FOR SAUNDRA

i wanted to write
a poem
that rhymes
but revolution doesn’t lend
itself to be-bopping

then my neighbor
who thinks i hate
asked - do you ever write
tree poems - i like trees
so i thought
i’ll write a beautiful green tree poem
peeked from my window
to check the image
noticed that the school yard was covered
with asphalt
no green - no trees grow
in manhattan

then, well, i thought the sky
i’ll do a big blue sky poem
but all the clouds have winged
low since no-Dick was elected

so i thought again
and it occurred to me
maybe i shouldn’t write
at all
but clean my gun
and check my kerosene supply

perhaps these are not poetic
times
at all

Nikki Giovanni

PHILLY ENERGY SALE

On Friday, January 10th, several “community organizations” protested outside the semi-dormant Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery on West Passyunk Avenue, in anticipation of the upcoming January 17th auction of the property in NYC. Citing environmental racism that subjects particular populations to the brunt of the pollution known to contribute to asthma and cancer, the proximity of 1.1 million Philadelphians to a potential blast zone, and the structural contributions to class divides and poverty (with the refinery went bankrupt after the dangerous June explosion last year, executives got bonuses and more than 2,000 union workers were laid off without severance), protesters blocked the entrance of the plant on Friday afternoon. The refinery has been maintaining since bankruptcy with an 80+ person skeleton crew, and the future of the grounds may lay in the hands of auction front-runner (and former PES chief executive) Phillip Rinaldi, with his new company Philadelphia Energy Industries (PEI).

PEI’s formation was announced last August with the express intention of buying the property to restart it as a conventional fuel-manufacturing facility, but a possible partnership with RNG Energy Solutions has also thrown words like “renewable” next to pollutants like jet fuel. In any case, protests will continue at the NYC auction on the 17th and back at the refinery with a youth “climate strike takeover” on the 20th.

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2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

Overall 2019 felt like a relatively quiet year. There were no big campaigns or strings of actions that anarchists participated in. There were less anarchist actions and demonstrations, and less explicitly anarchist events and discussions. This makes sense in a certain way. The period immediately following Trump’s election through 2018 was more intense than usual and unless a culture, networks, and infrastructure are developed, that level of activity cannot run on enthusiasm and outrage alone. The normalization of Trump’s presidency has also meant that some who took up actions we often associate with anarchists have fallen into socialist organizing or simply given up on radical organizing in favor of subculture, romance, or normal life. How can we make the most of these quieter times? As popular rage wanes and wanes, how can we keep our eyes set on anarchy without unnecessarily isolating ourselves or watering down our ideas?

Some things have stayed pretty much the same in 2019 as in years before. There is a certain regularity in the Philadelphia anarchist space that is held together by annual, monthly, and weekly events. Anarchy Afternoons at the A-Space continued to provide a weekly space for people to meet, read, discuss, and watch movies with other anarchists. The various Food Not Bombs chapters around town have kept up their weekly cooking and serving schedule for yet another year. They keep people.
PHILLY ENERGY SALE (CONT.)

The air quality surrounding the plant continues to be declared unhealthful, even after the blast that occurred on the Summer Solstice, and even according to city-monitoring sites when you could smell the refinery’s output from the distance behind the PNC Bank. A final report on the explosion was issued in November declaring that, after using information provided by PES, models were constructed to replicate the blast. These models were “broadly consistent” in suggesting that the dense concentrations of dangerous hydrogen fluoride and various hydrocarbons that were released dissipated below dangerous levels before exceeding the boundaries of the plant itself. Still, stating that “significant HFP was likely to have occurred if the facility perimeter” has not relieved much apprehension.

During the blackout of 2003, Species Trait No. 4 ran an excerpted report of an air-quality monitoring flight run by the University of Maryland that was diverted to Selinsgrove, PA—a town in the middle of the blackout area and downtown of more than 100 power plants in the Ohio River Valley. The unique opportunity afforded researcher Jacek Maruza significantly “bigger-than-reported” results of a “chemical cocktail that people in the Northeast inhale every day.”

“Within 24 hours of the blackout, sulfur dioxide levels dropped 90 percent, while ozone declined by 50 percent. Both are linked to global climate change, long-term health effects, and increased mortality rates. Daytime visibility in the region during the blackout increased nearly 25 miles due to the 70 percent decrease in light scattering particles. Tail smokestacks, built to alleviate pollution close to power plants, may contribute to the regional air problem by causing emissions to stay suspense long enough to react and produce other, more harmful pollutants.” —Scientific American

Maruza concluded, “If these plants were shut down, results would be immediate.”

