

ANATHEMA

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YEAR IN REVIEW

No one can argue that 2020 wasn't a strange, chaotic, and intense year. Colored by a global pandemic and filled with more rioting than the US has seen since the 60s, 2020 was the year that turned everything on its head. For anarchists in Philly, 2020 brought many changes that would have been difficult to predict, let alone prepare for. Looking back, 2020 has changed the social terrain and anarchists have changed with it.

The covid-19 pandemic completely transformed society. Initially everything stopped and went quiet, and then the state and capital tried to keep things going, prioritizing the economy over life. For anarchists, this meant many things in terms of our ability to organize and interact. Regular events that hold together the anarchist space shifted and changed. Many took place outdoors -- assemblies, reading groups, hang outs, benefits, demonstrations -- and some moved online; others didn't happen at all. In 2020, weekly indoor meetups, big prisoner support BBQs, and public potlucks were out; in their place new forms of collective presence took the stage, alongside a few older forms that never went away. Going for walks and sitting in parks seems to be a timeless practice. The riots and encampments provided new spaces where anarchists could meet, always alongside others of various political leanings. The lack of indoor events meant that the influx of new anarchists didn't have easy access to shows, movies, meals, and other ways of simply "joining" preexisting anarchist social groups. The networked but still mostly distinct clusters of the anarchist space in 2020 are in part a result of the virus that shaped anarchist social life. Covid also resulted in a massive loss of work and a huge amount of people getting unemployment; for many anarchists this meant much more free time and/or financial struggles.

The pandemic drastically altered most people's personal landscapes of family, friendships, and relationships, and in many cases forced us to reevaluate those relationships in their entirety. The past year's focus on the virus (and subsequently the police) brought us back to the matter of life and death, which has been the backdrop of this whole year. These questions of support and survival that surfaced as soon as the pandemic spread were the first stage in preparing us for the uprisings that followed (as well as those that are still to come). They indicate that our anarchist praxis must be centered on care and collective survival. Our successes and failures at just getting by, whether emotionally or physically, are not a distraction from our anarchist projectualities and visions — they utterly inform them. Centering these issues will continue to be critical especially as we

Continued on page 6

This afternoon, January 15 2021, an anti-fascist comrade was visited by two FBI agents at their home in Philadelphia.

The agents said they had questions about the recent events at the Capitol. The comrade refused to answer questions & immediately got in touch with legal & anti-repression support. We don't rely on the state to address fascist threats. The FBI has its roots in repressing anarchist and Black liberation movements. We do not trust that they are only investigating the events at the Capitol. We challenge their attempts at repression with our collective refusal to speak to law enforcement.

If you are contacted by the FBI or other law enforcement, contact Up Against The Law or Philly Anti-Repression.

Up Against The Law: 484-7580388
Philly Anti-Repression: 267-460-1886

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

YEAR IN REVIEW.....	1
WHAT WENT DOWN.....	2
MUTUAL AID.....	2
DELIVERY ROBOTS.....	3
GROUP CHAT/SOCIAL HUB.....	3
COMIC.....	5
PHILLY ENCAMPMENTS.....	7
CLIMATE CATASTROPHE.....	9
REPRESSION UPDATE.....	11
POEM.....	12



WHAT WENT DOWN

Late November – Banner drop in solidarity with indigenous prisoner Loren Reed. “ALL COPS ARE BULLIES FREE LOREN REED”

Early December – Freight train traffic is disrupted using copper wire. “Solidarity with first nations people continuing to oppose colonial destruction of this continent and the rest of the earth. Solidarity with those facing prosecution for similar actions.”

December 9 – Police tase and shoot 50 year old Jose Cerda in North Philadelphia. Cerda is critical condition at Temple University Hospital.

December 10 – Protest against eviction of unhoused and at-risk people in front of the Holiday Inn Express which is scheduled to evict on Dec 15th.

December 14-15 – Protests continue again outside the Holiday Inn Express after it is revealed that some at-risk unhoused people will be moved to correctional housing while others have no place to go at all.

December 20 – 12 bank card readers were sabotaged with glue and cut gift cards. “RIP all the homies we lost this year!”

December 25 – Police shot and killed a man in Kensington.

Late December – Tacks are spread over Amazon parking lot, two Amazon vans have their tires slashed, and an Amazon truck has its valve stem cut. Tacks are also spread at a police parking lot before a demonstration. Fiber optic cables are cut in a rich neighborhood. “NO MORE PRESIDENTS” is painted on a regional rail train. “Small but unceasing acts against so many Goliaths. We hope to put a sling in many more hands while hunting for low-hanging fruit that might actual nourish our revolt.”

December 29 – City-provided housing site, the Oxford building in North Philly, is attacked by anarchists. It’s locks are sabotage, windows and door smashed, and graffiti is written. “The site at 19th & Oxford, where they were expected to be transferred, appears to be a detention center of sorts. Word on the street is that it does not have hot water, some units may not have heat & the residents were going to be roomed in pairs. The point is this situation is abhorrent.”

New Year’s Eve – The federal detention center, US courthouse, Rober Nix federal building, William Green federal building, US Customs House, and a sheriffs van are vandalized during an anti-prison noise demonstration. Six arrests.

Early January - Fascist Jovi Val and others from New Jersey European Heritage Association put up anti-black and anti-semitic propaganda around Independence Hall.

January 13 - Proud Boys president Zach Rehl and other Philly Proud Boys exposed as attendees of the DC Capitol riots, despite an effort to cover up their attendance.★

WORDS MEAN THINGS: MUTUAL AID

Ever since the start of the pandemic I’ve seen a lot of projects pop up that claim to be mutual aid projects. They do all kinds of nice things like give out food, provide masks and gloves, or give away warm clothes. These are really helpful, especially since corona has messed a bunch of people up financially. Most of them aren’t mutual aid though.

When I think of mutual aid I try to keep it real simple; I think “is it mutual?” and “is it aid?”. Giving useful stuff away during a crisis is definitely aid but most of the stuff calling itself mutual aid isn’t mutual. The people giving stuff away don’t get stuff back; who is the giver and receiver doesn’t change. The project just gives and the people it provides to just take. It’s nice but it’s not mutual.

I feel like we’ve taken the term mutual aid and made it into something it’s not. It seems like it’s been blown up into this word that means some high visibility showing up to give things away. Not everything needs to be mutual aid. There are lots of reasons to just give stuff away — for propaganda, to start conversations, to lessen suffering, because stuff should be free, the list goes on. An anarchist project that gives things away can achieve a lot, and just because something isn’t mutual aid doesn’t mean it’s not worth doing.

