an option before prison. Where I needed to find the strength in myself beyond the social scene pressures of my politics (or anti-politics) and overcome the privilege of considering fear before action. Times where I had to set a line in the sand as to what I could and could not allow into my life from this coercive fascist civilization regardless of its inconvenience. I have worked through these obstacles concluding only that I truly am an anarchist, and the position is deeply important to me and my character. At this point, to even consider regret based on what a mathematician or scientist would call futile goals and efforts would only humiliate over half of my existence, and more disturbingly disrespect the friendships and experiences that have grown from my anarchist life. But when you see the same stories again and again, personal and political, positive and negative, what do you do when your mind faithlessly wonders how to keep onward? Is our community one that can support each other through these mental and emotional challenges?

I do not have children or property, and with years of saving from an array of (conventionally speaking) modest to premium service jobs, I have the luxury to travel a bit and take off work. With this privilege to travel, I see the same fucking thing all over the world. Capitalism is truly winning almost everywhere on earth, displaying the same excesses of the wealthy across the board, and extreme poverty of everyone else (It really is fucking only different based on inflation and different degrees of social diversity). I see the world getting rapidly worse, technically and socially, at the expense of the natural world, non-human species, and the health and sustenance of most of humanity (the less "fortunate" portion of humanity, that is overwhelmingly most of it.). The internet doesn't help me to feel any better. I watch poor and people of color murdered, on video, almost weekly. Only to see the same varying reactions by both those protesting and those repressing. I read about ISIS crucifixions and its booming sex-trafficking market while I am bored on the train. And when I really become obsessed with understanding how fucked and miserable this global capitalist dystopia is, I just start to research the realities of nuclear waste and nuclear maintenance. These things make me feel small, they make me question myself as an anarchist. They are the thoughts that cut the time short for victorious feelings I may have from a cathartic experience in the streets, or the inspiration I would feel from discontent communities and individuals resisting the oppression/repressions of the world today. They bring me back to a feeling of private humility, I am not ashamed of, but concerned is a counter-revolutionary instinct not to share with my revolutionary community. The feeling that highlights the grim reality of lottery odds that my anarchist desires face.

I have pride as an anarchist, but pride for me isn't something I can always use to keep my head up simply surviving everyday life, with all its compromises.

This year I have had the opportunity to observe some of the most beautiful street-demos I have ever seen. They were both far from my home, and expected. They were amazing, truly cathartic, but by the next morning, I quickly returned to the harsh reality of normalcy. It seemed that that is all they were, cathartic or therapeutic

(which is maybe a good thing, but it can't be the only thing, cause I am not fighting just to feel free in my life, but to be free), a refreshment, like a night out that was unusually fun. But as I traveled to both instances of demonstrated rage and joy, I thought in retrospect that I was experiencing an almost choreographed play. A violent theater in the streets tolerated and expected by both my comrades and my enemies. That with my foreign participation and selfish contributions I was simply embracing a controversial tradition as opposed to pushing insurrection against capitalism and the state. I would leave and start to question projections on the experience I would make as an anarchist, versus realities of my being there as a tourist and the array of tensions and histories going on that do not stem from my everyday life back home. I felt that I was appropriating these acts of planned and annual resistance to the state for my own existential interests (a much less annoying appropriation than something like yoga or eastern spirituality by the west, but still an appropriation in a way), even though I simultaneously firmly appreciate the violent display of solidarity and horizontal social bonding (something I truly feel and wanted to express to my unknown friends in the streets) that I tell myself took place. I walked away feeling like an accomplished tourist in my eventual confusing retrospective analysis; like I got to go to a great party and have great sex (these comparisons are awful but I am trying to expose my thoughts and feelings). I don't regret either moment though of course. In fact the memories of these instances will forever make me smile and help cope with my thoughts that accompany this consideration of failure or stagnation. The return to normalcy that follows once this moment of revolutionary catharsis resides, again and again, year after year, is something that can rot in the back of your mind; coming out in the form of panic attacks, drinking, or depression.

Right now in 2016, I do believe that since I started to consciously identify my frustrations and desires as anarchist, there is a real yet subtle growth in displays of anarchist activity and tensions we have solidarity with in North America; most importantly not just by or with self-proclaimed anarchists. I feel that anarchist methods for displaying discontent is being generalized by the grassroots efforts of proletarian and non-politicized oppressed/repressed communities. I believe that anarchists are reaching a broader audience, whether it be due to the internet or the re-surfacing of American riots and strikes. But this is in comparison to when I was born in the 80s, during the Reagan years.

With reading about what is happening now in the states and comparing it with periods throughout the 20th century I have this awful idea that I am witnessing a society repeating itself. These riots resemble the 60s, just with inflated damage estimates, politically correct reporting, and a far more equipped police force (Clearly riots such as the Detroit and LA riots of the 60s had far more destruction created by proletarian communities. This most likely is just due to the advancements in American policing and punishment). Additionally the earth seems to be one giant fucking cigarette for the industrial capitalists to smoke before us all, until they finally get cancer and bring us all out with them. You then look outside the west though, and realize that while there are exceptions, we are a serious minority in this world. I also can't help but fixate on the lengths our enemies that acknowledge us will go to ruin our lives. Of course we would pursue the same depths in regards to our goals

for them, but you can't help but feel intimidated by the depth of their resources. Resources that surpass any logistical capability of anarchists if it came down to it. These are a few thoughts I contemplate when I search myself for new motivations to feel optimistic (Or not become victim to self-imposed normalcy).

These are considerations I can't help but to ponder. Yet I want to push for a non-cynical reaction to them. Problem is, I am finding that harder and harder to do so. I have this lingering depression about my conscious obliviousness to a most likely epic fail. Also I face a constant anxiety of not doing enough, or anything at all. And whether or not I find a balance in that regards, I will always have anxiety about the constant and tenacious threats of the state for simply choosing this subversive stance.

I do believe in community and solidarity. I think these are the most crucial things that anarchism in reality has contributed to my life. I will never turn my back on either, and for this I reach out to the anarchist community and express my solidarity as a committed enemy of the state, yet ask if anyone has any words of wisdom on my belligerent hope shattering contemplation?

I am wondering if this is clear, I hope it is not too clear in a way; to reflect the confusion I am trying to share. However this is interpreted, I am writing anonymously, not sharing my race, gender (or lack of), or ethnicity. I am not sharing my particular political team or ideological association when it comes to my anarchist rhetoric. I am reaching out believing that I am not the only one going through this. Also that I am not the only one going through this or has gone through this that looks for answers that help to stay the course, retaining my anarchistic passions, and not seeking a way out by passive Nihilism or sub-cultural escapism.

Maybe your gut reaction is to tell me to get a therapist or quit your whining, but it is important to realize that I am as dedicated as I can be to our movement/tension. To dismiss me would in a way set a precedent to perpetuate a drop-out culture in anarchism that we have seen repeated throughout our history. A drop-out culture that has enabled snitching, sexual assault, resource theft, and exposure to the state.

This is an experiment. I am writing this with the intention of putting together a publication of responses to these thoughts. I am seeking responses that can contribute to a dialogue that will help our minds and hearts to stay free of counter-revolutionary Nihilism and cynicism. We have beautiful voices as anarchists in this world. We reserve the only true liberatory position among a wretched humanity. I believe that we can create a dialogue within our communities that can start to help answer these questions and prevent a re-occurring dropout culture or the neglect of emotional dialogue that can strengthen ourselves and our subversive communities. I have been very broad here, but I am reaching out just as widely.

*\*I have always felt that these folks claiming to be Nihilists in the states specifically have misrepresented Nihilism. Something such as complete negation of society and its reified institutions is something that i consider very much to be an important position for anarchists to take from or embrace completely. On the other hand it is being used not in the way it was materialized by Russian Nihilists a hundred and fifty years ago, or interpreted by Situationists contributing to a push away from their leftist origins; it is being used as an academic discourse that excludes individuals who are without the proper rhetoric, belittles manifestations of negation that are not in line with the fantasies of those advocating for this post-modern(ish) approach to Nihilist thinking, and pushes for a discourse that is insular in it's nature; incapable of being generalized to other humans. While Nihilism today has done some interesting things in places such as Chile or Greece (Of course it is important to note that Greek Nihilism while having fantastic actions and beautiful writing, and I myself feel a sense of solidarity with due to these things, has not been an entirely positive element of the overall Greek anarchist movement, and not to be put on some pedestal.) The states is not comparable. We are left with a simpsons-comic-book-seller-type-pretension of Nihilism in the states.*



-October 30th, 2016 / Strefi Hill / Exarchia





## A SECOND TRY

It has been over a year since my last attempt at this. I find myself writing this rough draft call out from the same historic hill I wrote from a little over a year ago. Originally I wrote a cathartic piece regarding my own existential issues as a revolutionary anarchist. I typically have always wrote purely propaganda, but with time, feelings of disappointment or defeat are inevitable, affecting my ability to be so classically hyperbolic in what I say

With this, I found the need to write a public piece last year regarding my issues with helplessness and my struggle to continue onward in permanent conflict with this society, as a self-proclaimed insurrectionary anarchist. I wrote a piece a little over a year ago titled 'To My Comrades'. I wanted to turn it into a larger project that compiled different responses to the piece, hopefully creating a forum or publication of mixed voices in struggle on the issue of keeping strong, or generally just helping each other to get out of bed in the morning as anarchists in a horribly overwhelming era. To put it simply, I was humbly searching for advice and inspiration from other anarchists, and wanted to share whatever I discovered on this journey for help.

I believe that there are multiple benefits to creating a safe space for dialogue such as this: steering folks away from the counter-revolutionary directions of passive nihilism and post-modernism, or sharing with younger folks the obstacles that typically come with time as a revolutionary, and how some have chosen to overcome them.

*To put it simply, I was humbly searching for advice and inspiration from other anarchists, and wanted to share whatever I discovered on this journey for help.*

I thought that by exposing some humility and existential contemplation, maybe I could start to encourage a dialogue that helps answer questions that tend to push folks away from the movement over time, or lead people to consider betrayal in the form of snitching or 'ghosting' as an option in their lives. After a year of insanity for the world, I thought to try again.

I received a few contributions to my last call out, but it was not enough I think to compile this project the way I intended. Additionally, I was faced with an experience of harsh intimidation by the state, which pushed me away from writing publicly. And in private discussions I have had with some comrades I respect dearly who appreciated the call out, they claimed an interest in contributing, and I hope this second attempt will pressure some results.

So I write this in hope of a larger response, as well as a subliminal statement to the scum - boys in blue (or suits) - that I won't shut up in fear.

One year later I still feel both equally confused as I did the last time I wrote something like this, yet proudly feeling equally passionate about never wanting to forfeit my position as an anarchist, or neglect my revolutionary disdain I have for this vile civilization that serves the interest of a disgusting elite and their despicable followers, especially considering how many folks bite their tongues these days when I am like, "fucking told you so!"

Since the original piece a lot has happened.

For one, Trump has come into power. Essentially the United States has become more honest as the fascist nation it is. Although unbelievable in some ways, and equally terrifying, Trump has actually radically benefited the anarchist community. Whether in the form of the 'anti-fa' trend, or the adoption of anarchist street tactics and strategy as an acceptable form of political protest many would have frowned upon prior to Trump. I would say that anarchism has entered mainstream dialogue in the states even more so than during "occupy" or the Seattle days of the anti-globalization movement.

Whether Clinton or Trump, government wins. I didn't vote, it wouldn't matter if it did, and I am not so stupid to consider this a mistake of any kind. However with Trump, some things like the earth's impending demise, the emboldenment of the hyper-rich and grassroots fascists, nuclear war, and the volatile content of the reactionary white world; has me a bit shook if I'm honest. Where do I run? Where do I fight? How does shit keep getting more ridiculously awful?

However I choose a position still to not blame this particular administration, but the system that has given it power. All political parties that intend to repress us and participate in the current system whether to reform it to the left or right are enemies of anarchism. We pride ourselves on the negation of this entire system, choosing not to play in its deceptive theater of politics. Nevertheless sometimes, I get exhausted. I want to drink away this everyday mourning I succumb to for humanity. I want such negation of this system's practices to manifest in simple apathy and lack of passion. I want an easy way out: the famously blissful ignorance, or a new ability to discover satisfaction within a society of coercion I do not benefit from or condone. Riots and discussions on repeat seem to leave me in the same position I was prior.

In spite of everything, I always listen to the strong voice of my heart screaming back to myself: "Fuck this convenience! Take pride in your inconvenient revolutionary desires and position! Solidarity is a strength that will always overpower this introspective demise! Which side of history will you die on?! And while I believe my heart will always win, the future looks bleak as fuck, and I don't know if everyone is able to continue pulling through with remaining committed to our movement and inspired by the solidarity that is essential to its functioning." I want to write for these moments we all share, whether or not we are open about it. I want to hear from those who have overcome these existential issues, and continue to struggle regardless of our defeats and disappointments. I want to write from my heart in saying our solidarity and position in the global social war of modern times is a victory in itself, stronger than any disappointment, administration, or prison. I want to create something that is read and finished with our chins up. Like my last call out, I am writing in the form of a confused rant, with the intention of framing a sentiment for the publication or forum I hope to build from this.

