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 riots 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 “hanging” presentizing 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 projectivities and visions — they utterly inform them. Centering these issues will continue to be critical especially as we

Continued on page 6

anathema.noblogs.org ★ anathemaphil@riseup.net
**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 Joe Cerdá in North Philadelphia. Cerdá 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 Goobers. We hope to put a plug 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 looks like sabotage, windows and door smashed, and graf- fiti 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 removed in pairs. The point is this situation is abhorrent."

New Year's Eve - The federal detention center, US courthouse, Robor Nix federal building, William Green federal building, US Customs House, and a sheriff's van were 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 attendess 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 add?" 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. 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 propagan-da, 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 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 then also sharing with and helping you. How does it look to have that kind of relationship with someone? Do you help them 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.

**REPRESSION UPDATES**

On December 31st, New Year’s Eve, 7 people were arrest-ed in connection to a demonstration outside of the Federal Detention Center. Since then all the arrests 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 Phila-delphia 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 peo-ple’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 antici-pation 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 arrests from the George Floyd riots are being held.

---

**FOOTNOTES**

1. George Floyd riots are being held.

---

**MORE ON:**

[The link to the document is not included in the image.]

---

**PHOTO CREDITS:**

[The photo credits are not included in the image.]
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 0.5°C, and 95 per cent if temperatures increase by more than 2.0°C, and overall projections are worst in the southern parts of the world where the impacts of significant biodiversity. Average timelines for a 2.0°C global increase above pre-industrial levels suggest it will occur in less than 15 years.

Agriculture, too, is expected to collapse. Increasing demand for more food and waste incurs, increased water in the atmosphere, increasing droughts, soil erosion and degradation, all of which increase 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. These permutations methods that largely model themselves, after pre-industrial gatherer-hunter models provide a more effective path forward to destructive agricultural practices, but not so long as industry and developmental growth continues. If that current pace in, fact, forests will also be decimated in the same time period, and climate change will likely kill every tree alive in 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 these nations intend to reduce emissions, but even these "tough" 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°C above pre-industrial levels in 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 researchers also believe that the agreement is based on "highly dubious assumptions" about its functionality. At the heart of the agreement is technological solutions, for their validation of the ecological system, and therein lies the problem. That and most world governments plan on increasing fossil fuel production every year in the 2020s, anyway, taking us towards the horrors of 1.6°C to 2.0°C by 2030.

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 atmosphere — actually put more greenhouse gases into the air than they take out. Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), which would provide a way to stop these negative climate impacts altogether, would need 14 per cent of the world’s land area — 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 the next two decades, 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. That is a number that is 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 non-wood would also trigger disastrous ecosystem collapse by itself. To avoid a 1.5°C global warming calamity without reorienting and reprogramming our carbon sequestration, the global community would have to get zero carbon emissions by 2050. 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 CMIP7).

The condition of the Great Barrier Reef has worsened dramatically due to rising sea temperatures, "critical" in a damning world heritage outlook report by a UNESCO advisory body. Corals and reefs are like forests and fields important, slow-growing aspects of their ecosystems that can’t move or adapt quickly, and are increasingly beneficial the older the tree gets. The rare occurrence of ocean heat content is considered one of the most effective ways to show how fast the 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 previoustly addressed.

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 Wildlife Refuge, and this month that its opening vast swaths of forest in the Pacific Northwest for timber harvesting, eliminating 6 million acres in particular. Oil and other driving forces threatened with extinction feel particularly callous. There is no relief in the spectacle of changing rules, 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 convincing in the light of the recent appointment 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 — a goal that the city’s administration — but there are actually no means outlined to reach that goal. The city’s "strategy reductions" only account for a sphere actually put more greenhouse gases into the air than they take out. Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), which would provide a way to stop these negative climate impacts altogether, would need 14 per cent of the world’s land area — 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 the next two decades, 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. That is a number that is 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 non-wood would also trigger disastrous ecosystem collapse by itself. To avoid a 1.5°C global warming calamity without reorienting and reprogramming our carbon sequestration, the global community would have to get to zero carbon emissions by 2050. 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 CMIP7).

The condition of the Great Barrier Reef has worsened dramatically due to rising sea temperatures, "critical" in a damning world heritage outlook report by a UNESCO advisory body. Corals and reefs are like forests and fields important, slow-growing aspects of their ecosystems that can’t move or adapt quickly, and are increasingly beneficial the older the tree gets. The rare occurrence of ocean heat content is considered one of the most effective ways to show how fast the 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 previoustly addressed.

