

ANATHEMA

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KEEPING THE EMBERS HOT

The killing of George Floyd has set off a wave of unrest the likes of which have not been seen in the US since the 60s. Entire neighborhoods have been transformed into autonomous zones, free stores, tent cities, canvases for art, and piles of ash. A police station and countless police vehicles have been turned into smouldering rubble. Stores have been looted and their merchandise freely distributed. Statues have fallen and history itself is being questioned. The isolation of quarantine has been replaced by the collective fury of revolt against this anti-black society. An incredible amount of people have realized their power during riots, protests, looting, and police-free areas, we won't soon forget our potential.

As the fires settle into embers what do we do?

Protect the flickering coals

The state and the far-right will punish as many people connected to the uprising as possible. The lynchings of black people, the arrests, the threats, the killings, and the imprisonments will increase as we start to feel bits of normality slip further and further back into our lives. We can protect each other from the repression and remind ourselves that we will not abandon those of us who come under the literal and metaphorical cross-hairs of the state and other racists. Jail and prisoner support, self-defense initiatives, trauma-informed healing circles, and a general sense of solidarity will keep us closer to each other and more confident in our ability to take care of each other not only during the heated moments but

also when the news cameras leave.

Keep the embers hot

Even though the riots have stopped for now, nothing is finished. The protests are still ongoing, the discussions continue, the love and solidarity are present. We can continue to make the struggle visible, intense, and widespread. Now is not the time to stop criticizing the racist role of the police, to stop disrupting in small and large ways the functioning of our oppressive society, to stop taking care of one another in spite of everything. To keep struggling while things begin to cool is to stay sharp, to develop our skills, to remind ourselves of the importance of rebellion, and to keep things hot until the next wind blows.

Prepare for the next gust of wind

Imagine what you would have liked to see happen during these moments of rage and possibility. What would you need to do now to be ready to make your liberatory imagination a reality? Start preparing just that. Another wind will blow over the glowing coals of this revolt and spark it anew. Unfortunately, until they are destroyed, the police will not stop killing black people, many of these deaths will cause little uproar, but it's only a matter of time before we reach another tipping point and explode.

This uprising may have caught many of us by surprise but when the next one comes around we can be sure to have well laid plans. Be ready. ★



WHAT WENT DOWN

May 19 - In North Philly two unknown people used crow-bars to break open a Bitcoin ATM in a LUKOIL and made off with the money box.

Late May - Graffiti in various neighborhoods in memory of George Floyd and against the police. George Floyd was killed by cops in Minneapolis sparking riots.

May 28 - An retaliatory inspection by New Age Realty of a house on rent strike is thwarted by a large presence of strike supporters.

May 28-29 - Workers at Milk and Honey stage a wildcat walkout strike for workplace safety, better wages, and in solidarity with the uprising in Minneapolis. After walking out there have been pickets in front of the cafe.

May 30 - Massive riots break out in Center City for George Floyd. At least four police cars are burned, stores and businesses are looted and burned, barricades are thrown up and burned, police are fought, city hall is vandalized, and entire novels are written on the walls in graffiti. Frank Rizzo statue is vandalized.

May 31 - Looting of Center City continues into the morning. Riots spread to West Philly, Kensington, and North Philly. Heavy clashes with police and looting occur around 52nd St and Market. Looting of stores and businesses occur all throughout the city.

June 1 - Multiple demonstrations against police and in memory of George Floyd continue in various neighborhoods. Looting continues. The National Guard arrives.

June 2 - Frank Rizzo statue is removed from Center City by the city government in the middle of the night. Demonstrations continue.

June 3 - Frank Rizzo mural in the Italian Market is vandalized. The Mural Arts Program announces that they will discontinue maintenance of the mural. Demonstrations continue.

Early June - Milk and Honey Market closes following a wildcat strike and repeated vandalism. Demonstrations continue.

June 5 - Three people bash the windows of the OCF office.

June 10 - An occupation forms on the Ben Franklin Parkway, the camp is eventually called James Talib Dean camp. Demonstrations continue.

June 11 - Nine security cameras are sabotaged in solidarity with anarchist prisoners. "We want to remind prisoners that they are with us in the struggle against white supremacy and police." Demonstrations continue.

Mid-June - Three tires of an OCF truck are slashed.

June 13 - A crowd of about 300 loots an Exxon and vandalizes a police cruiser at the 3100 block on N Broad St. Demonstrations continue.

June 13-15 - White vigilantes gather at Marconi Plaza to defend the Christopher Columbus statue. Journalists and counter-protesters are assaulted. Demonstrations continue.

Mid June - Proud Boys attempt to enter James Talib Dean camp three times and are chased out each time.

June 14 - An unknown person stole a police bicycle off of a police cruiser in Center City.

June 15 - The FBI Homeland Security, ICE, ATF and PPD raided a house in Germantown and arrested Lore Blumenthal, she is facing federal charges related to a PPD care being set fire on May 30.

June 19 - Celebrations of Juneteenth take place in various neighborhood including at the Parkway, Malcolm X Park, and Drexel Park.

June 19 - A Juneteenth noise demonstration paints graffiti and shoots fireworks outside the Federal Detention Center in solidarity with people facing state repression from the George Floyd uprising. "Towards the destruction of the state, it's cages and it's enforcers."

June 27 - A demonstration attempts to occupy Hahnemann hospital. Demonstrators barricaded an adjacent street and set up a clinic outside the building before leaving due to police. "When we act together, we can care for each other and keep one another safe."

June 29 - A new occupation is started across the street from the PHA building in North Philly. PHA construction workers attempted to fence in the lot the camp occupies and residents and supporters dismantled the fence and built barricades around the camp. The camp demands low income housing and less policing of houseless people among other things.

Late June - Anti-police and anarchist graffiti in West and South Philly.

Early July - An Amazon truck is sabotaged. "These seeming inconsequential acts teach us how to show up and look out for each other, act on our own accord, and in that process naturally create a culture that openly opposes the death cult of capitalism."

