

# ANATHEMA

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## WHAT'S THE POINT OF THE BLACK BLOC? ANARCHY IN A TIME OF CIVIL WAR

*Reflections on "Don't Let Paris Be A Pretext"*

What is the point of black bloc? How can the misuse of black bloc tactics be dangerous and alienating to others in struggle? What are our goals when we use black bloc? The following is a critique of the bloc that was called for the “Don’t Let Paris Be A Pretext” march that took place on November 20th in Center City as well as some suggestions on how do better. I felt that the actions the bloc was called to enable were poorly planned and that the bloc itself was generally sloppy. Before discussing the specifics of how the action went, I’m going to lay out some basic information about black bloc to provide some context for my critique.

Black bloc is a tactic that developed in Germany as part of the anti-nuclear and squatter movements in the 1980s in response to constant evictions and police repression. The tactic was intended to allow people to more easily attack police and publicly carry out illegal actions. Materially it made participants both anonymous and indistinguishable from one another. Initially, black bloc participants wore motorcycle helmets and black leather jackets to protect themselves from cops and create a uniform appearance. The tactic has since spread and evolved, taking on different forms in new places. In the United States, black blocs most often consist of masked people wearing plain black hoodies and black pants. The tactic usually accompanies rioting, vandalism, or street fighting. Black bloc doesn’t exist to produce a militant aesthetic, it exists to facilitate combative action.

The bloc on November 20th was called for by word of mouth, and though it was implied that there was an interest in burning one or multiple flags, this plan never actualized itself. Creating the conditions on our own to burn a flag in the street can seem like a challenge, but it certainly isn’t impossible. By talking together, we can figure out ways to attempt to outmaneuver the police and make space to burn a flag. Simply waiting around with a mask on won’t do anything — organizing informally in the moment or making plans with trusted friends and comrades ahead of time is what makes collective action possible.

The way people masked up on November 20th and where they chose to do it was not well done. *[continued on page 3]*

White supremacists shooting Black Lives Matter protesters, new revelations of gratuitous police lynchings of young black men in Chicago and Oakland, international retaliation against Muslim and Arab countries, escalating attacks on Muslim and Arab individuals, a prolonged, murderous shoot-out and hostage situation at Planned Parenthood in Colorado, and CO2 levels in the global atmosphere officially reaching 400ppm — the month of November ended with signs of a violent unraveling. The longstanding domestic and international war on black and brown bodies, accompanied by global destruction at the hands of colonial capital, has turned into open civil war.

At a time when collapse is happening in front of our eyes, as the State accumulates ever more resources, what possibilities for intervention remain? Which practices and methods, both from historical cycles of struggle and current ones, are useful now and which need to be abandoned?

Reports from Minneapolis following the white supremacist shooting at the Black Lives Matter encampment indicate a need for increased self-defense and for a break with movement “leadership.” The current lack of the first is in part the result of the latter, since the strategy of official social movements has not included developing practical self-sufficiency. Instead, they’ve mostly focused on speaking from the moral high ground in attempts to persuade people in power to reform themselves. In this case, this has included appeals to the cops from some protesters, even though the cops have already demonstrated their antagonism towards Black Lives Matter and anti-racist struggles. Some people at the Minneapolis camp seemed shocked that it had taken 15-20 minutes for the cops and EMTs to arrive on the scene after the shooting, as though they still expected the cops to protect them. If there are lessons to be learned here, it’s that anyone involved in direct struggle that challenges the state, especially black and brown people and other populations that are already under attack, are on their own. We need to develop our own mechanisms for keeping each other safer as the conflict moves forward.

What would this look like, in Philly *[continued on page 3]*



## AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE OF ACTION AGAINST GENTRIFICATION



**March 2015**

\*An OCF Realty car has its tires slashed in West Philly, the action is claimed anonymously in a communique online.

\*Anti-Ori Feibush (the owner of OCF Realty) posters and graffiti are seen around the Point Breeze neighborhood in South Philly.



