

# ANATHEMA

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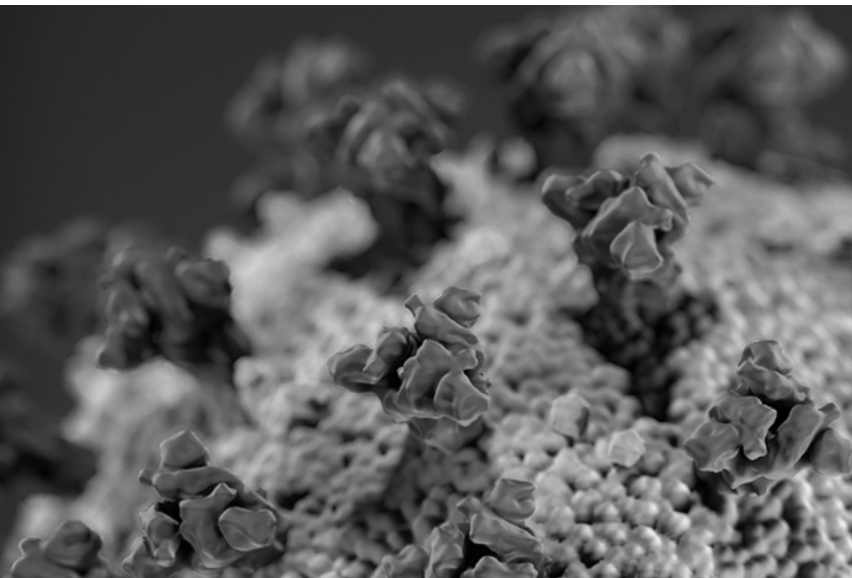
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### ***FROM FUTURE TO PRESENT TENSE***

"Colonialism is a plague, capitalism is pandemic.  
These systems are anti-life, they will not be compelled to  
cure themselves.  
We will not allow these corrupted sickened systems to  
recuperate.  
We will spread.

**We are the antibodies."**

— *Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-Futurist Manifesto*

As I write this dozens of refrigerated trucks are rolling into New York City to pick up the bodies that they don't have room for anywhere else. The United States is a particularly large country, but having become number one in the number of diagnosed Corona cases is no

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### ***COVID-19: A FORK IN THE ROAD***

The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing us to a fork in the road. On one side we see the near future that power wants: an atomized and remote workforce, a drastic decrease in spontaneous in-person social life, a big increase in who is considered surplus population as "non-essential" work is cancelled, and a bunch more surveillance, policing, and social control. On the other hand, the state is scared, it's showing that government is capable of providing social security when the choice is between that and an uncontrolled breakdown in the social order. Neither of these paths lead to places that we, as anarchists, can feel good about. As this pandemic runs its course and society changes because of it, a new normal will slowly congeal as things cool down. What that normal looks like and how it comes about is

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# WHAT WENT DOWN

Mid-February - Four new inhabited condos are splattered with red paint. "The owners will have cleaned it away in no time, but I hope they felt a least 1/10th of the rage I feel encountering such 'progress' all around."

Mid-February - Rail traffic disrupted twice in a week using copper wire in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en nation and land defenders. "Reconciliation is dead, insurgency is alive!"

February 25 - A rally in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en struggle blockades a Chase bank in Center City with lockboxes. Police bring in two generators and power tools to cut through the blockade.

March 13 - A Philly SWAT cop is shot and killed while breaking into the house of a homicide suspect in the early morning.

Mid-March - Multiple mutual aid efforts are organized around the city to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

March 18 - PPD announces they will not be arresting suspects being charged for many "non-violent" crimes and instead will process them on the spot and issue a warrant for their arrest at a later time. This measure is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

March 19 - An unknown individual robs a Citizens Bank using a demand note.

Late March - Anarchist slogans tagged in multiple neighborhoods. "FUCK THE STATE DONT ABANDON EACH OTHER (A)" "TREASON IS FUN (A)"

Late March - Graffiti and posters in support of a rent strike are put up in multiple neighborhoods.

Late March - Tacks were spread in several Philly police station parking lots in an effort to puncture police car tires. "Cops are violent antagonists of the living and enemies of freedom, in collusion with judges, prosecutors, bosses, landlords, and politicians."

