



WHAT WENT DOWN

December 22 - A banner is dropped in Center City against the construction of an arena in Chinatown and in solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle. “76 Place Will Never Be Built From Philly to Palestine, stop land grabs.”

January 6 - Neo-nazi Sara Kaufman, a leader of the group S14, dies of a heart attack.

January 26 - The door and windows of the District Attorney’s office are broken during a citywide celebration of the Eagles victory leading up to the Superbowl.

February 9 - Following the Eagles Superbowl victory, celebrations break out across the city including violence against police and property.

March 21 - A raucous autonomous group visits UPenn president Larry Jameson’s home early in the morning in an action against UPenn’s complicity in the Zionist genocide of Palestinians.

June 10 and 14 - Autonomously organized anti-ICE demonstrators clash with police in Center City in solidarity with the uprising in Los Angeles.

June 15 - Neo-nazis Samuel Kieffer Bray and Sean Lemley of Atlantic Nationalist Club are doxxed.

June 20 - A call goes out to participate in a game of Camover, in which participants disable cameras across Philadelphia.

July 1-9 - Workers from District Council 33 strike for a new contract. Strike actions include pickets, sabotage, confrontations with scabs, and arson.

Early July - Three cameras are disabled by “Blood Moon.” “Happy hunting!”

Mid-July - A coordinated “work party” at Bartrams North writes graffiti, cuts a fence, sabotages a bulldozer, paints over surveillance cameras, and disables an electrical box. “This work party is an example of coordination between individuals and affinity groups, and an example of how action can look beyond demonstrations.”

July 22 - A demonstration against borders walks through Center City spreading propaganda, putting trash in the street, writing graffiti, and vandalizing a police car. “No one is coming to save us. The time to act is now.”

July 22 - Four cameras in Malcolm X Park are disabled with paint in solidarity with Benjamin Song and Jahki McCray. “Solidarity with everyone fighting ICE and police!”

August 8 - Franconi’s Pizza in Wildwood, NJ is the target of a bomb threat following documentation of fascist symbols in the restaurant.★

INS & OUTS

Out:

- “real democracy”
- anti-fascism
- respectability politics

- worrying about leftists
- organizing the proletariat
- gatekeeping skills

- phone in your pocket
- weekly meeting
- campism
- tape
- big group chats
- driving to the demo

- abolition
- another counter-insurgency workshop

In:

- anti-american sentiment
- anti-capitalism
- prisoner support & anti-repression
- doing us
- self-organization

- constantly circulating technical zines
- phone on your dresser
- weekly dinner
- anti-authoritarianism
- wheatpaste
- paper fliers
- pulling up on the stolen Indego
- demolition
- doing insurgency

Still In:

- paying with cash
- black hoodies
- TOR & TAILS
- phoneless walks ★



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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.

genocidal, white-supremacist state. It is the culmination of many European invasions resulting in a settler-colonial nation, attempting to expel and eradicate indigenous peoples to build a new white homeland. The enslavement of so many people, most notably the kidnapping of black people from Africa for this purpose, built a new empire for these conquerors. There was less need for civility when those populations could be othered to the point of being considered less than human. Whether the American critics were made uncomfortable by that truth deep inside is beyond the scope of this essay, but the current Federal Administration (and many more local administrations) have once more removed their mask of civility and have begun openly pushing for their idealized white American homeland.

