Last year’s student protesters
Are this year’s dropouts who can’t afford tuition;
Last year’s striking workers are this year’s unemployed.

Who is more entitled to occupy a school
Than those who can’t afford to attend it?
Who is more entitled to sabotage the economy
Than those for whom there are no jobs?

To survive, we have to fight from outside
Where more and more of us find ourselves:
Establishing a front at every margin,
Becoming the eye of every storm.

“What seems outrageous to one generation becomes a commonplace to the next.
You think this can’t happen; but later, when it’s history, no one will be surprised.”

–Jeanette Winterson
“THE BIRD FIGHTS ITS WAY OUT OF THE EGG. WHOEVER WANTS TO BE BORN MUST FIRST DESTROY A WORLD.”

– HERMAN HESSE
to be brief indeed. Now that it has closed, we can get our logical conclusions.

predictions seriously enough to follow them through to their challenges would be. As usual, it was hard to take our own to get beyond desperately invoking it to anticipate what the outbreak, anarchists brainstormed the violence/non-violence debate into happened along? And hadn’t we argued undercop cops, the clinically in convent assemblies of contrarians, decision-making model for arbitrarily decided consensus process was the best prepared to find common cause with “99%” of the population, consensus inherited from the anti-globalization movement.

The narrative of this issue breaks off immediately before Occupy Wall Street pitched camp in Zuccotti Park on September 17, 2011, setting off a well-known chain of events. After three surprisingly quiet years of recession, the prayers of US anarchists were finally answered by a sudden populist groundswell with an anticapitalist streak, ostensibly based in the principles of horizontality and consensus inherited from the anti globalization movement.

Having your wishes granted is a sort of punishment, as you have to suffer all their shortcomings. Were anarchists really prepared to find common cause with “99%” of the population, reactionary politics and ally? Was “occupying everything” a sufficient long-term strategy? Who decider consensus process was the best decision-making model for arbitrarily convened assemblies of contrarians, undercover cops, the clinically insane, and anyone else who just happened along? And hadn’t we argued the violence/non-violence debate into the ground already?

In the months leading up to this outbreak, anarchists brainstormed about how to set it off, but not what to do next. Even as we predicted a cataclysm, we couldn’t seem to get beyond desperately invoking it to anticipate what the challenges would be. As usual, it was hard to take our own predictions seriously enough to follow them through to their logical conclusion.

But that’s another story, for another time. In the ensuing hubbub, many projects were suspended as anarchists scrambled to make the most of a window of opportunity that turned out to be brief indeed. Now that it has closed, we can get our bearings again.

The first order of business is to make sure we haven’t forgotten anything. Such creeds of momentum tend to obscure everything that came before them. Afterwards, it’s hard to reconstruct what people were doing and thinking that helped bring them about, and what else people were up to before the wave hit. Those who live through a high point of struggle often set about trying to repeat it immediately, usually with diminishing returns. It might make more sense to retrieve our steps to the context that produced that high point and take one more look around.

For example, Occupy Seattle was able to carry out such exciting occupations and blockades because anarchists in the Puget Sound had already done so much to normalize insurrectionary tactics during the anti-Nato protests of early 2011. There are still countless cities across the US where this has not occurred, anarchists who live there must put that missing piece in place if they don’t want the next wave of momentum to catch them flat-footed.

On the other hand, while some strategies have already borne what untapped potential. It seemed that black bloc tactics had reached their apex at the Toronto G20 summit to be superseded by occupation, but they came back into vogue as the Occupy movement reached its limits. What other approaches have we set aside that are still ripe with possibility?

In our next issue, we’ll engage with the questions and oputative capacity for adaptation, though it kept us alive in Auschwitz and Biafra, can shackle us to an otherwise insufferable present.

a spark for every powder keg, your force and tireless editors

‘Anarchist discourse tried to shake readers’ inner fibers with histrionic, emotionally charged declarations: ‘Oh, bourgeois vampires! You, on one side, and Jesusism on the other: you have robbed the people, condemning them to eternal suffering.’ Their penchant for inflamed discourse often led them to employ extraunusual jargon, even if at times they did not know what the words they were using meant.

–Jain Sartorio, Paradoxes of Utopia: Anarchist Culture and Politics in Buenos Aires, 1905-1920

‘Whoever knows he is deep, strives for clarity, whoever would like to appear deep to the crowd, strives for obscurity.’

–Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science

For more on clarity and obscurity, we urge the earnest reader to consult George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.”

 Accident - A statistical inevitability. Some nuclear power plants are built on fault lines, but every mine, dam, oil rig, and waste dump is founded upon a tacit acceptance of the worst-case scenario. On a long enough timeline, everything that can go wrong will, however small the likelihood is from one day to the next. The responsible parties may wring their hands about Japan—and Haiti and the Gulf and New Orleans and Mexico City—but accident is no accident.

 Adaptation - One develops skills according to one’s situation. The executive learns to give orders, the underling to avoid carrying them out; the prisoner becomes adept at doing time (see figure i). The need to utilize one’s capabilities is more powerful in most human beings than the desire for pleasure (see Desire); for example, one of the forces that drives people back into abusive relationships is the unconscious wish to continue making use of their finely honed skills for dealing with crises. What is more terrifying than the unknown, in which one must become something else—the uncertainty, in which one may blame oneself for things going badly because they really might have gone better? Thus human beings’ tremendous capacity for adaptation, though it kept us alive in Auschwitz and Biafra, can shackle us to an otherwise insufferable present.

On the other hand, when we have no choice but to adapt, it is certain that we will. If people survived in Auschwitz and Biafra, we could surely adapt to life without managers.

Adult - That is to say, obscene

Adventurism - The scandalous practice of enjoying yourself in the course of struggle

Agency - Until November 1999, few anarchists knew anything about the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund. Shortly after the historic protests of 1999 and 2000, any punk or fellow-traveler could expound on their wrongdoings in greater detail than the average grad student. Feeling that one has some influence over an issue, even by proxy or association, makes one a great deal more interested in it. Activists usually begin by trying to educate the public in order to build up to taking action. Perhaps they’ve got it backwards.
These morons have no idea what's going on."

The following morning, beginning his first day of work under the inmate beside him, "Are you a nuclear physicist?"

"That's right," replies the hysterical man. "I'm a nuclear physicist."

Other inmates answered "tailor," "barber," or "cook" in hopes of obtaining a more advantageous position in the camps; but a year and a half later a Black Maria arrived just for him. It took him to a sharashka, a special scientific research facility run by Solzhenitsyn, fed up altogether, scribbled in "nuclear physicist."

After Solzhenitsyn and his fellow inmates had spent several days preparing to be arrested, they were given cards in a belated effort to sort out who all these prisoners were.

Where did you think diamonds came from?

Near the end of the Second World War, twelve-decorated veteran Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was arrested for sending a letter mentioning "the moustached one," which the censors took to mean to designate Stalin himself. Young Aleksandr was sent to the Soviet prison labor camps along with millions of dissidents, supposed conspirators, prisoners of war, and hapless civilians.

Solzhenitsyn and his fellow inmates had spent several strenuous months in forced labor, a guard distributed registration cards in a belated effort to sort out who all these prisoners were. One of the blanks on the form was marked "Trade or Profession." Other inmates answered "tailor," "barber," or "cook" in hopes of obtaining a more advantageous position in the camps; but Solzhenitsyn, fed up altogether, scribbled in "nuclear physicist."

This was during the Soviet race to discover the secret of the atomic bomb. Solzhenitsyn didn't give the survey another thought, but a year and a half later a Black Maria arrived just for him. It took him to a sharashka, a special scientific research facility run by the Ministry of State Security. He had never studied nuclear physics.

We can imagine Solzhenitsyn on the laboratory bench the following morning, beginning his first day of work under the watchful-eyes of elite guards. Concealing his dismay, he whimsically turned to the inmate beside him, "Are you a nuclear physicist?"

"Shh—" hisses back his new colleague. "But don't worry—these morons have no idea what's going on."

Captive Audience

Once upon a time, this distinction was useful, as some audiences might properly disengage themselves if they so chose; but in the age of Facebook and Twitter, the qualifier has become practically redundant.

Cardiologist

He knows how to maintain it, but not what it's for.

Civilization

The tendency of pedestrians to stop walking when they step onto an escalator.

Common Sense

What is common becomes sense, but what is sensible does not necessarily become common.

Conspiracy Theory

Like free enterprise, conspiracy can be good, theory can be good, but conspiracy theory is not so good.

Critique

At first, one only recognizes particular instances to be worthy of critique; critique appears synonymous with rejection, implying deficiency in that which is critiqued. Over time, one discovers that everything warrants critique. This can produce cynicism: nothing is above reproach, nothing is pure, therefore nothing is worthwhile. But followed through to its logical conclusion, this insight inspires a profound optimism: if everything can be critiqued, then no matter how bleak things are, there is always a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Captive Audience

Once upon a time, this distinction was useful, as some audiences might properly disengage themselves if they so chose; but in the age of Facebook and Twitter, the qualifier has become practically redundant.

Cardiologist

He knows how to maintain it, but not what it’s for.

Civilization

The tendency of pedestrians to stop walking when they step onto an escalator.

Common Sense

What is common becomes sense, but what is sensible does not necessarily become common.

Conspiracy Theory

Like free enterprise, conspiracy can be good, theory can be good, but conspiracy theory is not so good.

Critique

At first, one only recognizes particular instances to be worthy of critique; critique appears synonymous with rejection, implying deficiency in that which is critiqued. Over time, one discovers that everything warrants critique. This can produce cynicism: nothing is above reproach, nothing is pure, therefore nothing is worthwhile. But followed through to its logical conclusion, this insight inspires a profound optimism: if everything can be critiqued, then no matter how bleak things are, there is always a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.

Cultural

Of or pertaining to cults, large or small.

Debate

An opportunity for mutual gain often mistaken for a competition, to the misfortune of all; as in economics, those who set out to win doom all to losing. Nothing is more precious to a way to improve them.

Those who comprehend this can pass beyond the binary of approval and disapproval, striving to identify the conflicting currents within any subject of inquiry so as to take sides inside positions as well as between them.
Homeland Security
They slaughter the original inhabitants, poison the soil and water, impose general amnesia, then call this their homeland!

Humanity
The most depreciated commodity

Hypochondria
"Oh my god—I'm afraid I'm coming down with—HYPOCHONDRIA!!"

Ideologue
Ideas get the proponents they deserve (see Ideology)

Immure
Surround with walls; imprison. Once upon a time, only convicts were said to be immured; today one rarely hears this word, perhaps because there are walls enough for all of us.

Inquisition
So long as power is concentrated in the hands of a few, inquiry is never impartial and disinterested, not without consequences (see figure iv.)

Italics
A sure sign of an author whose writing is slanted to the right

Market Forces
Indeed it does

Marriage
Tying the Gordian knot (see Divorce)

Neutral
For all intents and purposes, dead (see Neutralized)

Peace Dividend
Among capitalists, even peace has to pay its own way

Print Media
A verb followed by an object, denoting the archaic practice of printing out text files rather than simply reading them on one's computer screen

Pro-Life
Only the unborn have the right to live

Raison d'État
As the dictionary explains, "a purely political reason for action on the part of a ruler or government, especially where a departure from openness, justice, or honesty is involved." It's easy to see what sort of reason the state employs—but what is the state's raison d'être?

Real Estate
As the crisis of 2008 showed, real estate isn't any more "real" than any other investment; like all capitalist values, the value of property is socially constructed and can vanish in a crisis of faith at any time

Servility
A means of gaining the element of surprise

Sustainable Technology
One can also sustain injuries—at least up to a point

Target Market
A redundancy

Tautology
A statement of which one might say, in the vernacular, "It is what it is"

Thing
A monotonous event

Top-Down
Denoting a system in which actions are initiated at the top of a hierarchy. One might think the opposite to be "bottom-up," but this still assumes an "up," many grassroots initiatives make this error, attempting to exert leverage through political channels rather than developing the power to achieve their goals autonomously. Better simply to topple pyramids than to attempt to defy gravity.

Twit
A silly or foolish person (see Twitter)

Words of the Issue: Extremism and Legitimacy

Extremism
A few years into the 21st century, Dutch corporate media ran a series of stories accusing the squatting movement of escalating violence and criminality. This was bewildering; twenty-five years earlier squatters had regularly engaged in pitched battles with police, but by the time of the news coverage the movement was comparatively tame and weak. In 2010, following up on the public relations work carried out by corporate journalists, the Dutch parliament made squatting illegal.

When the squatting movement was at its peak and thousands of people routinely participated in violent confrontations with the authorities, it was impossible to brand it "extremist" because so many people were involved that it was understood as a part of Dutch society. Ironically, it was the decline of "extremist" tactics and organizing that enabled the press to brand squatters extremists, paving the way for their formal criminalization. Faced with this smear campaign, the only hope for the squatttng movement would have been a resurgence of widespread participation in confrontational activity. This should serve as a warning to all who react to corporate slander by distancing themselves from militant organizing.

Legitimacy
As soon as the administration learns that one of the buildings has been occupied, the announcement goes out that the occupation is being carried out by non-students. At first, this seems like a clever move: in a campus-based struggle, non-student participants are likely to be seen as illegitimate. In fact, the administration is making a dangerous gamble: by the end of the day, the crowd outside the occupied building has grown to over a thousand people. Does this mean that they didn't hear the announcement, or that they don't believe the administration—or that they don't care if the occupiers are non-students? If this sets a precedent legitimizing non-student occupations of campus buildings, it'll be a whole new ball game.
Overture:
The More Things Change . . .

Once, the basic building block of patriarchy was the nuclear family, and calling for its abolition was a radical demand. Now families are increasingly fragmented—yet has this fundamentally expanded women’s power or children’s autonomy?

Once, the mainstream media consisted of only a few television and radio channels. These have not only multiplied into infinity but are being supplanted by forms of media such as Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter. But has this done away with passive consumption? And how much more control over these formats do users really have, structurally speaking?

Once, movies represented the epitome of a society based on spectatorship; today, video games let us star in our own shoot-em-up epics, and the video game industry does as much business as Hollywood. In an audience watching a movie, everyone is alone; the most you can do is boo if the storyline outrages you. In the new video games, on the other hand, you can interact with virtual versions of other players in real time. But is this greater freedom? Is it more ingenuous?

Once, one could speak of a social and cultural mainstream, and subculture itself seemed subversive. Now “diversity” is at a premium for our rulers, and subculture is an essential motor of consumer society: the more identities, the more markets.

Once, people grew up in the same community as their parents and grandparents, and travel could be considered a destabilizing force interrupting static social and cultural configurations. Today, life is characterized by constant movement as people struggle to keep up with the demands of the market; in place of repressive configurations, we have permanent transience, universal atomization.

Once, laborers stayed at one workplace for years or decades, developing the social ties and common reference points that made old-fashioned unions possible. Today, employment is increasingly temporary and precarious, as more and more workers shift from factories and unions to service industry and compulsory flexibility.

Once, wage labor was a distinct sphere of life, and it was easy to recognize and rebel against the ways our productive potential was exploited. Now every aspect of existence is becoming “work” in the sense of activity that produces value in the capitalist economy: glancing at one’s email account, one increases the capital of those who sell advertisements. In place of distinct specialized roles in the capitalist economy, we increasingly see flexible, collective production of capital, much of which goes unpaid.

Once, the world was full of dictatorships in which power was plainly wielded from above and could be contested as such. Now these are giving way to democracies that appear to include more people in the political process, thus legitimizing the repressive powers of the state.

Once, the essential unit of state power was the nation, and nations competed among themselves to assert their individual interests. In the era of capitalist globalization, the interests of state power transcend national boundaries, and the dominant mode of conflict is not war but policing. This is occasionally employed against rogue nations, but continuously implemented against people.

Once, one could draw lines, however arbitrary, between the so-called First World and Third World. Today the First World and the Third World coexist in every metropolis, and white supremacy is administered in the United States by an African-American president.
At the turn of the century, we could only imagine anarchism as a desertion from an all-powerful social order. A decade ago, as starry-eyed young maniacs, we published Days of War, Nights of Love, unexpectedly one of the best-selling anarchist books of the following decade. Although controversial at the time, in retrospect it was fairly representative of what many anarchists were calling for: immediacy, decentralization, do-it-yourself resistance to capitalism. We added some more provocative elements: anarcho-primitivism, crime, hedonism, the refusal of work, the delegitimization of history in favor of myth, the idea that revolutionary struggle could be a romantic adventure.

Our approach was defined by a specific historic context. The Soviet bloc had recently collapsed and the impending political, economic, and ecological crises had yet to come into view; capitalist triumphalism was at its peak. We focused on undermining middle class values because they seemed to define everyone’s aspirations; we presented anarchist struggle as an individual project because it was difficult to imagine anything else. As the anti-globalization movement gathered momentum, we presented an anarchist struggle as a desertion from an all-powerful social order.

Radicals often think they are out in a wasteland, disconnected from society, when in fact they are its cutting edge—though not necessarily moving towards the goals they espouse. As we argued in an earlier issue of this journal, resistance is the motor of history: it drives social, political, and technological developments, forcing the prevailing order to innovate constantly in order to outflank or absorb opposition. Thus we can contribute to tremendous transformations without ever achieving our object. This is not to credit radicals with the agency to determine world events, so much as to assert that we often find ourselves unconsciously on their cuir. Measured against the infinities of history, all agency is infinitesimal—but the very notion of political theory presumes that it is still possible to utilize this agency meaningfully.

When we strategize for individual campaigns, we have to take care not to make demands that can be defused by partial reforms, lest our oppressors neutralize us by simply granting them. Some examples of easily co-opted radical programs are so obvious that it is practically vulgar to point them out: bicycle fetishism, “sustainable” technology, “buying local” and other forms of ethical consumerism, volunteer work that mitigates the suffering caused by global capitalism without challenging its roots.

But this phenomenon can also occur on a structural level. We should look at the ways we have called for broad social change that could take place without shaking the foundations of capitalism and hierarchy—so in that next time our efforts can take us all the way.

* At the time, we had no idea the book would reach anyone at all. A fierce status quo. Originating from a personal decision to oppose a firmly rooted else. As the anti-globalization movement gathered momentum an individual project because it was difficult to imagine anything more.

Not Working—Did It Work?

The defining provocation of our early years was to take literally the Situationists’ dictum NEVER WORK. A few of us decided to test out on our own skin whether this was actually possible. This bit of bravado showed all the genius of untrained youth, and all the perils. Though countless others had trodden this road before, for it was as if we were the first primates to be shot into space. In any case, we were doing something, taking the dream of revolution seriously as a project one might initiate in one’s own life immediately, with—as we used to say—an aristocratic disdain for consequences.

It’s tempting to brush this off as mere performance art. Yet we have to understand it as an early attempt to answer the question that still faces would-be revolutionaries in the US and Western Europe: What could interrupt our obedience? Contemporary insurrectionists have attempted to ask this same question, though their answers have been equally limited. Neither voluntary unemployment nor gratuitous vandalism alone seem to be capable of jerking the suffering caused by global capitalism into a revolutionary situation?. Despite everything, we stand by our initial hunch that it will take a new way of living to bring about such a situation; it’s not just a matter of putting in enough hours at the same old task. The essential fabric of our society—the curtain that stands between us and another world—is above all the good behavior of exploited and excluded alike.

Within a decade, history rendered our experiment obsolete, perversely granting our demand for an unemployable class. US unemployment rates, alleged to be at 4% in the year 2000, have been well over twice that for three years now—only countering people known to be actively looking for work. More importantly, employment is increasingly temporary and precarious. The excess of consumer society once offered dropouts a certain margin of error; the economic crisis eroded this and gave a decidedly involuntary flavor to philosophies.

It turns out our capitalism has no more use for us than we have for it. This doesn’t just go for anarchist dropouts, but for millions of workers in the US. Despite the economic crisis, major corporations are reporting enormous earnings—but instead of using this income to hire more employees, they are investing in a certain margin of error; the economic crisis eroded this and gave a decidedly involuntary flavor to philosophies.

It turns out our capitalism has no more use for us than we have for it. This doesn’t just go for anarchist dropouts, but for millions of workers in the US. Despite the economic crisis, major corporations are reporting enormous earnings—but instead of using this income to hire more employees, they are reinvesting in the flow of history or carp that capitalism and hierarchy—so in that next time our efforts can take us all the way.

Not Working—Did It Work?

The defining provocation of our early years was to take literally the Situationists’ dictum NEVER WORK. A few of us decided to test out on our own skin whether this was actually possible. This bit of bravado showed all the genius of untrained youth, and all the perils. Though countless others had trodden this road before, for it was as if we were the first primates to be shot into space. In any case, we were doing something, taking the dream of revolution seriously as a project one might initiate in one’s own life immediately, with—as we used to say—an aristocratic disdain for consequences.

It’s tempting to brush this off as mere performance art. Yet we have to understand it as an early attempt to answer the question that still faces would-be revolutionaries in the US and Western Europe: What could interrupt our obedience? Contemporary insurrectionists have attempted to ask this same question, though their answers have been equally limited. Neither voluntary unemployment nor gratuitous vandalism alone seem to be capable of jerking the suffering caused by global capitalism into a revolutionary situation?. Despite everything, we stand by our initial hunch that it will take a new way of living to bring about such a situation; it’s not just a matter of putting in enough hours at the same old task. The essential fabric of our society—the curtain that stands between us and another world—is above all the good behavior of exploited and excluded alike.

Within a decade, history rendered our experiment obsolete, perversely granting our demand for an unemployable class. US unemployment rates, alleged to be at 4% in the year 2000, have been well over twice that for three years now—only countering people known to be actively looking for work. More importantly, employment is increasingly temporary and precarious. The excess of consumer society once offered dropouts a certain margin of error; the economic crisis eroded this and gave a decidedly involuntary flavor to philosophies.

It turns out our capitalism has no more use for us than we have for it. This doesn’t just go for anarchist dropouts, but for millions of workers in the US. Despite the economic crisis, major corporations are reporting enormous earnings—but instead of using this income to hire more employees, they are investing in the flow of history or carp that capitalism and hierarchy—so in that next time our efforts can take us all the way.

Today it must become a line of flight out of a collapsing world.
New Technologies, Outwitted Strategies

In the second half of the 20th century, North American radicals based themselves in subcultural enclaves from which to launch assaults on mainstream society. The call for confrontational unemployment presured a context of existing countercultural spaces in which people could invest themselves in something else. The cultural landscape is different today; subculture itself functions differently. Thanks to new communications technol-

ogy, it develops and spreads much faster, and is replaced just as quickly. Punk rock, for example, is no longer a secret society into which high school students are initiated by classmates’ mix tapes. It is still generated by the participants, but now as a consumer market mediated via interpersonal venues such as message boards and downloading. It’s no surprise if people are less personally invested in it: as easily as they discovered it, they can move on to something else. In a world composed of information, subculture no longer acts as a subculture, indicating a possible line of escape, but rather one of many zones within it, a mere matter of taste.

Meanwhile, the internet has transformed anonymity from the province of criminals and anarchists into a feature of every- day communication. Yet unexpectedly, it also fixes political identities and positions in place according to a new logic. The landscape of political discourse is mapped in advance by URLs.

The micro-economy of World of Warcraft resembles the derivat- ives market in that it is not tied to the “real” world and yet exerts disproportionate effects upon it. We could also look at the video game industry as the next step in the evolution of drug cartels. Externally structured yet thoroughly participatory, video games can abuses players in an alternate reality in which television and movies cannot, to a degree of complexity and control drugs cannot. While prisoners slave to produce profit from this virtual sphere, “free” users are indoctrinated to equate recreation with competition for abstract metrics of wealth and power. Accounting and trading now characterize leisure time as well as business. Even after the crash of the derivatives market in 2008, the promise of capitalism remains: you can’t own your own house after all, at least your avatar can!

New technologies are enabling this colonization to penetrate deeper physically as well as mentally. As of 2012, the new holder of the Guinness World Record for “fastest selling consumer electron- ics device” is Kinect, a video- and voice-activated interface that su- persedes the keyboard in inte-
grating us into the virtual. This offers corporations the possibility to shape the conscious and unconscious movements of our whole bodies. When dance

is not the free, open-ended exploration of space but a ma-

ter of matching a template imposed on the level of centimeters, there is nothing to distin-

guish it from the labor that takes place in factories and sweatshops. The only difference is that it does not produce an hourly wage, but a purely virtual re-

ward—albeit equally standardized. Today more than ever, the only way to realize the kind of play we celebrate in Harbinger a decade ago is to attack the forces that structure our lives. May the new generation lead the charge and never allow it to become a mere matter of teaching or subversion.

The Guardian in May 2011.

The myth of CrimethInc. as a decentralized underground anyone could participate in inspired a great deal of activity through the topography of the in-

termnet slowly concentrated attention on a single webpage: This internet has simultaneously fulfilled and rendered obsolete the potential we saw in subculture and anonymity.1 One could say the same of our advocacy of plagiarism; a decade ago we thought we were taking an extreme position against authorship and intellectual property when in fact we were barely ahead of the curve. The weeks we spent combing librar-

ies to reuse forms showed a world in which practi-
cally everyone does the same thing with Google Image Search for their blogs. Conventional notions of authorship are being superseded by new forms of production such as crowdsourc-

ing, in which tasks are outsourced to the general public. This points to a possible future in which free volunteer labor will be a major part of the economy—as a part of capitalism rather than an opposition to it.

Here we arrive at one of the most pernicious ways our wishes have been granted in form rather than content. Free distribution, once thought to demonstrate a radical alternative to capitalist models, has now taken for granted in a society in which the means of material production are still held hostage by capitalists.2 Electronic formats lend themselves to free distribution of infor-
mation; this forces those who produce material formats such as newspapers to give them away, too, or go out of business—to be

to placate the jobless and make use of them. It implies a future in which a wealthy elite will use free labor from a vast body of precarious and unemployed workers to maintain its power and their dependence.

This is all the more gruesome in that this free labor will be absolutely voluntary, and will appear to benefit the general public rather than the elite.

Perhaps the central contradiction of our age is that the new technologies and social forms horizontalize production and distribution of information, yet render us more dependent on corporate products.
Decentralizing Hierarchy: Participation as Subjugation

At the close of the 1990s, anarchists sanctioned participation, decentralization, and individual agency. Building on our experiences in the do-it-yourself underground, we helped popularize the viral model, in which a product is to be copied worldwide. Exemplified by programs like Food Not Bombs and tactics such as the Black Bloc, this helped spread a particularly anti-authoritarian culture from New York to New Zealand.

At the time, we were responding both to the limitations of the previous century’s political and technological models and to emerging opportunities to transcend them. This put us moving towards a situation in which the foundation of hierarchical society will not be permanent centralization of power, but the standardization of certain disempowering forms of socializing, decision-making, and values. These appear to spread spontaneously, though in fact they are a product of a system that has somehow refused and interrupted the forms of participation essential to the maintenance of order, both the ones predicated on integration and the ones predicated on marginality. They have to provide a foundation for the continuity of control, and instead we see it rise to dangerous leaders elsewhere. And if we advance solutions that turn out not to address the root causes of our problems—as we did a decade ago—we will only inoculate the ruling order against this generation’s resistance.