July 8 - Pete Dardas of the Berks County Sheriff's Department resigns after being outed for making racist threats against minorities and activists on social media. ★



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THE NARRATIVE AROUND LORE BLUMENTHAL'S CASE

An early morning raid by the FBI, ATF, Homeland Security, and PPD in June saw Lore-Elisabeth Blumenthal taken into federal custody, accused of setting fire to a PPD car during protests over the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd. Blumenthal is one of over 750 hundred people arrested or cited in connection to the protests. While most of the interactions with police have resulted in local charges, Blumenthal's charges are federal - part of a nationwide trend of the FBI stepping in to handle property crime around police vehicles. Similar federal charges have been filed in NYC, Seattle, and Portland.

Even before Blumenthal's arrest, local and federal politicians tried to discredit the anger people felt across the country and create tension between people. On one hand politicians made a show of supporting those they called "peaceful protesters;" they took a knee, they talked about people's right to protest, they cried crocodile tears and said George Floyd's death was saddening or upsetting. At the same time, the political establishment condemned and attacked those they labeled as "violent;" these people were teargassed, pepper-sprayed, beaten, arrested, and discredited as outsiders, professionals, white people, agitators, and ANTIFA without evidence. This age-old divide-and-conquer strategy has been in use since before the civil rights movement. The idea that only outsiders would take confrontational actions to fight against racism erases all the locals and black people who did just that. Already the strategy is coming apart at the seams; even Mayor Kenney recognized that not everyone who is criminalized is illegitimate. On July 8th, the mayor announced that anyone who received a protest-related code violation notice will have it waived.

The state's narrative around Blumenthal specifically argues that she endangered her fellow protesters by setting fire to a police car and that burning a police car has nothing to do with protesting racism. While the claim that burning a car is dangerous holds, it completely misses the mark. The reason people are protesting in the first place is because they feel that police themselves are dangerous and racist. In Minneapolis, where the entire situation started, people burned down an entire police station and the city government announced its intention to abolish the local police department. Both the people on the ground and the politicians have, through their actions, made it clear that fewer police means more safety and less racism. Seen this way, the burning of a police car is a way of decreasing danger and, incidentally, increasing public safety.

Some online commenters blame Blumenthal for being out of line as a white person. People have said it is not a white person's role to escalate a situation between police and people of color (because, again, police are dangerous and racist). Yet the fire Blumenthal is accused of setting is not an escalation, and in fact did not result in an immediate use

of force by the police. Earlier at the same protest two PA state trooper cars were vandalized and one was burned and police officers were hit and had things thrown at them (by a racially mixed crowd if that matters). The area around City Hall and the Municipal Services Building where Blumenthal is accused of having burned the PPD car was already covered in graffiti, people were already smashing and burning cars and fighting with the police, attempting to pull down and burn the Frank Rizzo statue. In fact, the police are accusing Blumenthal of taking a burning barricade out of an already burning police car to light another one. It feels like an honest assessment to say that the action that Blumenthal is accused of was both not an escalation and also in line with the actions of black people and other people of color. Unsurprisingly, those who urge white people to follow the example of black leadership and to not put black people at risk rarely question the racism of only understanding more temperate black voices as leadership. The black people who stand up for themselves in ways that they find upsetting are painted as misguided youth, opportunist thugs, or are magically transformed into white anarchists; in their eyes only certain black people can be leaders.

Supporting Lore-Elisabeth Blumenthal as she faces up to eighty years in prison is important. As the state moves to water down rebellion against racism on one hand and lock it up on the other, coming together to support everyone charged is a sign of solidarity. A way of not letting someone be taken out of the struggle, and a way of reminding everyone involved that they aren't alone, even if the cops come to their home. Look out for updates on Blumenthal's case and how she can be supported. Donations to Blumenthal's support fund can be made at welovelore.com ★

ABOLISH THE POLICE?

"Today, there are those who call themselves 'Abolitionists,' even some anarchists. But there are other anarchists who have begun to use the term 'Demolitionists' instead, and for good reason."

– Michael Kimble, anarchist prisoner in Alabama

So Minneapolis city council announced its intention to disband its police force – but what the hell does that even mean? Many have pointed to our neighbor Camden, NJ as the model, where local forces were disbanded while surveillance expanded and policing was simply handled on a county level. This is not an abolition of the police, and even if it were, what failings does an abolitionist perspective present?

As anarchist prisoner Michael Kimble elaborates on in his essay, by trying to abolish chattel slavery instead of the entirety of the state that maintained its legality, abolitionists of that period allowed the state to reform slavery through the thirteenth amendment and expand it to other populations through imprisonment. There are anarchists who currently try to reframe the abolitionist narrative around police to also include dissolving prisons and the state, but

this is far from a popular narrative.

More common is the perspective that we can abolish policing through increased social services, thereby maintaining authority through different state apparatuses. A nice idea in theory – well, at least if you never opposed the existence of every state in the first place – but then there are the retorts about the inherent racism of even that socialized system, the abducting of children by social services, or even a local infoshop staffer who got someone locked up by following his social work training a couple of years ago. As it so happened, following a destructive outburst in said infoshop, this former social worker followed steps to forcefully institutionalize someone for their outburst – if only in a mental health facility at his family's behest. Of course, that never happened because those protocols alerted his parole officer and got him thrown back in prison – and as has been said before, many who've experienced such mental health facilities describe them as worse than prison.

Therein lies the point though – this nicer, more civil treatment of recalcitrants by pathologizing their criminality still encourages incarceration for any who step out of line. Bonanno warned us of these "abolitionists" that seek to medicate crime away – confining any who still oppose this society, or otherwise act against it, to "the sanctuary of the asylum," assigned cops with white coats to subdue their impulses. This similarly does not begin to oppose the problems of authority and social control.

Others speak of the disbanding of the Iraqi military, using state-led protocols of disbanding, disarming, and reintegrating the forces to prevent new militias and terror groups from forming. Still, those groups already exist in the US, they are already armed, and the state is a large part of the basis of our problem. States, especially complex/massified capitalist states, require policing. Relatedly, outlawing guns will not stop already illegal groups from remaining armed. Given the obvious history of policing, and specifically racist gun control measures of the past, it only precludes marginalized groups from possessing the means to defend themselves.

