They have carved up the whole world; if you’re lucky they’ll offer you a piece of it back, at a price— they call that freedom.

But it is still possible to be free in thoroughfares reserved for soulless traffic, in locked buildings slated for demolition, in the ruins of forests bulldozed to make way for warehouses, in cities in which everything is for sale, even under the martial law of soldiers who shoot to kill— provided that you march, that you trespass and occupy, that you plant new gardens and defend them, that you give and share without measuring: that you resist.

“We must be the trouble we wish to see in the world.”

–Friends of Brad Will
OAXACA RECYCLES

Bottles are lined up at Cinco Señores barricade, ready to be transformed into molotov cocktails for the defense of the city’s last autonomous radio station. Mexico leads the world in the consumption of Coca-Cola, the worthless commodity par excellence—but the refuse of this world can become the seeds of a new one.

OAXACA TRAVELS

A requisitioned bus serves as a barricade and as sleeping quarters for those who guard it. In the era of neoliberal capitalism, when commodities move freely across borders but human beings must sneak across them in fear for their lives, it is only possible to move forward by shutting down the routes upon which we are running in circles.

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“...All this gave Francois a new lease on life. He would shake me and say, ‘What a ball! Just think! What a celebration if after all this there is not a chance! They are just ghosts, the ones who think people fight to win! They fight because they like it.’”

—And There Was Light, Autobiography of Jacques Lusseyran, blind hero of the French Resistance
About the Cover

Brad Will was an activist, independent media reporter, and anarchist who gave his life to the struggle for a better world. In the 1990s, he squatted and defended buildings and gardens in New York City, and traveled the country carrying out guerrilla theater and speaking about gentrification and squat defense. Long before most of today’s anarchists attended a summit demonstration, he attended the Active Resistance gathering at the Democratic National Convention in 1996; he went on to organize for and participate in the historic WTO protests in Seattle and the series of demonstrations that followed them in DC, Los Angeles, Prague, and everywhere else all around the globe. He then turned his attention to Indymedia work, and traveled South America documenting popular movements there. He was known throughout anarchist communities as a brash, tireless, joyful free spirit with an iron in just about every fire. The editors of this journal last saw him, or fought the police—and sometimes won!—on three continents. To die at thirty-six was a tragedy; his life stands as a courageous triumph.

Few who die of old age have ever traveled the country by freight train, lived rent-free in a grain silo in a thunderstorm, or fought the police—and sometimes won!—on three continents. To die at thirty-six was a tragedy; his life stands as a courageous triumph.

On Monday, October 30, solidarity demonstrations took place at Mexican consulates across the US, some consulates were occupied or physically damaged. On November 1, hundreds of mourners packed St. Mark’s church in New York’s Lower East Side for a four-hour memorial service in Brad’s honor. Afterward, a marching band led the raucous crowd in an unpermitted parade throughout lower Manhattan. The march eventually arrived at the bolted doors of Charas Community Center, which had served New York’s Puerto Rican and radical communities for twenty-two years before the city closed it down. Locks were cut and hinges broken, and the crowd surged into the building. The walls were painted with messages of hope for those in Oaxaca and merry voices once again echoed in rooms where Brad’s had years before. The photo on this issue’s cover was taken from the scaffolding looking over the crowd in front of Charas. Although Brad’s death is a tragic loss, his life stands as a courageous triumph.

The editors of this journal, and saw him at the Cimarron convergence in Minnesota, not long before he left for Mexico.

On October 27, 2006, at age thirty-six, Brad was shot to death by government officials while filming the defense of Barricade Three in Oaxaca. He had traveled to Oaxaca to cover the popular uprising described elsewhere in this issue; in his last report he had written about another victim of the paramilitaries, Alejandro Garcia Hernandez. The Mexican government exploited Brad’s death as a justification to send thousands of militarized federal police into Oaxaca to “re-educate” shamelessly condemning countless others to Brad’s fate. At the same time, Brad’s killing brought the plight of those in Oaxaca to the attention of thousands in the US at the very moment at which attention was needed most—though it remains frustrating that it takes the death of a Brad Will or Rachel Corrie to make some people take notice of injustice.

Brad Will Presente!

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Brad Will Presente!

In Memory of Brad Will:
–from Sascha Scatter’s Desert Rat song, fiercely, loudly, proudly:

So I called upon your brother, and you asked what I would do
And I told the truth dear sister when I spoke these words to you
I will stand beside your shoulder to defend this land we love.

And I told the truth dear sister when I spoke these words to you
I will stand beside your shoulder to defend this land we love.

And I told the truth dear sister when I spoke these words to you
I will stand beside your shoulder to defend this land we love.

And I told the truth dear sister when I spoke these words to you
I will stand beside your shoulder to defend this land we love.

And I will not leave that cursed room ’til you walk out with me
So I called upon you brother, and you asked what I would do
And I told the truth dear sister when I spoke these words to you
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Letter to Infiltrators

Read at the opening ceremony of the fifth CrimethInc. convergence, July 26, 2006

You may tell yourself you are nobly serving your country—but there are nobler causes to serve. Your masters want power for themselves at any expense, while we struggle for respect and coexistence among all living things. You may tell yourself that you are here to do good—but you are the only one on salary; we do what we do for free, for our conscience, not for a paycheck. Essentially, you are a prostitute; and should you have sex with your targets in order to entrap them, as other infiltrators do, this will come as no surprise. Imagine the conscience of a person who sleeps with others not out of love or desire, not just in return for money, but in order to trap them.

You must be ashamed of yourself. Think how many people in the world would be disgusted with you, if they knew what you are doing. Anyway, the gulf between us is too broad to be crossed now. The future is not the job but badly, like a worker at McDonalds who must feed his family even though he knows his employers are destroying the rainforest, the health of their customers, and the future of all species. If one shred of humanity remains within you after a lifetime of brainwashing, please—do your job badly.

As for the rest of you, who are not infiltrators or informants—if you disagree with someone being here to endanger you and your friends, don’t do the same thing for free. Don’t speak of your involvement in illegal activities, don’t speculate as to others’ involvement—and above all, should you ever find yourself in court, don’t even cooperate with the ones who really hate our freedom attempting to terrorize you into helping them frame your friends, don’t cooperate, don’t sell out everything you believe for them.

Our freedom, our safety, are under our control, not theirs. Freedom is not a matter of how many fences are outside the grip of our enemies, but of being able to trust ourselves never to deliver others into harm’s way, never to become something we despise.

The FBI, which exists to protect the interests of the most powerful, selfish, and destructive men in the world today, hopes to intimidate us out of our struggle for a better world. But we are here because we feel that the lives waiting for us in their society are unbearable, because we know that the pollution and destruction of their economy are unsustainable. There is no future for us except through change—so attacks on our freedom can only mobilize us to struggle more urgently.

Even if there are one hundred federal infiltrators here and only two human beings, those two human beings can be more powerful than the entire apparatus of the state. Find each other and do something beautiful. Thank you.

2 This is not intended to be taken as a slight by honest sex workers. The author extends the utmost respect to wage laborers in all fields, while dreaming of a day when both wages and work itself will be things of the past.
**Glossary of Terms, part IV**

**Capitalism**—Just as monarchy means rule by one, and communism means rule by communists, capitalism means rule by capital itself, the wealthy rotate in and out of power, but wealth remains the constant determining force (see Market).

**Chaos**—The sum of all orders.

**Disorder**—A disruption of the anarchy that otherwise characterizes our world. Any organically ordered system—a rainforest, for example, or a circle of friends—is an anarchic harmony that tends to perpetuate itself, disorder, on the other hand, can only be maintained by ever-escalating exertions of force. The precarious discipline of a high school classroom, the factory farm in which sterile rows of genetically modified corn are defended against weeds and insects by a host of technological innovations, the fragile world-domination of a superpower—these are not examples of order, but of disorder imposed from above.

Some confuse disorder with anarchy, misunderstanding it as the absence of any system. But disorder is the opposite of anarchy: enforced over a long enough period of time, it systematizes itself, stacking up hierarchies according to its pitiless demands. One of the most developed forms of disorder is capitalism: the war of each against all, rule or be ruled, sell or be sold. One might call capitalism a social disorder in the same way that bulimia is an eating disorder and sickle cell anemia a blood disorder.

**Gallows Humor**—Revolutionaries, facing the guillotine: “We die because the people are asleep. You will die because they will awaken!” Executioner: “Don’t put all your heads in one basket!”

**Hygiene**—An ascetic regimen designed to weaken children’s immune systems, discourage them from interacting with the natural environment, and deprive them of the information and pleasure otherwise communicated by pheromones. (“Will arrive soon, don’t wash.” —dispatch from Napoleon Bonaparte to his lover Josephine)

**Market**—The mysterious netherworld in which commodities, having seduced investors and enslaved producers, compete to complete their subjection by reducing them all to consumers. It is unclear who is really in charge; the capitalists or their capital; the economy grants less security and freedom of movement to its human participants than to the objects they consider themselves to possess and control. (see figure i.)

In the words of a former addict of heroin, the commodity par excellence, “The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product; he does not upgrade and refine his merchandise, he degrades and simplifies his client.”

**Medo**—An assemblage of tools with which to expand an audience’s conception of what “the world” is to such an extent that their own lives and capabilities seem utterly insignificant; a means of psychological warfare by which people are overloaded with information and dehumanized to their own and others’ suffering; the sum of all means by which human beings reduce the infinite complexity of reality to a dead-end maze of abstractions—such as the one in this sentence. So let’s try a story instead:

A team of anthropologists once traveled far across the outback to live alongside an aboriginal group that had experienced little contact with the European settlers. The visitors found their hosts not only peaceable but also welcoming: life among them was for the most part joyful and uncomplicated. Each time, the troubled aborigines prepared to break camp and hurry to the assistance of the sicken people; each time, with great difficulty, the anthropologists talked them out of it.

Finally, an entire news program passed without any response, and then another, and another. The anthropologists congratulated themselves: at last they had impressed upon their pro-tégés what it meant to live in a global village. Over the weeks that followed, they noted further changes in their hosts. Many who had been lively and outgoing grew increasingly sullen and listless. They sat around, listening to radio reports of calamities from Dover to Peking, rarely lifting a finger to help one another or themselves.

**Oedipus Complex**—According to a certain psychoanalyst, little children want to love and kill their own parents. Transposed to the political sphere, this theory is used to suggest that revolutionaries are pathologically mired in adolescence, endlessly rebelling against authority as a representation of the father figure. But there is a precursor of the Oedipus story in which Cronus, having become king of the gods by castrating his father and marrying his sister, devalues his children as they are born so they will never replace him. In this earlier, more complete version of the narrative, we can see that in fact it is the autorcocrat who is pathologically frozen in one stage of development, struggling to impose the moment of his power upon eternity (see figure ii). The State is a terrorist attempt to halt time itself—to achieve, in its abettors’ words, “the end of history”—by slaughtering those who would inaugurate the world to come; the bullets of riot police are Saturn devouring His Children. Goya’s terrifying rendition of the Cronus myth, come to life. Seen in this light, the Oedipus Complex looks like the parasitic projection of patriarchs seeking to justify their crimes. Fortunately, if the conclusion of the Cronus myth is any indication, history cannot be held hostage forever.

**Religion**—Etymologically speaking, “hierarchy” originally meant “rule by the sacred.” In theory, religion is not necessarily oppressive—one could hold, as certain revolutionary heretics have, that everyone and everything is sacred. In practice, the only religions that survived the conquest and colonization of the world were the ones that were willing to make themselves accomplices to psychological warfare by which people are overloaded with information and dehumanized to their own and others’ suffering; the sum of all means by which human beings reduce the infinite complexity of reality to a dead-end maze of abstractions—such as the one in this sentence. So let’s try a story instead:

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conquest and colonization (see figure iii)—not to mention the ongoing charge. Of course, subtle forms of dissent thrive in even the most oppressive contexts, and today there are still people who use the word “God” where others use words like liberation, mutual aid, and community.

Sem título — The production of literature banned by the former communist government of eastern Europe; the term is a play on the term for the Soviet state press, and translates to “self-publishing.” Throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, the best literature, philosophy, and history in the Soviet Union and its satellite states was copied by photo-reproduction and circulated through underground channels—just as it is here in the United States today.

Schizophrenia — A long-term mental disorder involving a breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behavior, leading to faulty perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, withdrawal from reality and personal relationships into fantasy and delusion, and a sense of mental fragmentation. When this takes place all at once throughout a society, it is no longer discerned as a disorder, but on the contrary lauded as “good citizenship,” “patriotism,” and even “hard-nosed pragmatism.”

Slogan — A pithy formulation convenient for mobilizing reactive masses; as every politician and advertising executive knows, the less a statement means, the more people can rally behind it. (Punk rocker in a painted leather jacket, responding to an inquiry about his beliefs: “Any questions, read my back.”)

Totalitarianism — Ideology incarnated as a society, the “World made flesh,” to appropriate Catholic logos. After the great leader’s death, walls throughout the nascent Soviet Union were painted to read “Even now, Lenin is more alive than the living.” The implications could not have been wasted on the beleaguered workers for whom the boundless possibilities of life had been replaced with the inert prescriptions of the dead.

Trouble — Our ancestors were afraid of getting hurt; today, we stay in line out of fear of getting “in trouble.”

Word Experience: Teaches — Note on a locked door: “Applicants for wisdom — inquire within”

Work — The curse of the drinking classes (that’s a wide idea); alternately, the meaningless routines the capitalist economy imposes on its participants in order to obscure the limitless potential of their own self-directed activity (see Capitalism, Economics, Market)

This word later became “slag,” the expression we use for the battle-cries of our modern crowds derives from the Highland hosts of the dead.

Sof Drift — Worthless things make the best commodities, as their prices are indispensible.

Symptom — Once we had characteristics, now, thanks to medical science and psychiatry, we have symptoms.

The term “nature” usually appears in conjunction with its supposed opposite, civilization. Together, these words imply that the activities and motivating forces of human beings differ from those of the rest of the cosmos. But once you dispense with the superstition that God created Man in His own image to give him dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, it’s hard to get around acknowledging that the same natural processes through which stars form and shellfish evolve must also be at work in every aspect of human activity.

All dichotomies are constructions, useful only for what they bring out when applied as frames to the infinity of existence; one who desires to get to the bottom of a dichotomy must begin by asking what those who use it for. For capitalists who don’t give a damn about ecology, the answer here is obvious: in differentiating nature from culture, to classify the latter—just as the former—will be, in some respects, with themselves on top, thus justifying the exploitation of the aforementioned fish and fowl. Ironically, ecologically-minded anticapitalists who use this dichotomy may also be unconsciously seeking to establish a hierarchy, but with everything non-human at the top and human beings at the bottom—with the possible exception of themselves.

This is most obvious in those who anthropomorphize Nature, attributing values and wisdom to it as if it were a sentient being. Some even cross the line into authoritarian mysticism, insisting we must adopt those values and abide by that wisdom. This is a slap in the face or not, to make their own values and “wisdom” seem more compelling; nature itself is so infinitely diverse that it would be impossible to distill one lesson or party line from its example (see Abstractions).

Contradictions abound in every normative attempt to define nature. Nature is characterized as that which is “sustainable,” as if it were something constant, when in fact the natural world is always in flux. Nature is differentiated from civilization according to vague criteria such as language or domestication, in spite of bees communicating the locations of flowers to each other and certain ant colonies practicing animal husbandry. Nature is said to have ordained a specific role for every organ in a body and every species in an ecosystem—but these claims are based only on circumstantial evidence. Anyone who believes in fixed natural laws or purposes has more in common with the priests who describe sodomy as a “crime against nature” than with the naturalists who have observed homosexual behavior in countless species.

Heraclitus another account of what nature, and humanity as a subset of it, might be: Imagine an infinite, dynamic chaos, in which processes through which stars form and shellfish evolve must also be at work in every aspect of human activity. Some of these immediately observable in others from afar. Most of these creatures can agree indiﬀerence itself as wanting to be other than this nature? But prefers the more hospitable side of the tree.

Is not living estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, deciding, not surprised, that they are special. The traits which they believe differentiate them from other animals—culture, language, free will—are not actually unique to them, but these appear very diﬀerent when we observe them observed in others from afar. Most of these creatures can agree according to nature” meant at bottom as much as “live according to life”—how could you make a principle out of what you yourselves are and must be? In truth the matter is altogether diﬀerent: while you pretend rapaciously to read the canons of your law in nature, you want something opposite, you strange actors and self-deceivers! Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature—even on nature—and incorporate them in her; you demand that she should be your nature “according to the Stoics,” and you would like everyone to exist exactly like your image—as an immense eternal glorification and generalization of Stoicism. For all your love of truth, you have forced yourselves so long, so persistently, so rigidly and hypocritically to see nature the wrong way, namely Stoically, that you are no longer able to see her diﬀerently. And some abysmal arrogance finally still inspires you with the insane hope that because you know how to tyrannize yourselves—Stoicism is self-tyranny, nature, too, lets herself be tyrannized: for is not the Stoic—a part of nature? But this is a transient animal story, what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates a world in its own image, it cannot do anything otherwise. Philosophy is this tyranical drive itself.
—Nietzsche, Beyond Good And Evil

Word of the Issue: Nature

whether similarly processes repeat themselves, changing slowly over time. Within this context, certain responses have been decided, not surprisingly, that they are special. The traits which they believe differentiate them from other animals—culture, language, free will—are not actually unique to them, but these appear very different when we observe them observed in others from afar. Most of these creatures can agree indiﬀerence itself as wanting to be other than this nature? But prefers the more hospitable side of the tree.

According to this account, everything is natural—from polyurethane to cannibalism, from space travel to breast implants. Free of responsibilities to nature, we can ask ourselves: what do we want? Do we want to replace forests with asphalt and pump the atmosphere full of carbon monoxide, to supplant reality with virtual reality and ecology with technology? Those who do not want base their objections upon arguments about what is natural any more than they mean should make a principle out of what you yourselves are and must be? In truth the matter is altogether diﬀerent: while you pretend rapaciously to read the canons of your law in nature, you want something opposite, you strange actors and self-deceivers! Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature—even on nature—and incorporate them in her; you demand that she should be your nature “according to the Stoics,” and you would like everyone to exist exactly like your image—as an immense eternal glorification and generalization of Stoicism. For all your love of truth, you have forced yourselves so long, so persistently, so rigidly and hypocritically to see nature the wrong way, namely Stoically, that you are no longer able to see her diﬀerently. And some abysmal arrogance finally still inspires you with the insane hope that because you know how to tyrannize yourselves—Stoicism is self-tyranny, nature, too, lets herself be tyrannized: for is not the Stoic—a part of nature? But this is a transient animal story, what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates a world in its own image, it cannot do anything otherwise. Philosophy is this tyranical drive itself.
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But what, a distraught conservationist might ask, are we to make of our species’ impending murder-suicide at the expense of all life on earth? Doesn’t that imply some kind of essential disjunction between human beings and other life forms? This can be answered most easily in the form of a parable. Once upon a time, several herds of deer lived in relative symbiosis with the rest of a grassland ecosystem. They would eat the tops of the grass, then move on; the grass would grow back in their wake, fertilized by their manure. One day, a young deer tried eating the grass, then move on; the grass would grow back in their wake, and these were driven to the edges of the plain. After a few decades, almost all the grass had been consumed, and where it had grown only parched desert remained. There were huge numbers of deer by this time, in teeming, oversized herds, looking sleeker and healthier than their ancestors ever had; a year later, their corpus littered the desert by the million, bones sticking through emaciated flesh. That ratting flesh contributed nutrients to the scorched desert, and eventually the first shoots of a new crop of grass appeared. As new grasses spread slowly across the desert, a few deer could once again be seen nibbling at them. These were the descendents of the ones who had never begun to eat the roots.

The deer that ate the roots were as natural as any other deer—they were an experiment that worked for a while but could not continue indefinitely. The question is whether we want to follow in their footsteps.