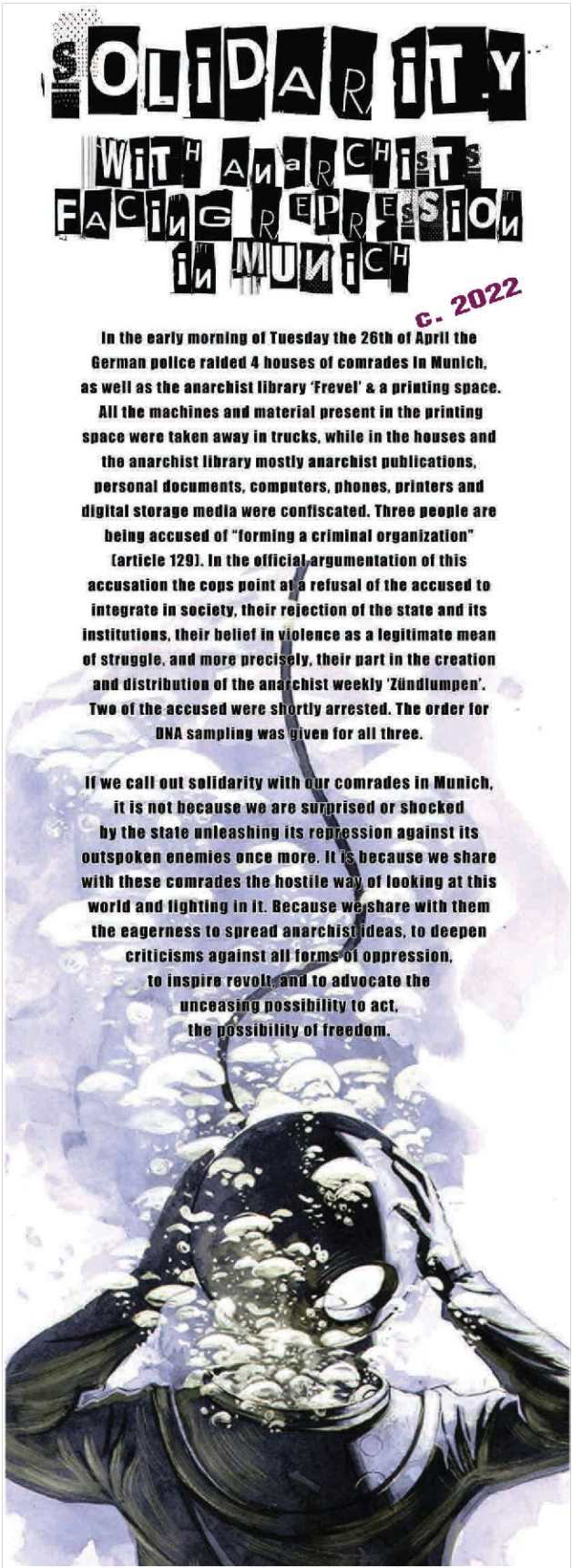
The question is, at what point do the white Americans allegedly resisting this government see the benefit of bombing infrastructure to stop the conquerors? At what point do Steinbeck’s townspeople dynamiting rail lines and mines resonate with common American citizens, particularly those who see the current American government’s policies as a continuation of its founding principles? This is why the portrayal of the characters feels farther afield of an American reality, because the common citizen in this country is complicit, if not actively a part of, the conquering force.

The sense of duty to follow orders fits into the paradigm of respecting government and its civil processes. Most of us are the beneficiaries of a quality of life carved out by empire at the expense of so many others. The integration of a wider variety of people into those lifestyles has been a liberal strategy to quell dissent, or at least channel it into less volatile means.

The familiar misinformation campaigns, and unreliable narratives spread by the conqueror’s media proliferate in this story, but their metaphor that “the flies have conquered the flypaper,” can can be flipped on its head in the context of a digital world. It’s well documented that the web has become rife with misinformation and conspiracy theories, some also perpetuated by the government -- and the intentional enshittification of the internet by search engines making their sites less accurate, while offering AI answers to every question, has further fueled this trend.

Returning to the story, there is something inspiring when the conquering military finds its rank and file growing paranoid. They begin to realize their government is lying to them, and they also realize that they’ve come to be surrounded by the townspeople. The traps laid and the crimes of opportunity are both moving. But while the noble end of the town’s top bureaucrat might occasionally be an accurate portrayal in some places, it does not resonate here. Maybe if more space had been available for Steinbeck to warm us to this character, we could

overcome the disdain for his position, but a single official’s death does little when they are viewed as complicit in an ongoing conquest. The debt has not been paid through a single blood-letting, and our civility creates worthless impasses.★





15. How do we recover from longterm injuries? If those injuries become disabling for long periods of time, what happens to our comrades who can no longer train?

16. When is the appropriate time to initiate the forty person bare knuckle brawl at the smoker?

17. Do we need more anarchist martial arts promotional videos? Anarchist Muay Thai TikToks? If we start making promotional content, will it draw the attention of enemies like anti-social media anarchos (jk jk, a lot of us at the gym hate phones too), clout-chasing activists, communist baddie podcast influencers and the Feds? Maybe we want the attention of the communist baddies? Enemies to lovers arc?

18. What is the role of the one-time anarchist fight workshop? Should we still be doing them?

19. How do we integrate political education into our training in better ways?

20. Should every anarchist Muay Thai gym have their own flag? Is joking about “franchising” the gym mean that we’re actually part of the trend of everyone these days being a Maoist?

21. What’s most effective when fighting an ICE agent? A thigh kick or a teep to the chest?

22. Are smoker report-backs really necessary? When you could be burning down the city instead of hiding in the safety of the rented warehouse, maybe we should ask ourselves what is the role of the anarchist social event?

23. How do we relate to youth especially Black youth and youth of color as some white youth seem intent on organizing their own fascist active clubs? Our projects seem to skew 25 and up, what could we do to change that? Or is that just the nature of the project? If often seems that only old traumatized and politically disillusioned anarchists tryna train Muay Thai, why is that?