March 30 - Millionaire Joel Freedman's house on the 2100 block of Locust was vandalized after he offered to allow the city to use the vacant former Hahnemann Hospital building for around \$1M and the city refused. A fliers were also left at the house. "JOEL KILLS"

"FREE HAHNEMANN" "Joel has blood on his hands"  
"Open Hahnemann Hospital"

March 30 - Car caravan circles City Hall demanding the release of prisoners at Philadelphia jails and state prisons. Several prisoners and staff have already tested positive for the coronavirus.

March 31 - Neo-nazi Joseph Berger of Bethlehem, PA is doxxed. He runs an alt-right podcast, and has disrupted a number of left and liberal events around PA, including in Philly.

Early April - Red Belly Autonomous Garden is re-squatted. "This land should not be developed! It is not the time for new condos. It is time for us to begin healing our relationship with the land."

April 3 - Nine prisoners under quarantine at Philadelphia Industrial Correctional Center threw commissary containers at the windows of their cells in an apparent effort to break the glass. Guards responded in riot gear and used pepper spray on the prisoners.

Early April - "The anticapitalist contingent of the philly mural arts program" claim responsibility for dropping a pro-looting banner near a Trader Joe's, tagging Joel Freedman's house (the second time it has been tagged), and spraying over a security camera at Wells Fargo. "In times like these, no work to be found even if we want it, not enuf weed and acid in the world to make time pass fast enuf, we must dig deep and remember play as a method of killing time."

Early April - At least 13 households in the West Shore neighborhood of West Philly went on rent strike against millionaire landlord Guy Laren owner of Hast Investments. "We're very excited to coordinate with other renters in the city organizing on their own terms and can be reached through the contact information below. [...] CCTenants@protonmail.com" ★



# FORK IN THE ROAD CONT.

still up in the air.

In the name of “public health” all sort of security measures are coming together to create an authoritarian wet dream. Internationally borders are becoming more difficult to cross, and anti-immigrant and specifically anti-Asian sentiment is on the rise as racists in the media and politics stir up fear hostility toward China. Earlier in the month video surfaced of an Asian couple being beaten by a group of people on a SEPTA platform, and Philly isn’t the only place seeing this sort of harassment, New York and Los Angeles have also experienced similar attacks. The state is encouraging what is being called “social distancing”. People are advised to stay home, cut down on social outings and gatherings, stay six feet apart, and digitize or give up on in-person social life. Schools and universities are closing left and right. At least one school is taking it even further, the University of Pennsylvania sent an email to its students March 14 explaining that social distancing is encouraged and that students “congregating on campus, or off campus, will face immediate intervention by Penn Police.” It would not be surprising to see other institutions or even the city itself take on similarly drastic measures. The Board of Health has made forcing people to quarantine legal. Many workplaces are asking their workers to work from home, reducing their hours, or laying them off. Workers that are considered non-essential are falling through the cracks financially. What we see forming is a way of life that is sterile, policed, mediated, and closed off. When this pandemic tapers off, who’s to say that bosses, cops, and politicians won’t like the peace and quiet enough to keep using all these new ways of controlling the population? Once those in power have the means and the compliance of the population, how easy would it be for them to simply keep the ball rolling? Is what we’re seeing as a crisis response a glimpse into the new “normal” we’ll live after the crisis?

At the same time, power is scared. The state and capitalists have made some proposals and offers that would have seemed outrageous a few months ago. Comcast is offering free access to its internet networks to the poor, offering unlimited data, and has put a hold on shutting off connections. Verizon is making a similar offer. PECO, PGW, and Philadelphia Water Department have all pledged to not disconnect utilities even if they are owed money (for the time being). A resolution has passed that prevents utility shutoffs and also places a moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, and tax-lien sales until the pandemic clears. This means that the issue of losing ones housing during the crisis could be less likely if your landlord doesn’t decide to lock you out illegally (although rent and tax debt will continue to drain our wallets). Federally the state is expanding who qualifies for unemployment, and figuring out how to send \$1200 to millions of US citizens. These offers and proposals

go to show that the means of existence -- shelter, warmth, water, and communication -- could be provided to everyone by the state and capital. Of course these kinds of actions by the state are unlikely to last, the aversion of US politicians to anything that remotely resembles consideration for social well-being is derided as socialism or communism. Either way the services and infrastructure to take care of each other and our needs exist and outside a capitalist economy could be much more accessible than our current setup. With that in mind why would or should we entrust our health and social life to the institutions that could, but do not and never will, meet our needs? This pandemic only makes more clear the absurd priorities of the state and capitalists. In the unlikely event that the state and capitalists decided to adopt a welfare state model we still have no guarantees that this wouldn’t be coupled with intense policing and isolation, that it would last, or would include those who are most oppressed.

