

ANATHEMA

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ON THE RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST GENTRIFICATION

Point Breeze is a rapidly gentrifying area of South Philly. In the last four years median household income has increased from \$77,300 to \$115,000 as the white population of the neighborhood goes up by almost 30 percent. A old player has stepped back into the equation, John Longacre is behind a series of outdoor beer garden-type events catering to younger, wealthier new residents of the area. This man does not have a good reputation in Point Breeze, in fact in 2011 his plans to create a totally out of place bar upset residents to the point where one woman engaged him in a fist fight following a community meeting. The biggest potential blow against the working class neighborhood is Longacre's plan to build luxury condos once the beer gardens have run their course. Considering how fast and widespread gentrification is

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DNC INVADES PHILLY IN 2016

"A convergence is an imminently political call to do politics; anarchists are alien to every political alliance. But also because to consent to convergencism as a key moment or to "take advantage of it" reduces our hopes and our passions of living anarchically to a mere political ideology, a question of "tactics" and strategies, as if we were machines that acted in a way predetermined by these "mechanisms" of struggle." - MEXICO: ON ANTI-ELECTORALISM AND ANARCHIST STRUGGLE

Where to stand? Certainly we oppose every bit of the authoritarian program of Democrats as much as Republicans, so it should be across any and all party lines. While many of our ilk still define themselves of the left, rather unfortunately, it should be apparent that these political programs serve the civilized practice of control. More to the point, politics are control. Like any amerikan city Philadelphia is a stronghold of this practice, corrupt and otherwise, so perhaps calling this bastion of control setting up shop in our city an

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AN ANARCHIST CRITIQUE OF (THE NEW PHILLY) PRISON

"You don't need barbed wire and bars to build a prison – you just need domination" -325 Collective

"Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prison?" -Michel Foucault

The city is planning to build a new prison in North East Philadelphia with the aim of eventually replacing the existing prison in the same area. It's most important to oppose this project in many different ways, but also, to oppose the new prison from an analysis that is both anti-prison and anti-imprisonment. As anarchists our critiques need to be sharper than those commonly heard in leftist rhetoric, we must move beyond notions of innocence and guilt, narratives that focus on whether a prison is private or public, and watered down critiques that only seek to end mass, racist, or unfair incarceration. The reasons that we oppose prison are the same reasons we oppose white supremacy, the state, capital, and gender: because these frameworks can only produce coercive relations between individuals, they always lead to hierarchies which must be maintained through means both subtle and violent. If we oppose prisons by promoting the ideas and methods on which it is based we keep our ideas distinct from our lived activity and become anarchists in name only.

At the moment the city is discussing whether to make a payment of between \$7.2 and \$7.8 million toward purchasing a 58 acre plot of land on State Road on which to build the new set of human cages. The location

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SOME RECENT ANTI-COP CHALKINGS

Over a dozen people gathered and some defaced a mural memorializing dead policemen at the 35th police district HQ in mid-June.

An unknown individual (or individuals) left the message "COPS KILL KILL COPS" chalked under a train bridge on Springfield St in West Philly.

Keep it up, we'd love to see some paint next time :)

[gentrification continued] taking place in Philly, it's almost surprising that more widespread conflictual approaches to ending it haven't exploded onto the scene. Almost, because so often it seems that such acts of rebellion are met with a condescension, genuine confusion, and disbelief. In spite of liberal opposition, it seems some have begun carving out room for a more direct and combative approach to opposing gentrification. Before looking at the more recent attacks that took place, let's rewind to two summers ago.

In the summer of 2013 someone smashed the windows of an OCF cafe/office in Point Breeze, South Philly. OCF is a realty company partially responsible for the rapid development (and inevitable displacement) in the Point Breeze neighborhood, OCF is owned by notorious politician-wannabe and realtor Ori Feibush. Gentrification in Point Breeze had been a contentious issue for a while, with the Point Breeze Organizing Committee [PBOC] being amongst its loudest opponents. Despite their opposition to OCF and Feibush (whom they had explicitly critiqued and denounced) PBOC chose civility and denunciation when presented with an opportunity for solidarity, publicly supporting a full police investigation into the vandalism while distancing themselves from the act. Online many condemned the attack as counter-productive and inappropriate, while others speculated as to whether the smashing had been carried out by Feibush himself in order to gain sympathy and portray himself as a victim of vicious activists. The idea that fighting gentrification could be done literally seemed to completely escape almost everyone's imaginations. Needless to say almost two years later Point Breeze is still very much getting gentrified.