The "full employment" argument is similarly impoverished. Certainly poverty is in fact a requirement for others to be financially wealthy, and contributes to the necessity of crime for survival – but this is ultimately the result of any economy, and especially the civilized invention of class distinctions. That includes socialized economies too, with their historical examples of poverty, the inherent exploitation of any wage labor, and the inevitable corruption of the necessary authoritarian roles – which have always included cops, among them. Economic thinking, and therefore treating objects as commodities (most notably other living inhabitants of our earth), necessitates this and was actually the reason for the origin of policing and prisons. From slave-catchers turned sheriffs in the Americas, to the first police in Europe arresting and imprisoning anyone who refused to conform to the imposition of a work-centered paradigm.

Yes, there was a great deal of resistance to the creation of wage labor, meant to work the land that the upper-class domesticated, and then later in their factories as the world began to industrialize. Freedom of movement was criminalized as the imaginary lines that are borders became firmer, and words like ‘vagabond’ were created to cast shade on those who still abided our ubiquitous nomadic heritage and lived off the land – as the construct of labor was not necessary, and in fact was a direct impediment to life.

Today the scale and accompanying alienation of our society opposes organic communities that can work out their problems interpersonally. The very concept of private property encourages some to have more than others, to the point of hunger and poverty that, again, necessitates crime. To successfully rid ourselves of policing we also need to do away with the state, capital, private property, and dissolve mass society. The steps we are taking now are the first of many, and are only halted by making demands of the state (as they encourage those authorities to remain, if only under some misguided sense of accountability).

To take it one step further, crime is not inherently bad either. The United States has legally carried out genocide on its native populations, has observed legal chattel slavery, and continues to condone slavery as an acceptable punishment for breaking the law under the 13th amendment. We hardly need to mention the name Robin Hood to invoke all the real-life criminals that were praised by masses of people for taking from the monied classes and redistributing the wealth – many anarchists among them. This is more so relevant because we will never reach some peaceful utopia – most of all not immediately following the shit show of western civilization. Conflict is natural and healthy, and a means to assert ourselves to maintain our freedom, and there are plenty of ways to resolve those conflicts that are a detriment to our lives without invoking any authority.

Many of us, and this paper is not exempt, maintain ourselves through crime. Many of us balance that with a working-class existence, too, but neither need to be lauded. The anarchist project is ultimately alegalist, and also for the dismantling of every class structure.

The atrocities of police have gained a great deal of attention thanks to the sorry construct of race, and to a less-mentioned degree gender, and those social constructs will still be dealt with regardless of whether the police exist or not. Still, the integration and other reforms of police forces of the last couple of centuries have only served to integrate larger populations into better-controlled states, inherently oppressive and expressly contrary to freedom.

It is in that way that many of us feel particularly betrayed by those radicals that construct these legible demands, that seem to fall short of even what a Minneapolis city council has proposed. I do appreciate that they haven’t left out releasing unrepentantly violent black liberation fighters, and even call for their release by name (i.e. Joe-Joe Bowen), but

this begs a question a politicized prisoner recently posed to someone I know: if Mumia has so much dedicated support, why hasn’t anyone gotten around to breaking him out? As for the larger project of eight demands beyond our city limits, I’m sure most of us already know that those reforms already exist in many places and have not stopped anything.

We rely too much on the state to fix our problems, even in anarchist circles. This is not a call to prefiguration, to building our own institutions now, as institutions will remain a problem – too impersonal with one-size-fits-many solutions, to say the least. This is a call to not limit our visions or else we will fall short of liberation. Demand nothing, or at least nothing short of what the mediators tell us is impossible. Better yet, I intend to continue taking steps to literally dismantle those institutions that keep us down. Brick by brick, wall by wall, authority figure by authority figure, and all that. We similarly have a lot of unlearning to do – killing the cop in our head, as they say – but its pretty difficult to do that while the physical cops of the world keep bleating their propaganda in our ears and holding us down.

Though I haven’t heard any identify as a “demolitionist” personally, I think the actual destruction of authority figures, their infrastructure, and their institutions is more akin to what Michael Kimble is proposing. ★



MASS MOTIVES

We Read Endnotes 5 So You Don’t Have To!

The long-delayed Autumn 2019 issue of *Endnotes*, the anti-state communist journal, lands at a strange moment for would-be revolutionaries. *Endnotes* has tended to offer compelling but dispassionate analyses of what is happening around us – specifically, of the global conditions that produce particular uprisings, as well as those uprisings’ limitations. Their accounts of contemporary resistance do not really discuss the subjective or experiential aspects of resistance, or why some of us might make individual decisions to rebel regardless of how isolated we are or how unfavorable our conditions might be.*

Their new issue, “The Passions and the Interests,” though, is noticeably different in tone, subject matter, and analytic quality. Most of the essays completely depart from in-depth analysis of actual struggles against capital and its world, instead reentering into incredibly tired fantasies about how

to manage a future communist one.

Other essays turn towards more interesting topics, though, such as the questions of individual motivation that *Endnotes* has historically left unexplored. This includes subjects like internal dynamics in radical groups or scenes, what motivates the masses when the revolution does arrive, and what the role of those of us with pre-existing political identities could be both during and before an actually revolutionary scenario.

This concern about the role of *Endnotes*' authors, or for that matter any of us in the minoritarian anarchist or communist scenes, was just as relevant in 2019 as it is now in the summer of 2020, although for different reasons. The uprisings that spread across the world in 2019 did not arrive in the U.S. or England (the main countries in which the journal is based). Instead, both countries saw radicals' energy channeled, very unfortunately, into a somehow renewed optimism in electoral campaigns, which proceeded, predictably, to fail.

Now that an unprecedented wave of riots and demonstrations for Black lives and against police has spread across the United States, we find ourselves confronted with renewed urgency by the question of why people choose to rebel (or not), how to participate in those rebellions once they have started, and why these insurgencies' intensity has already waned so significantly.