There is a third way: resisting the isolation and policing, and also sidestepping a social safety net that could be pulled out from beneath us as soon as we’re well enough to work and pay, we can take responsibility for ourselves and self-organize. As we lose our hours or jobs we are still expected to pay to live, to eat, to move about the city. As we worry for our individual and collective health, we can figure out how to meet our needs outside the systems that would rather see us sick and alone. Schools, offices, stores, and many other places are sitting empty. Can we imagine open-sourcing test kits and occupying labs to make them readily available? People are already organizing rent strikes and opening up squats to make life without work go from a crisis imposed disaster to a joyful freeing of our time and space? When food and health care supplies are in short supply, will we have squatted gardens and autonomous clinics to meet our needs? Will the local pharmacy continue to profit off our fears and desire to take care of ourselves, or will it be taken over to provide medicine, snacks, and hygiene supplies to whoever needs? Will we take advantage of the crisis to leave the city to start a farm or food forest on some under-policed plot of land? This pandemic is making power’s disdain for free and healthy life more than clear. Will we respond by folding into ourselves, losing ourselves behind glowing blue screens and locked doors or will we make our lives our own and create the health and freedom we need to life in the midst of crisis?

\*Since this article was written at least one autonomous garden has been squatted :)★

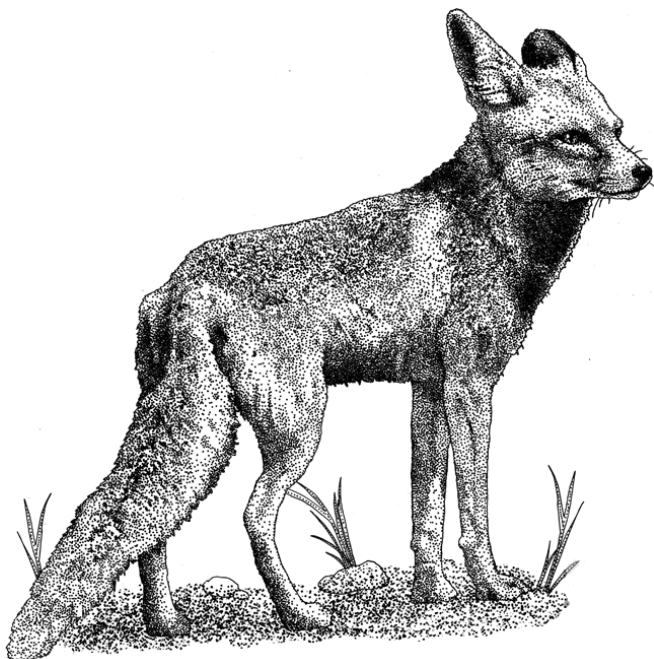


## ***EARTH'S DESTRUCTION DEEMED "ESSENTIAL"***

Despite the silver linings of pollution reduction in China during the height of the pandemic, the United States seems determined to maintain life-destroying industry.

Initially, coal mining and clear-cutting forestry were to be shut down across Pennsylvania, but Governor Wolf reversed his decision about a day later. On the federal level, the Environmental Protection Agency has basically handed the keys of their offices to polluting industries – citing the pandemic, they relaxed regulations to the point of non-existence when they told “power plants, factories and other facilities to determine for themselves if they are able to meet legal requirements on reporting air and water pollution,” according to the New York Times.