**April 2015**

\*April 28 The windows and locks of two vacant OCF Realty properties are "wrecked" near 20th St and Reed in South Philly, the action is claimed online by the Radical Action Network

**May 2015**

\*May 3 Surveillance cameras are removed from unfinished developments in Mantua neighborhood of West Philly, the action is claimed anonymously in an online communique.

**June 2015**

\*June 25 Large graffiti reading "FUCK CONDOS" appears on the fence of future condo development on Baltimore Ave and 43rd St in West Philly.

**July 2015**

\*Anti-gentrification posters released online for West and South Philly

\*An article entitled "On the Recent Attacks Against Gentrification" explaining why people would use direct action to combat gentrification and developers, is published in Anathema, a local anarchist periodical.

\*July 7 An OCF Realty car is vandalized with white paint, the action is unclaimed.

\*July 12 Open discussion and potluck on fighting gentrification in West Philly takes place in Malcolm X Park.

**August 2015**

\*August 13 A call is put out online for "A Concerted Effort Against Gentrification"

\*August 22 A banner is hung on the fence of future condo development on Baltimore Ave and 43rd St. It reads "NO CONDOS ON BALTIMORE AVE / NO CONDOS ANYWHERE".

**November 2015**

\*The banners attached to the fence of a commercial and residential development at 41st and Market were tagged "FUCK RACISM FUCK" with spray paint.

\*Signs put up by Cedar Park Neighbors Civic Association are splattered with paint at 51st St and Baltimore. The action is claimed online in a short communique.

\*November 19 The Barn on Baltimore is vandalized. "FIRST WORLD LOUNGE" is written alongside scribbles on the door and windows. The Barn recently replaced a bar called the New Third World Lounge that catered to a mostly black demographic.

**PHLanticap.noblogs.org**      **Anarchadelphia.tumblr.com**

# FIGHT WHITE SUPREMACY, ATTACK THE POLICE



# A REPORTBACK FROM LEIF ERIKSON DAY 2015

via phillyantifa.org

One People’s Project has a longer report back posted on Idavox, but, yea, they didn’t show up.

Despite KSS co-founder Bob Gaus claiming on social media that LED 2015 would be on Saturday at Noon, as it had been almost ever previous year, when Anti-Fascists mobilized to confront them they were met with some very confused joggers and a Viking statue and gazebo that had been tagged with Anti-Fascist graffiti.

We waited around for a few hours, taunting KSS and Traditionalist Youth on twitter to come and “smash the reds” who were so patiently waiting like sitting ducks, but they demurred.

After it was clear they were not coming, we thanked those that had responded to the call and went to lunch with some new recruits/supporters who had come out to oppose the event where we sat around and talked about how improved the situation was in Philly in the past 4 years. So thanks for that, KSS.

[E}ventually a picture was posted on social media of the 2015 Leif Erikson Day celebration [in the dark with a statue that] looks Photoshopped. Guessing the paint didn’t fit into their narrative.

Much like pacific northwest Neo-Nazi Jascha Manny did when he called a demonstration in Olympia, WA on a day that did not exist, the boneheads from KSS seem to have trouble using a calendar and clock. [The picture the boneheads posted] is definitely not noon.

Look, we realize that this was a deliberate ploy by KSS to feed us misinformation so that they could hold their little nighttime demo to an audience of none without Antifascist opposition. What we don’t understand is why KSS could possibly think that proves anything other than Philly Antifa has lots of local supporters willing to mobilize on unconfirmed intel with a few days’ notice to keep their city an Anti-Fascist zone.

...

This crowd was at least 90% Philly people, with some support coming in from NJ and NYC Antifa. When we look at the pic from the KSS demo, we see people from all over PA, Indiana, Ohio and probably a handful of other places. Could it be any clearer that Philly KSS is just a couple guys and an e-mail address at this point? Hell, we remember when these guys were going to counter Mumia demos and attacking Rambo shows. Now you can’t even directly meet us with an advantage of months of planning and support coming from hundreds of miles away. They can bluster and brag all they want, but that has to hurt.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to come out and stand in solidarity with us. We are very proud of our city and the work everyone has done the past few years to drive Philly KSS underground and to the edge of extinction. Special shout out to NYC Antifa and NJ Antifa for making the trip.This fight isn’t over, but we are winning.

