

ANATHEMA

VOLUME X ISSUE I
JANUARY 2024
A FREE ANARCHIST PERIODICAL

WHAT WENT DOWN

August - Anti-fascists in Delaware County cover up fascist Active Front stickers with anti-fascist ones.

Mid-August - Anti-fascists flier S14 fascists Mark Kaufman and Sara Sheaffer's neighborhood in Kensington with posters outing them as neo-nazis to their neighborhoods. "Antifascists have been continuing to turn up the heat on S14 members."

Late August - "Last week a work party painted over all the new cameras at the entrance to Bartram's North. (A)"

September 17 - Philly ABC's annual political prisoner benefit 5K, Running Down the Walls, takes place at FDR Park in South Philly.

September 18 - Around 7000 mink are liberated from a fur farm in Sunbury, PA. "When the cage latches were opened the mink jumped out to experience their first steps in grass and mud."

Mid-September - Anti-fascists continue to flier S14 neo-nazis Mark Kaufman and Sara Sheaffer's neighborhood and make connections with their neighbors.

September 26 - Former cop Mark Dial has all his charges for killing Eddie Irizarry dropped. A march moves through Center City. Looting erupts in Center City, West Philly, North Philly, and Northeast Philly. "The Black liberation movement is alive! Those who say it's dead are either racist or not in the street and these revolts are the proof."

September 26 - "Some anarchists" attack gentrifying business Clarkville during the riots. "Hopefully actions like these will grow the general disorder."

October 12 - Two cops are shot at, one dies, after interrupting a car theft at the Philadelphia Airport.

October 13 - Forest defense films are screened at Iffy Books.

October 14 - An introductory conversation on anarchism is held at Wooden Shoe bookstore.

October 14 - Jackson Bradley is doxxed and outed as a member of the fascist organization S14. "Bradley's ire over the racial make up of Philadelphia as well as his history of racist and bigoted actions show that he poses a danger to racialized and other marginalized individuals."

Mid-October - A military recruitment office in Upper Darby is vandalized with paint in solidarity with the uprising in Palestine and in memory of murdered trans woman Ganda. "In the face of massive non-disruptive protest, we hope we can inspire others to act more directly

and confrontationally."

October 21 - Two SEPTA police cars have their tires slashed during a demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians. "In expressing solidarity with those fighting for their freedom and lives in Palestine, functionaries of a colonial project in support of the state of Israel, such as the U.S, can and should be attacked."

October 22 - Anarchists hold a conversation on anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine. Late October - Two excavators in North Bartrams are sabotaged. "In addition to smashing the machines, we poured quick-setting concrete into the exhaust pipe of a machine. [...] The other machine we used various techniques that can be found in warriorup.noblogs.org."

October 28 - An anarchist and decolonial bloc is warmly welcomed while painting slogans during an emergency rally in support of Gaza. "[...] people are angry, grieving, and fucking fed up with inaction in response to peaceful protest."

October 29 - Anarchists hold a well-attended reading group about Fauda, a Palestinian anarchist group in the West Bank.

Early November - An Elbit subsidiary, Aydin Displays, is vandalized in Birdsboro, PA.

November 10 - Anarchists vandalize businesses and bang on windows following a die-in organized by healthcare workers in solidarity with Palestine. "Hopefully more anarchists can show out for future actions and calls of these kinds."

November 18 - The Anarchy Skill Fair takes place in Bartram's North, featuring food, workshops, warm fires, and games.

Mid-November - Graffiti around West Philly expresses solidarity with Palestine.

November 23-24 - Anti-colonial and anti-Zionist banners are hung over I-676 on Thanksgiving and Black Friday. "End Genocide from Turtle Island to Palestine" "The Pequot Remember the Massacre"

December 3 - A demonstration against the Israeli occupation of Palestine walks through Center City and University City leaving behind a trail of anti-colonial graffiti. "...what feels remarkable was the support and complicity of more well-behaved marchers not in bloc."

Late December/Early January - Neo-nazi and S14 member Jackson Bradley dies of septic shock after ignoring an infection for a week. ★

FASHION

<i>OUT</i>	<i>IN</i>
camo shiesty	keffiyeh
nvda for the mass appeal	seductive vda
“what time is it?”	wearing a watch
windows 11	salmacians
refusing to participate in imperfect struggles	literally any linux
anarchy mall bookfairs	beating up those who “are just trying to provoke us”
self-deception	nuanced anti-authoritarian stances on national liberation
queer separatism	partying after the spicy demo
leftist anarchism	trans takeover
democratic anything	technical skills zines
	nautical insurgency and piracy



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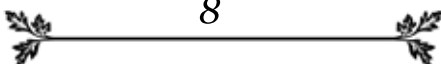
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SUBMISSIONS

We accept submissions of material by, for and relevant to anarchists, from the so-called Philadelphia region and beyond. We are most interested in works that say what only anarchists can say, making our project unique from the Left and even other anarchist projects. No more than 2,000 words please.