When it comes to contagious solutions, perhaps the Greek riots of 2008 during which all the banks were burned were less significant than the day-to-day practices in Greece of occupying buildings, seizing and redistributing food, and gathering public locally outside the logic of commerce. Or perhaps the riots were equally significant, not just as a material attack on the enemy but as a festival affirming a radically different way of being.

Destabilization of Society: Double or Nothing

In the 1990s, capitalism appeared evidently stable, if not unassailable. Anarchists fantasized about riots, catastrophes, and industrial collapse precisely because these seemed impossible and, because in their absence, it appeared that they could only be a good thing.

All that changed starting in September 2001. A decade later, crises and catastrophes are all too familiar. The notion of the world coming to an end is practically banal; who hasn’t read V for Vendetta or seen the equivalent seemed to be taking over the headquarters of the global financial system? The very fabric of our society will not be permanent centralization of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in their foreheads the equivalent of a symbolic Anarchism; if they succeed in persuading the people to adopt this frieze, they will abandon all vestiges of fascim, our prospects will be bleak indeed.

So while pundits professed surprise at the role Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking media played in the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere around the Middle East, we should not be surprised, though in fact they were exactly what they were originally designed for. The question is why they have not been part of applicable upheavals in the US.

It seems that consumer culture has caught up to us, integrating our escape attempt into the viral model. Jeremy Soule does not offer anyone else the opportunity to “escape” as well. Bored by unidirectional network television programming, the modern consumer can do her own programming, albeit still at a physical and emotional distance from her fellow viewers. Our longings for more agency and participation have been granted, but in a framework still fundamentally determined by capitalism. The demand that everyone become a subject rather than an object has been realized: now we are the subjects administering the spectacle. The spectacle is not just the world of appearances but rather the social system in which human beings only interact as their prescribed roles.*

* Even fascist regimes are trying to get in on decentralization and autonomy. In Europe, “Autonomous Nationalists” have appropriated radical aesthetics and formats, utilizing anti-corporatist and anti-black bloc tactics. This is not simply a matter of our enemies attempting to disguise themselves as us, though it certainly might be treated as such. Rather, the ideological split in fascist circles as the younger generation attempts to update its organizational models for the 21st century—now, all that is left is to integrate the models we pioneered with those of the new generation. Developed in part by the Rolling Thunder book shop in New Zealand.

For some have argued that in the absence of a center, when the aforementioned virus is much more dangerous than the frontal assault, the task is not so much to pick the correct target as to popularize a new way of fighting. If this has not yet occurred, maybe it is simply because anarchists have yet to develop an approach that strikes others as practical. When we demonstrate concrete solutions to the problems posed by the capitalist diaspora, perhaps these will catch on.

As global intensifies the distance between classes, some of the disparities between nations seem to be leveling out. Social support structures in Europe and the US are being dismantled just as economic growth shifts to China and India; National Guardsmen who served in Iraq are being deployed to flee 1955 to 1965 capitalism thrived by exploiting another ongoing catastrophe—the Cold War. This war was fought on a global scale and ended in nuclear Armageddon. If this catastrophic scenario of the end of the world could be so useful to our rulers. We can imagine a future in which the repressive measures necessary to maintain industrial capitalism are justified on ecological grounds the same way that a generation ago the repression justified the maintenance of the market as justified by protecting freedom.

**Autonomous Nationalists** are adopting anarchist aesthetics and organizing principles near the forefront of innovations that reshaped capitalist society. For example, TXTmob, the SMS texting message program developed by the Institute for Applied Autonomy for protests at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, served as a model for Twitter. Similarly, one can interpret the networks of the Black Bloc, this helped spread a particular frame of work done by the Social Support Committee. Bored by unidirectional network television programming, the modern consumer can do her own programming, albeit still at a physical and emotional distance from her fellow viewers. Our longings for more agency and participation have been granted, but in a framework still fundamentally determined by capitalism. The demand that everyone become a subject rather than an object has been realized: now we are the subjects administering the spectacle. The spectacle is not just the world of appearances but rather the social system in which human beings only interact as their prescribed roles.**

The spectacles is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images. “Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle.†

† From 1955 to 1965 capitalism thrived by exploiting another ongoing catastrophe—the Cold War. This war was fought on a global scale and ended in nuclear Armageddon. If this catastrophic scenario of the end of the world could be so useful to our rulers. We can imagine a future in which the repressive measures necessary to maintain industrial capitalism are justified on ecological grounds the same way that a generation ago the repression justified the maintenance of the market as justified by protecting freedom.

‡ The mumbo of the panopticon “imposes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjectivity.” Michael Foucault, Discipline and Punish!
in the US to maintain order during summit protests and natural disasters. This is consistent with the general trend away from state, spatialized hierarchies towards dynamic, decentralized means of maintaining inequalities. In this new context, 20th-century notions about privilege and identity are increasingly simplistic. Our enemies to the Right have already mobilized their reaction to the era of globalization and decentralization. We can see this at work in the Tea Party in the US or nationalist movements throughout Europe and religious fundamentalism worldwide. While Western Europe has agglomerated into the European Union, Eastern Europe has been Balkanized into dozens of nation-states teeming with fascists eager to capitalize on popular discontent. Religious fundamentalism is a comparatively recent phenomenon in the Middle East, having taken hold in the wake of failed secular “national liberation” movements as an exaggerated reaction to Western cultural imperialism. If we permit proponents of hierarchy to monopolize opposition to the prevailing order, anarchists will simply disappear from the stage of history. Others are already disappearing from this stage. As the middle class erodes in Europe, traditional left parties are dying out with it, and far Right parties are taking all the ground they lose.

If the Left continues to recede into extinction, anarchism will be the only left game left in town for radicals.¹ This will open a space in which we can make our case to all who have lost faith in political parties. But are we prepared to fight it out with global capitalism on our own, without allies? Escalating conflict is a gamble: as soon as we attract the attention of the state, we have to play double or nothing, attempting to mobilize enough popular support to outflank the inevitable counterattack. Every riot has to be followed by an even broader outreach campaign, not just a retreat into the shadows—a tall order in the face of backlash and repression. Perhaps it would be better if history were moving slowly enough that we had time to build up a massive popular movement. Unfortunately we may not have a choice in the matter. Ready or not, the instability we wished for is here; we will either change the world or perish with it.

So it is high time to dispense with strategies founded on the status of the status quo. At the same time, crisis keeps one locked in a perpetual present, reacting to constant stimuli rather than acting strategically. At our current capacity, we can do little to mitigate the effects of capitalist catastrophes. Our task is rather to set off chain reactions of revolt, creating opportunities for others to join us in struggle and keeping these spaces free of authoritarian dynamics. We should evaluate everything we undertake in this light.

In this context, it is more important than ever not to see ourselves as the protagonists of insurrection. The currently existing social body of anarchists in the US may be numerous enough to catalyze social upheavals, but not nearly numerous enough to carry them out. As a comedian from Void Network in Greece emphasizes, “We don’t make the insurrection. We aren’t even organizing, everyone makes the insurrection.” This will demand a lot from each of us. Ten thousand anarchists wishing to go to the same lengths as Enric Duran, the patron saint of debt defaulters, could constitute a real force, seizing resources with which to establish alternative infrastructures and setting a public example of disobedience that could spread far and wide. ² That would bring “dropping out” up to date for the new era. It’s terrifying to imagine going to such lengths—but in a collapsing world, terror waits ahead whether we choose it or not.

Everyone who has participated in a black bloc knows it’s safest in the front. Double or nothing.

Conclusion: Forbidden Pleasures

But enough about strategy. There was one demand in Days of War, Nights of Love that could not be realized in any form under capitalism: the idea that unmediated life could be intense and joyous. We expressed this in our conception of resistance as a romantic, utopian capacity of fulfilling all the desires produced but never consummated by consumer society. Despite all the tribulation and heartbeat of the past decade, this challenge still lingers like hope at the bottom of Pandora’s box.

We still stand by this demand. We don’t resist simply out of duty or habit or thrust for vengeance, but because we want to live freely and make the most of our limitless potential. We are not anarchist revolutionaries because it seems there is no way to find out what that means without at least a little fighting. Likewise, we are not communists or Christians who put up with today’s depressions in hope of future rewards; we believe that we unlock our potential in the course of revolt—by means of it—not afterwards when we reap its fruits. As many hardships as we may entail, our struggle is a pursuit of joy—to be more precise, it is a way of generating new forms of joy. If we lose sight of this, no one else will join us, nor should they. Enjoying ourselves is not simply something we must do to be strategic, to win recruits; it is an ineludible indication of whether or not we have anything to offer.³ As austerity becomes the watchword of our rulers, the pleasures available on the market are increasingly dear. The turn to virtual reality is practically an admission that real life is not—cannot be—fulfilling. We should prove otherwise, discover forbidden pleasures that point the way to another world.

Ironically, ten years ago this one sensible demand was the most controversial aspect of our program. Nothing makes people more defensive than the suggestion that they can and should enjoy themselves: this triggers all their shame at their failures to do so, all their resentment towards the state murderers Brad Will or Alexis Grigoropoulos² but cannot set aside our differences to fight equally fiercely for the living.

This formula is magically familiar to anyone who has witnessed radicals caricaturing each other. Declaring that you have experienced decadent pleasure—especially in something that actually violates the regime of control, such as shoplifting or fighting police—is an invitation for others to heap scorn upon you. And perhaps this formula also explains why anarchists can exist together with the state murderers Brad Will or Alexis Grigoropoulos but cannot set aside our differences to fight equally fiercely for the living.

Death mobilizes us, catalyzes us. The reminder of our own mortality liberates us, enabling us to act without fear—for nothing is more terrifying than the possibility that we could live out our dreams, that something is truly at stake in our lives. If only we knew that the world were ending, we would finally be able to risk everything—not just because we would have nothing to lose, but because we would no longer have anything to win. But if we want to be anarchists, we are going to have to embrace the possibility that our dreams can come true—and fight accordingly. We are going to have to choose life over death for once, pleasure over pain. We are going to have to begin.

¹ Between 2006 and 2008, Enric Duran took out 68 loans from a total of 39 banks with no guarantee or property as collateral—adding up to 4,400 Euros. On September 17, 2008, on the heels of the economic crisis, he announced that he had done so with no intention of repaying the loans, as a form of “financial civil disobedience,” and had funneled the money into anticapitalist organizing and propaganda efforts.

² If one wishes to emphasize commonality, the easiest way is to point out that they also feel pain. If one wishes to inspire ethnic hatred, the easiest way to do so is to concentrate on the bizarre, perverse ways in which it is imposed.

³ Now that God is dead, perhaps we can disbelieve in forbidden pleasures. We should prove otherwise, discovering forbidden pleasures that point the way to another world.
The crisis continues. This isn’t just a hiccup in the market, but a structural breakdown. A system driven by competition for ever-increasing profit can’t run indefinitely; sooner or later everything that can be commodified has been drawn into the market, all the capital accumulates in a few hands, and the profits dry up.

Today the factories of every industry produce commodities more and more efficiently via automation that renders workers increasingly redundant. The only way to profit on these commodities is to cut costs: to eliminate workers or pay them next to nothing. But without work or wages, people can’t play their part as consumers. The only job openings are with the police, who wage a never-ending war on the population to control the poor and unemployed. This is why our world is overflowing with cheap shit, with human life cheapest of all.

As commodities get cheaper and consumers get poorer, how can capitalists continue making a profit? Credit was invented as a way for consumers to go on shopping even when they weren’t paid living wages. When the sale of real goods can no longer produce profit, profits must be made on expected future returns—in other words, on speculation.

But like any house of cards, debt can’t be built up forever—eventually someone calls it in. The house of cards collapsed under its own weight in 2008 when it became clear that the expected future returns could never materialize. Rather than
reconsidering their faith in capitalism, the authorities are now gutting the last vestiges of the support structures established to pacify the old labor movement, feeding every last stick into the fire.

The financial crisis signals a deeper metaphysical crisis: this system, which perpetuated itself by creating unfulfillable emotional needs, cannot provide for the global population's material needs either. The high rates of unemployment from Egypt to the US are not simply caused by the corruption of despots like Mubarak, nor the greed of specific capitalists; they are evidence that a system that never worked for us is on the verge of ceasing to work at all.

In response, some hope to resurrect social democracy. But wasn’t it social democracy that neutralized the resistance movements of the 20th century, while building up a state powerful enough to impose the current inequalities?

Democracy has always been the guardian of capitalism, giving the greatest possible number of people reason to invest themselves in hierarchies and coercive institutions, equating freedom with property rights. If capitalism is doomed, we need something altogether different—the truth is, we always did.

Capitalism won’t crumble overnight. Its rituals and values are so deeply ingrained in us that its demise could take generations, and it might give way to something even worse. If we want to have any influence over what comes next, we have to pose the right questions with the ways we fight and the narratives we propagate. Here we’ll trace the trajectory of popular struggles against austerity and capitalism around the world across 2010 and 2011, identifying their limitations so as to push further next time.

Pitfalls and Paradoxes: The Student Protests of March 4, 2010

The economic crisis that entered the public consciousness in 2008 prompted governments to inflict massive cutbacks on public education. The student movement that began in December 2008 with the occupation of the New School in New York City—itsel a private school—intensified with a series of protests and occupations throughout fall 2009, principally in California. These culminated in nationwide demonstrations on March 4, 2010. The Bay Area was the epicenter of this day of action, with tens of thousands in the streets; but at this epicenter, the contradictions within the movement came into stark relief.

While anarchists had been at the forefront of the occupations, reformists took the lead in organizing for March 4, planning a standard march and rally. They also attempted to secure control of the narrative. A week before the day of action, a dance party at UC Berkeley turned into a small-scale riot as students took the streets, mingling with non-students and defending themselves against police attacks. There were only two arrests, but afterwards liberals and leftists alleged that outside agitators were attempting to hijack the movement—a story some had been repeating for months, which has become all the more familiar since.

As in the anti-war movement seven years earlier, anarchists had largely limited themselves to escalating the tactics of the student movement. Most militant actions were organized informally, and there was neither an autonomous body for coordinating these nor a voice for them in the organizational structures of the larger movement. This opacity offered the element

Anarchists were “occupying everything” long before Occupy Wall Street was a gleam in Adbusters’ founder Kalle Lasn’s eye.

The March 4 protests in the Bay Area (above, and opposite) marked the peak of the US student movement of 2009-2010—and capped it.

* See Rolling Thunder 99.
of surprise, but it ultimately enabled reformists to outflank radicals by dominating the public discourse and planning actions that were unfavorable for confrontation. Likewise, because anarchists weren’t able to popularize a narrative identifying the student movement with the larger struggles of the disenfranchised, most people took it for granted that the point of the struggle was simply to get more funding for public education. Consequently, it was difficult to legitimize the participation of non-students except as passive “allies,” let alone make a case for a struggle against government.

On March 4, a march of several thousands departed from Berkeley towards Oakland. Student organizing groups jock-eyed with black-clad militants for the lead. The march joined younger students and teachers in downtown Oakland for a rally at which the usual speakers took turns at the podium. A breakaway march had been planned to depart from the rally, but one speaker took the stage to discourage anyone from participating, emphasizing that it would be illegal and dangerous. The word on the street was that radicals had established some sort of back-room deal with public organizers that the latter reneged on. Most people left after the rally, but a couple hundred people remained around a sound system and set out, managing to block the freeway before being mass-arrested. A fifteen-year-old student fell from the freeway when the police closed in, suffering serious head injuries and tragically confirming the speaker’s warning.

Afterwards, there were declarations of victory and hysterical recriminations, but the student movement had passed its peak. Without the initiative of the militant participants driving the movement, the reformist wing drifted into hopeless attempts to associate murder with protesters rather than police. It takes that had framed resistance in Greece since December 2008, associating murder with protesters rather than police. It takes numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police, thousands of supporters gathered in the

Rolling Thunder • Issue Ten, Summer 2012 • Background & Analysis • 23

Reaching Limits:
May Day, 2010

On May Day, small but fierce anarchist demonstrations and attacks on property took place in many cities around the United States, notably including Santa Cruz, California and Asheville, North Carolina. Eleven people were arrested in Asheville, charged with conspiracy and other felonies and held on $65,000 bail.

The arrests sent shockwaves of controversy throughout anarchist circles. One editorial entitled “What I would do with $55,000” [sic] argued that it would be more strategic to leave $65,000 bail. Anarchists were among the first into the building, none of the organized anarchist groups in the UK turned out in great numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police and media didn’t show the faces of longtime militants but those of the nation’s youth. The participants referenced the recent sweeping the globe—“France, Greece, now here too”—but this marked the entry of a new generation into confrontation with the state. The UK had been comparatively quiet for years. Previous protest campaigns had largely been organized by full-time activists; consequently, an activist subculture had emerged. This subculture helped to foster radical activity and infrastructure, but it was disconnected from the experiences and concerns of most of those suffering from capitalism.

The attack on Millbank ignited a wave of protests, walkouts, and other actions involving more than 200,000 people over the next two months.* Occupations occurred at schools throughout the country, serving as nerve centers through the country, serving as nerve centers.

* This vindicates the call for anarchists to set off “chains of recall” that had appeared a few months earlier in the original draft of “Fighting in the New Terrors.”

in Greece they debated about how anti-social tendencies had taken root and set the stage for the bank fire. Some still declared the worldwide actions at the beginning of May to be a success, but it’s worth noting that few towns in the US hosted repeat events on May Day 2011.

When a strategy begins to produce diminishing returns, this is an opportunity to reevaluate and experiment. While the existing anarchist movement struggled to come to terms with the limits it had reached, new protagonists took the stage.

Anarchist in the UK:
The Student Movement, November-December 2010

On November 10, 2010, the National Union of Students drew 52,000 people to London to protest an austerity bill that would raise the tuition cap from £3,290 to £9,000. As the main demonstration moved by Millbank Tower, a splinter group of hundreds, headed by no more than 30 black bloc anarchists, broke into the Tory Headquarters there. As they smashed windows, painted graffiti, and clashed with police, thousands of supporters gathered in the square outside, building a fire from their signs and placards. It took the police hours to regain control. Helicopter footage showed the occupiers lining the railing on the roof of Millbank, papers blowing out over the crowd far below while smoke rose from the fire.

While individual anarchists were among the first into the building, none of the organized anarchist groups in the UK turned out in great numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police and media didn’t show the faces of longtime militants but those of the nation’s youth. The participants referenced the recent sweeping the globe—“France, Greece, now here too”—but this marked the entry of a new generation into confrontation with the state. The UK had been comparatively quiet for years. Previous protest campaigns had largely been organized by full-time activists; consequently, an activist subculture had emerged. This subculture helped to foster radical activity and infrastructure, but it was disconnected from the experiences and concerns of most of those suffering from capitalism.

The attack on Millbank ignited a wave of protests, walkouts, and other actions involving more than 200,000 people over the next two months.* Occupations occurred at schools throughout the country, serving as nerve centers through the country, serving as nerve centers.

* This vindicates the call for anarchists to set off “chains of recall” that had appeared a few months earlier in the original draft of “Fighting in the New Terrors.”

Anarchist in the UK:
The Student Movement, November-December 2010

On November 10, 2010, the National Union of Students drew 52,000 people to London to protest an austerity bill that would raise the tuition cap from £3,290 to £9,000. As the main demonstration moved by Millbank Tower, a splinter group of hundreds, headed by no more than 30 black bloc anarchists, broke into the Tory Headquarters there. As they smashed windows, painted graffiti, and clashed with police, thousands of supporters gathered in the square outside, building a fire from their signs and placards. It took the police hours to regain control. Helicopter footage showed the occupiers lining the railing on the roof of Millbank, papers blowing out over the crowd far below while smoke rose from the fire.

While individual anarchists were among the first into the building, none of the organized anarchist groups in the UK turned out in great numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police and media didn’t show the faces of longtime militants but those of the nation’s youth. The participants referenced the recent sweeping the globe—“France, Greece, now here too”—but this marked the entry of a new generation into confrontation with the state. The UK had been comparatively quiet for years. Previous protest campaigns had largely been organized by full-time activists; consequently, an activist subculture had emerged. This subculture helped to foster radical activity and infrastructure, but it was disconnected from the experiences and concerns of most of those suffering from capitalism.

The attack on Millbank ignited a wave of protests, walkouts, and other actions involving more than 200,000 people over the next two months.* Occupations occurred at schools throughout the country, serving as nerve centers through the country, serving as nerve centers.

* This vindicates the call for anarchists to set off “chains of recall” that had appeared a few months earlier in the original draft of “Fighting in the New Terrors.”

Anarchist in the UK:
The Student Movement, November-December 2010

On November 10, 2010, the National Union of Students drew 52,000 people to London to protest an austerity bill that would raise the tuition cap from £3,290 to £9,000. As the main demonstration moved by Millbank Tower, a splinter group of hundreds, headed by no more than 30 black bloc anarchists, broke into the Tory Headquarters there. As they smashed windows, painted graffiti, and clashed with police, thousands of supporters gathered in the square outside, building a fire from their signs and placards. It took the police hours to regain control. Helicopter footage showed the occupiers lining the railing on the roof of Millbank, papers blowing out over the crowd far below while smoke rose from the fire.

While individual anarchists were among the first into the building, none of the organized anarchist groups in the UK turned out in great numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police and media didn’t show the faces of longtime militants but those of the nation’s youth. The participants referenced the recent sweeping the globe—“France, Greece, now here too”—but this marked the entry of a new generation into confrontation with the state. The UK had been comparatively quiet for years. Previous protest campaigns had largely been organized by full-time activists; consequently, an activist subculture had emerged. This subculture helped to foster radical activity and infrastructure, but it was disconnected from the experiences and concerns of most of those suffering from capitalism.

The attack on Millbank ignited a wave of protests, walkouts, and other actions involving more than 200,000 people over the next two months.* Occupations occurred at schools throughout the country, serving as nerve centers through the country, serving as nerve centers.

* This vindicates the call for anarchists to set off “chains of recall” that had appeared a few months earlier in the original draft of “Fighting in the New Terrors.”

Anarchist in the UK:
The Student Movement, November-December 2010

On November 10, 2010, the National Union of Students drew 52,000 people to London to protest an austerity bill that would raise the tuition cap from £3,290 to £9,000. As the main demonstration moved by Millbank Tower, a splinter group of hundreds, headed by no more than 30 black bloc anarchists, broke into the Tory Headquarters there. As they smashed windows, painted graffiti, and clashed with police, thousands of supporters gathered in the square outside, building a fire from their signs and placards. It took the police hours to regain control. Helicopter footage showed the occupiers lining the railing on the roof of Millbank, papers blowing out over the crowd far below while smoke rose from the fire.

While individual anarchists were among the first into the building, none of the organized anarchist groups in the UK turned out in great numbers. The photos of suspects circulated by police and media didn’t show the faces of longtime militants but those of the nation’s youth. The participants referenced the recent sweeping the globe—“France, Greece, now here too”—but this marked the entry of a new generation into confrontation with the state. The UK had been comparatively quiet for years. Previous protest campaigns had largely been organized by full-time activists; consequently, an activist subculture had emerged. This subculture helped to foster radical activity and infrastructure, but it was disconnected from the experiences and concerns of most of those suffering from capitalism.

The attack on Millbank ignited a wave of protests, walkouts, and other actions involving more than 200,000 people over the next two months.* Occupations occurred at schools throughout the country, serving as nerve centers through the country, serving as nerve centers.

* This vindicates the call for anarchists to set off “chains of recall” that had appeared a few months earlier in the original draft of “Fighting in the New Terrors.”
to broaden and coordinate the movement. Several thousand young people converged in London again November 24 and 30; the police responded by surrounding and “kettling” demonstrators for hours. The movement peaked on December 9, with thousands participating in clashes in London while the British parliament passed the austerity package. Police kettled and viciously attacked protesters, sending one boy to the hospital in need of brain surgery; protesters defended themselves, smashed the windows of the Treasury and other buildings, and attacked a car bearing Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall.

In contrast to the US student movement, the disEnfranchised took a primary role in these protests, often to the chagrin of “proper” student organizers. In one video clip from December 9, masked hooligans asserted, “We’re from the slums of London—how do they expect us to pay £9000 for uni fees?” Politicians and corporate media endeavored to drive a wedge between the different demographics that comprised the movement, but this diversity was its primary strength.

Activity tapered off after the bill passed. As in Greece in December 2008, the end of the year served as the closing of parentheses around a period of increased momentum.

The movement in the UK came on the heels of strikes and labor unrest throughout Spain and France; it coincided with a comparable student movement in Italy, culminating similarly on December 14 with fires and rioting outside the Italian Parliament during a controversial vote.

Things were heating up.

**New Fronts in Information Warfare:**

*Wikileaks, Anonymous, Lulzsec*

While austerity protests drew in wider and wider swaths of the population, the same thing was taking place online. After Wikileaks released classified documents from the Afghani stan and Iraq occupations and US diplomatic cables, several corporations broke off relations with the group, cutting off its access to funds. In response, Anonymous—an internet meme serving as an umbrella for collective action—orchestrated distributed denial of service attacks on many of these companies, shutting down their websites and attracting interna- tional attention.

**CNN:**

What’s the end goal for you?
What do you want to see happen as a result of Operation Payback?

**Anon:**

Personally? A utopian society. This is just a new way to fight . . .

In the 20th century, the first wave of hackers had been motivated by curiosity and mischief; their successors pursued personal gain, working for criminal enterprises or security organizations—often in that order. Now, finally, it seemed that politicized hacking was coming into its own. Some of this attention may have been convenient for the US government, which was seeking to position itself for online crackdowns; but it also reflected the determination of online communities that existed by virtue of anonymity and free circulation of information to protect the necessary conditions of their existence.

While the culture of early Anonymous had been steeped in the adolescent humor and hostility of the message boards where it originated, by 2011 participants in this and similar projects frequently endorsed an anarchist agenda. For example, after targeting the Arizona Department of Public Safety, Lulzsec proclaimed, “We’re doing this not only because we are opposed to SB1070 and the racist Arizona police state, but because we want a world free from police, prisons and politicians altogether.”

Information heists can reveal the shady underbelly of the authorities, discrediting them while dispelling the myth of their invulnerability. The cables released by Wikileaks describing President Ben Ali’s pet tiger enjoying a luxurious diet while Tunisians starved stoked the flames of revolt in that country. But these attacks further a longer-term strategy, as well. Both 21st-century capitalism and the repressive apparatus that protects it depend on the circulation of information to protect the necessary conditions of their existence.

While austerity protests drew in wider swaths of the population, the same thing was taking place online. After Wikileaks released classified documents from the Afghani stan and Iraq occupations and US diplomatic cables, several corporations broke off relations with the group, cutting off its access to funds. In response, Anonymous—an internet meme serving as an umbrella for collective action—orchestrated distributed denial of service attacks on many of these companies, shutting down their websites and attracting international attention.
The Insurrection Comes: “Arab Spring,” December 2010-March 2011

No one was prepared for governments to begin toppling. The first to go was Tunisia. Demonstrations commenced after an impoverished street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire to protest his treatment by police; at first, these protests were marginal, but every attempt at repression fanned the flames until unions and even lawyers joined in. Turnouts only increased after Ben Ali fled the country on January 14.