Eternal War on the Hitler Youth, Antifa Philadelphia ★

## ACTIONS REPORT

\*Protesters, including RSCC, kick predatory police recruiters out of CCP and hold rally against police. Another rally follows against repression, policing, and neo-liberalism.

\*Christopher Columbus statue on Broad St tagged with "fuck white power"

\*KSS and other neo-nazis are a no-show for Leif Erikson day (possible they showed up at night instead), gazebo and viking statue tagged with anti-fascist and anarchist slogans, around 40-50 people hold counter demo.

\*Black lives matter protesters attempt to interrupt police commissioner Ramsey as he gives a talk on just policing. They are escorted out by guards, and the talk continues.

\*SEPTA police kill a man at the Huntingdon station.

\*Paint attack against signs put up by Cedar Park Neighbors.

\*"FIRST WORLD LOUNGE" painted on the Bar(n)

\*Solidarity demonstration for Minneapolis anti-police (brutality) protests.

\*Anti-abortion billboard attacked with paint in Grey’s Ferry.

\*Clarkville is vandalized a week after opening. "Merry Christmas" and "fuck you" is spray painted and the windows are Xed out.

\*March for Brandon Tate-Brown and Freddie Gray on the first anniversary of Brandon's death is rowdy and unpredictable, disrupting shoppers and diners inside several stores and restaurants around Rittenhouse Square. ★

[**Black Bloc continued**] It should be obvious, but bears repeating: wearing distinctive clothing and putting on masks in front of police and cameras undermines the purpose of being in a black bloc. I would suggest people ensure their clothes maximize their anonymity while minimizing individual distinguishability. Logos can be covered up, patches removed; in a pinch it can make sense to turn a shirt or hoodie inside out so that graphics aren’t visible. If you plan on attending a bloc with friends it can be helpful to discuss and compare outfits ahead of time to ensure that you will at least be hard to distinguish from one another. When people are masked up in ways that compromise their identities or make them very distinguishable, others who are interested in being able to blend into a similarly dressed crowd often feel alienated. I know I did.

There’s no perfect way to mask up, especially in the city, but there are ways that will make masking up safer. When choosing where and when to mask up, these are two methods I’ve seen that seem sound: masking while crouched in a sympathetic crowd or masking in a less surveilled location. If a black bloc is already gathered, it’s usually fine to walk into the middle and once well surrounded change clothes. This way anyone outside the bloc looking in will have a hard time seeing someone putting their mask on. Choosing a location a few blocks from where the bloc is supposed to converge is also a safer option as long as care is taken to avoid cameras and police.

I understand that many who consider themselves revolutionaries, anarchists, communists, insurrectionaries, etc will feel that tightening their security or sharpening their informal coordination now is taking things too seriously. To them I ask, are you interested in being heard and sending a message to those in power, or are you interested in combative struggle and creating space for the multiplication of direct actions in the street? Are you out here to look tough and militant, or are you interested in actually facilitating or participating in militant action? How can you cultivate experience now so that you can deepen revolt as the stakes get higher? When you find yourself in moments of tension, what experience and knowledge will you draw from to intervene in and intensify struggle? I hope that this article sparks or contributes to conversations on how we can refine our practice in the street — if not to create moments of joy in the present, then at least to contribute to social revolt more generally. ★

[**Civil War continued**] and elsewhere? Friends having each others’ backs in public. Security and medic infrastructure, including emotional support, at occupations or other sustained actions. Less control by organized leadership and more autonomous action at marches and other public events. Secret illicit activities with trusted friends, instead of attending rallies

[**Civil War continued**] and elsewhere? Friends having each others’ backs in public. Security and medic infrastructure, including emotional support, at occupations or other sustained actions. Less control by organized leadership and more autonomous action at marches and other public events. Secret illicit activities with trusted friends, instead of attending rallies and demos where there will be even more exposure to cops and state surveillance. Safe houses, networks of people to call instead of the cops, people staying ready for conflict and prepared to look out for each other.