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 Wildlife Refuge, and this month that its opening vast swaths of forest in the Pacific Northwest for timber harvesting, eliminating 6 million acres in particular. Oil and other driving forces threatened with extinction feel particularly callous. There is no relief in the spectacle of changing rules, 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 convincing in the light of the recent appointment 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 — a goal that the city’s administration — but there are actually no means outlined to reach that goal. The city’s "strategy reductions" only account for a

**AUTONOMOUS DELIVERY ROBOTS**

A law (bill 105-97) passed in Pennsylvania in November allows autonomous robots to make deliveries as long as they are 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 are looking at in the next five to ten years. What is an autonomous delivery robot, why are people opposed to them, and what can we expect to see from them in the future?

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 are a recent step in an ongoing regression of exclusion and mediation that spans from the first walls and enclosures to the latest smartphones and home assistance devices.

**Labor Activists**

**The Group Chat:**

**Our New Social Hub**

You’re probably familiar with the group chat. Signal threads and Telegram chats for updates, organizing, and, of course, to be in touch with people you’re in. In many cases, the only time you see each other are when you’re in events. If 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. Usually, the group chat has its merits such as speed, convenience, and being far-reaching, but there seems to be a lot of issues with regard to how this new norm in our lives, this new media that is shaping our social relations and organizing spaces. This essay aims to discuss
The only news I need is on the weather report.
Throughout the summer and fall, advocates, organizers, and residents oscillated between open negotiations with city council and armed resistance to the city's unwillingness to budge on their initial radical demands was impressive and constant. The resurrection of attempts to appeal to city government were disappointing and upsetting. Some time in the fall, negotiations with the city had been cut off due to attempts to与时事安全防御. In response, organizers scrambled to re-open negotiations. During the next week, approximately $3000 was raised and utilized to offer an extensive buffet-style bumper sticker to Mayor Kenney, in hopes of baiting him into direct communication. Especially hilarious is that the buffet table was set up on the road in front of Kenney's house. 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 acrocity around money and donations.

Tensions between participants touting respectability politics and anarchists were often high. At one point all involved were encouraged to utilize “normies” and individuals who were willing 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 appeared on the street stating radical demands and the Whole Foods across the way was targeted with minor defacement. None of which we were sorry for. At another late night eviction defense, heat- end arguments broke out between “organizers” and anarchists regarding bloc, barricades, and burning a flag.

Despite the clashes 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 damage 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 scrum 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 agreement 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 had 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 folks in need, but the city’s actions have shattered their tents around the city. These situations are obvious indications that the encampments’ objectives have been undermined by the city’s efforts to quell their existence. This proclamation is best evidenced by a visit to the Philadelphia Housing Action’s website, where you’ll find a large number of the top stories: “WE WANT!” A significant grievance we have with the organizers and coalitions associated with the protest is that they see a rhetoric of resistance to the city that is fundamentally in opposition to the city’s actions. We use Telegram because it offers more anonymity. We use Signal because we want in our conversations. Despite the city’s repeated attempts to dismantle the encampments, we continue to grow in number and to succeed. We desire a truthful narrative for the purposes of continued struggle.

The encampment did address many needs of individuals who lacked housing. Yes, 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 direct situation unhoused people find themselves in is visceral before it is political — their need for resources and community supersedes political feelings and actions. The occupation as a successful protest because it resulted in organizers being told by the city that some of their demands would be met. It is difficult to put forth such a much and effort only to admit after many months that you’ve come up empty handed. But damage is done when telling self-gratifying and victor- story takes precedence over dealing with the still desperate reality of the people you assembled to help and claimed sol-

“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 the organizers agreed on a request of the city. The request was respected in exchange for having (a drastically compromised version of) their goals met. The barb wire and chains were cut, the clearing of the site was celebrated and a new community began to emerge.

For all it’s flaws, the encampment did provide significant aid, created community, radicalized individuals, developed net- 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 discarded entirely. These are all possi- ble 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 sensi- tive content shared within them. We use Telegram because it offers more anonymity. We use Signal because we want in our conversations. Despite the city’s repeated attempts to dismantle the encampments, we continue to grow in number and to succeed. We desire a truthful narrative for the purposes of continued struggle.

The encampment did address many needs of individuals who lacked housing. Yes, 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 direct situation unhoused people find themselves in is visceral before it is political — their need for resources and community supersedes political feelings and actions. The occupation as a successful protest because it resulted in organizers being told by the city that some of their demands would be met. It is difficult to put forth such a much and effort only to admit after many months that you’ve come up empty handed. But damage is done when telling self-gratifying and victor- story takes precedence over dealing with the still desperate reality of the people you assembled to help and claimed sol-arity with.

* Personally, I am coming from the bias of strongly want- less mediated experiences. Simultaneously, I confront a ten- sion in not wanting to discount the ways in which folks with dif- ferent 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 activism for the rest of the year. The riots, camps, and protests that filled 2020 have all roots in events in the vicious, Fruitvale Station massacre of 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. Another layer of this discussion is the talking point (although it quickly lost much of its edge to defending and other less tangible goals). Anti-blackness and white supremacists became strong, and federal charges were filed against rebels for taking part in the riots.