More recently, early this spring in fact, a string of claimed attacks against gentrification has hit Philly. Three attacks took place in April and May of this year, two against OCF (see our last issue for re-prints of the communiques). Again there has been complaints against them from the liberal left, hypotheses that it's Feibush self-sabotaging and suggestions that the vandals take up activism instead. Let's dismiss the idea of self-sabotage right off the bat, because, let's be real, it's doubtful Ori Feibush would go out into the night, damage his own properties and the write radical communiques anonymously on the internet claiming to have done so. As for the vandals needing to engage in activism, there's no real way of knowing if they do, short of asking every activist if they also take part in illegal attacks which is (hopefully) an obvious no-no.

Liberal critiques aside, what could have motivated these attacks? What does this kind of approach to anti-

gentrification mean politically? What would it look like to hold space for this form of struggle within less confrontational settings?

First off in terms of motivation the first things that come to mind are fun and merit; honestly Ori Feibush is a tool and it probably feels great to break something that belongs to his terrible business. One communique literally tells us the motivation behind the attack: "We did this because we are tired of living in a system that constructs houses for the rich, while poor and working class people get more police, more jails, more budget-cuts, more misery." But frustration with class society and its policing isn't the only factor behind these attacks, the same claim goes on to explain that economic damage is an incentive as well. Economic damage, through vandalism, sabotage, strikes, and many other forms have been part of social struggles for as long as rich people have owned stuff, from riots during of the Civil Rights movement, to workers trashing tea in Boston, to environmentalists ruining forestry equipment. Not mentioned in any of the claims is the social impact of these attacks, a visible sign of opposition is hard to ignore, making visible the conflict inherent in gentrification, while also reminding everyone that there are people who are already fighting back.

The thing about these types of physical actions: night time smashings, expropriations, blockades, is that they aren't political, they're literal. People are literally taking small steps toward stopping things from happening themselves. A political response is to beg someone powerful to do something they most likely don't care about, whereas these actions have been small interruptions in how gentrification works, stopping momentarily, one aspect or another of the process that sterilizes and remodels neighborhoods for richer, less "dangerous" people. In isolation these won't do much, but undertaken in concert, can put a real damper on development, dissuading investors, renters, and realtors alike.

Moving beyond the bad example set by the PBOC, individuals and groups fighting gentrification in less controversial ways can act in solidarity with those who have decided to attack its physical mechanisms. A simple first step that should be obvious would be to avoid public denunciations and endorsements of police intervention, the last thing any social struggle needs is more people in jail. A simple way to support combative opposition is to endorse it, not necessarily without some critique (because no strike is perfect), but to stand behind it publicly and be explicit that different methods exist within the same struggle. Since many still don't seem to

understand why someone would want to damage property, it might not be a bad idea to explain some reasons people would “stoop” to such a level, and spread narratives that understand attacking to be a necessary and valuable contribution to stopping gentrification. Because of the illegal nature of many forms of direct action, many of those involved will probably have a difficult time explaining their ideas and analyses outside of anonymous channels without risking their safety and freedom.

Lastly, for everything an attack brings to the table, there is one thing that hasn't been brought up: that every attack is an invitation to act, a call to others to revolt. thing that hasn't been brought up: that every attack is an invitation to act, a call to others to revolt. ★

[**DNC 2016 cont.**] invasion should be an exaggeration. However, when a convention comes to town, said town falls entirely under its control, by way of the police, and to let this pass without answer suggests weakness on our part.

It is rather comical looking back at the zine about the 2000 RNC protests in Philly entitled, *We Shut Down the City*, having attended conventions and seen that police, on behalf of the parties, shut down, cage, kettle, and blockade thoroughfares. In NYC in 2004 the stories in the news had a focus on the essential evacuation of the populace during the RNC to avoid said shutdown and invasive political mayhem. In 2008 there were stories about the propositions by city organizers for the 2008 conventions suggesting that it would draw capital into the city, while many reports suggested exactly otherwise. In that way, we see the shutdown of the economy that we pursue, but only temporarily by an affair that actually perpetuates that paradigm.

As such, we don't need to "shut down the city," as that's already occurring, but shutting down those aspects available to convention goers, and ultimately the convention itself could be of interest. That is, of course, if one believes that such activities were possible, let alone worthwhile.

Like our Mexican comrades quoted above I intend to pursue practices that bring me joy, some of those practices fitting beneath the banner of maintaining a "tension" against the totality of control, but to ignore results and consequences entirely is beyond short-sighted. In terms of publicly organizing resistance to the convention, the decision manifestly reveals itself to me as not worth my time, as such things would not bring me

joy and likely end up in a preemptive arrest of myself and others. The important thing to draw from their larger piece is to act regardless of morals, mores and legality, pursuing a consensual realization of myself beyond the automatons swarming around us. In some disagreement with their piece, again, I try not to dilute my passions into *hope* for anarchy because I am either living it or I am not, but in fighting to live my life or enjoying a restful moment apart from imposition, I also reject politics and ideology.