The first massive demonstrations took place in Egypt a week later, organized by a coalition of predominantly youth groups. One of the most influential forums supporting these was a Facebook page called “We Are All Khaled Saeed,” named for a man murdered by police. The protests were violently repressed, and the government shut down internet and cell phone access throughout much of the country, but once again, this only spread and intensified the resistance. After clashes with the police left many police stations burnt to the ground along with the headquarters of the ruling party, demonstrators shifted towards more radical tactics—such as burning the Egyptian flags and the chant “Muslims/Christians! We are all Egyptians!”—and democracy. As often happens, the forms the rebellion assumed chiefly to the forms of government rather than the economic structures that produced these; in the preceding years helped set a precedent for what it looked like to revolt, which North Africans pushed further than Europeans had imagined possible. By early February, a great part of the country was participating in the revolt, despite hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries.

President Mubarak repeatedly offered to grant protesters’ demands, but always a step too late; as momentum increased, people gained the confidence to demand more and more, until they would only be satisfied with his departure. He finally resigned on February 11. The following weeks saw similar uprisings in Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere around the Middle East, and an all-out civil war that ultimately drove Gaddafi from Libya.

Although North Africa might seem far away in a globalized world, it isn’t as familiar by how familiar everything in this story is: unemployment and bitterness, actions organized in response to economic conditions, they opposed themselves chiefly to the structure of the internet is still quite centralized; while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

Mubarak faced a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

Although the North African upheavals involved labor unrest, they started outside the workplace and remained focused on public spaces like Cairo’s Tahrir Square. The old labor movement was predicated on the way the production process gave rise to the uprising, it was because it was a new kind of collective intelligence enabling workers’ councils—a new kind of collective intelligence enabling workers to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

The period of chaos that continues up to today. The state desperately needs people to distrust and fear each other; without this, it lacks its chief justification for existence. Just as Mubarak’s predecessor had police as a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

As a result, the system is not only more capable of self-reproducing, but also more effective at controlling the social relations of production. The network effect, which makes it all but impossible for anyone to cut off the internet, is driving the spread of repression and violence. The Internet’s only value lies in its ability to reproduce the same kind of control that is invested in the state. The only solution to the problem is to build a new network that is more distributed, and therefore more resilient to attack. This is why rolling thunder is so essential: it allows people to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

Mubarak faced a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

As a result, the system is not only more capable of self-reproducing, but also more effective at controlling the social relations of production. The network effect, which makes it all but impossible for anyone to cut off the internet, is driving the spread of repression and violence. The Internet’s only value lies in its ability to reproduce the same kind of control that is invested in the state. The only solution to the problem is to build a new network that is more distributed, and therefore more resilient to attack. This is why rolling thunder is so essential: it allows people to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

The period of chaos that continues up to today. The state desperately needs people to distrust and fear each other; without this, it lacks its chief justification for existence. Just as Mubarak’s predecessor had police as a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

As a result, the system is not only more capable of self-reproducing, but also more effective at controlling the social relations of production. The network effect, which makes it all but impossible for anyone to cut off the internet, is driving the spread of repression and violence. The Internet’s only value lies in its ability to reproduce the same kind of control that is invested in the state. The only solution to the problem is to build a new network that is more distributed, and therefore more resilient to attack. This is why rolling thunder is so essential: it allows people to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

The period of chaos that continues up to today. The state desperately needs people to distrust and fear each other; without this, it lacks its chief justification for existence. Just as Mubarak’s predecessor had police as a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

As a result, the system is not only more capable of self-reproducing, but also more effective at controlling the social relations of production. The network effect, which makes it all but impossible for anyone to cut off the internet, is driving the spread of repression and violence. The Internet’s only value lies in its ability to reproduce the same kind of control that is invested in the state. The only solution to the problem is to build a new network that is more distributed, and therefore more resilient to attack. This is why rolling thunder is so essential: it allows people to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.

The period of chaos that continues up to today. The state desperately needs people to distrust and fear each other; without this, it lacks its chief justification for existence. Just as Mubarak’s predecessor had police as a no-win situation: if he left communications technologies running, they would be used against him, but taking them down provoked outrage and international solidarity. In the future, we can expect the authorities to suppress unrest by structuring and directing the flows of information rather than interrupting them. They already seem more adept at this in the US, where Facebook is not usually used to coordinate insurrections but as a space for atomized individuals to compete for social capital.

As a result, the system is not only more capable of self-reproducing, but also more effective at controlling the social relations of production. The network effect, which makes it all but impossible for anyone to cut off the internet, is driving the spread of repression and violence. The Internet’s only value lies in its ability to reproduce the same kind of control that is invested in the state. The only solution to the problem is to build a new network that is more distributed, and therefore more resilient to attack. This is why rolling thunder is so essential: it allows people to organize themselves directly without representation. At the same time, if communications technology was essential to the uprising, it was because it subverted its conventional role in the West, bringing people together rather than enabling them to remain at a distance from one another. This is proven by the fact that the demonstrations only intensified when Mubarak shut down cell phone and internet service. The material infrastructure of the internet is still quite centralized, while it can be useful, it is a mistake to depend on it as long as it remains in capitalist hands.
unprecedented demonstrations. Teachers called in sick to work on masse, shutting down schools, anarchists and fellow travelers occupied a university building in Milwaukee in an attempt to spread the unrest; rumors circulated about a general strike. On March 9, while Senate Democrats were absent in protest, Wisconsin’s Republican Senators passed a part of the proposed austerity package—a bill stripping public-sector unions of collective bargaining rights. In response, thousands returned to the capitol building, pushing past state patrolmen to reoccupy it in defiance of the court order that had concluded the previous occupation.

The centrality of the capitol building throughout the protests shows how important it is for a movement to establish a relationship to physical space. Just as university occupations served as nerve centers during the December 2008 uprising in Greece, the capitol building offered a focal point for demonstrators to build momentum over a period of weeks and a site to converge in response to new developments. In the streets of universa estrangement, when we can only congregate in spaces designed to make us shop or cheer for sports teams, common space itself has become radical and radicalizing.

This level of disruption was unusual for a quiet Midwestern state like Wisconsin. But once again, though the occupation assumed comparatively radical forms, it still limited itself to law-abiding democratic discourse. This created strange bedfellows for the protesters; for example, individual police officers expressed support for the occupation early on, though they later helped put a stop to it. This also passed the anarchists Democratic Party to squander whatever momentum remained afterwards by channeling it into a doomed campaign to recall the governor.

Heavily deviating the Republicans’ machinations, they passed the bill by democratic process, the same way countless other bills are passed. Although the protesters saw themselves as patriots of democracy, in forcing their way back into the capitol on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators on March 9 they were essentially asserting that their illegal occupation of the building was more legitimate than Senators

This underlines an important lesson: the first compromise might as well be the last. Whenever we concede anything, we set a precedent that will be repeated again and again, emboldening those for whom it is more convenient if we don’t stand up for ourselves. If police didn’t arrest demonstrators in the capitol, it was not because they supported the occupation, nor because the demonstrators had the right to be in the building, but because the demonstrators had mobilized enough social power to force the authorities to back down. Pithiness and obedience could only detract from this leverage.

In popular struggles, one role anarchists can play is to be the ones who refuse to yield. We can use our hard-won analyses to less experienced protesters—for example, emphasizing that however permissible individual police officers might seem, they cannot be trusted much as they are police.

To accomplish this, however, anarchists must be vocal and in the thick of things, not looking on from the margins as they were in Wisconsin. Anarchists of a more insurrectionist bent gravitated to the occupation in Milwaukee, while anarchists in Madison largely focused on providing infrastructure. Offering resources can be a good way to connect with strangers, yet our task is not just to facilitate protests of any kind whatever, but to ensure that they threaten the power structure. To this end, we have to seize the initiative to organize actions as well as infrastructure—engaging the general public in the process, not just other anarchists. Clashes with police will be more controversial than never-never-never, but this controversy has to play out if we are ever to get anywhere.

A common complaint from the more combative anarchists in the Madison occupation was that leftist organizations had already determined the character of the protest. Anarchists on the ground had to fear that they would be simply marginalized if they challenged the dominant narrative. In fact, there’s nothing to lose in such circumstances, when for all intents and purposes the Left doesn’t have a point beyond the horizon of capitalism; even when they aren’t utterly naïve, they serve to distract and neutralize those who desire real change. Where the field is split between left and right, we may as well disrupt this dichotomy by acting outside of it. Even if we fail, at least we broaden the terrain.

This brings up the larger question—what should be the goal of anti-austerity protests? In Wisconsin, most participants took it for granted that their goal was to stop the bill; in other words, to keep things the way they had been. This treats the financial crisis as if it were just an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. But from the capitalist perspective, austerity measures really are unavoidable; there’s no other way to keep the system running. Elsewhere in the US, earnestly heartbroken Democrats were proposing similar measures for their own states—largely without opposition, thanks to the stultifying effect of the two-party system.

Capitalism is not a static condition but a dynamic process transforming the world. A protest can’t freeze history. Even if one wave of cutbacks can be stopped, a thousand more assaults will follow. The state literally can’t back down—the politicians have nowhere to go. This means that state austerity is not an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. This treats the financial crisis as if it were just an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. But from the capitalist perspective, austerity measures really are unavoidable; there’s no other way to keep the system running. Elsewhere in the US, earnestly heartbroken Democrats were proposing similar measures for their own states—largely without opposition, thanks to the stultifying effect of the two-party system.

Capitalism is not a static condition but a dynamic process transforming the world. A protest can’t freeze history. Even if one wave of cutbacks can be stopped, a thousand more assaults will follow. The state literally can’t back down—the politicians have nowhere to go. This means that state austerity is not an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. This treats the financial crisis as if it were just an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. But from the capitalist perspective, austerity measures really are unavoidable; there’s no other way to keep the system running. Elsewhere in the US, earnestly heartbroken Democrats were proposing similar measures for their own states—largely without opposition, thanks to the stultifying effect of the two-party system.

Capitalism is not a static condition but a dynamic process transforming the world. A protest can’t freeze history. Even if one wave of cutbacks can be stopped, a thousand more assaults will follow. The state literally can’t back down—the politicians have nowhere to go. This means that state austerity is not an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. This treats the financial crisis as if it were just an excuse dreamed up by greedy capitalists. But from the capitalist perspective, austerity measures really are unavoidable; there’s no other way to keep the system running. Elsewhere in the US, earnestly heartbroken Democrats were proposing similar measures for their own states—largely without opposition, thanks to the stultifying effect of the two-party system.
The spell of occupation extended beyond Wisconsin—along with the spell of democracy. Real Democracy Now! (appropriately abbreviated DRY in Spanish), a new group professing to be outside all existing political parties and ideologies, organized protests against austerity measures and political corruption around Spain on May 15, afterwards, the idea spread by Twitter to camp out in plazas in imitation of the Tahrir Square encampment. Or on May 25. These lasted longer than the Spanish occupations. DRY in Spain included all those who had yet to be thrown at the mercy of the job market. Instead, the predominantly white union workers framed the protest as a matter of defending their own privileges, sidelining other demographics such as unemployed African-Americans in Milwaukee and thus dooming themselves to defeat. Nonetheless, by mid-June the plazas had emptied throughout the country, though in some cities neighborhood assemblies took their place. Because they did not mount an offensive on the state and private ownership of capital, there was no endgame for the occupations: they were exciting experiments in convergence and self-organization, but offered no obvious road forward. Like the UK student movement, the plaza occupation movement marked the entry of new demographics into conflict with the state—including many from the disenfranchised middle class. These newcomers accepted some of the premises of long-time radicals, such as autonomy from political parties; in this regard, they went much further than protesters in Wisconsin had. At the same time, they brought many of their dogmas with them, including pacifism. Likewise, the myth of a better, purer democracy remained alive and well in the plazas. The central assemblies addressed demands to the government and monopolized legitimacy, if not power, in the occupations. In Greece, plaza occupations inspired by the ones in Spain began on May 25. These lasted longer than the Spanish occupations, drawing hundreds of thousands at the high points. They built up to a 48-hour general strike on June 28-29 coinciding with the Greek parliament narrowly voting to accept the new austerity measures decreed by the European Union. In Greece as in Spain, the new refugees from the middle class brought pacifism with them alongside various brands of nationalism.

"The time for indignation is over. Those who get indignant are already starting to bore us. Increasingly, they seem to us like the last guardians of a system that many of us no longer believe in. Do they produce new momentum, new ways of fighting, new unruliness? They create new relationships between people, new ways of relating to material goods? Do they demonstrate values that point beyond capitalism? Do they produce new momentum, new ways of fighting, new unruliness?"

-Franco Berardi Bifo

On May 27, police arrived at the occupation in Barcelona to "clean up" the plaza. Tens of thousands convened to oppose them. Organizers attempted to impose a code of nonviolence, as they had in every proposal in the assemblies, but as the police attacked clashes broke out all the same. After a long battle, the occupiers forced the police to withdraw; over one hundred people were injured, many with broken bones.

In some cities the occupations signed on to the DRY manifesto from the outset, becoming ideologically homogeneous; these occupations did not expand as much or last as long. The occupations that remained sites of contention for a range of ideas and approaches were much more vibrant and enduring. Nonetheless, by mid-June the plazas had emptied throughout the country, though in some cities neighborhood assemblies took their place. Because they did not mount an offensive on the state and private ownership of capital, there was no endgame for the occupations: they were exciting experiments in convergence and self-organization, but offered no obvious road forward. Like the UK student movement, the plaza occupation movement marked the entry of new demographics into conflict with the state—including many from the disenfranchised middle class. These newcomers accepted some of the premises of long-time radicals, such as autonomy from political parties; in this regard, they went much further than protesters in Wisconsin had. At the same time, they brought many of their dogmas with them, including pacifism. Likewise, the myth of a better, purer democracy remained alive and well in the plazas. The central assemblies addressed demands to the government and monopolized legitimacy, if not power, in the occupations. In Greece, plaza occupations inspired by the ones in Spain began on May 25. These lasted longer than the Spanish occupations, drawing hundreds of thousands at the high points. They built up to a 48-hour general strike on June 28-29 coinciding with the Greek parliament narrowly voting to accept the new austerity measures decreed by the European Union. In Greece as in Spain, the new refugees from the middle class brought pacifism with them alongside various brands of nationalism.

It Spreads:
The Plaza Occupation Movements, May-June 2011

The spell of occupation extended beyond Wisconsin—along with the spell of democracy. Real Democracy Now! (appropriately abbreviated DRY in Spanish), a new group professing to be outside all existing political parties and ideologies, organized protests against austerity measures and political corruption around Spain on May 15, afterwards, the idea spread by Twitter to camp out in plazas in imitation of the Tahrir Square encampment. Organized around assemblies based on “direct democracy,” these occupations swiftly drew thousands of participants in many cities around Spain. Communists, anarchists, and partisans of various national liberation movements mingled with people of other walks of life, many of whom had not previously been involved in protests or considered themselves politically active. By the countrywide elections the following weekend, hundreds of thousands of people had visited or participated in the occupations. Nearly half of the population abstained from voting, with blank ballots doubling to 5%.

Occupying it—Rolling Thunder—30 ¬ Background & Analysis ¬ Issue Ten, Summer 2012 ¬

police stations. No amount of Obama doublespeak can render that peaceful.

If we shouldn’t evaluate anti-austerity protests according to whether they thwart new legislation or how many people they draw to rallies, then content becomes the important question. Do they create new relationships between people, new ways of relating to material goods? Do they demonstrate values that point beyond capitalism? Do they produce new momentum, new ways of fighting, new unruliness? The capitol building symbolized democracy, which is to say collective participation in top-down control. Occupying it implied that the people could be better stewards of democracy than their elected representatives. Insofar as workers behaved themselves even as their right to organize autonomously was stripped away, they proved this to be the case.

Like the student movement, the movement in Wisconsin stalled because it limited itself to opposing specific legislation affecting one demographic. Framed as a last-ditch effort to protect the privileges of state employees, it could only go so far: people of many walks of life got involved, but the narrative prevented them from taking the lead. Yet millions of workers without union jobs or state salaries were already suffering the same conditions the Republicans wanted to force on state employees. A movement involving all these different sectors of society as equal participants could have snowballed; it would also have been much more difficult to control. Spontaneous high school walkouts in February had hinted at this possibility, connecting the proposed cutbacks to the alienation of young people who had yet to be thrown at the mercy of the job market. Instead, the predominantly white union workers framed the protest as a matter of defending their own privileges, sidelining other demographics such as unemployed African-Americans in Milwaukee and thus dooming themselves to defeat.

As they had in every proposal in the assemblies, but as the police attacked clashes broke out all the same. After a long battle, the occupiers forced the police to withdraw; over one hundred people were injured, many with broken bones.

In some cities the occupations signed on to the DRY manifesto from the outset, becoming ideologically homogeneous; these occupations did not expand as much or last as long. The occupations that remained sites of contention for a range of ideas and approaches were much more vibrant and enduring. Nonetheless, by mid-June the plazas had emptied throughout the country, though in some cities neighborhood assemblies took their place. Because they did not mount an offensive on the state and private ownership of capital, there was no endgame for the occupations: they were exciting experiments in convergence and self-organization, but offered no obvious road forward.

Like the UK student movement, the plaza occupation movement marked the entry of new demographics into conflict with the state—including many from the disenfranchised middle class. These newcomers accepted some of the premises of long-time radicals, such as autonomy from political parties; in this regard, they went much further than protesters in Wisconsin had. At the same time, they brought many of their dogmas with them, including pacifism. Likewise, the myth of a better, purer democracy remained alive and well in the plazas. The central assemblies addressed demands to the government and monopolized legitimacy, if not power, in the occupations.

In Greece, plaza occupations inspired by the ones in Spain began on May 25. These lasted longer than the Spanish occupations, drawing hundreds of thousands at the high points. They built up to a 48-hour general strike on June 28-29 coinciding with the Greek parliament narrowly voting to accept the new austerity measures decreed by the European Union. In Greece as in Spain, the new refugees from the middle class brought pacifism with them alongside various brands of nationalism.
The pacifism threatened to divide the movement: as had occurred in the wake of the Toronto G20 protests and elsewhere, baseless conspiracy theories circulated that the “hooded ones” at the front of clashes with the police were actually somehow in league with the authorities. The nationalism was also ominous; although only a small minority in the occupations were out-and-out fascists, as the economic crisis worsens even mild nationalism may turn into xenophobia.

Despite these internal challenges, the general strike was marked by massive violent clashes with the police. For the first time since May 5, 2010, the insurgents who had risen up in December 2008—anarchists, anti-authoritarians, students, the underclass—were joined in the streets by the general public.

**Anarchy in the UK, Take Two:** 
Riots and Reaction, August 2011

A month later, Chile erupted in its wildest riots in years, with 874 people arrested in student protests against the privatized education system—the same day that Standard & Poor’s downgraded the United States credit rating. Immediately afterwards, riots broke out in the UK in response to the police murder of Mark Duggan. Far from subsiding, the unrest generated by the crisis seemed to be ricocheting back and forth across the globe.

The riots began on August 6 in London following protests in Duggan’s native Tottenham and spread swiftly around the country, intensifying in other cities after police clamped down in the capitol. These were the opposite of the plaza occupations: a single subset of society escalating its private war on police and private property, without narrative, demands, or illusions, and thus coming directly into conflict with the rest of society as a whole. Participation occurred chiefly along class rather than racial lines, with many groups being effectively multi-ethnic.

All together the riots inflicted around £200 million of damage, including widespread looting and arson. Once again, Twitter and Facebook were used to coordinate action on the ground, including widespread looting and arson. Once again, Twitter and Facebook were used to coordinate action on the ground, once again, the alternative to the official narrative for the unconnected was the Twitter account of a small fire demands constant tending. A bonfire can be left alone. A conflagration spreads.
action. Although we must not conflate the present with the past, we also shouldn’t forget the lessons anarchists learned in the anti-globalization and anti-war movements: converge, take the initiative, frame the narrative.

At no point during the buildups to the protests of March 4, 2010 or the occupations in Wisconsin did anarchists establish an autonomous public organizing body to play a role such as the RNC Welcoming Committee played at the 2008 Republican National Convention or the PCGR played at the 2009 G20 in Pittsburgh. This was a strategic error that enabled liberal and authoritarian organizers to monopolize the public discourse around the protests and determine their character and conditions in advance. Without the leverage afforded by public organizing of our own, we can only expect to be hoodwinked and betrayed by those who don’t share our opposition to hierarchical power.

The actions that go well for anarchists are likely to be the ones initiated by anarchists, or else in conjunction with others who respect anarchists’ goals and autonomy. In such cases, anarchists are more likely to succeed in determining the character of events, choosing a terrain conducive to confrontation. This may explain why occupations and apparently “spontaneous” actions offered more space and opportunity to decentralized forms of resistance than large-scale events such as the permitted marches of March 4, 2010. Authoritarian and lowest-common-denominator organizations can more easily dominate the latter, both by literally laying the groundwork of what is to happen and by monopolizing legitimacy in the public eye by presenting themselves as representing the movement. So long as anarchists remain on the margins of liberal and authoritarian organizing, organizing breakaway marches and the like, the lack of initiative and “legitimacy” in the public eye will always impose structural limits on our efforts.

We need public, participatory calls and organizing structures, both to offer points of entry to everyone who might want to fight alongside us and to make it impossible for authoritarians who respect anarchists’ goals and autonomy. In such cases, an initiative, frame the narrative. Who is more entitled to occupy a workplace than those who have already lost their jobs? If we can accomplish this, we will neutralize the allegations of being “outside agitators” and drive them against those who revolt. Better, we will transform every austerity conflict into an opportunity to connect with everyone else who has been thrown away by capitalism. One goal should not be to preserve the privileges of those who retain their jobs and enrollment, but to channel outrage about everything that capitalism has taken from all of us.

In addition to exacerbating the contradictions inherent in the financial crisis, we should undertake to make life in upheavals more pleasurable and robust than workaday life. Those who participate in wildcat strikes, blockades, and occupations should experience these as more exciting and fulfilling than their usual routines, to such an extent that it becomes possible to imagine life after capitalism. As many anarchists live in a permanent state of exclusion, making the best of it despite everything, we should be especially well-equipped to assist here.

In other words: the occupation is the goal, not just a means, and this should come to the fore in every outbreak of resistance. Finally, we have to be tireless in our critique of democracy, as the alternative people in this society intuitively fall back on against the excesses of capitalism. The more unpopular this is, the more important it is that we do it. Private property and government are the two great sacred cows of our age—the ones for which our lives and the earth itself are being sacrificed—and challenging the ways they monopolize legitimacy is our project, not two. They are two heads of the same beast; they cannot be beaten separately.

“"It was a symbolic battle—or more precisely, a frighteningly real and bloody fight over a symbolic location; the fight itself was the message.” –a participant in the battle for the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior
suffering from heat stroke, kidney damage, terrible blisters, wounds, hypothermia, post-traumatic stress, and just about every other tribulation you could possibly think of. I’ve been to places where people were robbed and raped and murdered, my friends have found bodies. In addition to hearing witness to others’ suffering, I myself have fallen off of cliffs, torn my face open on barbed wire, run out of water, had guns pointed at me, been charged by bulls and circled by vultures, jumped over rattlesnakes, pulled pieces of cactus out of many different parts of my body with pliers, had to tear off my pants because they were full of fire ants, gotten gray hairs, and in general poured no small amount of my own sweat, blood, and tears into the thirteentid desert.

There is nowhere on earth like the place where we work. It is beautiful beyond telling: harsh, vast, mountainous, remote, rugged, unforgiving, every cliché you can think of and more. I have been humbled countless times by the incredible selflessness and courage of the people I have met there, and I have been driven nearly out of my head with rage at the utterly heartless economic and political system that drives people to such lengths in order to provide for their families. Doing this work has given me a great deal of opportunity to observe how the border is managed on a day-to-day basis, and hopefully some insight into the functions that it performs within global capitalism—the real objectives that it serves. I offer this essay as ammunition to anyone who still cares enough about anything to intervene when people around them are being treated like pieces of meat and directly benefit identifiable sectors of the population of both countries. It may be evil, but it’s not stupid. If this sounds a little shrill, let me tell you how I’ve seen this play out on the ground.

When I started working in the desert I began to notice some very peculiar things about the Border Patrol’s operations there. They would do a lot of enforcement in some areas and very little in others, and this would not necessarily correspond to which areas were busy and which areas were slow. In fact, very often the enforce- ment would clearly be done in such a way that it would push traffic into rather than out of the busiest areas, where Border Patrol would keep a low profile until the very northern end of the route. At that point there would be a moderate amount of enforcement again, but not really what you would expect given the numbers of people that were moving through.

Then they started building lots of surveil- lance towers. But once again, the towers were not really built in the places where the traffic was heaviest—they were built on the edges of them. If anything, they seemed to be intent on forcing traffic into the busiest routes rather than out of them. What was happening?

Meanwhile, I was constantly meeting mi- grants whose groups had been split up by heli- copters. The Border Patrol would fly over them a few feet off the ground, everybody would run in different directions, and soon there would be thirty people wandering lost across the desert in groups of two or three. What seemed par- ticularly odd was that the Border Patrol ships made no effort to actually apprehend these people after breaking them up—they just flew away. And then there’s this. Over the last few years, the organization I work for has developed a pretty comprehensive understanding of the areas of the desert we cover, which has given us a fairly clear picture of the most heavily traveled sections of the entire border. We’ve formed a fairly clear picture of where traffic starts, where it goes, how it gets there, where it’s busy and where it’s slow at any given time, where the pinch points are, and so on. I honestly believe that if I worked for the Border Patrol I could basically point at a map and tell them how to shut down the whole sector. It’s really not rocket science. Keep in mind that all of our work has been done by untrained civilian volunteers, armed with low-end GPS units, a few old trucks, run-off- the-shelf mapping software, cheap cell phones with spotty service, and a very limited budget.

The first thing that I want to make clear is that the atrocious suffering that happens on the border every day is not an accident. It is not a mistake and it is not the result of a misunderstanding. It is the predictable and intentional result of policies implemented at every level of government on both sides of the border. These policies have rational objectives and

“We answer the question of who benefits or profits most directly from an action, event, or outcome and you always have the starting point for your analysis or investigation, and sometimes it will also give you the end point.”

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The first thing that I want to make clear is that the atrocious suffering that happens on the border every day is not an accident. It is not a mistake and it is not the result of a misunderstanding. It is the predictable and intentional result of policies implemented at every level of government on both sides of the border. These policies have rational objectives and

“We answer the question of who benefits or profits most directly from an action, event, or outcome and you always have the starting point for your analysis or investigation, and sometimes it will also give you the end point.”