While I still struggle with manic questioning and overcoming helplessness or annoyance in repetition, my heart always beats my mind. I feel completely the same as I did a year ago, it's just that things in the world are worse, getting much worse (Even more than I expected), and I needed to update my call out to maybe recognize a bit more the current changed circumstances. I am my-

self also personally at a period in my everyday life survival where I am more afraid than I've been for years. My strategy of never buying property, never going to university, or having children has helped me to avoid my status as "legit under the poverty line," but it is also scary as fuck. I have no hope of experiencing stability or comfort going forward, and it's harder to expect anything from community as most of them share this everyday fear and hopeless long term thinking as well. Trump for me means it will only get worse for those of us who are poor and without safety nets from poverty, yet I suppose I see comfort in even more of us sharing this inflicted precarity.

Some years ago at an event I threw, a comrade visiting that I respected a great deal asked me how I continue to be committed to preserving my life as an anarchist in struggle. I told them, "What the fuck else am I going to do or feel? I mean when you analyze this society for what it is and how it works as a system of domination and exploitation, what other approach could you take unless you begin to advocate for it."

I'm not sure exactly what to expect. I suppose that is why this project is interesting. Yet to give some idea, I am requesting articles, essays, rants, or general written catharsis on the subject of continuing struggle as anarchists regardless of the (inevitable) bitterness and helplessness that comes for some with time. I am looking for writing that deals with existential issues as revolutionaries that does not recite the typical rhetoric, however I am open to that as well.



-December 8th, 2017 / Strefi Hill / Exarchia

# RESPONSES & RELATED

## HELLO, MY DEAR COMRADE!

*Comrade Grusha / Moscow, Russia / 2016*

At first I'd like to thank you for that deep and exciting text. I have just the same feelings about all of this and I think that every anarchist has something similar to share. But I have to correct you. Capitalism isn't winning. It already won. And anarchists are the ultimate losers and have to play most tragic role in this farce. I love the story of a daughter of King Priam and of Queen Hecuba of Troy Cassandra. Apollo gave her gift of prophecy and curse of never being believed. She knew and predicted the destruction of Troy, but nobody listened and believed her. She was mocked by people of Troy. And then Greek came. They pillaged the city, killed her family and relatives, raped her and murdered. She had no choice but to be impotent spectator and observe calamity she cant stop.

Do you feel the same my comrade? You try to set Trojan horse on fire but they stop you and throw in a prison.

I had the same experience with taking part in foreign street action. It was in Copenhagen in 2009 during Cop-15. There were thousands people on a streets and hundreds of anarchists. Black bloc smashed few shops and robbed them. It was cool and pointless like other street actions. And I felt so weird because I was taking part in it and shooting video as journalist in the same time. That gave me alienation from my comrades in rage and quick release from police arrest. From that point I always felt distance between me and true anarchists.

In Thailand I observed totally different street demo. There were red-shirts in Bangkok somewhere near Siam Square under one of those wide sky train lines. People were yelling and I couldn't understand them. I'm sure it was about freedom because everywhere people want just the same. Red-shirts gave me food and I walked away. From that point I felt distance between first world activists and other world.

My comrade be strong. I don't have any idea what to do in global way and I can't give you advice. I'm shocked and confused just as you. But I've got an idea how to cope with the world. I want to move to a village, gather all of my despaired anarchists and run a commune. At least we can build our small, maybe illusionary anarchy.

A week ago I was at Peter Kropotkin house in Dmitrov where he died. I saw his deathbed and I thought about Russian anarchist movement which ended shortly after his funeral. On the wall I've read his political testament. It was published in Berlin magazine

"Working path" in 1923. Kropotkin tries to comprehend October Revolution and anarchist loss in his short article "So what to do?". I'll translate an excerpt.

"...Then all is left for you: to survive a typhoon. In this position, I stand as anarchist. But now even larger parties are in very similar situation.

Now the Russian revolution is in this position. It creates horrors. It ruins the whole country. It is in his frantic frenzy destroys people: so it is a revolution, not a peaceful progress, it breaks without looking that it destroys and where he is going.

And yet we are powerless to send it the other way, until she become obsolete. It is necessary that it has outlived its forces. And then? Then a fatal reaction will come.

Such a law of history; and it's easy understand why otherwise can't be.

Imagine that we can change the course of the revolution - a childhood dream. Revolution - a force that can't be changed.

And the arrival of the reaction is absolutely inevitable. Just as deepening of the water surface behind each wave is inevitable and fatigue after febrile increase.

So all we can do is to direct our efforts to reduce growth and strength of the approaching reaction.

*But what can we do?*

Moderate voice of the passions on both sides? Who will listen to us? In any case, even if there are diplomats able to do anything in this role - neither the one nor the other party won't listen to them. I can see one thing: the need to gather people who are able to do construction work among each of their groups, after the revolution become obsolete. We, anarchists, need to find the core of honest, dedicated, not suffering from selfishness anarchist workers. If I was younger and could meet hundreds of people - of course, as it should be, if you want to select people for a common cause.

If these "collectors" of anarchists are among comrades, I'll be ready to help them by correspondence and personal connections than by printing".

My comrade I hope you will find wisdom and solace in these words. I want you to be healthy and rigid because we stand shoulder to shoulder against whole world. And we are going to lose and we will be crushed - you know it just everyone knows in our rows. But we can't act otherwise.

*-Comrade Grusha*

# LIGHT AND LOVE TO YOU COMRADE.

Anonymous / 2016

Your letter was both incredibly inspiring and comforting to read. Knowing that i was not the only one having these thoughts. Being that I constantly questioned the depth of my knowledge and perspective, because I have only known about this world and this fight, and been actively involved for a short time now, about a year. Compared to how long you have been fighting, to me that is nothing. I could never understand your highest points, and what you felt at your lowest. Something that i can definitely understand, relate to, and have experience with, is the euphoria of revolutionary work, and the depression crash of reality. After the first few times this happened to me, I definitely began to see how it was unsustainable for me to live a consistently and sustainably happy life while doing this work, when i looked at it from this perspective.

The perception of this as a, “This moment defines everything” “And what I do in this moment, has an impact on the entire world right now” Is too big a burden to carry, for anyone. We are not able to control the world, so directly, in reality. So to persuade ourselves otherwise does nothing but to keep ourselves in a constant rotating fantasy that we unfortunately are not able to sustain. It puts pressure on us, and we are not able to function without the “drug”. That revolutionary euphoria after actions. And then revolutionary work, turns from a lifestyle that should be extremely whole and full of love solidarity and struggle, into another job. That is not the direction I think we should be going. No one wants another job. And this lifestyle is definitely not appealing to humans. It is unnatural, just like capitalism

In order for this work to be sustainable, we need to change our perspective, which will in turn improve our actions for the better. When we have a better understanding of what we are actually achieving with our actions and all of our amazing work. We are changing the world, but not in the way we think we are.

In conclusion, the main point I am trying to make here is that our happiness and being able to sustain this work is a decided lifestyle, that must function without needing constant adrenaline and euphoria, while appreciating it whenever it comes. It is essential to our success that we show people that this life is what they should be living. That this life is incredible, empowering free. That we show them what they're missing. We need to be the light to draw them in from the darkness that they now live in. We can not project life if we have none in us.

And more importantly, FUCK THESE PEOPLE. They don't get to enslave us, AND steal our joy, our happiness and everything that makes life worth living. We will defeat them, and do it with light. I would also like to leave you with a quote that comforts me in my times of worry.

*“TO BE HOPEFUL in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.*

*What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.*

*And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand Utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”*

- Howard Zinn

All my love, All my solidarity, and all my positive energy, light and love to you comrade.

## MY LOVE MAY BE DORMANT, BUT IT AIN'T DEAD.

Betty / 2016

Thank you for putting that piece out. It's nice to know that I'm not alone.

The most frustrating thing about burning out for me has been that my rage has become impotent. At least that's what it feels like. I used to feel that my comrades and I could do anything, and we did. All kinds of wild shit. Some of us burnt ourselves to crips on the fires of our anger and passion, others just grew up making babies and getting jobs.

I ran away, I live in the woods now. We all check in with each other periodically. There will be a small book fair or get together. We spend more time reminiscing then plotting because we all know.

I honestly don't know what the solution is. And even if there is one, I'm afraid. It's a terrible thing for an anarchist to admit, but I've been beaten enough, both physically and emotionally. And the one thing that I keep thinking is that if Renzo Novatore were here he would shoot me in the fucking face, and he'd be right to do so.

I don't know if this is a forest/trees thing. I hope someone writes something more hopeful or helpful than I have. I just wanted to say that I'm there too, and I don't know how to get out of it. Because my love may be dormant, but it ain't dead.

-Betty

# OK WELL, ENOUGH OF THE RAMBLE.

Wiley / 2016

Hey, I just read your letter over coffee at the beginning of my day. There was a lot in there, but I just want to quickly respond to a few things that I connected to. I think we are of a similar age - I also was born during the reagan years and I also have been involved in activist circles for about half my life.

One thing that has been a challenge for me at my age is feeling like a lot of my political/activist community have made choices to pursue other things in life - things that are perfectly normal, like starting families, landing real jobs with careerist ambitions, buying homes etc. Perhaps this speaks to the class background of a lot of the people that I have considered comrades in my life, but not entirely. In any case, it has left me feeling like my people are not around much anymore. The political community I had in my twenties is largely fragmented and not much engaged in politics anymore, at least outside the box of non-profit organizing.

It has left me in this strange predicament where it feels like there is so much more grassroots activity and organizing happening in the US than when I became politically active, but I show up to events and demonstrations and find that I don't know anyone and that it's hard to connect with the new people. I'm not the kind of person that likes to prove my credentials. I'm really not trying to prove anything - I've never been one of the cool kids if you know what I mean. Anyway, this has the predictable effect of making me feel isolated and rootless. It's strangely alienating, to be seeing so much encouraging activity and not be able to feel entirely a part of it.

I think community is the thing that really holds us together and sustains movement. The thing that keeps people coming back and participating isn't that we have the 'correct' strategy, or politics or any of that - it's the feeling of being a part of something, and being accepted, valued, supported, loved. Reading your letter, it feels like you are going through a period where you don't have those comrades around to sustain you in your every day - something that I can relate to when I've been in that place too.

Where I live there are a ton of activists, something that should make it easy to find that community. Unfortunately there is also this sort of toxic culture around activism, where people are jealous of their projects or organizations and talk shit on each other - so I find myself in a city where there is a ton going on but I'm still not welcome to participate in much of it. Really I have found as much or more community outside of political circles. I've spent a lot of years doing grassroots community organizing and at this point, many of the people that sustain me are the people I've met on the street in my neighborhood. We've been through a lot together and understand each other in a way that a lot of outsiders can't. But I do yearn for that more concretely political connection, and struggle with finding a home politically.

In this context it is easy to find myself critical of the activism going on around me. Making me play a role in that toxic activist culture. I feel sometimes as a slightly older activist that I am overly critical of how people are organizing today. I see people making the same mistakes that we made 10 or 15 years ago and I write off their process. This is a mistake. There is no right way of doing something, and in reality we need to be much more forgiving of each other. Just because people are trying something I've tried in the past doesn't mean they will come up against the same problems or come to the same conclusions. Really, I think it's important to value and recognize anyone that is actually trying to do something at all - how they're doing it is less important than making sure that when people try, they are encouraged and supported, even in their mistakes.

We are getting older, you and I. Our days of getting rowdy in the streets are winding down. They should be, let the young people carry that torch, they are going to be better at it anyway. As older activists, we need to learn the skills necessary to be mentors. We need to be connecting with people who are just coming up, or just getting involved. We need to make sure that when people come up against failures or setbacks, they don't drop out - that they stick and stay and are around for the next wave of protests and organizing. There were a few people like that for me in my life, they were important and I credit them with the fact that I didn't burn fast and bright, but have stayed steady over many years. Now it's our turn to be those people.

This is hard - sometimes I feel like I know too much and it would be easier to be younger and a little more naive and ignorant. Far too often I shoot down ideas or projects before they have even begun because I think I know how they will end. I think the thing missing from that equation though, is that it's not about how things end, it's about how they happen and transpire. All of us are in a process, and it's the process that's really important. Depending on how that process plays out, people will either gain a lifelong commitment to activity, organization and community, or they will drop out and never get involved in political activity again. Our job now is to make sure that as they move through their initial involvement in activism, they find lifelong comradeship and commitment that sustains them through their life, and that they spread that in their circle. In so doing, we find that community that we need to sustain us as well.