Fires like the one at PES are not isolated incidents either, as last month the Kinder Morgan chemical plant at 63rd and Passyunk (right down the street from PES) caught fire and leaked ethanol, after which the city again declared the air safe. Certainly, there haven’t been reports like those from similar situations in Houston—when a 1998 Sterling Chemical leak hospitalized hundreds, a 1994 leak that prompted 9,000 people to evacuate, or a March 13, 1800, chlorine explosion that killed 15 people. But the problem of our air, to continue to focus on one aspect of a refinery’s threat, persists beyond these particularly spectacular mentions in Alan Weissman’s The World Without Us.

Weisman explains that as of his 2007 publishing of the book, it would take more than 200,000 years for the winds to “absorb all the carbon we have mined from the Earth and put into the air”—which has only grown significantly worse since then, due to the exponential growth of human on climate change. Simultaneously, they are listed as owning “more oil, gas, and thermal coal reserves than any other investor with total reserves amounting to 9-15 gigatons of CO2 emissions—or 30 percent of total energy-related emissions from 2017.” BlackRock is also known to be “the largest investor in weapon manufacturers through its iShares U.S. Aerospace and Defense ETF.”

Business as usual was disrupted in asset management firm BlackRock’s Paris headquarters in early January, featuring blinding flashes and angry voices. Healthcare workers and teachers joined striking railway workers there on the strike’s 29th day, making it the longest rail strike in French history. They briefly occupied BlackRock’s offices in a continued protest of the new French pension legislation—and particularly, in this case, BlackRock’s profiting from the new plan. As this is written the strike continues, with street clashes at today’s demonstrations making the news, who profits when workers make less—who is BlackRock?

The biggest asset management firm in the world, New York City-based BlackRock (with local offices at the Cira Center, 2999 Arch St., Philadelphia) is essentially a bank without the same regulation or federal guarantees of its investors’ money—what some call a “shadow bank.” “Their managers” go from big to bigger by investing for clients in, well, pretty much anything—but most notably, by investing in money.

Financialization, the term that comes about to describe this investing strategy, has been cited in Forbes magazine as the “growing scale and profitability of the finance sector at the expense of the rest of the economy and the shrinking regulation of its rules and returns.” It is often criticized for encouraging practices that destabilize the economy, failing to create jobs, and of course contributing to the growing wealth gap between classes.

While none of this destabilization and its related results are beneficial to day-to-day human survival (but great for life in general, arguably), it does signal a general destabilization of the status quo, part of the ongoing failures of capitalism and democracy.

Automation has actually been a much greater detractor from employment than financialization or even globalization (e.g. NAFTA). This suggests that the problem is bigger than any reformer would argue—systemic economic and political failure that so far have been characterized by increasing far-right power grabs and large-scale social revolts. Economies and their imposition of work are a primary means to subjugate people, and they are struggling to maintain themselves. Their failure to make the modern economy can be seen as an increasingly desperate grasp at keeping commerce (and thus profit and growth—the most basic needs of capital) afloat, while nation-states attempt to reinforce their power.

As such, asset managers like BlackRock are hedging their bets and diversifying their investments in uncertain times. Working with “activist” investors, they have encouraged gender diversity in Russell 1000 companies, have offered Exchange-Traded Funds that exclude gun manufacturers, and are promoting “sustainable investing” in exclusively “green” portfolios. They have even gone so far as to be involved in a shareholder resolution for ExxonMobil to act

#STOPLINES

BlackRock

BlackRock, along with local asset managers The Vanguard Group (headquartered at 100 Vanguard Blvd in Malvern, PA), are also the biggest investors in GEO Group. GEO Group is the Florida-based private prison enterprise that runs immigrant detention centers across the country as well as the nearby George W. Hill Correctional Facility (the only private prison in Pennsylvania).

This is the sort of investment strategy they use to benefit their clients, so maybe it isn’t surprising that they would play both sides in uncertain times in an attempt to stay profitable and on top in the future, but it certainly serves to emphasize that neither side will benefit us. In fact, we should remember that there are more than two options available—and maybe move to the point, that left and right are only two sides of the same coin.

Whether or not ExxonMobil acts on climate change, it will remain a powerful energy producer for profit, so long as economies remain. It has already perpetrated a great deal of the environmental destruction that has pushed the earth beyond many irreversibility thresholds. Whether or not stronger gun control measures pass, or manufacturers stop producing for private individuals, the same murderous governments that enforce such developments will be armed to the teeth militarily. Whether or not workplaces become more equitable, it still means control of the populace for the benefit of nation-states and their economies, as enforced by policing and imprisonment. Enforcement, in turn, which will continue to target marginalized or “threatening” (real or imagined) populations, no matter who makes up the leadership of the police and prisons—and we should only intend to grow as a threat.