Endnotes' writing is at its most compelling — and, I'd argue, its most useful for anarchists — when uncovering the deep economic and structural reasons for why rebellions happen when and where they do (see for example "Brown v. Ferguson," in Issue 4) and when they attempt to predict where these economic conditions will take us next (as in "The Holding Pattern," Issue 3). In this issue, Jasper Bernes' intake piece, "Revolutionary Motives," takes on the more personal and psychological aspects of why people rise up. We hesitate to give Bernes' work more airtime, given what we imagine his part was in impeding recent accountability efforts at the now-defunct communist magazine at which he was an editor. That being said, some of the ideas in this piece are worth passing on to anarchists who might not otherwise engage with this type of theory. *Endnotes* and other writers in the communization tendency typically don't discuss anarchism, let alone address anarchists. When anarchists are very occasionally mentioned, it is in such a way that makes me doubt that they understand very much about what anarchism is about.** This review is an invitation to figure out how (or if) pieces like Bernes' are relevant for us, especially given the rapidly changing global context we find ourselves in.

Leftists tend to assume that the decisive element for moving towards revolution is peoples' consciousness, and thus take up education (and leadership) as primary organizing strategies. Bernes' main idea in this essay is that in reality, ideas and beliefs are not the primary factor for most people. What motivates people, he argues, is something deeper —

"survival, desire for increased well-being, concern for the well-being of one's familiars, hatred of oppressive heteronomy" (195). Rebellions will cease when they no longer seem to be moving towards enhancing peoples' well-being.

Yet there are also revolutionaries whose motives are "idiosyncratic, undertaken out of commitment to the cause of the revolution rather than personal well-being or the well-being of familiars" (198-199). These two categories of people and their motives are not strictly separate; some people move from survival purposes towards broader goals and then back again, or vice versa. The major mistake that Bernes identifies in the Left is that this "'organized minority' takes its own motives - and its capacity for sacrifice, discipline, self-abnegation - as evidence of the structure of motivation in general" and try to "compel the support of the larger revolutionary mass and install in them its own motives," a strategy that always fails (199). "For an ideology to succeed," Bernes concludes, "it must work with and not against people's underlying motivations" (195).

So what should that small minority of revolutionaries do in case of an actual revolution? Bernes distinguishes between two approaches: vanguardism, which seeks to lead and control the masses through education; and adventurism, which "engages in self-directed action that seeks to facilitate the conditions under which the vast majority of people will decide that going in the direction of the revolution, of communism, means satisfying their materialist motivations" (200-201). Examples of helpful adventurist participation include stealing and redistributing goods that people need, defending against capitalist counterattack, and subverting attempts to establish leadership within the revolution (201). Such actions might catalyze or assist other peoples' actions, but they do not try to direct or force them. That is, they "run along rather than against the grain of human motives" (245).

There are plenty of basic premises in this argument that we might question, but the most significant point in this essay might be a more minor one concerning the nature of riots. Other recent communist analyses of the riot, and why it's become a more popular tactic again, have argued that it should be seen as a kind of bargaining tool that ultimately wins certain reforms or benefits for the rioters (regardless of whether that was their aim), and one that is more appropriate for our time than the traditional strike tactic in labor movements. Bernes instead sees the mass riot as motivated by a kind of "altruism" that manifests as vengeance, a desire to punish those who've exploited people. It can thus only be temporary. Its own participants don't approach riots as a road towards the future, and they don't pass over into an actual breakdown of the established order.

This view resonates somewhat with what we've seen from the riots here in Philly, which from the targets that were chosen seemed focused on revenge, catharsis and healing, but maybe not on taking power away from the system and moving towards something completely new. Anarchists in Philly have mostly ended up chasing the demonstrations

around the city, perhaps with the mistaken assumption that the riots could be a path to insurrection. While anarchists here didn't end up doing that much to push it in that direction, if we look closely at the way the riots generally went, it doesn't seem like they were motivated to go in that direction anyway. Maybe riots — in Philly at least — don't really express a desire for revolutionary transformation at all.

Bernes does not give examples of how one might get to the insurrectionary moment of institutional breakdown, but it is in this moment that he seems to place more significance. Once things start to break down, he observes, there is a window in which people feel hopeful; essentially, they're willing to suspend their immediate needs with the assumption that the movement towards revolution will end up satisfying them as well as everyone else's. That window starts to close when it becomes clear that the revolution will not actually fulfill their needs or desires. Revolutionary situations activate not only deep-seated needs for survival, but also a broader desire for "improved well-being." Marx and Bernes both call this human "development," a term which I would not use for reasons that are hopefully obvious.

The essay seems directed, as usual, at fellow communists, who in the past have pretty consistently tried to combat the slide of revolutionary motives back into individual interests by creating impersonal institutions (not to mention leveraging violence) to compel revolutionary aims. It's not necessary for anarchists to read this essay in order to understand why those kinds of communist strategies would not work.

There is still much that anarchists might take from this theory of revolutionary motives. For one thing, for anarchists who are interested in fomenting and moving alongside others towards an insurrection — anarchists who often identify as "social insurrectionaries" — we could consider what would need to happen, alongside rioting, for that to happen. It would take a lot of dedicated effort and follow-through to start putting the kind of infrastructure and relationships in place that might show people that anarchists can provide for one another materially as well as showing up to the riot and doing occasional mutual aid projects.

"Revolutionary Motives" turns to social psychology in order to substantiate its claims about people, which I found odd for a number of reasons. In my opinion, questions of why individuals commit to radical ideals that don't benefit them substantially and aren't mirrored by the rest of our society remain much better answered by anarchist explanations, especially individualist currents that explore the rediscovery of desire and passion from their domestication by western colonial civilization (as well as capitalism).