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In the Next Issue:



THE COMING WEIRDNESS

Things are getting weirder, stranger, more bizarre, absurd. The political cultures of the United States are becoming more and more polarized. As people grow dissatisfied with politics, the fringes come to the fore. Groups and ideologies that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago are making themselves known, putting forth their ideas, and acting on them. An environmentalist anti-cop urban guerrilla group, yep that's a thing. Fitness bro white nationalists supporting Palestine, uh huh they're real. Insurrectionary shit-slinging pro-maskers lobbying anarchist events, cross it off your list, already exists. Crypto-authoritarian populist vanguards, anarcho-Maoists, armed oogles; check, check, and check. Religious militancy coming from all directions. The political situation currently unfolding around us is honestly incredible.

So what's an anarchist to do? We may do well to remember that as anarchists we get the luxury of being against so many things (everything, some might argue) and that makes it easy for us to find ourselves in agreement with many who criticize the status quo, yet not all enemies of our enemies are our allies. Now seems as good a time as ever to be paying attention to what people are about, to not assume people mean the same thing as us when we have some common vocabulary, to pay attention to where political commonalities can be found with others. Some of these groups will make unusual but good allies, others new enemies, and these relations may flip, change, and grow more strange still. As anarchists we can find commonality with those critiquing authority and we can offer solidarity to those fighting for liberation, yet more and more we may face situations where things are murkier. Let's be discerning, critical, and curious. As the storm around us swirls in ever more unusual ways let's continue to orient ourselves toward anarchy, whether the wind carries us toward it or we have to go against the prevailing winds. ★

pov: you are jackson bradley



SHIFTS IN THE PHILADELPHIA ANARCHIST SPACE

The Philadelphia anarchist space has been shifting over the last half a year, gaining some teeth and cohesion around creative and destructive practices. After 2020, following repression, interpersonal conflict, and the coming and going of anarchists in Philly, the anarchist space shrunk, and was fractured. The main focus seemed to be socializing with other anarchists, as more of a subculture than an offensive force or alternative world. Certainly, there was more going on than sitting around fires and watching films but that did seem to take center stage for many seeking out anarchist spaces and activities. While it seems fair to say the anarchist space is still fractured — which isn't necessarily a bad thing — there is a growing cohesion around practices. This is a welcome change after so much hanging out. It may be that after 2020, this more tranquil period was useful to recover and keep moving, but this author is glad that anarchists are getting their hands dirty again.

The numbers are also going up. There are simply more of us anarchists right now. People move to town, people become radicalized, the anarcho-curious take steps to be more active. It's interesting to see, and one wonders what this new numeric potential will lead to, how all these people will live their pursuit of anarchy. We can ask ourselves some questions to move through this change in ways that best align with our goal. What new possibilities open up now that there are more of us? Should we continue to grow the anarchist space, and how? How can we avoid falling into relying on numbers or crowds while making the most of numerical growth? What could it look like to build connection and coordinate between different groups and individuals without trying to unify the anarchist space?

Loosely defined (and certainly overlapping), three practices have come to the fore: squatting, attack, and anti-fascism. Anarchists have been appropriating housing and social space for themselves and others. Living rent-free, challenging the systems of the landlords and the law. It's exciting to see this new development! Having access to space isn't always easy; gentrification continues to make legitimate use of space more and more expensive. Squatting is a way to counter this, find some room to breathe. From there, what's the move? Can the anarchist squats act as maroons? Small enclaves that stay a step further out from the center, expansive on one hand — experimenting with anarchic ways of living — destructive on the other - confronting and attacking structures of oppression and control.

What would it mean for squats to be a jumping-off point for further expressions, creative or destructive, of free living and anti-authoritarian struggle?

Anti-fascism has focused on the S14 neo-Nazi group, a newer fascist group in the NY, NJ, PA area. Anti-fascists have been doing research, publicizing information about members of S14 and outing them to their neighbors, countering their demonstrations, and even attacking fascist's property. Paul Minton, a racist skinhead turned anti-fascist turned white nationalist has been a particularly hated figure. It's not hard to imagine that this kind of activity will be even more vital as the country continues to polarize and become more extreme in the upcoming election season. Anti-fascism often aims to prevent fascist groups from developing street presence and successfully recruiting to their cause. What would it look like to draw connections between the overt white nationalists and fascists and the larger more subtle systems of racism and domination that hold together society? Already anti-fascists are using some insurrectionary methods, how can we continue to link insurrectionary struggles to those against fascism and vice versa? Can squatters or insurrectionaries learn from anti-fascists and their history of research, confrontation, and counter-demonstrating?

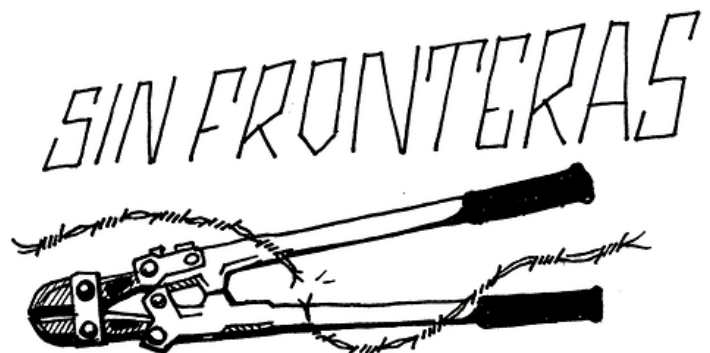
“Insurrectionary activity can aim to inspire further revolt, push reformist struggles in revolutionary directions, or simply to disrupt and damage oppressive institutions.”