So what does doing mutual aid mean then? I think a good start is to think of mutual aid less as a thing you do and more as a way you have relationships. Imagine helping and sharing with someone and them also sharing with and helping you. How does it look to have that kind of relationship with someone? Can you imagine scaling it up to a group? There’s no set formula for a mutual aid relationship, it will look different with each person you relate to because the aid we can give and receive from each person is different.

For me mutual aid is helping each other. It’s more about living in a way where I help people and they also help me. It doesn’t need to be flashy. I help a friend with their event and they give me a ride a week later; we aid each other, mutually. I’m not keeping track of how many favors I’m owed or anything but if things are one-sided then I want to be real that it’s not mutual aid.

As anarchists, a goal is to get away from hierarchies. Relying on our horizontal relationships to co-create the lives we need and want, instead of the powers that be, is a way to move away from those hierarchies. ★



AUTONOMOUS DELIVERY ROBOTS

A law (bill 105-97) passed in Pennsylvania in November allows autonomous robots to make deliveries as long as they are under 550 pounds and go 12 miles per hour or slower on sidewalks or up to 25 mph in the streets. For context a human pedestrian moves at about 3 or 4 miles per hour. This is what you might be sharing the sidewalk with in the coming months and years. What is an autonomous delivery robot, why are people opposed to them, and what can we expect to see from their presence?

Technocrats and capitalists are rejoicing at new ways they can lean on the pandemic to find innovative new ways to increase social control, profits, and alienation in the name of public health. More robots is a recent step in an ongoing process of exclusion and mediation that spans from the first walls and enclosures to beyond the latest smartphones and home assistance devices.

Autonomous delivery robots -- also known as personal delivery devices (PDDs) -- are machines that roll (or walk) goods from one place to another, usually over a shorter distance. They are a growing presence (alongside drones) in what's called the "last mile logistics" industry. These delivery bots are already commonplace on campuses, in the healthcare industry, and in hotels. Fedex, Amazon, UPS, as well as robotics, courier, and food delivery companies are pushing to get these more efficient robots on the streets.

A delivery robot is mostly autonomous. This means it doesn't need any outside input from a human to make a delivery unless it encounters a problem (in which case it can be controlled remotely via radio waves). These robots navigate using a combination of GPS, 360 degree vision from onboard cameras, gyroscopes for balance, and ultrasonic sensors to avoid crashes. The robots also build up a shared understanding of the terrain they travel; networked together and learning from each other, they calculate the fastest routes based on patterns of traffic and other observations.

Disability and labor advocates have voiced their concerns and opposition to these new couriers. Disability advocates worry that the robots are blocking ramps and narrow sidewalks, at times leaving wheelchair users or people on crutches waiting on the bots so they can get out of the street. Labor advocates on the other hand are unhappy with the loss of jobs that the PPDs bring.

Since rolling and walking delivery robots have no passengers and use the sidewalk, they qualify as low-speed vehicles, which are less regulated than drones or self-driving cars. They do not need to go through crash tests or get approval from the Federal Aviation Administration. PennDOT regulates applications for operating PPDs. Pennsylvania municipalities are prohibited from regulating the robots except to allow them onto certain roads or, after consulting with their operator, ban them from roads or sidewalks where they would pose a danger.

Already malfunctions from delivery robots have resulted in accidents. In December of 2018 a Kiwibot caught fire at UC Berkeley due to a defective battery. In Frisco, California at least two car accidents have involved delivery bots, one resulting in over \$2600 of damage to a car that was waiting at a

red light. None of these accidents have been life threatening, and it seems that the most significant damage these robots do is to the face-to-face interactions that are lost as life becomes increasingly digitized.

How can one imagine resistance to these robots? A man in Berkeley, CA stole a kiwibot in April of 2019; he told police he was frustrated and sick of seeing the robots. The man was caught because the robot was tracked using its GPS and made to move; police then heard the robot moving in the man's car. In terms of anti-theft protection, GPS and sound seem to be the robots' only defense.

Could throwing a large faraday bag over a delivery bot be the key to a successful botnapping? The process would certainly be easier and less risky than a kidnapping for a savvy criminal. After all, a breakdown of a robots components includes some useful and valuable parts like a Raspberry Pi computer, lithium-ion batteries, a motor, cameras, and a radio antenna. That's in addition to whatever the robot is delivering. Anyone able to get their hands on the PDD applications submitted to PennDOT can read about the "technology that enables a police officer or emergency responder to stop or disable the device" included in each application, though that isn't public information. A more technologically oriented thief might reverse engineer a PDD and figure out a way to use one for their own deliveries -- discreetly and anonymously delivering whatever they want under the guise of the high tech economy. ★



THE GROUP CHAT: OUR NEW SOCIAL HUB

You're probably familiar with the group chat. Signal threads and Telegram chats for updates, organizing and coordinating with friends. Maybe you're in one, maybe you're in many. Probably at one point or another you've been frustrated, ambivalent, or overwhelmed by it. Maybe you've even been so tempted to leave it, yet you can't pull yourself to do so. How come?

In recent years, and especially since Covid-19, there's been an increase in the use of the group chat, it now being one of the more popular means for organizing. It comes in many names, sizes, and styles. Surely, the group chat has its merits such as speed, convenience, and being far-reaching, but there seems to be a lack of critical discourse around this new norm in our lives, this new media that is shaping our social relations and organizing spaces. This essay aims to discuss

criticisms of the group chat, suggest improvements, and propose alternatives to it. It attempts to probe our self-analysis of how we engage with the group chat. If you don't feel these critiques are relevant to you that's great; if they are, let's continue the discussion.

The group chat is our new social media. It's another platform we've become overly reliant on for receiving information, feeling connected, and engaging with others. Like other social media, its conveniences take away the need to do things ourselves. And when we lean too hard into that convenience it results in dependency and helplessness, and dulls agency and creativity. We comfortably remain in the calculated formulas given to us. The group chat manages to fabricate this dependency all while keeping us isolated and immersed in our separate devices and lives.

Similarly to how social media spoon feeds us information, so does the group chat. But how much of this information is relevant to our lives? How much of it could we learn on our own if we sought it? How much of this news do we actually need and why do we need it? What will we do with the information we receive? Something, I hope. How much of our desires to be in a group chat stem from a fear of missing out? Where is the FOMO coming from and can we make it go away? Some ways to tackle these questions is through a bit of introspection.

A fear of missing out or other insecurities shouldn't be our main motivators for being in a chat. We could all benefit by being more self-aware of our reasons and capacities for participation. Is the group chat serving us? Are we serving it? We can determine this by examining what motivates and fulfills us and comparing this with the intentions of others in the chat. Starting from our centers can make us more selective and less susceptible to feeling like we'll miss something. By knowing what fulfills us and acting from there, we can be more independent and confident in finding happiness and purpose. Not being reliant on other sources to alleviate our insecurities enables us to cut out distractions that aren't serving us and can point us in more fruitful directions.