During the second half of 2006, the Mexican state of Oaxaca was the site of one of the most dramatic uprisings in recent North American history. For several months, police and politicians completely lost control of Oaxaca City; the capitalist economy was brought to a standstill, radio and television stations were seized to transmit news of the struggle, and life throughout the city was organized according to consensus-based structures. Speaking both geographically and in terms of the forms taken by the revolt, this may be the closest our generation has come to seeing anarchist revolution.

What can we learn from the events in Oaxaca? It is too early to derive any conclusions about specific tactics, but a few basic lessons seem clear. First, revolutionary struggle in the Western hemisphere is most advanced south of the US border, any opportunity for significant social transformation here will likely be preceded by major upheavals there. Second, revolutionary uprisings in the US should stay abreast of developments in Latin America, establish relationships with people there, and find effective ways to support them in liberation struggles.

Mexico in particular is a powder keg right now. While the eyes of the world have been focused on the Middle East—including the eyes of some anarchists, who have wishfully tried to project an anti-authoritarian character onto the Bush insurgency—neoliberal capitalism has met fencer and fiercer resistance there, much of which has been explicitly anti-authoritarian. The extent to which anti-authoritarian ideas and models play a role in struggles there over the years to come may well determine the viability of the anarchist alternative in North America.

Second, a great percentage of the population of Oaxaca is indigenous. Because their traditional customs include decision-making models that are comparatively more horizontal, they share a point of reference for an alternative to the hierarchical structures of capitalism and so-called democracy. This highlights the importance of a culture of resistance in any struggle. Without a counterpart to the existing system, people are much less likely to struggle against it and much more susceptible to being hoodwinked into struggling on behalf of some duplicative system. In North America, where most non-hierarchical traditions have been virtually wiped out by capitalist genocide or assimilation, we have to build new cultures of resistance from the ground up. A culture of resistance is not a clique in which people profess radical opinions while living according to the dominant social and economic norms—it is a subcultural space in which power flows differently and people become experienced in a radically different way of life.

Finally, whatever they say on television, it is possible in at least some parts of the world to involve the majority of the population in a full-on contest with the powers that be. The uprising in Oaxaca began the same way the Paris uprising in May 1968 did: one group demonstrated the effectiveness of direct action, managed to avoid alienating others while escalating the conflict until the state responded with intense repression, and the rest of the populace rose up to support them, taking up their tactics and organizational forms in the process. It may be that this could happen elsewhere, as well. Our hopes for transforming our own lives rest on whether we can find common cause on such a scale.

This poses the eternal question of how we organize ourselves and what criteria we use to recognize allies. There has been a fair bit of debate as to whether the Oaxaca uprising, the consensus-based popular assembly of Oaxaca, deserves anarchist support, since it includes members of established political parties and has only made reformist demands. The perspective of the editors of this magazine, in brief, is that revolutionary impetus always comes directly from the people involved in a struggle, not from organizations. Organizations can only be pushed to revolutionary action by popular momentum and initiative; it is almost always the case that the apparent leaders of a liberation struggle are borne helplessly along on a wave of popular energy, struggling to keep up with it when it surges forward and inevitably moving to control and contain...
it when they can. While we see some organizational forms as more conducive to self-determination than others, even in the best case scenario the center of gravity for us is the liberating activity of human beings, whether it takes place inside or outside organizations. In covering the events in Oaxaca, we are not cheerleading for APPO, per se, but celebrating the fact that people have made to free themselves, including many that have taken place under the APPO banner. At the same time, we trust that the Oaxaqueños know better than we could what approaches are most appropriate to their context.

Oaxaca Photo Index

I. August 11: Funeral March (R)

Thousands of fists are raised in the Zócalo, the main square in Oaxaca City, as the first casket of a movement member killed by police here to clear out an encampment of the crowd. On June 14, the Governor’s casket of a movement member killed by paramilitaries with those who had defended them. Taken down on November 2 just before the epic leftist parade through the 1980s and ’90s, called for Flavio Sosa, an Appo leader who was active in the movement, to stop the state government from functioning through nonviolent direct action: reclaiming government vehicles, and gaining control of government buildings, closure down all government buildings, occupation of government buildings and computers. Buses were also set up to transport radio stations cleared by the movement. People from all over Oaxaca prepared food to bring to those living in encampments. This group of women live in a small village outside the city, although they themselves have very little, they would each bring an ingredient and together cook a meal for thousands of teachers.

II. September 15: Communities Cook Food for the Movement Members Sleeping in the Streets (R)

Beginning with the encampment set up by the teachers’ union in the Zócalo, more and more encampments were created as new actions occurred. Once government building was shut down, an encampment would be constructed outside to maintain the closure. Camps were also set up to protect radio stations cleared by the movement. People from all over Oaxaca prepared food to bring to those living in encampments. This group of women live in a small village outside the city, although they themselves have very little, they would each bring an ingredient and together cook a meal for thousands of teachers.

III. September 15: Community Radio is Key in this Popular Struggle (R)

Recognizing the role of the media in discrediting the teachers’ union and spreading disinformation, Section 22 decided to create and gain control of media outlets for movement communication. The state government responded with a series of violent attacks.

The man in the casket in this photo was a teacher’s husband, fifty years old and a father of three, who had been shot by government gunmen and killed while walking in a march with 20,000 others against government repression.

Radio political graffiti like this decorated the streets of Oaxaca, leaving no wall untouched. Political slogans, stencil art, and tags were spray-painted on every possible surface, anouncements, letters from political prisoners, posters, and handmade prints were wheat-pasted alongside them. Messages of support arrived constantly from the EZLN’s Other Campaign. The Zapatistas blocked roads and bridges in support of the central demands of APPO.

VII. October 20: EZLN mural (A)

The mural reads: “para tod@s todo, para nosotr@s nada” (for all, for us all, for us nothing). The artists and activists who worked on the mural were the ones who decided what it should say. It is a saying popularized most recently by the Zapatistas. It means “Nothing for ourselves, everything for everyone.”

The use of the abora (Ω) is a written way to subvert the gender binary imposed by the Spanish. By ending with a character including both an A and an O, a word ending with @ applies to all genders.

VIII. October 28: Federal Police Enter Oaxaca (R)

On October 29, 4000 Federal Preventive Police (PPF) moved into Oaxaca. The move put up incredible nonviolent resistance. People lay down in front of bulldozers and other military machinery to prevent it from entering the city. In this way and others, they held the police off for hours. A friend that came into town by bus this first day said he saw a march of 3000 walking to the city on foot from their rural village to show support. At the time, they were over an hour away, who knows how far away they started.

The PPF killed at least two protesters and arrested thirty-six on the first day. At one point they were entering private homes and searching for people. They arrived in the Zócalo in the early afternoon, but due to the sheer number of people they were unable to occupy the space. Lines of PPF were forced multiple blocks up the street, people from the movement captured the buses that had brought the police to Oaxaca, moving them to of television Channel 3. They broadcast footage of the bloody events of June 14, when the government-controlled media had refused to air.

August 10 – Paramilitary groups com- posed of ex-Oaxacan police and politicians from the PRI open fire on a march, killing teacher José Jiménez Colmenero.

August 28 – Paramilitary attack and dis- able the broadcasting station. In response, residents set up barricades throughout Oaxaca and take over radio stations.

October 18 – Teacher and APPO particip- ant Pánfilo Hernández is murdered by paramilitaries. Many others have also been killed or “disappeared.”

October 27 – Paramilitaries armed with pistols and rifles attack the barricades, 2000 teachers and students attack. One in full body armor, the police surround and invade the city, firing tear gas indiscriminately into unarmed crowds and residential neighborhoods. Countless Oaxaqueños are beaten, shot, and “disappeared.”

November 2 – Thousands of police in helicopters and armed vehicles attempt to storm the university to shut down the last radio station controlled by the people of Oaxaca. In a seven-hour pitched battle during which tremendous quantities of tear gas are dropped into the university, locals equipped only with stones and rocks. The paramilitaries shoot several people and kill three, including US independent media journalist Brad Will. His Sellos, who are caught on camera include a police chief and two officials from the PRI.

To view this article online, please visit www.rollingthunder.com
ment had decided to retreat and the police stepped back down the streets and had to change their strategy. Numbers of people who came out to the street to show solidarity were surprised by the diversity and the sheer number of people who had gathered. It was not until 2:30 in the morning. Clearly, the police were not prepared for such a large-scale mobilization.

**IX. October 29: Federal Police Enter Oaxaca**

In the Santo Domingo plaza, a teacher showed me her dinner, kindly brought by community members who support the movement. The teachers had not been paid since the end of August and many relied purely on support from the community in order to continue the struggle.

**X. November 2: Muertos del Movimiento (A)**

The Day of the Dead is one of the most important holidays in the state of Oaxaca, during which the dead are honored with altars typically bearing flowers and offerings of food and drink. This altar honors twenty-nine APPPO supporters and teachers killed for their involvement in the movement.

**XIV. November 4: Radio Universidad (A)**

After Radio Universidad was sabotaged by government loyalists in early August who poured gas into a building occupied by a group of women took over the government-run media complex Channel 9, broadcasting their own television and radio programs. After they were attacked and taken off the air, supporters converged throughout the city, taking over twelve local radio stations in one night. By late October, Radio Universidad had returned to the air, but it was soon the only station broadcasting news and information for the movement. It survived an all-out police assault on November 2, but eventually its broadcast was blocked by a competing signal transmitting a single song on endless repeat.

**XV. November 8: Cinco Señores Barricade (R) [inside front cover]**

People involved with Cinco Señores were disappeared, beaten, and arrested; on November 5, twenty-two-year-old Marco Sanchez Mertinez was shot while guarding the radio entrance and sent to the hospital in critical condition. I spoke to a woman whose teenage son was taken from her home in the middle of the day by plainclothes police for allegedly spending time at the barricade. As these attacks increased, defensive measures were taken such as stockpiling molotov cocktail and PVC pipe tubes used to shoot tear gas. At one point, two military officers were captured by young barricade guards and released two hours later to the Red Cross.

**XVI. November 18: Cinco Señores Barricade (R)**

At one point during the struggle, there were over ten barricades set up autonomously throughout the city. Reclaimed buses and cars, tires, sandbags, old mattress Springs, and barbed wire were used to control the flow of traffic and protect the movement from attacks by paramilitaries and plain-clothes municipal police. Neighborhoods came together to close down their main thoroughfares, setting up a barricade each night and keeping watch until the morning. Cinco Señores, seen in this photo, was the last remaining barricade. It spanned several blocks, closing the streets surrounding Autonomous Benito Juarez University with burned buses, rebar, and light poles to protect the radio station there. The majority of those who remained at the barricade were students and homeless youth who slept in buses like this one during the day. Women from the community set up a small kitchen to cook for the barricade.

**XVII. November 18: Cinco Señores Barricade (R)**

On November 2, Cinco Señores was the location of a seven-hour battle between the PPF and the movement. The police advanced on the university housing the radio station of the movement with water cannons, tear gas, and slingshots. The radio called for the people to come out and defend the station. Thousands responded and, after a seven-hour battle, the police managed to force the federal police to retreat by means of molotov cocktails, fireworks, and rocks. As more and more barricades were cleared by the PPF and many of those who had maintained them were seized from their homes by police, Cinco Señores remained. The PRIistas and undercover police began to target this barricade almost daily. Facing automatic weapons, the compañer@s at Cinco Señores continued to protect the radio station.

**XVIII. November 19: Women's March (R)**

This women was expressing her support for the movement. She is wearing a apron worn by many traditional Oaxaqueña women.

**XX. November 19: Women's March (R)**

Another march took place on November 20, marking the anniversary of the Mexican revolution. After the majority of people were treated, all that was left other than the police lines was a burning bus. The photographer found it highly ironic that it was burning next to a sign calling for recognition that Oaxaca was not governable and the three branches of government (poderes) are clearly not functioning.

**XXII. November 20: March Turned Smirkish (R)**

Another March took place on November 20, which ended in street fighting and fires.

**XVIII. November 19: Women’s March (R)**

In response to the repression of the PPF and reports of rape and violence by the invading forces, a women’s march was organized on November 19. This woman is painting “Ullses Out!”

**XXII. November 19: Women’s March (R)**

Women hold hands in a line between marchers and the federal police. As the march approached the first line of police, the police met their chants with pepper spray.

**XXI. November 19: Women’s March (R)**

This women was expressing her support for the movement. She is wearing a apron worn by many traditional Oaxaqueña women.

**XXII. November 20: March Turned Smirkish (R)**

Another March took place on November 20, marking the anniversary of the Mexican revolution. After the majority of people were treated, all that was left other than the police lines was a burning bus. The photographer found it highly ironic that it was burning next to a sign calling for recognition that Oaxaca was not governable and the three branches of government (poderes) are clearly not functioning.

**XXIII. November 20: Cohete (A)**

A cohete—a device for shooting fireworks—points to a line of federal police outside the Camino Real Hotel. Cohetes were fired most often out of PVC tubes called “bazookas” and were also used for communication between barricades.

The Camino Real Hotel was a favored canvas for graffiti and was targeted during the protests with rocks and Molotov cocktails. As one of the “finest” hotels in Oaxaca City, the fortress that used to be a prison and then
a convent is now the favorite lodging for Ulises Ruiz and the military elite.

XXIV. November 20: Media (A)
Reporters Without Borders named Mexico the second most dangerous place in the world for reporters in 2006, second only to Iraq. The corporate media came to Oaxaca equipped with goggles, gas masks, and bullet-proof vests. Most attended protests on motorbikes, ready for a quick getaway.

XXV. November 20: Leading the March (A)
A girl leads the march on November 20 with a cacerola—a frying pan used as a noisemaker or weapon. Taken from its domestic context, the cacerola is an important symbol for the women’s movement.

XXVI. November 25: Mega March (R)
On November 25, tens of thousands marched the eight kilometers from Santa Maria Coyotepec to the Oaxaca City Center. The police were in full riot gear at each of the entrances to the main square. In many of the entrances police officers could be seen atop armored vehicles equipped with live ammunition. Within half an hour street battles broke out between the movement and the police in at least two of the entrances. Eventually the police pushed the people north up the hill, at one point taking over the Santo Domingo plaza where the movement had been centered since the police forced them out of the main square. The police continued to fire tear gas into the crowd and burned the tarps and other items in the Santo Domingo plaza. During this time, plainclothes police were arresting people in the streets.

After the police retreated to the main square, many movement members regrouped in Santo Domingo as night was falling. The police advanced over eight blocks, forcing the crowd to continue running north of the main square. Paramilitary groups also arrived on the scene, shooting into the crowd as people ran for their lives. Throughout the following hours federal police and plainclothes gunmen continued to attack members of the movement. Three movement members were killed, over 140 arrested, and over 200 injured, at least 40 with live ammunition. Since November 25, this repression has continued, leaving those involved in the movement unsafe in their own beds.

XXVII. November 25: Rocks (A)
The man scans the street with rocks in hand.

A mostly Spanish-speaking listserv has been started by anarchists involved in the struggle in Oaxaca in order to facilitate greater coordination throughout North America: anarkagalactica@lists.riseup.net

Photos courtesy of Rochelle Gause (R) and Ariel (A), available on www.flickr.com as mexicosolidarity and revolucionoaxaca, respectively.
South Central Farm was a collectively run community garden that fed 350 of the poorest families in Los Angeles. The city sold it to developer Ralph Horowitz in a back-room deal for $5 million; he intended to build a warehouse there, possibly for Wal-Mart. The farmers raised beyond the $16 million he demanded for the land—but, as Horowitz told the Los Angeles Times, he would not sell the land to them even if they offered $100 million.

At about 4 a.m. everything became soaked with morning dew. This woke me up just enough to think about how nice and cozy my little soft patch of grass was going to be when the warm sun came up. A couple hours later I was awakened a second time. A local songbird perched on a fence post was running through its favorite calls. I enjoyed its singing for a few minutes, then drifted back to sleep. At seven a.m., I was awakened for a third time by the roar of a helicopter circling very close to the ground. As its circles tightened, I sprang to my feet to see the yellow and green of the LA County Sheriff. It was my first morning at South Central Farm community garden.

At the time, South Central Farm was a fourteen-acre green space in the middle of South Central Los Angeles. It consisted of 350 individual garden plots. The farmers grew fruits and vegetables, cooking and medicinal herbs, flowers, and many rare and endangered plant species. As a haven from drugs, gangs, and the stress of living in an impoverished, over-industrialized, and extremely polluted area, the garden provided a safe space for children and community to grow. With weekly farmers' markets, educational and political events, and community celebrations, the farm offered a vital alternative to the suffocating gray of the surrounding area.

And the garden itself was a wellbeing of abundance. The air quality there had consistently been rated among the worst in California—but polluted air, while slowly poisoning humans, offers plants plenty of the CO2 they thrive on. The farm was the last green space for miles in any direction, of immeasurable value in cleaning the air.

At four a.m. I was awakened a fourth time. A couple hours later I was awakened a fifth time by the roar of a helicopter circling very close to the ground, tightening its circles. I sprang to my feet to see the yellow and green of the LA County Sheriff. It was my first morning at South Central Farm community garden. It was around this time that some of the farmers began a round-the-clock vigil at the farm. Some hoped this would gain positive media attention. Some wanted to be there in the event that something could be done physically to stop an eviction. Some simply couldn't face the thought of leaving the garden forever.

The farmers' markets and community events continued in this atmosphere. Negotiations were underway for the potential sale of the property to the farmers. New lawsuits were filed. Support was growing. Then the political climate shifted. Horowitz became less open to negotiations and started calling for a forced eviction: “I want those people off of my land.” The county sheriff began to hunt at an impending forced eviction. South Central Farmers Feeding Families put out a desperate call for support. They asked for people to join the growing encampment. It was the middle of May, 2006. That was when I first heard of the garden.

Knowing that a forced eviction could happen at any time, the farmers built up the encampment so if an eviction took place it would be delayed long enough...
to attract the media and receive major network news coverage. They hoped that this might rally more local support. They couldn’t have predicted that the camp would thrive for over a month, that some of those defending the farm would hold out for over eight hours on the day of the eviction, and the media attention and solidarity actions would go worldwide.

“Perhaps you’re thinking, ‘Media attention? Do we really care about that?’ Let’s pay a visit to this developer’s house, fight the cops, set shit on fire, and save this fucking garden, right?” Many of those who came to help struggled with this question. Everyone was there to help the farmers who already had plans and ideas in motion. Although at times it was frustrating for some of the more radical fighters, the general decision was made to act within the constraints of the South Central Farmers’ wishes. Those with more direct ideas were heard and were responsible for pushing the overall action further than it might have gone otherwise, but in the end some, as newcomers to the garden struggle, had to make trying concessions in order to fight for the farmers. The idea of stepping into a fourteen-year fight and staging a takeover in order to radicalize and direct it didn’t seem right to any of us. We had to remember that we couldn’t afford from a job she would even-

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Life in the camp was pretty comfortable. For starters, fresh food was everywhere. We had access to a fourteen-year-old grocer’s garden, which we enlarged and watered. The camp also greatly benefited from a regulations vary from one area to the next, but if helicopters the problem was that after a couple of hours he would “forget” and the circle would start up again.

The original plan for the drainage of the kitchen sink only accounted for a few days of use; after a couple weeks, the water collection pool was overflowing and the entire kitchen area was oversaturated. We began a digging project to revamp the drainage system. Apparently the authorities looking on from above were very concerned about this: as soon as a helicopter flew over, it began circling us. After about twenty dangerously low circles and a couple of gusts, our patience was running thin. One of my good friends stood defiantly offering her middle finger and brandishing a sign that read “PLEASE WASH YOUR OWN DISH.” My treesitter friend was on the phone doing her thing.