The Mariner East 2 pipeline has also just been given the go-ahead to resume construction at some 17 locations across Pennsylvania. Some of us mistakenly thought the project was already completed when they decided to join what they had finished of their new construction to pre-existing pipe to make the line operational after the final stages of new construction were blocked by court order in 2018. Sunoco, which combined with Energy Partners in 2016, was noted to have continued dumping drilling fluids from the operation in 2018, shortly after a more than \$12 million fine from the EPA for other “egregious” violations just prior. Sunoco is particularly infamous for its environmental transgressions, with many leaks, sinkholes, and explosions relatively recently cited across the state and continent – further illustrating its relative immunity to government regulation.★



## ***COVID-19 IN PRISON***

As COVID-19 spreads across the so-called free world, jails and prisons are starting to show the highest infection rates in the country. At Rikers Island in New York City, the rate of infection is currently at 6.59%; at FCI Oakdale in Louisiana, cases are reportedly growing at a rate of 68%. As of this writing, at least 16 prisoners have died so far of coronavirus in U.S. correctional facilities. Pennsylvania's state prisons have been locked down since March 30, as prisoners wait for the virus to slowly spread to them through the correctional officers holding them captive, since prison protocols (like being escorted to yard or showers) do not permit physical distancing.

This is in basic violation of prisoners' rights, as almost none of them have been sentenced to death (or to longterm lung damage, if they survive). There is ample proof by now that the coronavirus can kill anyone, including healthy and younger individuals. This is especially the case when those infected and struggling to breathe cannot access oxygen or fluids, so we need to expect the worst, which is that infected prisoners will not be taken care of and death rates will be high. Most state prisons are located in rural areas, whose hospitals will be overwhelmed once the virus hits the region; they will not be prioritizing those whom this society dismisses as “criminals.” We have already heard stories of doctors answering prisoners' concerns by saying that if they didn't want to get coronavirus then they shouldn't have come to jail; one infected prisoner in New York state's Sing Sing facility reportedly died after being given nothing for his illness but Tylenol (it is widely known that Tylenol exacerbates the virus's symptoms and can in itself lead to death). This is the type of “treatment” we can expect our friends in prison to receive. The notion of “rights” is a charade, as is the idea that prisons are meant to protect us.

Meanwhile, most activists on the outside have seemed blissfully ignorant of the fundamental concerns that prisoners have shared about the risk that the virus poses by virtue of incarceration itself. That is, activists' demands and legal efforts so far have demanded only the release of certain individuals who are more at risk (or of non-violent offenders at the end of their sentences), with little discussion of the fact that incarceration poses a potential death threat for everybody in jail, not just the elderly and those with preexisting conditions. If we're going to be making demands of those in power, why not start off the negotiating process by demanding

the release of everyone, especially since it's a demand that's ostensibly supported by our constitutional rights and other things that activists and politicians purport to believe in?

In any case, making demands in this situation seems like a more worthless strategy than ever; the state does not care about prisoners and will consider them disposable as much as public opinion will allow. It will always answer activists' demands with a weaker solution. We've already seen this in states like California, which has pledged to release a truly minuscule proportion of its prison population, and now in Pennsylvania, where officials have said they will release somewhere between 500-3,000 prisoners out of 44,000. Governor Wolf has the power of reprieve, which he could use at any time to release anyone he wanted from prison, without the approval of any other public official or board. But why would he do that, if his failure to do so poses no significant threat to his political career or to his person?

Another angle towards getting prisoners out has to do with the correctional officers and other staff who currently keep the prisons running. Once the virus has spread into the facilities, will they continue risking their lives and those of their loved ones in order to go to work? Will they be in good enough health to have a choice? If officers stopped coming to work, it would only be in a situation that was already very dire for prisoners as well. Prisons falling into such bureaucratic disorder, though, seems like one of the only potential opportunities for prisoners to free themselves, especially those whom the problematic activist talk of "nonviolent offenders" has so far left behind entirely.

I think we should be prepared for seemingly unlikely situations like that one — they are more realistic than Tom Wolf deciding to prioritize the safety of a significant proportion of the state's prisoners. What is much more certain, though, is that prisoner resistance will continue to escalate. According to Perilous Chronicle, an anarchist collective that documents prisoner unrest, as of April 4 there have already been at least 21 acts of COVID-19-related protest in facilities across the country, including in Philadelphia. In two instances — at a county jail in Washington state and at a low-security women's facility in South Dakota — prisoners were able to actually escape, and most of them remain uncaptured. In a situation this desperately dangerous, the danger can also lead to a way out. ★

***BLACK SOCIALISTS IN AMERICA  
APPROACHED BY FBI***

Black Socialists in America have been visited by the FBI in Philly. Special agent Joffrey Alcidor from the Philadelphia Division followed a member of the BSA and their family and left a card with contact information in their door. The visit is alleged to be related to an anti-police twitter post.