Another function of the group chat is staying connected with people we don't always see, and in some cases may not even know, but how connected are we really with the people in our virtual social spaces just by existing in them? How much of our desires stem from wanting to feel a part of something? 'Connection' can have many meanings. It can mean linking, like how when we communicate with each other we form links as we send messages that spread through our networks. It can also mean bonding, a feeling of relationship, togetherness, or unity. Using the group chat for the latter can become problematic.

The group chat is not inherently a collective of unified interests, nor is it always a unified decision-making body, although it sometimes is treated as such. It has members with diverse ideas and desires, most of which are not usually explicitly stated. We assume we're all in the group chat for similar reasons, but how are we to know if we aren't discussing them explicitly with each other? For example, someone could be there for social reasons, someone else has the goal of coordinating projects, while you're just there for the memes. It might be good to start shooting for more transparency about our intentions, sticking to them, or at least bringing up when they change. This could help at least assess the chat's trajectory and create a little less confusion.

The idea of togetherness is a misconception. Being in a group chat doesn't fundamentally make us a part of something; our actions do. Virtuality can't completely replace our real needs for person-to-person connection and direct experience.* At best it can leave us with a gateway towards those things, to coordinate actualizing our desires. At worst, it can leave us feeling disconnected or with a false sense of connection. This happens when we mistake the increased dopamine responses from passive virtual engagement for something long lasting or that being connected in a group chat makes us connected outside of it. Feeling satisfied with passively engaging virtually can prevent us from taking steps needed to actively build and create connections and meaningful experiences outside of the group chat. To impact our relationships with the world around us, we have to take things outside of these virtual platforms and into more personal encounters. This could look like reaching out to each other outside of the group chat, linking up in person, or coordinating directly with those with whom we share goals and interests. It could also look like having gatherings to discuss ideas or projects, or consistent hubs where folks can meet and interact face-to-face.

In addition to the critiques of the group chat affecting the personal, there are also pressing concerns of security. One security concern is the question of invitations, who to include and when it's okay or not to bring new people into the chat. By simply asking or having clear standards for inviting people we can address this concern, but before that, it's important to distinguish the chat's level of openness. Is the group chat public, can anyone be invited? Is it closed, meaning it's a specific group of friends that isn't looking for new members? Or (more confusingly) is it semi-open, a place for folks who know each other but welcomes branching out? Obviously these distinctions all have their pros and cons, so the question of openness should be determined based on the goals of the chat and the intentions of its members. For example, if the chat has the goal of disseminating information it might make sense to be more open. Just as, if the chat has a goal that requires more security and intimacy between those involved, it might make sense to be more closed. One standard for inviting new people is simply asking if it's okay before inviting someone. Another is to invite people only after meeting them in person. Even another is to only invite people who share an established trust and projectuality. You could not invite strangers at all, or you could invite people based on something else entirely. It's up to those involved to decide.

When the chat is well established another security concern that arises is that of lurkers. Lurkers are folks who are in a group chat but don't participate, thus they are privy to all of the information in the chat but are not necessarily visible themselves. This concern is tricky because everyone has different capacities and styles for participating, and these capacities and styles are ever-shifting. The issue of the lurker is more specific to those members in a chat who no one seems to know, see, or hear from. The ones you find yourself asking who is this and why are they here? This is a concern for obvious reasons, one being a lack of trust and the discomfort that comes with people we don't trust having access to sensitive information. Some ways to deal with lurkers are to have periodic check-ins. This can open up space for folks to again consider why they are there and how they feel about the chat's effectiveness. People can discuss their intentions and concerns and make moves from there. Maybe a lurker decides to leave on their own, maybe you directly ask them to leave. Maybe a new chat is formed branching out with

only those who share similar pursuits, or with only folks who express desire to continue it. Sometimes a chat is no longer serving its purpose and is ditched entirely. These are all possible scenarios for keeping a chat clean and on track.

Another, more obvious, security issue is that the group chat keeps track of our networks and the sensitive content shared within them. We use Telegram because it offers more anonymity. We use Signal because we're confident our information is encrypted and that the company can't hand our data over to the wrong person. All this is insignificant when the wrong person has access to our group chat or devices. If they can get into our chats, they can access whatever is shared/stored on them. Because of this it's a good practice to default to using disappearing messages, so that shared information goes away. It's also useful to delete conversations frequently and ask others to do the same, for the same reason.

Just like any other social hub, the group chat can only function well with transparency, honesty, and maintenance. And just like other social hubs, we can't rely solely on it to meet all our needs. We also shouldn't forget that it is still a technology that can be used against us. This is not to say we should abandon the group chat, it's just to say we should consider ways to imagine and adjust without it. We can think of alternate ways for sharing and coordinating information. We can gather more in the streets. We can have more propaganda projects. We can relay messages through other forms of media. Like anything, we should never become too reliant on one thing. It's important to build many connections and practices for staying in touch, if only to ensure options to fall back on if one of them should fail us.

** Personally, I am coming from the bias of strongly wanting less mediated experiences. Simultaneously, I confront a tension in not wanting to discount the ways in which folks with differing abilities can greatly benefit from technology. ★*



YEAR IN REVIEW CONTINUED

move further into the winter season, which poses even more challenges to the psychological well-being of most of the people closest to us. If we don't take care of each other, no one will.

The death of George Floyd and the upheaval that followed shaped the course of anarchist activity for the rest of the year. The riots, camps, and protests that filled 2020 all have roots in events immediately following George Floyd's death at the hands of the police. The example set in Minneapolis and the nation-wide rioting set the tone of politics for the rest of the year. Abolition of the police became a mainstream talking point (although it quickly lost much of its edge to defunding and other less total goals). Anti-blackness and white supremacy became the subject of common conversation. The riots that took place throughout Philly in May and June left a lasting impression on thousands of people, revealing possibilities that up until then felt out of reach. It seems accurate to say that during the first two days of riots, police were defeated -- forced to retreat, outmaneuvered and overwhelmed. The riots were many people's first time seeing each other since the beginning of the quarantine and the fact that this did not lead to a spike in covid cases prompted many to begin organizing and socializing outdoors with less worry.

Covid led to a renewed focus on physical health, and anarchists were involved in a number of health-related actions. At first this meant mutual aid efforts centered around distributing PPE and delivering and giving out groceries. Prisoners' health advocacy efforts increased. Hahnemann Hospital became another focal point. First its millionaire owner's Philadelphia home was vandalized and then there was an attempt to take over the hospital itself. Although the takeover failed, the attempt itself speaks to a level of ambition among anarchists.