That was the day we learned the power of the words “Watch Commander!” Armed with information about FAA flight restrictions—as it turns out, circling lower than certain height is illegal in Los Angeles—and the name and number of the current watch commander, we cleared the skies. With one phone call the helicopter was gone. It returned a couple times in the following days, only to be met by signs reading “Can you say watch commander?” and “FAA 200!” From then on, helicopters took place less frequently and at significantly higher altitudes, and the dustings ceased altogether. The signs were eventually replaced by a sign that simply read “We always knew the name of the watch commander on duty.” In the middle of the South Central Farm struggle, it is illegal in Los Angeles that anyone who is not a regular and noisy part of our lives on the farm. For the first couple of weeks dangerously low fly-bys and “dustings” were common. “Dusting” is when the rear}

果es and vegetables in abundance. Many of the natural food stores in the surrounding area. Fresh herbs grew within arm’s reach. The kitchen was equipped with several gas burners and cookware borrowed from a local Food Not Bombs chapter. It offered ample space for preparing and serving large buffet-style lunches and dinners, and makeshift sidewalk café-style seating was to be had out front.

One of the most vital participants in the occupation spent her days in the kitchen. She was a farmer, one of the strongest and most self-sacrificing people I have ever met. She had taken time off that she couldn’t afford from a job she would eventually quit just to cook for us full time. This inspiring woman was risking just about everything so that she could cook for us, her “kids.” She was in the camp from eight in the morning until eleven every night, with two or three other volunteers who prepared amazing forty-person meals twice a day. We never tired of her beans and rice, nor of the incredible fresh nopal cactus salad. She did all this and took many risks and in the end thanked us for showing her so many new things. She was excited about cooking with olive oil instead of butter and learning about greywater and composting. She told me, “I’ve cooked with vegetables before but never with just vegetables. It’s so much better.” Wherever she is right now, I hope she’s warm, loved, and well-fed.

Just behind the kitchen was the dishwashing sink and greywater collection pool. This was where we happened to be the day we learned a valuable lesson about handling police harassment. The LAPD and LA County Sheriff’s helicoptersus were regularly and noisy part of our lives on the farm. For the first couple of weeks, they hovered dangerously low.” The station was thoroughly stocked with first aid supplies, toiletries, vitamins, and natural options for everything from sun block to antibiotics. When asked the mild-mannered nurse what she did when she wasn’t defending occupied community gardens, she responded, “Roller derby.” She had the brilliant idea to designate a quiet space with a few comfortable sleeping stations, which proved to be invaluable for the devoted and often sleep-deprived security team. The station also enjoyed a regular flow of holistic body workers volunteering to treat our many sore muscles and tired bodies. Overall, the medic tent was pretty self-sufficient throughout the occupation—the worst injuries were minor burns that occurred during the nightly candlelight vigils.

Directly across from the medic station was the kitchen—a vegetarian and vegan paradise. It was stocked with fresh-picked
would happen. Sometimes it was frustrating to maintain this habit and brought smiles to our faces many times. A tree was established in the walnut trees to attract attention; it also served as a vantage point from which to watch for signs of an impending police raid. Two experienced treesitters arrived almost immediately. For one of them, it was her first sit since an action that had won her worldwide notoriety. Her involvement brought a lot of welcome attention to the farm. A famous actress volunteered to be a third treesitter, bringing even more media attention with her. All three of them were in the trees almost every day and night, coming down only for daily press conferences, meetings, and, of course, visits to the wonderful camp kitchen. From high above these three spent every day pulling strings to help provide the camp with its basic needs, arranging visits from politicians and media, and doing some serious fund-raising.

During the occupation the space under the trees remained as vital as it had been before all the trouble. It hosted conferences, rallies, meetings, ceremonies, children’s games, and the sounds of the afternoon radio. A patch of garlic that I helped plant during my first few nights at the farm lay in the shadows of the walnut trees.

With its combination of class-based, ethnic, cultural, and environmental struggles, the fight to save the South Central Farm attracted a diverse array of supporters, including celebrities, journalists, politicians, riot-ready anarchists, labor organizers, environmentalists, religious leaders, and educators who knew and loved their families. Our tactics included media work, lawsuits, protests, and rallies, and some of us also made plans for a part of the farm to be used as an emergency route to cut across the treestreet.

As the camp went on, many people decided to go home in order to keep up with a piece of rebar welded through the center to allow for “clipping in.” We later discovered that the box was smaller in size, so your hands fit snug inside. An outline pointing to the location of the locked person’s hand was drawn on the outside of each box. These boxes, although risky, proved very intimidating to those who had to cut them open. When one of these boxes was used, the authorities chose to go through the slow and costly process of dismantling half a bulldozer rather than risk inflicting injury on the person using it.

The boxes we used were secured around our wrists by a nut and bolt through two of the links, with enough links left to reach just beyond our fingertips. This extra length allowed for the attachment of a light weight c-clamp that was also clipped to the rebar in a box or barrel. The extra length on the chain also made it easier to attach to another clip — either on the other wrist, or on the wrist of a partner sharing the box. This tip, given by visiting Humboldt County redwood defenders, proved invaluable in dismantling lock boxes; police employees often begin by removing the rebar pin. If you’re only locked to this pin, the lock boxes can be rendered ineffective in minutes.

With a whole month to prepare, we didn’t stop at lockboxes—we brought in cooking stoves, beds, and cooks to move to block the main gate that was not yet barricaded, and the other six as sentry set up in a ring around the trees. The barrels were filled with airport runway concrete; we were told that our source had yet to see one of these barrels broken. This increased our prospects of holding out for a long time, new words like dehydration and pain compliance entered our planning vocabulary and we initiated new trainings. We looked into

According to the Los Angeles Times, the farmers of South Central Farm had created a “special, almost magical, place,” but “no magic is so strong that it erases a landowner’s right to either his property or its fair value.”
In the predawn light, through showers of sparks and clouds of chainsaw exhaust, I could see the fuckers storming in. A couple of hours later, as they sat on the security shift. exhausted from weeks with little sleep and no real rest off, as I drifted off I thought about how I would spend the next day at the farm with them. A couple of minutes before the police arrived, a reporter came up to interview them about their plans for the coming day. They thought his timing was a little weird, but brushed it off and continued their shift.

They didn’t know that the media had been given advance notice of an impending raid. That’s right—the police gave the media notice of the raid, but never revealed the promised fifteen-minute warning, and the media showed their true colors by spending hours later, still covering the story. Minutes later my friends witnessed an overwhelming swarm of police. “Umm, cops,” one of them hissed into the walkie talkie, “a lot of them.” It was June 11th. It was his first night at the farm and he was witnessing the raid we had prepared for a month to the night.

“Get up! Get Up! This is it! This is it! I’ve never seen so many cops in all of my life! Wake up! This is it!” The treesticks lookout post had paid off. His voice set us in motion. I was on my feet and a few steps out of the tent before I actually woke up. Realizing that I had to pee, I took advantage of the time it took me to reach my post to do so along the way. When I reached the front gate where my barrel was, I took a second barrel to finish behind one of the portable toilets. As I surveyed the area, it became clear we were in a dire situation. “Shit! They’re already in!” All of those awkward nights in my shoes and chains now made perfect sense.

The cops flooded in with a frightening efficiency. The walkers, sitters, and layers didn’t have a chance to organize; had I not been equipped in advance, I would not have had time to strap on shoes or chains. In the predawn light, through showers of sparks and clouds of chainsaw exhaust, I could see the fuckers storming in. Actually had to sneak past some of them to get to my barrel. I was overjoyed to see them so we might as well just clip. They went on to tell us how they would simply went around. My system and locked up the two-tone truck. It was a motorcycle vehicle that had stopped just inches away from us with its motor running. The frusted look on the driver’s face was enough for them to break it up. Unfortunately we had already been clipped. Out of the six of us on the front gate, four had locked down in time. The game wasn’t over. The cell phones we had deployed was better at the tree. Later on I would learn that they all made it into place. It was clearer now. The cop had locked down and that there were no unclipped. Out of the six of us on the front gate, four had locked down in time. The tree sits remained locked in place a couple hours longer.

Once removed and arrested we spent the rest of the day processing at the county jail while they attempted to scare and humiliate us. It must not have occurred to them that when one is prepared to spend days locked down facing hunger, dehydration, the possibility of soiling oneself, and pain compliance tactics, jail doesn’t seem all that bad. It also helped that the news was on TV; some of our cellmates recognized us and met us with thanks instead of the intimidation the guards had hoped for. We were booked, cited, and released in time to make it back to the farm for an evening press conference. The next night I enjoyed sleeping without chains or shoes.

I would love to write a happy ending, but I can’t. About two weeks after the eviction, in a crushing and heartbreaking move of greed and selfishness, the farm was seized. It was his first night at the farm and he was witnessing the raid we had prepared for a month to the night. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours. The tree sitters remained locked up for several hours.

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We had discussions within our group to establish which of us would join in blocking paths when the police arrived. One of us did not wish to risk arrest at all, and so elected to sleep in one of our vehicles. Others chose to risk the exhaustion but had bandages that would have to be changed every few days.

Before I suddenly found myself at South Central Farm I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio. I’d heard of it on the radio.

www.southcentralfarmers.org www.southcentralfarmers.org www.southcentralfarmers.org

Editor’s Addendum

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It was still dark when the air horn woke me again. This time, there was a different feeling in the air: there were shouts around me nearby. Stumbling to my feet, I made out the silhouettes of armored police fanning out ahead. They had already bypassed the defensive positions we had planned. Those fucking liars! I swore to myself. Fuch that! We couldn’t do what we could negotiate with them, and us for believing what they told us! There was nothing to do now but follow the others to the escape route where we were all arrested pointlessly. We ran down the middle of the secret exit, only to find a crowd backed up ahead of us. Panic—we were locked in and surrounded.

A harrowing flight for some ran up and shouted to follow him. The forty of us backtracked, then turned right and made our way out the back gate in single file. The police didn’t interfere with us; in retrospect, I’m sure they were glad to see us leave of our own volition.

Once we were on the sidewalk, they pushed us across the street onto the adjacent street corner. A small crowd coalesced there, clutching belongings and signs and shouting to passing traffic about the eviction. Someone’s hand was badly sliced; he had been standing watch alone on one corner when the police attacked, and had to scale the fence and clamber over loops of razor wire to escape and warn others. In the chaos, we’d been split into several groups and lost track of each other. Were members of our crew trapped inside, or arrested? We produced the phone lists and began running third floor to find each other and get our bearings in this unfamiliar territory before our cell phones’ batteries died. Most everyone had ended up on one of the corners around the farm, only one of us was cut off from the others—the one who had kept in a vehicle to ensure he would not be arrested. That vehicle was surrounded and blocked in by the police; he was hiding under one of the seats, afraid to remain on the phone for fear of giving himself away.

Should we retreat to gather with the others, or remain apart? If we left that corner, the police would almost certainly not let us return; but we couldn’t afford to remain scattered, either, and while the police were not yet harassing us we were also not in a good position to act. We opted to stay and up and follow. A support group convened on the other side of the farm, along with perhaps a hundred inured locals. A parked train stood on the tracks between the police and the farm, with it rumbling screams of pain traveled through them when we could. The helicopter fol-

Those of us who needed to piss had to do so in busy parking lots in front of several lanes of traffic. At length, we found a quieter street and crossed out across the sidewalk, of us remaining awake. The helicopter lingered overhead for a while, then disappeared from view.

Later that day, we finally caught up with our friend, just before the last of our cell phones died. After hours in hiding, he had talked his way through the police lines, citing California legal code—which they, of course, did not know—when the police refused to let him drive the vehicle out. By this time, a great mass of people had gathered to protest the eviction; but the police presence seemed unassailable, no one had a concrete strategy, and all opposition remained symbolic. We decided to follow our travels and see what was possible elsewhere in the way of solidarity actions.
Instituting the Gift Economy

Once a month two hundred or more people from all walks of life gather at the commons in the center of our town. They bring everything from jewelry to firewood to give away, and take whatever they want. There are booths offering bicycle repair, hairstyling, even tarot readings. People leave with full-size bed frames and old computers; if they don’t have a vehicle to transport them, volunteer drivers are available. No money changes hands, no one haggles over the comparative worth of items or services, nobody is ashamed about being in need. Contrary to government ordinances, no fee is paid for the use of this public space, nor is anyone “in charge.” Sometimes a marching band appears; sometimes a puppetry troupe performs, or people line up to take a swing at a piñata. Games and conversations take place around the periphery, and everyone has a plate of warm food and a bag of free groceries. Banners hang from branches and rafters proclaiming “FOR THE COMMONS, NOT LANDLORDS OR BUREAUCRACY” and “NI JEFES, NI FRONTERAS” and a king-size blanket is spread with radical reading material, but these aren’t essential to the event—this is a social institution, not a demonstration.

Thanks to our monthly ‘Free Markets, everyone in our town has a working reference point for anarchist economics. Life is a little easier for those of us with low or no income, and relationships develop in a space in which social class and financial means are at least temporarily irrelevant.

Why the ‘Free Market Works

The ‘Free Market model has several virtues to recommend it for anarchists hoping to build local infrastructures and momentum. First, like Critical Mass or Food Not Bombs, it lends itself to a de-centralized approach: so long as the idea is well-distributed, neither hierarchy nor central coordination is necessary to organize a ‘Free Market. This makes the ‘Free Market model helpful for those hoping to cultivate personal responsibility and autonomous initiative in their communities; it also means that, should the ‘Free Market in your town run into trouble with the authorities, they won’t be able to shut it down by simply targeting the leaders. As a means of bringing people together, Food Not Bombs seems to have built-in limits: in much of North America, the stigma around eating free food is strong enough that often only dropouts, radicals, and desperately poor people are comfortable doing so in public. The ‘Free Market model, conversely, can be comfortable for almost anyone. In a consumer society in which shopping is the common denominator of all social activity, everyone feels entitled to pick through items at a yard sale—and the fact that they’re free just sweetens the deal. Middle-class people, of course, need more than anything else to get rid of things: their houses are all so overfilled with unused commodities that the opportunity to do something with them is a godsend. This works out nicely for the rest of us! And thanks to wasteful mass-production, even the poorest of the poor usually have access to a surplus of some kind. Being able to give something to someone who needs it is even more fulfilling than getting things for free: centuries of capitalist conditioning have not yet completely worn off. The ‘Free Market makes sense to a godsend. This is also presents a point of departure for further struggles: if this is what we can do with the scanty resources we’re able to get our hands on now, what could we do with the entire wealth of this society?

Pitfalls

As with any tactic, the ‘Free Market model can fail when applied incorrectly. The most common mistake is to organize a ‘Market the way you would organize a demonstration: issue a press release heavy with rhetoric, put up fliers featuring circle-As or words like “social justice,” tie the event to particular causes, limit participation, organize a social activity, everyone feels entitled to share things, pure and simple. No money changes hands, no one haggles over the comparative worth of items or services, nobody is ashamed about being in need. Contrary to government ordinances, no fee is paid for the use of this public space, nor is anyone “in charge.” Sometimes a marching band appears; sometimes a puppetry troupe performs, or people line up to take a swing at a piñata. Games and conversations take place around the periphery, and everyone has a plate of warm food and a bag of free groceries. Banners hang from branches and rafters proclaiming “FOR THE COMMONS, NOT LANDLORDS OR BUREAUCRACY” and “NI JEFES, NI FRONTERAS” and a king-size blanket is spread with radical reading material, but these aren’t essential to the event—this is a social institution, not a demonstration.
The Really Really Free Market model is well-suited to an age of overproduction, stratification of wealth, and isolation, when so much goes unused yet few have access to the material resources they need and fewer still are connected to the social networks they desire.

Year or so. Consistency is one of the most important elements of a successful ‘Free Market’. A sporadic schedule inevitably means that attendance will be limited to those immediately connected to the networks through which promotion takes place; a regular event can eventually attract quite a lot of people, as word spreads outside the circle from which the idea originated. On the other hand, your ‘Free Market’ should not occur more frequently than you need and fewer still are connected to the social networks they desire.

Throw Your Own ‘Free Market’!

It’s easy to organize a Really Really Free Market. Every town should have one; big cities should have one for every district. It is the authors’ opinion that successful, consistent ‘Free Markets should be established around the United States, following the footsteps of the proliferation of Food Not Bombs festivals across the nation, in the belief that this would significantly increase the visibility and scope of anarchist activity in North America.

Once you get a regular ‘Free Market’ off the ground, it should basically run itself. The challenge is to start things off with enough energy that everyone can see the project’s potential, while making sure everyone who gets involved feels an equal sense of ownership and investment. The first essential element of a good ‘Free Market’ is location. Your ‘Free Market’ should take place on neutral ground—that is, in an area everyone feels an equal claim to, or ownership of—so no one will feel more or less comfortable than anyone else. For similar reasons, your location should be a central, visible area. If you can use a space where major public events happen or where a wide range of people are already accustomed to gathering, it will dramatically increase your chances of success.

Many of the best spaces must be rented.

It doesn’t make sense to pay to hold a free event, but it probably won’t do to hold your ‘Free Market’ in somebody’s back yard, either. If you do have to pay a permit fee, be clever about raising the funds for it. It compromises the integrity of the event to have to put out a donation jar to cover expenses, and those donations will inevitably fall short; it’s better to find an organization that is free or cheap enough to cover privately or else raise funds through independent benefit events. Reservation procedures are also problematic in that they position one person as responsible for the entire event, the exact opposite of the horizontal structure you’re trying to promote. The militant solution we’ve tested is to start out paying permits for a month or more; this makes it clear that this would significantly increase the visibility and scope of anarchist activity in North America.

The next step is to advertise. Sure, you should post fliers and send out emails to every listserver you can possibly think of, but that’s only the beginning. You can take handbills around and give them out at bus stops, public events, in neighborhoods and apartment complexes; you should also see if local radio stations will run Public Service Announcements for your event or, if local papers can run a listing or even a story on your event. If you come into conflict with city officials or anyone else, treat it as another opportunity to solicit media coverage. In our town people have taken the yard signs produced by politicians and real estate agencies and painted over them, then redistributed them throughout town; we also hang banners by major intersections a week in advance. We used to do the latter on town property, until we got in a spat with a petty official over it; now we put the same banners a few feet away, on private property owned by sympathetic locals or in places town employees are too lazy to reach.

Don’t stop at advertising.

Don’t depend on authority figures but extend directly to the people you want to invite. Forget about government officials—they’re too tied up in red tape to think about your event as anything but a headache—but do contact the workers at health clinics and other non-profit support institutions: they’re probably so overwhelmed and under-equipped that they’ll be thrilled to direct people to your ‘Free Market’ for additional resources.

Make all your flers, signs, and announcements bilingual, or else produce them in different languages for different contexts. At every ‘Free Market’, put out a sign-up list so people who want to receive news of the next one or coordinate with other organizers can leave their contact information.
But we’re getting ahead of ourselves here. Several of those projects grew up in the momentum generated by the local Really Really Free Markets, which are the subject of this story.

Late in 2003, several people from this area attended a Really Really Free Market at the protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas ministerial in Miami. The following summer, activists organized the state’s first Really Really Free Market in a nearby city; it was a one-time event, coinciding with summit protests elsewhere in the region. The next fall, a few friends paid the permit fee to reserve the town commons for the first local ‘Free Market. It, too, was conceived as a one-time event, but it was such a success that in early 2004 others joined in organizing a sequel. Even at these first couple ‘Free Markets, the crowds were fairly diverse, owing to fliers having been distributed in multiple languages and neighborhoods. There were also hints of the controversies that were to come: rumors circulated that town officials worried the ‘Market would take business away from local corporations, and it turned out that town regulations forbade a group from reserving the town commons for the same event more than twice a year.