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Does it seem logical that we could figure this stuff out while the government of the United States of America cannot, despite access to he- licopters, unmanned drones, electronic sensors, fleets of well-maintained trucks, night vision systems, state-of-the-art communications and

 Volunteers leaving water in the desert for migrants.
It is to manage and immediately disrupt in the agriculture and animal exploitation industries, not to mention in everything related to construction—quite possibly leading to a sophisticated history lesson, beginning with some very inconvenient truths. Like the rest of the Western Hemisphere, the land that is currently called the United States of America was stolen from its rightful inhabitants by the descendants of European colonists through a well-documented orgy of bloodshed, mass sacrifice, treachery, and genocide of proportions so epic that they are arguably unprecedented in the thousands of often gruesome years of human history preceding them and unsurpassed in the hastily tranquil ones that followed. This monstrous crime has been in progress for over five hundred years, has never been atoned for in any meaningful way, and continues to be perpetrated to this day. Everybody knows this, but nobody really likes to think too much about what it means. What it means is this: unless you’re honest enough to admit that you think that might makes right as long as you’re on the winning side, you have to acknowledge that the federal, local, and state governments of the United States of America, along with all of the agencies such as the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement contained therein, are illegitimate institutions with no claim to legitimacy whatsoever over the territory they currently govern. If anyone can show me an ethically, logically, or even legally sound way to dispute this statement, they’re clear that undocumented workers were not subjected to such extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.

Here’s another lead that is easy to follow: the recent wave of anti-immigrant hysteria sounded very similar to the anti-Muslim fear of the 1970s, when the supposed threat of deportation will mean something traumatic, and expensive, but possible. The threat of deportation will mean something very serious. It means spending a ton of money. It means risking your life to return. It means that you may never see your family again. This is supposed to provide American employers with a vast and disposable pool of labor that is kept down to the bare minimum, with extraordinary traumatizing, and expensive, but possible. The point isn’t to deter people from coming—far from it. Some of those who dislike seeing people treated like shit and then discarded like diapers, because what’s more important is that this migration and immigration as long as undocumented labor is needed to maintain the stability of the economic system that is being propped up by the extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.

Here’s another lead that is easy to follow: the recent wave of anti-immigrant hysteria sounded very similar to the anti-Muslim fear of the 1970s, when the supposed threat of deportation will mean something traumatic, and expensive, but possible. The threat of deportation will mean something very serious. It means spending a ton of money. It means risking your life to return. It means that you may never see your family again. This is supposed to provide American employers with a vast and disposable pool of labor that is kept down to the bare minimum, with extraordinary traumatizing, and expensive, but possible. The point isn’t to deter people from coming—far from it. Some of those who dislike seeing people treated like shit and then discarded like diapers, because what’s more important is that this migration and immigration as long as undocumented labor is needed to maintain the stability of the economic system that is being propped up by the extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.

Here’s another lead that is easy to follow: the recent wave of anti-immigrant hysteria sounded very similar to the anti-Muslim fear of the 1970s, when the supposed threat of deportation will mean something traumatic, and expensive, but possible. The threat of deportation will mean something very serious. It means spending a ton of money. It means risking your life to return. It means that you may never see your family again. This is supposed to provide American employers with a vast and disposable pool of labor that is kept down to the bare minimum, with extraordinary traumatizing, and expensive, but possible. The point isn’t to deter people from coming—far from it. Some of those who dislike seeing people treated like shit and then discarded like diapers, because what’s more important is that this migration and immigration as long as undocumented labor is needed to maintain the stability of the economic system that is being propped up by the extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.

Here’s another lead that is easy to follow: the recent wave of anti-immigrant hysteria sounded very similar to the anti-Muslim fear of the 1970s, when the supposed threat of deportation will mean something traumatic, and expensive, but possible. The threat of deportation will mean something very serious. It means spending a ton of money. It means risking your life to return. It means that you may never see your family again. This is supposed to provide American employers with a vast and disposable pool of labor that is kept down to the bare minimum, with extraordinary traumatizing, and expensive, but possible. The point isn’t to deter people from coming—far from it. Some of those who dislike seeing people treated like shit and then discarded like diapers, because what’s more important is that this migration and immigration as long as undocumented labor is needed to maintain the stability of the economic system that is being propped up by the extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.

Here’s another lead that is easy to follow: the recent wave of anti-immigrant hysteria sounded very similar to the anti-Muslim fear of the 1970s, when the supposed threat of deportation will mean something traumatic, and expensive, but possible. The threat of deportation will mean something very serious. It means spending a ton of money. It means risking your life to return. It means that you may never see your family again. This is supposed to provide American employers with a vast and disposable pool of labor that is kept down to the bare minimum, with extraordinary traumatizing, and expensive, but possible. The point isn’t to deter people from coming—far from it. Some of those who dislike seeing people treated like shit and then discarded like diapers, because what’s more important is that this migration and immigration as long as undocumented labor is needed to maintain the stability of the economic system that is being propped up by the extraordinary risks and pressures they would act like anybody else and obtain the highest price for their labor that the market would bear. In fact, these same workers have proven themselves able to work two or three jobs at a time, despite having to overcome obstacles other workers do not face. But border and immigration enforcement drives down wages across the board—that’s the point of it.
welcome to let me know, but I’m not going to lose any sleep for this to happen.

It’s important to start by framing the matter this way. Who are these people that claim to have jurisdiction over native land? What right do they have to be telling anybody where they want to go and when? If anyone has a right to decide who can and cannot pass through the territory that currently constitutes the Mexican-American border, it’s the people whose ancestors have inhabited that land since time immemorial, not the descendents or institutions of the ones who colonized it. Most so-called illegal immigrants are closer to having a defensible claim to the continent they’re traversing than most of the hypocrisies who condemn and pursue them.

Now fast forward, for the sake of brevity, to January 1, 1994, the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, and thousands of indigenous people in southeastern Mexico famously rose up in arms in response. Calling themselves Zapatistas after the Mexican revolutionary, these people predicted that this agreement would mark a final deathblow to their way of life if they failed to resist. Their analysis of the situation quickly proved exceedingly cogent, their ensuing project of indigenous autonomy has yet to be defeated, and their actions sparked an entire generation of resistance to global capitalism: a whole different story that is thankfully not over yet.

Within the year, the Clinton administration launched Operation Gatekeeper, a program that massively increased funding for Border Patrol operations in the San Diego sector of the border in California. The federal government greatly stepped up enforce- ment in this sector and built a fourteen-mile wall between San Diego and Tijuana. Operation Gatekeeper roughly marks the beginning of a two-decade running process of ever-increasing border militarization that has continued steadily since then, into the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. This has meant that every year there are more Border Patrol agents, National Guard units, fences, towers, checkpoints, sensors, guns, and dogs along the border. Understanding the nature of this militarization will go a long way towards clarifying what’s actually happening and why.

By all accounts I’ve ever heard, it used to be much easier to cross the border than it is now. Most people crossed into relatively safer urbanized areas such as San Diego, El Paso, or the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Starting with Operation Gatekeeper, the Border Patrol made it much more difficult to enter the country in these places; over the years, it has methodically pushed the traffic into the increasingly remote mountains and deserts. Nowadays, many people have died from heat, cold, sickness, injuries, hunger, and thirst as a direct result. At this point, I think, the game is reaching a hit of an endpoint. The government has pushed the traffic into the very deepest and deadliest pockets of the entire border, which is where they want it. This does not mean that the situation is completely static—people will continue to come to work in the north without leaving their families behind for good. There have been several interesting byproducts of these changes. Many pueblos now keep a database of people that send for their relatives in the north to visit them, to get their mail, to send for supplies, and to find work in Mexican cities, in sweatshops primarily owned by American corporations in northern Mexico, and in the United States.

We got a call from the Mexican consulate. A man’s family had contacted them. He had been missing for nine days. The last time anybody had seen him was somewhere near a small body of water with a fractured rib. They thought that he was in our area somewhere. For about a week we searched and searched, but we never found him. His brother had papers. He came up, with a horse. He combed the desert on horseback for another week, and eventually found his brother’s body.

Two weeks later a man came walking into camp. He was carrying an almost empty gallon jug of water with our markings on it in one hand, and a white shirt tied to a long stick in the other. He stuck the jug under my nose: “This water saved my life! I was praying to Jesus for water! I was sure I was going to die, and I found this water in the desert! I think Border Patrol leaves it on the trails for people!”

“No man,” I said, “Border Patrol couldn’t give a shit if people live or die.

We left that water:

“Those bastards,” he said. “I’ve been waving this flag at their helicopters for two weeks. Just fly by. They just fly off. When you want them they’re nowhere to be seen, and when you don’t—there they are.” I checked the markings on the bottle. It had been dropped two weeks earlier at an unusual location we had only gone to because we were looking for the man who died.

periods of time and are returning to their homes in the United States. This latter group faces a particularly feudish dilemma if they run into trouble on the way. I have often heard people speak of the Southern border as if they were saying things like “I thought I was going to die and all I could think about was my babies. It’s better for me to go back home than to risk dying again.” I have often heard people whose children live north of the border say things like “If I have to risk my own life to get my kids home, then I will.” As I hope I have made clear, a policy of push- ing migrant traffic into extremely dangerous areas does not at all imply an actual intention to stop or even deter people from entering the country illegally. This complex and slightly perverse strategy has numerous compelling advantages. It allows for the cameras while still providing the American economy with the farmers and meatpackers it depends on. It provides ample opportu- nities for giving big government contracts to giant corporations: for example, to Wackenhut to transport migrants, to Corrections Corpora- tion of America to detain them, to Boeing to build surveillance infrastructure. It justifies the hefty salaries of the 20,000 people who work for the Border Patrol. And it has its beneficiaries, who will I get to momentarily. On the whole, border militarization is best seen as a massive government pork and corporate welfare project that is possibly only surpassed in the last twenty years by the war in Iraq.

The outcome of this policy has been mass deportations that are only used to be easier. That was the border, it also used to be a lot cheaper. This won’t be surprising to anyone familiar with the laws of supply and demand. Any service will become more expensive if it becomes more difficult to provide, and the service of being smuggled across the border has certainly been a case study in this law. Prices rose and rose as the Border Patrol pushed people further and further from the cities and established more and more checkpoints that made the journey longer and longer, until at a certain point there was as much money to be made in moving people as there was in moving drugs. At that point, the cartels that already controlled the drug trade recognized an excellent business opportunity, muscled out the competition, and took over the entire game. This dramatically transformed what had been a relatively low-key affair into a lucrative, highly centralized, and increasingly brutal industry with tens of billions of dollars at stake. There is no doubt that these cartels are among the primary ben- eficiaries of American and Mexican drug trade, and immigration policies since the end of the Cold War.
The rise of the cartels to a position of absolute dominance within a booming industry led, unsurprisingly, to a mass-based approach and an extraordinarily inhumane methodology. I have met people who were forced to stay in the desert, with the sick and wounded straggling behind and trying desperately to keep up. I have met people who were told that what is always at best an extremely demanding four- to five-day journey would take as little as twelve hours on foot, and countless more who were left behind to die by their guides without hesitation when they were for any reason no longer able to keep up.

As a result of border militarization, prices have risen now to the point that it costs around five thousand dollars for a Guatemalan to be brought into the United States through the networks, and about six thousand for Salvadorans. Fees for Mexicans vary widely, but they are far from cheap. You won’t be surprised to hear that many people who wish to migrate do not actually have six thousand dollars lying around. The cartels have developed a variety of inventive solutions to this problem, often involving kidnapping and indentured servitude. I’ve met people who spent years working in the United States simply to pay off their initial fee, some while held in conditions of outright bonded labor. I’ve met others who made it through the desert and were immediately held for ransom by the same groups that brought them in. The ones who were able to raise a few thousand dollars more were allowed to go. The ones who weren’t able to were beaten for days and then driven back out to be left in the desert, where within minutes they were picked up for deportation by Border Patrol agents who clearly had some sort of working arrangement with the kidnappers. I’m not kidding. It’s scandalous.

As bad as all this is, it still doesn’t fully convey the depth of the cruelty that has characterized this era of government-sponsored cartel control. Rape and sexual assault of female migrants is absolutely endemic at every step of the process of migration. This has been greatly exacerbated by the actions of the government by pushing the traffic out into the middle of nowhere, they have basically guaranteed that in order to enter the country women have to place themselves in situations where rape and sexual assault are extremely likely. In addition, the trails are frequented by groups of armed bandits who make their living targeting migrants. I believe that some of the bandits are employed by the cartels themselves, who are simply robbing their own clients, while others are free-lancers taking advantage of an easy opportunity to prey on people who make their living targeting migrants. I believe that some of the bandits are employed by the cartels themselves, who are simply robbing their own clients, while others are free-lancers taking advantage of an easy opportunity to prey on people who make their living targeting migrants.

One day we met three Central American migrants. The Salvadoran had been traveling with his niece. He had promised his brother that he would take care of her. He had been carrying her bag when their group was split up by Border Patrol. He got separated from her in the chaos, she fell down, and they carried her away. He escaped with the two Hondurans. They had been utterly lost for four days and nights.

The Salvadoran had a cell phone, which gave no service in the US. It was full of pictures of places they had been and things that they had seen. “Look at this mountain!” he said. “We crossed it! It was so beautiful. We thought for sure that we would make it!” He called us a week later. “We made it. We kept going. We knew if she is safe. We don’t know if she is safe. We don’t know if she is safe. We don’t know if she is safe.”

While they were recuperating he asked me how much it cost to fill up the tank of our truck. I told him usually about seventy-five dollars a tank represents about twenty days of labor at $8 a day.

“$175 dollar tank of gas would be for me.”

“So, you paid $175?” I asked.

“No. I paid thirty dollars a tank of gas for the Salvadoran was as difficult to pay for as a $2500 tank of gas would be for me.”

“That’s a problem,” I said.

“It’s a very serious problem,” he agreed. “They tied our currency to the dollar, and everything got incredibly expensive. It’s just impossible to live there right now.”

A little later he found a laminated picture of a young girl in our kitchen. “Who is this?” he asked me.

“Um, she was abandoned by her guide. One of our volunteers found her body in the desert last winter. She was only fourteen.”

“Who was she from?”

“El Salvador.” He looked like he was going to cry. “How old is your niece?”

“Fourteen.” The younger Honduran put his arm around the Salvadoran’s shoulders. “She was having a hard time keeping up. I thought I was going to have to carry her. It was dark. There were lights and screaming. Everybody was running every which way. She fell down and they grabbed her. I saw them carry her away. I ran. I don’t know if she is safe. I don’t know if I did the right thing.”

“I’m sorry,” I told him.

We ate together, and they left as the moon was coming up. The older Honduran had wrapped up his knee and taken a lot of painkillers. “No matter what happens,” the Salvadoran said, “we’re not going to leave him. They’re not going to get us. We’re going to make it.” He called us a week later from his cousin’s house in Utah. They had all made it out of the desert.
defenceless people who are often carrying their life savings in their pockets. Again, it is primarily because the government has pushed the traffic into the ends of the earth that these migrants are often unwilling to ask for help that’s the only place you’re going to get.
side as best I can. Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes you beat the man and sometimes the man beats you.

The border doesn’t end at the border, and the hardships that undocumented people face don’t stop there either. The border cuts through every city and state; it cuts through many of our bodies. The line in the sand is neither the first twist nor the last of the meat grinder that global capitalism has prepared for people without papers. After making it across the border undocumented people enter a world in which they cannot legally earn money; they have compelling reasons not to call the ambulance, go to the hospital, get health or auto insurance, drive a vehicle, open a bank account, use a credit card, apply for a mortgage, sign a lease, or rely on any number of other options that people with citizenship can fall back on.

If for any reason you have made it a practice to live a portion of your life off the books, you might be able to appreciate how hard it is to do this full-time in this society.

Illegal immigration is a legitimate form of resistance to the inequities of global capitalism for millions of people worldwide. It may be indirect resistance, but it gets the goods. This functions in two principal ways. First, remittances from immigrant workers in the United States—many of them undocumented—to their families in Mexico totaled more than 21 billion dollars in 2010 alone. If you add up all the remittances from immigrant workers in the entire global north to all of their families in the entire global south, the total starts to look pretty significant. Even though it’s filtered through a fine screen of work and exploitation, this money probably represents one of the largest redistributions of wealth from the rich to the poor in the entire course of human history. Second, south-to-north immigration, much of it illegal, is bringing about real demographic shifts in parts of the global north and particularly in the United States. This shift may eventually lead to meaningful social changes within this country, which could contribute to a somewhat more equitable restructuring of the global economic system, which would mitigate the tremendous disparity in wealth between the global north and south, which is what drives the migration in the first place.

It’s certainly not a given that this latter hope will pan out. Generations of immigrants have moved from the margins into the mainstream of American society without radically changing its course. In fact this is exactly howsettlers took control of the land to begin with. Nonetheless, a distinctive feature of American history is that this pathway has generally been reserved for immigrants of European ancestry. It has not yet been proven that this country can assimilate or segregate the current influx of non-European immigrants without eventually undermining the foundation of white supremacy upon which it has been built.

This impending demographic change is a cause of real anxiety for some powerful Ameri-
to get on the winning side while there still may be time. In any case, the wheels are coming off the bus, and we live on the same planet as everyone else. The way of life we inherited has proven disastrous for the biosphere and for the very ecosystem on which we depend. The well is empty. As others have pointed out before me, my generation is perhaps the first group of white Americans that not only have an ethical man-lifetimes and leave our children with nothing it is a significant one. At this point in time, I think carefully about where our allegiance really lies, and to find ways to act on it in materially meaningful ways. Believe it or not, there are examples throughout history of people who did just this—members of oppressor and colonizer groups who decided to throw in their lot with the colonized and oppressed. You can point to white people involved in the Underground Railroad during slavery, gentiles who sheltered Jews during the Holocaust, white Americans who took part in the civil rights movement, and so on. We made slow progress, burned through much harder than it normally does. I saw my companions. They did not respond to my circuit of large cocaine production countries, which will not happen without structural change in Colombia and the other cocaine-producing countries, which will not happen without structural change in the United States, and so on. You can reverse the order of these statements or add others and they will still be true. Fighting internal deportations and fighting border militarization are not two different things. This ultimately has global implications, but it is especially true in the case of Mexico, the United States, and their devil-child The Border. Nothing will get better on the border without things changing in both countries, and the problems in one country will not be solved without addressing the problems in the other. Once, I asked this Oaxacan guy what he thought it would take to end the death in the desert. “Una revolución balanconio”, he answered without hesitating. We laughed and laughed, because we went deep into the mountains, deeper than we had ever been before. We thought that there was traffic going through the area, but the area was deserted. It is for those of us who still think that there is a win-win to get to that we had never been able to find out for sure. These were different mountains, and we didn’t know how well we would do. We reached the trail early in the morning of the second day. Within five minutes, we ran into a migrant who was walking by himself. He looked tired but was in pretty good shape. He asked us how far he had to go. I had to tell him that I didn’t really know. We gave him some food and water. He went on by himself, and we kept going. The trail was worse than any I had ever seen, and I had seen plenty of bad ones. It crossed five large canyons, dropping and climbing about two thousand feet each time. There were lots of signs of old use. We found a shrine on a ridge between two of these canyons, carefully tended with little grottos for different saints. We made slow progress, burned through most of our water by late afternoon, and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape. It is amazing how fast anyone can deteriorate for years and was in excellent shape.
stakes are too high and the metaphor is not strong enough. One life means a lot to the person that lives it. “Tourniquet,” I tell them, “I can visualize the steps from A to Z of how to drop twenty-five gallons of water on a trail. When I wake up in the morning I can do my best to help, but if the people are going to get free they are going to do it themselves. I not only don’t have to—at least I can’t call the shots in other people’s struggles for liberation. I trust that the millions of people who are most directly affected by immigration and border enforcement will keep finding ways to combat it. There will almost certainly be things that white American citizens can do if we keep our ears to the ground. If my efforts in the desert are in any way contributing to 21 billion dollars moving from the rich to the poor, I’m happy.”

With that caveat, dear reader, please allow me to address you directly. The death in the desert is not the only messed up thing in the world. But it is pretty bad, and it is very close to my heart. I would really like to see it end. I encourage you to find a way to get involved. I can’t tell you exactly how to do this. Coming to work in the desert is one way. There are many others. There are communities of undocumented people in nearly every part of the country. What is the situation in your area, and what might you have to offer? There are corporations that benefit from this whole catastrophe in nearly every part of the country, as well. What might you be able to do?

It has been suggested that in order to link systemic change with tangible goals we must find points of intervention in the system where we can apply power to leverage transformation. These points of intervention have been described as the point of production, the point of deconstruction, the point of consumption, the point of decision, and the point of assumption. It’s not perfect, but it is a good framework as any to use when thinking about how to intervene in this particular situation. What might direct action at the point of production look like?

Stalling the construction of new CCA facilities? What about at the point of destruction? Finding ways to interfere with BP/ICE operations or intervene in deportations? What about the point of consumption? Pressuring businesses to commit to non-compliance with anti-immigrant laws and organizing boycotts of ones that refuse? The point of decision? Interrupting meetings or legislative processes? What might direct action at the point of assumption look like? What lies and assumptions are used to justify dehumanizing immigrants? How might you be able to counter them? Do you have other ideas?

Direct action in the context of humanitarian aid in the desert is a relatively new field, all things considered. There are many tactics yet to be developed, and many others that have yet to exhaust their effectiveness. There is still much to learn and much that new people can offer. Most promisingly, the bi-national, cross-cultural, and inter-generational alliances that have been forged in the crucible of the border have yet to approach their full potential. Our ability to realize this potential will determine the extent of the success of our campaign to end migrant deaths in the desert, as well as whether that campaign ever develops into a deeper resistance to the systems at the root of the problem. They haven’t heard our thunder yet.

The desert is full of places that are sacred to me. There is the last place I saw Esteban, the place I found Alberto, the places where Claudia and Jose and Susana and Roberto called, Jamie’s rock, Yolanda’s hill and Alfredo’s tree. It is overwhelming for me to think that as many of the stories as I know—as many as anyone will ever know—it is just a drop in the bucket of all that has happened there. The objects that people leave behind are a constant reminder of this to me, as a physical manifestation of all of the best and worst that human beings have to offer. I am not a particularly spiritual person, but the weight of these reminders is immense and often oppressive. I love the desert. It breaks my heart that it has played host to such terrible suffering. It gives me some solace to know that someday—even if it is only because there are no more human beings left on the planet—there will be no more United States, no more Mexico, no more helicopters, no more walls, no Border Patrol. The desert will break down, the memory of these things will fade, and the land will finally have a chance to heal under the blue sky and the merciless sun.

“Las paredas vueltas de lado son puentes.” Walls turned sideways are bridges.

— graffiti on the south side of the Border Wall, Nogales, Sonora
APPENDIX: The Border Patrol

Allow me to add a couple of words about the Border Patrol. There is no government job that can be attained without a high school diploma that pays more than that of a Border Patrol agent. They are generally paid about $45,000 a year their first year, $55,000 their next two, and $70,000 or up after that. They are not going around hungry. I don’t know how to convey the extent of the abuse that I have heard migrants report at the hands of these jokers. I have heard of agents beating, sexually abusing, and shooting people as well as throwing them into cacti, stealing their money, denying detainees food and water, deporting unaccompanied minors, driving around wildly with migrants chained in the back of trucks that look unmistakably like dogcatchers, and on and on. I’ve also heard numerous reports of Border Patrol seizing fifty pound bales of marijuana from drug smugglers and then either passing a drop that had been vandalized or a place where for months a few particularly hostile Border Patrol agents have consistently slashed our water bottles, popped the tops off our cans of beans so that they go rancid, and removed the blankets that we leave on the trails. As a result of these activities, we have had to move these drops around constantly, and stop dropping at what would otherwise be excellent locations because the supplies will almost surely be vandalized. I believe that more likely than not, before this woman died she either passed a drop that had been vandalized or a place where there would have been a drop if it were not for the actions of these agents. I believe that it is very likely that she found our supplies she would have survived long enough for us to find her. As far as I am concerned, the pieces of shit who are doing this are murderers and her blood is on their hands.

Border Patrol agents really are scared, even if right now they don’t actually have much to worry about. You can see it in them. I guess fucking over other people every day of your life must do that to you. Personally it gives me great pleasure to be able to go unarmed daily to places that people with automatic weapons and body armor are terrified to set foot in. I have not made myself an enemy of the people—and in the long run that is going to keep me safer than them.

The desert is full of trash. Water bottles, tin cans, food wrappers, back packs, blankets, shoes, socks, pants, shirts, hats, toilet paper...there must be hundreds of millions of tons of the stuff. Anti-immigrant types love to talk about it. This is not because they actually give a rat’s ass about the environment, but because they hope to confuse people who sympathize with migrants. It’s like Bush taking a sudden interest in the position of women in Afghan society ten years back. You don’t hear these characters talk very much about the Border Wall obstructing wildlife migration patterns, or about the huge swaths of public land that are being leased out by the government to giant mining and ranching companies for a pittance, or about the depletion of the watershed as a result of cattle and urban sprawl.

Unlike these dirtbags I actually care about the desert and have done my best to clean it up. I have hauled countless truckloads of garbage out of there, which is more than almost anyone on the opposing side can say. I tell new volunteers that as soon as they’ve picked up their first bottle they’ve done more to deal with the problem than 99.99% of the Border Patrol agents, Fish and Wildlife officers, militia members, and armchair morons watching Glenn Beck on their TVs ever have or will. Border militarization has pushed migrant traffic into the wilderness, and consequently the wilderness is getting trashed. If you don’t like that, we need to figure out some way to stop the border militarization.

The other thing that any self-respecting Border Patrol agent will tell you is that they are protecting us from terrorists. This begs the question of who “us” is. More human beings have lost their lives in the desert as a direct result of Border Patrol activity than in every Al-Qaeda attack on American soil combined—quite possibly more than would have died if every attack that the Border Patrol has had a hand in thwarting had been successful. The more important point is that as long as there is such outrageous global inequality Americans are never really going to be safe.

Many Border Patrol agents come from working class back-grounds and many are Hispanic. To be fair I will say that I have met some who treated migrants with respect. I will also say that in fact they do find people sometimes, that some of those people would surely have died otherwise, and that some agents can be nice enough people. The fact of the matter, though, is that it is rank-and-file Border Patrol agents that enforce the policies that cause all of the problems that I have wasted so many words trying to diagnose. No matter what they do individually, they will never be a part of the solution as long as they wear a uniform and carry a gun. They could put the cartels out of business and end the death in the desert tomorrow by simply going home.

I’ve heard too many apologies for the Border Patrol—that they are not the enemy and that they are subject to the same economic forces as the migrants and so on. I don’t buy it. History is replete with examples of people who were willing to sell out their own people to save themselves. There were black slave drivers on the plantations, Jewish police in the ghetto, native scouts leading the Army after Crazy Horse, and now there are Hispanic Border Patrol agents in the desert. I’m sorry but I’m not impressed. I think that when people become willing ac-

complices in atrocities, they just don’t deserve much sympathy. Recently a friend of mine found the body of a woman who died of some combination of dehydration, sickness, exposure, and exhaustion within a quarter of a mile of reaching one of our largest supply drops—a place that I have personally survived several hundred times in my life. She had passed through an area where for months a few particularly hostile Border Patrol agents have consistently slashed our water bottles, popped the tops off our cans of beans so that they go rancid, and removed the blankets that we leave on the trails. As a result of these activities, we have had to move these drops around constantly, and stop dropping at what would otherwise be excellent locations because the supplies will almost surely be vandalized. I believe that more likely than not, before this woman died she either passed a drop that had been vandalized or a place where there would have been a drop if it were not for the actions of these agents. I believe that it is very likely that she found her...
Burning the Bridges They Are Building: Anarchist Strategies against Police in the Puget Sound, Winter 2011

Introduction

When I moved to Seattle many years after the infamous upheaval of 1999, I found almost no remnants of whatever had existed here. Certainly, I could find other anarchists, but for a long time I found myself in variations of the same conversation: How do we reach each other? What are we doing? Why does nothing happen?