Housing came into focus as a site of struggle as the pandemic hit. Rent strikes, though initially dismissed by the institutional left, popped up and had some degree of success starting in April. Organized according to geography, shared landlord, or across formal striking groups, rent strikes were a major focus for anarchists in 2020 before the killing of George Floyd. Underground squatting efforts also took place, flourishing and becoming more visible as they pivoted into the housing protest encampments in Fairmount and North Philly. The camps, squatting, and the housing struggle generally were a huge part of anarchist struggle in 2020 -- paralleling eviction defense and autonomous zones that formed around the country. A companion article in this issue covers these struggles in more depth.

Certainly no moment of popular upheaval goes without its matching conservative backlash. The mass rioting and looting of the George Floyd riots brought out vigilantes in Fishtown and South Philly in June, intent on protecting their neighborhoods from looters. Armed with bats, clubs, and in at least one case guns, groups of reactionaries wandered Fishtown and occupied Marconi Plaza in South Philly, attacking protesters and journalists. Police mostly stood by or told those under attack to leave. Anarchists and anti-fascists were unable to remove or confront the groups and mostly avoided them or dealt with them defensively. These racist vigilantes continued to gather in Marconi Plaza, celebrating Trump, law enforcement, and the legacy of Christopher Columbus, whose statue they were gathered to defend. What could it look like to engage reactionaries in their own neighborhoods? How can

we approach situations where we are outnumbered and out-gunned?

Proud Boys also mobilized in response to the atmosphere of popular unrest. On September 19 they were to rally in Clark Park -- the "belly of the beast" -- but did not show up, instead harassing a local liberal anti-fascist while hundred of anti-fascist counter-protesters waited around in the park. The next weekend they held an unannounced march through Center City and Old City with the help of the police. Anti-fascists confronted their march but were unable to break it up.

In addition to the non-state reaction, in June and October the national guard was deployed to the city and state, and federal charges were filed against rebels for taking part in the riots.

On October 26, PPD cops Sean Matarazzo and Thomas Munz shot and killed Walter Wallace Jr in West Philadelphia. The police killing of another black person going through a mental health crisis quickly led to rioting. Walter Wallace Jr's death at the hands of the PPD sadly was only the most recent in a long string of shootings, beatings, and killings -- Kaleb Belay, Askia Sabur, Brandon Tate-Brown, David Jones -- but this time things did not pass quietly, a reflection of the national anti-cop feeling still lingering in the air from the spring. This wave of riots seemed more violent and angry than the ones in May and June. Aggression toward police was much more palpable. Police response was also more violent than over the summer; batons and charging were used to beat and intimidate. Also noticeable was a tension between some black residents and anarchists in black bloc, activists, and white people. This tension was expressed as a racial tension and a distrust of perceived outsiders. West Philly has a large anarchist population and many anarchists participated in the riots. How do we want to address strained relationships in the neighborhoods in which we live and struggle? How do we want to intervene in struggles against police where demands to abolish are already common?

The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris led to celebration around the city and signaled to many people that it was time to move on from resistance and upheaval. Anarchists continued to struggle against homelessness, provide mutual aid, carry out attacks, organize discussion, and paint graffiti, but the social movements they moved through had shrunk by mid-November. What does it mean to enter a period of relative calm? How can we continue to revolt when so many have left the street?

One major difference between 2020 and previous years has been anarchists' participation in social movements. Many anarchists participated in popular struggles against police, fascism, homelessness and housing insecurity, repression, and around health and covid. This shift has meant that anarchists struggled side by side with all kinds of people instead of just each other. This participation has made anarchists more visible and more approachable, and anarchist ideas were more widely discussed. The same visibility and social presence has led to some racial tension between white anarchists and black people during riots and protests. As social movements rise and fall, how do we want to engage socially? What kinds of social and anti-social projects feel meaningful to us?

Anarchist participation in large social movements coincided with a spreading and deepening of street tactics within protests and riots. In 2020, anarchists and fellow travelers became more adept at barricading streets, clashing with po-

lice, defending space, and vandalizing property during large actions. The past few years saw anarchists carrying out clandestine attacks, outside of demonstrations and often without relying on the momentum of social movements. 2020 saw a significant drop in claimed anonymous attacks and sabotages, and a dramatic increase in anarchist attacks during riots and protests. Combative anonymously organized demonstrations also made more appearances than in previous years, organized off public channels and mostly ending without arrests. What conflictual activity do we want to see in and out of protests and riots in the coming year? What does it look like to keep growing our capacity to attack?

The uprisings of 2020 also presented an opportunity to experiment with using clandestine action to take widespread rioting and looting in the streets to another level. Street fighting, while crucial, has proven to be not enough on its own to move towards the destruction of power, at least in a practical sense (on a symbolic level, the riots massively undermined the state's legitimacy in the public imagination). Alongside strategies centering people's material needs, guerrilla action has historically been the most effective means of overcoming a centralized power like the state. On a more modest level, we could begin by discussing and choosing infrastructural and logistical targets to go after during mass social upheavals; this would be a way of prolonging and deepening the disruption of order that's already underway in those moments.

A couple of communiques referring to actions taken during the more recent uprisings for Walter Wallace in late October show that some insurrectionaries have this approach in mind, and the much-discussed possibility of civil war leading up to the election led to organized conversations among anarchists here about the insurrectionary potential of that kind of social breakdown. Ultimately, though, many of us felt unprepared for the level of intensity in the streets. One thing we can observe from the past year is that these mass uprisings will get started with or without anarchist involvement. In addition to attending the riots, how can we personally contribute to prolonging or deepening them? How can we make use of our particular skill sets and move in these moments towards total freedom?

Of note is that 2020 was not only a year with more anarchists, but also a year with widespread communication between anarchists locally. In 2019 and earlier, anarchists had made efforts to open up space to discuss, meet, and network, with mixed results; last year saw more success than failure in terms of anarchists reaching out and connecting with each other. Assemblies, meetings, reading groups, skill-shares, digital communication, and small group conversations all made the anarchist space significantly more connected despite an increase in size. How can we stay in touch and meet each other, especially as things slow down? How can we keep growing our numbers? Is that something we want to focus on moving forward?