24. Anarchist Muay Thai theme song? Why are the fights apart from Philly always so quiet?

25. Is the real purpose of anarchist Muay Thai the friends we made along the way? ★



## REVIEW: THE MOON IS DOWN

A foreign military has invaded a town. There was an informant on the ground who simultaneously led the town’s small militia away while the military power took over, and ambushed the militia upon their return. This unnamed power, a not-so-vague stand in for the Nazis, tries to appeal to the town’s well liked mayor, trying to trap them into civility by saying they’d rather not bring about violence – in fact, the killing of some members of the militia could’ve been avoided if they just surrendered...if they just knew that they’d been beat.

Released in 1942, John Steinbeck’s *The Moon is Down* is a curious novella in that it was funded by the predecessors of the CIA to help grow anti-fascist sentiment in the United States. It is neither great literature nor overt propaganda, but it is a decent little story. Actually focusing on the human element within its landscape, it rightfully reads as a drama – in fact it was also performed as a play on many occasions as it illicitly circulated across the European continent in many languages, countering the German occupation. There is something familiar in its characters in that Steinbeck accurately portrays common citizens, even if it’s hard to imagine US Americans in the 21st Century actually taking up acts of sabotage to stop the conquests of fascism. The citizens seem equally as annoyed and inconvenienced by the arrival of this military occupation, as they are defensive of their homeland – whether as patriots or more often because, as one character simply describes, “they don’t like to be conquered.”

There is still an air of civility in the interactions between the local government and the occupying military force, right to the very end, somewhat normalizing the concept of conquering and being conquered early in the story – if only problematizing it as an old concept. The conduct in such a situation has become unfamiliar once more, and the administration doesn’t know how to “receive the conqueror” – they don’t know “what is proper” etiquette. The conqueror also tries to maintain civility, and its Lieutenant even appears sympathetic at times, even while appealing for the town to cease their resistance.

This speaks to what was criticized in the US reception of the novella, but lauded in other countries as a more accurate portrayal of the invading forces: all parties are shown to be human. There are no caricatures of evil, only some that feel a duty to follow orders and others with a duty to resist. There is fear on both sides – passion, too, if only a bit stilted in the short story. Perhaps the discomfort of those Americans critics lay in something else, too.

It has been said many times over that the the US is a

## WORDS MEAN THINGS: LEADERSHIP

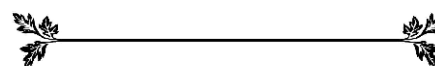
As anarchist ideas become more popular and widespread they often lose meaning. We have witnessed the great violence done to old favorites like mutual aid or direct action. This Words Mean Things will flip the script a bit, this term has not received enough hostility and this author has seen it reconciled with anti-authoritarian notions of freedom too many times. So in the spirit of fomenting some negativity let’s look at the word leadership.

To put it most simply leadership either refers to the leaders of a group, or the position or ability to lead. For leadership to work there needs to be followership, otherwise it is a failure. Directing, commanding, guiding, governing, these are the things leadership entails.

None of these things model non-hierarchical, let alone anti-hierarchical relations, yet too often radicals will advocate for leadership while claiming to espouse horizontal or non-hierarchical politics or visions of freedom. Terms like misleadership or collective leadership, the putting of quotes around the word leader when it refers to someone who is especially oppressive, or talking about “real leaders” pulls discussion away from the fact that any leading that has resulted in following was successful leadership. It may not have led to anything good, but the fact that it was followed means it was leadership. For example, if someone were to lead a group of people into a meatgrinder, though the consequences would be grisly, no one can reasonably argue that they didn’t lead.

As anarchists we are critical of all hierarchies, we aim to have direct and horizontal relations. Leadership and leaders have no place in our visions of freedom except as people and systems to undermine. Instead, anarchic ways of living and struggling revolve around self-organization, individually and collectively. Deciding for ourselves the what and how of our activities without top down or outside direction.

Like other anarchist concepts horizontal organization is having a moment of popularity in the left and among other not-necessarily-anarchist people discussing struggle. Many of those talking about horizontal relations genuinely envision freedom as a leaderless existence, but some are using these concepts to make their authoritarian ideas more palatable while secretly hoping to be the ones holding the reins, stay sharp. ★



## IS IT FASCISM?

Since President Trump came into office for the second time, the country has been overwhelmed by an onslaught of incredibly repressive executive orders and legislation. This onslaught has been virtually inseparable, moreover, from the hapless, disingenuous, liberal outrage machine through which most of the news coverage of it has been articulated. By describing Trump’s regime as a fascist one that threatens the rule of law and order, liberals and progressives portray Trump’s administration as an aberration and promote democracy and the U.S. constitution as our savior.

As usual, most radicals have not been very helpful either. Many have hopped onto the liberal antifascism bandwagon, without thinking through the fact that this “antifascist” discourse is coming from liberals and that this group always has the absolute worst ulterior motives. This is especially important to keep in mind here in Philadelphia, which is one of the nation’s major bases for reestablishing democracy and, as part of that process, channeling peoples’ rage and discontent back into voting and the electoral system.