BlackRock and other investment companies are the financiers of the world we live in. Physical infrastructure that we oppose can be targeted directly, but its source of funding is also an important aspect of its existence. Despite asset managers being diffuse and difficult to impede, Parisian workers recently illustrated their very offices can be a common meeting ground for so many we find affinity with, and we can simultaneously make it more difficult for any such company to operate—acting its very bottom line.
But many anarchists’ choice to orient themselves towards a perpetual, everyday insurrection is also a reaction to activ-
ists’ uncritical hopefulness and the delusional conviction that we are “winning.” Having decided instead that we can-
not and will not win, some anarchists instead take insur-
rection solely as a guiding concept of daily life instead of a thing that we’re trying to move toward in the future. I want to challenge that reaction, while also being clear that I do 
believe we will win— and think people who do are very 
annoying. As a reaction, it seems to me like it simplifies reality just as much as the idea of revolution as a one-and-done deal does—it makes it seem like everything is insurrection and we have no further projectiality and the destruction of the state is no more of a desirable event than an ordinary 
weekday stealing stuff from work.

So part of the context I’m responding to is that as the fore-
cast for the future has gotten increasingly darker, it’s become more popular for insurrectionaries to say they take action for the joy of it, with no (or few) further goals. I would never say that every action people take needs to clearly lead to insur-
rection, or that anyone must have that as a projectiality. But for those who do, I want to pose the question of how to get there from here.

If we mean to make a direct impact on the functioning of the state and all authority, there are so many moves we could be making to approach that goal. And this doesn’t just mean il-
legal actions; there are so many different approaches to rob-
bing the state of its legitimacy and power.

Individualist anarchy teaches us to learn our own desires, and I still desire the destruction of institutions of power and I want the impossible lives me and my friends and many oth-
ers before us have dreamed of. No matter how out of reach, I would like to keep posing the question to myself — how do we get there from here? While the specific “here” and “there” is perpetually changing as our terrains, selves, positional-
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my, empowerment, belonging. This is not a call for plans or programs. I just want to encourage people to imagine how they personally might move towards what they most deeply desire.

On Friday, January 10, at 9:00 am, the trial of 22 comrades for the occupation of the Hellenic American Union contin-
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The appeal continues — after an interruption — and concerns 22 comrades-in-arms arrested during the occupation of the Hellenic American Union on September 26, 2019.

This occupation was initiated by the “Solidarity for Prisoners of War and Trial Fighters” assembly together with solidarity compa-
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It is noteworthy that Solidarity actions for the “fight against slavery” that took place in US prisons resulted in at least 3 cases of mass kidnapping and mass arrests.

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A / A from the west

populace and industrialization (further delaying a future ice age). The chain reactions those larger groupings set off across the planet, which resulted in their own exponential, put-

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ongoing. Some anarchists have taken to organizing social events for anarchists to build and strengthen their 

networks across Europe. This has led to a trend where the form of put-

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YEAR IN REVIEW CONTINUED

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Philly ABC also organized the annual Running Dog event in 

this year prior to the MOVE prisoners. June 11th — a day of solidarity activity for 

long-term anarchist prisoners - saw graffiti and a barbecue

fundraiser. May Day also saw graffiti and a couple attacks, 

less than the last year. As has been the case for the past six 

years, the new year was run in with a noise demonstration 

outside a prison with a lot of noise. How can these regular-

events change another strength analysis in any real way than 

fall into repetition? What kind of traditions do we need to create 

for the kind of struggle we want to see?

All that said, 2019 was not simply a less extreme version of the year before; new things have started to take root and oth-
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ditionist Movement has formed here with a focus on black and 

anti-colonial anarchists. They have organized a discus-


tion, co-organized a demonstration against police corrup-

tion, and plan to take their ideas around the country. After 

years of organizing, the Vaughn 17 trials (prisoners in Dele-

was released of participating in a prison takeover) came to a close.

Most of the accused were found not guilty or had their 

charges thrown out, and two prisoners took full responsibil-

ity for planning and taking part in the uprising, using their 
court appearances to denounce the prison system and the liberal approaches to reforming it. Even though the trials are 

finished and the Vaughn 17 are out of prison, the conse-

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BY DR. JOHN MILLER

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to attempt to evict those who took over the space, and eventually was able to regain control of the building from the developers it was sold to. Needless to say, as anarchists we should be bragging not about spaces outside the legal system and capitalist notions of property. What do we want to see happening in the anarchist spaces anarcho-communalism and more constructive measures do to make those desires a reality? How can we ensure that our actions in our spaces are consistent with the anti-authoritarian values that founded these spaces? How can we grapple with issues of property and resources while being coherent with our anarchist (anti-)politics?

Interracial conflicts between anarchists (and our fellow comrades) seem to have plagued 2019. More so than other years, conflicts between individuals seem to have been especially prominent, sometimes to the point of slowing or hindering efforts to organize. In a way it is normal for us to squabble more now that struggles are less intense (as has been illustrated in the “After The Crest” zine series), yet as anti-authoritarians we also know that we are responsible for something—perhaps through the process of developing the skills that allow us to have conflicts among companions while also being able to have or create collective power together. How can we move through interracial conflicts in a way that doesn’t leave our communities weaker in terms of capacity, or at least, hinder us less? How can we address our conflicts in anarchist ways that don’t rely on legitimacy, cancelling, passivity or subtle forms of authority?