The changes in the political terrain this past year cannot be attributed to anarchists — the general climate of increasing economic misery, anti-black violence, social restrictions, and the government's glaringly obvious lack of intention to do anything for us is very much responsible for a lot of the changes. Anarchists cannot expect to see the same kinds of growth, conflictual energy, and deepening continue unless efforts are made to question how we contribute not only to rioting in the streets, but also to the intensification of rebellion towards insurrection and freedom. After a year that could be considered a high point in terms of the potential for revolt, how can we keep things going? And going towards what? What feels rea-

sonable to expect of ourselves, of the social conditions around us? ★

PHILLY ENCAMPMENTS

What We Lost When "We Won"

The encampment on 22nd and Benjamin Franklin Parkway began in June with a collection of individuals advocating for housing justice. The predominant assertion of the (titled by banner) "Housing Now" protest was that permanent, accessible housing should be offered as a solution to homelessness, instead of the dehumanizing array of current stopgaps. The encampment originated with a group of advocates who recruited a handful of unhoused Philadelphians to join their project. It took off from there as word of the camp spread. The project grew into an occupation-style protest, as well as a literal campground with a kitchen, medical tent, and recreational areas for (eventually over 200) unhoused city residents.

A central target of the project was the Philadelphia Housing Authority. The protest created awareness about the PHA's unforgivable routine of leaving houses vacant long enough to render them uninhabitable, creating an excuse to sell property to developers for profit, at the expense of providing more folks with affordable housing. The average amount of time individuals spend on the waitlist for affordable housing in Philadelphia is currently somewhere between 10 and 13 years.

During the first week the 24/7 occupation grew from existing modestly in the corner of the field with (+/-) 3 tents, to stretching all across the field's South perimeter, serving as a campground for over 100 unhoused Philadelphians. The collective action addressed needs for shelter, food, hygiene products, PPE, a shower, toilets, running water, medicine and medical care, assistance with legal-documents, and sustained human connections. The largest, most visible, and publicized site was the James Talib Dean encampment (Camp JTD), named after a deceased activist who helped begin the project. Two off-shoot encampments also sprung up. The first, Camp Teddy, was beside the PHA's headquarters on the 2000 block of Ridge Ave, and the second, Camp Prosperity, took root at the "Azalea Garden" near the art museum. The provisional shelter, occupation, protest, mutual aid, and autonomous community lasted over 100 days. Its final dispersal occurred in October, involving no shortage of bitterness, conflict, confusion, loose ends, anger and grief.

We spent considerable time at the encampments, starting in June, up until September — when tensions peaked regarding our tactics, fashion choices and willingness to challenge self-appointed leaders. We participated in protest, community, mutual aid, eviction defense and direct action, but generally as independent players. While we applaud the protest's lack of centralized governance, the community lacked effective communication and mutual respect between the not at all politically-homogeneous individuals that showed up to support the movement. Much of the conflict that took place was a result of things that we, as anarchists, hate. As people took charge, created leadership roles, and artificially separated the community into factions, like "organizers," "volunteers," "eviction defense," "residents," (and eventually, "disruptive anarchists") the camps became notably infused with conflict.

Throughout the summer and fall, advocates, organizers, and residents oscillated between open negotiations with city council and refusals to compromise. At times, their unwillingness to budge on their initial radical demands was impressive and commendable. On other occasions, their attempts to appeal to city government were disappointing & upsetting. Some time in the fall, negotiations with the city had been cut off due to the antagonistic nature of a recent eviction defense. In response, organizers scrambled to re-open negotiations. During the next week, approximately \$3000 was raised and utilized to offer an extensive buffet style brunch to Mayor Kenney, in hopes of baiting him into direct communication. Especially hilarious is that the brunch table was set up on the road where “Oust Mayor Kenney” had recently been painted on the pavement. It was catered by the mayor’s favorite restaurant, yet he (obviously) rejected the invitation. One camp resident responded to the clearly misguided use of funds by flipping over the buffet table. A response we feel great affinity for. There were several other instances of withholding funds, careless spending, and secrecy around money and donations.

Tensions between participants touting respectability politics and anarchists were often high. At one point all involved were encouraged to utilize “normie bloc.” The individuals backing this wanted to “appeal to the sympathies” of “average Philadelphians.” It was clear at this point that anarchists were being held in contempt. The more “respectable” participants hoped that “normie bloc” would combat any negative public perceptions that had developed following the “rowdy” behavior that occurred during a day-time eviction defense the week prior. We were unamused by their desires to assure the public that we were “really nice people.” Graffiti filled the street stating radical demands and the Whole Foods across the way was targeted with minor defacement. None of which we are sorry for. At another late night eviction defense, heated arguments broke out between “organizers” and anarchists regarding bloc, barricades, and burning a flag.

Despite the clashing that occurred between groups, the multiple instances of eviction defense were effective. Throughout the occupation, at least 3 official eviction notices were given. The night before expected evictions, participants stayed overnight, constructed shields and barricades, practiced getting charged by police, and remained present throughout the day until it became clear that the city didn’t intend to follow through. This occurred in response to each eviction notice, and while it caused the intended psychological distress and exhaustion, at no point did the city act on their threats to sweep the camp in the expected manner.

However, in terms of the protests’ stated goal of permanent housing, it’s impossible to claim that the protest accomplished what it set out to do. After months of negotiations with the city, a group of organizers (who ironically created a coalition with the acronym PHA - Philadelphia Housing Action) were reportedly promised 50 vacant homes to be fixed up and become part of a community land trust. There was also an apparent assurance that certain squats would not be targeted with eviction. However, the author and contributors recently learned that only one of the 50 homes the city supposedly handed over to organizers has actually been made available for housing.

Moreover, this past week (in mid-December) an (on and off) occupation-style protest sprung up outside of a Holiday Inn on 13th and Walnut streets to address the planned

eviction of the otherwise unhoused folks who are sheltering there. These “Covid hotels” were meant to serve as shelter for vulnerable & infected individuals, but the city “ran out of funding.” It is understood that many previous residents of the encampments are sheltering here, meanwhile others have scattered their tents around the city. These situations are obvious indications that the encampments’ objectives were unrealized, despite the victory claimed by prominent organizers. This proclamation is best evidenced by a visit to the Philadelphia Housing Action’s website, where you’ll find a large banner at the top of the page displaying the words: “WE WON!” A significant grievance we have with the organizers and coalitions associated with the protest is that they seem ultimately most interested in publicizing a narrative of success. We desire a truthful narrative for the purposes of continued struggle.

The encampment did address many needs of individuals who lacked housing, but it’s felt that the organizers’ declarations of victory represent an abstraction of people’s realities – of the experience of being unhoused – into a politicized protest with goals that can be defined and accomplished. The dire situation unhoused people find themselves in is visceral before it is political – their need for resources and community supersede political feelings and goals. Framing the occupation as a successful protest because it resulted in organizers being told by the city that some of their demands would be met distracts us from the reality that almost none of the people who were homeless before the encampment are now securely situated in permanent housing. It is understandably difficult to put forth so much time and effort only to admit after many months that you’ve come up empty handed. But damage is done when telling a self-gratifying and victorious story takes precedence over dealing with the still desperate reality of the people you assembled to help and claimed solidarity with.