Insurrectionary and attack-oriented struggle has been a third practice that's been prominent here in Philly. Its most recent manifestations have been attacks in support of and interventions in the Palestinian liberation, attacks against the proposed bio-tech development in Bartram's in Southwest Philly, and participation in riots for Eddie Irizarry. Insurrectionary activity can aim to inspire further revolt, push reformist struggles in revolutionary directions, or simply to disrupt and damage oppressive institutions. What kinds of possibilities exist now for broadening and deepening insurrectionary anarchist practices? How can we experiment with coordination, street demonstrations, spontaneity, and campaigns? Can confrontation and attack be used to prevent or deter landlords from evicting squats? Can an insurrectionary

approach to anti-fascism keep us on the offensive instead of always reacting to fascist organizing?

As with all shifts and growth, new opportunities and challenges present themselves. Sudden growth in the anarchist space has presented challenges in the past; interpersonal abuse, isolation in the face of repression, poor security practices, poor communication, informal hierarchies, among others. We know this can happen again, many of us have been impacted by these problems, it's up to us to see that we learn from our experience. That said, there is a lot of actionable possibility that accompanies change and growth. We can make efforts to make and maintain connections across the anarchist space's different scenes and practices, we can support each other in achieving common goals, we can ensure there is a militancy, experimentation, and deepening in our practices, we can open up space (both physically and culturally) to hold discussion and help welcome newcomers.

Imagine how the three sets of practices outlined above could best compliment each other. A squat is threatened with eviction, anarchists and anti-fascists do the kind of deep research usually reserved for neo-Nazis to map out a landlord's life. The landlord is pestered as a slumlord in their neighborhood, the address of their home and their properties are published and shared around, their other properties are squatted and vandalized, their car put out of commission. The brunt of anarchist struggle grows to be too much, the landlord seriously considers dropping out of the eviction process. This is a hypothetical example, yet the potential exists. The synchronicity between squatters, anti-fascists, and insurrectionaries is underexplored. Squats as maroons, as jumping off points for attack. Research practices expanded to map a whole corporate network. Flyering the neighborhoods of all stripes of authoritarians. Counter-protests that go on to ravage property, or demonstrations that march to empty buildings and open them. Let's imagine all the possibilities and actualize some too! ★



WORLD WAR III?

Welcome to the new year! January 1st, 2024 found the world in the midst of countless horrors: an ongoing genocide being conducted with impunity, the far right gaining political ground around the world, brutal new regulations against migrants, systemic poverty and oppression countered by ever-increasing state resources for repression and warfare, and a general atmosphere of geopolitical tensions and terrible vibes. In the midst of all this, some commentators have speculated about the possibility of a third world war (and “what it would mean for investors,” in an especially mask-off moment for the publication *The Economist*). But what might it mean for anarchists (most of whom are not investors)? Is the renewed threat of World War III just a scare tactic, or something to which we should be paying closer attention?

The current concerns about being on the brink of a third world war began when Russia invaded Ukraine — in fact, President Zelenskyy himself used this language to garner international support for Ukraine. We’re now twenty-three months into that war, and the number of regional conflicts that might escalate into global catastrophes has only multiplied. Israel’s genocide of Palestinians in Gaza threatens to erupt into a wider Middle East conflict, which could in turn escalate into warfare between the world’s superpower blocs supporting opposite sides. Meanwhile, the United States was already in some kind of new cold war with China, and recently China has become increasingly aggressive towards Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, all of whom are U.S. allies. Recently, the major fear being floated in the media is that China might decide to blockade or invade Taiwan, which would necessitate an intervention from the United States and potentially turn into a verified doomsday scenario, given what we are also hearing in the news about China’s recent technological advances.

But let’s back up for a moment, because every time we see discussions like this in the mainstream media, we have to ask ourselves.....why? The United States does not willingly disclose updates on matters of national security unless there is some benefit to itself, whether that be ideological, political, or economic. The threat of war is a perennial tactic of the nation-state to quell internal dissatisfaction, compel unity and nationalism, and remind its citizenry that we need the state’s protection from external threats. In this era of ever-worsening governmental neglect and widespread public dissatisfaction, therefore, it’s not surprising

that the threats of warfare are also proliferating.

The possibility of World War III specifically, moreover, seems to have special resonance for Americans, although it doesn’t actually take much to deem the latest conflict a potential WWIII. It’s the kind of threat that is consistently wielded as though it were brand new and shocking, when in fact such fears have been leveraged since before the Second World War was even over. The same alarm was subsequently sounded during the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, and the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. So far, the idea has served far more as a potential nightmare than an actual event. Maybe for Americans it expresses the twisted shadow side of the U.S.’s success in global domination. For decades, the United States has led the imperial sculpting of the world’s geopolitical landscape into a doomed, interconnected hellscape, in which every regional conflict has the potential to spiral into global warfare between international superpowers and their allies.