As far as I can tell, this is what it means to not just be reactionary to the system. This is what's needed to be building our own alternative in the face of this alienating dehumanizing world. Yes, of course, the clock is ticking, things are depressing, we need to be fighting on such a much larger scale than we are prepared for - i said already, we know too much - but that cannot be helped. These things take time and if we are going to go down the road of the apocalypse, well, we'll need each other more than ever and we'll be glad to have invested the time in building strong bonds with each other. The system we are fighting is predicated on us being isolated and fighting each other. It's important that we see that the work involved in creating and sustaining real community is resistance to the system - just as important as getting to burn down a bank at a street demo - or maybe even more so.

Let us not forget that demonstrations are theater, by definition. They will not lead us to liberation through some scripted steady escalation of confrontation with the state. There are going to be times where our actions in the streets help crack open spaces where people can see a different way of relating, or they can experience, even for a moment, a feeling of freedom. But like you say, tomorrow you wake up back in your regular life and it's almost a worse shock, a bigger let down. Imagine waking up the next day and getting to keep working and building with the people who were in the streets with you - getting to celebrate and carry on. That's what's going to sustain movement over a lifetime.

By implication, I guess I am also saying that we need to let go a bit of ideological purity. It's important to be able to meet people where they are at and not vet them based on how closely they identify with an ideology. That's not going to get us anywhere, and I'm sure there was a time when you were not an anarchist at all. Don't lose sight of that. The best recruitment tool anarchists have at their disposal is not being crazy ideological bastards, but instead modeling the kind of flexibility, acceptance and freedom implied in the politics of autonomy. Easier said than done maybe, but that's the trick of it. For me, it's been a long time since I thought it terribly important to identify with that ideology explicitly. There's a time and place, to be sure, but I haven't found it very useful on the day to day or when dealing with the general public. It's more important to me to meet people where they are at and develop working relationships of mutual trust and respect. The rest tends to fall into place, and even if there is a difference down the road, it's easier to have it in that context and not have it end the relationship.

Ok well, enough of the ramble.  
Hope you get a lot of good responses.

*Best wishes,  
Wiley*

## SOME NOTES ON NOT GIVING UP

*Anonymous / 2018*

By way of a short introduction: I've consciously identified as an anarchist for around a decade now, and was actively involved in other forms of anti-capitalist/anti-war/anti-fascist/climate change-related organizing for several years before that. At time of writing, I'm pretty much entirely divorced from any kind of radical social scenes, and, seen from more or less the outside, the anarchist movement in the UK is very much not in the best of health, as 2017 ended with some TERF politician and one of their mates managing to spark off a conflict that was destructive and badly-handled enough to kill off the London Anarchist Bookfair.

(The topic of how anarchists handle internal conflicts is one that would certainly be worth an article in its own right. Here I'll just note in passing that I think a lot of the attitudes and qualities that enable us to make a unique contribution to social struggles – a certain all-or-nothing, liberty-or-death, make total destroy approach – can be really destructive in situations of internal conflict where a certain amount of de-escalation might be called for.)

Like probably anyone who's been around for more than a few years, and quite possibly more than most, I have had more than enough reasons to just give up on the whole thing. Here's a few reflections on why I haven't:

### *WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO NOT BE AN ANARCHIST?*

#### *Giving in*

The obvious alternative would be to just give in and accept the world as it is, whether one chooses to brand this resignation as an ultra-woke, ultra-edgy nihilism or just to be more honest about surrendering, swapping out the black flag for a white one. But what would this actually mean?

Crucially, it wouldn't actually get rid of any of the problems I have now. Not being an anarchist wouldn't take away the problem of having to work in order to survive, with everything that follows from that; accepting the legitimacy of private property wouldn't do much to help solve the problem of having to pay rent in order to have a place to sleep; declaring that I actually love authority and hierarchy won't take away my anxiety. All the shit of the existing world, all the conditions that made us into anarchists, will not just disappear. It's still there whether we choose to consciously face it or not. And consciously facing it is terrible, often unbearable, but the alternative has literally no positive advantages to recommend it.

But, of course, being an anarchist is not the only way to go about changing the world. A brief consideration of two popular alternatives:

#### *Back in the USSR*

Some anarchists sometimes declare that they're going to become Leninists. In the UK, the dominant brand of Bolshevism has long been Trotskyism, while in the US, I understand that Mao/Stalin/"Marxism-Leninism" has a higher profile than it's ever enjoyed here (although the huge international exchange facilitated by the internet has probably led to some UK folk buying into this American fad – a particularly odd form of cultural imperialism, perhaps).

When responding to these traditions, some points are common to the critique of both, but the difference in perspective between the anarchist and M-L/"anti-revisionist" understandings of 20th century history, in particular, seems to me to be so massive that it's hard to see how anyone could cross that gulf. While Trots at least claim to have a revolutionary critique of most of the monstrous dictatorships that flew the red flag, to swap out anarchism

for Marxism-Leninism means going from wanting to abolish the state to singing the praises of one-party states that were ruled by single figures for decades at a time; from supporting the efforts of working-class people to collectively take control over our lives to applauding the brutal military suppression of revolutionary attempts from Kronstadt and Gulai-Polye to Budapest; from recognizing that liberal capitalists and fascists are both our enemies, and it's possible to fight both at once, to siding with the former in order to restore capitalist business as usual by turning a revolution into a war; from prison abolitionism to dreams of the gulag; from thinking that, generally speaking, nazis are pretty bad and that you don't make deals with them to being prepared to swallow monstrosities like the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact... and so on and so on. In short, I don't really see the appeal.

Trotskyism is harder to make a sweeping critique of, because the faults of Trots have tended to be on a much smaller scale than those of "actually existing socialism", and because each grouplet is keen to distinguish itself from all the others, and so to claim that criticisms that may be true of everyone else can't possibly apply to them.

Still, we can note that this tendency has, time and time again, found itself home to cult-like social dynamics – not just the recent cases of the UK SWP, and the WRP before that, or the exceptionally weird journey of the RCP/Living Marxism/Spiked crowd, or the AWL having to publish their guru's crappy poetry which is definitely not weird at all, but also in other cases like that of the (unrelated) US SWP, or the Spartacists. Doubtless there are Trots who'll insist that these examples don't represent real proper Trotskyism, but the question still remains how anyone can be comfortable with an organisational model that's produced these disasters time after time.

Having seen the small-scale messes that these groups tend to turn into, it's not hard to imagine how much damage they could do if they ever achieved their ambitions of seizing state power.

Still, if anyone reading this really fancies the idea of joining a Leninist sect, I can only say go for it. If you can keep your critical thinking skills even vaguely intact, you should emerge out the other side with a much sharper critique of the authoritarian left than you had before.

Still, while the various Leninisms might be able to make some fairly big ripples in the small ponds that anarchists often swim in, there's another option that's far more popular: democratic socialism or social democracy.

### *Other Saviors*

In the Anglosphere, this has mainly taken the form of Corbynism and Momentum/Labour in the UK, and the Bernie phenomenon and the DSA in the US; elsewhere, in countries less tied to a two-party model, it's been more likely to take the form of an entirely new party.

Whatever form it takes, its attraction relative to anarchism is obvious: compared to trying to overthrow every single government in

the entire world, winning a few elections seems a much easier task, and it's hard to disagree with anyone who thinks that the chances of using state power to slightly slow down the rate at which capitalism's destroying the planet have to be better than the chances of putting a total end to all domination and hierarchy.

Still, having said all that, the supposed practicality of the reformist option starts to look a bit questionable once we come to examine its record more closely. After all, it's really not so long ago that Syriza was seen as the shining example of what a successful left electoral strategy could look like, and people certainly started to go quiet about that one pretty quickly. On a broad historical level, it's worth considering that two of the most impressive examples of left-wing electoral projects that didn't just abandon their programme when they came under pressure would be the Spanish Popular Front of the 1930s, and the Chilean Popular Unity government of the early 1970s. The Syriza experience on the one side, and the Spanish and Chilean ones on the other, set out some clear examples of what the historical limits of attempts to change the world through the ballot box have been, and I've still not seen a convincing answer from the new social democrats of how their projects would be able to avoid the dangers of "soft" economic coercion on the one hand, or just plain military force on the other.

But before we can even get to this stage, where it's possible to talk of navigating dangers at such a large scale, electoral projects have to get round to winning power on the national level first. If they can make some progress, but not enough to govern on the national scale, then they're stuck in the position that, for instance, UK Labour are in now – being in charge of local government in lots of areas, but only being able to exercise that power within limits strictly defined by the national government. Just as well-meaning politicians who manage to win power on the national scale find that their hands are tied by international financial institutions, those who only get to rule on the local level find that the only choices they can make are ones set out for them by the next level of the hierarchy.

This is where the contradictions of trying to change the world through the ballot box really come in – those ambitious reformist comrades who make it into local government find that the only thing they can do is to implement an agenda that's already been handed down by the bastards that they were trying to fight in the first place. They might have some choice over whether it's the nurseries or the libraries that they close first, but the possibility of making any more ambitious and radical decisions has already been ruled out in advance. That's an unfortunate situation for them to be in, of course, but the worst part of it is that anyone who's committed to the same electoral project is then bound to defend them – at best, they might end up fighting against them for half the year, while still going out knocking on doors to get the vote out for them at election time, because we can't let the other lot win.

And so, what may appear to be a more effective, practical way to achieve social change turns into a cruel trick, like a wish granted by a malicious creature in a fairytale, where trying to use state power to change the world traps people into recreating the very problems that they wanted to get rid of in the first place.

In short: anarchism may be a wild, Utopian dream, but the other options – pretending we can just carry on like this, trying to build a revolutionary force on the top-down model of an army or a corporation, or trying to get rid of the system by playing entirely on the system's terms – are no more realistic. So what is this position that we're stuck with?

### *WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ANARCHIST?*

#### *Small victories*

Part of what enables me to carry on is being careful about what I focus my attention on. Certainly, there are a great deal of problems that I, or even we, can't really hope to do anything about in the short term, and it would be easy to become completely fatalistic if we dwell too much on these. But at the same time, there are always things that we can change as well.

Sometimes we get big victories – to think of a few recent ones, sometimes all our comrades get acquitted on all charges, sometimes the airport doesn't get built. But, even when there aren't those big stories to celebrate, there's usually little stories worth paying attention to. There's always some group of fascist clowns somewhere who got too arrogant, made the mistake of believing their own propaganda about the opposition just being a handful of weedy students, and got a nasty surprise, or a scumbag landlord who assumed that they could get away with whatever they want because they're not used to tenants acting collectively, or some boss who overestimated what their workers will put up with.

These things might not be enough to bring capitalism and the state crashing down, but in times like these, they might be just enough to keep hope alive, to encourage us to carry on and fight another day.

On that note, a quick shout-out to a few groups that have given me cause to celebrate: here in the UK, the Scottish Unemployed Workers Network, housing groups like Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth, people taking direct action against immigration raids like the Anti-Raids Network, and other groups like the Angry Workers of the World, Brighton Solidarity Federation, and the grassroots UVW and IWGB unions all do good work humiliating the powerful on a fairly regular basis. Over in North America, the Seattle Solidarity Network and the groups modeled on it, Parkdale Organize in Canada, and various wob projects have all been inspirational. And of course, there are various anti-fa crews all over, whatever names they go by, who deserve respect for helping to stomp out fascists wherever they attempt to organize.

#### *The Future is Unwritten*

Beyond that, there's the bigger picture, which is... definitely not clear and hopeful, but I also really don't think it's stable and predictable enough for anyone to be too confident when forecasting doom and gloom either. The centrist model, which assumes that something very much like this system will be stable enough to endure indefinitely, seems very unrealistic, and so the various forms of nihilist pessimism which ultimately come to similar conclusions don't feel that convincing to me either.

Insofar as I feel confident making any predictions, I think it's probably safe to say that the cops will continue to murder people, most of these killings will be ignored, and that some of them will unexpectedly spark off uprisings like those in Ferguson, Baltimore, St Louis, or the English riots of August 2011. These events will happen whether or not anarchists get involved in them, but it certainly can't hurt to have people with experience of street revolt getting stuck in, sharing techniques, and pushing back against "peace police" and other attempts to make the situation governable.

Meanwhile, the continuing inability of this system to meet people's needs will probably continue to produce more "electoral shocks" like Trump, Brexit and the rebirth of electoral socialism. The increasing pace of climate-produced natural disasters will further destabilize everything. The situation that's been seen in Syria over the last few years, where the centralized rule of a single state has been fractured, and some attempts at autonomous self-organization exist alongside authoritarian projects attempting to form new states, while various competing imperial powers try to grab control of as much as possible, is likely to be repeated elsewhere. As in Egypt, various ruling cliques will lose their grip on power, but the movements from below that topple them may end up being defeated and demobilized by new regimes if they don't have a convincing revolutionary alternative.

And what are we to do in the middle of all this? Honestly, your guess is as good as mine. It's very likely that all this chaos won't actually produce the outcomes we want to see. It is entirely possible that this society will run into full-on ecological catastrophe before we're able to defeat it, and then whoever's left will be stuck trying to make the best of whatever's left. It's likely that the conflicts that will come won't be on the terms that we'd want them – perhaps we'll end up fighting for the victory of forces that look more like the PYD over forces that look more like Erdogan, Assad or ISIS. Perhaps we'll end up forced to make a tactical alliance with Mark Zuckerberg's forces to fight against Peter Thiel's, who knows?