Remember that if you are ever contacted by the FBI or other law enforcement that anything you say can be used against you, even if you're just being honest. Silence is the best policy. Let the agent know that you won't be talking to them without your lawyer and ask for their card. Be sure to let your networks and lawyer know about the visit, don't keep it to yourself, everyone benefits from knowing when the law is sniffing around. If you're unsure of how to move forward you can contact a local anti-repression group like Up Against the Law or the Philly Anti-Repression Fund. ★



## FROM FUTURE TO PRESENT CONT.

small feat – though we have yet to surpass the death toll set by the much smaller country of Italy at more than 10,000 people. Statistics of this sort are changing hourly, but are also not necessarily the point. As the store shelves grow barren, anti-capitalist commentators satirize the common trope about the bread lines in Soviet Russia while posting photos of lines out the doors of grocery stores in Capitalist America. Make no mistake though, the rhyming Ukrainian saying that “Hammer & Sickle = Death & Hunger,” could always also be applied to the Stars & Stripes. Those aspects of foreign and domestic U.S. policy that have invisibilized its victims, in collusion with the media (which has stopped broadcasting caskets coming home since the Vietnam War), are now threatening broader segments of a more accommodated part of the populace – even beyond the too-dense cityscapes that have previous served as accelerators of infection. Still, the cities remain at the center of the problem, and even from within them must we begin to consider life beyond and opposed to them.

### A G I T A R E...



...l'anima umana; ribellarsi in questa ora fosca; vendicare i caduti sotto il peso della barbaria e della prepotenza borghese, debbono essere gli assillanti doveri di ogni rivoluzionario nel momento attuale.

“Shake the human soul; rebel in this dark hour; avenging the fallen under the weight of barbarism and bourgeois bullying, must be the nagging duties of every revolutionary in the present moment.”

-- Severino di Giovanni (c. 1927)



As a recent City Lab article attests, “the stories of cities have always also been those of infectious disease,” and urban planning has often changed in response to epidemics and pandemics throughout the centuries – perhaps most notably in the case of water and sewer systems after the plagues. What has changed now, particularly with the coronavirus, is that “tertiary cities” and other suburban communities have been affected more significantly than before. That globalization is to blame had to be explained by the article’s authors, as that had been more strictly associated with cities before, but it has now come to encompass almost the entire world as one economic system. This, of course, is well known to anyone that’s ever been of the anti-globalization persuasion, but it is still a consequence of a society that’s been constructed around cities at the center (more succinctly, civilization). As such, and as purveyors of that civilization, the article’s authors again turn their attention to possible changes in urban planning to better contain infectious disease under globalization – notably speculating about cities sprawling outwards, instead of up, with transportation infrastructure to match.

Such urban-centric attempts to reduce population density, along with “the decentralization of services” and further digital infrastructure as the “sanitation of our times,” are the suggested solutions. Some might read this like the further suffocating of the earth beneath more steel and concrete, the recuperation of mutual aid services that are not in direct conflict with the state, and the further alienation of an increasingly modernized populace – and this does not begin to entertain the ways in which such a restructuring will be used to increasingly control the populace (as we saw with the dissolution of “the commons” from the earliest urbanization efforts).

*“Were we to have sane, human-sized communities with highly local economies, pandemics could be relatively easily contained. Long-distance travel would be mostly optional and recreational, rather than economically imperative. Afflicted communities could simply self-quarantine and would have their own landbases to meet most of their supply needs and would contact a relatively small number of people giving aid from neighboring communities who could in turn individually self-quarantine.”*

– Bellamy Fitzpatrick

Bellamy’s advice does little for us in this moment, but as we’ve recognized the current dissolution of normality (and begin to plot against its return), it should be something we keep in mind as the pundits advocate maintaining and expanding cities. Their attempts at “greenwashing” proposals that intend to further separate us from the earth should be seen for the absurdity that they are, in the ongoing climate catastrophe that so many scientists have very publicly acknowledged is enveloping us quicker than they had previously thought. Beyond climate scientists, in fact, well-established financial advisors

and other types of professionals are predicting the collapse of civilization. The consequences of these changes in the short term range from rising sea levels flooding rivers and swallowing previously inhabited islands, to increases in the severity and frequency of deadly weather patterns and pandemics (in addition to long-standing poisoning of water, air, and land).