We saw a few false starts last year. A few times attempts were made to organize actions or activities that didn’t (to this author’s knowledge) have the follow-through, results, or continuity they could have. Specifically, the Christmas eve far strike, the call for a demonstration in memory of Willem Van Spronsen, and beginnings of a city-wide anarchist network all started with strong exciting energy and seemed to disipate. What happened to the enthusiasm and planning that brought the beginning of these initiatives together? How can we carry forward the lessons from these experiences without concluding that some of our projects won’t succeed? How can we channel our collective knowledge into new initiatives so that we have more chances of achieving our goals?

In March, police officer Kevin Pfeifer shot Kaile Belay in Cedar Park. Kaile is an immigrant from Ethiopia and many Ethiopians and Eritreans came together to demand justice for her death. This incident further tarnished the image of skin patrol and him legally as he faced criminal charges. The anarchist response to such a gross display of policing in a neighborhood with a history of anarchist activity felt disproportionately tame. A few vandalized buildings should be just the beginning when police shoot someone. It is understandable that the activity organized at the Ethiopian Community Center, which sought justice for Kaile, is imperfect. But how can we deal with this in a way that is incompatible with anarchist understandings of dealing with the law. Organizing against police violence does not need to be limited to the immediate network of the victim, anarchists could have taken any number of steps to make it clear that police violence will not go unanswerd, especially in a neighborhood with so many anarchists. How can we respond to policing in a way that feels true to our values and anger? What would it look like to respect the efforts of a victim’s networks — that we are not in this alone? What would we do to make those desires a reality? How can we ensure that we are working to change the world without abandoning our own struggles against police?

What will we bring to 2020? We have the momentum of liberal election energy to contend with, the continued devastation of the living environment, the possibility of another war in Western Asia, the ongoing gentrification of our neighborhoods, and the continuing proliferation of biocapitalism to look forward to. How do we confront these and other forms of social control in the new year is up to us. How will we learn from our past experiences of struggle in 2019? How will we spread, intensify, and experiment with anarchist struggles in the year to come? ★

What’s up bootlickers! So despite the Democratic Party’s best intentions to prop up a liberal this year, Sanders will become the party’s next presidential nominee. It also seems likely that more and more radicals will become enroled with Sanders’ or another Democrat’s campaign, spending more and more time on the campaign trail. Sanders has been the most consistent candidate, with the system itself. But the question is, Why? The impracticality of the US presidency as a path towards freedom should be obvious to everyone based on the experience of previous administrations. But the system is designed to suck us back in without realisticly considering the long-term consequences, so let’s try to break some of those down.

If we harbor from Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential run, we’ll see some striking similarities to Bernie Sanders’ current campaign. Obama capitalized on the polarizing effects of George W. Bush’s hyper-nationalist, racist, and repressive presidency to pose the possibility of what seemed at the time like a radical alternative. His campaign set new precedents for grassroots organizations, which in turn supported him and his candidacy,

Incumbent campaigns have typically been more adept at organizing campaigns than any other alternative. For one, there are already structures in place that allow for easy mobilization. But the system is designed to suck us back in without realistically considering the long-term consequences, so let’s try to break some of those down.

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Back in the states, the more symbolic electoral campaigns will be happening this summer as well. The Democratic National Convention is scheduled for July 13-16 in Milwaukee. Also, the Democratic National Convention is scheduled for August 24-27 in Charlotte, North Carolina, rounding out the summer. Charlotte was the only city to submit a bid for the DNC and local opposition began to organize itself shortly thereafter.

Given the significant displeasure so many massive populations of people seem to express about the state of the world, and the fact that there are no obvious, quick fixes of some kind seem possible — particularly around the DNC, as is usually the case. Whether organizers develop the expansive networks of people that can enable large scale mobilization to get things done (or confused with the largely recuperative, specialized activist groups), and agree to the sort of principles among those involved that don’t reduce revolt to resistance, will of course remain to be seen. Additionally, the militant support that Trump has garnered also contributes to the likelihood that DNC protesters will have more than just the cops to contend with — pre-emptive infiltration, arrests, attempts at entrapment, doxing, and excessive charges after the fact are becoming par for the course, and likely without the large class-action payouts of the former “summit hopping” era after the fact.