“Empowering ourselves to operate as autonomously as possible, disregard authority, disobey laws, and create relationships outside society’s prescribed dynamics – all while still existing in the systems we aim to destroy – is our only hope.”

These assertions of victory ultimately led to the conclusion of the encampment. We watched as medic tents, an extensive kitchen, remote networks of support from laundry to guerrilla defense were broken down at the urging of organizers who declared their demands met. A pivotal moment of compromise was when organizers agreed to remove barricades at the request of the city. The request was respected in exchange for having (a drastically compromised version of) their goals met. These barricades became a source of friction after we were criticized for collecting and erecting them. Yet, in the end, their removal was a significant source of leverage in negotiations with the city. Many of us urged people to remain in conflict with the city and be ruthless in exposing unmet needs and unrealized objectives.

For all its flaws, the encampment did provide significant aid, created community, radicalized individuals, developed net-

works, increased public awareness about the housing crisis, and demonstrated what it looks like to value people for who they are versus what they have. All of these things deserve space, but they do not negate the exaggerated assertions of solidarity, shortsighted decisions and cooperation with the state, and the false claims of success that were made.

Despite the poorly handled deterioration of the camp and the publicly touted accomplishments, the visible anarchist presence and the power struggle with the state that occurred are inspiring. This prolonged creation of an autonomous “no cop zone” that was centered around mutual aid and communal living is deserving of celebration. Expected sweeps were repeatedly halted by overnight stays, block parties and guerilla defense. Other defensive actions included the erection of barricades, an explosion of graffiti on the surrounding roads, calls for community support, and a impressive amount of folks willing to practice and partake in physically guarding the space and fighting off cops (if it had come to that). It is just as essential to highlight and savor what we as individuals experienced, attempted, struggled for, created and destroyed — as it is to point out the failings of the larger protest.

Affinity groups were created and expanded throughout the summer. Politically vague but radical protestors were introduced to anarchists and became anarchists. Some became emboldened to partake in more direct and offensive styles of resistance. Individuals picked up spray paint for the first time, became advocates of smashing and defiling property, and developed enthusiasm about limiting surveillance, decreasing security breaches, and using black bloc effectively. Comrades became emboldened to confront liberals, the press, clout-seeking career activists, instances of swooping and peace police, as well as their own internalized repressive attitudes and behaviors. Overall there was a notable and exciting increase in outspoken anti-state, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and abolitionist rhetoric.

Occupation, no matter how flawed, is a powerful experience. If we define an event/movement by the popular, over-arching narrative of what “the organizers” created (or didn’t), and accomplished (or didn’t), then we relinquish the subversive power we claim to have as anarchists. Empowering ourselves to operate as autonomously as possible, disregard authority, disobey laws, and create relationships outside society’s prescribed dynamics — all while still existing in the systems we aim to destroy — is our only hope. The repressive contexts that we struggle in can be as general as “larger society” or specific as tiny, temporary microcosms like the encampment.

If we cannot create and benefit from cracks in the system or accomplish instances of liberation within structures of repression — then we can do almost nothing in the present moment. There is no immediately possible scenario where anarchists completely destroy society and begin building the one they desire from scratch, totally unhindered and unopposed by what and whom existed beforehand. We will likely always be struggling to create new realities and realize our dreams of liberation while simultaneously resisting and destroying the larger oppressive contexts that our lives and work occur in. The encampment is no exception. It is absolutely necessary to call out and confront the things we hate. But, in order to be effective our focus should ultimately be on what we are able to do, not on what others fail to accomplish, welcome, or understand. ★

BUILD A WALL OF RESISTANCE



DON'T TALK TO THE F.B.I.

THE ONLY NEWS I NEED IS ON THE WEATHER REPORT

“...the stakes only seem to grow due to that collapse, and it would benefit us to look beyond street battles with cops and fascists and toward resource extraction industries and energy infrastructure, in addition to other dangerous and vulnerable aspects of the economy...whether it’s through tactical maneuvers, computer programming, or other means of attack.” – Armed Struggle (last issue)

Most major news sources are reporting that global warming is making people sick and leading to more premature death. The longer more intense heatwaves are more dangerous, in particular. In fact, new research found that in the last twenty years there’s been a more than 50% increase in heat-related deaths for people over the age of 65. Air pollution is also leading to hundreds of thousands of premature deaths around the world. And hurricanes, floods, and wildfires are all getting more severe because of climate change. Such disasters not only injure people, they make it harder to get routine medical care. Global greenhouse gas emissions are still rising. And UN scientists say the pandemic has had basically no effect on the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. What can we do?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a 2018 special report on abrupt climate change that underplayed an alarming fact: global warming is accelerating. Abrupt climate change will be “faster and more furious” than anticipated. Their “worst case scenario,” of a 50C increase by the end of the century, is actually the most accurate model.

In just 50 years' time, a third of all plant and animal species on our planet could be wiped out due to man-made climate change, according to scientists at the University of Arizona early last year. About 50 per cent of species had local extinctions if maximum temperatures increased by more than 0.50C, and 95 per cent if temperatures increase by more than 2.90C, and overall projections are worst in tropical regions – often the last bastions of significant biodiversity. Average timelines for a 20C global increase above pre-industrial levels suggest it will occur in less than 15 years.

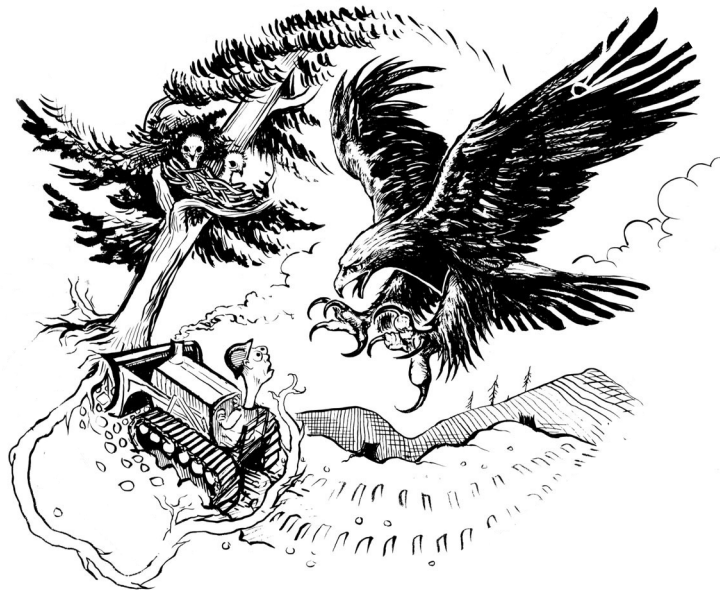
Agriculture, too, is expected to collapse. Increasing demand as more development and waste occurs, increased ozone in the atmosphere, increasing droughts, soil erosion and degradation (largely from agriculture itself), along with all the other factors of climate change will likely lead to a total failure of agricultural systems that feed humans in the next two decades. These factors combine to offset any possibility of increased carbon dioxide in the air benefiting plant growth. Those permaculture methods that largely model themselves after pre-industrial gatherer-hunter models provide sustainable alternatives to destructive agricultural practices, but not so long as industry and developmental growth continue. If warming continues at its current pace, in fact, forests will also be decimated in the same time period and climate change will likely kill every tree alive today within 40 years.