Meanwhile, we see the ways in which the supply lines provided by capitalism become overburdened by crises like this pandemic. As the cities produce little to nothing of what the resident populace needs to survive locally, even a comunization of their infrastructure would not avert disaster. It has been well established elsewhere, anthropologically and otherwise, that mass society is not only responsible for many aspects of crises like these, but that any society larger than 150 people (or certainly, 300, to account for critical alternatives) requires a restrictive governing authority to maintain themselves (see: “Dunbar’s Number”).

Many of us remain in cities anyway, despite the further vulnerability of our autonomy as we heavily rely on the never-neutral technologies and infrastructures beneath a growing panopticon, still hoping for moments of rupture in which to strike decisively at the heart of it. But as a viral pandemic can and should limit the gathering of people in any space, we are left wondering if this misfortune should produce a revolt of any value or how we might be able to strike in capital’s recovery faze.

While we’re left pondering this others have acted against those oppressive institutions that maintain a civilized mode of existence – particularly those that have maintained during, and even taken advantage of the crisis. From police patrol cars being targeted with tacks in their parking lots, to contractors working with ICE getting their offices flooded in Los Angeles – even the rent strike begins to question the logic of their normality.

That is to say, the rent strikes that have begun in many cities around the world can and should challenge the relationships around, if not the very concept of, private property – particularly if they can make connections beyond an already radicalized community. Private property is quite possibly the very bedrock of our society, necessitating as it does borders, policing, class distinctions, and even enabling the existence of cities.

Back within the cities themselves, it is questionable whether gentrification will continue on its global scale after an economic collapse in which an ever-growing population of

workers (especially those within higher income brackets) can perform their duties remotely. Who will occupy the peripheries of the cities as proposals are made for their expansion? Will they continue to be the wealthy suburbs already established in a U.S. context, or will a continued white return to urban centers result in European-style suburban housing projects?

Regardless, the communication infrastructure necessary to maintaining renewed capitalist relations will only increase in value to those authorities, especially as they attempt to restore the economy and return to something resembling their idea of normal.

Many additional targets remain, including the prisons, which continue to put the detained in worse situations. The small portions of people that have been released from jails in a handful of cities so far seems notable, but so many more remain. There have been a significant growth in uprisings within those confines of steel and concrete too, particularly vulnerable as they are to the spread of the virus. The discussions of liberating prisoners in the events of crises where staff abandons them (i.e. hurricanes), like many other discussions of coming catastrophes, has not notably accounted for pandemics. Neither does this account for the fact that many more of us may have to move.

*“Been studying collapse for over 20 years. My advice: 1. Don’t get invested in thinking you’re going to be bailed out by the system at any time. 2. Be prepared to leave and have plans to do so. 3. This is being normalized quickly, but it’s unprecedented. 4. When in doubt, move.”*  
– Kevin Tucker

Moving during the peak of a contagious pandemic is not really advisable, unless maybe you already have a place prepared for you and yours that you can get to without more human contact – but in a world already filling with climate refugees it is something to anticipate having to do. We already know that a great deal of the atrocities in Syria have stemmed from or been exacerbated by climate change, driving many out of the region. Similarly in the African nation of Chad, *one* of the major climate change disasters on the continent is the drying up of an immense fresh-water lake – unfortunately driving more people from that region into urban centers.

The harmful effects of a globalized civilization have certainly disproportionately affected impoverished communities both rural and urban, and the environmental racism of the placement of harmful infrastructures in poor, black, and brown communities on this continent is well documented – infrastructures necessary to cities. Particular to Native peoples here, we see everything from nuclear waste and weapons in western states to continued displacement for the sake of pipelines – and in one



brand-new case, the government motion to disestablish the Mashpee Wampanoag reservation in so-called Massachusetts.

Particular to disease beyond the obvious early colonial cases of small pox, when First Nations communities in rural Manitoba requested medical supplies to battle a second wave of the Swine Flu there in 2009, Canada sent body bags – literally. This sort of gross insult is nothing new, but never stops being shocking. And at the time of this writing, the Decolonial Atlas has just reported that New York City, which has the largest indigenous population in the US or Canada, accounts for 10% of all Corona virus cases worldwide (and is *rapidly* increasing).