It seems very unlikely that whatever emerges out of the coming conflicts and insurrections will end up looking like the anarchist utopia we'd hope for. But again, I don't think anything can be ruled out either, since things that seemed extremely unlikely have happened before, and weird and unexpected things will continue to happen in future.

Ultimately, all I feel confident is saying that whatever comes next will probably look considerably different to what we're used to at the moment, and that scenarios that involve the conscious participation of strong, well-organized, militant anti-authoritarian forces and movements will probably turn out less badly than situations where the only major actors are various different stripes of nationalist, technocratic or religious authoritarians fighting for their turn to rule.

That's not much of a guarantee, but I think it's as close to a guarantee as we're likely to get. And, to me at least, it sounds like enough to be worth fighting for.



*It's all about where you're at.  
But what do we do till then?*

To me, the answer has to be rooted in our daily lives. As mentioned above, the way the world is currently set up causes us all kinds of problems, and we're going to have to face up to those problems in our own lives whether or not we choose to call ourselves anarchists. And while it can be necessary and great to, when the chance arises, punch Nazis or face off with the cops in the streets or block airports from being built, no-one does that stuff all day every day, so what we do with our lives outside of those moments is equally important.

The vast majority of us still have to navigate the daily humiliations of work, or of negotiating the benefits system. We all need a place to live, which for many of us means renting, and the foreclosures that came with the mortgage crisis showed that even those of us who supposedly own our homes aren't actually that secure either. We all struggle with various mental health conditions, everyone knows that we all do even if we don't acknowledge it out loud. And, of course, most of us will also have to navigate additional oppressions based on our gender, or race, or sexuality, or ability, or migration status, or whatever other dividing lines this system can find.

It's how we respond to these situations when they come up in our own lives and our friends' lives that makes a meaningful anarchism possible. Wherever we can, we should be trying to combat the issues that we face through direct action, mutual aid and solidarity, and arguing against solutions that involve relying on external saviors and representatives. Certainly, this won't be easy – pretty much everything about our culture is set up to discourage this kind of approach – but it's the best chance we have of putting our principles into practice in a way that can actually affect things. It's a good way to stay engaged even if you don't wear black hoodies, or get in punch-ups at bookfairs, or any of the other rituals associated with the anarchist subculture, very often.

## IN CLOSING

### *On Connection, Isolation, and Prisoner solidarity*

As is probably clear by now, these notes are written from the perspective of someone who's currently somewhat disconnected from anarchist social scenes, in the hope that they might be useful to people who find themselves in a similar position. In closing, I'd like to offer up prisoner solidarity as one area of activity that might be particularly appropriate for anarchists who find themselves isolated for whatever reason.

For a start, whereas most forms of anarchist activity have a specific goal (blocking a nazi march, shutting down a business or transport hub, or whatever), and the connections that are formed through that activity are a kind of secondary bonus, in prisoner solidarity work the forming and strengthening of connections is in itself a major objective. The repressive function of prisons works by isolating people, and solitary confinement, where a lot of rebels tend to end up, doubles down on this isolation. If people in the outside world can forge and nurture a connection with someone on the

inside, that is in itself a blow against the intended workings of the carceral system. This connection can also be something that helps sustain the "free" person, whether that's by giving them a direct link to ongoing rebellions and conflicts with authority at a time when there might not be much else going on in their area, or even just by generally helping with the basic human need to feel connected to other people.

It's also an area that's open to isolated anarchists in a way that a lot of other things aren't, because even some of the most clandestine night-time activity is stuff that works better if you at least have another person to act as a lookout, whereas the most basic act of prisoner solidarity is writing a letter or a card, which is definitely something you can do on your own. The second basic act, ringing or emailing the prison authorities to hassle them to do something or stop doing something, is also something you can take part in without needing an affinity group.

Finally, while I don't want to put anyone off getting involved, it is worth taking a moment to think about the possibility of getting on watch lists and the like. I don't know how any of this stuff works for sure, but if you engage in correspondence with, say, someone who got sent down as a result of being targeted by the FBI, it's probably reasonable to assume that there's a good chance you will be marked as a person of interest yourself.

Depending on what stage of activist burnout you've reached, perhaps this doesn't bother you, so if you're not currently doing anything that the cops might find interesting, and you don't think you're likely to start at any point in the future, maybe you don't need to worry about it; but if you'd prefer to take some basic precautions, the name you sign your letter with doesn't need to be the name that the state, your bank or your employers know you by. If there's a public social center, infoshop, radical space, wob office or something similar near you\*, you might want to ask them if it's OK to list them as a return address and get them to pass your mail on; or, if not, maybe think about if you have any friends or relatives who are vaguely sympathetic to your ideas, but who live sufficiently quiet lives that they wouldn't be worried by the idea of their address going on a file somewhere.

The truth is I don't know the world I act within well enough to justify a moment of certainty. Of course I deceive myself into many such moments, because the scale of chaos that swirls around me is beyond comprehension. But if you ask me the point of undertaking the small acts of resistance I find within my reach, I must admit:

*"Probably nothing, but possibly everything."*

*And those are the best odds I can expect to play if I am in the habit of believing in troubling things like freedom. I might never know the results of what we do, but I have trouble thinking they could be worse than if we had done nothing at all. - Pat the Bunny*

**\*Editors note:** we would suggest consulting your local anti-repression group such as the Anarchist Black Cross. They typically have return addresses available such as PO boxes that are used specifically for corresponding with prisoners and to avoid tracking.

# SOME THOUGHTS FROM AN AMERICAN COMRADE

*Anonymous / 2018*

I get a tension in both call-outs for this publication about a question of what it means to “give up/in” or “stay committed.” You give varying answers. One answer you give suggests the importance of not changing your personally held positions. There’s also a discussion of the importance of action. You talk about being disappointed by current events and anarchist actions, feeling depressed/hopeless about the revolutionary question, and sometimes then link this directly to a sense of personal failure or weakness connected with your ability to continue holding anarchist positions and believing they are the most correct positions. These things certainly all have relationships with each other but I would try, when thinking about this, to not necessarily view them all as the same thing. In other words, being depressed, feeling hopeless about the possibilities of revolutionary transformation, etc. isn’t necessarily the same as deciding that anarchism or its basic positions are wrong. This is a different tension, one where someone is questioning anarchism itself, wondering if it has all the answers or makes the most sense. You may experience both of these at the same time but I think they are two different things and shouldn’t be lumped together. So maybe, as you put it in the text, if your mind is telling you that various actions seem like dead-ends and the movement isn’t going anywhere, it isn’t necessarily battling with your heart that’s telling you anarchism is right. Anarchism isn’t wrong just because of these other anarchist-associated things being disappointing. If it’s wrong, it should be wrong in its most pure expression as an idea. There are many historical ideas or movements, for example, which we could analyze and say “They were right” even if there is not a single living practitioner of those ideas or movements.

This leads us to interesting and vexing questions. These are questions along the lines of asking ourselves whether we, or anyone, deserves the term anarchist. Can we imagine ourselves today truly carrying on the same struggle of years past? Can we trace a legitimate lineage, like Jeet Kune Do practitioners judge the legitimacy of their teacher by way of how direct their lineage to Bruce Lee is? I can already see many heads shaking while reading these words, but I think these are important questions for anyone concerned about our word being stolen or used inappropriately. Whether or not someone calling themselves an anarchist today likes it or not, their chosen identity is tied to a set of ideas, texts, histories, movements, and actions. But no, you protest, anarchy simply means an absence or rejection of hierarchy and thus it can be applied to anything related to that! I hear you, dear comrade, but your use of the word has everything to do with Proudhon using it first in a positive self-identifying sense. Much of Proudhon’s ideas would be laughed out of the bookfair by today’s anarchist standards, but even his most vicious critics must acknowledge that their ideas

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overlap enough with his to continue using his term, instead of using a new one, which is always possible to do. Of course, as we know, anarchism didn’t end there, but continued being built upon by many thinkers and actors. So, can we call ourselves anarchists next to the great thinkers, actors, and their movements that have done the same? Is it simple enough to be a sympathizer or supporter of anarchist ideas or must we live up to the label?

Comrade 1: “You don’t become an anarchist by reading a book, you become an anarchist in the streets.”

Comrade 2: “A nice sentiment, but is a smashed-up shopping district in Seattle equal to Makhno’s army?”

Comrade 1: “A fair question, but does this not lead us down another troublesome path, where actions are judged by their level of destruction on a pyramid of goodness, where the lowest action is gluing a lock and the crown jewel is the assassination of a national ruler? Isn’t it more complicated than that?”

At this point the comrades sit there in silence for a moment, both very much feeling like armchair radicals as they quickly go over a mental catalogue of their personal radical histories. Neither of them has raised an anarchist army or assassinated a great tyrant. The second comrade feels like a fraud in much the same way that they are implicitly accusing the other. The first comrade tacitly accepts the logic of the second and the very structure of their response comes from a place of defense and excuses, which leads both to ask themselves why they have failed to live up to their ideals. Both, in their guilt, feel a weight of personal responsibility for carrying forward a grand narrative and in identifying with that narrative have projected its failures onto themselves. In a place and time with a small movement, this seems like an even more reasonable thing to do.

It’s easy to feel that anarchism is right and also hopeless about its possibilities. If you feel this way longterm, it poses a question of what does it mean to be an anarchist if anarchism feels like it cannot be. You’re an iconoclast, out of step with society and most others around you. It can be sexy and exciting in some ways but over time it can also be tiring, among other things. Non-revolutionary anarchism tend to, especially in their North American conceptions, turn this dynamic around and claim that revolutionary social transformation was never the goal in the first place and isn’t even desirable for X and Y reasons. The hopeless revolutionary anarchist would say “There is no hope on the horizon, but it is our duty to struggle for X and Y reasons, so struggle and fail we must because it’s the right thing to do” or alternately and more optimistically “We never know where a spark will start a bigger fire, so all we can do is keep making sparks until something catches.” We don’t know what the truth is in regards to a strategy for life or struggle. Life has us awash in too many constant choices and decisions to know which ones are important and which ones aren’t. I do think there probably aren’t enough choices and strategies in anarchist struggle and a good 21st century strategy has probably yet to be written or maybe it already has been and we’re

just not following it. The future being unknown, it's hard to predict what the right choices are now.

In interviews with people who were part of the Algerian revolution, something repeatedly said was that although colonization had been reigning supreme for over 120 years in the 1950s, many factors made it the right time for a revolution and there was this collective sense that now was the right time to really push it forward. In some sense I agree that the time is always now, but in another sense I think there's truth to there being a right time for certain projects and movements when they have their most maximal potential. Sometimes I feel like I was born at a bad time, too late for the Spanish Revolution, too late for the 1960's, too late for the anti-globe movement, coming of age in the long wake of post-9/11 repression, maybe during the most counter-revolutionary period in American history. Or sometimes I think I was born in the wrong place. I should've been born in Italy, Greece, etc. Because the future is unwritten, it's hard to ever definitively say that we're "too late" and there was a window and it closed but sometimes I wonder about that as well. I wonder conversely how much the partisans in the Paris Commune of 1871 looked nostalgically toward the revolutions of 1848, when anything seemed possible. All of these struggles failed, of course, so one could argue that the timing was wrong for all of them, even if they got closer than we have. In Debord's *Comments on Society of the Spectacle*, he concludes that the spectacle has likely become too deeply integrated to be fought against. "There remains nothing, in culture or nature, which has not been transformed, and polluted according to the means and interests of modern industry." In summary, we had a shot and we blew it and we'll never get that shot again. As time goes on we tend to only accumulate more questions rather than answers. This is how one should interpret this piece, as a series of thoughts and questions, rather than answers.

## LET'S MAKE IT COUNT.

*Anonymous / 2018*

"We're old anarcho dudes now," my friend once told me. I don't know about old, I'm just in my early 30s now, an aging millennial. But it is true, I have been an anarchist now for more than half of my life. I was radicalized by the tail end of the anti-globalization movement and was thrust into the middle of broken glass and street fights during the wave of anti-war demonstrations, where I first met other anarchists waving black flags. As another friend once mentioned, the generation I come from, born in the mid-1980s, unlike many other generations, have been doing this shit for a long time, where as our parents generation often were involved in social movements, only for a few years.

There has been a few moments in my life where I've felt like I was done, or totally burned out, or even gone full nihilist. But, something always brings me back into the movement. I feel the baseline of this is several things. First and foremost, things are getting worse, politically, socially, ecologically, and economically. The political class has a death drive and is limited by their inability to imagine a different form of life and a fundamental fear of people controlling their own lives. As things get worse however, more and more, people are turning their backs against the system. If there's a slimmer of hope to be found in Trump, it shows how much people want something different and that they are turning outside of the neo-liberal mainstream. At the same time, we should keep in mind that the true silent majority didn't vote in 2016, and didn't root for either politician. I'm told that even in the swing states, the number of people that voted for NO ONE for President, (but still voted in local issues), was higher than those that pulled for Trump or Clinton. In short, we are in the majority, not them.