Despite this prohibition, it was decided that additional ‘Free Markets could be held, but no one had money to put up for it. The town Parks and Recreation Department was informed of the planned date, but no one ever showed up to pay the permit fee. Contrary to all fears, the ‘Free Market went off without a hitch—it was the most successful one to date. Another ‘Free Market was called for the following month. This time, however, another group had already reserved the space for that day. A town official contacted the person who had most recently signed up to reserve the town commons for a ‘Free Market and informed him of this, but refused to facilitate communication with the group. ‘Free Market supporters tracked down members of this group themselves, and worked everything out with them; in the end, both events took place, and participants in the ‘Free Market assisted the other group in setting up. Town officials later disingenuously referred to this double-booking as one of the problems caused by the refusal to pay the reservation fee, but in fact it was a non-issue at the time.

Still fearing that the authorities might try out intimidation tactics at one of the ‘Free Markets to discourage unpermitted use of public space, we invited comrades from other towns who were experienced in “public order” situations to attend. Had we been thinking more clearly, we would have realized in advance that town officials would not act publicly, but rather target individuals underhandedly. That summer, a person who had signed up for an earlier ‘Free Market received a letter from a local law firm acting on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department. This intimidation had the effect of making people even more hesitant to have their legal names associated with ‘Free Market organizing, but it did not dampen the momentum of the ‘Markets. A handbill circulated at the next one listing the phone numbers of prominent town officials, inviting people to call and express their displeasure at the targeting of individuals associated with the ‘Markets; it subsequently appeared posted all around town. Officials later complained of having received numerous calls, and the individual who had received the threatening letter never heard from the law firm or the government again.

Despite this, it seemed clear that some sort of showdown with the town bureaucracy was brewing. Heated discussions took place behind the scenes about the best way to handle this. Public support had to be mobilized—but how could this occur without centralizing control or representation of the ‘Markets? Should public meetings be held, or would that simply offer a clear target for government repression and reinfraction? There were still some who felt that a confrontation with the government was neither feasible nor desirable.

Three decisions were made that greatly influenced the ensuing course of events. First, an even more conscious effort was made to rotate organizational roles early on. This proved invaluable both for resisting concentrations of power within our own circles and weathering our later struggles with the town bureaucracy. We had our first real scandal the following autumn, a year after our initial ‘Free Market. By this time, the organization core had drifted to a social circle characterized by more conflonational politics. It was election time, and every major intersection in town was decorated with yard signs proclaiming the virtues of various candidates for office. Many of these yard signs reappeared painted over and stenciled with advertisements of the upcoming ‘Market. The local political milieu erupted in a huff; this took some time to pass and was draining for those who took it upon themselves to smooth things over. The scandal drew more media coverage to the ‘Free Markets, albeit negative, and contributed to their contentious reputation.

Meanwhile, the ‘Markets themselves were doing just fine. The hundreds of people who attended them, who came increasingly from low-income backgrounds, apparently weren’t concerned about the private property of local bigwigs. The watershed juncture arrived spring of 2004. Over the preceding year and a half, organizers had paid hundreds of dollars to reserve the space for the ‘Markets, often out of their own pockets. There had long been debates as to what would happen if we stopped paying the reservation fees. Would the government dare set the police on a multigenerational, multiracial crowd in the center of town? Some felt that they would not, and that it was absurd to pay town officials for the right to provide a public service to the people they purported to serve. Others felt that, while the fees were undesirable, the ‘Free Markets just didn’t have the support necessary to win a conflict with the town government.

In the end, the former camp carried the day out of necessity: there was a great deal of interest in the next ‘Free Market, but no one had money to put up for it. The town
Markets had no decision-making body other than the entire number of people who participated in them. Throughout this process, organizers benefited from the small size of the town and the lines of communication extending through different social circles.

Second, the ‘Free Markets would take place once a month, on a regular day. This solved the problem of someone having to call for one to take place, and with it some of the remaining problems with power distribution. If the date of each ‘Free Market was common knowledge according to a monthly system, there would be no organizers to blame for calling them. Fliers went out listing the next eight months of upcoming ‘Free Markets.

Finally, ‘Free Market supporters reached out to their friends in a local puppetry troupe to plan a ‘Free Market that would surpass all that had come before. These puppeteers had maintained a popular series of local shows for over half a decade, and were considering hosting a puppetry convention that would draw troups from around the country. Someone suggested that the convention be timed to intersect with a ‘Free Market, and it was agreed. The puppeteers, not wishing to take the same risks, reserved the town commons, and a joint ‘Market-cum-puppetry-festival was announced across the state. In a town known for support of the arts, this was a real coup.

As the date of the festival approached, a struggle over public space issues broke out elsewhere in town when the co-mentioned earlier for its affluent customers attempted to ban public expression on its front lawn. Protests were held, posters appeared wheatpasted across public walls, newspapers printed debating viewpoints on the issue, and town officials were drawn into the matter. Venomous columbinists even accused politicians who took positions in favor of public use of space of being closet anarchists—thanks in part to the ‘Free Markets, anarchism was becoming a point of reference for everyone. In the end, the landlord backed down, ceding victory to those who championed freedom and community over private property.

The week before the festival, in this edgy atmosphere, a town official contacted the puppeteer who had signed up for the space and informed him that if people were going to share food at the event, he would have to pay several hundred dollars for insurance. In two years of ‘Free Markets, each of which had featured a tremendous smorgasbord of free food, there had never been any talk of insurance; in fact, a later examination of the wording of town policy revealed that it did not require insurance for events at which food was given away. At the time, however, this phone call provoked some consternation.

The day of the ‘Free Market, food was delivered to the site by visiting supporters from out of town; this was part of the policy of rotating high-visibility tasks, so town officials—although some of us have expressed frustration with the transience in the local common among younger anarchists, holding that it prevents people from building up the long-term bonds and commitments necessary for major social transformation, we’ve also relied on visitors to bolster energy right before each ‘Free Market, bring in scarce resources from out of town, take one-time-only high-profile roles, and convey stories about our ‘Free Markets to other communities as an inspiration and challenge.

would not have an easy target for repressive measures. A town official who supported the ‘Free Markets mentioned that at the meeting of the town government a couple days later there would be a resolution on the table proposing harsher penalties for those who promoted unpermitted events on public property. In retrospect, this was an important turn of events. Had he not passed on this advance warning, everything that followed might have played out differently. Phone trees were activated and a call went out for people to gather at the meeting in opposition to the measure. This was to be the first time ‘Free Market supporters had acknowledged the town government in over half a year, and it had to be a show of force.

The night of the meeting, almost thirty ‘Free Market supporters arrived at the town hall. They ranged from leather-jacketed teenagers to grey-haired women with long histories of local volunteer work. On his way into the building, the mayor stopped to ask what brought them there; he disingenuously claimed the proposed penalties were not directed at ‘Free Market organizers, though he admitted to the measure. This was to be the first time ‘Free Market supporters had acknowledged the town government in over half a year, and it had to be a show of force.

Just a few of the things shared at our ‘Free Markets:
-televisions, stereo, and computers
-furniture, futons, beds, and exercise machines
-CDs, DVDs, videotapes, and cassettes
-clothing from lingerie to silk boots
-suitcases, briefcases, and ironing boards
-homemade bird houses
-finest wood
-seeds and vegetable starts
-shampoo, conditioners, moisturizers, and other toiletries
-children’s toys, baby clothes, and diapers
-toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and homemade soap
-hot soup, tostadas, salad, popcorm, combined, sweet tea, coffee, and other lunch items
-banana bread, a myriad of cakes and pies, and vegan chocolate chip cookies by the thousand
-massive quantities of groceries
-thousands upon thousands of pamphlets, ‘zines, and papers
-books and magazines
-tarot card reading and fortune telling
-acupuncture, reflexology, and massage
-hammocks
-bicycles
-a bicycle repair station operated by skilled bicycle mechanics
-auto repair advice from a professional auto mechanic
-screenprinted shirts and patches, including several celebrating our ‘Free Market
-screenprinting, silk spinning, and self-defense workshops
-coffee, tea, fresh fruit, and bar lessons
-performances from drummers, folk singers, classical musicians, a marching band, a drum corps, and dozens of puppet troupes
-pretzels full of vegan cheese
-games from chess to ultimate frisbee
-an official from the free public transit system came to give out bus schedules and info on the transit system logo on them and the local Police & Justice coalition brought sheets and paint to make beautiful murals
-After being fired from her job at a corporate banana-making factory (no joke!), one enthusiastic participant hand-quilted a banner proclaiming ‘REALLY REALLY FREE MARKET,’ which now hangs at every stop.

name had been on a reservation form years earlier received an email from a town council member about the possibility of dollars of insurance if food was to be shared. The phone trees were activated again, and several dozen people showed up with cookies, cakes, pies, soaps, and definitions of foodstuffs to give away in defiance. This time the government did not send anyone to harass participants; they simply posted signs reading “The town has no control over and does not warrant the quality of any food distributed at this event.” ‘Free Market organizers brought their own signs, one of which was a full yard high and proclaimed ‘The town government does not sanction the distribution of food at this event, do not use them or expect them to share food with you. Eat at your own risk—BE GOVERNED AT YOUR OWN RISK.” The wording of the town policy regarding insurance is striking at the base of the sign, to show how their demand for insurance contradicted their own guidelines. At a later ‘Free Market, the same official who had given the heads-up about the meeting expressed

Overheard in conversations at our ‘Free Markets:
[One elderly African-American woman to another] “Oh, you live there? That’s right down the street from me! Why don’t you come by tomorrow, and I’ll give you the flower pots you need.”
[High-school student, to friend] “See! A marching band! This is the best thing ever!”
[Doesn’t know woman holding a ‘zine, to her partner] “Look, honey, this was printed by our friendly neighborhood anarchists!”
[Someone in a denim jacket, to companion:] “OK, now how can we get rid of money?”

[Response: “That’s why we have ‘Free Markets.”]
approval of this sign, implying that town employees had their hands bound by red tape.

The ‘Free Markets continue here to this day, each one a resounding success. Rumor has it that the town government may change the reservation system so a fee is not required for non-profit events in public spaces; in this way, our project has contributed to the general struggle for free access to space in our community. As of this writing, several other cities in this state have regular ‘Free Markets following the model we’ve developed. We have long-term plans to continue building an anarchist infrastructure in our town, running parallel with the hierarchical structures imposed by the government and corporations, with the goal of eventually supplanting them. In the meantime, our ‘Free Markets are an excellent way to support the needy and nourish our culture of resistance.

In the end, the conflict with the town government gave us opportunities we would never otherwise have had. We were able to bring up questions about the distribution of wealth and power that otherwise go unasked in this society; likewise, we were able to differentiate our approach to social support programs from those of liberals and religious groups. Had the town not raised such a fuss, people might have mistaken the ‘Free Markets as another state-sponsored charity event.

Our efforts have borne fruit in other ways, too. Last Mayday, when there were massive marches in support of immigrants’ rights around the country, many of the ones in our state were organized in conjunction with liberal or communist front groups and bore a correspondingly authoritarian character. Here, thanks to the work we had done on the ‘Free Markets, we were fortunate enough to be involved in the organizing along with immigrants and immigrants’ rights advocates. Consequently, the march that occurred here was distinctly more radical in form and content: it took place without any permits, occupying the town’s main thoroughfare for several hours and culminating in a free dinner, dancing, and movie at the town commons. The connections that developed at this event later enabled people to coordinate solidarity actions during the assault on Oaxaca.

We shouldn’t underestimate the importance of small, concrete victories such as this one. In an era when radicals are used to losing every struggle they enter, it is important to set realistic goals and achieve them, and thus get used to doing what it takes to win. Perhaps the lessons we’ve learned here can’t be applied in every town across the United States, but there must be countless other towns like our own. It’s up to you to discover whether our successes can be repeated where you live.
get out of my courtroom.’ We looked at each other: all four of us were wearing mismatched sports coats and slacks and looked of confusion. This was the big day, the conclusion, the showdown, the verdict.

‘But what about the house? Are we going to get it?’ I asked, ‘ahem, your honor.’

The verdict came down from on high: ‘You’re done here. Get out of my courtroom. That’s it.’

That was the much-feared verdict from the judge, the most powerful manifestation of the state group we had encountered so far: the feeble pronouncement of a figurehead who only wanted to get on with the day’s business.

Almost a year earlier, in August, we’d gone to the 13th district court wearing the same mismatched suits to attend the housing court date of the decedent owner of the estate. The judge looked at us with suspicion. ‘Why are you here and where is Richard Starr?’

We exchanged glances and lied. ‘We have permission to live there and we are interested in fixing up the house.’

He said he needed more information and called us to return three months later. When November rolled around we were nervous but wouldn’t show it, not even to each other. The judge began by listing housing court violations. Then he asked if we wanted the house. He knew the owner was dead; whether or not we really had permission to live there was irrelevant: they were working on a strategy to give us the house, to expedite our progress through the legal system. By moving in, we’d cut down on costs. It worked.

Almost six months later, we left the courtroom in confusion. What did it all mean? We asked our court liaison. ‘Well,’ he answered, ‘you fulfilled your end of the bargain. Now we’re trying to get you out of this court and into surrogate court.

Six months later, we left the courtroom in confusion. What did it all mean? We asked our court liaison. ‘Well,’ he answered, ‘you fulfilled your end of the bargain. Now we’re trying to get you out of this court and into surrogate court so you can get the deed.’

Get the deed! He knew we were squatters, but the city prosecutors here have bigger fish to fry. In fact, the success of our case has inspired some city officials to try to rewrite housing court law. There is talk that they may use our house, among others, as a model. The beginnings of industrial collapse in Buffalo have put us at an advantage.

Squatting means looking at land without boundaries, without any concept of ownership. Animals, insects, and plants are all squatters—indeed, in the eyes of developers they are pests to be removed or exterminated.
Having been called by a neighbor R. hadn’t talked to yet. They took his keys and gave him a trespassing violation. Later that week R. called the officer whose name was on the ticket and told him he was going back to the house. The officer asked him not to, and that was that—the birth of the Fuckers mentality. The court hadn’t issued a vacancy order yet and the case was still pending. The house was trapped in limbo with no overseer; without a legitimate complaint from the landlord or the block club, they had to wait. Almost mysteriously, we’ve had no more trouble with the police.

R. finally realized that he needed help, and began asking around in the punk and radical communities. Everyone seemed really interested in the possibilities, but also skeptical and afraid. It’s a lot to ask of people that they drop everything and dedicate all their time to something they will almost certainly lose, especially in a privileged community such as the college-age, North Buffalo punk community. Luckily, around this time a punk house down the street was getting evicted and someone had the idea to rent a moving truck, load it full of all of the furniture from the closing house, and bring it to this new mansion in order to appear legitimate. Besides, the former residents needed a new place to live.

The truck pulled up in broad daylight. “Yeah, we own this house.” People began piling boards off of the window. The same police officer from before drove by and waved—we were terrified, but nothing happened so we started working. Soon, on July 17, everyone began actually living in the house. Thus began an endless series of house projects, those servants incessantly going up and down the stairs, the staircase next to the main staircase—wouldn’t want to see an explosion in all of our lives and the lives of everyone around us. It was shocking—suddenly we lived in the house. We thought that after the owners left, the house went under the house became a tenant-run nursing home. After they went bankrupt, the house was abandoned, then became a crackhouse, and now it is a palace—the beginning of our journey.

For us, we’re mostly men—women have never outnumbered men, but have come close a few times—and mostly white: we’re all European and Hispanic, at the border of a Hungarian/Polish ghetto and a Puerto Rican/Latino ghetto. We’re also all dropouts: mostly of us never finished high school, none of us spent more than a year in college, and there’s hardly any work among us.

**Squatting versus Homesteading: Class, Privilege, and Gentrification**

The house can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. On one hand, obviously, it’s a squat: we have no landlord, no certificate of occupancy, no lease agreement, no deed. We are squatters and this is occupied territory.

Culturally, the word squat has a lot of baggage. It generally implies a temporary living situation. Since property is owned by banks and landlords and protected by judges and police, it would seem that the logical end to squatting is getting discovered and kicked out. Isn’t the eviction the glorious climax of every squatting war story? And what’s the point of fixing up a place you’re doomed to lose in the end?

So squatting also implies inhospitable conditions: a dilapidated old house, a decaying industrial center, an abandoned cereal plant, a camp under a bridge. Squatting means laying in broken glass, pissing in the corner, smoking cigarettette butts in piles of liquor bottles and garbage. Squatting is for those with no money, no ingenuity, very low standards, and very high tolerance. In light of these assumptions, I often get dirty looks when I mention that I’m a squatter; at the same time, I often find I have little in common with other squatters. In many ways, our squat has little in common with other squats: it’s only temporary as we let it be—and it’s not an inhospitable hovel, it’s a fucking mansion.

Essentially, we are a clique of friends, but a clique numerous and crazy enough to flip a car and run out of stores with our arms full—a unstoppable mob.

Admittedly, the first winter, we tamed the porch in the time the front of the house looked like it was abandoned. That changed when we got into the court process. Now we see the porch as a facade that should be kept orderly; although we have dogs, we do the yard work and the neighbors all love us. In fact, one year later we have been here longer than most of the neighbors. We still occasionally take out interpersonal problems on the walls and appliances, but unlike most squats we’ve become a sort of family. Our relationships are the foundation this house is built on. I like to think that we are held together by love for each other and our work as a group as much as hatred for the outside world.

So from another perspective, this isn’t a squat, it’s a home. In that regard, you could say we’re homesteading. Pass on the floor or break bottles out of disrespect and you are likely to get tackled. This is the most beautiful thing any of us have ever had—it’s the only thing some of us have—and we love it. We are always scheming up new ways to compromise less while simultaneously making our lives more comfortable. This is our experiment in self-sufficiency in the midst of collapse, in living out our dreams in the midst of the nightmare of modern life. In the past, I’ve referred to the house as a militant homestead—squatting without the transience, no compromise homesteading. In fact, this house is a spider web of compromises; like many aspiring insurgents, we dream of a world free of compromise but are doing our best with what we’ve got.

Squatting and homesteading have different class associations. Visualize a group of settlers marching to the top of a hill, establishing camp, and settling down. That’s homesteading, the most long-standing method of obtaining ownership in American history, or at least the history of those settlers’ descendents. Centuries later, imagine a squatter breaking into the abandoned hotel now atop the very same hill. In this perspective it appears that the difference between homesteading and squatting is first a matter of era, and then of class. But if you can back and take an even broader perspective, it becomes clear that squatting has existed for longer than homesteading, indeed much longer than the idea of property itself. Squatting, in its most basic sense, means looking at land without boundaries, without any concept of ownership. In this view, animals, insects, and plants are all squatters—indeed, in the eyes of developers they are pests to be removed or exterminated. Squatting feels natural: right of occupation by virtue of use.

Homesteading is the American tradition in which one moves into “unoccupied” territory to fix it up, i.e., kill anything that moves. The homesteading era was characterized by brutal violence and destruction; these were essential to the capitalist reworking of the physical and mental landscape of North America. The literal occupation of the West was the front line of the conquest of the wild by civilization and the ace by ace establishment of the closed system of modern ownership.

This seems to illustrate the class difference between homesteaders and squatters—but it’s not that simple. Many homesteaders were lower class. As the cities got bigger and bigger, and more and more people left them, pushed out by poverty, wanderlust, or persecution, and headed West. Their contemporary counterparts are more likely to squat than to seize property with the backing of the authorities. Our dominant culture comes from the history of homesteading that preceded this era, but we trace our heritage to the much older and broader squatting community.

We do take advantage of the privilege we have to protect ourselves from the court system and the prying eyes of the upper class, yes. It helps that the neighbors assumed we acquired the house legally. We acknowledge this privilege, but we don’t want to perpetuate it. We don’t want to be gentrifiers. Fuck development. Just because some of the
The values of many of our neighbors mesh well with our own: we raided abandoned buildings with our next-door neighbor. Unlike many of our punk and college student friends, he is not shocked by this kind of activity—on the contrary, he respects us for it. Our young white friends do not visit us and nowadays we are rarely accepted in their backward neighborhoods. We are clearly recognized as a lower class than them. I feel like a squatter when I notice that a quarter of all the houses in my neighborhood are abandoned, when I remember I have no job and I spend all day stealing and scavenging or loitering, when people point out to me that I am dirty and smell like wood smoke or muck. I feel like we are homeless when we willingly turn off the gas for good, when we’re eating wild green salads and potato bug patties while waiting for the tomatoes in the garden to ripen, when the brew room is full of the music of fermentation, when we all eat breakfast together in the morning and scheme for the whole day. We are exceedingly ambitious; that’s the most concrete manifestation of our privilege.