General preparedness and a long-term perspective as this whole situation continues to take shape are also important. This perspective is something that historical anarchism and traditional classical anarchist thinkers cannot necessarily provide, as the prospect of ecological and financial collapse presents a unique horizon that should inform our current activities. Social justice issues cannot be addressed as though the conditions they exist in will remain static. As the global economy struggles to continue accumulating surplus value, the immiseration of already marginalized populations will increase and other sectors of society will be increasingly excluded from the economy. Similarly, environmental crisis will find its path-of-least-resistance in the perpetuation of historically ongoing genocides against black and brown populations, while creating newly immiserated sectors of society, even as select members of these populations are co-opted into management of the crisis itself via NGOs, political parties and resurgent nationalism.

As a number of people have pointed out, the recent white supremacist and patriarchal attacks are not just acts of terrorism, but part of a historical war against certain populations that is now escalating in retaliation for growing resistance to years of increased economic misery. We don’t really have the option of reformist demands and symbolic actions if we want to actually fight this — civil war means we need to fight in terms of practical goals, direct struggle.

This has not happened in Philly, at least amongst anarchists and radicals. Instead, antagonism at demos is mostly symbolic, marches are highly controlled by organizers, white anarchists attempting to be allies reinvest in managerial leadership models, and grassroots organizations spend much of their time making demands of politicians and/or collaborating with them. People are doing traditional anarchist mutual aid and doing activism that won’t get them in trouble with the state, but these models that we’ve been left with are not adequate to the current situation.

Increased attempts to control movement, speech and behavior at

[concluded on last page]

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[*Sean Swain's Black December continued*] with great enthusiasm, I would remind readers that banks foreclosed on millions of houses still sitting empty that they plan to re-sell, and you can likely find them easily online. I would also point out that arson is the least-solved crime in the United States, and that gasoline is really cheap, and matches are free.

I would also point out that the individual people who call the shots and murder the future can be followed home from work. It's very demoralizing when folks at the top of the hierarchical food chain are held personally accountable and made to pay for their crimes, suddenly reduced to sleeping in tents and bicycling to work as everything they own still smolders. It instills great misgivings in other shot-callers and in the upwardly mobile that maybe the corner office with the window comes with too high of a price tag.

Judges, prosecutors, FBI agents, racist cops, executives of every variety – they all have to get home somehow on those dark December nights. Of course, there are places like blastblog.noblogs.org that already have information posted if you would prefer to get right to the good, clean, family fun.

Despite its projection of invulnerability, the larger control program we have to take down is really a constantly-unraveling mess too dependent on too many sprawling systems that are left unguarded for miles (a truckload of shoes dumped from an overpass can stop a workforce from entering a city for hours) and power is too concentrated in the hands of the few (who must be protected from the many), but there are not enough guards to put guards on the guards, or to put guards on the guards' guards, and even if there were, they all must drive home.

We're talking about vulnerabilities here. Very serious ones. So, let's break that paralysis and start living our resistance, even if on a small scale, baby steps, and we build, all through those dark December nights, until we find ourselves in the midst of a Black January or a Black February, and by then the police will be patrolling in those military vehicles like we saw in Ferguson.

Good thing. By Black May, we'll need those. We'll have to defend the armed convergences that the Invisible Committee predicts, and we'll evolve Occupy into Shockupy.

It begins with one proverbial fire alarm. Just six pounds of pressure to pull the lever.

We own the future.

It starts now.