It is interesting to note, though, that since Charlotte was the only city to offer to host the RNC, it could be difficult for the convention to have the same large scale revolt there as there was in Chicago — but that should almost be an afterthought, as inhibiting the largely symbolic event wouldn’t likely stop the presidential election, and the practical-on-the-ground gains of a city-wide revolt would be more notable. Still, the prospect of a Republican incursion into the city might be the sort of impetus to begin such a revolt, and Charlotte was actually recently active in such a way after Keith Leomont Scott was killed by police in 2016. The resulting occupation of an 8 lane highway and burning of a tractor trailer upon it meshes well with the sort of tactics that have been used to prevent delegates and convention attendees of all kinds from making their way to a convention center – in fact, we’ve seen attempts to coordinate on-ramp blockades around these types of events to do exactly that in the past, to various degrees of success. Should such an event take place, we would hope that the tactics carried over into a period separate from the convention – much like the Chilean revolt began with false eviction and came to full scale action after the event itself was over, from there, rather than retrace back into business-as-usual.

As many a strategist of insurgency has noted since the sum-mits era, however, anarchists and other radicals often fail to successfully evaluate our terrain or have a longer-term strategy – particularly in protest, and particularly of the large-scale summit variety. Beauty may be a brick to the wall, but it’s a brick. Even if the revolt is at least of a size to create the conditions we must rush to the site of highest police concentration for conflict — nor does an absence of police mean there is less to be done. Although what means finding holes in police cover-age, anticipating the slowdown of a large armored force con-trolled by a few leaders, assessing the limits or weak points of their communication and supply lines, or even anticipating areas entirely outside of the city or state that may be un-do to the resistance of a certain group. Also, in such a situation there will be a single, perhaps one particular center – for those interested in a summit or convention as a point of conflict, there are many options to be considered. That’s not to say that areas will be entirely unimportant, but it’s not as if marching different from the smash- ing windows in a city center could be beneficial.★

RESPONSE TO RESPONSE TO “PROPERTY DESTRUCTION IS NOT ENOUGH”

Thanks for your response — it gave me a lot to think about. It’s great to hear you address all important questions that you posed, but I hope you challenge us to be more real with each other about what it is we’re doing and where we think it’s going (or isn’t). And where it could go.

I’m mostly writing this because I realized from your response that some of the questions and critiques in the original article were vague enough that they might need clarification. I hope that this response will assist. I think some of the questions do, in fact, sound like they should involve all kinds of weapons (and in some cases already do), but what I had in mind was not necessarily martial, but oriented towards means and doing something.

The context I’m writing in is the US; right now, the most destructive or negative anarchist practices are in places like America in situations of property destruction or direct action. I don’t think it’s necessary to talk about a moment in time, but maybe. Maybe. Maybe some of that will lead to involvement in armed struggle; it could look like experimenting with more social organizing projects that challenge the state’s legitimacy; it could also mean intensified property destruction. After a bunch of people acting together could probably do a level of damage to state infrastructure that would have the potential to bring it down. There are a lot of great reasons not to try this (death, imprisonment), but I am surprised that it seems like so few people seem to even have this in their minds as an option. We are not powerless up against this system as we tend to think; nothing is impossible.

One of the major questions you brought up had to do with an assumption in the original article that there’s a particular goal — what are we referring to when we say property destruction isn’t enough? Enough for revolution? Insurrection? I think history has pretty clearly shown the problems with insurrection, as it frequently leads to police control at some point. But other anarchists have sought to further correct the problems with revolution as a single event by proposing a kind of perpetual, everyday approach to revolt. This may not be the best shape for the moment, but the transnational infrastructure we’re looking for is not fully achieved when the latest mon- arch is killed. And unlike some revolutionary event that is supposed to experience a single, large scale result, the process of experience glimpses of here and now, when we get a lit-
Being attentive to the dynamics of capital means there will be millions of people fighting capitalism at various historical junctures. Capitalism produces escalating crises. These crises will cause tumultuous unfolding political transformations over time that are fundamentally unpredictable. Any real defeat is not attentive enough to how much capitalism produces crises. I do think that fascism is the most likely outcome of these crises but not an inevitable one.

In terms of people wanting to revolt without winning, if that helps them feel alive and be kind to other people, then more power to them! 

2020 SUMMITS

The passing of the 20th anniversary of the seminal Battle in Seattle – exceptional in that it actually shut down the World Trade Organization meeting it opposed – led to an interview elsewhere in the paper that elaborates on important lessons and some of what has changed, since. As a result of those changes, such protests may seen a relic of the bygone anti-globalization era. Still, the annual procession of summits and conferences, stacked with heads of state and industry leaders we oppose, rumble onward with anarchists and others trying to figure out where and how we stand against those figures and their plans – and if the summit is the place to do it.

The upcoming Group of Seven meeting will be held from June 10-12 at the Camp David government retreat in North-west Maryland in 2020, featuring the heads of state of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. This follows the trend of holding such conferences in remote, self-contained places so that opposition can’t get near it, making it difficult for any kind of protest to interfere with transit to the meeting, and even prevents gathering any significant numbers. The 2012 G20 was held in the same location quite successfully. The only altercation in this trend seems to be the G20 in Hamburg, Germany, a few years ago which indeed became a riot – but for which the international radical community is still suffering repression. Urban terrain lends itself to riot, which in Seattle contributed to an official State of Emergency that shut down the city and the ’90 WTO conference, but Hamburg still wasn’t as successful as its predecessor – in part due to the change in policing such events.