And then, finally, I was with other anarchists in the street—friends and acquaintances, but others, too. Who are all these people? We were all in black masks. This was the first black bloc in Seattle in about a decade. Hundreds of posters all over town had announced a demonstration against police violence in the middle of Capitol Hill as part of the West Coast Days of Action Against State Violence April 8–9, 2010. The size of the demonstration was modest—probably around 80 people—but we took the streets that day ready for a fight.

But if the mild clashes of April 9 set off any sparks, they didn't seem to catch in the moment. At one point, cops used their bikes as mobile barriers to push the crowd out of the street and onto the sidewalk. As a cop on a horse cornered the group, one demonstrator tossed a paint bomb right at the cop's head. Incredibly, the paint-filled light bulb bounced unbroken off the helmet of the dazed cop, whose only reaction was a look of dim confusion. The paint bomb broke harmlessly on the street and onto the sidewalk. As a cop on a horse cops at bay, the youth chanting “Eye for an eye, a pig’s gotta die”—Seattle was seeing riots following the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009 in Oakland, and, most recently, the disruptive demonstrations in Portland.

Anarchists in the Puget Sound* had been inspired by recent events elsewhere: the Greek insurrection of December 2008, the actions during this time in Seattle were not just the work of Seattle anarchists, but of anarchists from throughout the region. These were significant to us for many reasons. Anarchists played an active and critical part in all of them; they showed that people can actively resist the violence of police; they revealed that when people act on their rage, they open a space in defiance of the violence of everyday life. In this space, new social connections developed among anarchists in the Puget Sound during this period, and there was much collaboration between anarchists from different cities. The actions during this time in Seattle were not just the work of Seattle anarchists, but of anarchists from throughout the region.

These stereotypes: those people ruined the protest for the rest of us; violence never solves anything. I went home having experienced a harsh reminder of where I was. This wasn’t Greece, or even Oakland, or even Portland. I lived in Seattle. The spell of social peace isn’t broken here. Nothing happens. Less than a year later, anarchists were in the streets in black masks again. But I wasn’t lost in what I wished could happen. Something was happening. The occupied streets, the broken glass of police cruiser windows, the undercover cops and finding their targets. As a cop on a horse cops at bay, the youth chanting “Eye for an eye, a pig’s gotta die”—Seattle was seeing riots following the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009. For months, any casual reader of the mainstream media could learn that shots were being returned to cops and finding their targets. Individual armed resistance to the police serves analysis from anarchists, but falls outside of the scope of this article. I only have space here to mention the two most widely reported attacks:

Violence, Counterattacks, and Counter-Information: A Brief Background to Anti-Police Tension in the Puget Sound

It would be an exaggeration to claim that anarchists are responsible for the most remarkable resistance to the police in the recent history of the Puget Sound. On the contrary, anarchists had no perceivable role in a string of unconnected attacks against police in 2009. For months, any casual reader of the mainstream media could learn that shots were being returned to cops and finding their targets. Individual armed resistance to the police serves analysis from anarchists, but falls outside of the scope of this article. I only have space here to mention the two most widely reported attacks:

* The Puget Sound is a geographical region that contains Seattle and other cities. The actions during this time in Seattle were not just the work of Seattle anarchists, but of anarchists from throughout the region.
perpetrated by the police; the police have always been brutal. Rather, while the corporate media ignore or downplay police violence whenever possible, all these events were caught on video. When police are caught red-handed, even the complicit media can be forced to show their true face, let their legitimacy be challenged by video websites.* Rather than use the growing tension between the population and the police as an opportunity to act as a countervailing force to the invisible war hidden by the façade of social progress and the police, corporate media were careful to hide it behind a narrative of individual instances of “bad apple” police violence on one hand and the supposed insanity of Monfort and Clemmons on the other. In the Fourth Times, this was evidenced by the way police called Monfort’s death an “act of terrorism.” A local Fox News affiliate alleged that a confidential source had reported that child porn was found on Monfort’s computer; no other news sources ran this information and the city never filed such charges. The Seattle Times also reported that Clemmonds had previously been convicted of a felony child rape charge among other crimes. According to the Times, this was evidence of his deteriorating mental health—the only plausible reason one would take up arms against the police.

Clemmons never got a chance to speak for himself; but there’s no need to speculate about Monfort’s feelings. Monfort had his appearances in court and in the media to present a coherent critique. Despite surviving being shot in the head only to face the death penalty in prison, Monfort was calm, collected, and assertive—not all at the madman the media had presented. In particular, he decreed officer Schene’s beating of Calhoun. In the courtroom, he read aloud his letter to the judge, and he expressed his doubts about how Harris was injured. It is unlikely Harris will recover.

In November 2009, 15-year-old Malika Calhoun was slammed into a wall and punched twice while being detained in a holding cell by King County Sheriff’s Deputy Paul Schene. Schene had previously shot and killed a man named Maurice Clemmons on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ robot to destroy a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

These shootings took place in the midst of a string of high-profile instances of police violence:

• In May 2009, Christopher Sean Harris was chased down a street in Renton by police who had not identified themselves to Harris. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ head into a wall and crushed it, resulting in a catastrophic brain injury that finally won Harris a $10 million settlement after it came out that police had lied to the medical examiner about how Harris was injured. It is unlikely Harris will recover.

• In November 2009, 15-year-old Malika Calhoun was slammed into a wall and punched twice while being detained in a holding cell by King County Sheriff’s Deputy Paul Schene. Schene had previously shot and killed a man named Maurice Clemmons on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ to a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

• In May 2009, Christopher Sean Harris was chased down a street in Renton by police who had not identified themselves to Harris. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ head into a wall and crushed it, resulting in a catastrophic brain injury that finally won Harris a $10 million settlement after it came out that police had lied to the medical examiner about how Harris was injured. It is unlikely Harris will recover.

• In November 2009, 15-year-old Malika Calhoun was slammed into a wall and punched twice while being detained in a holding cell by King County Sheriff’s Deputy Paul Schene. Schene had previously shot and killed a man named Maurice Clemmons on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ robot to destroy a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

• In May 2009, Christopher Sean Harris was chased down a street in Renton by police who had not identified themselves to Harris. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ head into a wall and crushed it, resulting in a catastrophic brain injury that finally won Harris a $10 million settlement after it came out that police had lied to the medical examiner about how Harris was injured. It is unlikely Harris will recover.

• In November 2009, 15-year-old Malika Calhoun was slammed into a wall and punched twice while being detained in a holding cell by King County Sheriff’s Deputy Paul Schene. Schene had previously shot and killed a man named Maurice Clemmons on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead. Deputy Matthew Paul shoved Harris’ robot to destroy a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

• On the morning of November 29, a man named Maurice Clemmons walked into a cafe in Lakewood, Washington, where four police officers were in their vehicle before their shift. Clemmons opened fire on the officers, killing them, but did not aim at any other customers or the two bartenders. Police went on to militarize the neighborhood where Brenton was killed a month earlier, arming vehicles to block roads and a robot to destroy a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

Liberal Reform and Social War

While the forces of order sought to isolate Monfort, anarchists set out to connect his acts—and individual instances of police violence—to the invisible war hidden by the façade of social peace. At the previously mentioned demonstration against the police on April 9, 2010, anarchists distributed a leaflet titled “Some People Shoot Back,” which explained:

Almost none of the media coverage about Monfort mentioned the brutal beating of the 15-year-old girl, or the many other instances of police violence that motivated Monfort and Clemmons to take up arms against the state for the same power structure: a power structure that demands we all remain obedient while they rob us, exploit our bodies, and use us to wage war. This is the utmost cruelty when we break one of their rules, or fight back. This is a system built on our misery. It is no coincidence that sometimes people snap, and do whatever they can to fight back against the agents of this system. To win just a moment of justice, a moment of vengeance. They are the bravest of us, the most honest.

Anarchists defended Monfort’s act and called for prison soli- darity for him, insisting that all attacks on the police preserve support while alsoarticulating that the struggle for freedom does not stop here—in the part anarchist position of social war differs from Monfort’s war, even if there is a connection. As another leaflet put it,

What we must want is to fight socially by strategically cultivat- ing our will to be free and then connecting with others committed to the same people killed by the police; to make peace with the police. We bring fuel to the fires. But the dominant visible sentiment in Seattle did not embrace this.

The fervor that followed Brenton’s death sent many to make peace with the police. We bring fuel to the fires. But the dominant visible sentiment in Seattle did not embrace this. The fervescent that followed Brenton’s death many to make peace with the police. We bring fuel to the fires. But the dominant visible sentiment in Seattle did not embrace this.

* In some places, authorities are moving to make it illegal to videotape police.
**The First Assembly**

Despite anarchists’ understanding of the role police play in capitalism, many felt totally unprepared for five murders in one week. Posters, banners, and leaflets seemed insignificant in the face of such horror.

- **August 31**, police shot to death David Charles Young, age 23, in Federal Way. Police opened fire on him on the basis of the supposed theft of a Ford F20 pickup truck. His father said: “He didn’t deserve to die. They murdered an unarmed man.”
- **In Spanaway**, on August 31, King Ramos Hoover, age 27, was tasered to death at a house thought to contain Officer Clint Mesherle as a guest. While tasing Hoover, police put him in handcuffs and bound his feet. The cops later blamed his death on drugs—not electrocution.
- **On September 3**, Richard Sims was shot to death by a police officer who shot him on the basis of the supposed theft of a car. He was tasered to death for “causing a disturbance.”
- **On September 4**, in Gold Bar, Adam Colby, age 25, was tasered to death for “causing a disturbance.”

**The Forces of Order and the Maintenance of Social Stability**

Meanwhile, the forces that maintain order wasted no time springing into action. Before John T. Williams was even buried, several different entities were enacting schemes to make sure that his memory got out of hand. Like december 2, they recognized that during wide expressions of social rage, a space can open in which anything can happen—including the dismantling of their own tenuous grasp on power.

The city government’s strategy was designed to defuse conflict while granting killer cops impunity. Even the corporate media described the court proceedings initiated by officials as empty gestures.

The Firearm Review Board found the shooting unjustified; the Seattle Police Department Office of Professional Accountability decided to give Birk the benefit of the doubt. The police chief John Diaz claimed Williams’ murder a “huge mistake” and admitted Birk should be “held accountable.” Later, the deputy chief called the shooting “egregious.” The effect was for those in power—city officials, the chief of police, and the rest of the Seattle Police Department—to publicly distance themselves from Birk, the “bad apple,” knowing that nothing worse than unemployment would befal him.

The long process provided a cooling period for the rage over Williams’ murder. While in Oakland the dates for killer cop Mesherle’s verdict and sentencing were long anticipated and contributed to the mounting tension, the decision to not charge Birk at all came suddenly and unexpectedly in the middle of another ordinary week of political theatrics. City prosecutor Dan Satterfield, who made the decision to not charge Birk in the end, political parties are unwelcome—including so-called ‘revolutionary’ ones.”

First, participants presented ongoing projects contributing to the anti-police struggle. Then they analyzed and discussed the situation, focusing on concrete proposals for action, time for which was reserved in the third phase of the assembly. Emphasizing concrete proposals is discounting the lack of action frustrating. They should be “done as well” as attempts to develop concrete plans during the assembly. Participants were supposed to express their grievances and their ideas and be expected to present plans they had prepared in advance and that they were committing to carrying out with who ever else was interested. The assembly closed with information discussion and formal acts of direct line and groups attracted to each other’s analysis and proposals—an opportunity to exchange information in the aftermath of the recent violence. According to a police spokesperson, this move was unprecedented in Seattle. In another novel tactic, the SPD leaders participated in a “restorative healing circle” influenced by Native traditions. The William’s family’s attorney described this meeting as a success, noting that the circle created a feeling of “connection.”

The City Mayor Mike McGinn held a press conference the next day to sternly but sadly nod his head in agreement: “I know the public finds the lack of action frustrating. They should be “done as well” as attempts to develop concrete plans during the assembly. Participants were expected to express their grievances and their ideas and be expected to present plans they had prepared in advance and that they were committing to carrying out with whoever else was interested. The assembly closed with informal discussion and formal acts of direct line and groups attracted to each other’s analysis and proposals—an opportunity to exchange information in the aftermath of the recent violence. According to a police spokesperson, this move was unprecedented in Seattle. Another novel tactic, the SPD leaders participated in a “restorative healing circle” influenced by Native traditions with Williams’ family members in an attempt to curb “fear and mistrust” between the Native community and Seattle police.

The police spokesperson explained this as an opportunity for the police department to apologize without affecting any legal outcome. The Williams family’s attorney described this meeting as a success, noting that the circle created a feeling of “connection.”

But what about the rest of the outrage populace? Might the police finally lose good citizens’ loyalty? Through organizations like the East Precinct Civilian Oversight—whose mission statement explains that it exists to foster “partnerships among residents, schools, businesses/merchants, the Seattle Police Department, social service and government agencies”—SPD organized community forums for police spokespeople including Chief Diaz himself to speak with self-appointed representatives of society.

The media also stepped up efforts to maintain order. The same newspaper that had heightened tensions by publishing the secretive police union papers then sought to resolve that tension by implementing a pressure release valve. In January, The Stranger began promoting its own “police accountability forums” under the name “Where Do We Go From Here?” The event was little more than a press conference for SPD and their friends—the chief of police, the head of the police, the mayor, a city council member, and the head of the police-controlled Office of Police Accountability. A lawyer in favor of filing charges against Birk and a representative from the ACLU were the wild cards on the panel. The lawyer was later reported to be the “hardest critic” of police on the panel, she called the police “unprofessional” and suggested that the SPD should list police infractions on its website. The police chief acknowledged that the website “needed work.” According to The Stranger, discourse following murders like Williams’ is often “brazen, with little dialogue between the police, community members, and the officials empowered to make policy changes.”

Meanwhile, protests organized ostensibly to confront the violence of the SPD were defused in the face of getting out of control. Most of these protests were organized by the John T. Williams Organizing Committee and the October 14 Coalition.

The John T. Williams Organizing Committee was a coalition of various groups focused on winning small reforms in police department operations: cultural sensitivity trainings, policy changes that respected the Native American community. They also asked that “consequences for Officer Birk may include loss of his job and badge but must at least take him off the streets until he has demonstrated the new protocols developed in this process.” Their strategy was to work with city officials, as demonstrated by the committee’s decision to deliver their demands to a city council member along with a gift—an offering of peace. The Committee’s analysis of police violence indicated that they accepted the brutality of the larger system. They shied from the word murder, instead referring to Williams’ death as a tragedy that could have been avoided; if police could “serve to increase public safety and peace in our community by employing a variety of de-escalation tactics with the greatest potential to avert violence against the public and the police.”
Despite apparent political differences, anarchists did attend Organizing Committee protests, bringing their own banners and leaflets and seeking to make connections with other angry groups and individuals. The primary significance of these protests was that, in contrast to the rest of the community, they were not just an expression of the anger of the family and other members of the native community. Its brother, Rick Williams, spoke at a more militant Organizing Committee event, the committee had decided to keep on its side—albeit almost as fast as the politicians of the SPD had. Most of the other speakers at these rallies were mainstays from Seattle’s liberal parties, who had been vocal—but in a different way. As the pace of the march picked up as it neared the place where he was killed. About seventy people gathered for speeches under party management. Shortly after the murder of John T. Williams, a small but vocal group of anarchists began to outshout those on the march. The pace of the march picked up as it neared the perimeter of downtown Seattle after dark. Fewer people gathered, including a very small group of anarchists with a banner and bullhorns that criticized calls for justice and accountability.

The outcry for the prosecution of Ian Bark for murder—"for the power of the law to bring down its heavy hands upon the murderer—reinforces state power. "Police accountability" is a contradiction in terms. The police are the violent front of a war that is waged against us in innumerable ways. They maintain the social order as it exists: all of us below and one percent at the top. They are slave drivers of our everyday lives who uphold the interests of the elite. The police exist precisely to act without accountability. There is No Justice—Just Vengeance.

In contrast, members of the RCP were handing out golden yellow cards that read COMMUNISM: Why We Need It. One party member was rebuffed by a young man as she tried to hand a card to him. She responded in a tone betraying the emotionality of talking points: "But what do you know about communism? Is the Soviet Union real communism? Is China?" He quickly fled the demonstration in expectation. Because the RCP’s agenda is to grow its so-called revo- lutionary party, they actively discourage revolts in the streets, which is always to be put off for some future, official revolution under party management. Shortly after, a speaker of John T. Williams, Ozaz called for a protest to start at the intersection where he was killed. About seventy people gathered for speeches from Williams’ union and enraged relatives. The crowd then turned back to join the march toward the city’s SPD office. Precinct members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for “Justice.” A number of people in the sidewalk toward the north of the SPD were precise.
A CHRONOLOGY OF ATTACKS AND SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

"Anarchists, now is not the time to fear the baton of a pig and sink into hiding. Now is the time to master up courage, scheme evil plots, and seek revenge. This was not simply an attack against the state, but a justified assault against every one of those motherfuckers pay dearly! Not just for beating a fellow rebel, but for the everyday management and misery these spineless bastards heave upon our backs. In knowing that anarchists are unapologetic, others will take it upon themselves to launch a greater surge of aggression against the swine that fill our streets."

— From a communiqué issued by two police cars and a police substation in Olympia, WA, in solidarity with anarchists in Seattle

In addition to coordinating open revolt, anarchists in the Puget Sound also carried out clandestine attacks. While it takes a confident black bloc to break even a few windows at a demonstration, and arrests will likely ensue, in the dead of night a handful of friends can wreak havoc on a target with relative ease. Public acts have advantages that covert acts lack; for example, a tactic is more likely to spread if it is demonstrated

just two nights after the crashing of the accountability forum, the cops struck back. Some anarchists who had been involved in the gathering were through the window, and one cop yelled at him “I will Ian Birk you, motherfucker!” Friends quickly arranged bail and jail support, and many people spent the day waiting at the jail for the arrestees to be released. When they still had not been released that night, anarchists called for a demonstration outside the jail.

The anarchist critique had not appeared as merely one of many political viewpoints rationally competing for speaking time and new adherents, but rather as a weapon. When the anarchists began to rationalize, the anarchists aimed this weapon, took a deep breath, and lodged it deep in the throat of dialogue itself. The conversation spattered, gurgled, and collapsed. In the next week’s print edition, the editors of The Stranger didn’t so much mention the failed attempt at conciliatory communication they had tried to orchestrate. Their competitors announced that the forum had been a “failure.” The head of the police officers’ union later complained in The Guardian that “people refused to be quiet!” Now, anarchists had to move to take advantage of the winds their opponents—denied them any opportunity to regain an air of dignity.

A Home Invasion and a Noise Demonstration

We have nothing to lose and everything to gain; them, quite the opposite. If they want us to be silent, we scream! If we are pushed, we push back. If they talk most simply filed out, tossing the remaining leaflets into the air behind them.

The anarchist critique had not appeared as merely one of many political viewpoints rationally competing for speaking time and new adherents, but rather as a weapon. When the anarchists began to rationalize, the anarchists aimed this weapon, took a deep breath, and lodged it deep in the throat of dialogue itself. The conversation spattered, gurgled, and collapsed. In the next week’s print edition, the editors of The Stranger didn’t so much mention the failed attempt at conciliatory communication they had tried to orchestrate. Their competitors announced that the forum had been a “failure.” The head of the police officers’ union later complained in The Guardian that “people refused to be quiet!” Now, anarchists had to move to take advantage of the winds their opponents—denied them any opportunity to regain an air of dignity.

A Home Invasion and a Noise Demonstration

We have nothing to lose and everything to gain; them, quite the opposite. If they want us to be silent, we scream! If we are pushed, we push back. If they talk

organized precisely to invite the enraged to shape their rage into a civil, contended commentary; to present it to the panel of cops and politicians who would, in turn, regurgitate it as a new, improved justification for policing. Citizens would return home with a new respectability of the police force, knowing that their hands had been raised in abstraction.

There were two ways to avoid this trap: to present our call to the abolition of all police as something completely alien and hostile to the conversation unfolding within City Hall, or to try both.

Meanwhile, a handful of anarchists donned their best courtroom clothes and attended the forum with the intention of communicating with other forum attendees. This group openly shunned dialogue with the police but communicated with other forum attendees.

The banners read: Judges = Executioners, and operated on anarchist principles.

"Anarchists, now is not the time to fear the baton of a pig and sink into hiding. Now is the time to master up courage, scheme evil plots, and seek revenge. This was not simply an attack against the state, but a justified assault against every one of those motherfuckers pay dearly! Not just for beating a fellow rebel, but for the everyday management and misery these spineless bastards heave upon our backs. In knowing that anarchists are unapologetic, others will take it upon themselves to launch a greater surge of aggression against the swine that fill our streets."

— From a communiqué issued by two police cars and a police substation in Olympia, WA, in solidarity with anarchists in Seattle

In addition to coordinating open revolt, anarchists in the Puget Sound also carried out clandestine attacks. While it takes a confident black bloc to break even a few windows at a demonstration, and arrests will likely ensue, in the dead of night a handful of friends can wreak havoc on a target with relative ease. Public acts have advantages that covert acts lack; for example, a tactic is more likely to spread if it is demonstrated in the midst of a crowd. But as long as care is taken to plan a careful getaway, dispose of evidence safely, and work only with trusted comrades, nighttime destruction entails fewer risks. No one believes that overthrowing capitalism is simply a matter of breaking enough windows. Windows are easily replaced, graffiti washed away. Like other tactics, covert action has to be evaluated as part of a larger strategy.

Anarchist intervention successfully altered the discourse of struggle in the Puget Sound, identifying conflict and creating situations that were difficult for the forces of order to defuse. Clandestine attacks contributed directly to this: smashing the windows of a community police station is inherently difficult to cover up. The coming storm is fundamentally different from—and opposed to—reformist activism.

Such attacks also serve to broaden the terrain of the conflict. Public protests are the accepted territory of social movements; the police have crowd-control strategies to keep these under control. Striking where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring

in the midst of a crowd. But as long as care is taken to plan a careful getaway, dispose of evidence safely, and work only with trusted comrades, nighttime destruction entails fewer risks. No one believes that overthrowing capitalism is simply a matter of breaking enough windows. Windows are easily replaced, graffiti washed away. Like other tactics, covert action has to be evaluated as part of a larger strategy.

Anarchist intervention successfully altered the discourse of struggle in the Puget Sound, identifying conflict and creating situations that were difficult for the forces of order to defuse. Clandestine attacks contributed directly to this: smashing the windows of a community police station is inherently difficult to cover up. The coming storm is fundamentally different from—and opposed to—reformist activism.

Such attacks also serve to broaden the terrain of the conflict. Public protests are the accepted territory of social movements; the police have crowd-control strategies to keep these under control. Striking where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring strategies to avoid the police have crowd-control strategies to keep these under control. Striking where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring strategies to avoid the police

in the midst of a crowd. But as long as care is taken to plan a careful getaway, dispose of evidence safely, and work only with trusted comrades, nighttime destruction entails fewer risks. No one believes that overthrowing capitalism is simply a matter of breaking enough windows. Windows are easily replaced, graffiti washed away. Like other tactics, covert action has to be evaluated as part of a larger strategy.

Anarchist intervention successfully altered the discourse of struggle in the Puget Sound, identifying conflict and creating situations that were difficult for the forces of order to defuse. Clandestine attacks contributed directly to this: smashing the windows of a community police station is inherently difficult to cover up. The coming storm is fundamentally different from—and opposed to—reformist activism.

Such attacks also serve to broaden the terrain of the conflict. Public protests are the accepted territory of social movements; the police have crowd-control strategies to keep these under control. Striking where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring strategies to avoid

in the midst of a crowd. But as long as care is taken to plan a careful getaway, dispose of evidence safely, and work only with trusted comrades, nighttime destruction entails fewer risks. No one believes that overthrowing capitalism is simply a matter of breaking enough windows. Windows are easily replaced, graffiti washed away. Like other tactics, covert action has to be evaluated as part of a larger strategy.

Anarchist intervention successfully altered the discourse of struggle in the Puget Sound, identifying conflict and creating situations that were difficult for the forces of order to defuse. Clandestine attacks contributed directly to this: smashing the windows of a community police station is inherently difficult to cover up. The coming storm is fundamentally different from—and opposed to—reformist activism.

Such attacks also serve to broaden the terrain of the conflict. Public protests are the accepted territory of social movements; the police have crowd-control strategies to keep these under control. Striking where the authorities expect it least minimizes the police’s control. Structuring strategies to avoid
To everyone’s surprise, about fifty people gathered—a larger crowd than the anarchist presence at any of the preceding demonstrations. Because the speaker system malfunctioned, the only noise was the sound of flag poles banging against walls and street signs and the screams and chants of the crowd. Nonetheless, the roar that assailed the concrete walls was tremendous. It was around 10 p.m.—lights out in the jail—but on several floors, the silhouettes of hands could be seen in the windows, waving back enthusiastically.

One cop car appeared. As the occupant exited the car to approach the mob, individuals ripped apart the grating of the jail guards’ parking garage, flinging the bolts and hooks of metal at him. He returned to his car to call in backup and await instructions. As the noise continued, people began to smash nearby surveillance cameras.

Another police car arrived and tried to box the crowd in, but the demonstrators effortlessly walked around it, the cops inside afraid to face the group. The demonstration circled the jail a few times while more police cars arrived. Another officer attempted to approach the demonstration; a metal trash can was hurled at him, and he hastened back to his car. After half an hour, the demonstration suddenly dispersed, leaving the cops in their cars waiting obediently for orders. No one was arrested.

The three who had been beaten, threatened, and arrested were released the next day. The charges against them were dropped at their first court appearances.

The significance of the house invasion was clear: the police were threatened by those who wouldn’t play the game of “accountability.” Because of the swift response from anarchists, the cops’ plan had backfired. That night many different crews from the Puget Sound, some of whom had never worked together before, discovered that they could face down the police—even on the enemy’s home turf.

For the Attack:
Subverting Submissive Protests

The crashing of the accountability forum heralded the end of dialogue with police and their apologists. The noise demonstration had forged new connections in the street. The next step was to set a new trajectory for the coming demonstrations.

Following the second assembly, the first opportunity was another protest called for by the October 22 Coalition on February 12. Anarchists intended to take the streets and hold another protest called for by the October 22 Coalition on February 22. A group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.

-February 18, Seattle, WA: Police report over their radios that a precinct must be evacuated because a gas line has been opened. The timing of the discovery coincides exactly with the starting time of the demonstration. Because no action claim ever surfaced and the mainstream media did not report on the event, it’s unclear whether this was sabotage or mere coincidence.