Yet the term WWIII also might be misleading, since it creates the false expectation that events would recur in the same way. The U.S. has not officially declared war on any other nation since World War II, yet has carried out countless military invasions, occupations, and economic and political interventions throughout the entire world. These kinds of interventions, a key characteristic of the U.S.’s period of global domination, totally muddies the simple contrast between “war” and “peace.” Is to speculate about a future “world war” not to ignore the reality of ongoing permanent war in which we already live?

We are now dangerously adjacent to an Agamben-esque analysis of warfare (as something like a “permanent state of exception”), so let’s quickly move right along. In discussing the potential outbreak of global warfare, we should not assume that the next war will take the same form as previous ones. So, based on what we can observe thus far, what might it look like? This is where it gets slightly more interesting for anarchists of action.

Setting the Stage

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a potential precursor to World War Three parallels how historians argue the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 was, in retrospect, a prelude to World War One. During the Russo-Japanese conflict, major world powers sent military attachés to watch and learn as artillery, mortars and machine guns were for the first time used in concert to kill 160,000 people, wounding another 200,000. They

took notes and figured they could up those numbers.

The Japanese came out victorious, kind of. On land, the Japanese outmaneuvered the Russians. At sea, they employed new naval tactics and a bit of espionage to completely destroy the Russian Baltic fleet. Then Teddy Roosevelt butted in and made a peace treaty in which the Japanese got to keep the land and ports covered in dead bodies, Russia didn't have to pay for anything, and Teddy got a Nobel Peace Prize.

This led to a bold and bitter imperial Japan on the rise, Russia embroiled in a civil war, and the rest of the world powers stockpiling shiny weapons with newfound fear in their hearts resulting from the fact that a small Asian power, modernized and armored, had taken on Russia. Tensions rose and the rest is history.

We are all now watching drone swarms mix with trench warfare. Hundreds of thousands of lives lost in a far-off corner of the world. The tension rises.

Changes

In attempting to understand today's changing forms of warfare and how they might affect us as anarchists, we can take up Marshall McLuhan's prediction from back in 1970: "World War III will be a guerrilla information war, with no divisions between military and civilian participation." This was a convenient theory for McLuhan, who was a communications theorist (academics love to conclude that the key to the world's problems lies in their own particular field of study). However, he was right that technological developments would produce significant changes in how war manifests today, specifically with regard to communications.

An example of this is the development of technologies that are able to escalate military warfare by disrupting civilian space and electrical infrastructure. For decades, China has been working on antisatellite missiles, which could be used to destroy most of the civilian satellites that provide GPS navigation, telecommunications, financial transactions, and other critical infrastructure for the U.S. economy. Reports also indicate that China now has super-electromagnetic (EMP) weapons, is capable of defending itself from EMP attacks, and has developed protocols for launching a first-strike attack. Such an attack could knock out power grids across the U.S. and cause long-term blackouts. Without functional power grids, the ability to resupply grocery stores and gas stations and other normal means of ensuring peoples' survival becomes extremely difficult. While the U.S. still has military superiority, it is said that these

kinds of unconventional tactics would win the conflict.

We have already seen that satellite communications have become crucial in warfare. Last February, a Russian cyber attack rendered thousands of Ukrainian military routers from U.S.-based company Viasat ineffective in the hours before Russia launched its full-scale invasion. A Ukrainian official described the attack at the time as "catastrophic." In addition to affecting Ukraine, it also knocked out service to thousands of Viasat customers in Poland, Italy and Germany, where several hundred wind turbines were affected.

According to a U.S. intelligence report leaked in 2023, China's cyber capabilities are significantly more sophisticated than the Viasat hack. They would seek to stop satellites from communicating with each other, relaying signals and orders to weapons systems, and sending back visual and intercepted electronic data. It is not clear whether the United States has similar capabilities.

War as Restructuring

In addition to providing information about these kinds of technological advances and what they might mean for future state warfare and counterinsurgency methods, closer study of some of the current conflicts reveal layers of strategy and intent that are not immediately obvious. In the background of its attempt to rout Hamas from Gaza, for example, is Israel's ambition to export gas to Europe and shift the balance of international resource dependency. Over the past decade, Israel has become an exporter rather than importer of natural gas. In late October of 2023, Prime Minister Netanyahu's government awarded 12 licenses to six companies for natural gas exploration off the Mediterranean, for gas finds that are valued at \$524 billion. Most of it will have to be sourced from within occupied Palestine. Moreover, a large gas field lies off of Gaza's coast, and Israel has been preventing the Palestinians from developing it since 1999. Israel's control over the Gaza region is thus crucial to its geopolitical strategy.