The essay also does not address the possibility that additional, darker motives have colonized our minds and intuitions over the long centuries of white supremacy and colonization. There are plenty of excellent theorists on this topic whose ideas Bernes could have incorporated rather than or

in addition to those of game theorists. The essay's only nod to the idea that perhaps centuries of domestication have instilled negative instincts for control and/or obedience among most people, even when they are challenged by a potentially revolutionary scenario, is in a lengthy footnote addressing the 2011 eco-anarchist zine "Desert." The footnote seems, however, to dismiss without further consideration the zine's concerns that peoples' domestication might affect (indeed, has already affected) the outcomes of potential insurrections.

The choice to draw on social psychology and game theory brings up other issues as well. Research projects like this one often seem to retain a desire for control or to manage in advance how a communist future might unfold. I'm not sure what else to call this latent attempt to manage or control a liberatory future except communist. While many of the provocations and insights the text as a whole offers are very significant, there is a lot to argue with in terms of the entire project of the essay itself.

The *Endnotes* collective's editors observe in the introduction that it's a mistake to evaluate the recent global uprisings in terms of how much they measure up to our political ideals (i.e. rejecting them because they don't seem anarchist enough to us). We should be realistic about the fact that they are rather "desperate attempts to combat austerity, corruption, police repression, and deteriorating living standards" (13). *Endnotes* suggests instead that maybe "it is not these movements themselves, but rather their historical and political context, that might be 'revolutionary.'" The benefit of *Endnotes*' careful economic analysis is that they can and do substantiate the intuition that many of us share that capitalism is dying, potentially in the death throes of its decades-long terminal crisis of accumulation. There's many different approaches to helping it die. But how can we do better to work "with the grain" of what other people are already feeling and seeing in order to also realize our own motives and desires, whatever those might be?

* See "On Action, Individualism, and Other Anarchist Materialisms" in V.4 Issue 4 for our attempt to bridge the competing explanations for political action offered by communization theorists (like *Endnotes*) and individualist anarchism.

** See for example their bizarre interpretation of why anarchists failed in the Spanish revolution in "We Unhappy Few." ★



Anathema is a monthly newspaper published by anarchists and based out of the occupied Lenape territory known as Philadelphia. We welcome submissions to the paper and want to include a range of contributions from an anti-authoritarian perspective. The editors do not necessarily agree with the viewpoints published in this newspaper, or even with each other ;-). While some of our shared views aren't up for negotiation, we tend to see difference and conflict as integral not only to human life, but also to a struggle for freedom that can deepen and grow. To that end, the newspaper is intended to provide space for dialogue and debate as well as sharing information and analysis and feelings that are not legitimated by many other forums. The paper's content tends to be published anonymously in order to provide a more secure space to talk and scheme in a time of growing surveillance and repression.

We publish news stories, poems, drawings, political analysis, letters to the editor, reportbacks, critiques of us, and any other style of writing you want to contribute.

You can email submissions to anathemaphl@riseup.net.

TOUCH THE SKY REVIEW

Touch the Sky is a documentary “video collage” constructed from images from the Ferguson riots following the death of Mike Brown in 2014. This documentary is a welcome contrast to popular films covering this period, such as *Whose Streets?* and *Stay Woke*. These earlier documentaries emphasized the role of organizers and recognizable activists, sometimes at the expense of the broader crowd. *Touch the Sky* stands out by emphasizing the crowd — its agency and participation in producing these tumultuous events. The film’s foregrounding of agency is on display in its title: a reference to Nicki Minaj lyrics (interpolated by a rioter in a film clip) “hands up and touch the sky” that recontextualizes the well-known “hands up” gesture. Through this subtle detournement, this popular symbol of passive resistance (usually accompanied in Ferguson by the chant “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot”) becomes one of active defiance — striving for something held out of reach. Most importantly, *Touch the Sky* focuses on the riots in the Ferguson riots, refusing the sanitized narrative that downplays the riots for “legitimate protests” and rejecting the respectability politics that animate such revisionary history. This alone makes *Touch the Sky* an important — albeit flawed — addition to the historical memory of the past decade.

The filmmakers have assembled 1 hour and 50 minutes of footage, producing a dense archive of events. Their choice to rely entirely on found footage means that their work is unlikely to further criminalize participants by adding to the body of evidence used to prosecute rioters. Their light touch narration (supplemented by brief intertitles to mark the dates and passage of time) maximizes the opportunities to highlight the action and voices of rioters. The film is divided into three parts—stories, subversions, and complexities— structuring

the film around these subjects, which are tackled to varying degrees of success. The first of these subjects, the stories, is the most fleshed out and, to my mind, the most important. The stories of riots in America are rarely told by participants, especially not unrepentant rioters. The filmmakers position themselves as fellow rioters but, to their credit, do not foreground their personal experiences. Their hand is most evident in the selection of material, which privileges footage that might be called “riot porn.”

And who doesn’t like that? The riot footage is generally exciting, intense, and frequently inspiring. However, with close to two hours of riot footage, I found myself looking forward to moments where the film transcended the familiar repertoire of tactics and made space for reflection and analysis. This came in two main forms: 1) brief scenes set away from the direct confrontations and looting and 2) moments that addressed the spread of the riot beyond Ferguson. I appreciated the filmmakers’ interest in how the riot generalized, as the action spread first to St. Louis and beyond. Even more intriguing were the fleeting moments when rioters remarked on similarities between the Ferguson riots and riots past, such as the 1992 LA riots. The film’s narrator reminds us that St. Louis was known for its “good behavior” while other cities burned in ’92. Thus, the 2014 riots could be understood as a moment that riot tactics finally spread to this part of the country. Likewise, the tactics taken up in Ferguson— looting, street fighting, burning police cars — are likely to bring to mind the events this summer, following the death of George Floyd. The film invites us to think about continuities between riots.