The colonization that has displaced almost every indigenous group from its land-base – attempting and sometimes succeeding in erasing lives and practices in the form of physical, cultural and even intellectual genocide – has dispossessed so many of the means to live and thrive in connection with a world that previously provided for humans, without any need for capital or (more to the point) cities. Settler-colonialism has meanwhile warped every one of our minds, in fact, and would likely require a long decolonial process to overcome.

All this is not intended as doom-and-gloom fear mongering, but as a naming of both our enemies and desires. For it is in this context that it would behoove us to begin thinking outside an existence in cities – it would be in our interest, in fact, to plan for a life outside of and in conflict with them. That is not to say we must pursue primitivism, either (or as it has been better branded more recently, primal anarchy); too few people are interested in that, and there are so many usable remains of civilization that will continue to litter the land-

5 ACTIONS



FOR EMERGENCY  
COVID-19  
SURVIVAL

	<b>MUTUAL AID</b> Look out for your friends. Communicate with your neighbors. Build or plug into networks to offer free medical care.
	<b>NO WORK</b> File for food stamps and unemployment. Plant gardens. Forage. Organize looting expeditions. Distribute materials.
	<b>FREE HOUSING</b> Organize rent strikes and open squats. Hack in to databases to destroy utility and property records.
	<b>FREE THE PRISONERS</b> Obstruct policing, arrests, deportations. Create safe houses in squats. Build capacity to assault and empty prisons.
	<b>LIBERATE</b> The economy is tanking, police are afraid of responding to calls, and the government is failing. We don't have to go back – we can move forward from here.



scape for time immemorial. As the Greek comrade Giannis Naxakis stated in a public letter, "No matter how you look at it, civilization is a gigantic crime. If we want something, it is a life without any elements from this one. If we want freedom, we want it wild. Not primitive, new-found." There are so many post-civilized imaginaries to be realized, but only after we begin to move beyond half-measures.

From *Rethinking the Apocalypse*, once more:

*In our past/your future it was the unsystematic non-linear attacks on vulnerable critical infrastructure such as gas utilities, transportation corridors, power supplies, communications systems, and more, that made settler colonialism an impossibility on these lands.*

- *Our organizing was cellular, it required no formal movements.*
- *Ceremony was/is our liberation, our liberation was/is ceremony.*
- *We honored our sacred teachings, our ancestors and coming generations.*
- *We took credit for nothing. We issued no communiqués. Our actions were our propaganda.*
- *We celebrated the death of leftist solidarity and it's myopic apocalyptic romanticism.*
- *We demanded nothing from capitalists/colonizers. ★*



## ***THE LAST ASSEMBLY: A REPORT BACK***

It's a strange moment to be thinking about anarchist assemblies. It has been several weeks since the last assembly in Philly, although it might feel like eons. What seemed at the time like a small gathering of several dozen anarchists would be considered a crowded event under a regime of social distancing. It might not be the best time to explore the future of this project, but I want to offer a few notes while the memory of the last assembly is still fresh.

There was almost exactly a year-long gap between the previous assembly in 2019 and the one this February. It felt a little bit like starting over and, at the same time, it was a conscious attempt to create continuity. As a result, the discussion was a bit meta, focusing on the structure of the assembly and the basics of organizing a recurring event. While the elements for organizing an assembly might seem self-evident, there were two factors that made it more complicated: 1) we needed to address why the previous assembly did not result in a recurring event and 2) relatedly, we needed to assess ways to organize an assembly without an official group appointed to the task.

It might seem like we were overthinking the question of organizational structure. However, this is an important question if we are to address what an assembly is adding to the anarchist space. What is an assembly and how is it distinct from the dozens of Leftist organizations operating in Philly? In my view, the assembly should offer an alternative to the existing organizations—not an addition to the activist landscape—by functioning completely differently from them. The assembly should run counter to the popular Philly organizations, whose function has traditionally been to recruit members and to direct our actions. Ideally, the assembly should provide one way to coordinate our activity without relying on existing Philly organizations or any central organization.

If our hope is that the assembly can break from the managerial program of Philly organizations, then we need to make that clear. One way to clarify this objective is to determine and delimit the minimum structure required to make the assembly happen. Much of the discussion in the last assembly circled around this topic.