Decadent Poverty and Squatter Economics

The class dynamic interests me because of the twofold nature of our situation. The giant mansion might give some of the appearance of luxury—but it is an illusion. A confrontation. Others might see the house as a ruin, a crackhouse, a money pit—but I look at all the space, the hardwood floors and hardwood molding, the library and dining room, and I see magnificence and decadence. We are pauper kings and queens living the high life.

Together we generated the concept of decadent poverty. Initially, it was an inside joke that arose out of dumpster diving. More декадент poverty evolved into a way for us to brag to our friends and house guests, to heckle people who are invested in their jobs and the work ethic. At first, we made the house our top priority. We told ourselves that we were invincible, but individually we were afraid. When are the cops going to knock on the door? When are we going to get that letter? As a group, we constantly reassured each other that we had it all figured out. We not only redefined it but shouted it at the top of our lungs: “Fuck'em, let them try to stop us.” Together, as a large group of sketchy, wild eccentrics, we cultivated a camaraderie that I have come to view as a gang mentality. Not because of the way a gang controls territory or deals drugs, or because of the violent and misogynistic tendencies associated with gangs, but because of the way we looked out for each other, the way we promoted crime and mischief, and the way we saw cops and the courts.

When we moved in, this neighborhood was Crip territory; there were a bunch of murderers and this year the Bloods are in control. They say it’s a war between Puer-

To Rican drug dealers on our street, but we’ve never had any problems with them. They see two dozen kids swarming around the house at all times, screaming and singing and building and destroying, and they leave us alone.

We have conflicts with plenty of other people, though. Every time we bike somewhere as a group it seems we get in a confrontation. Although Buffalo is the birthplace of the bicycle and many of the roads were originally designed for bikes only (seriously—look it up), this is not a bike-friendly place. A bike mob of ten kids going dumpster diving, or to a party or even to the corner store, is liable to run into trouble. We bike in V formation and CAW at the top of our lungs. I could recognize that CAW for blocks away, and here I come, sharpened railroad spikes in hand and bloodlust at the ready. We’ve banned from many houses in the college area, many of us are banned from stores in the vicinity, and everyone recognizes us as those bike kids, the crazy kids in the ugly house on the corner. That’s us, the Birdhouse gang—caw caw.

Essentially, we are a clique of friends, but a clique
and now the logical conclusion, the cult: “Everybody wake own stories and myths. So from gang, to family, to tribe—feel like a tribe, like we are creating a culture here with our we’ve started two new houses since this one’s inception—I
ness. But the way we are branching o≠ into new houses—we are sick or sad and always meddling in each other’s busi-
become more like a family, taking care of each other when
angry, penniless criminals with an urge to have fun at any
of our group has changed. In the beginning we were all
is more important?
our strategy of staying in limbo creates very powerful
extremes—our highs are very high and our lows are very
low. All these issues are serious and not completely resolved. However, we have begun something that we all see as beauti-
ful and relevant to the larger community of radicals and squatters. Our model can and will work for others, and we
invite you to descend upon our city and others like it in a
screeching, scheming horde. Squatting, especially the way we
have done it, is not for everyone. It is, however, an inspiring
and effective strategy for growing together and distancing
ourselves from capital and the state. When you see us fly past
in V formation overhead, railroad spikes in hand, feel free to
join the flock. To paraphrase a famous Haymarket martyr, we
are indeed the birds of the coming storm.
numerous and crazy
efficient enough to flap a car and run out of
stores with our arms full as an unstoppable mob. This
gang mentality has sustained us through countless uncer-
tainties and difficulties, though it can also negatively influ-
ence the way people treat us. Many people have come to
the house once and only once. They formulate judgments
of people—sometimes weeks straight, especially
in winter. Honestly, I can’t say collective living is for everyone. You really have to ask yourself:
can I handle living with all of these people, in each of their cycles of energy and isolation, with all their meses and idiosyncrasies? Our house is a so-
cial experiment. We are all bipolar and have each snapped a few times, but we act as a support group for each other. The
dominant culture is deranged and traumatizing, the house is meant to be our hideout away from this death machine—but
this is a big project.
Our strategy of staying in limbo creates very powerful
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Assembly (AG) to take up the question of the government’s proposed reforms. The first AG occurred in late January; it was a small convention of students overwhelmingly sympathetic to the idea of blockades or partial occupation. The bulk of students, however, having not participated in the AG, were subsequently astonished to find themselves denied access to their classes; the truly indignant, like all the rest, were advised to attend the next Assembly. The organized protest groups easily set the perimeters of debate. By contrast, the voices opposed to occupation tended to be isolated, bringing a small speech and perhaps a friend or two along for applause. It didn’t do them any good. Eventually, as more students were drawn into its orbit, the AG established itself as a legitimate body in the eyes of students and faculty alike.

So it was that Sarah had begun setting out every morning before dawn to packet and otherwise clog the entrancesways at Montpellier III. This put her at odds with her social and domestic cohorts, who were abstractly sympathetic but did not share her enthusiasm—and that, she explained, accounted for her sullenness.

“This café is for jerks. Let’s get out of here,” I fol-
lowed her. I must confess that since leaving the ‘States for Montpellier six months earlier I’d never felt the slightest inclination to leave the three or four square miles that composed its medieval core. A decade or so earlier, the city’s megalomaniac socialist mayor had decreed that the town’s center would henceforth be automobile-free, had tramways built, and financed the creation of a hellish series of underground tunnels for the displaced traffic. Such a policy, which cannot be recommended highly enough, had returned the surface of the town to the nineteenth century—but without all the horses. As a result, one could observe a veritable zoology of pedestrianism: the stroller, the idler, the drifter, the rubbernecker. I even found myself regarding the occasional bicyclist with suspicion. For a still-
young man living in the Old World, the city was a labyrinth of passageways, all closing in upon themselves—crowds, clearings, cathedrals, and fountains; it was a narrow lattice-work balcony in front of a thousand windows. That’s where we were when our little walk was proposed.

Months before, French Police had chased two teenagers to their death, touching off the nationwide uprising as the Autumn Riots. I had cracked out a large number of colorful posters in support of said activities because, unlike Sarah, I lacked the know-how to be of more immediate use and had to content myself with cheering on the protagonists and frightening our local bourgeoisie from the sidelines. A good
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out into the distance, one could see the Mediterranean to one side and tightlypacked high-rises hosting North
African immigrants to the other; we were now on the periphery, nearly beyond the city’s walls, surveying an envi-
ronment that offered fewer illusions. Outside the artificial
refuge of the city center, commodification had dag in its slim fingers, creating monts per- 
dimmings, brie-a-tac, and nothingness.” It’s all presented as something enormously positive, but what of all that will be left in a hundred years?” Sarah wondered aloud.

However, urban sprawl seemed to be simultaneously opening up an ever-expanding front for potential resistance. That had been the lesson, so to speak, of the Autumn Riots. Those who had joined in setting cars on fire and attack-
ing schools, reporters, police, and corporate targets were offering their own provisional answers to Sarah’s question. In previous eras, one threw oneself at the Bastille. It had an address; one could travel there. Now the Bastille seemed to be everywhere—consider the speed with which the conflict in Clchy-son-Bois, a small suburb north of Paris, had spread across the entire country. The rioters there had offered a model that could be applied by virtually anyone.

“Virtually anyone?” she laughed. “The Bastille is a giant traffic roundabout—sitting on a mass grave. All that, all that…” she gestured outward, then stopped short. “No,” she said, “it really isn’t a question of where to start, but of where not to start!” The conversation ended: we’d arrived at the university.

TWO—

The main entrance to the faculty was sealed off by an imposing eight-foot fence, without any footholds to speak of. How strange it was to see faculty was sealed o≠ by an imposing eight-foot fence, without any footholds to speak of. How strange it was to see
enemies could be agreed upon, that was simply a question of taste, but what it might mean to get beyond that was a matter of marked disagreement.

Upon entering the AG I beheld for the first time our rough coalition: stone-agers, futurists, unrepentant Marxists, negationists, Lacanian confusionists, utopian socialists, provocateurs for this or that reform, cynical sociologists, dogmatic mystics, aspiring housewives, doe-eyed nihilists, steadfast contrarians. In this last number, of which France is most generous, must be counted my friend Clement, whose presence there in the hall I had not expected. Clem was an art student from a small manufacturing town along the German frontier; at the semester's end he would return there to look for work in the factories. He threw up his chin and met me through the poorly lit amphitheater, where a crowd had gathered to conspire, flirt, smoke, drink, and mill about.

We eventually arrived at the foot of the stage and gazed out into the auditorium. Clem procured a bottle of wine from his sack and began casting about for a corkscrew. While he was so doing we were accosted by a young woman who offered a sip from her own bottle. Introductions took place. Following mine, she inquired as to my nativity; Clement answered at some length, presenting me as "a little professor, come to visit from the final holdout of the middle ages."

"Ah yes… the United States… I see…" she responded in English, looking me over once more. "Ah, a terrible place, of course you know, but… well, the problem with that country, yes, the problem… Americans, they… they have no appreciation for the Classics… why, they don't even know what the word means…"

Clement struggled to make a joke in Latin. Another party later informed me that this young lady, who was so concerned about the American reception of Ovid and Thucydides, was the unofficial leader of a band of frumpy libertines and small-time terrorists, organized loosely as the "Movement for the Apocalypse." I was familiar with their various propaganda campaigns: one poster portrayed a gallery of headshots ranging from Subcomandante Marcos and José Bové to Sam Walton and Don Rumsfeld, all with targets on their foreheads, with the slogan: "the Revolution—it's in the head!"; their latest read "Students! Kill yourselves, you're already dead (but after the semester exams, of course)." At the time, I only understood her as an oddly militant classicist. She proposed the toast: "To the incompentence of governing classes—timeless foundation of Revolution, last true hope of the People!" There are some people who are not types.

By this time Sarah had decided to rejoin us; she couldn't be bothered to endure Clement's attempted ironies, but correctly deduced that the addition of the Basque classicist had essentially neutralized him. She brought with her a half dozen members of the Communication Committee, who inquired if I would allow one of my posters to serve as masthead for the next issue of the ad hoc journal they were producing on the school's occupied printing press. The occupation was only in its third week, but the committee members were obviously exhausted. Nevertheless, in spite of the late hour, they patiently answered whatever questions we put to them. As we finished emptying our bottles, one of them suggested we get a bit of rest, offering us an improvised tatami mat and some loose fabrics.

We slipped into the adjacent auditorium that served as group sleeping quarters, and tip-toed in the direction of a vacant patch of linoleum. No sooner had we laid out our donated bedrolls than peels of laughter erupted from one corner of the enormous room. This was followed by several "Sssshhh's" amid light snoring. Gasps from a nearby coupling provoked an even louder chorus of hushings, followed by more hystericisms from the aforementioned side. At the auditory situation began to settle, someone in the room began blowing out a tune on a pan-flute. This of course
toward the heterodox. Approaching the building, with its four-story walls, parasols, moat, polished bell tower, and indoor swimming pool, one regretted the comparatively drab '70s-era trailers that housed the school of language and literature known as Montpellier III. The proud youth of the high schools were out in force. Greeting us with fraternal hoorsals, they insisted that their school would not be subject to any attempted de-blockage and recommended that we return to look after our own faculties—and perhaps take another coffee. Nothing can adequately convey the impression made upon you by the sight of three hundred wide-eyed sixteen-year-olds holding their own assemblies on the lawn of a papal citadel.

We took their advice. As we returned to campus, the AG was starting to fill up. "What’s going on?" I asked. "Nobody knows for sure yet," answered the young man to my right. "It was starting to fill up. We took their advice. As we returned to campus, the AG was starting to fill up. "What’s going on?" I asked. "Nobody knows for sure yet," answered the young man to my right. "It was starting to fill up. We took their advice. As we returned to campus, the AG was starting to fill up. "What’s going on?" I asked. "Nobody knows for sure yet," answered the young man to my right. "It was starting to fill up. We took their advice. As we returned to campus, the AG was starting to fill up. "What’s going on?" I asked. "Nobody knows for sure yet," answered the young man to my right. "It was starting to fill up. We took their advice. As we returned to campus, the AG was starting to fill up. "What’s going on?" I asked. "Nobody knows for sure yet," answered the young man to my right. 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The Assembly: eight hours of debate, intrigues, proposi-
tions, ballots, false headlines. I slipped in a tad late, took a
seat on the floor between the Gulag and the Apocalypse in
the room of a thousand plus souls. As usual, appearances
decayed: an eloquent girl of fourteen brought the room to
its feet, an impassioned man from Portugal harangued the
audience for a quarter hour in his native tongue to
our collective badfeast, and proposals to terminate
winter*, occupy all commercial centers and all enterprises
private and public, abolish boredom, and institute a reign
of universal happiness were passed with little opposition,
even from the syndicalists.

Other voices spoke. One student proposed that we
vote with our student ID cards. “Why not just use our bank
cards?” The room laughed. A young man driven to the point
of madness by the prospect of missing his year-end finals
intended the virtues of the CPE, enunciating a more “dynamic,
competitive France.” This speech was punctuated by storms
of protest, barnyard calls, and a rain of spit gun fire. As it
became clear that order would not be restored, the presiding
moderator entreated the damp young man to find his seat:
“Evidently, the room is sufficiently conversant with the politi-
cal ideology that the student must step down.” A thin,
ruddy-faced student, rather taller than the rest of us, spoke
of the incarceration he had recently undergone courtesy of
our local police, when the Assembly broke into song, performing a traditional ode which had
been altered to accommodate current happenings and in
which this tight-jacketed red-faced young man figured as the
hero: “Marcel, Marcel, Marcel, we look to you!”

The system of note-sharing and study groups maintained
their complicity for a time, keeping the education machine
running and giving the movement some breathing room.
Our occupation wasn’t total; we had yet to appropriate all
the resources of the school—the statues in the museums,
the stoves in the cafeteria—but for all that we might still be
running and giving the movement some breathing room.

The very existence of our movement called into question
the principle of majority rule, proving that the mythical
sovereignty held by that body could be under-

mented faced: on the one hand, the risk of being co-opted and
assimilated; on the other, the pitfalls inherent in the very
format we had adopted.

The union leadership was taking a keen interest in
these events: they were along for the ride, seeing in
the movement a sure winner, a bagging tool for the seri-
ous business of negociating workers’ demands, and

Mr. Salter saw he was not making his point clear. “Take a single
example,” he said. “Supposing you want to have dinner. Well
you go to a restaurant and do yourself proud, best of everything
Bill perhaps may be two pounds. Will you put down five pounds
for entertainment on your expenses. You’ve had a slap-up din-
ner, you’ve three pounds to the good, and everyone is satisfied.”

Evelyn Waugh, Scoop

Nearly everything, my anarchist friend, need to
know about the mechanics of the journalists you will inter-
act with—and I mean journalists, the people themselves,
not the apparatus you call the Media—can be found in this
short passage from Waugh. Written in the 1930s, Salter’s
instruction to his young, wealthy, conscious reader, to
essentially, to cheat: how to succeed at the so-called “hon-

nouring of intellectual contributions and be-
ing able to eat at the finest restaurants. Many a young

example, “ he said. “Supposing you want to have dinner. Well

I love what I do. Many describe journalism as a vicari-
ous enterprise—you write, but you do not act. Don’t believe
this. There are few experiences that get the blood circulat-
ing faster than the simple act of interviewing ob-rience of the CrimethInc.

Full-Court Press Infiltration Unit

For years, I have reported from war zones and offices.
My work has taken me from Guantamano Bay to Iraq. I have
worked for television, print, and internet news organizations,
from opinion journalism to newspaper book review sections,
academic journals, and blogs. On more than one occasion I
have locked horns with Bill O’Reilly and sounded sensible
on NPR. Your liberal friends have read my work and approved.
If you have conservative friends, they may have run my name
through the mud. I’ve given them reason.

For the pursuit of pleasure to be the endeavor of journalism,

I’ve given them reason.

I’ve done that quite to my heartbeat. I do it because I feel I have a mission: to find the hidden
aspects of power, secreted away in the labyrinth of the
national-security bureaucracy, and explain to you—
the one in whose name all these things have been done, mostly
without your knowledge or consent

And there is a dark side. It’s one thing, as with Waugh,
to seek to turn the lovely things of this world to one’s own
advantage. But it’s something much different to consider
the pursuit of pleasure to be the endeavor of journalism,
as if telling the story is a reservation at Elaine’s. (You, my
anarchist friend, will never eat at Elaine’s.) To put it one way,

2 See the introduction to this issue of Rolling Thunder for the editors’ com-

3 Republican Securities Companies—the cut control forces and general
reserves of the French National Police.

* According to the author, who is better known as twenty-first-century Right’s hero, MSM is an internet term for “Mainstream Media.” It started as a derogation on the right—a sneering acronym that was
meant to be read as shorthand for ‘clueless liberal press.’ Since then it’s taken a life of its own, and
people on the left use it as well now.

Opposition confers upon one an obligation, and that obligation is strictness: if I am against the war, my obligation is to seek to end it, if whatever means are at hand. I am interested in understanding the circumstances that led to the war, and I am not interested in demonizing those who started it or those who did not stand in its way. But to do that, I must first satisfy myself with the context, the backstory, and the cast of characters. After this work is done, what remains is the disaster itself—and the obligation to stop it.

My former boss is the enemy of journalism. He is capable of seeing the problems of the world in vivid, if abstract, relief. But to pass from description to judgment to obligation is too great a leap for him. This, I submit, is not a failure of journalism, but a failure of integrity. His position, justified by the exercise of reason, is not reasonable. Instead, it is a self-satisfied strain of intellectual apoplexy and abdication. It is the journalist who exists in a republic to hold those who govern accountable. You may not believe this, but I do. For a journalist to restrict himself or herself from fulfilling that role is, in my view, a betrayal of an honorable mission. Better to be refused for a refusal to betray a honorable mission than to prosper in disgrace.

What this means for you should be clear as well. You are an architect of passion; it is your brick and your mortar. Commitment is what will sustain you through the bleakest time until a better job or a better bureau opens up, and your penny-ante revolutionary anxiety is the tick of her clock. Following the above instructions will get your message to meet, so what else could he do. He will win that argument. Don’t let him.

Find out who his editor is. This is cunning, and it pays off. Ask him what desk he’s on (Metro? General assignment? National?), who he works for, how long he’s been there, and how he finds it. Take notes. He’ll interpret this as a sign of your dedication and professionalism; and, in this, it is a polite recognition of his importance. In reality, it is a tool to use for your advantage. If you are dissatisfied with his conclusion, contact his boss. It can be a powerful tool. (But remember—Fabulist, that is to say, liar. Those three syllables make editors break out in a cold sweat.)

Don’t insult his intelligence. It’s not that this reporter isn’t intelligent. Rare is the reporter who doesn’t like to be gracious to those with whom one disagrees than it is to exhibit an ugly certainty about events—even if that means people in faraway parts of the world will die. This obligation is unfathomable to my former editor. He doesn’t like to be bullshitted. But politeness and attentiveness are appreciated in what is very often an exhausting job. He will ask you many, many questions. If you are dissatisfied with his conclusion, contact his boss. It can be a powerful tool. (But remember—Fabulist, that is to say, liar. Those three syllables make editors break out in a cold sweat.)