The reality is that American democracy has always been based in the elevation of some and the extreme oppression of the rest. This includes the brutal exploitation of racial minorities at home, heartless cruelty against migrants coming from abroad, and consistent violent interventions into other nations especially over the course of the past century. From Guatemala to Vietnam to Iraq and now Gaza, these atrocities are always in the name of “democracy.” That’s what democracy looks like; that’s what it’s always been. And if what the Trump administration is doing is mostly legal, isn’t this just a more unapologetic side of democracy in action?

**“American democracy has always been based in the elevation of some and the extreme oppression of the rest.”**

And what about the part that capitalism plays in all this? Conveniently missing from all the talk about fascism is capitalism as a global system and how its needs shape the world that political authorities have to navigate. All nation-states, all elected officials, all policy decisions are subject to these considerations. Some of Trump’s economic decisions – portrayed as insane and random by the media – make some amount of sense, sort of, if we understand that capitalism has been facing a crisis of accumulation for decades and that governments are having to make increasingly frantic and doomed attempts to resolve it.

This is part of the reason for Trump’s tariffs, which are part of a worldwide trend away from globalization and towards ethnonationalism. The U.S.’s national debt, meanwhile, is in fact unsustainable and dangerous from the standpoint of capitalism, and economists have been warning about this for decades now. So again, Trump’s massive governmental reorganization and budget cuts, while unhinged and chaotic in how they’ve been targeted, are necessary from the standpoint of capitalism.

While the government’s ethnonationalist economic decisions are in part a response to a globaleconomic crisis, so is the heinous and oppressive cultural environment it is fostering with the enthusiastic assistance of much of its people. For a while now, it’s been getting harder and harder for more and more people to survive, let alone live, in the U.S. This, coupled with increasing environmental disaster and misery, is potentially a very bad thing for the government. So at times like these, we tend to see a lot of cultural propaganda that redirects attention away from the root causes of peoples’ misery. This typically includes a renewal of traditional values, such as religion, right-wing views, gender conformity, and so on. The commercialization of relationships and the return of traditional views around marriage can likewise also be understood as a result of widespread desperation about financial stability.

On the other hand, while we can use fancy language and economic analysis to talk about all this, at the end of the day it’s not that complicated. I think it’s important to emphasize the economic reasons for what’s going on, to return our attention to capitalism as a major root cause rather than just seeing what’s happening as the result of the random whims of our meglomaniac president. But in addition to being a capitalist hegemon, America is a settler state, and right now the settlers are going wild. When white people panic about losing their dominance in this country to non-white migrants, that’s classic settler behavior. When some people panic about other people getting too free with their gender and sexuality or bodily autonomy, that’s them asserting a need for patriarchal control that is a cornerstone of settler colonial states. For a settler country to succeed, its people need to be cruel, violent, entitled, and obsessed with racial hierarchy and control.

As for the question of how fascism fits into all this, there are two competing definitions of fascism and how it relates to U.S. politics. The first understands fascism as a historically specific phenomenon, distinct from democratic governance, originating in Italy with the rise of the Blackshirts street formations and the demand for hierarchical, disciplined, ethnocultural unity. The second way of thinking says that the United States has always been fascist. This line of thought has historically been especially present in the Black radical tradition. In 1936,

Langston Hughes wrote that fascism “is a new name for that kind of terror the Negro has always faced in America.” The first definition understands fascism as a very specific type of right-wing nationalism, while the second sees it as an inherent feature of oppressive societies.

Both of these positions have different advantages in how they point us towards liberation. By defining fascism as qualitatively distinct from democratic governance, the first definition helps us understand that democracy itself is a specific method of white supremacist control. Vaguely defined as a form of government in which power comes from the people, in reality democracies have always been controlled by a privileged minority. It is a method of control that is typically more effective for maintaining power, since, because it claims to include everyone in governmental decision-making, it is able to easily “recuperate revolutionary movements and co-opt popular values so that they not only protect themselves from their own underclasses but enlist those underclasses to help manage the processes of exploitation” (Gelderloos, *Diagnostic of the Future*).

**“What this boils down to is that America doesn’t need fascism to maintain a regime of hyperexploitative racial control.”**

This democratic approach to controlling a population, combined with the project of colonial conquest and settlement of the territory that is now known as the U.S., has enabled the U.S.’s specific brand of white supremacy. Democracy claims to give everyone equal rights and inclusion, but the state has the power to determine who is a citizen and deserves those rights. Democracies have always waged war, including genocidal campaigns, against peoples who lived differently (for example, people who do not accept property ownership) and are thus not considered by democratic nation-states to deserve human rights. And because of the democratic values of equality and individual initiative, those genocidal campaigns have historically been seen as the personal responsibility of each American citizen and have been voluntarily taken up by most of its white population.