Currently, I think one of the things I'm excited about is that the anarchist movement is in a period where all sections of the movement are pretty active. There are people organizing in workplaces, there are people fighting pipelines, there are people

organizing against the Alt-Right, there is a growing insurgent prison movement, there is a new wave of tenant activity and rent strikes, we have a presence on campus that is growing - and more over, people respect each other's work. I'm not a member of the IWW, but I respect the hell out of the work that the Wobs are doing. I don't live by a pipeline, but I totally support all the work that people fighting pipelines are doing. Moreover, not everyone is involved in anti-fa organizing, but everyone understands the need for that work to happen, insofar as we need to protect ourselves and our communities.

Currently I feel if there's one thing we are failing at, it is bringing in new people to the movement at a rate that we need. In the past, people filtered into anarchist circles slowly. We live in a time now where we need to speed that up. We need to envision ways of bringing more people into the movement, vetting them, and seeing if they fit. The closed off and pseudo-conspiratorial clusters will only get us so far, and if we can't at least couple that with above ground entry points to get involved, then we are throwing good people to the side or at least, to the DSA.

I think the other thing I'd like to see is more inter-generational discussion and sharing of knowledge and resources, which in some ways is a reason why I am glad this project is happening. For instance, think of all the shit that went down in the 1990s, from the ELF burning things in the night to ARA to mass tree sits to the anti-globalization movement. A lot happened, but what happened to those people? Some are still around, but a lot aren't. It would be great to connect with them and bring them back into the fold.

Older folks need to make a commitment to work with younger people and share skills, and younger people need to attempt to hear what older folks have to say. In many places, we're seeing an influx of new crews that are making dumb mistakes, and that shouldn't be happening. In turn, older groups are closing ranks and cutting people off. We need ways in which lessons are shared and we all grow stronger and smarter. The next 20 to 30 years may decide if humanity will exist into the year 2100. Let's make it count.



## UNDERSTANDING LINES IN THE SAND

*Anonymous / 2018*

For the last sixteen years I have lived in an almost constant anxiety. I suppose some of this is self-inflicted, or purely an unfortunate reality of my inherited personality. However I blame the majority of this gut wrenching everyday emotion on impositions and obstacles made upon me by this society.

I was locked up for 20 months during my most critical teenage years. This wasn't the traditional juvenile detention center and it crushed my spirit (which was essentially their goal). However it crushed my spirit in the sense that I didn't forfeit my revolutionary desires or frustrations (since I was already identifying as an anarchist, supported as an anarchist prisoner from the outside, and punished as an anarchist prisoner on the inside), but crushed my spirit in the sense of ever having hope of finding satisfaction or fulfillment in a society that could have created such a volatile place and terrifying experience for me. I was abused, humiliated, stripped of all sense of being, and manipulated at such an immature age, I am surprised I function as much as I do today.

When I was released, I turned to the anarchist community that in some way made me feel special and different from the other delinquents while I was inside. I felt I was in this institution for a reason that was based on my choice to struggle against convention and coercive social expectation. I felt that I also would have a commu-

nity that would take care of me when I was finally released. Upon release I was still a total child. Yet this community I turned to did for some time embrace me. This was until my case and traumatic experience was no longer a topic of discussion for prisoner support groups, or in many cases those who had supported me disagreed with some of my politics once we met on the outside.

Either way, I turned to a community that I believed would take care of me, and I intended to show the same expected gesture. I mean I felt so passionately about this abstract community that gave me strength and hope when I was inside. Being so young and inexperienced as an anarchist I imagined so much to get through those traumatic days and nights with no end in sight. I imagined thousands of members of a movement who I have yet to meet, but share this incredible solidarity. This community was an ideal to me, as much as my politics that drove me to remain strong throughout this awful theft of my youth by the state and its self-serving institutions. Both allowed me to survive this captivity, but never to truly accept it or cave into deeper conditioning and authoritarian expectations.

Upon release, I dropped out of school, and I traveled from place to place, trying to reassure myself that I was part of something bigger than myself, and the youthful idealism that helped me to overcome this place was rooted in reality beyond my mind and heart's coping mechanisms. In some ways I discovered this, and in other ways I was greatly disappointed.

Once I became more organized I worked on projects that required being incredibly social or vocal either in making propaganda or going to extreme lengths to support prisoners and create new experiments in anti-repression. I never forfeited that angst or passion for hating this world; acting accordingly.

However with time, I discovered the need to abandon subculture and scene dynamics in the process of being a more active revolutionary, and equally having to grow up and take responsibility as a person without class privilege. The latter can be a very isolating experience (especially if you don't hustle you don't eat, and I never went to university, or even finished high school). With time, and with this transition, you begin noticing the people who at any moment can return to the privilege of a financially supportive family or resting opportunity to forfeit your life of conflict with society, and easily take hold of a life of abundance and convenience.

I slowly realized over the years that not only did I not have this chance of return, but I became brutally distant with those I saw in such a position (especially if they would not be upfront with this from the beginning and shared their privileges for the better or were forced to prove themselves more). But I had already pushed myself far enough. I was in this shit for life.

I spent years of remaining true to my words, acting passionately to show support to fellow struggling comrades. The consequences of my controversial choice of choosing the path of an anarchist began catching up with me. I was being harassed and intimidated by the state at a time of the grand jury peak. Regardless of me being innocent of committing any formal crime in the eyes of the state, it began an intensive process of frightening me, and dealing its haunting mysterious games behind tactics of intimidation.

At first it was nicer cause I had some distance between them and their scope. Then it became harder due to snitches and stupid people (without naming names, my own security measures would have kept the state without knowing my identity and projects, but snitches and idiot academics associating themselves with my movement exposed me). Then I was face to face with it, and forced to turn my life upside down. Then it calmed down, then it happened again, then it calmed down, then it happened again. Each and every time draining my resources, ruining my hustle, affecting my personal life, driving me to drink, driving me into paranoia, driving me into insanity (especially with concerns such as grand jury subpoenas or unclear state threats, lawyers only become therapists, as you simply never know what is gonna happen)\*. I suppose this is to be expected. How is it that I can expect something else. I mean this is what it means to be an anarchist, I am the enemy of the state, eventually they will choose a battle designed for me, even if it's nothing for them, it will take a toll of everything on me. Expecting anything else implies you believe you have rights, or you believe in the sanctity of the state's deceptive justice.

In this instance, choosing to overcome, meant choosing to remain true to myself as an anarchist, and defender of a movement that is maybe defined as a community, maybe as a tension, maybe as a scene, whatever it is, something worth defending, regardless of stress, inconvenience, or prison.

At the same time, the majority of the people who were there to support me were not those so-called comrades and self-proclaimed members of this movement. They were friends I was lucky to meet over the years, who bonded with me on deeper levels than superficial rhetoric. And from discussing with others who have faced similar stresses, I have heard many of them have experienced the same thing. Only a few of the people I helped financially or through broader anti-repression support came forward to really help where it was needed.

And these few that were from the so-called movement most likely pulled weight due to a more personal pre-existing friendship than revolutionary solidarity. However those people that were there, the people who helped me with money or simply emotional support, or showed me patience and understanding, they were comrades on a deeper level.

I am very vocal and honest about my hatred of this society and its reign of dominating and exploitative institutions. While I try to avoid an acceptance of ideology, I can absolutely be perceived as an anarchist through and through, and these bonds with people beyond the usually incestuous middle class dominated American anarchist movement, were a result of a mutuality of respect and love. No one could be my friend without sharing a contempt in some way or another for the everyday life presence of the state, or the permanent struggle of surviving capitalism. I built relationships with people that don't fall under the guidelines or limitations of a political scene, or organizing methods of various middle class hippy bullshit. I found informal bonds of love and respect based on who I was as an anarchist, that benefited me in my time of need.

They weren't doing anti-repression work, they were acting in solidarity with me based on our bonds that go far deeper than any disconnected activist logic. They were motivated by a respect for who I was, and who I am, which is an anarchist in this society, preserving tension and passion desperately before a coercive society I did not create, choose to be born into, or consent to in my everyday life. Many of my friends were gay, of color, or from poor backgrounds. And these people shared my animosities to this system, and simultaneously, feral love for a non-alienated humanity, in a way that was far more real than any bond I could have discovered with an exclusive reading group of individuals forced into my life by a movement that builds monotonous practices as opposed to informal permanent conflict in daily life with spontaneous encounters of revolutionary solidarity.

Maybe I didn't count on the right people. Maybe the movement failed me. Maybe this or that, experiences are undeniable. I will say I have met many beautiful and inspiring people from the movement (minority in the states, more so abroad, yet truth comes from time, and we should never approach so-called comrades in exotic light, only when chances to prove oneself are met). Yet these relationships are in no way more important than any other relationship I create.

Because I am not an activist. I am anarchist, in which my frustration and desire manifests in my everyday life regardless of it being in the material or the emotional. There is no separation between the personal and the political form. It is in my hatred upon going to work, or my constant disconnection with the paths placed before me, which only inconvenience awaits as I deter from them. Therefore while I am sickened by the fact that I now have little to no expectation from the movement to be there unless I'm rotting long term in a jail cell (which I also want to say deserves more attention long term and with vital resources than my situations, however the movement lacks in this respect as well, with the exception of very few committed folks doing prisoner support, I myself being one of them more in the past, and willing to do more in the moment, but have been debilitated a bit by surviving life.)

ing prisoner support, I myself being one of them more in the past, and willing to do more in the moment, but have been debilitated a bit by surviving life.)

The point for me to remember, and the point of this rant, is to never abandon anarchism for failing to succeed. It is not that anarchism as an idea or approach to responding to this awful civilization is the issue, it's relying on insular scenes and relationships that exist purely through shared theory to produce satisfactory experiences for our struggle. If I wasn't an anarchist, and didn't have the ethics and desires I have, I also would not have made such intense bonds with the people who were truly there for me and are some of the most amazing people in the world. My feelings that lay at the foundation of my journey as an anarchist are accessible feelings that go beyond theory and are accessible to people who do not come from politics or so-called movements.

In this disillusionment I had the heartbreaking realization that many people are bullshit, I had the heartbreaking realization that in many ways I can't rely on the movement I thought would nur-

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ture me after having my youth stolen by a horrifying institution of juvenile torture, or would comfort me and show me safety as the state forced its wrath my way. Being challenged to both realize this, and feel the emotions that come with it, I was able to keep my head up with the loving hands of people who love me because they know and respect my struggle, because my struggle is me and all those who share my path of survival without accepting or giving in to the comfort of apathy.

It isn't anarchism that should be questioned in these instances, the state of course will act as it does. And it isn't our commitments to the movement that should be questioned either. It is to remind ourselves that struggle is never-ending, and even the most surprising facets of our lives and connections may surprise us with disappointment as this awful civilization has inserted itself so deeply into our lives.

Now things are calmer with me, but from years of struggle, my life is a bit in disarray. All over the place, Schizophrenic in surviving as an adult, and surviving as anarchist, and finding the needed connections between the two (may I add having lived a life of crime and underground approaches to hustling, that the long term is bleak for me). But the people who love me for me, as an anarchist in struggle, I know will be there. And this keeps me going. This keeps me from betraying myself, from snitching, from disrespecting any protocol established before repression, because a violation of my integrity as an anarchist would be a violation of the integrity of those who are there for me and would be there for me and have chosen to love and open themselves up to me. This is a real bash at social alienation in our everyday life. And a real step in pushing out of scene or sub-cultural dynamics, and being a permanent force for revolutionary movement.

It is essential that we do not confuse our disappointments with individuals, cliques or scenes as disappointments for our revolutionary desires, or anarchism itself. We must learn from these disappointments to further discover ways to continue onward in struggle. This will not be easy, but struggle is defined by its complication and precarity. Struggle is as much individual as it is social and vice versa. We must find a balance in this, and remember the tragedies and traumas of alienation we are subjected to in this society before allowing ourselves to give up so easily.

It is indispensable to draw lines in understanding what it is to give up. Taking a step back or needing to focus on our survival when it comes to work and so forth is not the same as working against movements and struggles. Choosing to focus our efforts into per-

ceivable safer projects after years of stress and trauma with being threatened by the state for less safe projects is not the same as choosing to cooperate with the government, or see our disappointments as a ground for grasping onto the contrary liberal, activist, or fascist ideology.

As anarchists we embrace the total negation of civilization as we know it because it is a civilization of perverse and overwhelming domination (not that we are open to any domination of any kind), at the same time advocating for its destruction, and doing what we can to push tensions and resistance further. Preserving our negation at all times is a struggle in and of itself. One to be shared with people we love and one to constantly be re-understood or contemplated in the process succumbing to the darkness of apathy or acceptance.