If you challenge her, don’t back her into a corner. Journalists don’t like to be reminded that we don’t know everything in the world. (You might think that the beginning of journalism is a recognition of that basic fact, but there you have it.) If you are dissatisfied with his conclusion, contact his boss. It can be a powerful tool. (But remember—Fabulist, that is to say, liar. Those three syllables make editors break out in a cold sweat.)

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Between 1900 and the mid-1930s, German artists, musicians, and writers experimented with new ideas, technologies, and forms, creating a vibrant climate of fresh-
ness and beauty. Expressionism and other styles of abstract art allowed artists an unprecedented degree of creative and emo-
tional control over their works. However, many musicians were doing things with sound that had never been heard before. Much of Terezin was a ca-
ril and subversive: some through political and cultural anarchy. At Terezin, victor ullman was prolific. He organized the production of the opera "Der Kaiser von Atlantis" ("The Emperor of Atlantis"), an allegory of the Third Reich. The script was saved by one of ullman's fellow inmates. The exhibition was held in cramped, badly-lit rooms separated by temporary partitions. It was deliberately chaotic and overfitted: paintings were crowded onto the walls, hung badly, and identified by handwritten signs. Graffiti such as "Insult to German Womanhood" and "Mockery of God" was painted on the walls. Minors were banned from the exhibition on the grounds that it would corrupt them. Ac-
tors were hired to behave like madmen and incite the onlookers with insulting remarks about the works of art.

Despite all this, "Entartete Kunst" was the most widely viewed modern art exhibi-
tion of all time. Over two million people attended it in Munich and it toured Ger-
many and Austria for three years after its premiere, during which another million saw it. Interestingly, an exhibit of "Great German Art"—art which exemplified the "Heroic" realist style favored by the na-
Zis—opened in Munich the day before "Entartete Kunst" only attracted 450,000 viewers, even though it was located just around the corner.

A similar event, "Entartete Musik," was mounted in 1938 to showcase the alleged decadence of composers such as Stravin-
sky and Schoenberg. "Entartete Kunst" included portraits of these composers, musical scores, theoretical works, listen-
ning booths in which visitors could hear recordings of "degenerate" music, and performances of seminal modern music. These performances were listless, carcass-
tic, and calculated to disgust the music in the worst possible light, as no attempt was made by the performers to understand the ideas behind the music. After the exhibition, much of the art-
work was destroyed. 3000 paintings were burned by the Berlin Fire department in 1939. Many others were auctioned to for-
egain, and the profits going to the music-
ian regime. The artists whose works had been included in the exhibition were blacklisted and barred from participation in any future art shows. Some were forced to de-
fini to make artwork and subjected to suicide Gestapo raids to ensure that they complied. Many escaped into exile, yet were unable to continue producing art in the countries to which they fled. Some were unable to buy painting supplies and other materials, while others committed suicide or found that they no longer had the desire or motivation to create. Countless other artists and musicians were imprisoned or killed in concentration camps in Germany and Eastern Europe. One bitter joke of the time declared that "half the Berlin Symphony is in Auschwitz." In every corner that art is incompre-
ensible and elitist, there is an echo, however faint, of the Nazi accusations of decadence and degeneracy. Fees of hierarchy rightly reject the valorization of art that is opaque to the uninitiated or over the creative activity of common people—but any implication that all art should be accessible and ame-
nable to all people is borderline fascism, even when it is framed as class-conscious populism. A variant of this is the shock 

Entartete Kunst . . . intends to expose the common roots of political and cultural anarchy. 

from the exhibition guide

some artists continued to make art, in secret or from within the concentration camps. One such artist was the composer Viktor Ullman, who was deported to Terezin (Ther-
esianstadt), a "model Jewish settlement" among the Nazi camps: it was presented to the rest of the world as a kind of utopian ghetto protect-
ing its inhabitants from the horrors of the war raging outside, in order to camouflag-
e the actual reality of the Holocaust. Obviously, Jews at Terezin had complete autonomy and control of their lives. However, they were there primarily as a transit camp to which Jews were taken before being transported to death camps like Auschwitz and Dachau.

Since Terezin was a "model Jewish settlement," many of its inhabitants were artists, musicians, and scholars. In this company, Viktor Ullman was prolific. He organized concerts and a lecture series and continued to write music. Very little of his work has survived, with the exception of his final composition—the opera "Der Kaiser von Atlantis" ("The Emperor of Atlantis"), an allegory of the Third Reich. In this opera, Death goes on strike because the emperor has been overworking him. No one can die. At first, the emperor presents this as a triumph, but soon it becomes clear that there are things much worse than death—being mortally wounded and unable to die, for example. Eventually, the emperor makes a deal with Death: Death will go back to work, but first the emperor himself must die. In the final scene, all the characters reappear onstage, out of costume and back in their concentration camp uniforms, wearing the familiar yellow Stars of David on their chests and singing a last chorus welcoming Death.

Der Kaiser von Atlantis didn't premiere until 1977, several decades after it was written. Viktor Ullman never got to see his last work performed. The production of the opera at Terezin was shut down by the Nazis just before it was to take place and Ullman and others involved with the opera were transferred to Auschwitz, where they died two weeks later. The script was saved by one of Ullman's fellow inmates.

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the era that was passing with it. Whatever their motives, they failed to save the art or the artists who created it—an important lesson about the solidarity between creators and audiences.

And why did the Nazis focus so much energy on art and music? This question is of interest for contemporary artists and radicals alike. It is telling that the Nazis went to such lengths to suppress experimental composers as well as avowed political dissidents: this indicates that they recognized self-expression itself as a grave threat to their program of domination. Indeed, art, music, and poetry were used by those in ghettos, in concentration camps, in hiding, and in exile as weapons for survival and revenge.

Finally, why did the Nazi attempt to do away with “degenerate art” fail? Most of the art movements the Nazis opposed are more widely acclaimed today than they ever were in their era, while the Third Reich—which many looked on favorably in the 1930s—is remembered as the absolute nadir of human history. Is this only because the Nazis were bested in the contest of arms that followed their repression of defenseless artists and musicians? Or is art itself possessed of offensive capabilities beyond simply ruffling the feathers of the bourgeoisie? We leave this to you, dear readers, to puzzle over—on one condition: that you test your hypotheses.

Contact the author at xburningrosesx@riseup.net
Lucy Parsons
Forerunner of 21st Century Anarchy

Today, Lucy Parsons is almost invisible to history. A hero and inspiration to three generations of radicals in her lifetime, she was once known throughout the country as a notorious anarchist, a fierce and fiery speaker, a defender of terrorists, an eloquent and wildly original propagandist and publisher, an organizer of militant grassroots unions, and a troublemaker par excellence. She was famously described by the Chicago police department as “more dangerous than a thousand rioters.”

Lucy Parsons defied the constraints of her time so completely that it should not be surprising she appears so rarely in records of that period. What else can be expected of a person whose life is so consistently referred to as “colored,” “black,” or various derogatory terms implying African ancestry? Some accounts written by people who knew her later in life suggest the same thing, even claiming that photographs prove her African ancestry. It is speculated that Parsons invented her Mexican and Native American ancestry as a way of avoiding legal obstacles such as the “miscegenation” laws, which made inter-racial relationships illegal. Regardless of her true ancestry, it is certain that she was perceived as Black or “colored” by most observers in her era. While a Mexican and Native American identity would not have shielded her from racial stigmatization, it might have seemed sufficiently exotic to mitigate the worst effects of nineteenth century racism.

If she did in fact come of age near Waco after the Civil War, she must have witnessed sweeping racial violence. The Ku Klux Klan was especially active in Texas shortly after the war. Lucy herself would have been under constant threat. Between 1871 and 1873, Lucy and Albert witnessed or heard about hundreds of murders, rapes, beatings, mutilations, and other acts of violence committed against African Americans by the Klan. Albert himself was targeted repeatedly by the Klan for his political activities, especially those on behalf of African Americans; a bullet from an encounter with the Klan remained lodged in his body for the remainder of his life.

Throughout her life, Lucy Parsons claimed that she was of Mexican and Native American ancestry. Newspaper accounts from the time, however, consistently referred to her as “colored,” “black,” or various derogatory terms implying African ancestry. Some accounts written by people who knew her later in life suggest the same thing, even claiming that photographs prove her African ancestry. It is speculated that Parsons invented her Mexican and Native American ancestry as a way of avoiding legal obstacles such as the “miscegenation” laws, which made inter-racial relationships illegal. Regardless of her true ancestry, it is certain that she was perceived as Black or “colored” by most observers in her era. While a Mexican and Native American identity would not have shielded her from racial stigmatization, it might have seemed sufficiently exotic to mitigate the worst effects of nineteenth century racism.

She prefigured current anarchist trains of thought in both tactical and organizational matters; she participated in revolutionary upheavals as well as outreach; in wedding militant direct action, diversity of tactics, and mutual aid societies. The IWpA found itself at its peak, someone threw a bomb into the city, the article sounded the alarm.

In 1885, radicals disillusioned by electoral politics and inclined to anti-authoritarianism gathered in Pittsburgh to form the International Working People’s Association (IWpA), a decentralized network to provide an anarchist alternative to the various Marxist parties dotting the country. In Chicago, the IWpA was an amazing success. Within a few years, the collectives affiliated with the IWpA had as many as four thousand members, regular newspapers were being published in seven different languages, and four armed militias had formed along with countless singing and theatrical groups, picketing clubs, free-thinking leagues, and mutual aid societies. The IWpA found its greatest support in the large immigrant communities that comprised the majority of Chicago’s population at that time. Mostly young, blue-collar, and non-English speaking, Chicago’s anarchists were a motley crew.

It was among these rabble-rousers that Lucy Parsons cut her teeth as a prominent anarchist. She became well known for delivering fiery, uncompromising speeches and penning strong, sometimes shocking articles. Her first article for the IWpA’s English-language organ, The Alarm, was to be her most famous work. Entitled “To Tramps” and addressed as “a word to the 30,000 now trampling the streets of this great city,” the article sounded themes that were to become common in her writing.

Send forth your petition to the capitalist class and let them read it by the red glare of destruction . . . You can be assured that you have spoken to these robbers in the only language which they have ever been able to understand . . . You need no organization when you make your mind present this kind of petitions. In fact an organization would be a detriment to you; but each of you hungry tramps who have read these lines, avail yourself of these methods of warfare which Science has placed in the hands of the poor man, and you will become a power in this or any other land. Learn the use of explosives!

Anarchist print shop workers stayed after their shifts to print 100,000 pamphlet copies of “To Tramps” for the IWpA, which distributed them throughout the country. The article made Lucy a hero amongst the dispossessed and a target for the quickly mobilizing capitalist class. Emphasizing direct action, individual autonomy, and a non-ideological, pluralistic approach to organizing, Lucy’s writings helped carry anarchist thinking in an entirely new direction.

In May of 1886, when the IWpA was at its peak, someone threw a bomb into a crowd of police officers firing upon a peaceful demonstration in Chicago's Haymarket Square. Seven police officers were killed and many were injured, mostly by the wild firing of the police into their own ranks. The previous day, police officers had murdered a number of workers striking for an eight-hour day at the McCormick Reaper Works, and the Haymarket demonstration had been called to protest the slaughter. In the aftermath of the so-called Haymarket Riot, the state declared war on Chicago’s anarchists, hundreds were arrested, and seven men including Albert Parsons were put to death. The bomb thrower was never identified.

The seven martyrs of the Haymarket tragedy, only Louis Lingg, recently immi-

Rolling Thunder, Issue Four, Spring 2007
the labor movement. Just as her husband refused to renounce his beliefs and beg for leniency, Lucy did not limit herself to decrying the injustice being done him. For Lucy and Albert, the trial represented a tremendous opportunity to expand the anarchist movement. Everywhere she went, she visited attempted to block her from speaking, creating dramatic showdowns with local authorities. Although she was arrested several times, she forged ahead tirelessly with the help of friends and supporters around the country.

After years traveling the country and the world, Lucy was involved in the amalgamation of local and existing radical grassroots unions into a network called the Industrial Workers of the World. On June 28th, 1905, she spoke at the founding celebration, and her speech was a regular voice in the emerging feminist movement of that era, characteristically uncompromising in its radicalism and sense of humor. While denouncing women’s suffrage as a dangerous accommodation to the state, she also addressed the radical Women’s Forum on the theme that “the majority of men are low-grade morons.” She also drew the ire of some anarchists with her syndicalism about the “free love” philosophy promoted by Emma Goldman. In a time when few had easy access to birth control, she argued that “free love” was the provenance of middle class white women for whom the likelihood of pregnancy was not a serious concern. In this and her unremitting opposition to women’s enfranchisement, she was one of the first feminists to maintain the importance of class in the women’s struggle.

Lucy remained a tireless pamphleteer. She published a number of her own articles as pamphlets—no, punk rockers didn’t invent the zine—and edited and distributed a volume of speeches by the martyrs of the Haymarket affair. Lucy spent the last two decades of her life writing, speaking, and working on behalf of the International Workers Defense, at that time a Communist party front group committed to supporting political prisoners. The IWL was in some ways a Communist Party front group, which has led some to claim—erroneously—that Lucy actually joined the CP. Not even the dead are safe from rumors and sectarianism.

On the morning of March 7, 1942, the wood stove in Lucy’s home caught fire. At age 89, nearly blind and only partially mobile, she died alongside her longtime partner George Markstall. After the fire was extinguished, the Chicago police seized her entire library, all of her written correspondence, and her records, which have never been seen since. Hundreds of people attended her funeral at Waldheim Cemetery in suburban Chicago and watched with awe as she laid to rest a few feet from Haymarket Monument under which her husband Albert was buried.

I like to explore. The popular term for what I do is “Urban Exploration.” Some people call it “Reality Hacking” or “Vudding.” Other people call it dangerous and irresponsible. Police call it illegal.

What is urban exploration? The answer is subject to interpretation. Some consider it art, others a means of obtaining an adrenaline rush. Some describe it as civil disobedience. I describe it as “Gaining access to and exploring man-made areas that have been abandoned or otherwise lost to society.” The life of an explorer is risky indeed. Those who do not wish to risk life and limb or defy authority need not read further. Those in power would prefer that you stick to the norm—and for good reason! Everything you ever need to be satisfied exists in your job or at home on your television set. Why risk bodily harm? This curiosity about what ruins lie beneath the urban facade is juvenile. Normal people would never risk their well-being and freedom to see what is behind the curtain. You are permitted to see so little good! You do not need to learn about the sordid past of our society by poking around its forgotten remains. Be normal. Be compliant. Be what they want you to be.

Stop Reading.

Fine, don’t heed my warning. The experiences you will have in this wayward hobby can be disturbing. They may alter your perception of institutions. They may give you pause. Worst of all, they might be fun.

This article covers above-ground exploration sites such as grain mills, factories, old war bunkers, and warehouses; there are also below-ground areas such as sewers, utility tunnels, and caves to explore.

Some of the most beautiful explorations happen spontaneously. But after you’ve been doing this for a while, you’ll start running out of easily found buildings. On the other hand, you may have no clue where to start in the first place. Let’s say your friends call up and say they are coming over in twenty minutes, and want to go exploring. Wow! That’s a great idea, but you have no idea what to explore. Fire up the computer! Start googling.

One thing I like to do is look at aerial photographs and satellite images. These can yield quick results when it comes to finding an abandoned building. There are several programs and websites that offer access to these for free. Dig around and you might find them. When looking at aerial/satellite photos of your city, it is easy to pick out areas that may contain abandoned buildings. Cities are “zoned.” This means that the municipal government has set aside certain areas for different types of construction: industrial, commercial, and residential. As a general rule, though you shouldn’t take my word for it, there’s usually nothing worthwhile to explore in residential areas—just small occupied houses.

The areas to pay attention to are industrial and sometimes commercial areas; these are distinctive, as they are usually clusters of large buildings with massive parking lots. Industrial areas are normally found near federal transportation corridors such as train tracks, freeways, and large rivers. Because the companies that own these buildings usually need to ship large quantities of goods back and forth, they need easy access to interstate transportation routes. Commercial areas, on the other hand, thrive on customers. They are usually adjacent to residential areas and border popular commuter train lines. For the most part, commercial areas suck. The buildings are boring and uninspired. It also seems to me that there are more abandoned
Learning More

When you’ve learned all you can from satellite photos and driving around, both the library and your town’s Historical Society are great places to go for more information. However, the librarian will look at you funny when you ask for the section on breaking into old buildings. You’re going to have to use your noggin. Fear not, fellow deviant! Dust the cobwebs out, oil up the gears, and try out these pointers.

There’s no section labeled “buildings to explore,” so try searching for things that are linked to what you are looking for. Sift through city council minutes, newspaper articles, police reports, engineering reports, historical texts, and so on.

For example, imagine there are a series of old grain mills in your city that offer amazing rooftop views. You’ve found a couple and know there must be more. Start with what you already know. You know the name of the company that owned the ones you’ve been in. You know who installed the “man-lift” (or “belt-o-vator,” an open lift system that transports one person to equipment: minimalist and loaded for bear. Myself, I’m in the minimalist camp. I don’t like the hassle of a backpack full of gear, and the risk of getting caught with breaking and entering tools is not appealing.

You’ll want to figure out whether and where there are security guards, how you can get in, what kind of gear you’ll need, and where you can park. When you go out to explore, you don’t want to spend a lot of time poking around outside the building in ninja gear. A clean, quick entry will keep you safe and out of jail. It is wise to plan two or three entry strategies ahead of time so if one doesn’t work you can immediately try another. When looking for entry points, use your imagination. Ground-level entrances are locked most of the time. Are there any windows open? Maybe roof access? How about cellar or manhole access?

Scouting will help you determine the gear you'll need for your exploration. Certain locations require special gear. If you have to go through a storm drain, you'll need waders. If you need to get to a second story window, you might need a ladder. Perhaps you need to go over a razor wire fence? Bring a section of old carpet to throw over the top.

Shredded parking is more important than you think! Often the best places to park are away from the site and in a busy area. Try to blend in with other cars and crowds of people who have a legitimate reason to be there. Parking far away may hinder a speedy escape, but sometimes it's better to spend the night killing time in a thicket or dumpster than to be chased to your car and let someone get your license plate number. Worst case scenario, you have to spend the night in the dumpster anyway while the security guards or police write down every distinguishing feature of the only car parked in the lot—yours. Look for good parking in the course of your scouting.

Scouting can save you from all sorts of misfortunes, as well enabling you to get into buildings more successfully. Don’t underestimate its importance.

In my experience, there are two different schools of thought when it comes to equipment: minimalist and loaded for bear. Myself, I’m in the minimalist camp. I don’t like the hassle of a backpack full of gear, and the risk of getting caught with breaking and entering tools is not appealing.

I only take a few things with me, all of which fit in my pockets: climbing gloves, small LED flashlight, headlamp, Swiss army knife, and cell phone. This is almost always enough. I never bring more gear unless I determine in the course of scouting that I’ll need it.

This is my favorite part. I will sometimes do horribly bland little buildings just for the experience of finding a way in. In a world in which technology has put everything on autopilot, it is nice to exercise your brain every once in a while. Infiltration can take a little bit of thinking and creativity. Things rarely go as expected during infiltration. You can find yourself in all sorts of unexpected situations that require quick thinking.

Speed and competence are very important. Know what it is you want to do and how to do it. Again, the less time you spend milling around outside a building the better. This doesn’t mean you need to run around like a suspicious goof doing backflips—just move with a purpose. In infiltration, there is usually only one suspicious moment—the moment you actually go in. Before you go in, you’ve done nothing wrong. Once you are inside, no one can see you. Keep this moment short.
**Lights**

Nocturnal explorations often require flashlights. If you don’t need them, don’t use them. Humans can see fairly well at night. If you keep your eyes away from light, your pupils will enlarge to let more in—natural night-vision. Here are two very important tips about your vision:

1. Humans see movement very well.
2. Thanks to television and computers, your peripheral vision will work better in darkness.