What this boils down to is that America doesn’t need fascism to maintain a regime of hyperexploitative racial control. From its earliest days, it has been maintaining such a regime in the name of the “democracy” that liberals are now longing to return to. When we agitate for freedom, then, we should not be agitating for “democracy.” Democracy is actually a very specific form of unfreedom and always has been.

of the aisle. Beside the rows, to everyone’s left, and directly in front of the art works installed on the walls.

At this point, he has abandoned the step ladder. Instead, he eyes a podium holding up a sculpture, which is sharing the aisle with him. He puts his hands around the podium as if to test its weight. All of a sudden, he lifts the podium up and begins to carry it down the aisle with the sculpture still on top. As the sculpture wobbles precariously atop the podium, I am reminded of the time Morea visited me at a library archive.

*It was 10 years ago in New York City. We decided to meet at the Tamiment Library at NYU to look at their collection of Up Against the Wall/Motherfucker materials. There are a lot of rules and procedures at a library archive. I had been through it many times and knew the drill. So, I signed in, filled out the request forms, and patiently sat at an assigned table, while I waited for Morea to arrive.*

*I looked up at some point and noticed Morea was stuck at the front desk. I quickly realized the problem: they wanted him to sign in and asked him for identification. He had refused and the librarians were baffled. After what seemed like a long time, we were able to explain to one of the archivists that Morea created materials they held in their collection and, finally, bypassed their bureaucracy.*

This memory flashes through my mind as the sculpture threatens to fall off the podium. Before that could happen though, a very distressed event host bolts out from behind the winetable and runs down the aisle to collect the sculpture. Morea politely hands it off, oblivious of the host’s cold sweat, and then proceeds to drag the podium into position.

The pillows are retrieved from the stepladder, and he stacks them on top of the podium. Once everything is in place, he props himself against the pillows to begin his talk. From my vantage point, Morea looks like one of those classic silhouettes of a leaning cowboy.

I remember that he began the talk — microphones long abandoned — by broaching the subject of art and its role in revolution. Morea provided what must have been a complex and sophisticated takedown of an artwork’s status as a commodity, and the vital need for creative acts outside of and against institutions. For my money, his point was best made in his actions before the talk. ★



**HAS ANARCHIST MUAY THAI GONE TOO FAR? SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE MOVEMENT**

*A quick note: Anarchist martial arts culture is a new phenomenon in the United States. It is generally a welcome one in the author’s view. Here’s a few questions the author is pondering.*

1. How do we scale up and increase our capacity for training?
2. Should we even desire to scale up?
3. What model is best? Forward facing, semi-closed or secret? Or something else?
4. What is the role of these projects in terms of supporting revolt? Will these projects support revolt and resistance as it happens? Perhaps that has already happened?
5. Can we riot if we’re too tired from doing a thousand kicks on the bag?
6. Do we need mascots?
7. How should we relate to non-political gyms and sympathetic fighters in our cities as our movement grows?
8. Is “de-arresting” on its own a useful skill to train? What about more complicated group formations?
9. Are smokers the most useful way to organize meet-ups between different fight projects?
10. Should smokers have music during the fights?
11. Why do some of these projects break through the racial segregation common in the anarchist space? Why do some others not do that? How can we further interrogate this question?
12. How do we resist specialization?
13. Do we need our own branded Muay Thai shorts? What are the security culture ramifications of branding your gym, everyone wearing the same t-shirt and yelling the name like idiots at the smoker?
14. Should spinning back elbows be allowed if you are doing a “friendly spar” with the tiqqunist cadres/socialist gun-bros/anarchist complainers of the world?



Philly, from the demo-attack on the new Olympic Tower Apartments on May Day in 2024 to the smashing of almost all the first-floor windows on the new and widely hated monstrosity The Linden in November, which included a painted message that just read, “Fuck this shit.” That latter attack was never claimed — it needed no explanation. Experimentation with coordinated attack in this city, bringing together different elements within the anarchist space, and introducing newer people to direct action, is still happening through anti-development action.

Further Reading:

*Anti-Gentrification Direct Actions, 2013-2018* ★



ANTI-GENTRIFICATION DIRECT ACTIONS  
PHILADELPHIA 2013 - 2018



## REPORTBACK ON THE 10 MINUTES BEFORE A TALK BY BEN MOREA IN PHILADELPHIA

Ten minutes before Ben Morea began his talk and at least 11 minutes before socialists in the audience began to needle him with annoying questions, I took a seat near the front of the artist-run gallery space at the Da Vinci Art Alliance. This was July 11th at an event organized by Lot 49 Books to launch Morea’s new memoir, called *Full Circle: Life in Rebellion*.