Israel's gas resources also have broader international significance, as Europe and its allies seek to reduce their resource dependence on Russia. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the sanctions placed on Russia, which caused a global energy crisis, President Biden and other governmental authorities met with Israel and pressured them to pursue the development of the Gaza Marine gas field. In cooperation with Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, Israel granted approval for the development of Gaza's gas field in June 2023.

WHAT THE FUCK DOES RECONSTRUCTION EVEN MEAN TO Y'ALL?

*A Critique of W.E.B. DuBois Movement School
& the Black Left in Philadelphia*

These developments put rumors of Israel's proposal to forcibly remove the entire Palestinian population from Gaza in a different light. Shortly prior to Hamas' October 7th attack on Israel, Netanyahu showed a map of Israel to the United Nations in which Palestine was not included. A leaked Israeli intelligence report from October 13 contained a proposal to move Gaza's 2.3 million residents to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. An opinion piece published in the Jerusalem Post more recently on December 25th, 2023, echoed this call for resettling Gazans in Sinai.

In addition to the development of Gaza's gas, proposals have been floated to build new export routes, for example an LNG terminal off of Israel's coast or a pipeline to Europe, although it's unclear how technically feasible this would be. As one commentator points out, "Natural gas, or 'LNG,' is being used as a political ploy around the world to deepen political relationships and economic interdependence as the world shifts from oil not out of morality but simply because oil reserves are running dry" (Donald, *Everybody Wants Gaza's Gas*). New export routes between Israel and Europe would solidify the U.S.'s global position as well, since it would create energy dependency on Israel, a nation-state that is essentially the U.S.'s colonial outpost in the Middle East.

Two months before Hamas' attack on Israel, the Pentagon approved a \$36.8 million U.S. troop facility on a secret base it maintains in the Israeli desert, 20 miles away from Gaza (Klippenstein, "U.S. Quietly Expands Secret Military Base in Israel"). The base will probably be used to support operations elsewhere in the Middle East and appears connected to this broader ambition of constructing a more concrete infrastructural connection between Israel, Europe, and the United States.

So who knows exactly what's next, whether 2024's warfare will look like the world wars of the past century, or whether the threats of World War III will ultimately simply translate into new and ever-more-gruesome forms of geopolitical restructuring. What we can say is that changes are coming — whether or not we call them war. ★



I read a report-back from some Black anarchists recently about the Eddie Izirry riots. While I had some disagreements with that text, I thought it was interesting how they critiqued the W.E.B. DuBois Movement School's statement. I decided to do a deeper dive. The W.E.B. DuBois Movement School for Abolition and Reconstruction sounded cool to me. From the name, it is clear that they root themselves in the Black Radical Tradition as they write about "abolition" and "reconstruction." That's my tradition. I love *Black Reconstruction*. The first time I read that book, it blew my mind. However, after reading their website, I was deeply unimpressed especially as it was clear that their politics were reflective of a tendency with the Black liberation movement that comrades and I have been critiquing for years. For this essay, I am going to critique their project and talk about what that means in a broader sense for the broader Black left and those who are non-black but see themselves aligned with the Black liberation movement.

On Criticism

Why are you doing this, naysayers will ask? Why are you dividing our movement? Why don't you join the project and offer internal criticism?

Well, there's a couple of a reasons. As a New Afrikan communist-anarchist, I was encouraged to see a project coming about that seemed to be *mostly* (Geo Maher is a whole white man) Black-led and orientated to DuBois, a scholar who has deeply impacted my own way of thought. However, unfortunately, from glancing at the website the W.E.B. DuBois Movement school seems to have many of the same problems that has plagued the Black Left and broader social movements since the 60s.

Despite this, I often have a reluctance to critique projects such as the W.E.B. DuBois School because I tend to be excited when there are projects that are mostly Black and draw from a tradition I consider to be my own. Despite this, the time for in-house critiques is over. The Black liberation movement has splintered into the black nonprofiteers, the black authoritarians and isolated few of us black revolutionaries who continue to stumble, walk and run alongside the isolated Black masses or on our own. I think that Black anarchists and militants should try to intervene from the outside of these spaces that capture our time and energy while building our

own thing. Learning from elders such as Ashanti Alston and Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, who were involved in the nonprofit sphere and black authoritarian spaces has made me understand that generally intervening in those spaces has been a waste of our time for Black anarchists over the past 30 years.

To make my position completely clear, I am someone who aspires to an anarchist movement that is not plagued by whiteness, petty bourgeois sub-cultural politics, ageism and various other problems. I don't want to be accused of being a critic of Black leftists while not critiquing the mostly White anarchist movement. To be completely clear, I believe that the ONLY WAY for anarchism as a movement in the United States to have any teeth, is for it to unify with the black liberation movement. That's why I personally continue to pay attention (even if it's critical) to Black leftist projects like the W.E.B. DuBois Movement for Abolition and Reconstruction while many of my Black anarchist comrades just keep it pushing. These projects despite my critiques represent an earnest and important attempt to engage with the Black Radical Tradition which is deeply important in my view. But the Black Radical Tradition has been full of debates from the debates between Garvey and DuBois to the debates between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Sanyika Shakur used to roast the New Afrikan BPP. Hell, even Cedric Robinson wrote critiques of the Nation of Islam. Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin wrote critiques of Black socialist groups in Atlanta. There's a long history of this. The Black Left needs to be more okay with political differences and critique. Black leftists have constantly been in debates with one another. We flex our intellectual muscles and sharpen our praxis through critique.