If you're participating in Black December, you ARE the resistance...★

## BLACK DECEMBER IN MEMORY OF OUR FALLEN COMRADES

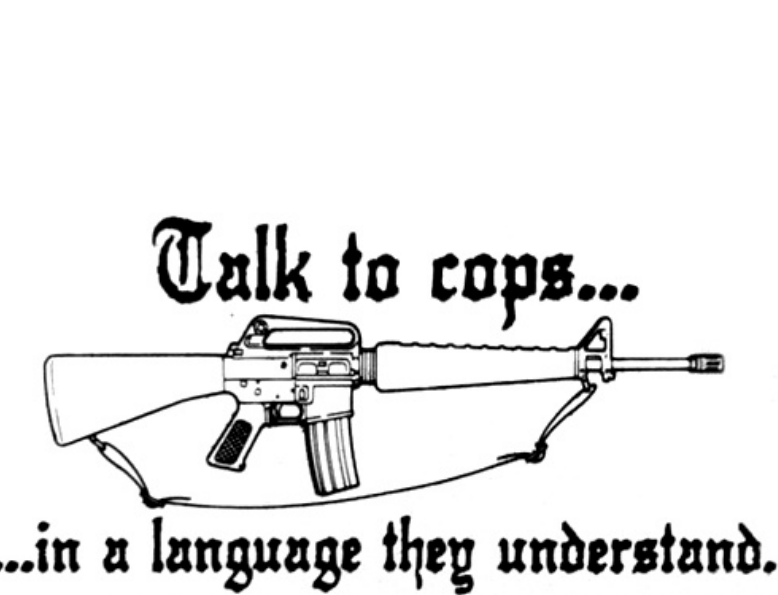
*By Michael Kimble*

Just as a worm struggles in resistance against the foot that crushes it so do we anarchists struggle and fight for the total destruction of a world system of coercive authority and domination in all of its manifestations and that wants to crush our spirits of resistance.

Kuwasi Balagoon, revolutionary extraordinaire and unrepentant anarchist within the Black Liberation Army, fell at the hands of the state of New York, USA in December 1986 through medical neglect.

In memory of this New Afrikan anarchist soldier i take the initiative to compose my contribution to the strategy of total annihilation of the state and its institutions by which the state exercises its power.

For me devising a strategy to destroy the state is simple. Attack the symbols of power using all tactics including improvised ammunitions, molotovs, demonstrations, etc. In other words, our strategy should be by any means necessary, including everything and excluding nothing. The debate about the fetishization of direct action needs to end. Direct action and counter-info projects both contribute to the destruction of power. Kuwasi understood this and so did Alexandros. The only strategy left to us is action/attack and that's what Alexandros and Kuwasi both knew and practiced. We can do no less. The war continues to wage, find your place on the battlefield. ★



## INTERNATIONAL CALL FOR A BLACK DECEMBER

*via Contra Info*

Comrades coming from various geographies and different paths of struggle, yet having the same longing for the diffusion of anarchist offensive, support the call for a Black December published by brothers held in prisons of the Greek democracy.

We call for the revival of the black memory of our dead and all those who have fallen in the fight for freedom and anarchy.

We call for the activation of combative solidarity with comrades that experience incarceration because of their unyielding stance of confrontation with all forms of Power, as well as those who have assumed the difficult path of clandestinity.

We call for the cessation of the fragmentation of our efforts, which – from different trenches in the same war – are able to hit the enemy where it hurts the most.

From counter-information activities, to actions of propaganda by the deed, let's make the most of this month and encounter each other, conspire, and synchronise our strengths in an informal, international and insurrectionary manner against the world of Power. Let's seize the chance to highlight the points we have in common, but also our different perspectives, in a spirit of comradeship and mutual respect.

With the black memory of our dead accompanying our rebellious steps

Complicity and solidarity with imprisoned and fugitive comrades

War by all means possible against domination

Anarchists outside the walls for a Black December ★

### BLACK DECEMBER

*via SeanSwain.org*

Black December is coming, and none too soon. We've hashed out our theories and we've analyzed our reality, we know what kind of future we want and what we are going to have to tear apart in order to get it. The time for philosophizing and talking it out has ended and we face the inevitable moment of conflict with the forces of control and conformity and subjugation.

December really is the perfect starting point, here in the U.S. anyway. It's the darkest month of the year, the most non-daylight hours to carry our acts of resistance and rebellion. Also, in the cold, everyone

wears ski masks. So, a rebel about to strike a Walmart or a police car or some fascist administrator's house doesn't look quite as conspicuous as he or she might look in, say, July or August in the same gear.