The exponentially increased number of cops on the ground, their increasingly militarized gear and strategy, and their advancing technological-savvy, exhibit reasons why protests fail. These police tactics can also be observed in less international affairs, such as the party-nomination conventions in the States that will also be occurring in 2020.

Though different in a number of ways from other events we discuss, it is very much worth noting that the COP25 United Nations meeting on climate change in November of last year did not happen in Chile as was planned. The ongoing revolts there, that began with calls for fare evasion, escalated far beyond the initial scope into large-scale social unrest preceding the event. Not being a protest of that particular summit, as such, it still led to the entire meeting being moved to Spain. The unified Spanish-Chilean production met with a unified resistance, with calls from Chile to Spain declaring that “all bullets will be returned.” This of course is not entirely hyperbole, as Chilean protesters have been shot in the streets, and more often disappeared – which a group of anarcho guerrillas have engineered a simple device resembling a metal pipe that can fire a single shotgun shell at a time, which has been used on police forces in Chile. Meanwhile, the meeting was still able to occur in Madrid.

As you can see, at no point during a Sanders presidency will the system give us an opportunity to reflect and say “wow, that did NOT go to plan.” Spain’s Spanish-Chilean situation would be plotted as the destruction of the unified state and spreading the joy of insurrectionary anarchy while I grow food and medicine to share with my friends and neighbors and prepare for economic and ecological collapse.” This conclusion is perpetually delayed by the constant need for rapid responses to the disaster that is electoral politics.

In 2020, let’s dare to dream of paths to freedom that could actually work. Tell people who try to guilt you into crying about elections that “They have been unrealistic and irresponsible. As hopeless as things are, the reason a candidate as ‘radical’ as Sanders is being offered to us right now is because the system is on the rocks and dissatisfied with it is at an all-time high. It’s up to us to point towards another way of life than what this system gives us, and not fall for the false alternative of socialism that the system is offering us in order to get us to calm down and comply.” Instead of accepting this offer, let’s encourage each other and those around us to explore projects that take power away from the system.

ATT. GEN. DENIES PAROLE

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro is a progressive who has backed marijuana legalization and supported lawsuits against the state of Arkansas’ abortion restrictions – but as part of the law of Pandemic, he recently opposed clemency for the imprisoned, who requires a unanimous vote of the five members in order to grant a pardon, only freed two of the hundreds of applicants last month.

There is no freedom in a society of governance, but estimates state that 1,200 people in PA “who never took a life are condemned to die in prison.” Taking the decisions for both parole and clemency, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has just put it in the hands of another bureaucratic, authoritarian element. Notably, though, Shapiro is essentially single-handedly responsible for keeping the following people in prison:

- Philadelphia brothers Dennis and Lee Horton were offered 4-10 years to admit their guilt, but they have served 26 years for second-degree murder while maintaining their innocence as accomplices in a shooting. The killer was only charged with third-degree murder, and he was paroled in 2008. The Horton brothers have zero jail record. Zero adult record. Zero prison time other than the two cases, or they have flawlessly impersonated innocent men their entire lives.
- Pedro Reynoso has one of the strangest cases taken on by the Pennsylvania Innocence Project. He has maintained that he was out of the country for his son’s baptism at the time of a double homicide for which he has been in prison for 23 years. Ten people, including the priest who performed the baptism in the Dominican Republic, corroborated his story. Family members of the victim have agreed that Reynoso was not the killer. He’s a Stage-3 cancer survivor in declining health.
- Edward Printup killed his sadistic stepfather, who viciously beat Printup four or five times a week, for 12 years. Printup later killed his own stepfather, his stepbrother, and a man named Jameson. His sister testified Friday that their stepfather sodomized her when she was 8 and raped her throughout childhood. Printup has been in prison nearly 40 years. The Department of Corrections calls him an exemplary inmate.
- 57-year-old Francisco Mujica Jr., who now walks with a cane, is an exemplary inmate who poses zero public safety risk. He never took at life, but he has been in jail for 27 years for being present and hiding a gun after his brother shot and killed a man. Mujica’s brother, the killer, was released more than a decade ago. He wrote to the judge, pleading to trade sentences with his brother, who is now likely to die in prison.
- Henrietta Harris has Department of Corrections’ full support for commutation after having served nearly 40 years for her role in a family tragedy. She has reconciled with her troubled past, including extensive abuse at the hands of the man she killed. She will now likely die in prison.
- The Evans brothers, Reid and Wyatt, carjacked a man nearly 40 years ago using a nonfunctioning weapon as a prop. They never shot a gun at him, and they had a heart-to-heart conversation. Instead of accepting this offer, let’s encourage each other and those around us to explore projects that take power away from the system.