What does bother me is that this will be the third time in the coming year that major events visit this city, assuming it safe for their practices. First the Pope (ruler of the catholic church, however reformist he may be), then the return of industrial bigwigs and politicians for the *Insight* fracking conference, followed next year by the Democratic National Convention. Despite three active infoshops and a host of anarchists, our apparent distaste for authority seems to have had little impact on where we reside.

Tom Nomad was certainly right when he said "we are losing," at the North American Anarchist Studies Conference several months ago, and it seems even more substantial a statement in view of our own local activity. And while it might warm my heart to see anarchists in the streets opposing conferences and conventions, reaching out to future friends and publicly attacking every edifice imposed (perhaps even utilizing some of Nomad's proposal regarding militant tactics in these scenarios), I would expect it to have little effect here and now. Militancy can be a false armor grown from rhetoric, further embracing politics and ideology - however, barring some substantial growth in our scene we would be lucky to have even that.

The necessity of attack only grows with every indignity, with every extinction, with every control, and should not be some calendar event occurrence - but a constant - or at least a constant fear of those we oppose. Besides, any effective, and in fact anarchic, considerations would not be limited to the streets outside the convention center and the stadiums where the DNC will occur, pursuing, instead, a more asymmetric path. ★

[**Philly Prison cont.**] was chosen because, as prison lover and manager Louis Giorla told a city council committee, it is near other prison facilities but far from residential areas, which is to say, it will exacerbate the isolation of prisoners from the outside and make visiting those inside more difficult. The decision to spend the approximately \$7 million has been postponed a few times so far,

and construction of the actual facility would cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The House of Corrections, an older prison built in the 19th century, is slated to be replaced by the new prison because it's not on par in terms of "modern correctional practices". It's not uncommon for promises to be made to demolish the old once the new arrives, only to keep both open in the end. This has already happened here in Philly with the Holmesburg prison which was supposed to be closed but is still in use after a few renovations. Either way the new prison will allow the city to put away even more people because one of its selling points is that it will alleviate over-crowding, and it certainly won't do that by freeing more people.

The most common argument against building the new prison is that the city should spend its money funding schools instead, this completely ignores the commonalities between the two institutions and the many connections that so often lead people from one straight into the other. Put bluntly schooling is mandatory domestication for young people. While learning, creativity, and the pursuit of new knowledges and experiences are to be valued, schools are not the places to seek non-coercive education. Schooling reflects the logic of imprisonment, certainly a few moments shine through that bring joy and meaningful information into the lives of students but these are exceptions to the disciplinarian and monotonous norm. School is a legally mandated institution that dominates the time, minds, and bodies of young people, which means that those who forgo legally sanctioned schooling are labelled delinquents and thus viable targets for state violence. School pushes an authoritarian agenda upon all who attend, instilling the idea that to be smart means to be able to perform for an authority satisfactorily; the teacher, the standardized test, the colonial historical narrative, western morality... Like in prison the only non-hierarchical relations take place between the subjugated.

As school uses the guise of education to indoctrinate its students, it also uses the excuse of behavior and discipline to label youth delinquents and introduce them into the justice system. The contemporary school environment is becoming less and less subtle with regards to it's practices of imprisonment and surveillance. Police officers guard the entrances and patrol the hallways, security cameras watch the corridors, zero-tolerance policies regarding cell phones, outfits and absence result in suspensions,

and truancy policing hunts young people who choose to avoid school. Even if one were to look past the fact that judges, educators and prison administrators actively conspire together to turn a profit by imprisoning youth through the bureaucracy of schools and the justice system, the fact that more and more youth find themselves surrounded by people whose job is to literally capture people for the state should be indication enough that school is an environment of legally sanctioned predation.

The suggestion that the state should implement alternatives to prison coming from many activists does not take into account the spread of practices of imprisonment outside of prison facilities already taking place. This request is reminiscent of angry liberal who is upset that police officers used firearms and not tazers, in this or that racist killing, the problem isn't the method of control, the problem is the relationship of control altogether. As critiques of racist, unfair, and mass incarceration edge into popular discourse due to narratives such as those present in *The New Jim Crow*, the state and capital will seek to maintain the social peace not by loosening their domination over people, but instead, will use methods more insidious to keep populations subjugated, forever reflecting the racist property based origins of modern prisons in the USA. House arrest, probation and parole, GPS monitors, community service, curfews, re-integration programs, job education, these are the softer and more socially acceptable face of imprisonment. The worst thing about all of these is that they put the subjugated person in an undignified position of choosing complicity with their discipline or a return to the overt violence of the police and the torture of four concrete walls.