When you’re trying to see in the dark, keep your eyes still. Don’t stare at what you are trying to see. Focus your eyes elsewhere and use your peripheral vision. If you’re trying to see a person, keep your eyes and head still. Open your perception up to everything. You’re not trying to look at anything, you’re using your eyes to detect movement. It will feel like you are looking at nothing, but you are really looking at everything. Once you detect movement, you can focus on that area. If you can’t see what you just detected, try again with your peripheral vision. You may be able to see things with your peripheral vision that you can’t see by looking straight at them.

If you combine this with careful listening, you should be able to do reasonably well in the dark. Another way to work in the dark is by feel. Sometimes when you’re trying to accomplish a task like popping hinges or unscrewing boards from a window, you can get away with using your tactile senses alone. If you can help it, keep those lights off. You will be less visible that way—and safer, so long as you don’t fall through a hole in the floor.

**Entry Methods**

**Picking Locks**

Your Crew

It’s important to know your capabilities and handicaps—not only as an individual, but as a group. Just because you can do something doesn’t mean everyone else can. Make sure you know the limitations of the people in your group. Some people are afraid of heights, some won’t fit through a tight screwing boards from a window, you can get away with using your tactile senses alone. If you can help it, keep those lights off. You will be less visible that way—and safer, so long as you don’t fall through a hole in the floor.

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**Roof**

On large buildings, there is often roof access. These entrances are left open more frequently than others. No one expects you to climb to the roof to get in. Sad, newer buildings are harder to climb, because the architecture is so plain and boring. Older buildings usually have all sorts of interesting features to climb around on.

Another good thing about roof access is that once you’re up, you’re fairly safe. No one can see you. Most rent-a-pigs don’t patrol roofs—they just drive around the perimeter. Even if the hatch or door on the roof is locked or sealed, you can take your sweet time working on it.

This may be surprising, but I’ve gotten into many buildings through underground entrances. This is usually difficult, but you shouldn’t rule it out. Drains, sewers, and utility tunnels run under buildings and sometimes offer access to them.

Every building has a weak point—a broken window, a boarded-up door you can unfasten, maybe a second-story window accessible with a little climbing. If a door has its hinges on the outside, you can pop them. Be creative. Use your imagination. There is no right way to open a door or window—though breaking them is bad form.

Sometimes one gifted person is able to get in where the rest cannot. That person may be able to open a door from the inside. The only drawback is that this can be dangerous—sending someone into a dark building alone is always a little dicey. It’s best if the door in question is close to your friend’s point of entry. You can use radios or cell phones to communicate (see Communications Technology for Direct Actions in the second issue of Rolling Thunder). If your friend can’t find a way to let you in quickly, it might be wise for him or her to come out.

Tools are a double-edged sword. They are useful for popping hinges or unfastening a ventilation grate, but they are a pain in the ass to carry around—and if you get caught trespassing with gear for breaking and entering on you, you can be charged with serious crimes even if you’re not using them.

If your scouting indicates that you need them, your best bet is to carry light disposable tools. That way if you run into trouble you can ditch them in the river or in the bushes.

Sometimes the door is just open. Make sure you check every door before you embark on some demanding project to gain entry. I’ve done some pretty crafty work to get into a place only to have another explorer just open a door twenty feet down and waltz in. Embarrassing.

It’s 4:33 a.m. You’ve just had the best exploration of your life. You and your crew are dog tired; it’s time to head home. You’ve proved your mettle by defying the darkness and danger. You’ve done things no normal person would have the guts to do. You are invincible! No one is going to mess with you!

You’d feel really stupid if you got caught now. The danger of getting busted or hurt is just as great now as when you entered the building. Put as much thought and caution into your exit as your entrance.

One of the best moments in exploring a building is when you climb out onto the roof. The cool night air feels great, the view of downtown is spectacular, and you feel like you’re on top of the world! Aside from being a great place to chill, a rooftop can give you a bird’s eye view of everything going on outside the building. You can check for security or any other surprises that might be waiting for you upon your exit. Take advantage of this.

It can be really handy to leave a lookout outside the building to keep an eye on things. If you have no lookout and you anticipate trouble, you could call up other explorers to see if they can come help out. One could double as a getaway driver if your car is parked too far away.

The best thing about locked doors is that you can often open them from the inside. You’ll probably have more exits to choose from going out than you did going in. If getting in required feats of acrobatic skill that would shame
an Olympic gymnast, consider picking a different way out. It may be a good idea to go out a different way than you came in, anyway—someone who saw you go in might be waiting for you to come out.

Cover Your Tracks
I know you are a kind-hearted individual. You don’t want to rob some other explorer of the great experience you just had. Right? So make sure to lock up any entrance you unlocked. If you could get in, so can another explorer. Why deprive them of that challenge? Replace boards you took off windows, lock the door behind you, replace the bricks from the crawl hole you found. If it’s clear people are entering a building, security may tighten up, or others may start using the building in a way that attracts security.

Fuck the Reaper

INJURIES
If it’s clear people are entering a building, security may tighten up, or others may start using the building in a way that attracts security. Getting arrested sucks, but the pigs are not your biggest enemy—death is. The risks of exploration are as great as the rewards. Explorers get killed and injured all the time. I’ve had close calls myself. I consider myself lucky. Not everyone has had the same luck as I have.

The point is that the danger in exploration is real. Use common sense and always keep your wits about you. It is a good idea to explore with a friend in case something goes wrong. Above all, never leave a fellow explorer behind. We watch out for each other. To the left is a list of bad things I know of that have happened to explorers.

Don’t Break Things!
There are so many reasons not to break things gratuitously. Not only will you mess up the building for the next explorer who wants to check it out, you’ll also draw unwarranted attention from owners or police. Many of us revere the beauty of these buildings. They are sacred to us. It is a shame to see them wrecked by senseless violence, or locked up and guarded as a result of it.

Don’t Steal
Everything that goes for vandalism goes double for stealing. A trespassing violation becomes something much more serious if it’s coupled with theft. However, this is a gray area. Some of us will take historical artifacts from a building that is about to be demolished. Use your best judgment—just don’t screw things up for the rest of us.

Don’t get Intoxicated
This is another gray area. Many of us will take a beer while chilling on a rooftop. But getting wasted while exploring is a good way to fuck yourself up and die. It’s already dangerous enough. You don’t need to stack the deck against yourself.

Tagging
This is an area of much dispute among explorers. Some believe tagging is a beautiful art form. Some do not. If you insist on tagging, try to do something worthwhile.

Prisoner Support
It has been said that the revolutionary potential of a movement can be measured by how well prisoners are supported. Who would take action if they knew they wouldn’t be supported in the event of arrest and imprisonment? In light of the past year’s escalation of state repression against environmental and social justice activists, it is essential that we step up our organizing in support of prisoners.

The prison apparatus is intended to cut prisoners off from the outside: from family, from community, from the continuing struggle. Prisoners are locked in cages; many that are identified as “political” are targeted for abuse and kept in control units where they spend most of their time in isolation. Increased communication between activists both inside and outside prison inspires resistance on both sides of the prison walls. Prisoner support work is a way to connect with our friends, those we admire, and those who have lost their personal support networks as they struggle through difficult periods of incarceration.

Prisoner support work can be daunting. Supporting prisoners who have been locked up can be emotionally taxing. Prison is physically, mentally, and emotionally abusive—but although it can be frightening and difficult, we can provide prisoners with support, stimulation, and an outlet for emotional release to improve their mental health. It can also be challenging to navigate the complex maze of prison bureaucracy. We hope this recipe can provide some ideas of where to start and how to avoid common obstacles.

There is a lot of work to be done! Fortunately, there are many different ways to go about it. Before deciding which ones to try, take some time to evaluate your energy, commitment, support base, and interests. Think about how much time you want to dedicate to prisoner support. Is there interest in your community? Do support projects already exist? Can you collaborate with other reliable folks, or will you have to go it alone? If you want to be a resource for prisoners or other activists, the following steps will help.

1. If you are interested in corresponding with a prisoner, contact:传动者 asheville@yahoo.com

2. Letters help to bridge the gap between the “inside” and “outside” worlds, keeping prisoners connected to what is going on in their movements, their communities, and the world at large. The penal system exerts a great deal of pressure on prisoners to break ties with the outside world; communicating with prisoners helps to counteract this.

People who haven’t corresponded with prisoners before often worry about what they should write. However, it’s simple. Share something about your life with them. Ask about what life is like on the inside—you can learn a lot from them—and what they plan to do when they get out. Offer some assistance. An unexpected letter from a supporter can be a welcome break from the daily monotony of prison life. Don’t feel intimidated about writing well-known political prisoners—they are not superheroes, just people who had the courage to act for what they believe in.

Consistency is paramount for communicating with prisoners. That said, don’t decide against writing just because you can’t commit to writing them
When Writing a Prisoner:

1. Many prisoners cannot receive stamps and require a money order instead to cover the stamps.

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51. Many prisoners cannot receive stamps and require a money order instead to cover the stamps.
Working on Prisoner-Directed Projects

The most successful prisoner support projects are those that are conceived of and directed by the prisoners themselves. The Victory Gardens Project in Maine is an example of such a project, as is the Anarchist Prisoner Legal Aid Network (APLAN) started by anarchist former prisoner Rob Thaxton. They are successful and enduring because the prisoners themselves are leading them, working in conjunction with outside support to achieve their aims.

One of the most straightforward forms of prisoner-directed support work is publishing prisoners’ writings and artwork. This could include corresponding, responding to letters with art, design and photography, fundraising, and a person to act as a recipient of those checks. Ideally, if you are part of a community that is likely to experience conflict with the law, all these should already exist in case of emergency.

In addition to supporting prisoners themselves, you can do a lot of important work supporting their family members and friends. Many prisoners are held hundreds or thousands of miles from their loved ones. When their parents or partners can’t visit, they will support those targeted, and build social movement. If you live near a prison at which a prisoner you wish to support is incarcerated, you could make inquiries as to how you can best support him or her. In addition to offering them food and sleeping space, you could also raise funds to pay their travel expenses and accommodations, assistance them with living expenses and releasing them.

Supporting Supporters

You can often find sympathetic lawyers who are willing to work cheaply on important cases through the National Lawyers’ Guild, the ACLU, or similar networks. If you are being targeted by the authorities for participation in environmental activism, call 888-NLG-eCOlaw for assistance.

You should always be fully informed and in control of the money that is raised on their behalf.

Fundraising

Okay kids, now’s the time to use all those scanning, stapling, and wildcatting skills you’ve developed for something worthwhile!
Solidarity Actions

Solidarity actions can be an important part of any prisoner support campaign. These can range from low-abiding public demonstrations to militant direct action. Focusing the goals of political prisoners or offering a deterrent to prison persecution without enabling the state to persecute them further is a ticklish business; any solidarity action must be thought out very carefully. For the purposes of this introduction, we can only bring up some basic questions.

First and foremost, what are the prisoners’ desires regarding solidarity actions? Some call for them explicitly; others wish for them, but are unable to request them; others wish for actions to continue occurring in the struggle, but that none of them be claimed as solidarity actions; still others wish that no one carry out solidarity actions at all.

Second, what is the goal of your action? To show that people are concerned about the welfare of the prisoner, or the issue for which the prisoner has fought, or the erosion of civil liberties in this country? If so, to show whom—other activists, the corporate media, the public, other prisoners? Or is the goal to exert leverage more directly on the state, or on the party bringing charges? Or is it to maintain momentum in the struggle to which the prisoner is committed, to show that it cannot be stopped?

Third, what is the risk/benefit ratio of your action? To what extent can the action be blamed upon the prisoner, either as his or her own doing or the result of his or her supposed “leadership”? Will the action make the state attempt to target the prisoner more, and is the state in a position to do so? Seamingly impressive solidarity actions can backfire, as may have occurred in Jeffrey Luers’ case when a solidarity action took place at the site of his alleged crime days before his trial. On the other hand, sometimes it takes something on the order of the Rodney King riots to force the state to back down.

Finally, should your solidarity action result in further arrests and court cases, does your community have the resources to support additional defendants, or would this detract from the support the current prisoners need to receive?

Getting Started

The Anarchist Red Cross was started in Tsarist Russia to organize aid for political prisoners captured by the police; during the Russian civil war, they changed the name to the Black Cross to avoid conflict with the Red Cross charity organization. Today, Anarchist Black Cross groups provide support according to each individual’s situation. Some prisoners need financial or material aid. With others, it’s important to keep in contact through make visits, provide political literature, and discuss strategy and tactics—preventing prisoners from becoming isolated from the rest of the movement. ABCs also fundraise on behalf of prisoners or their defense committees and organize demonstrations or public solidarity campaigns. In keeping with the Anarchist Red Cross’s tradition of organizing self-defense, ABCs also act to help defend prisoners against the brutality of prison officials—when prisoners are harassed, they harass back to let the prison administration know there are people watching. ABCs also make visits, provide political literature, and discuss strategy and tactics—preventing prisoners from becoming isolated from the rest of the movement.

Getting To It

Many people who do prison support work engage in some or all of these tactics with informal organization, but initiating an ABC group means calling publicly for people to solicit your help, and being ready to offer consistent, dependable support. (A big thanks to all who do this work!) This is not an easy task. You will need to be a part of a range of things going on in prisons, other groups, and local supporters. The last thing you want to do is start up only to shut down six months later, leaving prisoners and others in the lurch.

Books to Prisoners

Books to prisoners groups are often the first connection a prisoner gets on you, your region, your state, or your county? Think about which issues mean the most to you. Your energy and enthusiasm about the topics you have the most interest in will come across in your work.

Educate yourself. Learn about the prison system, the experiences of prisoners, and how to be an ally. Writers like Angela Davis, Christian Parenti, Marilyn Buck, Ward Churchill, and many others have written extensively on these subjects.

Get a post office box, offer voicemail, and covers many cities. Post office boxes run from $30 a year up; shop around and be mindful of hours, box accessibility, and cost. Put your ABC group on the contact card of the box. If you want to be available by telephone, www.onexbox.com offers free voicemail and covers many cities. An email address is also good; check it regularly!

Some ABC groups prefer to be closed membership groups of one to four members, while others prefer to do public outreach for meetings. Choose what works for you. If you opt for public meetings, don’t be discouraged if the gatherings are small. If yours is a closed group, consider teaching others how it works so they can take your place if need be.

Once your group becomes public, requests will start rolling in. Try to learn as much as possible about the prisoners you are considering supporting. Prisoners may not always be able to speak freely about the activities they’ve been involved in or cases that may still be pending. To find out more, ask them for documents regarding their cases, talk to people who have supported them or worked with them in the past, or ask other prisoners about them.

When planning visits, find out the days and times visiting is allowed. If a prisoner is in segregation or otherwise under “disciplinary” action, you may have to schedule a special visit with the warden’s permission. Prisoners should know when and how many visits they are allowed; schedule the date and time with them. Before you go, find a written list of the institution regulations by calling or writing to the prison or looking on its website. Be especially aware of what you can wear, what you are allowed to take inside, and what kind of identification is necessary to enter.

Find other groups in your area to collaborate with: can your ABC group work with a local grassroots anti-poverty organization or a prisoners’ families support group? Contact other existing ABC groups near your area. If you would like to affiliate as an Anarchist Black Cross collective, email abc-net@archblackcross.org; include a little about your group and your current activities, whether you want to be listed online or in printed materials as part of the network, and how other collectives can contact you. The ABC Network is intended to connect ABC groups and other autonomous groups, organizers, and supporters.

A Books to Prisoners (or books through bars, or prison books...) Collective is a group that sends free books to any prisoner that requests a book. Set up your ABC group to affiliate with this collective and send out books to prisoners. Everyday mail is the most appropriate, especially for books that are not in the public domain. Books to prisoners groups are unique in that they can draw support from prison abolitionists and reformists alike because sending out educational material is fairly uncontroversial. This broad appeal can help foster opposition to the prison system as a whole and build a larger movement.

Getting Started

When sending letters to the prison, make sure to have a written copy of the prison regulations and stick to them strictly. Also, help prisoners find out what resources are available to them for free—for example, many publications are free to all prisoners.

Starting a Books to Prisoners Collective

The prison system exploits prisoners and makes it difficult for them to get decent food and other basic necessities. Supporting prisoners can involve providing them with material aid such as food, clothing, and stamps.

As letters from prisoners seeking help pour in, it’s easy to get overwhelmed. If you need help, you can always ask others in the ABC Network for assistance.

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Send Away

For example, if the prison has no restriction on the number of books, but the state only allows each prisoner to receive two books a month, you will be wasting books and postage if you send more than two books.

Prisoner Support and Prison Abolition Resources

anarchistblackcross.org

criticalresistance.org

earthfirstjournal.org

criticalresistance.org

prisonersbookprogram.org

worldbefreetruefreedom.org

Resist! Foundation

The journal addresses for political prisoners; you can find subscription information online.

oppr.org

theojrchemovement.com/index.html

This is an amazing organization that features an extensive list of addresses for political prisoners.

prisonersbookprogram.org/npnl.html

spiritsofslavery.org.uk

transmission.rebelle.org

Contact them for information about their queer and trans prisoner pen pal program.

smellbraynet

Download and print tons of free zines including Race, Traison Behind Prison Walls, Policing on the Global Stage, and World Behind Bars—an amazing zine that includes a guide to prison organizing as a form of resistance on the prison system. The website also has a political prisoner and P.O.W. resource list.

Information excerpted from the Yale 2007 E/F Journal, by the N.A. Earth Liberation Pris- oners' Support Network, and from Anarchist Black Cross Information and Resources, by Nightcrawlers A.C.B. Thanks!

Logistics

Starting a books to prisoners collective is largely a process of trial and error. Fortunately, dozens of groups have undergone this process already and can share their knowledge. For all the information too nutty or gritty to list here, contact the national books to prisoners listserv, which you can find at riseup.net, to communicate with most books to prisoners groups across the country. The Philadelphia group Books Through Bars has published an excellent handbook for starting a free book program, available at www.booksthroughbars.org. You’ll need some kind of publisher or bookstore to work through, because many prisons only allow prisoners to accept books from publishers or “commercial distributors.” You can bypass this bureaucratic regulation by arranging with a friendly local bookstore or infoshop to receive prisoners’ requests at their address and incorporating their name into your collective. If you can’t use space at the bookstore, you’ll also need to find a reliable, affordable space to serve as your library and work area—preferably one in which strangers coming in for the first time will feel comfortable.

You’ll be sending hundreds if not thousands of books out each month, so obviously you’re going to need a library! College and public libraries will often have huge, super-cheap book sales at which you can purchase large sums of books at very low prices. Even if your local corporate bookstore may also be happy to donate newer titles that would otherwise be difficult to find, so long as they don’t have to know about it.

Unlike many collectives, projects, and campaigns organized by anarchists, books to prisoners systems present a simple but radical message: if the prison-industrial complex was really about “education” and “rehabilitation,” why would this work be necessary in the first place? 8

Some tried-and-true approaches for this include:

• Ma$ic and Soil benefit shows
• Helgy grants from sympathetic groups like the Resist! Foundation
• Setting up prison-oriented literature tables at local corporate bookstores, if you get permission.
• Selling t-shirts, patches, and buttons
• Book sales (just sell the donated books that you can’t give into the prisons)
• Secret Cafés—turn a friend’s house into a restaurant for a night to sell $20-a-plate dinners to sympathetic people
• Art Auctions
• Selling expensive items on E-Bay (obtained through whatever channels you prefer)
• Producing benefit CDs

8 We put some out in used book stores staffed by sympathetic employees; customers who go in to sell used books often just leave them out for free.
Access All Areas: A User’s Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration

Infiltration, PO Box 19, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M4N 4P4, Canada (www.infiltration.org)

This handbook was delivered to me the day before I set out on an adventurous first trip to Canada. I was so excited about its arrival that I spent the last few hours I had to rest before my trip reading it, completely forgetting to sleep. Twenty hours later, customs officials used it as grounds to deny me entry to the country from which it originated. If that’s not proof of its value, I don’t know what would be! I finished reading the book on a ferry crossing the straight of Juan de Fuca, returning from my preemptive deportation, and its challenge resonated with me. I was nine years old when Jeff Chapman began publishing Infiltration: A Zine about Going Places You’re Not Supposed to, a project that began with him trespassing into hotels and buildings in his home city Toronto and ended twenty-five issues later, with courageous ventures into missile silos and overseas military outposts. Infiltration and its dynamic online counterpart laid the foundation for today’s vibrant urban exploration underground, a subculture involving a range of participants from hard-core squatters to ineptuous architectural scholars.