-February 18, Seattle, WA: Seattle Police report over their radios that a precinct must be evacuated because a gas line has been opened. The timing of the discovery coincides exactly with the starting time of the demonstration. Because no action claim ever surfaced and the mainstream media did not report on the event, it’s unclear whether this was sabotage or mere coincidence.

-February 18, Seattle, WA: Following the large street demonstration, a group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.

-February 19, Seattle, WA: A Chase bank has its ATMs glued and its windows splashed with black paint. A communiqué explains, “This act of revenge was done not simply against the bank but against the police who protect the tortuous coils of capital.”

-March 4, Olympia, WA: Two police cruisers are damaged and a police station is vandalized with paint and glass etching cream.

-March 15, Olympia, WA: A police substation is firebombed.

-March 15, Santa Cruz, WA: A police cruiser is attacked with glass etching cream and its tires slashed.

-March 15, Vancouver, BC: A police substation is burned.

-March 15, Vancouver, BC: Another protest called for by the October 22 Coalition on February 22. A group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.

-March 15, Vancouver, BC: A police substation is burned.

-March 15, Vancouver, BC: Another protest called for by the October 22 Coalition on February 22. A group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.

-March 15, Vancouver, BC: Another protest called for by the October 22 Coalition on February 22. A group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.

-March 15, Philadelphia, PA: A bank’s windows are smashed.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.

-March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted on the windows.
it numbered between thirty and forty. Many participants carried black flags draped from thick hardwood dowels. The same anarchist banners reappeared, emphasizing that the events about to unfold were aimed at police and the justice system in its entirety.

At one of the later demonstrations in March, to general Seattle’s busy open-air market. Anarchists had Seattle, heading first to the Pike Place Market, were carrying clubs of their own. rage was visibly reinforced; many in the bloc this day the black mass was animated by a palpable April 9 bloc had seemed unsure of itself, on this time they kept their distance. While the bloc at the April 9 demonstration in 2010, but had been quick to push around a similarly-sized bloc took the streets and others followed. Police cars fell in behind them. People dragged bike cops following along.

As the demonstrators approached the precinct, officers stood by to guard it. Suddenly, an individual stepped forward and began banging a hammer on the windows of a parked police cruiser. It bounced harmlessly off the rear window, the next blow shattered the driver’s-side window. The attacker then moved back into the bloc. For a second, the police stood still, in shock. Then, they came running in to snatch the window smasher. But as they closed in, several received quick jabs to the head from the sticks bearing black flags and fell back, stunned. More cops moved in, and the bloc dispersed.

February 16: No Charges for Birk

The individual who attacked the cruiser escaped, though the image was dramatically captured by a local photographer and quickly proliferated throughout blogs, print, and news media. Although anarchists in the Puget Sound were critical of attempts to work with corporate media, the prominence of the image ensured that the shattering of the police window was heard by many who hadn’t attended the demonstration. Anarchists had loudly announced the end of passive protest. But would anarchist action become only another spectacle, with most of those who cheered remaining on the sidelines? What could mobilize the rage of a dormant population?

In only a few days, anarchists got an opportunity to find out. On February 15, reports circulated that the next day the city prosecutor would announce that no charges were to be filed against Birk. If there was a moment for large-scale anti-police revolt, this was it. Anarchists needed to act quickly to announce a time and place for a large gathering that could go in any direction as the night unfolded. Any hesitation and the moment of conflict would be framed and constrained by the forces invested in maintaining social peace. At the time, there was much talk of the use of Facebook to spread the popular uprising in Egypt weeks earlier. Anarchists in the Puget Sound are understandably skeptical about social media tools; nonetheless, they decided that Facebook might be the best way to reach large numbers of strangers quickly.

The callout was posted to Facebook anonymously as an event page. It was carefully worded
so as to be as open to as many people as possible without compromis- ing the anarchist analysis of the police. There was no call for self-restraint, no particular demands. The statement simply asked people to converge at 6 p.m. at Westlake Center, the closest thing to a public space in downtown Seattle and the starting point of many protests, in order to act on their rage. Overnight, the event page grew from 400 invites to over 8000. A commenter on the page asked, “Who is organizing this?”

Another responded, “At this point, we all are.”

Confirmed attendees online and actual bodies in the street are two different things. But as evening fell, it was clear that the night would be different than the small protests of the past. The John T. Williams Organizing Committee and October 22 Coalition had both called for their own protests a bit earlier. Now, their numbers headed to Westlake to join the swelling mob. All the previous protests had drawn less than 100 participants. The crowd on February 16 was huge by comparison, although probably under 1000. It was hard to estimate the number because more people were still arriving as the march left the square, taking the street despite innumerable police on bikes and horses and in unmarked cars.

Marchers took over every lane of traffic. The black bloc was a massive, shifting shadow in the sea of bodies. Some people weaved in and out of the crowd, writing anti-cop slogans on street signs and walls with markers, unmarked but uncollected about the cops pedaling nearby, powerless to intervene. The first stop for the demonstration was the intersection where Williams Street runs under a bridge. Protesters, they explained, were trying to bring down the fences around construction sites. The police showed up and announced through their blaring horns that they were there to maintain order and to keep people out of the construction. The protest leaders could only meekly follow. Their monopoly on the street was over.

This meant that the black bloc could be a little more daring. One police officer had been visited by protesters only days earlier. Suddenly, the crowd roared louder and louder, individuals fighting to the front of the mob to scream in the faces of cops who tried to maintain calm but visibly woned as some demonstrators yelled, “Chris Monfort was right!”

The crowd wanted to break through the line and swarm the precinct, but no one knew exactly how to proceed. This was a new experience for many. The anarchists made that night: there were many flags, but not enough projectiles. If the paint bomb hurled on April 9, 2010 had been thrown on this night—followed by several more—there could have been an explosion. To be sure, this lack of material preparation was not the only limitation that kept the situation simmering rather than boiling over; few in the crowd had any experience fighting cops in the street. But many people were waiting for the first brick to be thrown.

Instead, the stalemate withered the energy of the mob, and differing thoughts and doubts spread among the crowd. Demonstrators left the street signs and walls with markers, unmarked but uncollected about the cops pedaling nearby, powerless to intervene. The first stop for the demonstration was the intersection where Williams Street runs under a bridge. Protesters, they explained, were trying to bring down the fences around construction sites. The police showed up and announced through their blaring horns that they were there to maintain order and to keep people out of the construction. The protest leaders could only meekly follow. Their monopoly on the street was over.

An opportunity came immediately: the same day demonstrators had swarmed across the city, Ian Birk announced his resignation from SPD. Anarchists responded quickly with another call to action. “Join another rally at Westlake—Birk’s Resignation Means Nothing!”

Although only about half as many people turned out for the demonstration on February 18, the crowd was fiercer and more prepared to fight. The cops, too, seemed readier to clear buses to join them. As the crowd passed busy bars and cafes, demonstrators chanted, “Out of the bars! Into the streets! But those crowded around tables and drinks were mostly content to watch through the windows, some flashing, of all things, peace signs. The demonstration moved on. They can keep their bars. The streets are ours!”

As the demonstration came within a block of the precinct, a line of riot police came into view, blocking the way into the intersection in front of the rows of shields, clubs, and helmets. Tension rose.

The crowd roared louder and louder, individuals fighting to the front of the mob to scream in the faces of cops who tried to maintain calm but visibly wined as some demonstrators yelled, “Chris Monfort was right!”

The crowd wanted to break through the line and swarm the precinct, but no one knew exactly how to proceed. This was an entirely new experience for many. The anarchists made that night: there were many flags, but not enough projectiles. If the paint bomb hurled on April 9, 2010 had been thrown on this night—followed by several more—there could have been an explosion. To be sure, this lack of material preparation was not the only limitation that kept the situation simmering rather than boiling over; few in the crowd had any experience fighting cops in the street. But many people were waiting for the first brick to be thrown.

Instead, the stalemate withered the energy of the mob, and differing thoughts and doubts spread among the crowd. Demonstrators left the street signs and walls with markers, unmarked but uncollected about the cops pedaling nearby, powerless to intervene. The first stop for the demonstration was the intersection where Williams Street runs under a bridge. Protesters, they explained, were trying to bring down the fences around construction sites. The police showed up and announced through their blaring horns that they were there to maintain order and to keep people out of the construction. The protest leaders could only meekly follow. Their monopoly on the street was over.

An opportunity came immediately: the same day demonstrators had swarmed across the city, Ian Birk announced his resignation from SPD. Anarchists responded quickly with another call to action. “Join another rally at Westlake—Birk’s Resignation Means Nothing!”

Although only about half as many people turned out for the demonstration on February 18, the crowd was fiercer and more prepared to fight. The cops, too, seemed readier to clear people out of the streets, but the demonstration proved capable of defending itself. This was partly due to the increased preparedness of the black bloc, but also because non-anarchist demonstrators were adopting black bloc tactics.

While anarchists had previously been the only ones seeking to escalate things, on the 18th many others arrived with guns and masked faces. Many people brought their own black flags, so they were spread throughout the crowd rather than coming into the black bloc. One group of youth came wearing bandanas over their faces representing different gang affiliations but marched in a bloc, symbolizing their dedica- tion to overcoming divisions in order to fight the police together.

At first, the demonstration passed through parts of downtown that previous protests had not visited. The crowd walked against traffic through streets clogged with cars, making it difficult for police to follow. Journalists tried to approach the black bloc with cameras but were chased off. The night was alight in the eerie red glow of the street flares carried and thrown by some demonstrators.

The mob didn’t wait for a line of riot cops like the one from two nights earlier to strike. Some masked demonstrators, not in black bloc attire, lobbed bottles at the police. The reporter that they had an undercover in the crowd near one of the bottle throwers, but he was afraid to act due to the militancy of the demonstration. Indeed, the undercover was discovered by members of the black bloc, struck in the head with a stick, and chased out. A rock shattered through the back window of a police cruiser. The officer inside it jumped out of the car, leaving the car to drive into the police van in front of it. The crowd cheered, some jumping up and down in celebration. The police tried to cover their shame with a torrent of pepper spray. The crowd walked on, setting a pace that the police struggled to keep up with. The black bloc took it upon themselves to lead parts of downtown that previous protests had not visited. The crowd walked against traffic through streets clogged with cars, making it difficult for police to follow. Journalists tried to approach the black bloc with cameras but were chased off. The night was alight in the eerie red glow of the street flares carried and thrown by some demonstrators.

The mob didn’t wait for a line of riot cops like the one from two nights earlier to strike. Some masked demonstrators, not in black bloc attire, lobbed bottles at the police. The reporter that they had an undercover in the crowd near one of the bottle throwers, but he was afraid to act due to the militancy of the demonstration. Indeed, the undercover was discovered by members of the black bloc, struck in the head with a stick, and chased out. A rock shattered through the back window of a police cruiser. The officer inside it jumped out of the car, leaving the car to drive into the police van in front of it. The crowd cheered, some jumping up and down in celebration. The police tried to cover their shame with a torrent of pepper spray. The crowd walked on, setting a pace that the police struggled to keep up with. The black bloc took it upon themselves to lead parts of downtown that previous protests had not visited. The crowd walked against traffic through streets clogged with cars, making it difficult for police to follow. Journalists tried to approach the black bloc with cameras but were chased off. The night was alight in the eerie red glow of the street flares carried and thrown by some demonstrators.

The mob didn’t wait for a line of riot cops like the one from two nights earlier to strike. Some masked demonstrators, not in black bloc attire, lobbed bottles at the police. The reporter that they had an undercover in the crowd near one of the bottle throwers, but he was afraid to act due to the militancy of the demonstration. Indeed, the undercover was discovered by members of the black bloc, struck in the head with a stick, and chased out. A rock shattered through the back window of a police cruiser. The officer inside it jumped out of the car, leaving the car to drive into the police van in front of it. The crowd cheered, some jumping up and down in celebration. The police tried to cover their shame with a torrent of pepper spray. The crowd walked on, setting a pace that the police struggled to keep up with. The black bloc took it upon themselves to lead parts of downtown that previous protests had not visited. The crowd walked against traffic through streets clogged with cars, making it difficult for police to follow. Journalists tried to approach the black bloc with cameras but were chased off. The night was alight in the eerie red glow of the street flares carried and thrown by some demonstrators.
heard about anarchist noise demonstrations and wanted to create their own. Riot police formed a line to block the way, but this time the demonstrators forced their way through, despite more pepper spray. When they arrived at the jail and the noise demonstration commenced, the silhouettes of prisoners inside could be seen hanging on the windows.

In the end, the demonstration followed the path of the march two days prior, up to the East Precinct only to be blocked by many riot police, and then up and down busy streets and eventually back down toward Westlake. A (perhaps former?) organizer for the John T. Williams Action Against the Police and the Prison World was the February 26 and 27 West Coast Days of Action Against the Police and the Prison World called in solidarity with the former organizer for the John T. Williams Action Against the Police and the Prison World, was the February 26 and 27 West Coast Days of Action Against the Police and the Prison World. It avoided calls for “justice” or accountability; it stated that the demonstration was against police brutality.

Within minutes, more police cars arrived and the anarchists headed toward the Capitol Hill neighborhood, cruisers in tow. Incredibly, they managed to lose their police tails as they painted slogans on the walls, handed out leaflets, and attacked the windows of retail shops and banks with sticks and paint bombs. As the cops closed in again on a busy commercial street, another fire extinguisher was let off to create a smokescreen, and the mob dispersed. The cops chased and managed to arrest three people, but never filed charges, likely due to a lack of evidence.

### March 4: The Changing Terrain

Now the shape of demonstrations had been entirely transformed. As new groups adopted anarchist tactics, the momentum had no sign of slowing down. The next call for a demonstration did not come from anarchists but from a group of teenagers who had started a new Seattle Cop Watch. The callout, posted to the local anarchist news site, used language similar to statements written by anarchists. It avoided calls for “justice” or accountability; it stated that the demonstration was against police brutality.

Meanwhile, the SPD were paying careful attention to the role anarchists played in sharp- ening anti-police activity. Their previous, heavy-handed response—breaking into a local anarchist house and assaulting its occupants—had only kicked the hornet’s nest. If they couldn’t move to block the further proliferation of anarchist ideas and tactics, the situation would likely be transformed.

### February 26: Action Against the Police and the Prison World

Little more than a week passed before anarchists took to the streets again. This time the occasion was the February 26 and 27 West Coast Days of Action Against the Police and the Prison World. They Maintain, called in solidarity with the struggle unfolding in Seattle. The callout, posted to the local anarchist news site, used language similar to statements written by anarchists. It avoided calls for “justice” or accountability; it stated that the demonstration was against police brutality.

In the weeks leading up to this, anarchists in the Puget Sound had increased coordination between different crews and cities, gained new comrades in the streets, increased their material preparedness for conflict, and held the streets in several successful mobilizations. People wanted to organize something bolder than a clandestine attack in the dead of night.

At 8 p.m., about two dozen people converged at the intersection where John Williams was murdered. Dressed in black with their faces masked, some cut down nearby construction fencing and threw it into the intersection, while others ran caution tape across the streets, blocking traffic. Still others held black flags and a banner—Cops Murder Everywhere! Bite Back!—or painted anti-cop slogans on nearby walls and the street itself. Just as the event started, a police car happened to pull up to the intersection, escorting a prisoner to the nearby West Precinct. The cop stayed in his car but demanded that the intersection be unblocked. An individual responded by approaching the car and unloading the entirety of a fire extinguisher at it. The cop left the scene immediately.

Despite arrests and diminishing numbers in the street, the night’s events had people feeling alive and afire. Demonstrators had proven that the unrest of February 16 wasn’t a flash in the pan. What would happen if we just kept doing this?
The February 26 action was nationally reported as a violent riot. Although anarchists delighted in hearing an hour of taunts and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: “Why do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just dis

had been laid to justify repression, the SPD would spare no ex

expense. It didn’t help that the divisive efforts of corporate media and activist groups had whittled down the numbers wanting to take to the streets; many, it seemed, had been convinced that the fight was over. As the night fell on March 4, a few cops panicked. At Westlake looked dire: there seemed to be at least two cops for every demonstrator. The cops invented reasons to harass anyone they could identify as anarchists, or who were merely streaming people smoking too close to the public park, or to tossing leaves, or for not having their bike lights turned on. Others were positioned on the roofs because they had not been developed before the assembly, and because no one was taking responsibility to actualize them, the assembly ended after everyone was tired of talking without having set any new course. The only proposal was for a demonstration that had already been planned for March 15. It would prove to be the last demonstration of this period.

The only violence at the demonstration was carried out by police. Nonetheless, the media used the protest as another opportunity to justify the repression of demonstrators.

The February 26 action was nationally reported as a violent riot. Although anarchists delighted in hearing an hour of taunts and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: “Why do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just dis

itself against the ‘violence’ of the demonstrations of the last months later, in an attempt to curb militant demonstrations, the police in Denver used the excuse of a small firecracker being thrown at a police car to arrest and beat demonstrator Amelia Nicol, charging her with two counts of attempted murder of a police officer. The attempt was made to use explosives, and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: “Why do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just dis

The terrain was changing rapidly. The previous courses of action no longer seemed adequate, and many people felt disheartened. Anarchists needed to look carefully at what was happening and reformulate. The Third Assembly to Address the Problem of the Police took place a few days later on March 8. Unfortunately, participants had to deal with a large police presence. As the meeting went on, demonstrations faced more than the SPD anti-riot squad. Now that the groundwork

The Third Assembly

The February 26 action was nationally reported as a violent riot. Although anarchists delighted in hearing an hour of taunts and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: “Why do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just dis

had been laid to justify repression, the SPD would spare no ex

expense. It didn’t help that the divisive efforts of corporate media and activist groups had whittled down the numbers wanting to take to the streets; many, it seemed, had been convinced that the fight was over. As the night fell on March 4, a few cops panicked. At Westlake looked dire: there seemed to be at least two cops for every demonstrator. The cops invented reasons to harass anyone they could identify as anarchists, or who were merely streaming

*

March 15: The Moment of Upheaval Ends; The Active Struggle Continues

Nevertheless, the effort of March 15 should not be regarded as a total failure. The plan introduced an international tradi

The night was full of talking without having set any new course. The only proposal was for a demonstration that had already been planned for March 15. It would prove to be the last demonstration of this period.

The only violence at the demonstration was carried out by police. Nonetheless, the media used the protest as another opportunity to justify the repression of demonstrators.

The February 26 action was nationally reported as a violent riot. Although anarchists delighted in hearing an hour of taunts and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: “Why do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just dis
By the final protest on March 15, 2011, the authorities had regained control of the situation, temporarily managed to regain control of the usual private grudge match. Yet anarchists and the new allies they found were able to use those moments of rupture to the public at large. In retrospect, it would have been wiser to have recaptured those moments of rupture to the usual social organism respectfully shaking the friendly new face of repression: “justice-based policing,” explicitly aimed at policing more efficiently by rebuilding trust between the police and society.

As anarchists we know we cannot find justice under the State and Capital. Instead, we seek vengeance. Vengeance for those whose lives can never be given back and vengeance for our own lives constrained by the tentacles of social control. We do not want a better system because, in fact, better only means more efficient for those who wish to kill and imprison us. We do not strive to reform those who love to see us on our knees. In stead we seek the total destruction of this system of domination, our feet planted firmly on the ground. —From Reportback & Statements Regarding the February 12th Anti-Police Demo in Seattle

Here in Seattle now, our feet remain firmly on the ground. We don’t offer this analysis out of an inflated sense of the importance of last winter’s events relative to struggles elsewhere, but in contrast to the dreary quiet of so many preceding gray Northwestern winters. Things are not the same here now. There is more cohesion, more drive, more energy. The frequency of attacks, information nights, and solidarity actions has increased. We’ve learned new skills, tactics, and strategies. And although there is a stillness in the summer air, we know that the social war continues. The next time it flares up, we’ll be better prepared to feed the flames.

—Summer 2011

Further Reading

Pugetsoundanarchists.org

News for anarchists from the Puget Sound

Against the Police and the Prison World They Maintain: Communicals from the Pacific Northwest January-March 2011

http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/node/595
Author’s Addendum, 2012

I wrote this over a year ago, it describes events that occurred over a year and a half ago. The intervening time raises the question: were Seattle anarchists in fact “better prepared to feed the flames” of social war afterwards?

In fact, to write about the trajectory of anarchist activity since the end of this narrative, I would need twice as much time and space, and I would still inevitably leave out important situations. A list of highlights would have to include dozens of clandestine attacks, the occupations of multiple buildings, the construction and defense of an impressive street barricade during the port blockade of December 12, 2011, further experimentation with the assembly model, the establishment of a biweekly newspaper, the demise of one social center and the opening of another, the general expansion of anarchist social circles, the efforts leading up to May Day and the riot and demonstrations that day—and, unfortunately, numerous cases of repression and state violence against rebels. Anarchists have continued to constitute a force of their own in Seattle, repeatedly outwitting the police, destabilizing professional and amateur politicians, undermining the lie of social peace, and finding the pressure points to open space for new possibilities.

Furthermore, the actions I once described excitedly are modest compared to what anarchists in Seattle have been able to accomplish more recently. An easy example: the black blocs described in Burning the Bridges hit very few targets per demonstration and exhibited a bit of aimlessness and sloppiness in the street compared to the bloc’s effort on May Day 2012, which wrecked an unknown number of targets (at least twenty) including a federal courthouse, outmaneuvered the uniformed police entirely, clobbered the undercover cops who tried to intervene, kept the media away with words and force, and disappeared expertly before the police regrouped in greater number.

Why, then, when there is so much more recent news, should Rolling Thunder dedicate space to this old story? What is its remaining relevance?

The critical element of Burning the Bridges is that it describes a starting point. One of the most remarkable considerations when reviewing anarchists’ contributions to social war in Seattle is that none of this was happening only a few years ago. In 2011, anarchists managed to collaborate autonomously in an entirely decentralized manner to create a new means of struggle in an environment where we had previously felt suffocated and ineffectual. Burning the Bridges is the story of the origin of the trajectory that shaped the events listed above. The short period it describes informed and influenced anarchist participation in last fall’s occupations and is still evoked and dissected now in local discussions of how to continue interventions toward insurrection, despite general recognition that we have since accomplished things we considered impossible in 2011. Of course, there are innumerable prehistories to this story—for example, anarchist involvement in the Port Militarization Resistance activity in Olympia and Tacoma in 2007—but anarchists here recognize that something new began in the early months of 2012.

That feeling should be familiar; for the last few years, anarchists throughout the US have been participating in a new wave of activity. I can’t count the number of cities I never imagined had an anarchist population that issue regular communiqués and reportbacks today. Two beautiful texts that say so much have seemingly planted two simple slogans in many anarchists’ minds: “The secret is to really begin” and “Find each other / Get going.” These phrases have meant so much to people because, in periods of uninterrupted social peace, it’s difficult to think of “beginning” and “getting” and the longer we postpone that ignition, the more urgent it becomes, and the more frustrated we feel. After experiencing the joy of really beginning, intentionally and with strategic consideration, I wanted to share with others what insights I considered to be insights about how Seattle anarchists discovered that secret.

That said, I never intended to write a guide to a “Seattle model” of anarchist activity. Burning the Bridges is the story of how Seattle anarchists got going. I wrote it with the hope that it would help others to get started. But where those trajectories lead is up to the rebels who know their cities, their friends and comrades, and their social contexts. This is why there is no “Seattle model” and why there will be no sequel to this essay, which still serves its intended purpose. For a more up-to-date view of the situation in Seattle, consult PugetSoundAnarchists.org.

In the early morning hours of May 18, 2010, three black-clad figures darted out of a branch of Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) located in a trendy Ottawa shopping district; moments later the building was engulfed in flames.

News of the attack spread quickly through the corporate and alternative media, setting the tone for the looming G20 protests in Toronto: they would be militant, they would be confrontational, and they would be angry.

Although it stood out as a particularly brazen example of direct action, the RBC arson did not occur in a vacuum; that particular branch, along with countless others throughout the country, had already been subject to a campaign of targeted property destruction dating back as early as 2007. A major sponsor of the Vancouver Olympic Games and a central financier of the ecologically devastating Alberta Tar Sands mega-project, RBC was widely despised by those involved in the Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and anticapitalist movements.

A video communiqué released by a group called the FFCF drew a direct link between the Vancouver Games and the upcoming G20 Summit, both events taking place on stolen Indigenous land, were intimately connected to global capitalism, and were causing widespread social suffering and environmental devastation.

In 2010, Canadian anarchists and anti-authoritarians came together to mount a year of resistance that put Canadian anarchism on the map. But where did this resistance come from? How did it take shape, and what lessons can we draw from its example?
There are a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don’t like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is go and bleed.

– Pierre Elliot Trudeau, during the October Crisis

We got nowhere with words. Maybe someone up there in Ottawa will listen to exploding bombs.

– Front de Libération du Québec
collection of semi-automatic weapons and formed a clandestine organization, which they christened Direct Action.

On May 31, 1982, Direct Action carried out a bombing against the unfinished Cheekye-Dunsmuir Hydro substation on Vancover Island. The blast destroyed four hydro transformers, causing over $5 million in damage. A communiqué issued to the media on June 14 claimed credit for the action; it explained that the group had attacked the facility to protest industrial expansion, which they accused of “raping and mutilating the earth” for over 200 years. That summer the militants, now reunited with Hannah and Belmas, stole a pickup truck and loaded it with explosives. Hansen, Taylor and Belmas then set off on a cross-country trip towards Toronto.

On October 14, a powerful explosion occurred just outside Linton Industries, a factory on the outskirts of Toronto that manufactured parts for US cruise missile guidance systems. The blast injured 10 people and caused nearly $4 million in damage.

Direct Action claimed responsibility and issued a communiqué contextualizing the bombing as a response to the resumption of the US/Soviet nuclear arms race and emphasizing the need to “rescue the earth” for over 200 years. That summer the militants, now reunited with Hannah and Belmas, stole a pickup truck and loaded it with explosives. Hansen, Taylor and Belmas then set off on a cross-country trip towards Toronto.

On October 14, a powerful explosion occurred just outside Linton Industries, a factory on the outskirts of Toronto that manufactured parts for US cruise missile guidance systems. The blast injured 10 people and caused nearly $4 million in damage. A communiqué issued to the media on June 14 claimed credit for the action; it explained that the group had attacked the facility to protest industrial expansion, which they accused of “raping and mutilating the earth” for over 200 years. That summer the militants, now reunited with Hannah and Belmas, stole a pickup truck and loaded it with explosives. Hansen, Taylor and Belmas then set off on a cross-country trip towards Toronto.

Backstory 4:
Anti-globalization, Anarchism, and the Canadian Context

A more recent headwater of the contemporary Canadian anarchist movement can be found in the anti-globalization era, a development prevailing among anarchists on the west coast involved with forest defense work. The general opposition to economic disruption.