As like all politicians, progressive or otherwise, Shapiro trades on granting limited rights to people in exchange for their continued submission. When one steps out of line, of course, we return to the most familiar condition: with any chance of escaping incarceration left entirely up to the state-apparatuses – lest we escape, ourselves. That, of course, is the lesson governments never grant freedoms, they only restrict it.

With offices in Harrisburg, a post office box in Philadelphia, and a home in neighboring Montgomery County, PA AG Josh Shapiro can never be too far away.
20 YEARS AFTER THE BATTLE OF SEATTLE: AN INTERVIEW

For the 20-year anniversary of the 1999 Seattle WTO demonstrations, we talked with some political activists who lived in the anarchist space in the period. In this interview, we reflect back on summit-hopping, the introduction of black blocs to North America, and the "anti-globalization" movement. We consider the dynamics in which these events took place, the common patterns and trajectories that followed, and what they might mean for anarchists now.

It's been 20 years since the Seattle WTO protests. From your perspective, how did it come together?

I think it's helpful to parse the protest in November '99 in Seattle in terms of three different sets of tactics coming together pretty effectively, complementing each other. One was a very large march by the AFL-CIO that really drew a huge crowd to the city. The second was direct action blockades (organized by Direct Action Network). Affinity groups would be assigned to blockade the conference center. Thousands were involved in that and they were successful in blockading the conference center. The third piece was the black bloc: militant anarchists often with a critique of nonviolence interested in using black bloc tactics to destroy property, fight police, be disruptive, etc.

In a lot of ways there was more solidarity between these three tactics than one might expect. There was a lot of antagonism and a lot of hostility, but they really ended up relying on each other. Like, the black bloc was effective precisely because the streets were shut down and the police had lost control of the entire situation. The three tactics together created a situation that the police were grossly unprepared for and led to the success of the protest.

I wasn't unaccustomed to direct action tactics. I had spent roughly the same number of months traveling in Europe and spent a couple of months traveling in anarchist/communist squats on the continent. There I attended many protests. I remember in Rome being in a huge march against the state funding of religious schools and meeting anarchists/communists who said that we're going to attack your embassy; do you want to come? And I was like I would love to.' We hopped trolleys, got off in this bourgeois shopping neighborhood, linked arms, charged the police vans, rolled them over, and destroyed the McDonald's on that block.

Only in Germany was the black bloc used in that visceral style, where everyone would wear matching clothes. The German antifa was widely regarded as the scary dogmatists of the European anarchist scene. In Italy and Spain, many of these tactics were really used by everyone, effectively preventing the police from controlling the crowd, isolating and arresting people. They were tactics like black blocs, chains of people to slow or keep moving. These were not part of the street culture in the US at this time, but they were being imported.

My first exposure was June '99. I grew up in Eugene, Ore., which was a concentration of a certain anarchist scene. I was a social anarchist, class-struggle anarchist, and the scene was very different. I came to Seattle marked a new scene in Eugene and they were confrontational. One young man, Rob Thaxton (Rob los risos) threw a rock at a cop and got 7 years in prison.

The anarchists used some of these tactics and they were gear- ing up to use them in Seattle. When I went to Seattle, I was with a videographer crew, wearing black and masked up on and off. We were mostly oriented to the street blockades, but we were not hostile to the black bloc. In the April 16th, 2000 protests in Washington DC against the IMF, I was part of a very substantial black bloc and had a good time in DC. One of our favorite things was moving cars into the middle of intersections.

I saw the black blocs as a combination of militant tactics used in Europe, that really should be used by all street protesters in all contexts, and on the other hand, this really particular aesthetic of looking "scary." I think the aesthetic was a lot harder to make work in a anti-establishment way but that didn't mean it was wrong for people not in it, it is kind of terrifying. Those were the clothes I wore; I wore black Carhartts and a black hoodie everywhere I went in those years. I didn't mind those aesthetics (I was mildly critical of them) but really it made the proper defense of it harder to mount because of the implicit fear. After Seattle, I organized anti-crowd control workshops in Minneapolis. I wrote this essay for The Indypendent and I think that I was much inspired by that as the political intervention that needed to be made.

As for property destruction, I strongly defend that morally. I am not sure if it was strategically essential. It ended up falling into an aesthetic. Looting, for example, is much more strategically essential. Or really effectively destroying a target.

So, you are making distinction between an aesthetic, the spectacle, of the black bloc and the tactics. When you say these tactics needed to be more broadly generated and how do you see them organically realizing in the specific subculture that was using them?