Government-led initiatives don't even begin to address the problem. The Paris Climate Agreement – that was made among many UN member nations at a previous Coalition meeting (COP26) – has provided a metric by which those nations intend to reduce emission, but even these “lofty” goals have neither a feasible path forward nor actually addresses the issue with the seriousness that is necessary. Their goal of holding the earth's temperature to 1.5-20C above pre-industrial levels is the best that any civilized nation has had to offer, still many (the US included) have chosen to opt out.

On top of those goals hardly addressing the issue at hand, climate researcher's also believe that the agreement is based on “highly dubious assumptions” about its functionality. At the heart of the agreement is technological solutions, for the sake of maintaining their economies, and therein lies the problem. That and most world governments plan on increasing fossil fuel production every year in the 2020's, anyway, taking us towards the horrors of 1.6-2°C by the 2030s.

The technological solutions such proposals rely on, like carbon capture and storage (CCS) and Direct air capture (DAC) – meant to remove carbon dioxide from the atmo-

sphere – actually put more greenhouse gases into the air than they take out. Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), in particular, would push Earth over ecological limits. BECCS features in more than 80% of the IPCC pathways, which means it sits at the very center of the Paris agreement – even though it is not mentioned in the text. The technology has never been proven at scale, and there's no way it will appear in time to make an impact. Even if it did, it would require that we create plantations equivalent to three times the size of India, which would eat up 1/3 of the planet's arable land. This alone would make it impossible for us to feed the world's population, if not also for the factors mentioned previously. And transforming that much land into bio-energy monoculture would also trigger disastrous ecosystem collapse by itself. To avoid a 1.5°C global warming calamity without relying on fantasy, large-scale carbon sequestration, the global community would have to get to zero carbon emissions by 2026. We are expected to reach that calamity by 2032, and 2°C by 2034, according to projections based on the latest climate models produced in the lead up to the Paris meeting (called CMIP6).



The condition of the Great Barrier Reef has worsened from “significant concern” to “critical” in a damning world heritage outlook report by a UNESCO advisory body. Corals and reefs are like forests in that they are important, slow-growing aspects of their ecosystems that can't move or adapt quickly, and are increasingly beneficial the older they get. The measurement of ocean heat content is considered one of the most effective ways to show how fast Earth is warming. The rapidly increasing warming of the oceans led to the tipping point for coral between 2014 and 2016, causing them to bleach and die – which was not previously predicted.

With the predictions we have now averaging at catastrophic, it is not the time to keep our heads in the sand. The Trump administration announced last month that it's auctioning off drilling rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and this month that its opening vast swaths of forest in the Pacific Northwest for timber harvesting, eliminating 3.4 million acres (in particular) of habitat for owls already threatened with extinction feels particularly callous. There is no relief in the spectacle of changing rulers, either, as noted by the increased stocks prices (i.e. confidence) of major fossil fuel industries following the acknowledgment of Biden's win. All the more so when the incoming president appointed as his Climate Movement Liaison a congressman who has accrued a great deal of money from the that industry.

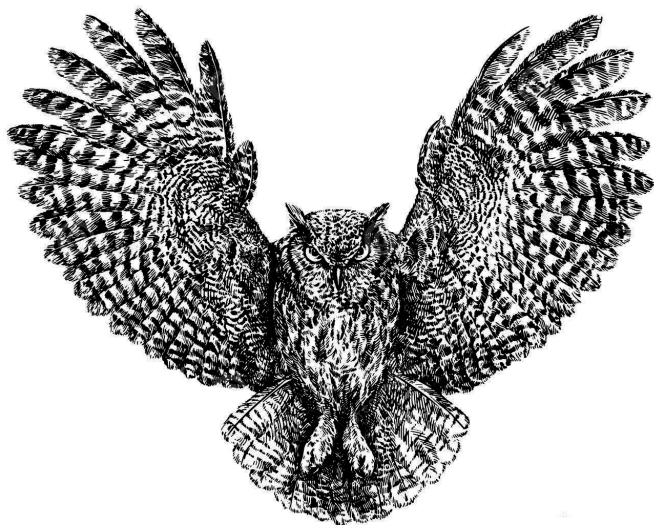
Philadelphia just announced a goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050, following the Biden administration – but there are actually no means outlined to reach that goal. The city's “strategy reductions” only account for a

little more than half of those necessary reductions, by their own measure, and that strategy does not even construct definitive plans for much of the technologies or costs necessary to do so (much like the Paris Agreement). It literally, “does not make any assumptions about the technologies or costs required to achieve” most of its goals. Further following COP 26’s footsteps, such a plan overlooks that mean projection of twelve years before a global rise in temperature of 1.50C.

There is no green future that involves economies. Products and travel that are sold as “climate neutral” or “climate positive” due to offsetting, still have a carbon footprint and essentially incentivize that footprint to consumers. As we’ve covered before “green” technologies operate similarly, requiring components and production that are ever-devastating to the earth. Hell, recycling is a scam even when it is carried out – which it increasingly isn’t, as it becomes increasingly unprofitable. The oil industry itself misled the public into believing plastic would be recycled according to reports as recent as September, in hopes that the public would be less likely to care about climate change. Meanwhile, plastic production continues to increase carbon emissions, litter the earth and its deepest oceans, fill stomachs and even our blood with its particles, and leech its poisons into everything.

Additionally, the Pentagon is the largest consumer of fossil fuels in the federal government, and the largest institutional greenhouse gas polluter in the world, effectively putting nearly every life at risk with every aspect of its existence.