The Riots in Québec City

From April 20 to 22, 2001, Québec City hosted one of the largest demonstrations of the anti-globalization era. Over 50,000 people mobilized to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) ministerial, taking over the city core. Divided into green, yellow, and red protest zones according to anticipated levels of risk, the city was transformed into a veritable play ground of resistance. Protesters tore down the security fence that surrounded the ministerial meeting and held their ground against police who utilized tear gas, water cannons, concussion grenades, and rubber bullets. One of the highlights of the weekend was a “Medieval Bloc” with a full-sized catapult that fired teddy bears at the lines of riot police.*

The demonstrations in Québec City were coordinated by the locally-based Summit of the Americas Welcoming Committee (CASA, in its French acronym) and the Montreal based Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC). In response to the criticisms of “summit hopping” following * In response to the charge that such performance art was insufficiently militant, the participants explained that the teddy bears were infected with bubonic plague.

Learning from the shortcomings of the Days of Action and their failure to challenge the Harris government, OCAP intensified its focus on “Direct Action Casework:” This involved supporting welfare claimants, picketing agencies and employers, squatting abandoned buildings, and fighting the criminalization of poverty.

Queen’s Park Riot, 2000

OCAP and other Toronto-based groups called for an action on June 15, 2000 to revitalize a “movement of generalized resistance.” A march of homeless people and their supporters arrived at Queen’s Park to demand that the government meet with them and address their concerns. The provincial government responded by mobilizing riot police. OCAP and its supporters met this provocation by fighting back, resulting in what became known as the “Queen’s Park Riot.” The riot engendered a new militancy amongst participants and local progressive organizations, resulting in the founding of the Ontario Common Front, a province-wide campaign of economic disruption.

The Lessons of Direct Action

In the years following the Cheekye-Dunsmuir bombing, green anarchism found a fertile home in British Columbia, much as it has in the US Pacific Northwest. The first Earth Liberation Front (ELF) action in North America was an arson carried out in 1995 against a wildlife museum in BC, and EnCana oil pipelines and infrastructure in the province have been bombed six times since October 2006. BC is also home to a chapter of Earth First! and a sizable community of radical environmentalists heavily involved with forest defense work. The general opposition to development prevailing among anarchists on the west coast makes sense in light of the fact that much of the province’s natural ecology remains relatively intact, whereas Canada’s other major population centers have long since been robbed of their natural beauty and transformed into post-industrial cityscapes.

We must make this an insecure and uninhabitable place for capitalists and their projects. This is the best contribution we can make towards protecting the earth and struggling for a liberated society.

– Direct Action Communiqué, May 31, 1982

Queen’s Park Riot, June 15, 2000.
protests in Québec City. During the 2001 FTAA
Tear gas filled the sky
numbers were relatively small and
end of the summit. The “Take the Capital” demonstrations in
On June 26 and 27, 2002, the 28th G8 Summit
the WTO protests in Seattle, the organizers em-
the pace and severity of the colonization of
the communities most consistently targeted by
In 1534, Jacques Cartier landed on the shores of
There were temporary suspensions.
First Contact
In 1534, Jacques Cartier landed on the shores of Gaspé Bay, in modern day Québec. In front of a small group of curious Haudenosaunee villagers, Cartier ploughed a large wooden cross into the earth, claiming the “newly-discovered” territory in the name of France. In a cultural misunderstanding that had serious historical ramifications, the Huron-Iroquois word for village, “kanata,” was mistakenly interpreted at the name of the newly discovered territory; thus, the name Canada was born out of a linguistic gaffe—and a centuries-long campaign of colonial displacement and genocide began.

The Arrival of the British
The pace and severity of the colonization of Turtle Island intensified with the establishment of the first British colony in 1607. Whereas French settlers had largely been traders, pil-

With power thus consolidated, the Brit-

The Québec Provincial Police’s use of agents provocateurs in Montebello generated tremen-
dous controversy. Identified as undercover agents by participants in the black bloc and subsequently pointed out to labor leaders, three masked individuals holding rocks were accused of attempting to incite violence. Pacifists later used this incident to portray the actions of the black bloc during the Toronto G20 demonstrations as the work of police infiltrators.

BACKSTORY 5: Indigenous Influence
In the absence of a revolutionary Canadian labor movement, traditional notions of class warfare have been superseded in many anarchist circles by the narrative of Indigenous resistance to corporate development. As inhabitants of a na-
tion built on a foundation of murder and theft, many anarchists in Canada feel an affinity with
to European markets, the British settlers were

First Contact
In 1534, Jacques Cartier landed on the shores of Gaspé Bay, in modern day Québec. In front of a small group of curious Haudenosaunee villagers, Cartier ploughed a large wooden cross into the earth, claiming the “newly-discovered” territory in the name of France. In a cultural misunderstanding that had serious historical ramifications, the Huron-Iroquois word for village, “kanata,” was mistakenly interpreted as “a regular British subject.”

During the 2001 FTAA, a crowd of 1,000 people came up against tear gas that it ordered through the ventilation system of the building hosting the summit, forcing the meetings to be temporarily suspended.
This policy was largely abandoned in 1879, following a report by Nicolas Flood Davin to sitting Prime Minister of Canada John A. MacDonald arguing that the adult Indigenous population had proven incapable of transitioning from their “present state of savagery” to the “rules of civilized life” to the white man’s imagined role as refined British subjects. Instead, the Davin Report recommended relocating the government’s attention on “civilizing” Indigenous people through a system of compulsory boarding schools administered by the church; thus the Canadian Residential School system was born.

The Residential Schools

From 1880 until the closure of the last federally-administered Residential Schools in 1996, the Canadian government provided over a network of Indigenous indoctrination camps the stated goal of which was to “kill the Indian in the child.” To this end, generations of children were torn from their communities and thrown into Christian boarding schools, where harsh corporal punishment was inflicted on students caught speaking their native tongue. The absence of public oversight and the climate of racist impunity created the conditions for widespread sexual abuse at the hands of Roman Catholic and Anglican priests, leaving a legacy of trauma that persists among survivors of the Residential Schools to this day.

The cramped and squalid conditions of these schools were also an ideal breeding ground for disease. From 1880 until the closure of the last federally-administered Residential School in 1996, the Canadian government took over administrative control of the schools and began the mass incarceration and medical experimentation on Native children. According to the report, released in 1909, alleged that Native children were subjected to rigorous medical tests and experiments, with a mortality rate of 50%, with the majority of these deaths occurring in the first year at the school; an addendum to the report, released in 1910, alleged that Native children were being purposely exposed to tuberculosis and left to die by their white doctors.

Bryce was subsequently fired and his findings covered up. In 1910, federal legislation was introduced declaring administration of the system compulsory for all Native children between the ages of 7 and 16. Attendance peaked in the 1930s; it only began to drop off in the 1950s, when the state of the schools began to improve. The 1950s also saw an increased rate of Native children being removed from their families and sent to Indian residential schools.

The Oka Standoff

The Oka Crisis was a 79-day armed standoff in Oka, Québec between Canadian security forces and members of the Mohawk community of Kahnestake. The dramatic events galvanized First Nations communities across the country, producing an outpouring of solidarity actions and economic disruption that brought Native land claims to the forefront of the national consciousness. The confrontation began on July 11, 1990 when a highway blockade that had halted the expansion of a golf course onto a Mohawk farming community was attacked by members of the provincial Sûreté du Québec (SQ) with tear gas and flash grenades. Mohawk warriors responded with gunfire and a member of the SQ was killed in the resulting firefight. The SQ withdrew, leaving several police vehicles and a front-end loader behind; the Mohawks immediately put these to use, crushing the police vehicles and flipping over a police helicopter.

On April 20, members of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) arrested twenty-one people. Later that day, a large crowd from Six Nations retook the site, chased the OPP from the area, and erected barricades. The resulting tension, known as the Caledonia Crisis, drew in many non-Native supporters from around southern Ontario, including anarchists from Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, London, and Toronto. Through the barricades have since come down, the Douglas Estates remain occupied, and activists from Six Nations continue to resist the colonization of their land; millions of dollars of construction has since been halted at proposed development sites in Bracebridge and, a former police station on the Six Nations reservation was recently occupied and transformed into a youth center.

Indigenous Influence on Anarchist Struggles: A Case Study of Guelph, ON

Guelph is a small city in southern Ontario that boasts a vibrant anarchist community. The city is rapidly being integrated into the metropolis of Toronto; sprawl and destruction of natural spaces is a daily reality that cannot be ignored. Since the early 2000s, anarchists in Guelph have been involved in anti-poverty and anti-police campaigns, environmental actions, and countless clandestine acts of sabotage. The community boasts an active anarchist Black Cross, the Furies, an ethos of solidarity and mass mobilization, and a wealth of anarchist printing and distribution efforts. In summer 2009, an occupation of Hanlon Creek on the edge of Guelph successfully delayed the construction of a business park on one of the last remaining old-growth forests in southern Ontario. This occupation was directly inspired by previous Indigenous land reclamation and anti-development campaigns. Public dissent had long been building against the project alongside disenchantment with democratic methods of change. In the early morning of July 27, approximately 50 individuals, mostly anarchists, took over the site and halted construction for 19 days people held the land. An explicit goal of the occupation was to frame it as part of a broader anti-colonial struggle, foregrounding the theft of this land from its original inhabitants. Indigenous land defenders from across Ontario supported the struggle, including residents of Six Nations and the Mohawks of Tyendinaga.

The occupation also received public support from residents of Guelph. Farmers and neighbors dropped off food at the site; the police coordinated the delivery of supplies at City Hall; all created a space for people to meet and share stories of struggle and solidarity. Hundreds came to participate in the occupation.

The occupation ended with construction being stopped for the season, as the development company was unable to meet their deadline. One positive outcome of the occupation was a declaration by members of the business class that Guelph was “unfriendly to business.” The city had to be bailed out by the federal government for $800,000 to pay for the failed contract, and another larger development in the downtown had to be put on hold due to lack of funds. The City of Guelph launched a $5 million SLAPP (Strategic Litigation against Public Participation) lawsuit against the five organizers as a deterrent to further action. The following year, people prioritized the mobilization against the G20 in Toronto, and as a result construction went ahead as planned.

In hindsight, turning efforts towards organizing for a global summit rather than continuing to defend the land against development was not a strategically sound decision and resulted in a decline rather than a growth in the capacity of anarchists in Guelph.
First, the Olympics are popular the world over. The idea of amateur sportsmanship and the spirit of friendly competition among nations is a powerful myth obscuring the capitalist agenda of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It was challenging to expose the nefarious agenda and history of the Games, and equally difficult to convince troublemakers to come to Vancouver to participate in actions against something seemingly as benign as figure skating.

Second, Indigenous sovereignty was the most prominent message of anti-Olympics organizing. “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” was the rallying cry of the ORN. The events and infrastructure of the Games, including highway expansion and multi-billion dollar megaprojects, were all built on unceded Coast Salish territory.

Finally, the NGO-industrial complex, big labor, and the NDP all stayed away from anti-Olympic organizing altogether. While those groups often bring numbers and resources to major convergences, they also bring their bureaucratic style of management and a weak analysis of the structures of oppression. Their absence gave more radical activists space to push an anticapitalist and anti-colonial agenda to the forefront.

A series of successful direct actions beginning in 2007 forced the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC) to bring their pre-Olympic events indoors with heavy security. Sabotage and vandalism against sponsors, occupations and blockades at promotional events, and actions against the Olympic torch helped build momentum leading up to the main event. When February 2010 finally arrived, all the pieces were in place.

In 2007, the tag “Riot 2010” started appearing on mailboxes and on the walls of back alleys all over Vancouver. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what it referred to: the Winter Olympics were coming to the city, despite massive public opposition.

In the years leading up to what the government had dubbed the “greenest games ever,” anarchists joined forces with Indigenous people and grassroots organizations to sound the alarm and expose the Games. In the years leading up to what the government had dubbed the “greenest games ever,” anarchists joined forces with Indigenous people and grassroots organizations to sound the alarm and expose the Games.

In 2008, a group known as the Olympic Resistance Network (ORN) formed to contest the Games, using the media spectacle to broadcast an uncompromising critique of colonialism and capitalism. They accomplished this through high profile direct actions and a relentless outreach campaign culminating in the first ever anti-Olympic convergence, timed to coincide with the Vancouver Olympics.

Background

In July 2003, the International Olympic Committee selected Vancouver as host city for the 2010 Winter Games. At this time, the Four Host First Nations corporation was established, composed of government-funded band councils from the region. The co-option of Indigenous identity into the Olympics’ branding was a top priority for government officials, looking towards the potential of disruption posed by Indigenous people.

Olympic organizers also endeavored to exploit Indigenous culture through mascots, medal designs, and other imagery. The first phase of the anti-Olympic campaign took place between 2002 and 2005, consisting of small rallies, forums, and a failed grassroots campaign for a “No” vote against the Games in a city-wide plebiscite. During this period, struggles began to intensify around housing and homelessness, primarily in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES). This began with the 2002 campaign to turn the vacant Woodward’s department store into social housing, involving a week-long occupation of the building and a three-month tent city on its sidewalks.

In 2006, the campaign entered its second phase, characterized by larger militant protests and clandestine acts of vandalism and sabotage. This movement presented a radical critique of the Olympic industry as a whole, and expanded to a national level with solidarity actions and disruptions of Olympic events across the country, along with videos, speaking tours, newsletters, conferences, workshops, and other educational campaigns. Over 30 public direct actions occurred, including squats, event disruptions, and blockades, and at least 60 acts of vandalism and sabotage were carried out. There were over 80 Olympics-related arrests in Vancouver and other cities between 2006 and 2010, almost all resulting from public actions. Some 27 more arrests occurred during the Games.

The anti-Olympic movement had a considerable impact on public discourse and the Olympic industry. Polls reported over 30 percent support for the anti-Olympic protests and over 70 percent agreement that the Olympics cost too much.* Polls were surprised by the massive unpopularity of the Games, which only arose after militant direct actions began in 2007.

Among the Indigenous groups involved in the campaign, the Native Youth Movement (NYM), Native 2010 Resistance, and Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre Elders’ Council stood out. The NYM participated in several anti-Olympic protests and conducted speaking tours in Eastern Canada and the US. Native 2010 Resistance was a short-lived Indigenous anti-Olympic group based out of Vancouver that organized rallies and an action in early 2008. The Elders’ Council was often at the forefront of protests.

After some previous efforts to establish an anti-Olympic organizing group in Vancouver, the Olympic Resistance Network (ORN) was established in the spring of 2008. It comprised of radical grassroots organizations, including the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC), No One Is Illegal (NOII) and 2010 Games Watch, joined by several individual anarchist and Indigenous organizers. Other anarchists and Indigenous activists did not participate in ORN, choosing to organize autonomously. The Vancouver Media Co-op (VMC), which provided the best coverage of the anti-Olympic convergence in February 2010, originally began as a communications committee within the ORN.

In contrast to the ORN, a more reformist movement was comprised of NGOs and established groups such as the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), Pivot Legal Society (a “progressive” lawyer’s group in the DTES), Impact on Communities Coalition (IOCC), and others. These groups’ main strategy was to use the Olympics to promote their causes, relying on positive media coverage and lobbying for legal reforms. For these reasons, the reformists had little public interaction with the ORN and organized their own separate activities, including forums, rallies, an annual “Poverty Olympics,” and a “Poverty Torch Relay” just prior to the Games.

Anti-Olympic Convergence, February 10-15, 2010

In fall 2007, organizers began calling for an anti-Olympic convergence February 10-15, 2010. The dates were announced by several Indigenous persons involved in anti-Olympics organizing during an intercontinental gathering organized by the Zapatistas and the National Indigenous Congress in Mexico. The organizing of this convergence was eventually taken up by the ORN.

Meanwhile, in preparation for the Olympics, the government established a $1 billion security
apparatus with a force of 17,000 personnel. This included nearly 7000 police, 5000 soldiers, and over 5000 private security guards. Police, intelligence, military, Coast Guard, Border Services, and other agencies were placed under the control of a newly-established RCMP Integrated Security Unit (ISU).

Olympic Resistance Summit, February 10-11, 2010

The Resistance Summit was held in two venues in East Vancouver, located around the Commercial Drive area. Some 500 people attended training workshops, forums, and panels. Attendees came from across North America. Among the participants was an organizer from the 2006 anti-Olympic campaign in Turin, Italy, a member of the No Games Chicago coalition that successfully fought that city’s bid for the 2018 Summer Games, and a delegation of Circassians, the Indigenous people of Sochi, Russia, who were the 2014 Winter Games to be held.

Anti-Torch Actions, February 12, 2010

Two anti-torch protests were organized for the final day of the torch relay, which was timed to conclude with the Opening Ceremonies of the 2010 Games. One protest was set for 9 a.m. at Victory Square in the DTES, another for 10 a.m. on Commercial Drive. These two neighborhoods were centers of opposition to the Olympics.

By 9:30, several hundred people had gathered at Victory Square, 150 of these were protesters. As the torch convoy approached, protesters surged into the intersection and blocked the street. Cops on motorcycles attempted to push through the crowd but were stopped by a mass of determined people. As 20-30 cops, including six horse-mounted officers, attempted to contain the crowd, the torch relay was diverted up a side street. Protesters ran across the park and up to the next block in an effort to block the torch runner. The convoy sped up and passed along a line of police that were blocking the street.

Masked militants began pushing up against the police line, which was reinforced with more CCU officers, and then later by the RCMP. A fewmmm-cops in riot gear appeared behind the lines of cops.

By nearly an hour, the two forces confronted each other. Militants threw projectiles into the police lines, including a plastic traffic pylon. The black bloc made several charges against the police line and seized hats, flashlights, and gloves from CCU officers. Three officers were injured, two of them by projectiles.

It was later learned that BC Premier Gordon Campbell and Indian Act chiefs from the collaborationist First Nations insisted the national anthem and were late for the opening ceremonies because their bus was delayed by the protest.

Heart Attack, Saturday, February 13, 2010

The 2010 Heart Attack march was a daring plan to "clog the arteries of capitalism." The action was organized by militants from the ORN and promoted as an action in which a diversity of tactics would be respected.

Some 400 people gathered in Thornton Park at 8:30 a.m., including a black bloc 100 strong. At the park, the group practiced basic maneuvers with flags, then proceded down Main Street towards Hastings, eventually marching to the downtown business district. At this point, newspaper boxes and dumpsters were dropped into the street to delay police cars behind the protest, while spray paint appeared on walls, sidewalks, and vehicles.

As the protest passed the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) department store at Georgia and Seymour, militants emerged from the black bloc and began smashing the store’s plate-glass windows. HBC was targeted because of its role as an Olympics sponsor and its historical part in the colonization of Canada. Several windows were knocked in with metal chairs from a nearby café—as well as newspaper boxes and what appeared to be batteries in a sock. Red paint bombs were also thrown against some of the store’s windows.

One block away, a newspaper box was thrown through the windows of a Toronto Dominion (TD) bank. By this time, the CCU was deployed and began following the protest as it proceeded to the West End, towards the Lion’s Gate Bridge—its ultimate objective.

At Denman Street, the march ran into CCU agents accompanied by shooters carrying M4 carbines and less-lethal launchers; the officers began attacking protesters with batons. After some pushing and several de-arrests, the protest dispersed. Seven people were arrested; others would be arrested over the following days.

In one incident, as militants took shelter behind an electrical box to de-mask, a CCTV camera operator approached and began recording. The camera was the official Canadian broadcaster of the Games, and had entered into a contract worth over $500 million with the IOC.

The next day, one of the militants confronted the camera operator and was arrested shortly after for assault. Another comrade was arrested two days later and charged with counseling mischief over $5000.

The 2010 Heart Attack received widespread coverage—for more than the larger mobilization of the previous day. Footage of black-clad militants smashing out the windows of HBC appeared around the world. The action succeeded in its objective of disrupting business and clogging traffic: the Vancouver police themselves closed the Lion’s Gate Bridge, a central artery between Vancouver and Whistler, positioning large numbers of CCU members across the access road. The bridge was not reopened until 11:30 a.m., with police and transit authorities claiming a “serious accident” had led to its closure. Several hundred VANOC buses were delayed as a result.

The action became the most controversial of the entire anti-2010 campaign. Reformists and pacifists, among whom some had worked with the ORN, publicly denounced the black bloc. Among these was David Eby, a former Pivot lawyer who had become the executive director of the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), a state-funded civil rights “watchdog.” Eby had previously defended many activists in the city, and in the BCCLA had worked with some ORN members in press conferences about police harassment and a lawsuit challenging new bylaws restricting signage and “free speech.”
A few days after denouncing the militants, Eby was picked during a public forum in East Vancouver. At the forum, Chris Shaw of 2010 Games Watch and Derrick O’Keefe of the anti-war group StopWar.ca and the news site Rabble.ca also denounced the black bloc action.

Corporate media, police, and government officials immediately condemned the Heart Attack march, alleging that the legitimate protest had been hijacked by a “criminal element” comprised of anarchists from Ontario. Corporate media also reported on the controversy and portrayed the “movement” as being comprised of those who denounced the action, only Shaw had already been involved in the radical anti-Olympic campaign.

Housing Rally, Anti-War March, Olympic Tent Village, February 15-28, 2010

The final day of the convergence had two themes: housing and war. In the afternoon, a rally began at Piper Park with the slogan “No More Empty Talk—No More Empty Lots! Homes Now!” Across the street, a 50-foot banner reading “Homes Now!” was dropped from a nearby low-income tower. After some speeches and singing, the protesters marched to 58 West Hastings, a vacant lot owned by Concord Pacific, one of the main “developers” of condo in the DTES. VANOC had leased the site as a parking lot and surrounded it with chain-link fencing.

Participants immediately set up tents in the empty lot and established a medical aid station. Food Not Bombs provided food. The Olympic Tent Village was organized by the DEPW Power of Women Group, with assistance from a grassroots Christian group. Many radicals also helped out with security. At 6 p.m., approximately 200 protesters gathered for an anti-war rally organized by StopWar.ca under the slogan “Do You Believe in Torture, War and Occupation, Thief of Indigenous Land? The Canadian Government Does,” mocking the 2010 War Rally organized by StopWar.ca under the slogan “Do You Believe in War and Occupation, Thief of Indigenous Land? The Canadian Government Does.”

At 6 p.m., approximately 200 protesters gathered for an anti-war rally organized by StopWar.ca under the slogan “Do You Believe in Torture, War and Occupation, Thief of Indigenous Land? The Canadian Government Does.” The TDRC had agreed to host a G20 summit; even more shocking was the announcement that the summit would be held in the heart of downtown Toronto—Canada’s largest metropolitan area.

Many anarchists had viewed the G8 as a tactical nightmare. In Huntsville, a quiet mountain town in the Muskoka Lakes region, lacked obvious symbolic targets, woes, its small-town geography increased the likelihood that demonstrators would easily be encircled and contained by security forces. In contrast, Toronto offered multiple protest sites, multiple corporate headquarters, and wide city streets connected by an intricate network of alleyways—offering an ideal location for coordinated demonstrations.

The Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN) was “Justice for Our Communities.” Planned by a coalition of grassroots organizations including OCAP and NOHH, it was billed as a combined march, block party, and tent city. Organizers had conducted extensive outreach in marginalized communities throughout Toronto in an effort to make the event properly representative of the diversity of struggles going on in the city. At this point hundreds of protesters were arriving every hour on buses from Ontario and Quebec. The TCMN’s mandate did not cover actual action planning, anarchists from Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, London, Hamilton, and other cities formed Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance (SOAR). SOAR took on the task of organizing three high-risk actions: the “Get Off the Fence” breakaway march, an all-night running dance party dubbed “Tuesday Night Fever,” and a day dedicated to autonomous actions. Some anarchists chose not to participate in SOAR directly, preferring to work in closed affinity groups.

The G8/G20 security operation involved 19,000 security personnel: 10,000 cops, 4,000 militar-, and 5,000 private security guards. It was billed as the largest such operation in Canadian history, costing approximately $1.2 billion. A six-mile security fence was erected around the downtown core of Toronto where the G20 leaders and their delegates were to meet.

Days of Action

Street actions against the G8 and G20 began in Toronto on Monday, June 21. The first event, billed as an anti-poverty march, drew about two hundred people and involved a brief occupation of an Esso gas station and a demonstration outside the Children’s Aid Society (CAS). The Tuesday march focused on queer resistance to the G20, while a march targeting banks and corporations from Canada’s extractive industries was scheduled for Wednesday. Thursday’s rally for Indigenous rights grew to over 1000 people.

A police car burns in downtown Toronto during the Get Off the Fence march against the G20 summit.
“Shattered banks and police cars engulfed in flames, far from being a scene of carnage, are truly beautiful things. They mark a crack in the façade, a weakness in the dam that attempts to hold us from bursting through in an expression our overflowing love and rage, waves that nourish our communities in expressions of true freedom.”

– The SOAR Communiqué in “Carnage: We Find Beauty”
in the 1930s, it had been the site of a rally of the Canadian Nazi Party that sparked a popular riot on May 30, 1965.

On the day of the march, a cordon of bike cops and uniformed officers was established around the park’s perimeter. Initially, police stopped and attempted to search everyone arriving, checking bags and seizing banners, flag poles, goggles and other protective gear. Several people challenged the searches on the way into the park. Shortly after these incidents captured the attention of nearby media, police stopped conducting searches.

A number of anarchists had come prepared to march in full black bloc regalia, but without the intention of initiating conflict with the police or damaging property. The intention was to show solidarity with the struggles of migrants and other marginalized groups and to get a feel for acting collectively. The bloc was initially small, around 30-40 people, but swelled to perhaps double that during the march. The entire demonstration involved 3000-4000 participants, including unions, students, seniors, communists, Indigenous people, and advocates of a variety of national liberation struggles.

By the time the march reached the downtown core, police had put on their riot helmets. Just past Yonge and College streets, they made their first arrest of the day—a young deaf man of color, who was arrested for failing to obey a verbal command and jailed without access to ASL interpretation services.

After marching through downtown for several hours, the crowd began to peter out around University Avenue and Dundas Street. Some of the demonstrators returned to Allan Gardens to participate in a dance party and temporary tent city; others rushed to the SOAR spokescouncil to discuss the next day’s action.

Get Off the Fence: Saturday, June 26

The “People First: We Deserve Better” rally called for early Saturday afternoon by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and various other labor organizations and civil NGOs was the largest demonstration of the G20, with upwards of 40,000 participants. SOAR had called for a “Get Off The Fence” action, vaguely promoted as a sort of breakaway march that would attempt to get to the fence surrounding the summit. Many plans for coordinating actions on Saturday were presented and scrapped during heated debate at the Friday night spokescouncil. The meeting ended with the consensus that there would be no plan, which produced cheers and applause.

The route of the “People First” march was worked out in coordination with police. It began in Queen’s Park, proceeded south down University Avenue to Queen Street, then west to Spadina Avenue, north to College, and finally back to the established “protest zone” in the park. It was routed to turn back a full six blocks from the security fence.

As anarchists arrived in Queen’s Park and coalesced into a bloc of 100-150, they learned that a section of radical unionists and a contingent with NOII flags also wished to break off from the main march and head south towards the fence. Despite this, things looked pretty bleak. Anarchists with street experience essentially outsmarted the extensive security plan by taking advantage of vulnerable parts of the city while police officers were focused on the large demonstration and the summit perimeter.”