Morea is best known in the anarchist space as the co-founder of two groups, Black Mask and Up Against the Wall/Motherfucker. In a discussion led by the book’s editor, Sabu Kohso, Morea recounted the emergence of these groups out of the avant-garde art

world and 1960s counterculture, and their subsequent experiments in anarchist informal organizing. This included the popularization, in the American context, of affinity groups, amongst many other things.

Too many things to cover here. In fact, this reportback won’t get to anything that happened during the event. It will be limited to the action before Morea’s talk began.

The gallery space at the Da Vinci Art Alliance is one of those long hallways that — for events like these — are packed with a dozen rows of chairs. A narrow pathway separates the chairs from the art lining the walls. The front row of chairs where I am seated faces a couch set up for two speakers with microphones. The wine tabled at the entrance — next to the freshly printed copies of Morea’s books — seems too far away from me.

***“All of a sudden, he lifts the podium up and begins to carry it down the aisle with the sculpture still on top.”***

Morea enters after most of the chairs in the audience are full. Although there are few photos of him available, he is almost immediately recognizable, even for people who have never seen him before. Underneath his white cowboy hat, he wears a handlebar mustache and long hair. On his waist is an engraved belt buckle and, in his hand, a carved walking stick. He looks a little older than the last time I saw him, pre-pandemic.

When he gets past the rows of chairs, he eyes the couch suspiciously and remains standing. After a long pause, he grabs an open chair from the front row and turns it around to face the audience. One of his friends holds his arm to help lower him into the chair. Some words pass between them and a moment later someone brings him a stack of pillows.

Morea tries stacking the cushions on the chair and craning his neck to check the view. Frowning, he motions to the event hosts, pointing at the chair. Something still isn’t working. The hosts run back and forth, returning with a step ladder, and Morea stacks the cushions on top of it. He begins to drag the step ladder around, trying to see if it will fit down the narrow aisle. I finally have an idea of what Morea is trying to do: reorganize the space so he can be seen by everyone and, potentially, to find a place in the center of the crowd instead of being at the front of it.

It’s a difficult task in an art gallery, but Morea makes use of what’s available. He scouts out the aisle, walking back and forth in the din of audience chatter. Finally, he decides to situate himself in the middle

Currently there is a spark of hope for democracy and the Democratic Party in the form of Zohran Mamdani, a charismatic young democratic socialist who recently won the primary race for mayor of New York City. Leftists and progressives are embracing this man’s campaign as though it’s revolutionary, which it absolutely is not. But by running his campaign on some basic, reasonable facts about the brutal cost of living in New York City, Mamdani earned the most total votes in a primary in New York City history. While the city’s billionaires are now openly conspiring to buy the election to prevent Mamdani winning the general election in the fall, in reality Mamdani is a boon to the Democratic Party and the project of renewing regular peoples’ faith in the electoral system. We see this project reflected in Mamdani’s statement after the primary election that his goal was “to win people back to a Democratic Party that puts working people first.” Similarly, his rival Andrew Cuomo’s main reflection after the primary was that Mamdani had “brought in a lot of votes.”

Supporters for Mamdani were making comments like, “He gave us something to believe in,” and “I was amazed, honestly. This is what an election should look like in a real democracy.” These kinds of breathless, wide-eyed victory declarations along with the talk of a “leftist resurgence” all point to what his campaign is achieving on a more structural level: pulling disillusioned left-leaning voters back into the electoral system and restoring our belief that we live in a democracy in which regular people at least have some amount of power in choosing who represents us.

Whether we call it fascist or not, the brutal violence and hypocrisy of the democratic project is at the core of this country’s oppression, and much of what the Trump administration has done so far has a lot of continuity with previous administrations. The Obama and Biden administrations set up the infrastructure currently facilitating the deportations that liberals are now denouncing as fascist, for example, and the numbers of deportations remain around the same throughout the three presidents’ administrations. The major distinction so far is that Trump’s administration and its supporters are openly celebrating the cruelties that are being committed. As we have seen, violence is always needed to maintain social hierarchies, especially those around citizenship; what changes is how visible that violence is. That’s part of why a lot of the public doesn’t see the continuities: under Democratic administrations, the depravity tends to be covered up so most people don’t even know that it’s going on.

For example: recently, a report came out that ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement) has deported 70 people who were actually American citizens. A lot of people saw this headline. If you read the article, it’s actually about a study of the years 2015-2020. So U.S. citizens were already being deported under Obama and

Trump (and presumably Biden later on), and we just never heard about it.

The style in which the Trump administration has been carrying out the current deportations — kidnappings by masked agents with unmarked vans, the cruelty of certain high-profile cases, threatening to deport anyone who disagrees with the president, sending migrants to a prison in El Salvador and threatening to do the same to criminalized American citizens, the expanded use of third-party countries to deport migrants to places they’re not from — does indicate a move towards implementing ICE as a kind of secret police, which would be a real shift away from democratic governance. While the number of deportations themselves have not significantly increased so far, the number of arrests in the interior of the country (ICE’s domain) has doubled, filling up migrant detention facilities across the country, while the number of arrests at the southern border (made by CBP officers) has gone down significantly.