On the occasions that the narrative drifts away from the center of the riots, the filmmakers’ argument comes more into focus. While the film is thankfully free of the formulaic marches and redundant symbolic protests, the scenes of confrontations can get equally repetitive. It is worth noting that the filmmakers’ positions become clearest when, in the second half of the film, they spend some time looking at the activists and other known representatives of the uprising. Their polemic against these would-be leaders brings the film’s argument for an antipolitical agency of crowds to the surface. Similarly, the attention the filmmakers pay to the festival atmosphere of the occupation of the burned-out QuikTrip brings to the fore their interest in Situationist analysis of riots — particularly the riots’ playful subversion of the commodity form. But it is the moments that the filmmakers transcend the Situationist analysis of 1960s riots that demonstrate the strengths of the film. The Ferguson riots make it possible to consider new lessons that undermine commonplace assumptions, such as the passivity of suburbs and omnipotent power of militarized police.

The film runs a little long and, at times, the analysis of these events gets lost in the blur of action and haze of fires. This is particularly true of the final chapter of the film, “Complexities.” Yet, it is the repetitious nature of the scenes throughout the film that causes many of the complexities to get lost, and appear more as ambiguities. The audience would be forgiven if they lost track of the nuances and distinctions between

events and tactics after some time.

The discussion of the role of guns in the riots gets particularly murky. On the one hand, it is great to see a documentary directly address the appearance of guns in this uprising. On the other hand, guns for the most part appear in the film alongside and almost indistinguishable from an array of riot tactics and tools privileged by the filmmakers. It is all the more surprising that guns are singled out near the end of the film for criticism. As a viewer, I felt unprepared for this turn because I had lost track of the unique significance of guns in the reels of riot footage. In early parts of the film, guns are mentioned in an offhand way (a rioter casually states “[the police] got guns, we got guns”). Near the conclusion, the usually impartial narrator takes on a more serious tone and makes the striking claim that the rioters’ use of guns mirrors the State. Furthermore, the use of guns is characterized as gunplay. The term “play,” it seems, has lost its positive “pro-situ” connotation as rebellious and become a term to denigrate these “gunslingers” lack of tact and strategy. While the narrator concedes that the guns forced the police to retreat, it was rioters not police who were ultimately shot. The ultimate result of gunplay in a riot, the narrator claims, is friendly fire. Although this argument is quite clear and succinct, it suffers from a lack of a broader discussion of guns in uprisings.

Missing is a discussion of the historical importance of guns to Black Liberation movements, whether as armed self defense or, for that matter, offense. How do the filmmakers square this critique of guns with the significant role played by armed groups in past uprisings? Missing, too, is a consideration of other conclusions that could be drawn from the experiences they described. Why is the solution to the problem of friendly fire not better target practice? Or the kind of rooftop sniping reported in 1960s riots? And, if the only solution is, as the narrator suggests, to “identify and exclude” these elements that threaten everyone with their escalation, how is this accomplished? More importantly, how is this argument to be distinguished from similar arguments made by pacifists

about rock throwers? The documentary seems to rush past these questions to fit the so-called gunslingers into an insurrectionary anarchist framework that critiques military specialization. The gunslingers threaten the crowd by taking up an ungeneralizable tactic and monopolizing the action. My problem is it doesn’t quite even fit this age-old argument, since Alfredo Bonanno (who popularized this argument) directed his critique at guerrilla groups, not the armed rioter — of which there were many in the Italy of Bonanno’s Armed Joy. Since I was not a witness to the events of Ferguson, I cannot claim to have a conclusive position on the role of guns in the riots. All I can say is that I found *Touch the Sky*’s argument on this point somewhat confusing and ultimately unsatisfying.

That being said, I found the film thought-provoking and a compelling depiction of the Ferguson riots. Despite its limitations, the film does a great job of capturing experiences and events from a multiplicity of angles that are often left out of the historical record. As a result, it brings up questions that need to be posed when considering past and future of uprisings. If you have the opportunity to see it, I recommend checking it out.

Touch The Sky will be available for free online beginning August 9th-10th ★

WORLD NEWS

Explosive Attack on Manpower Group in Thessaloniki, Greece in Solidarity with Revolutionaries in US

From Greece to America, deep breath until the death of white supremacy

The assassination of African-American George Floyd by the white-clad white man Derek Chauvin on March 25 in Minneapolis is a war cry. Nothing will be the same from now on. America is burning and the flames of rebellion purify injustice once and for all. Miles away, the revolutionary forces are on the side of the Black Self-Defense. We take responsibility for the attack with a low-powered incendiary device at the headquarters of the American human resources giant ManPower Group at 14 K. Karamanli Avenue in Thessaloniki at noon on June 8, a day before George Floyd’s funeral. Our attack is a message of resistance and revolutionary solidarity to the insurgent forces that are destroying the omnipotence of American supremacy. As long as our Black Brothers and Sisters are the target of white terrorism, no American investment will be safe. 51 years later, the Days of Wrath are here again to haunt the nightmares of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time that we all enjoy our white privileges, black communities are fighting daily against racism and xenophobia. For decades now, people have been losing their lives every day to fire from either assassins or white armed racists because they have a different skin color. The assassination of George Floyd brought to an end, not the illegitimate targeting of the black community, but the social tolerance of this targeting. Nothing



will go unanswered.

Hearing the loss of another black person, thousands of angry people flood the streets of American metropolises. They attack the police and police departments with hatred, burning and looting the symbols of capitalism and exploitation. They take down symbols that glorify black oppression and slavery, restoring history. Blacks now have a voice that screams and shouts for immediate social justice and equality.

Opposite them is fortified the white terror of Trump, which relentlessly escalates the conflict. The uprising left hundreds injured by police violence and young people dead. But the killings of blacks do not stop. Robert Fuller and Malcolm Harsch were hanged in California, while Rayshard Brooks was left dead in a Wendy's parking lot in Atlanta by police fire because he fell asleep. But where injustice is dressed in white, black will cover everything.

In the armed front, solidarity is based on revolutionary action. We recognize the law of all revolutionary violence against the capitalist state of large corporations, its ruling class and its institutions. Talking militarily, alliances between different revolutionary armed formations are primarily a matter of coordinating their direction.