In addition to the non-state reaction, in June and October the national guard was deployed to the city and city, with federal control. The riots 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, outnumbered 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 anarcho- activists were involved in a number of health-related actions. At this time, mutual aid efforts centered around distributing PPE and delivering goods to the prison system. Prison workers’ health advocacy efforts increased. Halteman Housing became another focal point. First its millionaire owner Foulke Delphia home was vandalized and then there was an attempt to take over the hospital itself. Although the takeover failed, it was a very important moment that represents a level of ambition among anarcho- activists.

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 security, eviction, debt, or, across formal striking groups, rent strikes were a major focus for activists who were fighting to make a living. Underground squatting efforts also took place. flourish and becoming more visible as they pivoted into the housing, black bloc tunics, and red and black flags and graffiti. The camps, squatting, and the housing struggle generally were a major part of anarchist struggle in 2020 — parallel eviction resistance, housing, and social movements in the country. A companion article in this issue covers these struggles in more depth.

Certainly no moment of popular upheaval goes without its matching counterpoint. The eviction of the George Floyd riots brought out vigilantes in Fishhook and South Philly in June, intent on protecting their neighborhood from looters. Armed with bats, clubs, and in at least one case guns, groups of reactionaries wandered Fishhook and occupied Marconi Plaza in South Philly, attacking protesters and journalists and intimidating those under attack to leave. Anarchists and anti-fascists were unable to remove or control the groups and mostly avoided them or dealt with them through blockade. These mutinies continued to gather in Marconi Plaza, celebrating Trump, law enforcement, and capital punishment for those who killed George Floyd after the riots.

We approach situations where we are outnumbered and outgunned.

Proud Boys also mobilized in response to the atmosphere of popular unrest. On September 26, they roiled the Park Block — the belly of the beast — but did not show up, instead harassing a local anti-fascist while white-hooded anti-fascist counterprotesters were gathering. The next weekend 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.

As we continue to police ourselves, we must remember that these actions were not isolated. As we have seen this year, the police will not be contained by any political entity, and we must be prepared to respond.

On October 26, PPD cops Saul Matarazzo and Thomas Murno 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 shootouts, beatings, and killings — Kaleb Belay, Akash Sabhar, Brandon Tate-Turner, David Jones — but this time the movement did not pass quietly. The outbreak 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 ever. The result was a police war that started in late June and continued through the end of the year.

One major difference between 2020 and previous years has been a rise in the discussion of anarcho-activists participating in popular struggles against police, fascism, homelessness and housing insecurity, repression, and authoritarianism. This participation has been more visibly and more broadly visible, and anarchists have been more widely discussed. The visibility and social presence has been increased, and there has been a rise in the number of interest in riots during and protests. As social movements rise in and fail, how do we want to engage society? What kinds of social and anti-society social movements mean to us?

Anarchist participation in large social movements coincided and deepened with the Trump administration’s protests and riots. In 2020, anarchists and fellow travelers became more adept at barricading streets, clashing with police, defending space, and vandalizing property during large actions. The past few years saw anarchists carrying out clampdowns, direct action, and other forms of activism without relying on the momentum of social movements. 2020 saw a significant drop in claimless anonymous attacks and sabotage, and a rise in more direct actions targeting racist police and fascist protests. Autonomous and anarcho-activists organized demonstrations in response to the Trump administration’s various years, organized off-public channels and mostly ending without arrests. What conflictual activity do we want to see in and out of protests? What kind of thing does that look like to keep growing our capacity to attack?

The uprising 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 was never going to be enough enough to move towards the destruction of power, at least in a practical sense, so I will call this style of activity using the weaknesses of 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 undermining 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, since social unloving would be a way of prolonging and deepening the disruption of order that’s already underway in those moments.

A couple of comrades referring to actions taken during the Blackout started a conversation about how we can show that some insurrectionaries have this approach in mind, and the much-discussed possibility of civil war leading up to the election in November. Although here the insurrectionary potential of that kind of social breakdown. Ultimately, though, many of us felt unprepared for the attacks. Overall, the situation in Philadelphia is far from the past year is that these mass uprisings will get started and broadened without anarchist involvement. In addition to attending the mainstream, 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?

One key 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 share info and meet up in person. This year, the communication has intensified, and small group conversations all made the anarcho-activists’ participation in these struggles.

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 rise of the racialized ”digital divide” is just one example of anything for us is very much responsible for a lot of the chang- es. Anarchists cannot expect to see the same kinds of growth, conquest, and successes the moves and actions are not enough. We need to be more serious about how we contribute not only to rioting in the streets, but also to the internalization of rebellion towards institutions and about the real possibility of building a high point in terms of the potential for revolt, how can we keep things going? And going towards what? What feels real-