***“We’re here to fight against borders and nations themselves, struggle against white supremacy in all its forms, and move towards an idea of freedom and liberation that has nothing to do with the law.”***

The number of deportations and the manner in which they’re executed should be expected to dramatically escalate soon, moreover, especially with Congress’s approval of Trump’s new budget bill. This bill, terrifyingly, increases ICE’s budget for detention alone from \$3.4 billion to \$45 billion through 2029. What that means for what migrant detention will look like, we can only imagine. The bill makes ICE the largest federal policing entity in U.S. history. This would potentially give ICE more employees than the FBI and more detention space than the Federal Bureau of Prisons. A new era of the U.S.’s notoriously cruel policing and prison system is dawning, one that is both continuous with previous regimes and qualitatively different.

There’s no question that it’s critical to identify these developments and fight against them. I do think it’s important, however, to think about how we talk about it, since this has implications for what exactly we’re fighting against and what we’re fighting for. Do we, as people who want a completely different kind of life than anything the U.S. would ever give us, stand to gain anything from referring to these new developments as fascism or (my other favorite) the “dismantling of the



federal government”? Does this help us draw attention to the cruelty of the state and capitalism itself, to their foundation in the horrors of colonialism and white supremacy? In my view, the role of anarchists and other insurgents is not to restore the rule of law or reaffirm the constitution. We’re here to fight against borders and nations themselves, struggle against white supremacy in all its forms, and move towards an idea of freedom and liberation that has nothing to do with the law.

Historically, the transition from a democratic regime to a fascist one, for example one that has abolished the electoral system, does not happen overnight. Maybe what we have seen so far from the Trump administration — which, as we’ve noted, has been facilitated by decades of Democratic governance — really is moving in that direction, towards an increasingly murderous vortex of power-hungry hatred and self-destruction with global implications. So we must prepare for this, as many of us already are, and speak about it on our own terms. Not those of our enemies.★

## TEN YEARS OF ANTI-GENTRIFICATION STRUGGLE IN PHILLY

A mainstream news article came out recently about some new businesses that had opened up on Baltimore Ave in West Philly, and was received with widespread and highly opinionated feedback on social media platforms. As usual, the conversation was dominated by a bunch of gentrifiers who popped up to complain about how hard it is to maintain a small business in this neighborhood. In addition to a host of reasons like zoning laws about which I am personally determined to remain ignorant, many commentators cited a pattern of ceaseless broken windows by disrespectful vandals as a major reason for why certain kinds of small businesses are unable to survive in this area. In the words of one individual, “It feels like the constant vandalism has affected who wants to come to the neighborhood.”

This type of disincentivization is one that I am much more familiar with, and the conversation got me thinking about the trajectory of anti-gentrification struggles in West Philly and elsewhere in the city. Ten years ago, these kinds of online discussions were filled with scandalized gentrifiers (including some anarchists!) raging at, speculating about, and mercilessly shaming the alleged vandals. What struck me about this more recent discussion was that it seemed that residents have now accepted anti-gentrification vandalism as an unfortunate but inevitable fact of life in West Philly.

It also struck me that in the eyes of many of our adversaries, the anti-gentrification struggles have been

successful. That didn’t really resonate with me, as I look around and see more and more ugly new housing going up all over this side of the Schuylkill River, from West to Overbrook and especially in Mantua. Not to mention more and more white hipsters and yuppies walking around looking comfortable in areas that I personally do not believe they should feel comfortable in. But it is arguably true that vandalism has helped shut down and deter certain types of businesses on Baltimore Ave, and who knows what kinds of horrors would be getting built now if there had been no focused direct struggle around development. These struggles have probably succeeded in halting at least some aspects of development, and in encouraging and popularizing an anti-authoritarian style of anti-gentrification sentiment in certain neighborhoods.

Anti-gentrification was proposed as a focal point of struggle for anarchists in Philadelphia back in 2015. A call entitled *A Concerted Effort Against Gentrification*, posted on *Philly Anti-Capitalist* in August of that year, notes that there had already been a series of anti-gentrification attacks, especially against the notoriously terrible local company OCF Realty, and proposes that anarchists collectively build on that momentum across the city. It analyses the social tensions that already exist around gentrification and discusses our reasons for fighting it, including personal survival and connections to the movement for Black Lives that was gaining traction at that time. It also notes the need to spread our ideas more, with more dialogue about how and why we fight, to reach potential allies and avoid remaining a small and isolated minority.