What does Reconstruction mean to ya'll?

Aight, time to go in. Let's start with this quote from the website.

"This we know more clearly today than ever before: that there can be no true abolition without reconstruction. We cannot hope to tear down oppressive, carceral institutions without radically rethinking—and rebuilding—the violently racist and patriarchal capitalist world that called them into being."

Reconstruction sounds nice. It does. But I don't understand how we even talking about Reconstruction when we're nowhere close to tearing down any sort of carceral or oppressive institutions. It's cool to do conjecture about the need for Reconstruction in the future but especially as organizers who claim to be "deeply rooted in local struggles" the idea that especially here in Philadelphia that we're anywhere close to destroying carceral institutions is honestly a big joke. The police continue to murder Black folks with impunity, Black people continue to be

incarcerated, the gentrifiers continue to turn Philadelphia into the 6th borough of their NYC gentrification project. We are nowhere close to any sorta abolition. Why then, do folks like the Abolition school feel the need to "rethink" and "rebuild" when we are nowhere close to destruction of the violently racist and patriarchal capitalist world? Well, the reason is simple. The emphasis on "rebuilding" and "rethinking" is a way for folks in the project to distance themselves from the actual revolutionary activity that is happening when Black youth fight the police and destroy property. This places the project as the managers of the revolution "teaching and educating the masses" rather than building alongside and learning from them in their process of destroying the world. Furthermore, I think these desires for "rethinking and rebuilding" are ultimately utopian in their aims.

Phil Neel discusses this in his recent Endnotes text "Forest and Factory." I think we need (especially as anarchists) to let go of trying to prefigure any sort of revolutionary society when we are so utterly immersed within capitalist realism. As Neel describes,

"We would instead emphasize that a communist revolution is, fundamentally, an anthropological revolution. This means that it is genuinely difficult to understand what a better world would look like at the quotidian level, because such a world would also reshape those who inhabit it. The identifiable material and social prerequisites of this world (such as and end to scarcity in all essentials, ecological rehabilitation, and non-domination) would enable the blooming of new cultures and lifeways that are difficult or impossible for us to fully imagine."

Fundamentally for me, I think that if we understand revolution as anthropological then the idea of "rebuilding" or "re-envisioning" as the primary work of the Left is an authoritarian project. As subjects thoroughly immersed in capitalism, the idea that small groups of leftists can simply "rethink" capitalism is ridiculous and naive. Revolution isn't made by small groups of people, it is made by the self-activity of the oppressed and exploited. By millions of people. Revolutionaries ourselves are only a small segment of that group of people so to hoist all of the "rethinking" as the primary purpose of a revolutionary education project is wack. Rather our goal should be study the self-activity of masses themselves.

I got another beef with their website that I'm gonna point to cause I feel like it's an ahistorical claim.

"This is the lesson of 150 years of US history, in which slavery was mostly abolished through the courageous action of enslaved people and abolitionist militants, but after which little else changed. Capitalist exploitation and racist fear conspired to build new institutions to replace the old, from convict leasing to Jim Crow, segregation,

hyper-policing and mass incarceration.”

It seems a bit bizarre and lowkey wrong to point to the failure of the slavery abolition movement to completely transform society due to people not “radically rethinking” as the website implies. In fact, the real reason that Reconstruction did not succeed was due in many ways to the white counter-revolution that murdered countless Black people across the South as well as the treachery of the federal government. It wasn’t because there was a lack of “rethinking or rebuilding”...in fact the Black people who had quite literally built America were in the process of building a new society and were instead crushed by white counter-revolution. DuBois describes various new forms of social organization that were developed during Reconstruction by Black freedmen. It is honestly disrespectful to Black history when paramilitary white groups like the Klan working in a cross alliance with the Planter class actively repressed Black people. But again, the invocation of DuBois and the broader Black historical lineage is simply a rhetorical point, not a serious engagement with what his work means in our current context. Essentially, the use of DuBois and other Black revolutionaries is just window-dressing for more boring activist subculture with authoritarian impulses.

Failures and Cowardice of Vanguard

This leads into a quote from a lesser known Black revolutionary Kimathi Mohammed about how organization relates to spontaneity. Kimathi Mohammed wrote a great little book called “Organization and Spontaneity” that I really like. I think his book helps elucidate the failings of groups like The W.E.B. DuBois Movement School when it comes to real struggle.