The uprising in the American metropolises is not and should not go down in history as a cry of agony for the rights of our black brothers. Fighting at the core of security and counter-terrorism must lead the global revolutionary community to coordinate forces against the international interests of the US killers. The images from the clashes, a breath away from the White House, with the terrorists buried in the underground shelters, scream in the universe that in the face of popular anger, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

In the face of a regime that legally kills the black community in the United States, which is deploying military forces to invade Latin American territory (characterized by the arrest of two US secret service agents during their landing in Venezuela), which is shedding blood on Earth in the name of counter-terrorism, the invocation of protest and the institutional struggle for peace and equality is suicide. The Black Defense must follow in the footsteps of its armed ancestors. People's justice will not come from the convictions and imprisonment of Trump's uniformed assassins, but from the armed emancipation of oppressed communities targeted by white terrorism and the building of communities of equality in revolt and solidarity.

The arson of the ManPower Group is a practical statement of solidarity with the comrades of the Revolutionary Abolition Movement, calling on the international revolutionary community to take immediate and unequivocal action in solidarity. The war being waged in American metropolises and suburbs will not be silenced. Because the fire of the attacks of internationalist revolutionary solidarity is spreading to the ends of the earth. Comrades, you have our full appreciation and solidarity with the warring factions on the other side of the Atlantic.

All power to the Black Uprising

Revolution now and always

Anarchist Action Organization

Call to Action from the Fanny Kaplan Antagonistic Cell (FAI-FRI) - Buenos Aires, Argentina. June 2020

"...Anarchism is either illegal or it's not anarchism. That is its essence and its meaning. Its nature. For the same reason, it sometimes seems so obvious to us that we forget to insist punctiliously on the anti-authoritarian and therefore, the consequently anti-systemic character of anarchism. Rabidly anti-systemic! We are against all authority. That is our maxim... That we are against the system of domination, that we are fighting against the social order as a whole, we are objecting to its order and the laws that support it. All laws have been and will be made to give legal support to oppression and domination..."

— Gustavo Rodriguez

This is an appeal to our friends, to our comrades, like-minded and not so like-minded. A warm invitation to practice beautiful disobedience and take back our lives. A call to conflict against all that exists here and now, assuming the consequences of a life at war.

For anyone who lives in the territory dominated by the Argentine State, or almost anywhere in the world, currently there is a state of alert in the face of the current situation. The appearance and expansion of covid-19 quickly became a global problem, and while we do not want to question its existence or veracity, we want to show how the "epidemiological outbreak" unmasks the harmfulness of the class society and neoliberal capitalism maintained by the States its main economic groups.

This virus turned out to be the perfect excuse for the improvement and implementation of new control mechanisms, much more efficient and effective. That is, an opportunity for the strengthening of the States and their coercive apparatus. As well as, also, to test new forms of productivity and socialization, where the most damaged and those who will suffer the repercussions of this permanent crisis will be the same as always, the oppressed, proletarians, marginalized and the most deprived layers of our society.

The measures taken by the Argentine State have not been surprising, from the obligatory social isolation, to charitable "plans" and subsidies, whose purpose is nothing more than to placate the population and avoid any possible rupture of normality, mediatizing the most paternal and charismatic image of the current head of government Alberto Fernandez. These policies of misery are typical of social democracy and the so-called "welfare states", which have managed to exploit very well "the Peronists" and their representatives in order to preserve appearances and sustain this spectacle. Responding only to the logic of: "bread for today, hunger for tomorrow", sweeping under the carpet the precarization of labor, the waves of random dismissals, and the accumulation of debts for rent and linked to the area of basic services, among other consequences of this crisis of world capitalism disguised as an epidemic.

In addition, the death of several prisoners who, faced with the threat of the pandemic, mobilized and rioted in different prisons of the country fighting against the miserable conditions of hygiene, overcrowding and confinement. And also, the kidnapping and murder of different people with active political and/or social participation.

Our call is for active solidarity, mutual support among oppressed people and to abandon the aspirationism and servility promoted by the powers-that-be and their false critics. Not to obey any order of confinement and social isolation, and much less to reproduce the role of police for those who have the need or the audacity to go out to the streets and meet their peers. We repudiate the intellectual avant-garde and the demagoguery of warlords in our surroundings, as well as all authority.

We call on our comrades and allies to go on the offensive, to arm ourselves and to embrace revolutionary action, by whatever means, against the power in all its forms, here and now.

-Our main enemy is the State, Capital and any form of authority.

-Down with all the prisons, solidarity with all the prisoners of social war throughout the world.

-for the spread of the new urban guerrilla.

Fanny Kaplan Antagonistic Cell (FAI-FRI) ★

REPARATIONS AS A VERB

from blackautonomynetwork.noblogs.org

What does it mean when Elizabeth Warren gets on national television and talks of reparations as a way that "...we can as a nation do what's right and begin to heal."? Who is being healed? Can the very structure that historically and currently subjugates us offer us any means to heal, to undo or make even the damage done? Do we even want to heal the nation? Well, we certainly don't. We see this call for reparations by the democrats for what it is, the recuperation of what could potentially be a dangerous demand (or battle cry in an era of black revolt) for the ruling class. We understand that sections of the ruling class are willing to consider the idea of concessions to an ever rebellious and increasingly uncontrollable black population not to heal us but to save the state, and to put themselves in the presidency (and after election season lets see how quickly talk of reparations disappears).

Damn them and, in the name of our ancestors and our futures, damn the nation, too.

Reparations as a demand, like all demands, lends itself to disarmament and recuperation. The same state that subjugates us gets to set the limits and conditions of reparations, for we know damn well that the state is capable of doing everything under the sun but granting that which can threaten its power. The state also gets to draw the borders for who's black enough, who can trace their ancestry enough, who can x, who has y to get reparations. Even in a more radical scenario reparations could

mean that we are able to reshuffle the ruling class and distribution of wealth and maybe end up with a "socialist" state, but maintain the same colonial relationships, the same structures and mechanisms that enabled our oppression then and continue to now, and butt up against the same issues of the left in power everywhere.