For the most part, attendees agreed that the assembly should not evolve into a decision-making body. This

seemed like a popular and straightforward way to inoculate this gathering against the twin poisons of long meetings and professional organizers. Yet, there was still the problem—I want to say paradox—that we needed to decide who would organize the meetings of this non-organization. The simple solution, of course, is rotating tasks but that just returned us to the first problem that I pointed out above: why did the last assembly fail to generate a recurring assembly? The discussion circled this topic, like circling a drain, until people slowly arrived at the point where the problems were recognizable as such.

It is easy to suggest solutions when you do not clearly see the problem. Once we came to a shared appreciation that what the assembly needed was reliable people to take on tasks and access to shared resources to promote the next one, it seemed like an easy fix. But, in that case, how can we expect this group of strangers to work together, stay committed, and get along long enough to make sure we meet up again? Or conversely, how do we prevent the assembly organizers from forming an inner circle or inaccessible clique? These questions briefly came to the fore, right as the assembly ended, just long enough for people to recognize them. But they remain unresolved issues that may (or may not) crop up in the future.

Since much of the assembly was spent coming to terms with the problems we might face, there was scant opportunity to discuss what the assembly can potentially do for Philly anarchists. Yet at times, the discussion afforded glimmers of future possibilities for the assembly. To me, the most promising was the idea of creating a space where anarchists can discuss actions they could take in public (which is to say legal or relatively low risk activity). In this light, the assembly could be a format for public organizing that in no way aims to replace clandestine and autonomous anarchist actions. At its best, the assembly would make space for these unknowns while helping coordinate more public activity.

For others, the assembly's potential lay in its openness to new people, giving them a place to “plug in” to something with openly anarchist principles. People new to Philly or the anarchist space seemed particularly excited to take on tasks to promote the next assembly. This prospect also generated a lot of good discussion about basic security culture, the benefits and drawbacks of promotional tools like social media and email lists. At its most basic, this project will likely function as a medium for sharing information. Whether it takes the form of another in-person assembly remains to be seen. For the time being, we will have to think about what we can do together at a distance. ★

## MUTUAL AID TOWARDS FREEDOM

Mutual aid projects are popping up all over the place. The coronavirus pandemic is affecting everyone, and many of us are struggling to simply stay afloat. Mutual aid is the anarchist principle of helping each other instead of relying on authority. With the panic and rushing around that the media has created around the pandemic it's easy to forget that mutual aid is a weapon to be wielded against authority. The point is not only to help each other survive and "flatten the curve" but also to discredit and undermine authority. We have the potential to not only help each other get through this crisis, but also, to step away from it more free and capable than when we entered it.

Time after time mutual aid and disaster relief efforts are co-opted by power. We have to keep in mind that we're helping each other not only to keep each other healthy and safe but also because we want to build horizontal relations. If we want our mutual aid projects advancing in freeing ways and not just giving out illegal band-aids while we wait for the ambulances and the national guard, we have to remember that mutual aid is anti-state. It's been said many times, and it bears repeating, solidarity is not charity, and solidarity can only exist when we see our struggle, our sense of direction, our idea of what freedom is, in the struggles and activities of those we help.

Human potential to adapt is incredible and we do ourselves a disservice when we underestimate ourselves. Looking to Wuhan, China we see that building a hospital in a week is doable. In New York and Los Angeles the state is sending navy boats to be used as ad hoc hospitals to take strain off the local hospitals being overwhelmed with coronavirus cases. Instead of waiting for the government to throw money at a healthcare system that was never designed to work for most people, let alone deal with a global pandemic, we can create the liberatory infrastructure and relationships we need to get free now. When we look around ourselves we see that so many of us are without work, and so many places are sitting empty. If we took it upon ourselves, we could turn vacant dorms, warehouses, or offices into clinics, or even hospitals.

As the crisis stretches on and people worry for their health, we may see interruptions in the supply chains we are used to relying on. Now is as good a time as ever to get that autonomous project you've been thinking about off the ground. Turn a vacant lot into a garden; open up an empty house and turn it into a workshop; build a windmill on the roof of your apartment building. These small acts not only give us footholds against the uncertainty of the crisis, they help us leave behind the capitalist relationships we have been pushed to rely on. That way we not only take responsibility for our own well-being and needs now, we also make whatever "normal" comes next that much more in line with the liberated lives we seek.★