This being said, I want to say that choosing to be an anarchist is to choose to be in permanent struggle. This may not just be with the state at all times. This may also be with everyday life tragedies from areas we would never expect. It is choosing a controversial

position that doesn't have room for those activist types separating life and resistance, or better to say, making struggle a hobby.

We must look to build deeper bonds with people based on true affinity as opposed to shared ideology or superficial rhetoric. We must judge each other based on what we do, even more than it is what we say. We must avoid being competitive with one another, and look to pick up each others slack in order to keep our solidarity strong. Those in need and worthy of extra help

must be given our extra attention. We must be skeptical where we place our trust, but when we discover it, it must not be compartmentalized into this is my friend and this is my comrade. Because these are grounds for a broader informal community, one that is stronger than any incestuous bullshit scene or transient so-called movement.

These are guidelines for creating a more informal community that can surpass alienation in our everyday lives, and remind us that with ever changing lives of survival a midst an ever-changing and increasingly complex civilization we will have to discover new routes to survive and support ourselves in pursuing any stability and strength in our subversive lifestyles that can never expect the ordinary or convenient.

*\*Author's Note: I choose to be broad in both instances of repression I describe in this piece. This is intended to remain more generally accessible to readers. It is also intended for the purpose of preserving my anonymity.*



# IN A CYCLICAL NARRATIVE, THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER YOU WILL WIN

*Anonymous / 2018*

I don't participate in anarchist struggle because I think I can save the world. I have been involved in organizing, publishing, and other forms of activity for a quarter of a century now. I've seen people achieve inspiring victories against overwhelming odds. We've forced the authorities to back down, securing space in which to carry out our experiments to discover other ways of living and relating. Sometimes these spaces have lasted for minutes; sometimes they have lasted for decades. I've also seen a lot of suffering and despair. Many comrades of mine have been injured, shot, imprisoned, and killed in the course of fighting for the ideals we share. I still passionately believe that a few people can make tremendous changes in the world around us. But I'm not looking to be paid for my efforts in some future paradise. I'm not an employee seeking the wages of revolution. I do this because the fighting itself is fulfilling for me.

I don't participate in anarchist struggle because I think I can save the world. I don't believe in the old Western Enlightenment progress narrative in which life becomes better and better over time, and if we do our part we can congratulate ourselves on being a part of the arc of history that supposedly bends towards justice. The struggles we are engaged in today are very old. In some ways we have gained ground, in other ways we have lost ground, but there is no such thing as absolute victory or absolute defeat. There are no guarantees. There is only the unfolding of life—the infinite chaos of the cosmos around and within us—and the actions we take in the present.

I don't participate in anarchist struggle because I think I can save the world. I fight because I know that one day the whole world will be destroyed—the earth will be consumed by the sun, leaving only ash—and when that day comes, I want the story that ends to be a story of beauty and tragedy and resistance to tyranny. I want the story we live to be a story of joy and courage. I fight because I know that there is no happily ever after, there is no salvation or revolution waiting for us at the end of history, there is just what we do today. That is all the beauty and meaning in the world that there will ever be.

There will be suffering anyway—that is the one certainty. Whether we choose to fight or not, we will suffer. The question is what we want the context of that suffering to be. Will we suffer in pursuit of the things that are most precious to us? Or will we suffer meaninglessly, attempting to hide from the world and from ourselves, as if that could protect us? My experiences in a hundred black blocs have taught me that it is usually safer in the front.

I've made peace with the fact that I may be committing myself to struggles that can never be won or concluded. It's not a question of simply overthrowing a single government, or destroying the state as a social form, but the never-concluded process of challenging hierarchy and oppression in whatever forms they may take. This is not a project that can ever be completed.

For me, accepting that my actions cannot derive their meaning from some future goal is intertwined with the process of coming to terms with my mortality. Recognizing death as inevitable, I don't hurry any faster towards it. On the contrary, my attention shifts elsewhere, to everything that is not death, however small it may be. In a world of death, in a necro-cosmos extending across billions of light years of mostly empty space, a cosmos that is already well on its way to the heat death of the universe that astronomers anticipate, the germination of a single seed holds more meaning for me than all the swirling galaxies of dust. We may be defeated by our enemies, we are certainly doomed to become dust ourselves, but the world that matters to me consists only of the moments that something else is happening, something other than death—be that a loving interaction between two friends, the maintenance of an anarchist social center, the development of a

grassroots music tradition like punk or klezmer, an explosion of rioting, or the toppling of a government. The fact that each of these moments has been will remain forever, immutable, in defiance of the vacuum. The cowardice and violence of individual police officers and of the police as an institution, the egregious acts of ISIS and the KKK—those things are just background noise to me, death and taxes.

All this does not mean that I do not think about the future. We may or may not live to experience anarchy on a scale greater than our hard-won friendships, love affairs, projects, and uprisings. But in the meantime, the vision of such a possibility can anchor and orient us in the present, informing our actions, the way a mariner navigates across the sea by the stars. Regardless of what happens tomorrow, when we are able to imagine a utopia, that utopia can gain traction on reality by enabling us to take actions we would otherwise be incapable of. The reality content of a utopia is determined by the actions it enables us to take today. In this regard, my ability to believe in the possibility of change—not as something that occurs in the future, but as something I can pursue right now—is a fundamental part of my power to live fully, to maintain a healthy relationship to my own agency. This is different from believing that I can save the world. It is not a prediction about the future, such as a scientist might make, but rather a decision about how to relate to myself and my own capabilities.

This is what enables me to take action, however humble, however imperfect, and to learn from my actions, make contact with others, and take action again. The history of anarchy as the lived experience of human beings is comprised of such actions, which will hang in eternity after every empire has triumphed and been destroyed and the earth has been swallowed up by the sun.

As I've gotten older, I've found myself reading more history. As a younger person, I looked askance at this tendency in older anarchists, but now I, too, am learning about the ones who came before me, marveling at how the same narratives that transpired in my own life seem to have played out countless times before I was born. For younger people, more of the reality that they concern themselves with is located in the future than in the past, proportionately speaking, so they tend to focus more on what will be than on what was; as an older person, proportionately more of the reality I concern myself with is located in my own past, and this has opened up the rest of the past to me as a field of inquiry. Learning about the struggles that comrades before me participated in gives me more perspective on my own. Where once I assumed that history must possess a linear narrative with triumph or defeat at the end, now I am beginning to discern a sort of cyclical narrative, in which the same themes recur, the same questions and tragedies and moments of heroism.

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In a cyclical narrative, the question is not whether you will win, but which side you want to be on, which role you want to play.

Regarding that question, my mind is already made up, as I know yours is. Let's work hard to provide each other nourishing and fulfilling company on this side of the barricades. At the best moments, this has been one of the greatest rewards I have experienced for being an anarchist: I have been blessed with some of the bravest, smartest, and most compassionate people in the world as my companions. The experience of deciding to be what we are, of being what we are together in defiance of every threat ranged against us, up to and including death, which is assured in any case—if we live properly, if we fight courageously together, this is the greatest incentive we could hope for.





# CHANGES: AN ORGANIZER REFLECTS

*Anonymous / Vol. 53 Issue 4 - Winter 2014 / Peak Magazine*

It's coming on ten years that I've been participating in anarchist struggle against systems of domination. I find myself spending a lot of time reflecting on the past decade, which very often turns into thinking about the ten years ahead. As I think about where I want to go from here, I reflect on how different the questions I'm asking now are from the ones I asked as a teenager. How will I support myself and my projects financially into the future?

How do my increasing number of criminal convictions affect my capacity for action? What kinds of projects do I want to participate in during the coming years? How do I stay engaged within an anarchist movement that typically sees few people stay involved into their thirties? I'm calling it my late-twenties crisis, and a lot of my friends and comrades are experiencing it. There was a moment where it seemed everyone I knew had either quit school or had no intention of going, where we all supported ourselves with odd jobs, busking, scams, and welfare. Now a lot of those same people are applying to college or to masters programs, and I admit I'm thinking pretty seriously about resuming the degree I dropped out of when I was 20 years old. But I haven't managed to convince myself to move on it yet.

I have a desire for stability that I didn't feel five years ago. I feel critical that my first instinct in responding to this need for stability is to "drop back in" to a way of life that I'd previously tried to reject. Why does my desire for stability get immediately mixed up with talk of degrees and careers? My twenty-year-old self wasn't wrong when I concluded that an uncertain future was more desirable than the scripted life of mediocrity offered to me by success under capitalism.

Often, a decision to seek stability in this way is accompanied by a rejection of radical movements – the language of dropping out/ in demonstrates this binary thinking. Either you're a radical and embrace the permanent instability that comes with that, or you've opted for a career and accepted an ideology that valorizes that choice. It's a legacy of the 70s hippy activism that radical politics is viewed as a phase, as something to be grown out of and looked back on condescendingly.

Rebellion tends to exist as a youth subculture – this both causes and is caused by folks stepping away from movements as they get older. Whether someone hits thirty and dedicates themselves to the stock market or embraces a life involved a new job in a social justice NGO, the effect is that more combative and passionate ways of engaging are left to the youth. As a younger radical, I often experienced frustration or confusion that there was no older generation to learn from (or at least none that I was in contact with) I want to offer two examples of ways that I felt this lack.

When I set out to learn about resistance, I was flooded with different ideologies by the so called movement of movements of the early 2000s. In this flood, I encountered many positions that I would slowly and painfully come to realize were not related to the desires that motivated me to struggle, and were in fact often hostile to them. Why did it take me so long to realize that, for instance, conspiracy theorists aren't our comrades, that they are disempowering and have their roots in fascism? And why did it again take me more years to realize the same of neo-liberal micro-lending NGOs, the Québécois sovereigntists and other nationalist movements, and again for party communists? I've seen many people get bogged down in these dead ends and become disenchanted as they see their passions betrayed. I also really felt the lack of elders around dealing with state repression.

When I was 20 years old, I felt a very strong sense of urgency. Faced with the scale of destruction and suffering, it seemed that only violent direct action could meet the urgency of the situation. It is not my intention to argue for or against any particular tactics, but when I reflect on my 20 year old self fetishizing ELF arsons, I see the Cleveland 5 and the NATO 3, who are facing explosives charges after being set up by FBI sting operations. I see the two people from the 2008 RNC who got framed by Brandon Darby after he helped them make Molotov cocktails. I see Eric McDavid\* sitting in jail for decades after agreeing

*My twenty-year-old self wasn't wrong when I concluded that an uncertain future was more desirable than the scripted life of mediocrity offered to me by success under capitalism.*

to participate in an undercover agent's plan to attack a dam. There was nothing about me that was smarter or more savvy than they were, I'm simply lucky not to have been targeted.

I don't want to make the tired old complaint that radicals are always making the same mistakes—I'm an anarchist, I want people to trust the authority of their own experience, not uncritically accept the words of someone who claims to know better. I want people to be able to learn and develop their analysis and practice in their own ways. But the depressing activist dead-ends and the violence of the police are just two of the many hazards that almost every young radical is going to encounter. If there were more experienced people around who I trusted and with whom I had political affinity, it could have made navigating them much less painful.

I want to honor my younger self's passion and urgency – it led me to quit school, avoid employment, and learn as much as I could about combative resistance. By following those passions I exposed myself to many experiences and ideas that I might never have encountered otherwise, and it forms the foundation from which I now decide my next step. I also don't want to be trapped by my past decisions, to transform the passions I felt into an ideology that reaches into the present to limit the scope of my current desires. One way I know to honor my younger self is to refuse to leave the Anarchist space, to continue participating in struggle and hopefully one day be the wise older radical who I was so often looking for. To do this, I need to think honestly about my experiences of struggle, recognizing the few lessons I have learned, while mostly being humble about the massive questions that remain and the need to continue pursuing new ideas in the shifting social terrain.

At this point, many of us have experienced infiltration, we've seen attempted entrapments first hand, we have drawn strong lines against statists and crypto-fascists, we have organized massive actions, we have maintained low-intensity conflict during quieter moments, we have cared for each other through hard times and inspired each other into the best times. We are only just beginning to not make "the same mistakes"—all the most exciting conflict is ahead of us.

This might seem remote from the big questions I asked at the beginning and from the more immediate question of going back to school. But if I anchor myself in a desire to continue resisting systems of domination, to participate in an intergenerational movement, and to continue exploring and learning, then the question of stability becomes a strategic one. Although I still feel a lot of urgency,

I need to understand what I am actually capable of doing, and then strive to increase my capacity through struggle. When I attack power, I want it to be a sustained engagement, a long-term commitment.

I want to contribute to projects that are strongly rooted in their place and that are built from strong relationships. To do this, I am going to need stability—the permanent instability of the youth culture aspects of the anarchist movement will make it harder to move in the strategic direction I want to go.