There was a large milieu of anarchists with a few big convergences. There was a subset of fierce anti-capitalists in the Earth First scene. Thousands of kids were coming to the anarchist scene, either through the animal rights scene or a punk scene. At this point, Leninist parties were not effective at recruiting anyone, but anarchism was very compelling to a lot of us. People engaged in various actions, developed analyses, argued with each other over time and slowly an overlapping consensus emerged that escalating street fights against police was a necessary and integral tactic. And this was shared with "civilization-destroying" anarchist-primitivists and more soil darwinian social anarchists.

I was in Europe when a lot of this was happening in the US. I'm very much a fictional story from the summer of '98 to the fall of '99, and missing out on the discussion of a different context. I attended this through the affinity groups, but this was after Seattle. There was no question we saw a continuous escalation of militancy in the context of social crisis, producing circumstances somewhat like "protracted revolutionary civil war." This was our vision of how things were unfolding. The level off in the protests the police faced in Seattle marked a new phase of being on the offensive. We really thought that would continue. That's certainly not what happened in the 2000s but that was our vision.

How did so-called "summit-hopping" fit into this?

We recognized that you need a critical mass of people using militant tactics to have a decent demonstration. That might be riots of black youth like we had in the late 1960s or the anarchists in the late 1990s. Very few cities had a critical mass in any substantial block. If you wanted to have the police on the defensive you needed to converge militants then around the continent into one place.

There was a sense that you were always getting ready for the next big protest. You mobilized as many people as possible and also coalesced a smaller group that you travel with, allied affinity groups. This was denounced as "summit-hopping" in some circles. It was very effective as a means for fucking with police.

Why did this ultimately fizzle out?

There were three important factors: one is the police stepped up their tactics. Something that leaves the police "flat-footed" at some point in general is something they are not used to. There has to be a continual innovation of tactics when you are up against the State. In each subsequent protest after Seattle, the police knew better what they were up against and circulated tactics.

The second is the people involved in the black bloc were affected by the critiques of it: that it was masculinist, that it was racist, that it was alienating to people, that it was divorced from any kind of sustained organizing. Some of which were true and some of which were not true. There was real genuine anti-racist/anti-racist/feminist/anti-oppression organizing; identity politics was not a dirty word at the time. They were ambivalent about what they were doing and didn't have a clear vision strategically of how the black bloc fit in.

The third thing and by far the most important was the Sep- tember 11th attacks. There was a huge militarization of the US State and the complete collapse of the broader anti-globaliza- tion movement that had provided the supportive context for black bloc tactics.

A lot of people reoriented to different kinds of organizing, fragmenting the anarchist scene in different directions.

I came out as trans in 2000, which dramatically altered the way strangers related to me in the anarchist scene. In the 90s, I could move around the American and European anarchist scene and be taken very seriously everywhere I went. People actually listened to what I said and, I had a lot of well-developed thoughts. That completed evaporated when I presented as a woman or as transfeminine or gender nonconforming. I had a few comrades but, I had a much harder time seeing myself in the bigger scene.

Eventually I got a job in Philadelphia doing social service work with very poor trans women, working with people whose survival really tied up with relationship to the State, kind of called out to me to have a less one-dimensional analysis of the State. I kind of drifted into socialist politics and eventually led me into spending a few years in post-Maoist milieu, where community organizing was the chief priority.

I did that for a while and then I started thinking a lot more about the failures of social movements since the "90s and very much in a post-Searsian framework. I moved away from anarchism and a little back toward anarchism.

How do you think this history could be useful to anarchists now?

I think we have a lot of critique that is quite accurate of labor unions, of NGOs, of Marxist-Leninist organizations, of these that think of unity in terms of "unifying difference" or that these forms necessarily lead to political containment or to de-escalation, I think, limits our grasp of how things can unfold over time. What happened in Seattle was one example where less militant organizing actually provided the context for more militant organizing.

How different is your current model for escalation or insurrection from the model of "civil war" you had in 1999?

Revolutions are made by millions of people, they are not made by thousands. If all the activists and militants in the entire country, if they were all to get on board with the same strategy and they were to work really hard on that, chances are we would all get killed. We would lose.

In that context, the fundamental question for militants is how to break down the system. I think it's a question of how we figure out how to relate to them. As anarchists in the 1990s, we imagined ourselves as front-line guerrilla soldiers in a people's war. But there's no way we will defeat global capitalism through our own activities. That goes for a revolutionary party, a mass union, a collective prefigurative project. The kinds of confrontations that could actually cast the State into crisis are ones that would completely dwarf our activities. If we can figure out how to not get in their way and contribute something to them, then we would be doing better than most Left- ists have done historically.

I think that readers of Anarchaia would agree with your assessment of the Left historically and even agree that activist activities will not produce a revolu- tion. The difference is that many anarchists claim that we don't see "revolution" as achievable or revolutionary anarchism as tenable. They still desire revolt even if they don't imagine winning. Do you have anything to say to them?