None of the above is said in an effort to stifle struggle, but rather to sharpen it. To struggle against this new prison without struggling against imprisonment in all of its forms is to hack at the limbs of a tree while ignoring the roots that nourish and keep it growing, it may alter the shape and methods imprisonment takes but will not end imprisonment itself. We need to remain true to our beliefs if we are interested in total freedom. We only sell ourselves short when we allow our efforts to be derailed into improving and refining the institutions that keep us miserable. Our critique of prison should be inseparable from our critique of schools and our critique of imprisonment should expand beyond both. ★

AUTONOMOUS COURSE & PERMANENT DISCUSSION *from The Anarchist Library*

As anarchists, considering insurrection and looking for ways to make it possible is not the same as drawing up a master plan leading towards insurrection and looking for the cattle to execute it. Neither can it be about a crowd joining an initiative and not taking responsibility for thinking for themselves, discussing, creating an autonomous course. Of course this is a caricature, but it enables one to sketch out certain mechanisms inherent to each attempt to bring people together without, at the same time, proposing circles of affinity and permanent discussion as necessary conditions to enable informal organization.

The enthusiasm at the beginning of a shared project after a period of searching for affinity is contagious and attracts others who are willing to struggle. Enthusiasm is one of the driving forces behind every fight, but it is far from a solid base on which to build a struggle. What happens when it all becomes a bit less playful and demands a bit more seriousness? What about when there are difficulties and setbacks? This is not a plea for marrying a certain struggle or signing a contract at its inception, but an underlining of the absolute necessity of the development of an autonomous course. Without autonomy, without being able to revolt and struggle starting from oneself, and without a project being offered, one can only be swallowed into projects and able to make them their own.

But, viewed from another angle, what do you do when you are meeting other enthusiasts and impatient people in the middle of a struggle? During the development of the struggle against the new camp some individuals in Brussels took the initiative to create an assembly, a space where everyone (except politicians and other leaders) willing to struggle without trade unions could come to. A space for debate and coordination in the struggle.

However, discussion and thinking about what one wants need to happen in a more permanent way, outside of the collective moments, otherwise these moments become nothing more than moments in which one is either competing with others (by selling proposals and looking for adherents, or by shooting down the proposals of others), or letting oneself be dragged along by the best speaker. An assembly on the one hand risks the strengthening of a "waiting attitude" (we are waiting for discussion and proposals until we are all sitting together instead of autonomously looking for comrades and starting discussions on an individual level of in smaller constellations), and on the other hand risks strengthening the illusion of the number. What does that mean? If you consider the struggle as a struggle growing in "participants," you automatically start

thinking about what you can share with all these people. You start proposing things toward "the group," and if the group takes up the proposals you give them new proposals, on and on, until it bumps onto its inevitable limits.

But what are those limits? First of all the paralyzing effect of collectivity, some kind of dictum that everybody need to agree upon before something can begin, and so everyone needs to be persuaded of the validity of a proposal. This causes extremely destructive discussions, which hurt more than they help-- for example, when the deeper notions of ones view on social reality or what one demands from a struggle don't coincide.

Secondly, these sorts of spaces impose a collective rhythm on the struggle, a rhythm which everyone feels alienated from in the end. It is a rhythm of action after action without deepening, because deepening is not possible when discussion is limited to collective moments. And so, at the end, one doesn't know what one is doing anymore, except reproducing the same thing. When, in such a space, proposals are charged with an exaggerated weight, because no one wants to be dragged into an initiative that seems over their heads. What is known is milked dry until it becomes routine, what is unknown provokes adverse reaction. We'll say it again-- this is the consequence of a lack of autonomy, permanent discussion and thought about what one wants outside of the collective moments.

Thirdly, those who are accustomed to making proposals will feel exhausted after a while, because thinking about proposals each time and taking effort to realize them takes more energy than simply participating in an action. In every relation, the lack of mutuality eventually becomes a burden, until one decides to break with it. On the other hand, the ones that the proposals are coming to will feel passive, ever more unsure about what they actually want, in contrast with those who always seem to have a clear idea of what they want. This role begins to gnaw at us, until one has had enough of it and takes a step back from everything. An organizational model which is unbalanced can keep burning on enthusiasm for a while, but when the enthusiasm disappears one is left with sour feelings.

And so? Every struggle is in need of spaces that can help shape it. Spaces in which there is discussion or in which one can coordinate for specific goals (for example the organization of a demonstration). However, when there is only one space, and this space becomes the reference point, it will inevitably become a burden to the struggle and will suffocate people's autonomous courses, rather than giving them oxygen. ★