I think of all the conversations I've had about not selling out or giving up, all the ways my friends and I have pledged to hold each other accountable. Of course none of us can see clearly enough to say for certain that a particular path is "selling out"—there aren't many people around who know what it means to consider a second decade of anarchist struggle. The old youth culture reference points that kept us out of schools and jobs through our twenties may not serve us as well into our thirties. This involves, then, a new recognition of our lack of elders, and a deeper appreciation for the handful of people who, in their late thirties and forties, are just as engaged as they were in their twenties.

It's a big deal for me to recognize my desire for stability as being valid, but that doesn't necessarily give me any clarity about how to act. I do know that when I choose a course of action, I want it to flow from a genuine passion. Even if it looks like a college program or some shitty job, I want it to be clearly in reference to my own projects, not just because it seems like the only option.

As well, my current criminal charges are likely to leave me on some form of probation for a couple of years, and with my prior convictions, it feels nonstrategic to get arrested for breach. This might mean stepping back from some of the more confrontational aspects of struggle, which is of course exactly what the state wants. And they would love nothing more than if I stepped back from struggle and into a career.

However, if I redirect my energy into building infrastructure, networking, and educational events while I get through probation, then perhaps I can understand it as a strategic withdrawal to build strength, rather than a retreat. Similarly, if I approach the pursuit of financial stability in reference to these projects, I can smash the binary logic of dropping out/in. For instance, if I go to school to study languages and translation, it will create opportunities to build international relationships of solidarity and also to connect with non-English speakers locally. And when some of the projects that feel most important to me in the moment are social centers, publications, and prisoner support funds, having a reliable income becomes a part of a broader strategy.



Releasing some of the pressure of urgency has made it more possible to engage in these ways. My 20 year old self would have had a hard time with the prospect of stepping back for a couple of years, or with seeing financial stability within capitalism as an aspect of struggle. I don't want to reject urgency, or to see my past choices as errors—I was simply making different choices in a different moment, and choosing another path in the present is in

no way a break with the values I held.

I still believe it is madness to wait, that my actions need to be ends in themselves, and that compromising with power is a good way to lose track of yourself. But now I also bring to this an appreciation of capacity building, a clearer sense of what my skills are, a stronger crew of people to collaborate with, and greater self-confidence and inner strength. I want to share experiences, keep learning, and engage in sustained struggle – if I center these desires, then I can be confident in pursuing stability without retreating, dropping back in, or selling out.

*\*Editor's Note: Eric McDavid has been released from prison since the writing of this text.*



## **FOR A COMMUNITY THAT CAN OVERCOME TRAUMA AND DEFEAT REPRESSION**

The emotional toll of state repression is very difficult to understand without a direct experience with it. When I say state repression, I mean an individual's direct or passive encounter with governing institutions or agents that deal with investigating, charging, or punishing an individual for their political, subversive, or controversial interests, associates, or actions.

This repression can vary from simple visits to your home or believed work place by agents of law enforcement spouting threats. It can mean police raids and a lingering helicopter at your home right before the sun rises. It can mean empty threats that leave us gasping for air. It can mean arriving to your flight and being met by opportunistic agents at the ticket counter or security clearance. It can mean missing your flight all together due to extra-screening and questioning. It can mean being banned from flying altogether, with no explanation as to why, who to consult, or how to fix it. It can mean years of court and legal battles draining any sense of financial or emotional stability. It can mean years of anxiety, substance abuse, and psychological torment. It can mean the dividing of communities through calculated betrayal and coercion. And other than pure murder, it can mean a concrete cell (or in America's prison-industrial complex; an over packed gymnasium) for years and years of dead time.

The state is a beast, not a beautiful beast we may discover in the wilderness, it is a imaginary lifeless barrier standing between humanity and freedom. It exists with the sole intention of preserving itself and dividing humanity. It exists to protect those who benefit from it, and warn everyone else to never question this arrangement, otherwise prepare to be helpless before it's wrath. Unless it is benefiting you, living within this now global homogeneous state is an everyday tragedy most of us know nothing different of. Our suffering varies by the calculated privileges that come with it's mandated class, race, or ethnic lottery. While comfort and suffering varies, the absolute vast majority of humanity is forced to suffer the systems and pogroms of rule enforced by global state-capitalism, in serving the comforts and excesses of a precious few (and as governments tighten their rule, and populations continues to soar at the expense of natural resources, we will see the extreme tightening of these systems and pogroms).

If you choose to challenge this lottery you will face the alternative: prison. This can mean selling drugs to make ends meet when there are no means or ends. It can also mean fighting the police in the streets when they kill an unarmed black man, or deviate from their normal level of vile scumbaggery. For any and all struggle against the society the state exists to preserve; prison, or the threat of it, is the all encompassing solution to perpetuating a permanent fear amidst any human contemplation that could lead an individual or community to act on their frustrations or revolutionary desires. It is the real security guard at the bank stopping us from robbing it, that most of us are reminded of from the moment we gain consciousness.

Once we make the choice to claim a revolutionary position such as being an anarchist or radical opponent of the State, we have to assume to take on a particular attention from the State. If one is actively writing words of hatred for the State, or fighting it in the streets, you will most likely become a target regardless of it actually having evidence of you committing a crime.

I myself have both done time and been surveilled, harassed, and detained in many ways over many years. I want to say that my experiences do not compare to the extreme repression experienced in cases such as long term prisoners like Eric King, Jeremy Hammond, Marius Mason, the NATO 3 (Brent Betterly, Brian Church, and Jared Chase), the Cleveland 4 (Brandon Baxter, Connor Stevens, Doug Wright, and Joshua Stafford), the Black Liberation Army (such as Ashanti Alston, Kuwasi Balagoon, and Ojore N. Lutalo), Herman Bell, David Gilbert, Walter Bond, and many more incarcerated currently or in the past.

I say that to assert my humility, because for whatever reason I feel it is important to mention this, if for no other reason then to remind the reader of my respect for such individuals, and my awareness that I am not an all encompassing voice for experiences in repression and guidance on support. However, I believe that my feelings are important to share in a contribution to a discussion about repression generally, and our community's reaction to it. I believe that unless you have really been a target by the state and experienced it's wrath in some form directly, you can not fully empathize appropriately. I hope sharing some of own perspectives on overcoming repression can help highlight and strengthen bonds of revolutionary solidarity that I hold dear to my heart. I also hope to push for a dialogue that will specifically consider community programs in dealing with the psychology and emotional well being of individuals facing government perpetration. I hope this will motivate a dialogue with a strong consideration for preemptively acting against snitching and betrayal beyond typical support campaigns, and bring our struggle more victories against repression.

I myself am an anarchist, I have been for over half my life. I advocate for a free society without institutionalized domination and exploitation. Regardless of hope, I feel it is my responsibility to claim and assert this position in my everyday life, analysis, and when possible: in the streets. One of the most proud decisions I have ever made in my life was choosing outright that if I had to choose between my community or prison, I would go to prison. I wouldn't be able to live with myself. There would no point to life, as I already recognize the void around me. I have given myself everyday purpose mostly in the form of passions and desires that define me as an anarchist revolutionary, and the beautiful people I build relationships with in this putrid society due to intimate affinities and deep bonds. Almost my whole life would be a lie if I suddenly was willing to betray my own heart and the people I love for the threat of prison. These words sound very militant, and maybe hyperbolic to the cynical, but I follow them by saying that this decision didn't come without an internal struggle, and knowing for sure that I mean them.

*Regardless of hope, I feel it is my responsibility to claim and assert this position in my everyday life, analysis, and when possible: in the streets.*

Other than having a few critical years of my life taken away due to my choices as a self-proclaimed anarchist, I have dealt with about ten years of direct posturing and confusing threats by the State. The confusion I refer to is that for so many years they have not known who I really am, just visited people and places they associated with projects they thought I was doing like a ratchet ghost haunting me (this anonymity was actually a benefit of being taught to take security culture seriously). Throughout the years of this poking and fishing, and to the second I write this, I don't fear punishment for a crime I have committed. When my mind races, I am stressed to live with the reality that at any moment I risk punishment for simply the expression of my desires in writing, and my commitment to demonstrating no will towards their requested cooperation. I am referring to the possibility of a grand jury.

While all of the western world governments despise anarchists, the grand jury has made it possible for the American government specifically to assault us without ever committing a crime. Like not being able to fly, grand juries are a simple gesture made by the state that can seriously deter the rest of your life, offering only extreme confusion in light of its complete lack of transparency in both cases. A grand jury is simple; if you choose to remain silent, this is a potential plan B for the state.

A grand jury, and your reaction to it can play out in a handful of ways. First with a grand jury, you are only required to attend once you've been subpoenaed in person. However, you never know if you will be. So while you may not know if there is a subpoena for you, but suspect there might possibly be one based on harassment and a heated climate of repression, you have the option to go underground for a year and a half hoping whatever grand jury subpoena is out there for you has ran out of time. Underground meaning cut all ties, and live basically a couple of steps away from a fugitive lifestyle (because in this instance you have not technically committed a crime).

Yet with a grand jury, the bastards can easily reopen and force you underground again, and unless they approached your lawyer first and your lawyer told them you have fired them and secretly mentioned to you they have been approached, most likely you really don't know if it's dead or active, or if they will renew it, or if they are actively looking for you to serve it. In this case of preemptively going underground, you are not committing a crime until someone has handed you the subpoena and you have missed the requested grand jury time. On the other hand if you are subpoenaed in person or your lawyer accepts it on your behalf and you miss the grand jury, you technically become a wanted criminal. Also if you accept the subpoena or your lawyer does on your behalf and go to the grand jury, you do not have the right to a lawyer being present.

Additionally you can not actually say you do or do not know about the crime being investigated because that implies some willingness to cooperate, and down the line can be grounds for keeping you in prison. Also you can not pick and choose which questions you want to answer. So even if you don't know anything about the crime, and you simply do not want to betray the precious trust that

must define our communities in revolutionary struggle by answering personal questions about friends, loved ones, spaces, or events, you are committing a crime by making this choice. And then in this case, you can be found in contempt, and held in a federal maximum prison for up to 18 months. And after the 18 months, they can create a new grand jury and repeat the process again (this is not so easy, but it's certainly a consideration of state agents).

It's quite obvious this has been a tool of the state to punish when it can't legally punish based on its own standard of evidence. Yet the whole situation can drive you completely fucking insane. In this case you are possibly facing jail time for a crime that you maybe know nothing about, and for sure have not committed. And this insanity is in reality due to some eagle scout scumbag deciding he wants overtime, and has an opportunity to punish someone they for sure consider to be enemy combatants. I will humbly state that the state is brutal. I haven't experienced the depths of its wrath. I haven't had my home or car bombed (Like with the MOVE organization in Philadelphia in 1985, or the attempted assassination of eco-activist Judi Bari in her car in 1990), or been locked in solitary for over half of my life (Such as Albert Woodfox of the Angola 3 who spent 43 years in solitary confinement). Recognizing this, I have however felt helpless and dealt with debilitating anxiety, and do believe that I have trauma inside of me.

Specifically in the case of grand juries the state can leave you feeling paranoid and insane. Its goal is to do this. It is a special insane type of paranoia in the sense that it's not necessarily about the 18 months, it's more so not knowing how to deal with it. Not knowing if you should turn your life upside down hoping to avoid the theoretical subpoena, or go public. Trying to find pride in yourself about choosing to not cooperate even if you do not know anything about an investigation because it is your responsibility as a revolutionary to do so. Or not allowing yourself to feel alone, because many other people will have a hard time empathizing with you until you are inside a cell, and this can be really debilitating, and something I hope people will consider challenging. Individuals such as Jerry Koch have demonstrated a revolutionary strength in overcoming these challenges that I consider to be a victory for our movement.

To this day I still don't know if I am a person or even ever was a person of interest in this obscure quest for easy punishment by the state, and this lack of transparency is where my insanity flares. Maybe I have wasted my time and driven myself insane absorbing paranoia, or maybe I've made the right decisions these last ten years, my point is that this confusion has left its mark on my mind, body, and heart. It's also left a mark on my job, my family, my friends, my comrades, my projects, and general life stability.

This insanity is a potion of pressure on the mind and heart that engulfs your entirety. In choosing to never consider any route then evasion or prison I am demonstrating a revolutionary strength that my community can see as a victory. But anyone who hasn't been forced to choose so and so card of destiny I do not think fully understands the horrors met when going through the process. In

this process, even I myself have encountered vile questionable thoughts about weighing my options. I came out on top, and will continue to do so, but for those targeted who are new to struggle, they may have a different experience. You come to call into question your sincerity, and find a series of choices and obstacles in enduring your own revolutionary introspection.

For those in the states for example where struggle is new or a hobby, it is easy for me to imagine someone giving in to the state's demands through their inability to overcome the helplessness inflicted by its posturing. This leads to snitching and cooperation, which may both be in some cases demonstrations of character, I suggest we also recognize that these heinous actions can come from an individual feeling isolated due to the neglect of attention or inspiration given to them by their revolutionary community which needs to demonstrate a mutual ungovernable solidarity as an alternative to cooperation.