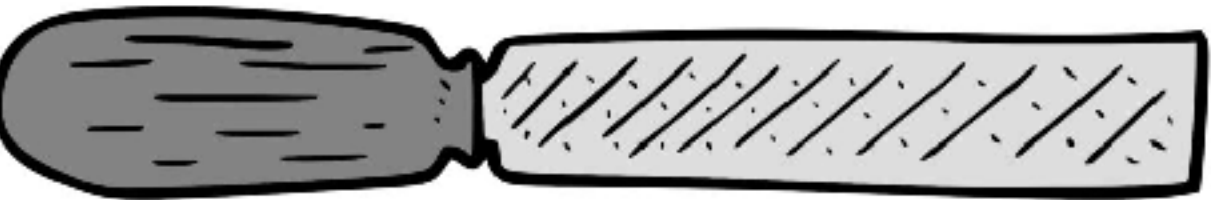
For us reparations isn't a demand to be made of the state, not for 40 acres and a mule (with inflation adjusted) or anything else. Along with reparations as a demand, we are also not interested in it delivered through capitalist property relations or economics (any economics). We agree with Saidiya Hartman when she says "I refuse to believe that the slave's most capacious political claims or wildest imaginings are for back wages or debt relief. There are too many lives at peril to recycle the forms of appeal that, at best, have delivered the limited emancipation against which we now struggle." We re-conceptualize reparations as an action, an attack on the order built off of our stolen labor – our stolen lives- which confines our existence to slavery, to wages and debt, to prisons and death, not just 500 years ago but today, here and now.

We see the act of reparations as the forms taken in which our liberation already exists. The ways in which our communities have had to exist outside of the law, outside of the economy, to take care of ourselves and each other. The autonomous zones that form in riots when we kick the police out of our neighborhoods. The breakdown of property relations when we loot the commodities we can't afford but are told to want, only separated from us by the threat of state violence and a window, and share them with strangers on the streets. These acts of survival and attack carry in them the forms of organization and social relations that will open space for anarchy, and it is from these that we move to the liberation of territory, the destruction of work and the economy, and the abolition of the state and its physical manifestations.

We can demand of the state to give us land, or we can liberate it for all. We can demand of the state to give us a better life, or we can make and share one ourselves. We can demand of the state to stop killing us, or we can act to defend ourselves. We can demand of the state, or we can act to create our own autonomous power, our own liberation, against and outside of the confines of the state and capital.

"To believe, as I do, that the enslaved are our contemporaries is to understand that we share their aspirations and defeats, which isn't to say that we are owed what they were due but rather to acknowledge that they accompany our every effort to fight against domination, to abolish the color line, and to imagine a free territory, a new commons. It is to take to heart their knowledge of freedom. The enslaved knew that freedom had to be taken; it was not the kind of thing that could ever be given to you. The kind of freedom that could be given to you could just as easily be taken back. Freedom is the kind of thing that required you to leave your bones on the hills at Brimsbay, or to burn the cane fields, or to live in a garret for seven years, or to stage a general strike, or to create a new republic. It is won and lost, again and again. It is a glimpse of possibility, an opening, a solicitation without any guarantee of duration before it flickers and then is extinguished." – Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* ★

INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF SOLIDARITY



WITH ANARCHIST PRISONERS 23-30 AUGUST

for a world without prison and state

A new decade has started on this planet. With the rise of right-wing movements and the slow decline of social democracy, we are looking into coming years of intense struggle with the state and capitalism. There are already many anarchists sitting in prisons for taking on this fight—forgotten or ignored by liberals and human rights NGOs for “violent” actions.

Quite often anarchists do get solidarity from parts of the society from which they are come. After all who can support one better than their own fellow humans trapped in the same misery of exploitation. However, we believe that responsibility for those facing repression in different parts of the world should not be only on the shoulders of local communities, but of international anarchist movements. Through our collective actions we can not only more widely diffuse the resources that are available, but also keep the fires burning in the chests of those imprisoned through autonomous revolutionary love and direct actions!

This is a call for you to act in solidarity with imprisoned anarchists all around the world. From the 23rd of August 2020—the day of execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, you can do everything, limited only by your imagination. Put some of that vast imagination into action to make people feel your energy and show our collective strength in revolutionary struggle! ★

RUNNING DOWN THE WALLS

Sunday, September 6, 2020

11 am sharp (Yoga warm-up at 10am)

FDR Park

Philadelphia Anarchist Black Cross presents our third annual Running Down The Walls (RDTW)! Join us for another revolutionary 5K run/walk/bike/skate and day of solidarity. In light of COVID-19, please bring a face mask and follow social distancing recommendations. If you would like to participate in light yoga and warm-up stretches before, please arrive by 10am and bring a mat if you can.

Running is not required! You can also walk, bike, skate or roll. 5K is two loops around the park and at a walking pace will take about 45-60 minutes. Light refreshments and so-

cializing will take place in the park afterward.

This year's event is co-sponsored by the campaign to Free Russell Maroon Shoatz — long-term Black liberation prisoner held in SCI Fayette. Join us as we celebrate the release of Chuck Africa earlier this year, commemorate the life of Delbert Africa, and raise some funds for the freedom struggle of another Philly comrade, Maroon.

After spending 48 years in prison, Maroon turns 77 on August 23rd while also battling cancer during a global pandemic. He needs our support now more than ever.

Fighting Stage 4 cancer, [I have] for 10 months been on various types of chemotherapy at SCI-Fayette, have watched 3 prisoners die of cancer, and my single cell was taken to make room for suspected COVID-19 prisoners, will be transferred to SCI-Dallas for another operation to remove a cancerous growth soon. The struggle continues!

- Political Prisoner, Russell Maroon Shoatz/z

Philadelphia RDTW 2020 is dedicated to amplifying the voices of our comrades behind bars, lifting them up in their struggles, and maintaining material post-release support.

If you cannot make it to the event or would like to make an additional contribution, please sponsor a participant either outside prison or inside or one of each. Contact us for more information on sponsoring!

Proceeds will be split between the Warchest Program and the campaign to Free Russell Maroon Shoatz. The ABCF Warchest program sends monthly stipends to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War who have insufficient, little, or no financial support.

Visit phillyabc.org to sign up! ★