Having read the Black December proposals, I would like to speak to those who are, so far, paralyzed by fear and skepticism, who still don't believe that we can undertake radical, militant actions against the common enemy, that political violence even of the clandestine variety is doomed, and that it's okay to "play" at being anarchists, but it's foolhardy for us to put our proverbial money where our mouths are. I want to speak to that fatalism, but I currently have no way to communicate with the outside world because the FBI, likely the NSA, and a sprawling prison industrial complex have all devoted huge amounts of resources and effort to cut off my every word. So, clearly, you're not reading this, and I'm unable to speak to your fatalism.

See what bumbling clowns we're up against?

Our job in carrying out Black December is to make the larger system of oppression unwieldy and unmanageable, to destabilize it so it collapses in its own footprint under its own incredible weight. Daunting? Not really. We're only taking down swivelization.

Look, we don't attack head-on, face to face, like regimented soldiers. And we don't attempt to take it all down at once, as if there was some magical, singular target where we could accomplish that. No – we simply go where they are not guarding and we destroy what we can and we go. We pull the proverbial fire alarms where there is no camera. The fact is, the managers of the matrix cannot put a camera or a cop on everything and everyone.

The idea on an individual or small group level is not to bring the whole system down on your own. Slow and steady wins the race, right? So we take what the system is essentially willing to surrender. The idea for each of us is to make our acts of rebellion outweigh our daily acts of forced complicity. That is, if our daily contribution to this vast concentration camp through forced labor and commerce is "x," whatever "x" represents, then we have to cause enough disruption of the process during non-daylight hours, wearing masks, that add up to "x+1." Our only real responsibility is to make the end result a loss for the larger systems exploiting us and subjecting us to non-freedom.

What I'm suggesting is that each of us doesn't have to conduct large-scale operations. If every single one of us commits to conducting millions of small acts of monkey-wrenching over the long-term, the proverbial pulling of the fire alarms, the cumulative effect over a very short amount of time will be pretty obvious and will feel really rewarding.

For everyone not paralyzed and looking forward to Black December



# FOR A BLACK DECEMBER

Who are the Philadelphia Police? The executioners of Brandon Tate-Brown? The ones who employed a firebomb on a home in West Philly that burned down the entire block? Or the ones who beat in Askia's skull and then had the gall to charge him with assaulting an officer? They've beaten women in the streets and at home, assaulted children, attacked public defenders, and even burst into a courtroom to punch a court officer and declare. "You can't do anything to us. We're fucking cops!"

No member of the court system, nor the legislatures that make the laws, are any less culpable in the subjugation of our lives, but we certainly feel the presence of the police more distinctly. Even those that may be well-intentioned, and maybe helpful at times, are there to violently suppress our will whenever it is deemed necessary. The very threat of this, alone, weighs heavily. Not to say that we are alone in such an admission.

Hatred of the police is near universal the world over, with many a familiar song providing the soundtrack to our hostility. And the series of riots after the murders in Ferguson and Baltimore are more than comparable to innumerable occasions throughout history. Though some actions have distinct visions and goals beyond the temporary, recuperable, outbursts in the streets.

When Tamara Sol's friend and comrade was murdered by a Banco Estado security guard on December 11th, 2013 (a sort of pale reflection of a cop), she responded in kind by shooting another guard with her vengeance clearly articulated. And when Nikos Romano's childhood friend was executed by a proud officer in the streets of Greece in December 2008, he saw to further immersing himself in the fight to extinguish the need, and very existence, of those same cops.

Now Nikos has joined in the call for a Black December, and we echo the sentiment: "From counter-information activities, to actions of propaganda by the deed, let's make the most of this month and encounter each other, conspire, and synchronize our strengths in an informal, international and insurrectionary manner... against domination."

Against the logic of submission and the state's monopoly on violence. Down with the police and the economies that necessitate them in the continued repression of those most marginalized. With the black memory of our dead accompanying our rebellious steps, complicity and solidarity with our imprisoned and fugitive comrades.

- Anarchists outside the walls for a Black December