Solidarity is our unconditional and ungovernable victory. It is something the state does not understand due to its lifeless techno-bureaucratic apparatus. It is something that is truly deeper and stronger than their prisons. When an individual forfeits their revolutionary integrity, this gives the state an obscure victory that it may even overlook in leading such a pathetic individual (cause regardless of my sympathies, they become one in this choice) to betray the only victory they can not take away from us, one that lives in our hearts, and preserves a conflict with its society. Individuals choosing the convenience of rejoining society as a traitor over prison for not cooperating humiliates our struggle, implying that it is possible to live a life in this world as we know it after choosing to understand it for the vile authoritarian nightmare it is, and due to convenience; betraying such a position and those who share it.

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But while some snitches really just do deserve stitches, or a six foot hole, it's important to understand that it is maybe not just a character flaw. Direct victims of political repression by the state can be victimized and we can also be responsible for not setting the appropriate emotional tone for our communities where our bonds and methods of support are strong enough to overpower the strains of state intimidation, and worse, incarceration.

With the emboldenment of our enemies in the states with Trump, now more then ever we must overcome degenerate awkwardness and shatter self-inflicted alienation in our communities. We must find alternatives to rumor mills and cliques. While never turning to a hero logic, we must put special attention and emotional consideration for people overcoming various types of repression, or recovering from the emotional trauma of a trial, state harassment, a house raid, and most of all: incarceration. We must celebrate our victories and weigh our battles within our communities. We are choosing a controversial position, and petty scene dynamics and a third person approach to struggle will not serve any revolutionary interest. While we must challenge our conditioning and be accountable for our mistakes, we must sway from a perverse vanguard of politically correct perfectionism that exists solely within

an exclusive scene and could not be generalized in revolt.

At the moment we can see this overwhelming wrath happening to defendants arrested resisting Trump's inauguration. The state is flaunting 80 plus years for what most countries consider to be standard relatively non-violent unrest. We will see little to no coverage of this terrifying situation for these courageous individuals because anarchists find no haven of safety by any state or it's media\*.

We must realize we only have each other, and a solidarity of common affinities with frustrated people we encounter or befriend in our everyday lives. We can not request asylum like Edward Snowden or Julian Assange, we are anarchists; friend of no state or border. We are not acting or pursuing a revolutionary path that looks to participate in the theatrical cage of politics society claims is our only hope to achieve freedom. We are the enemy of all authority, and every facet of institutional exploitation. We must begin to challenge our conditioning by this alienated society, and truly look to build stronger relationships of affinity.

I believe we need to consider creating support groups focused specifically on emotional sharing and support for people going through repression. If you have never experienced long term incarceration, the possibility of prison, or consistent state intimidation it's important to humble yourself and question your judgments of people who are maybe experiencing trauma or choosing to take drugs or alcohol to deal with

the emotional backlash of repression. We need to start being nicer to each other, and recognizing the double standards we allow to exist in our insular scenes, when we should be challenging each other to be better revolutionaries by assuring one another that our bonds are worth protecting regardless of state efforts.

These words are very nice, but I myself am a cynical person in recovery, and realize that it may sound preachy to some. Speaking personally, in light of seeing case after case over the years, and personally overcoming multiple instances of authoritarian harassment and punishment that lead to substance abuse, distress, social dysfunction, and trauma, pushing ourselves and our comrades to set new standards of emotional support and understanding, will help us to re-discover new victories that have always been there, and prevent cooperation and snitching to the state when times feel bleak. Our efforts in this must match our efforts of pushing for

a truly revolutionary struggle in the streets against the state and capitalism. We must have a balance of our love and hate, and must begin to eliminate scene dynamics, competitive relations, or moralistic judgments of one another that demean revolutionary communities.

We must set a new bar for implementing anti-repression support that creates safe spaces for individuals to find attention for their trauma and fears resulting from repression; reassuring each other that even when you are put into the corner by the state you are not alone.

I don't think I am providing a concrete trajectory for a way to achieve these things, but I feel that for the audience I am writing for, you can understand what I am saying by my social references and personal revelations. I am not a happy go lucky person, and I understand that most of us in the states come to this political position from a potentially traumatic childhood or teenage experience,

and this in many cases affects our social dynamics. But with the critical state of the natural world, the never-ending insanity when we look at the news, and the resilience of our enemies, its really now the time to check our sectarian urges to the curb, and embrace a stronger love and insurgent intimacy for our communities, with the intention of engaging with a stronger contempt for our enemies. It's time we all realize the significance and controversy of choosing a subversive life, and while some are stronger

then others in dealing with the consequences of this position, we must communalize the strength, push our infrastructures further, and create a culture that is unbreakable to the perpetration of the state and it's bastard agents.

*Anonymous / June 2017*

**\*Editor's Note:** *The case referred to regarding those arrested resisting Trump's inauguration is more commonly known as the J20 defendants. Many things have happened since this was written, updates and more can be learned here: [defendj20resistance.org](http://defendj20resistance.org)*

*For more general info on supporting political prisoners in North America please visit: [nycabc.wordpress.com](http://nycabc.wordpress.com)*



**STRUGGLE DOESN'T MEAN TO HOPE**



**IT MEANS TO NOT GIVE IN**

# INSTRUCTIONS



## FOR AN INSURRECTION

If it seems somewhat absurd to talk of revolution, this is obviously because the organized revolutionary movement has long since disappeared from the modern countries where the possibilities of a decisive social transformation are concentrated. But all the alternatives are even more absurd, since they imply accepting the existing order in one way or another. If the word “revolutionary” has been neutralized to the point of being used in advertising to describe the slightest change in an ever-changing commodity production, this is because the possibilities of a fundamental desirable change are no longer expressed anywhere.

Today the revolutionary project stands accused before the tribunal of history — accused of having failed, of having simply engendered a new form of alienation. This amounts to recognizing that the ruling society has proved capable of defending itself, on all levels of reality, much better than revolutionaries expected. Not that it has become more tolerable. The point is simply that revolution has to be reinvented.

This poses a number of problems that will have to be theoretically and practically overcome in the next few years. We can briefly mention a few points that it is urgent to understand and resolve.

Of the tendencies toward regroupment that have appeared over the last few years among various minorities of the workers movement in Europe, only the most radical current is worth preserving: that centered on the program of workers councils. Nor should we overlook the fact that a number of confusionist elements are seeking to insinuate themselves into this debate (see the recent accord among “leftist” philosophico-sociological journals of different countries). The greatest difficulty confronting groups that seek to create a new type of revolutionary organization is that of establishing new types of human relationships within the organization itself. The forces of the society exert an omnipresent pressure against such an effort. But unless this is accomplished, by methods yet to be experimented with, we will never be able to escape from specialized politics.



The demand for participation on the part of everyone often degenerates into a mere abstract ideal, when in fact it is an absolute practical necessity for a really new organization and for the organization of a really new society. Even if militants are no longer mere underlings carrying out the decisions made by masters of the organization, they still risk being reduced to the role of spectators of those among them who are the most qualified in politics conceived as a specialization; and in this way the passivity relation of the old world is reproduced.

People's creativity and participation can only be awakened by a collective project explicitly concerned with all aspects of lived experience. The only way to "arouse the masses" is to expose the appalling contrast between the potential constructions of life and the present poverty of life. Without a critique of everyday life, a revolutionary organization is a separated milieu, as conventional and ultimately as passive as those holiday camps that are the specialized terrain of modern leisure. Sociologists, such as Henri Raymond in his study of Palinuro, have shown how in such places the spectacular mechanism recreates, on the level of play, the dominant relations of the society as a whole. But then they go on naively to commend the "multiplicity of human contacts," for example, without seeing that the mere quantitative increase of these contacts leaves them just as insipid and inauthentic as they are everywhere else. Even in the most libertarian and anti-hierarchical revolutionary group, communication between people is in no way guaranteed by a shared political program.

The sociologists naturally support efforts to reform everyday life, or to organize compensation for it in vacation time. But the revolutionary project cannot accept the traditional notion of play, the notion of a game limited in space, in time and in qualitative depth. The revolutionary game — the creation of life — is opposed to all memories of past games. To provide a three-week break from the kind of life led during forty-nine weeks of work, the holiday villages of Club Med draw on a shoddy Polynesian ideology — a bit like the French Revolution presenting itself in the guise of republican Rome, or like the revolutionaries of today who define themselves primarily in accordance with how well they fit the Bolshevik or some other style of militant role. The revolution of everyday life cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future.



The experience of the empty leisure produced by modern capitalism has provided a critical correction to the Marxian notion of the extension of leisure time: It is now clear that full freedom of time requires first of all a transformation of work and the appropriation of this work in view of goals, and under conditions, that are utterly different from those of the forced labor that has prevailed up till now. But those who put all the stress on the necessity of changing work itself, of rationalizing it and of interesting people in it, and who pay no attention to the free content of life (i.e. the development of a materially equipped creative power that goes beyond the traditional categories of work time and rest-and-recreation time) run the risk of providing an ideological cover for a harmonization of the present production system in the direction of greater efficiency and profitability without at all having called in question the experience of this production or the necessity of this kind of life. The free construction of the entire space-time of individual life is a demand that will have to be defended against all sorts of dreams of harmony in the minds of aspiring managers of social reorganization.

The different moments of situationist activity up till now can only be understood in the perspective of a reappearance of revolution, a revolution that will be social as well as cultural and whose field of action will right from the start have to be broader than during any of its previous endeavors.

The SI does not want to recruit disciples or partisans, but to bring together people capable of applying themselves to this task in the years to come, by every means and without worrying about labels. This means that we must reject not only the vestiges of specialized artistic activity, but also those of specialized politics; and particularly the post-Christian masochism characteristic of so many intellectuals in this area. We don't claim

to be developing a new revolutionary program all by ourselves. We say that this program in the process of formation will one day practically oppose the ruling reality, and that we will participate in that opposition. Whatever may become of us individually, the new revolutionary movement will not be formed without taking into account what we have sought together; which could be summed up as the passage from the old theory of limited permanent revolution to a theory of generalized permanent revolution.

*-Situationist International / 1961*

**NEVER STOP**



**SEARCHING**

*Get up. Make my bed. Shower. Clean my room.*

*Face capitalism.*

*Hate capitalism.*

*Pressure. Anxiety.*

*Periods of relief.*

*An up and down one-way routed maze made of concrete beneath dangling razor wire.*

*Climbing for views of something else on this route can make your bleed.*

*We fall and have to continue walking bloody, pressured, and anxious.*

*Given just enough relief here and there to keep one foot in front of the other.*

*The urge to climb erupting due to haunting hope and sadistic curiosity.*

*We ask others to help hold us up as we climb.*

*Especially as the bleeding becomes too much.*

*We ask others to help us, risking disappointment.*

*We hold each other up in the face of cold bruising concrete, and at risk of raining blood.*

*We fall again and again. Bleeding from the wires, and bruised from the concrete.*

*We fall down, and are faced with the ground that grossly guides us only one way.*

*A route to our supposed future deaths.*

*A route that is only trekked properly with a subservient mind.*

*We follow as needed.*

*Yet we know that all this blood is worth it, all these bruises are worth it, all these disappointments are worth it.*

*Moments of a view beyond this one way enclosed route towards death help to keep our eyes open.*

*They keep our hearts beating, capable of passion.*

*For the only view on this desperately unintended route requires closed eyes, and cold feet.*

*It requires a lost heart; passionless.*

*Our blood and hurt keeps us warm. It haunts us but still keeps us warm.*

*It makes this trek harder everyday.*

*But seeking a different view, searching constantly for a different route, gives us a life with our eyes open.*

*It provides pride in resisting bleakness and a destiny without our choosing.*

*Maybe this pressure is my own misfortune, lack of luck, or conventional failure.*

*Maybe this anxiety is my own isolated illness.*

*Maybe these moments of relief are distractions.*

*Maybe views of redemption will forever fade.*

*But I blame it all on the concrete and razor wire that surrounds me on this unconsensual route placed before me.*

*Regardless of all this blood. Regardless of the bruising.*

*Regardless of the coldness.*

*I'll keep taking peeks.*

*I'll keep helping others looking to wander elsewhere, do the same.*

*Regardless of their blood falling on me.*

*Regardless of the trembling pain I feel every time I fall.*

*Regardless of the debilitating disappointment when someone drops me, or I drop them.*

*It's not my choice to take this route.*

*I cant. I wont. Blame myself or my fellow wanderers.*

*I blame these walls and this wire.*

*I can either function bloodless, bruiseless, sterile, and cooperative.*

*Or I can stand up everyday with my eyes wide open, searching all the time for another view.*



**“I don’t do what I do because I think I can save the world. I fight because I know that the whole world will be destroyed, it will be consumed by the sun, leaving only ash, and when that day comes, I want the story that comes to an end to be a story of beauty and tragedy and resistance, not a story of stupid, pointless suffering, but a story of joy and courage. I fight because I know that there is no happily ever after, there is no salvation or revolution waiting for us at the end of history, there is just what we do today—that is all the beauty and meaning in the world that there will ever be.”**