“The most serious mistake every political leader has made is not confiding in the masses. Instead they have placed their confidence in organization. But the type of organization that is essential for a transformation of any society can only be created through Spontaneity. That is, the people at the point of production and the exchange process are the only ones who can straighten out the mess created by the capitalist mode of production. They are the only ones that can organize a new society.” - Kiamathi Mohammed

This quote underlies the politics inherent in the W.E.B. DuBois Movement school in Philly. The implication in their work is the masses are incapable of fighting or transforming the world on their own terms without the proper guidance. Their whole premise of political education is based upon the idea that “political education” is lacking in Philly’s movements. While I’m in favor of people reading (I’ve been involved in more reading groups than I can count), we learn how to

act through acting. Ideally, we act alongside the most oppressed in their struggles when they decide to fight. I am in agreement with Kiamathi Mohammed, the most important type of organization that transforms society is spontaneity. The only ones who can create a new society are the ones who are currently trying to destroy it.

Community Organizing is not Revolutionary Organizing

But well, a naysayer would say, we at the Abolition School do act alongside the masses. We study the world to change it they would say. Well how does the W.E.B. DuBois movement school think about working alongside the masses and the most oppressed?

Unfortunately, the way they think about struggle alongside the masses is through the lens of community based activist campaigns as opposed to non-activist mediated struggle such as riots or blockades. This is indicative of the different groups involved in the initial meetup that was reported on the website. They reference a couple different organizations including Sunrise Movement, Students for the Preservation of Chinatown, and The People’s UC Townhomes. These formations are all plagued by the activist campaign-based model. In *Movement for No Society*, this model is critiqued in a good way.

“The key problem with the activist campaign model is that its strategy is to build mass support, which means the organizers are always attempting to adapt their ideas and tactics to a public audience that they imagine to be less radical. Ultimately, we have little control over how an anti-authoritarian project is being represented by people and institutions with power, since most of those people that the campaign wants to appeal to, including much of the public, have interests that are ultimately antagonistic to ours. But for activists, caring about a campaign’s image inevitably becomes a form of self-imposed control, constraining what activists are willing to do or talk about. Developing a mass social movement becomes the goal, rather than a strategy.

Despite this strategy’s flaws, today when most people think of resistance, they think of a mass movement campaign that makes demands of our authoritarian overlords. The idea that other forms of resistance are possible – and are happening everywhere – is being erased from public memory.”

This is important. The three organizations (Sunrise Movement, Students for the Preservation of Chinatown, and The People’s UC Townhomes) previously all follow this model described in the above quotation. They remain struggles that mostly involve a small activist

clique that tends to orient its “radical activity” through protests, speeches, and occasionally non-violent direct action such as sit ins or something. Mostly student-based in the case of all three. And student-led definitely in the case of the first two. Students, while marginalized in some ways, are not the most oppressed group of people. Anarchists like me are opposed to the management of struggle by organizers especially by those who claim to have more education. We believe that organization is ultimately about the ability to act together to take action which often runs counter to the more traditional activist/organizer approaches.

On the Qualitative Differences Internal to the Black Struggle

However, the naysayers will shout, The People’s UC Townhomes struggle is black-led, how can you critique that? Well, our friends who wrote the campaign based strategy critique have an answer for that as well.

“In Philadelphia, as elsewhere, many anarchists have chosen an activist strategy of community organizing and reform, usually following the self-appointed leaders of marginalized communities. Many bank on building a mass movement, which has involved them policing the initiatives of more conflictual anarchists, refusing to explain, engage with or otherwise support the insurrectionary activities that have become more prevalent in this city over the past few years. As we have discussed, even if some radicals did wish to support activities that the state deems illegal, their organizations are structurally positioned so that they genuinely cannot encourage such activities without losing the legitimacy on which their whole strategy is based.”

- from *Movement for No Society*

This is important. Many activists and radicals especially those claiming to support Black liberation will tout the importance of “black-led” struggles as the key to a mass movement. While I do not disagree with the importance of Black-led struggles, not all Black-led struggles have the same politics. Black people are not a monolith as it happens. A good example of this is the George Floyd uprising as well as the Eddie Izzard looting on September 26th. In those uprisings, large numbers of people fought the police or attacked capital. These actions were illegal and insurrectionary. These uprisings were qualitatively different from the UC Townhomes struggle in how people acted and what type of people those struggles attracted. Many of the people who fought in the uprising were Black. In fact, the W.E.B. DuBois website literally promotes a black-led militant struggle with the photo of a burning precinct in Minneapolis. But it contradicts itself while promoting safe reformist struggles such as the People’s

UC Townhomes that are legible for middle-class activists. It is critical to understand the qualitative differences in tactics between the activist campaigns (even if they are led by Black people) and Black uprisings where proletarians fight the state and capital. Again, it’s okay if people use different tactics but as an anarchist and revolutionary, I am wholly uninterested in reformist struggles without a militant capacity when it’s clear that other segments of the Black working class in Philadelphia are capable of fighting in more militant ways. I’ll refer back to Phil Neel again in his recent interview published on Brooklyn Rail.