The COP 26 Coalition agreement for net zero carbon emissions by 2050 remains a death sentence for millions, yet it’s the best offer that the powerful care to muster. This is one of the many reasons they must not remain in power – that those very power relations need to be destroyed. If we want to stop the development that contributes to the destruction of biodiversity that maintains our existence, then *we* have to stop development. If we want to stop resource extraction, *we* have to stop resource extraction. If we want to stop civilization we have to attack civilization. ★



REPRESSION UPDATES

On December 31st, New Year’s Eve, 7 people were arrested in connection to a demonstration outside of the Federal Detention Center. Since then all the arrestees have been released and face charges.

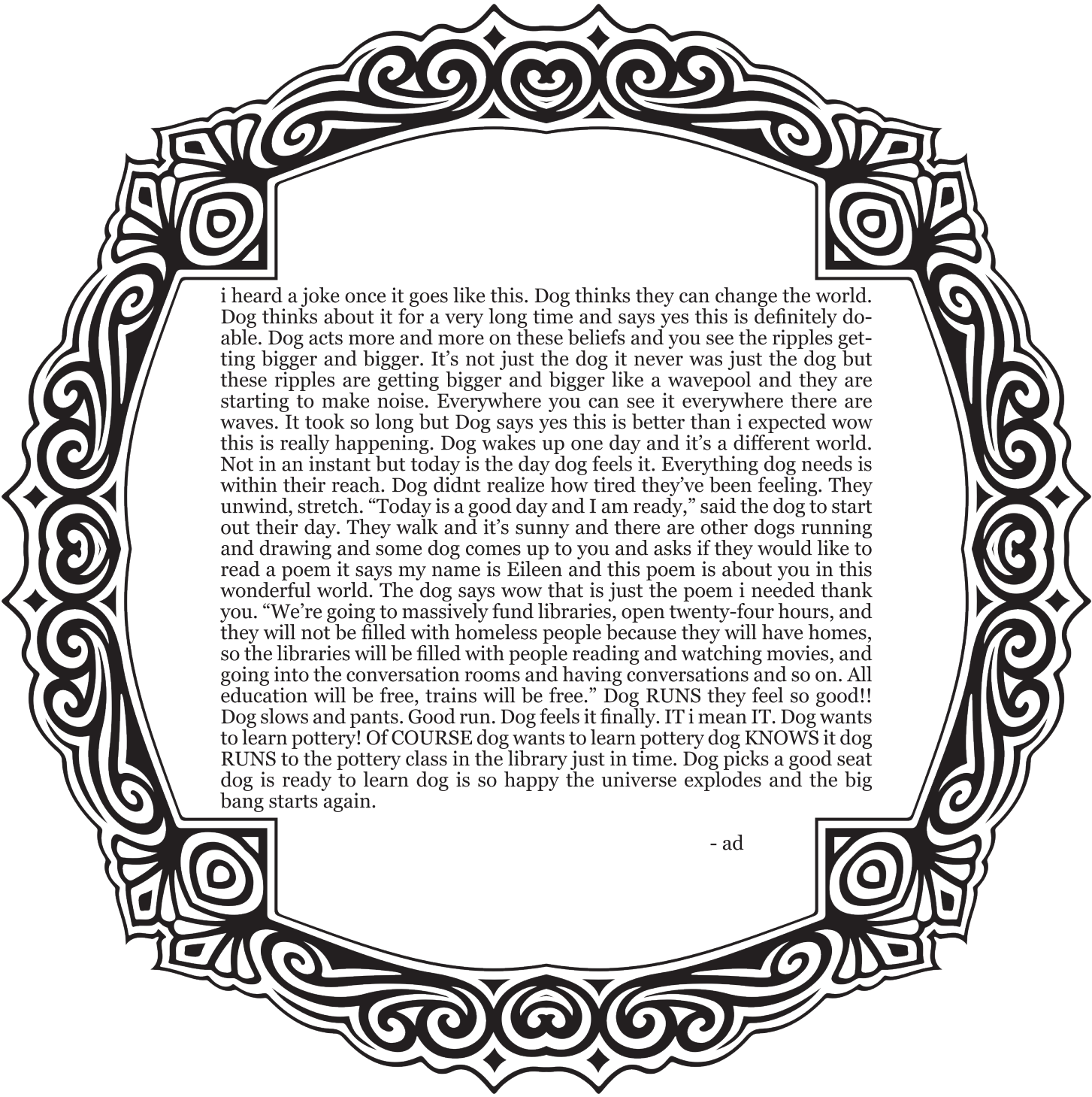
Following the riot at the Capitol building in Washington DC, police across the country have tightened their security, citing threats from the far-right. In Philadelphia, police have increased their presence in Center City, and have been seen carrying riot helmets and congregating in groups.

Two anti-fascists have been visited by the FBI in Philadelphia according to the Anti-Repression Fund and North Philly Food Not Bombs. These visits seem to be part of a nation-wide effort, agents have been showing up to people’s homes asking for information about the rioting at the Capitol on January 6th. At the time of this writing, FBI agents have been reported to also have visited people in Portland, OR, Atlanta, GA, New Jersey, Arizona, and have questioned at least two Black prisoners.

Federal prisons across the country are on lockdown in anticipation for possible violence. The Bureau of Prisons has cited “current events” as the reason for the lockdown that began January 16th. The length of the lockdown has not been announced. The Federal Detention Center in Center City is one such federal prison, where arrestees from the George Floyd riots are being held. ★



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i heard a joke once it goes like this. Dog thinks they can change the world. Dog thinks about it for a very long time and says yes this is definitely doable. Dog acts more and more on these beliefs and you see the ripples getting bigger and bigger. It's not just the dog it never was just the dog but these ripples are getting bigger and bigger like a wavepool and they are starting to make noise. Everywhere you can see it everywhere there are waves. It took so long but Dog says yes this is better than i expected wow this is really happening. Dog wakes up one day and it's a different world. Not in an instant but today is the day dog feels it. Everything dog needs is within their reach. Dog didnt realize how tired they've been feeling. They unwind, stretch. "Today is a good day and I am ready," said the dog to start out their day. They walk and it's sunny and there are other dogs running and drawing and some dog comes up to you and asks if they would like to read a poem it says my name is Eileen and this poem is about you in this wonderful world. The dog says wow that is just the poem i needed thank you. "We're going to massively fund libraries, open twenty-four hours, and they will not be filled with homeless people because they will have homes, so the libraries will be filled with people reading and watching movies, and going into the conversation rooms and having conversations and so on. All education will be free, trains will be free." Dog RUNS they feel so good!! Dog slows and pants. Good run. Dog feels it finally. IT i mean IT. Dog wants to learn pottery! Of COURSE dog wants to learn pottery dog KNOWS it dog RUNS to the pottery class in the library just in time. Dog picks a good seat dog is ready to learn dog is so happy the universe explodes and the big bang starts again.

- ad