AP News Report
Street is Canada’s equivalent of Wall Street; until summer of a billion dollars seemed absurd. But sure enough, burned. Sometimes all it was actually a group of mostly people of color, status at risk with confrontational tactics, it seemed the numbers of the bloc to double back. There was a single officer inside; the windows of the car were smashed and the hood was stamped on while the officer looked out in horror. This attack was met with cheers and shouts of encouragement from the bloc and the rest of the march, boosting morale and making it clear that the crowd would support militant tactics. After the windows of the car had been smashed, a group of police ran in to rescue the trapped officer; one quickly and clumsily withdrawing. The officers were visibly shaken and unsure how to proceed. By this time the bloc had travelled many blocks from the rest of the labor march, any one uncomfortable with confrontational street tactics had enough time to return north. As the bloc continued down Queen Street, the windows of many stores and buildings were smashed, including a Nike store, a Starbucks, and the Gap. The windows of a government building housing an immigration office were also destroyed, as was a CTV van. The march was moving quickly at this point, surprised that the way east was clear. As the crowd arrived at Bay Street—the central artery of Toronto’s financial district and the Canadian equivalent of Wall Street—antagonisms flared again between the black bloc, the NOII contingent, and others. The suggestion was again made to go south; many comrades were convinced that this would mean marching into an area where it would be easy for the police to surround the bloc. At one point a physical altercation almost erupted between individuals from the two groups. Ultimately, however, as the crowd filled the intersection of Queen and Bay, the bloc once again listened to those who wanted to go south and moved in that direction. The attacks against property continued. At Bay and King Street a massive window complex of a Bank of Montreal was attacked, a hammer thrown through the air stuck into the pane like a hatchet thrown into a wall, creating a beautiful spiderweb of shattered glass. A black-clad militant ran up and pulled it out to use again.
Offenders had abandoned a police car at this intersection; it immediately lost its windows. This attack seemed to slow the march as many stayed to observe the destruction. There was now a gap between the front section that had passed through the intersection and the group still on the other side. There were only a few cops following the back of the march, as the majority of the police force was still busy for- tifying their position against an anticipated attack. At this point, the security fence was visible a block and a half away; those in front waited for the rest of the block to catch up and hurriedly attempted to plan some sort of attack on the fence. Unfortunately, no one had really expected to get this close, and it didn’t seem as though anything could be done to breach the perimeter with the resources on hand.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

This didn’t last long, however, and the bloc had become bored in on Bay Street as it attempted to retreat north. Fortunately, at just the right moment, people charged the northeast corner of the intersection of Bay and King. Perhaps because two of their cruisers were burned beyond recognition, a hundred or so anarchists were hurtling screaming towards them, the line of riot police retreated, stumbling backwords, and let the crowd through. The bloc marched north on the next intersection onto Yonge Street—Toronto’s renowned shopping strip. The property destruction continued as many more banks and corporate chains attacked. The devastation went ge- neral, had its windows smashed and shit smeared on its mer-

Anarchists were hurtling screaming towards them, the line of riot police retreated, smashing and lighting on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re- ported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as feisty as they did at this moment.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops pursued into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc turned back toward King. The new iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—larger group still abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately smashed, smeared, and lit on fire. Witnesses re-
By Sunday, June 27, the police were attacking perceived protesters, SOAR until members of his affinity group—name Brenda Carey], were well-known within Bindo Showan] and “Brenda Doughtry” [legal intelligence Task Force operation. The police infiltration had devastating effects on anarchist organizing in southern Ontario. The actions of “Khalid” and “Brenda” led to the arrest of some of the region’s most dedicated activists. There were arrests and the strictest conditions that accompanied them had the intended effect of tearing SOAR apart and dealt a significant blow to efforts to create a regional network of anarchist militants.

The majority of the 1090 arrested during the G20 weekend were released by June 28, 2010, only 320 were charged. Charges included burning police cars, assaulting police, carrying weapons, criminal assassination, and mischief. Of those who remained in jail, eighteen were accused of being “ringleaders” and charged with multiple counts of conspiracy, facing sentences of up to ten years. The majority of those charged with conspiracy were active within SOAR, though not all: Pat Cadorrette and Jaggi Singh, both charged with several counts, were members of CLAC involved with anti-G20 organizing in Montreal. In May of 2011, in exchange for his conspiracy charges being dropped, Singh agreed to plead guilty to counseling to commit indictable mischief—referring to a NOII press conference held on June 24 at which he stated that the security fence was illegitimate and should be torn down. The plea bargain also included the precondition that he not be called to testify against any of his co-accused. On June 31, 2011, he was sentenced to time already served.8

Syed Hussan, a respected organizer with NOII and the TCMN, was arrested on the morning of June 26 as he was getting into a taxi. During the lead-up to the G20 counter-demonstrations, Hussan had served as a central figure on the TCMN’s communications committee. If found guilty, he faced deportation to Pakistan. Darius Mirshahi and Chris Bowen, better known by their hip-hop monikers Testament and Illogik, were both arrested on the morning of June 27 and charged with toppling a security fence to commit mischief—a separate conspiracy from the 18 co-accused—as well as masking with intent to commit a criminal act and counseling to commit mischief. This latter charge was tied to their popular music video “Crash the Meeting,” which the Crown attempted to blame for much of the destruction that occurred during the Get Off the Fence march. After five months of non-association conditions that prevented them from performing, composing music, or even speaking together, their charges were stayed for lack of evidence.

Eric Lankin, the last of the SOAR accused to be held in custody, was finally granted bail on September 3 after two denials. Alleged SOAR “ringleader” Alex Hundert, initially released on July 19, was rearrested on September 18; prosecutors accused him of breaching his “no-demonstration” condition by speaking on public panels at the University of Waterloo and Ryerson University. He was released from prison with extremely restrictive conditions in mid-October, including an unprecedented ban on “publicly expressing a political opinion,” only to be re-arrested soon after for alleged intimidation of the Crown Attorney. He was released again on January 24, 2011, and remained under limited house arrest for five months.

On September 29, Jaraslu Avila, an anarchist and Mapache activist studying political science at the University of Toronto, became the last of the accused to be arrested. Her charges were dropped three months later.

Following the G20 riots, police circulated a “most wanted” list, including photos of many individuals who participated in the later attacks on police cruisers left at Spadina and Queen. Dozens of people were identified in this manner and turned themselves in or were arrested. Additional arrests occurred through August and into September, primarily in Ontario but also in Quebec and BC. Some officials hinted that anarchists from New York had been identified and would be charged, but this never panned out.

One of those later identified through photographic evidence was Kelly Pflug-Back, a community organizer from Guelph. The Crown absurdly accused Kelly of being the on-the-ground “leader of the black bloc.” After pleading guilty to seven counts of mischief and Disguise with Intent, she was sentenced on July 19, 2011, to twelve months in prison, plus time served. Another individual charged with being in a black bloc action was Ryan Rainville, an Indigenous anarchist. After three months in prison, he was released under strict house arrest to a native spiritual healing lodge. On August 2, 2012, he pleaded guilty to three counts of mischief Over $5000 and Breach of Peace, but contested the charges of assault and obstructing police that had been pressed as a result of the presence of a police officer inside of his home during the attack on the cruisers. He repeatedly defended his actions in the courtroom, vowing struggle against all forms of oppression and drawing a distinction between violence against property and the systemic violence of capitalism. In mid-June, three individuals were arrested for the arson of the Ottawa RNC. Charges against two of them were later stayed for lack of evidence. One of the vehicles he judged himself to be the third individual, Roger Clement, to three and a half years. Asked by the court if he would like to take the opportunity to apologize to the police, Clement instead offered a humble apology to his friends and family for the inconvenience he had caused them, and for the fact that the money that would be used to incarcerate him was not being spent on something more worthwhile.

Legal Fallout

In the early morning hours of June 26, members of the Toronto Police Service’s “Guns and Gangs” unit battered down the doors of various Toronto houses and arrested four members of SOAR at gunpoint. Over the following hours, a dozen more individuals were snatched up from their homes or grabbed off the street, others stopped in vehicles. It soon emerged that these arrests were the result of evidence gathered by two undercover police agents who had infiltrated various anarchist organizations in the region—including AWOL (Anti-War at Laurier), the TCMN, and SOAR itself—as part of a Joint Intelligence Task Force operation.

These two agents, who had operated under the names “Khalid Mohammed” [legal name Kondo Showen] and “Brenda Doughty” [legal name Brenda Carey], were well-known within anarchist circles. “Khalid” had been active in SOAR until members of his affinity group became concerned about his erratic behavior and asked him to stop attending meetings. His early efforts to promote violent and reckless actions had raised the suspicions of activists in Guelph, where he had earlier attempted to infiltrate the city’s tight-knit anarchist community. After relocating to Kitchener-Waterloo, “Khalid” changed his strategy and began offering free rides, beer, and material support to members of AWOL. He also began to pit activists from different cities against one another by spreading rumors and playing up perceived divisions based on race, class, and theoretical disagreements. Unfortunately, a lack of forthright communication between anarchists in Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo allowed him to gain a position of trust, on which he used to gather a great deal of evidence against the alleged G20 “ringleaders.” Much of this was exaggerated and taken out of context by the Crown Attorney in an effort to paint these individuals as violent terrorists.

Unlike “Khalid,” “Brenda” was far more effective in eroding suspicion; the announcement of her betrayal came as a shock to everyone. Based out of Guelph, “Brenda” was actively involved in the planning of the G20 protests; at the time of her disappearance she was a registered legal observer with the Movement Defence Committee (MDC), in addition to sitting on both the Fundraising and Action committees of the TCMN. To top things off, she also attended SOAR meetings, and even shared an apartment with one of the alleged “ringleaders,” Mandy Hiscock.

In the early morning hours of June 26, members of the Toronto Police Service’s “Guns and Gangs” unit battered down the doors of two Toronto houses and arrested four members of SOAR at gunpoint. Over the following hours, a dozen more individuals were snatched up from their homes or grabbed off the street, others stopped in vehicles. It soon emerged that these arrests were the result of evidence gathered by two undercover police agents who had infiltrated various anarchist organizations in the region—including AWOL (Anti-War at Laurier), the TCMN, and SOAR itself—as part of a Joint Intelligence Task Force operation. These two agents, who had operated under the names “Khalid Mohammed” [legal name Kondo Showen] and “Brenda Doughty” [legal name Brenda Carey], were well-known within anarchist circles. “Khalid” had been active in SOAR until members of his affinity group became concerned about his erratic behavior and asked him to stop attending meetings. His early efforts to promote violent and reckless actions had raised the suspicions of activists in Guelph, where he had earlier attempted to infiltrate the city’s tight-knit anarchist community. After relocating to Kitchener-Waterloo, “Khalid” changed his strategy and began offering free rides, beer, and material support to members of AWOL. He also began to pit activists from different cities against one another by spreading rumors and playing up perceived divisions based on race, class, and theoretical disagreements. Unfortunately, a lack of forthright communication between anarchists in Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo allowed him to gain a position of trust, on which he used to gather a great deal of evidence against the alleged G20 “ringleaders.” Much of this was exaggerated and taken out of context by the Crown Attorney in an effort to paint these individuals as violent terrorists.

Unlike “Khalid,” “Brenda” was far more effective in eroding suspicion; the announcement of her betrayal came as a shock to everyone. Based
The seventeen individuals still facing conspiracy charges finally resolved their cases on November 22, 2011 without setting a legal precedent for conspiracy convictions related to demonstration organizing. Six accepted plea deals in return for the others having their charges withdrawn. Alex Hundert and Mandy Hiscocks pled to one count of counseling mischief over $5000 and one count of counseling to obstruct police; Leah Henderson, Peter Hopperton, Erik Lankin, and Adam Lewis pled to a single count of counseling mischief over $5000. Their sentences ranged from six to eighteen months. The seventeen released a collective statement proclaiming “We emerge united and in solidarity.”

The Lessons of 2010

For many, the now-iconic images of squad cars burning in the heart of Canada’s financial district were an exhilarating validation of the Riot 2010 slogan. Short of an attack on Parliament Hill, one would be hard pressed to imagine a more vivid symbol of anarchist struggle against the Canadian state. Yet, while at most summits in recent memory it was considered a victory to smash up a shopping district and disappear, Toronto seemed to present a situation in which generalized demonstrations of anarchist struggle against the Canadian state were an exhilarating validation of the Riot 2010 slogan. Short of an attack on Parliament Hill, one would be hard pressed to imagine a more vivid symbol of anarchist struggle against the Canadian state. For many, the now-iconic images of squad cars burning in the heart of Canada’s financial district were an exhilarating validation of the Riot 2010 slogan. Short of an attack on Parliament Hill, one would be hard pressed to imagine a more vivid symbol of anarchist struggle against the Canadian state.

In hindsight, anarchists in Ontario may have been held hostage by their own ambitions. SOAR worked so hard to prepare a full weekend of anarchist actions that they were unprepared when the Get Off the Fence march opened the possibility of general upheaval. Some longtime anarchists didn’t even attend, saving themselves for what they believed were more promising events—none of which ever happened precisely because of the success of the Get Off the Fence action. At a crucial moment, when the police were on the defensive and anarchists had every opportunity to push further into uncharted territory, anarchists abandoned the streets in order to prepare for the Saturday Night Fever mobile dance party. There is something to be said for quitting while you’re ahead—and without a communications structure, this may have been the best choice. But this was the turning point that allowed the police to regain the upper hand and thwart all of SOAR’s further plans. Saturday’s events show that sometimes anarchists’ aspirations are only limited by their inability to imagine that they will succeed.

The mobilizations of 2010 helped create a new political climate in Canada that many anarchists found challenging to come to terms with. Following the Toronto G20, many comrades were forced to navigate crippling non-association clauses that barred them from planning or attending public demonstrations. Much time and energy was spent raising money for legal costs and court support.

This enabled non-anarchists to frame the public discourse about the actions of the police in Toronto. Liberals, social democrats and right-wing libertarians presented the events of the G20 as exceptional, instead of channeling public indignation towards a deeper understanding of the need for real change, they focused on seeking minor reforms, often through fruitless calls for public inquiries and rallies demanding that police "respect civil rights.”

Immediately after the G20, conspiracy theorists began to circulate rumors that the black bloc was orchestrated by undercover police officers as a justification to crack down on peaceful protestors. These accusations, based on a superficial understanding of the use of agent provocateurs in the Monte bello protests of 2007, spread quickly among a population so thoroughly traumatized by the effects of the G20 protests that they were unprepared and unable to imagine how a few hundred anarchists could get the better of the authorities. Some conspiracy theorists went so far as to claim that the burning police cars were Hollywood props, while others suggested that the vehicles were left as “bait”—implicating those who lit them on fire into a trap.

Unfortunately, these misconceptions still linger in some circles. Anarchists produced comprehensive analyses debunking them, but failed to disseminate these widely beyond activist alternative media. In the immediate aftermath of the G20, much of the anarchist community was reeling from arrests or keeping a low profile in hopes of avoiding further repression. In hindsight, it was a grave mistake to remain silent during this period. At this crucial moment, anarchists could have used their new visibility to build on their successes and deal a critical blow to pacific hegemony.

The View from 2012

Canadian anarchists learned some hard lessons from the RCMP-led Joint Intelligence Group operation carried out in the year and a half leading up to the Olympics and G20. Freedom of Information requests filed by independent journalists subsequently revealed the presence of no less than twelve undercover police operatives across the country participating in this operation—most of whom still have not been identified. As the initial shock of Chadwick’s and "Brenda’s” betrayal wore off, Canadian anarchists moved to re-establish informal regional and national networks, armed with a more nuanced understanding of police surveillance and infiltration tactics.

Many of our comrades have completed the prison sentences they incurred as a result of the 2010 protests, while others are still involved in the legal process. Mandy Hiscocks and Alex Hundert, both currently incarcerated, are focussing on organizing within the prison system, and have shared their experiences through blogs maintained by outside supporters.

Although the iconic images of burning police cars in downtown Toronto were inspiring to anarchists and anti-authoritarians, the same can’t necessarily be said of other segments of Canadian society. Anarchists active in the Occupy movement had to deal with the conspiracy claims popularized by so-called “info-warrior” types in addition to the perils of being singed out by liberals and right-wingers intent on cooperating with police. This was not unique to Toronto—quite similar played out in Occupy camps in the US—but whereas elsewhere, antagonisms flared between participants who adopted differing tactics, in Toronto anarchists were viewed skeptically before the occupations even began.

As the dust settles on Riots 2010, its high points have been eclipsed by the multiple legal actions and financial costs of the G20. Yet the legal process has not yet been wrapped up. This Justice Act requires a critical blow to pacific hegemony.

Riot 2010 may go down in history as the last climax of the mass-mobilization era. In the mass mobilization model, people who shared ideological common ground converged in one location opposite a convergence of their foes, concentrates a global rivalry into one flashpoint. Since the Toronto G20, anarchists have shifted to a new model, participating in diffuse social upheavals originating in common conditions rather than political positions—spreading the clash throughout society rather than concentrating it in one location. Yet, while at most summits in recent memory it was considered a victory to smash up a shopping district and disappear, Toronto seemed to present a situation in which
For most of the organizing leading up to the riots of 2010, the protests at the Olympics were the only goal; yet the G20 protests arguably eclipsed these. This shows how a protracted buildup campaign grounded in multiple communities can create momentum extending far beyond the original objective. At the same time, it’s worth reflecting on the intelligence error that led anarchists to underestimate the Get Off the Fence march. This tells us a lot about the current global context and what strategies are likely to be most effective.

Until 2009, it seemed to make sense for anarchists to cast ourselves as the protagonists in pugnacious with the state; this set realistic goals in a time of low social conflict. Today, however, more and more people are drifting toward open revolt, while the state is scrambling to pick off its enemies before the next crisis. Even before the Occupy movement, the confrontational demonstrations at both the Pittsburgh and Toronto G20 protests drew more participants from the general public than expected. In this context, rather than planning what “we” should do, we should focus on what the “I” should be doing. In educating the general public about resistance tactics and less in laying “secret” plans. An effective communications system might have enabled anarchists to respond more swiftly and flexibly to the developments of that Saturday, but this points to a more fundamental issue. In the information age, the structures that channel communication are the most determinant factor in struggle. The flows of information create the social formations that preserve or interrupt the status quo, everything depends on whether we can establish subversive connections and currents. This goes not only for Twitter feeds and independent media co-ops, but also for the relations between black bloc anarchists and groups like No One Is Illegal—not to mention angry civilians without political affiliations.

In the mass mobilization model, people who share ideological common ground converge in one location opposite a convergence of their forces, concentrating a global rivalry into one flashpoint. Since the Toronto G20, anarchists worldwide have shifted to a new model, participating in diffuse social upheavals that originate in common conditions rather than political positions. This spreads the clash throughout society rather than concentrating it in one location. Now that this approach has caught on in North America with the occupation movement, riots may go down to history in the last part of the mass-mobilization era. It’s up to us to distill the worldwide lessons of that era to pass on to the next one.

Editors’ Postscript

To understand the story of Kurt Wilckens, we have to situate it in the context of the massive social conflicts that rocked Argentina at the beginning of the 21st century. For a time, new immigrants comprised a considerable portion of the Argentine working class; in effect, Europe was exporting its troublemakers to the so-called New World.

Consequently, the anarchist movement in Argentina during this period was arguably the most popular in the history of the Americas, becoming the dominant force in the broader labor movement. In Buenos Aires, a city of less than one million, illegal May Day demonstrations drew up to 70,000 participants and repeatedly resulted in gun battles with police.

In January 1992, clashes erupted during the funeral procession for five workers who had been killed in a shootout with police during a strike; these spread throughout the city and touched off a general strike. In retaliation, the government declared martial law and turned a blind eye while the far-right Argentine Patriotic League carried out anti-Jewish pogroms. Several hundred were killed and thousands injured during what came to be referred to as la Semana Trágica, the Tragic Week; afterwards, many thousands were imprisoned or deported.

The following year, anarchists initiated major labor struggles in the wool industry in Patagonia, the southernmost region of Argentina. These intensified until the end of 1992, when lieutenant colonel Héctor Benigno Varela led a detachment of the army to put down the unrest—ultimately killing 1500 workers. Upon his return to Buenos Aires, Varela was fitted by the Argentine Patriotic League, while employers in Patagonia announced the lowering of all wages by a third.

Like countless others, Kurt Wilckens had come to the New World looking for work. First he ventured to the United States, where he worked at a fish factory and then in the mines of Arizona. He was finally deported to Germany, arriving near the end of the series of unsuccessful revolts following the First World War and leaving again quickly for the West—this time to Argentina. As a member of Tolstoy—and a vegetarian teetotaler, like many other anarchists then and now—Wilckens was opposed to violence. But he could not remain passive in the face of the massacre in Patagonia. He resolved to kill Varela and sought the assistance of anarchists more experienced in clandestine activity to prepare a bomb. When he finally caught Varela outside his home and threw the bomb at him, a ten-year-old girl suddenly appeared between them. Wilckens shielded her body from the blast with his own, sustaining injuries that prevented him from escaping. He refused to give the police any information, claiming sole responsibility for the attack.

Months later, Wilckens was shot to death in his prison cell by Varela’s nephew, Ernesto Pérez Millán. Temlerpery—a member of the Argentine Patriotic League who had participated in the massacre in Patagonia. The murderer pled insanity and was given a comfortable place in a psychiatric hospital.

Kurt Wilckens: “Revenge Is Unworthy of an Anarchist”

In the context of the mass-mobilization era. It’s up to us to distill the worldwide lessons of that era to pass on to the next one.

For further reading about these and other events in the history of Argentine anarchism, seek out the works of Osvaldo Bayer.

Artwork by Berluc: berluc.com
Kurt Wilcken's

Born in Bramstedt, Germany, to a middle-class family, in 1940 he traveled to the United States, where he became acquainted with Tolstoy's ideas.

Upon refusing his inheritance, in 1920 he set sail for Buenos Aires, lured by rumors of a supposed uprising of a working-class movement.

He met Paulino Cutman in the café "La Breña," who presented himself as an "intellectual comrade." He turned out to be a policeman, and arrested Wilcken after the latter showed him a newspaper clipping proclaiming him the "most dangerous red in the west."

During his four months in prison he read about the Patagonian massacre, orchestrated by Varlla.

Once out of prison, in March of 1922, he decided to "execute Varlla to keep him from causing more bloodshed."

Andres Vasquez Parades helped him manufacture the bomb.

The testing of the bomb took place near the Barracas Bridge.
He waited outside the dictator’s house for 45 days. But with innocent bystanders, he was incapable of going through with his plan.

Shreds from the explosion hit his body, protecting ten-year-old María Antonia Palazzo.

Shots at point-blank were sufficient.

He still made sure to finish what he had started.

During his interrogation, three hours standing on his broken limbs, his only answer was: “I am the sole author. I manufactured the bomb without any help.”

He is sentenced to 17 years in prison.

In the night of June 20th, 1933, Ñonche Piria Milan followed a line of lights that led him through the pavilion disguised as a guard.

“Yáhoo”, is the anarchist’s response.

He enters the cell and says: “Is that you, Wickens?”

The bullet pierces through the prisoner’s right lung and exits through his back.

Wickens dies instantly.
A few days later, for one of the few times in the history of Argentina, an indefinite general strike is declared.

Repression is quick to come: 163 arrested, 17 badly wounded.

Two people: one policeman, and a horse die.

Wilkens' murderer claims insanity:

A hospital patient, Esteban Luján, following instructions from the anarchist włos Chadwicktutu: kills Pérez Milian to the cry of

"This is on behalf of Wilkens!"

But revenge is ignoble of an anarchist.

Tomorrow, our tomorrow, does not tolerate quarrelling, crime, or lies. It proclaims life, love, and science. Let's put our work into making that day ever more close!"

Kurt Gustave Wilkens, 1886-1923.
WE ARE ALL OUTSIDE AGITATORS

Everyone knows what happened next. The occupation that began awkwardly in Manhattan sparked hundreds around the continent; indeed, the best thing about the pacifist-dominated Occupy Wall Street was its function as a myth that enabled a wide range of people to imagine that the resistance movements they desired were possible. In the Bay Area, anarchists frustrated by how Occupy San Francisco mirrored some of the shortcomings of the New York occupation made sure that Occupy Oakland had a different character. Occupy Oakland raised the bar, establishing a police-free zone and supporting a diversity of tactics. The city government reacted by brutally evicting the Oakland encampment, but this only galvanized more momentum. The nationwide movement arguably peaked on November 2, when thousands shut down the Port of Oakland in response, alongside black bloc property destruction and a building occupation that inspired similar efforts around the country. The state drew the line at this, answering with rapidly escalating violence; most of the major encampments were evicted within the next two weeks. By the end of 2011, the context of anticapitalist struggle in the US had expanded dramatically. But the horizon was no longer open: though many battles were still to be fought, all the pieces were on the chessboard, at least for that round. The Occupy movement began its long, slow demise, with the demonstrations of May Day 2012 showing that only anarchists—largely concentrated in places where the movement had crossed a new threshold, it participatory organizing space, superseding the summit model for confrontation by drawing in wider swaths of the population to fight on their home turf. At the same time, the challenges anarchists posed to this space by acting outside of it served to keep it vibrant. Without autonomous action always pushing things further, consensus process would have limited the range of possibilities to the lowest common denominator, reducing the stakes of the struggle. Wherever this challenge was missing, the general assemblies emptied out quickly. Anarchists have long been smeared as outside agitators; it was precisely outside agitation that sustained the occupation movement.

In baring itself in public spaces—outside the workplace, and outside subcultures—the Occupy movement caught up to an era in which few people have fixed economic or social positions to defend. From Dayton to Dakar, deregulation and digitalization have swept us into a global pool of fluid labor. many of us need to find a new job every year, if not every week. This vulnerability—the consequence of being expendable as far as the economy is concerned—is the common thread that connects baristas and sex workers in the US with the one billion people who live in favelas and shantytowns worldwide. This explains why the occupations peaked with a port blockade: the only weapon left to a superfluous class is interruption. The blockades of November 2 and December 12, 2011 were controversial because they bypassed labor unions, but those unions are the dying holdovers of a dymanic era of peace treaties between capitalists and workers. To get any leverage today, we all have to become outside agitators. 

At the crisis goes on and more people lose their previous positions in society, traditional struggles will collapse, but the disenfranchised will pour into every struggle that creates new commons. Yet these commons can only survive as long as they spread: we can only defend ourselves offensively. Forget about going back to the old days—there can be no more peace treaties between classes when even governments are scrambling to keep up with the accelerating effects of capitalism. Forget about fighting to preserve your economic role and privileges—the only hope is to legitimate common resistance from outside them, against them. Forget about strategies based on incremental victories, radicalizing our demands as people build up a taste for winning—today it’s easier to topple governments than to reform them. We have to popularize new ways of fighting that create social bodies outside all capitalist roles, that can one day put an end to capitalism itself.

Much of what is covered in this issue was unthinkable only three years ago. If we want to be realistic, let’s plan to be doing the unthinkable three years from now. The wolves are at the door. Let’s be the barbarians at the gates.

---

* For example, the emphasis on tactical nonviolence that had attracted a diverse social body to Occupy Wall Street became an obstacle to keeping the streets when repression escalated.
DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE
DON'T FORGET WHAT YOU'RE HERE TO DO
www.crimethinc.com