“So the most basic precondition is that you absolutely have to be involved in those major events of mass politics that exceed the status quo. If you consider yourself a communist (or a socialist or an anarchist or whatever) you can’t fucking stay home and do nothing when there’s a big riot or a major strike in your city, posting “smart” commentary about it online afterwards. Obviously, we’re all going to have certain limits of safety, ability, and responsibility (to our kids, our families, our friends, etc.) when it comes to such things, and I’m not saying you need to go and do something that’s going to get you arrested. Just that you have to show up if you can and, if you can’t, you have to be supportive and open to what is happening, understanding that it will be messy and ugly at times. And the point is not just to physically be present and observe or to “support” in the sense of posting a BLM hashtag on your Instagram, but to materially support those uncontrollable and excessive elements that make the whole thing threatening in the first place, rather than trying to rein these things in—so you can’t show up and try to lead a fucking march to city hall when people have just been burning police stations and looting the shopping district, because even though you may think that you’re trying to push the movement to take a step forward in political awareness, you’re actually standing in front of it and pushing it backwards in the more important practical sense, which then means that you are, in fact, pushing it backward politically as well” (Neel 2023).

Again, I would place the W.E.B. DuBois School and most of the Black left in Philadelphia within the second group of people that Neel describes in this text. This is most clearly indicated by how these Black leftist forces were completely absent during the most recent mass Black rebellion in late 2023. This is embarrassing to me as a black revolutionary that most of our organizations are irrelevant to the Black rebellion. But again, the dominant academic, vanguardist and careerist orientation of these leftists makes them unwilling and unable to interact with the “uncontrollable and excessive” elements that are leading the Black revolt. By highlighting the work of small activist organizations rather than studying the methods and character of mass revolts, these Black leftist groups show their irrelevance to the broader social struggle. And to be

quite honest, these groups are incapable of interacting with the “uncontrollable and excessive elements” because if they were involved in those struggles, they’d realize broadly their own irrelevance so it is easier and safer to stay within an activist framework that caters largely to college students and academics.

In Closing

I often find myself at odds (in jest most of the time) with many of my comrades as someone who locates themselves within the insurrectionary anarchist milieu when it comes to the question of organizing. So on the face of things, a movement school is something that I should agree with. Unfortunately, the Movement school doesn’t seem to be anything new. While political education is critical, simply replicating the same boring activist orientated struggles as your political conclusion from study isn’t interesting at all. I hope we can develop political education structures that instead try to focus upon teaching people how to think and how to act in ways that don’t replicate the activist logics mentioned earlier.

The issues I’ve discussed here in this article, while specific to a Black Philly activist subculture, need to be understood as a broader problem as it relates to the Black Left as it exists across the country. The Black Left is largely academic, activist oriented, and career focused. These qualities alongside their cowardice is why they remain irrelevant to the real movement to abolish the present state of things.

We learn how to act by acting. Anarchists in Philly and around the country have been doing this for a while. We train, we fight, we study and we support our people who get locked up. I think there’s a lot of problems with the anarchist milieu but labeling the anarchist scene as “white” or “sub-cultural” or “overly critical” is honestly corny and increasingly untrue. I also don’t think the Black Left which is deeply wedded (apart from the Black nationalists) to multi-racial organizing has ANY place to speak on subcultural politics that cater to whites or Non-Black POC. However, I think anarchists in Philly (and across the country) could stand to work more on building deeper connections between the Black liberation movement. Some of the work that RAM-Philly did back in 2019 was attempting that. Before they folded, the organization SM28 pushed the perspective that Black liberation was the vanguard struggle. Not vanguard in the authoritarian sense but in the sense that Black struggle was the leading force for resistance movements in the United States. Despite my reluctance about the DuBois School, I think a renewal

in anarchist study groups that provide alternatives to spaces like the DuBois School is important so we can provide frameworks around Black liberation that aren’t rooted in an activist nonprofit orientation. And so we can add to the “terrible revolts” as the comrades in the Eddie Izizarry text discuss.

Finally, one last quote from Phil Neel.

“Communism is not the loving daydream of a better world, then, but something cultivated first from rage at what the world is not. We do not glimpse it. We feel it in moments of fever—of cities burning, of order breaking down, of loved ones dying slow and unremarkable deaths...Because a better world is not built backwards from the future but from where we stand now, at the peak of the mountain of bones that constitutes the pre-history of the human species.”

As DuBois documents in *Black Reconstruction*, the former slaves built the world in the South that they desired after the Black General Strike, we must build the world we want from where we stand now. But that cannot begin if we believe that revolution occurs through speeches, book talks and panels. It is only through acting that we become revolutionary. Regardless of how much Fanon, CLR James or DuBois books you read, those unwilling to act courageously alongside the oppressed will be relegated to the dustbins of history.

Suggestions for reading:

Spontaneity and Organization by Kiamathi Mohammed (Please actually read it cause so many of yall dont read anything in the 60s that wasn’t Huey Newton)

The Black Jacobins by CLR James

Black Movements in America by Cedric Robinson (whole text is dope)

Black Marxism by Cedric Robinson (actually read it, don’t just use Black Radical Tradition out of context)

Movement for No Society (mostly the chapters on Black Struggle and Activism, I’m less into some of the other stuff)

Maroon The Implacable (Philly classic)

Dreams of Black Revolt (another banger)

Forest and Factory by Phil A Neel ★