**“...there had been 42 attacks on OCF properties over that past year.”**

In retrospect, all of this is pretty much what happened. In 2015-2016, anti-gentrification struggles went from extremely petty actions like pouring salt water into small businesses’ flower pots, to a small autonomous May Day march that put up posters and threw paint at a police substation. By May Day of 2017, we were seeing a massive anarchist demo in Kensington that did hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage to new developments and terrorized gentrifiers in their own homes, and an unclaimed arson attack against an entire block of new OCF Realty houses in South Philly that rocked the whole city and for which no one was ever arrested. More sabotage, arson, window-breaking, and lots of graffiti followed, concentrated in the most rapidly gentrifying parts of West and South Philly.

Most of the actions were unclaimed, and many of the particular campaigns within that anti-gentrification

campaign have never been publicly written about or discussed. What looked like a chaotic, disorganized mess to many civil anarchists, democratic socialists, and other dweebs who can’t imagine life without formal organizing, was in fact often highly thought through and meticulously organized. At one point, a number of individuals came together to carry out a coordinated series of attacks targeting OCF Realty employees’ homes, alongside the ongoing attacks on OCF headquarters and OCF-owned properties. The idea was to make it personal for them, and to maximize the capacity of this small group of anarchists to disrupt the functioning of this company and of gentrification more broadly. This included an attack on the residence of widely hated CEO Ori Feibush, an action that featured a brick being thrown through his window that said “Enjoy your luncheon, Ori (A).” He was scheduled to appear at a real estate “influencers” lunch that next day. In mainstream news about the attack, Feibush said that there had been 42 attacks on OCF properties over that past year.

In 2018, a similar secret campaign of attack among a network of comrades was carried out to prevent Amazon from choosing Philadelphia as its location for a second national headquarters. This campaign included posters and other propaganda, graffiti, articles, sabotage, stealing and destroying large numbers of Ring cameras, and most notably, the arson of an Amazon Treasure Truck. It did not include any activist methods like putting pressure on lawmakers, making demands, holding protests, or litigating through the legal system. A short communique reported about the Treasure Truck attack: “There’s been almost no media coverage of this [attack] except for a short news story about a potential arson, which later got changed to a story that said that officials did not suspect any suspicious activity.” How interesting! Amazon did not choose Philadelphia for its HQ2.

**“The anti-gentrification struggle in Philly was an intentional struggle that sought to spread and deepen anarchist methods and ideas based on an analysis of the local context.”**

Over the past year or two, there’s been a lot of discourse among anarchists and anti-authoritarians across the country about forms of organization. Many feel an urgency around escalating and deepening practices of attack, and specifically for more coordination beyond small affinity groups. Lots of articles have touched on this need and made particular proposals, from “Subterranean Constellations” in *Tinderbox* this past spring to a text on *It’s Going Down* from July called “All Cocoons Are Temporary.” A variety of gatherings and conversations

have happened related to this topic. While there is still a lot of enthusiasm for informal organizing — a method where individuals come together and act based on the needs of a particular project or action, rather than starting or joining an official formal organization — many people associate informal organizing solely with acting in a small affinity group, and the possibility of coordination beyond that remains abstract. We might hear about it in other contexts like France and Germany, but are unsure of how to begin with such a method here. This leads to a turn, for some, to formal, militaristic, or even hierarchical organizations, like cadres or clandestine guerrilla formations, because they believe that that is the only way to ensure consistency and quality of action.

I mention all this because in fact broad coordination using informal organizing methods already has a precedent in the US. The anti-gentrification struggle in Philly was an intentional struggle that sought to spread and deepen anarchist methods and ideas based on an analysis of the local context. An important but unpublicized part of that was ongoing experimentation with what we might call a diffuse network of attack. At times, this involved something like what others have more recently called a “constellation,” in which a larger number of specific comrades are invited to take part in a series of coordinated actions, as opposed to just two or three friends trying to do everything together. This struggle had its flaws and hardships, but it built the foundations of an anarchist space in Philly that is associated with autonomy, initiative, and attack. Using informal organizing methods enabled anarchists to explore and build their capacity to act together as a network of affinity groups, gave more people more experiences of anarchy, spread anarchist ideas, and minimized repression and capture.

All this was carried out in the backdrop of widening anti-fascist action during the first Trump administration, impending global ecological collapse, border violence, police murders, and prisoner strikes. That is to say, there was a lot of popular resistance in the streets, which spread anarchist and autonomous methods to more and more people, alongside these secret diffuse networks of attack, which experimented with deepening anarchist methods and tactics. Ideally, as in that era, these two approaches — broadening and deepening — happen alongside each other as complementary aspects of a whole ecosystem of anarchist action, rather than approaches we have to choose between. Similarly, the uprisings of 2020 broadened and popularized combative practices in the streets, while the years of anarchist attacks before and afterwards have honed anarchists’ ability to act independently of mass uprisings — but also to intervene decisively in those uprisings. Ten years from now, maybe we will have been more successful than we imagine.

Bold anti-gentrification actions still happen in West