Access All Areas is a 242-page collection of texts from the Infiltration project, comprising a step-by-step guide to recreational trespassing. It charges readers to push their limits while simultaneously stressing the importance of taking risks seriously. The introduction hints at the benefits of urban exploration and similar pastimes: “Most people are extremely nervous the first time they climb a fence into a construction site or stroll past an employee into an off-limits area... after you’ve done these things a dozen times they become second-nature, allowing you to save your stores of nerves for larger challenges.” From thereon, it’s all gold: training regimens, notes on preparation, discourses on the art of sneakery. The social engineering section includes more than twenty pages on lying and disguises. Chapman, who is known as Ninjalicious in UE circles, goes over all the essential points about equipment, legalities, research, building plans, aerial photography, and GPS systems.

The second half of the book clearly alternates between anecdotes and site-specific techniques. Chapman explains the hazards and secrets of infiltrating active sites, exploring construction sites and abandoned buildings, navigating tunnels and drain systems, boarding freighters, and probing old mines. He includes a helpful glossary in the back to familiarize the neophyte with insider terminology such as crater (a verb), darkies (cavernous tunnels deep in the heart of a city that lead out into the middle of the wilderness), and my personal favorite, geocaching: “using GPS units to locate hidden caches of goods based on coordinates and clues.”

The book clearly wasn’t intended as a tactical manual for direct action—in fact, it takes a strong anti-theft, anti-vandalism, and pro-hobby stance when it comes to trespassing, though it does extend support to squatters and the homeless. All the same, I am struck by how useful these techniques can be in our community. After only a few months of investigating buildings and “half-truthing” employees, you should be ready to walk calmly through a business convention in a convincing disguise; after a year of slipping unnoticed into freighthers and military bases, think what you’ll be prepared to accomplish! Jeff Chapman completed this book in July of 2009, after publishing Infiltration for nine years; only a few weeks later, he succumbed to Cholangiocarcinoma, a rare cancer he had been fighting for years. The book has been passed on to others, to continue to distribute it in his memory.

review by resident sneak and sneak Guy Hackie, motivational support provided by Bobby “Ju$h-shizley” Hester

Flaming Arrows

A compilation of works by Rod Coronado—and a benefit for his legal fund

http://flamingarrows.mountaintinsel.net/

Flaming Arrows is an excellent compilation of Rod Coronado’s writings from previously released zines, Strong Hearts and Memories of Freedom, and some of his articles recently published in the Earth First! journal. It includes most of Strong Hearts issues 1 through 5, with the exception of some articles that are outdated or better articulated elsewhere, and all of Memories of Freedom beyond the introductory information about anarchism and the Animal Liberation Front.

Rod Coronado has devoted his life to education and action towards animal and Earth liberation. A loving father, a dedicated warrior, a passionate and kind person. Rod has been a strong and compelling voice in the ecological defense movement, inspiring many young hearts to act fiercely out of love for the Earth and all things wild. For more than twenty years, Rod has been writing zines and articles, contributing to the EFF journal, touring with roadshows, and giving lectures and interviews—even from prison. In 1993 he served a four-year prison sentence, after spending three years underground, for an arson at Michigan State University’s mink research facilities. Currently he is serving an eight-month term for sabotaging a mountain lion hunt outside Tucson in 2004. His release is set for March 28, 2007. However, Rod also faces up to twenty years in prison for a speech that he gave during his last trial in which he answered a question about how the incendiary devices used in the Michigan arson were made.

In his writings, he details his campaigns of sabotage on sea and land against the whaling industry and fur farms, and chronicles his experiences with native animals and their human relations, retelling the stories of their near-extinction on this continent—as well as the beautiful ways in which they fight for survival. Rod writes riveting tales of adventure and bravery, intertwined with intimate stories of heartbreak and rage. He writes with a powerful spirituality, connecting anarchist and environmentalist ideas to the traditions of indigenous resistance passed down to him by his Pascua Yaqui elders. Rod’s writing is not only for a cry for all that has been lost, it is a call to all people to act.

Flaming Arrows was lovingly compiled and bound by a compañero without Rod’s knowledge. Proceeds from this book go directly to Rod.

Please support Rod. Visit his support website at http://www.supportrod.org/

Paper Television by The Blow

K Records (www.krecs.com)

Have you ever day-dreamed about what would happen if right-on people made a pitch-perfect DIY pop record coming from the punk scene, complete with expert original production and delightfully playful and hearty lyrics delivered with beautifully earnest vocals? I have, too. Our danceable delirium has arrived.

With the addition of Jonas Betholt, The Blow’s newest album, Paper Television, delivers on the promise of all Khia’s Marichic’s earlier solo efforts. Her first releases, some as The Blow, some not, tended more towards forms of performance art and, while enriching, were not always as musical or soulful as they could have been. Now, thanks to the capable musical assistance of Betholt, Marichic’s playful and clever vocals finally have the musical accompaniment they deserve. The result is not only truly engaging music for the masses, but also some real substance, too.

Her lyrics meander effortlessly back and forth from the political to the personal—in fact, this is one of the most intellectually honest and complicated albums to come out of Olympia since the Riot on the Rocks movement of yesteryear. Third-wave feminists can be proud of the frank discussion of sexuality and sex accompanied by the strong assertion of personal identity and demands to be seen. “Pile of Gold” starts off the album cleverly using the metaphor of capitalist economics to illustrate the commodification of female sexuality—and you can dance to it! Marichic then effortlessly segues into the modern love song “Painless” about “If something in the deli aisle / Makes you cry / Of course I’ll put my arm around you / And I’ll walk you outside / Through the sliding doors / Why would I mind? ... And when you’re holding me / We make a pair of parentheses / There’s plenty of space..."
For those unfamiliar with this particular consensus process, it can be really intimidating to enter a meeting in which people are using mysterious hand signals according to a complex and ever-shifting set of rules. The same can be said for this book. For folks who have had some exposure to this formal consensus process and want to deepen or refresh their understanding, this book is great—and a good reference to have around. For folks who’ve had some exposure to the formal consensus process, it can stand a better chance of getting feedback loop of working out problems by creating more process.

Gelderloos’ depiction of this consensus process reflects my own experiences within activist communities fairly well. Describing a spectrum from basic discussion patterns to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict, this model provides many options for the needs of groups ranging from easy decision making—whether formal or informal—to complex tools that can be utilized to relieve tension and ferret out conflict.

Although I’d always imagined the “direct response” hand signal to look more like my friend’s fingers moving back and forth between my mouth and the person speaking as if to say “my mouth has something to say to your mouth” and rather like a gun pointed at the person you want to respond to, as Gelderloos describes it. But it’s true that simply speaking more to the personality of the groups I’ve learned from has been so helpful.

Deciding on a meeting agenda, as much time into getting to know one another deeply as into implementing a flawed process, as much effort into talking about your unmet needs now as into talking about all the beautiful things you want for the future, and as much courage into opening yourself up to others as into trying to find solutions to problems.
Besides all the raw materials, foods, tools and machines needed for a restaurant, the owner needs someone to put it all into action—they need employees. To the owner, the employees are simply another part of their investment. The owner buys our ability to work, and for a set period of time, we become theirs. The value of an employee is our wage—the amount of money we need to pay for food, clothes, rent, liquor, bus fare and whatever else we need to keep showing up to work. This is more or less depending on whether we are expected to wear nice clothes and be able to talk about wine and French history with the customers or whether we're just supposed to show up and not spit in the food. It also changes depending on how much food and housing cost in the particular city or country the restaurant is located in. Wages also reflect the balance of power between workers and employers. Where we are strong, we can force wages up. Where we are weak, wages can be lowered to a bare survival level.

Wages are expensive, but they're worth it. Unlike a can of beans, a cook makes money for the restaurant owner. A can of beans comes into a restaurant with a value based on how much work time was necessary to produce it. The can of beans is used up and transfers this value to the soup it is put in. The cook, on the other hand, is not used up. A large part of the value of the soup is the work the cook puts in while making the soup. Employees are not paid based on how much work we do. Our ability to work is bought for a set period of time, and we are expected to do work for the boss during that time. Our work adds value to the meal, and creates the conditions in which that value can be turned into money. In fact, we add a lot more value to the meals that are sold during our time at work than we are paid in wages. This surplus value is how a restaurant makes money. Through rent, taxes, liquor licenses and fines, landlords and various levels of government take a cut of this surplus value.

The value of a salmon dinner, for example, is first determined by the value of the raw salmon used up in its production. That value is the amount of work time necessary to catch (or farm) a salmon and transport it to the restaurant. Also, the value of the average amount of dried oregano, salt, lemon and cooking oil used up in the process has to be added to the value of the meal. So does the value of gas and electricity for cooking, and heating or cooling the restaurant. A small amount is added to the value of the meal for the wear and tear on the machines, for the replacement of plates, glasses, light bulbs, pens and paper, for the cost of upkeep of the property. All these represent a constant value to the restaurant owner. They do not make money for the restaurant. As spices and raw foods are used up, they transfer to the meal enough value to replace themselves. The actual costs of these items may move above or below their value, but this movement tends to cancel itself out. The boss may get lucky and get a good deal on a few cases of wine, and be able to sell them for more. But he may also get unlucky and have food go bad before it is sold, or there may be more than the average amount of broken dishes. In short, simply buying and selling is not a reliable source of profit. Restaurant owners do make a reliable profit.
The restaurant represents something very different to the workers. Those who work in a restaurant don't do it because we want to. We are forced to. We have no other way to make a living but to sell our ability to work to someone else—and it might as well be a restaurant owner. We don't make food because we like to make food or because we want to make food for this or that particular customer. When cleaning the floors or opening wine bottles, we aren't fulfilling a need for some kind of meaningful activity. We are simply trading our time for a wage. That is what the restaurant represents to us.

Our time and activity in the restaurant is not our own—it belongs to management. Although everything in the restaurant is put into motion and works only because we make it work, the restaurant is something outside and against us. The harder we work, the more money the restaurant makes. The ... afford to eat regularly at the restaurant they work in. It is common for restaurant workers to carry plates of exquisite food around all night, while having nothing but coffee and bread in our stomachs. A restaurant can't function without workers, but there is a constant conflict between the workers and the work. Simply standing up for ourselves makes us fight against the production process. We catch our breath during a dinner rush and slow down the production of a meal. We steal food, cut corners, or just stand and talk, and in the process cut into production. The boss, who represents the production process, ... and restaurant management is just as much a part of restaurants as the food, wine, tables, chairs, or check presenters.

The entrepreneur starts with money. He buys commodities (foods, spices, machines and tools, as well as employees' ability to work). These are set in motion in the production process and create a commodity—the restaurant meal—which is sold immediately to customers on site. This money is more than the original investment. It is then re-invested and the circuit starts all over again. By getting his capital to flow through the production process, that capital grows. This movement of capital is why restaurants exist, and it gives restaurants their particular shapes and priorities. What matters is not that a restaurant produces food, but that it produces surplus value and profit. The restaurant is a production process that makes the boss money, and he wants to make as much money as possible. Time and again safety, cleanliness, and even legal considerations are thrown aside to make more profit.
In the BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAINS there's a bird that's fair and bright
where the brakes are all empty and the sun shines every day,
where the horses and the hogs and the cigarette trees
on the pricks and the trees and the cigarette trees
where the lemonade springs, where the bloomed sing
where in the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAINS all the cops have wooden legs
and the hooligans all have rubber teeth
and the hens lay soft-boiled eggs,
the farmer's trees are full of fruit and the barns are full of hay
oh, I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow and the wind don't blow
in the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAINS you never change your socks
in the BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAINS come a-trickling, down the rocks,
and the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling, down the rocks,
and the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling, down the rocks,
and the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling, down the rocks,
and the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling, down the rocks.

I'll see you all this coming fall in
the Big Rock Candy Mountains.
There was a little boy named Connor. He was a small child, much smaller than the rest of his peers, and he didn’t get along with them much. In fact, he spent a lot of time playing alone.

Connor lived in a neighborhood in which the only other children were very young, too young to walk, let alone play. Don’t start feeling bad for Connor, though—he was quite content with being on his own.

Connor’s house was built on the edge of a great forest. This is where he spent much of his time between waking up and going to sleep. Little Connor would go into the forests just beyond where his lawn ended, and he would enter a world of make-believe.

Hours were spent playing in this make-believe world. It was not surprising for an animal there to speak to you. Fairies flew through everything that lived, leaving magic dust behind.

Connor affectionately called the woods and the world that existed in them Terijian. It was named after a mythical elf that Connor believed had once lived in the forest, who had, according to legend, fought off many great beasts and dragons that wished to destroy it.

Little did Connor know that the world of Terijian actually existed! This secret world of enchantment was hidden just beyond his world of make-believe, right next to the world of mundane things.

There were all kinds of secrets in this world. Magic did exist, and it flowed through everything that lived. Fairies flew through the air by day and at night, their lights danced in the sky. And the best-kept secret was the elves that lived in the forest and protected it from harm.

This fantastic everyday world was hidden to Connor. That is, it was, until one day early in summer, a new family moved in down the street. Connor heard that there was a young girl who lived there. Even though he was excited about having another child his age, he was too shy to introduce himself.

One day, Connor peered out his window and saw the little girl trotting down the street. She had her hands in her pockets as she made her way down the road, up his driveway, and finally right up to his front step. There was a tap at the door, and little Connor peeked out the window before opening it.

The little girl stood on the step wearing a shirt two sizes too big. She withdrew one hand from a pocket of her short shorts and said, “Hi!” with a big smile and a slight wave. “I’m Moriko. My family just moved in up the block.”

“Hi, Connor,” he stated, his hand still cautiously on the door handle.

“You play?” she asked, kicking her foot.

“I do,” answered Connor, showing his shoes and stepped onto the porch. “But I have to be back before dusk.”

“Okay,” replied Moriko as Connor tied his shoes. “So what do you usually do around here?”

Connor hesitated. “We could go in the woods and play make-believe.”

Moriko agreed, and the two little ones scampered through Connor’s backyard up to the edge of the lawn, and then stepped into the forest. The leaves rustled in the wind, blocking out the busy noises of the rest of the world.

The two children began playing a game of make-believe as they entered the woods. Connor became Astor, the druid of Terijian, guiding the warrior Yiva to a sacred grove deep in the forest.

As they journeyed through the forest, the children saw two young deer walking along a path through the trees. The children stopped their play and watched. One deer nuzzled its head against the other before galloping off through the woods. The other pranced quickly behind the first, and the two circled and chased each other into the forest.

Little Moriko and Connor crouched together, looking after the two young deer in amazement. Then Moriko glanced at Connor, bumped her head against his, and darted off through the woods. Connor jumped up and chased after the laughing girl, running through tangled branches and bumping over logs. The rushing forest slowed as they circled each other, giggling in glee.

Connor tagged Moriko before hopping off in another direction. Moriko was much faster than Connor, and she caught up quickly. She reached out her arms and tackled him, and the two rolled down a hill. Leaves flew up as the two tumbled down.

Lying in the leaves at the trunk of a young cottonwood, the two looked up through its branches and tried to catch their breath. “Have you ever noticed how different trees look from the ground?” Moriko asked as she gazed upward. Connor looked up, and he couldn’t quite put his finger on it, but it was as if he had never seen a tree before.

As he lay there appreciating the view of branches against a backdrop of leaves and sky, a tiny squirrel poked its head out from the branches above them. This sent the two children into fits of giggles. The squirrel cocked its head upward toward the tree branches, and Moriko asked, “What do you think it’s trying to tell us?”

Connor shrugged at the squirrel scurried up the tree. Moriko jumped up and grabbed one of the lower branches. She pulled herself up onto the first branch, stood up, and looked for another. As she swung up onto another branch, Connor yelled at her, “What are you doing?”

“Come on up,” Moriko yelled back, putting her foot on a thick branch and boosting herself up onto the next.

“Nah,” Connor said, standing up. “Climbing trees is dumb.”

Moriko just gave a little laugh before pulling herself up onto a branch. She sat there resting for a moment. “You’re just afraid.”

“Hey!” Moriko hit Connor. “How do you know that she’s married?”

“Oh yeah,” he started over. “Ms. Hawk? Would you mind giving me one of your feathers?”

Connor admired the beautiful creature as he said, “I want one of its feathers.”

“As her first one,” Moriko replied.

Connor looked up at the hawk and yelled, “Mrs. Hawk!”

“Hey!” Moriko hit Connor. “How do you know that she’s married?”

“Ask her for one,” Moriko replied.

Connor looked at the hawk and yelled, “Mrs. Hawk!”

“Ask her for one, ” Moriko replied.

Connor admired the beautiful creature as he said, “I want one of its feathers.”

“As her first one,” Moriko replied.

Connor looked up at the hawk and yelled, “Mrs. Hawk!”

“Hey!” Moriko hit Connor. “How do you know that she’s married?”

“Oh yeah,” he started over. “Ms. Hawk? Would you mind giving me one of your feathers?”

The hawk looked down at him before turning her eyes back towards the forest. Tiny hawks tried to peck out from under their mother’s feathers. To Connor, they just looked like puffs of fluff. “She says you have to earn it,” Moriko stated with a laugh. “Earn it?” Connor thought. Some people admire animals by killing them to hang on walls or wear as clothing, but that seemed like a dumb idea to Connor. “How do I earn a feather?” he asked.

The hawk spread its wings and flew past the trees and over a clearing. The two stepped forward and watched the creature fly. It swooped down over the valley that lay between the two sides of the forest. It circled the trees as it soared over the woods near the end of the valley. Circling the trees a few more times, the hawk let out its cry. “KLEEER!” Moriko looked over at Connor. “She said that to earn a feather you have to save the forest.”

“From what?” Connor was puzzled. The forest had never been in any kind of real trouble before.

Moriko looked out across the clearing. “I’m not sure what, but think it might be over there.” She waved a finger to where the hawk circled. Noises roared out from the trees, and wings of black smoke rose above the forest’s canopy.
"Come on, Astor. Let's go." Connor and Moriko walked through the valley. The grass around them stretched to twice their height. It whipped and waved as the wind blew between the forests. The rustling of a thousand leaves filled the air.

The two little ones followed the wafts of black smoke that lingered in the air. "But I need to get home, or I'll be in big trouble," Connor said as he walked back into the forest, "with wide eyes. "Elves live in forests and protect them. It's the forest being destroyed?"

"But what are they doing?" Connor whispered into the night. "What are we doing?"

"What are we doing here?" Connor demanded. "It's the middle of the night!"

"Let's go out in the woods," Moriko said with a mischievous grin. "What?" Connor said in shock. "It's midnight, I can't go out. Plus, I told my mom I wouldn't go out there anymore. I would get in trouble for sure."

"Only if we get caught!" Moriko tagged at his arm with a grin. "Let's go! We'll be back in a little bit."

"Moriko, no!"

Putting her hands on her hips, Moriko challenged him. "What are you, scared?"

"No."

"Moriko paused. But when he couldn't think of an excuse, he said in defeat, "I'll go change."

"Okay!" Moriko whispered with a giggle.

Connor slipped on his black overalls and tied up his shoes before sneaking out the window. The two crept through the backyard and into the woods. The campus of leaves hid the forest from the bright light of the moon, leaving a world shrouded in darkness.

Now, Connor wasn't especially afraid of the dark, but that had always been in the darkness of his own room—a mere veil pulled up over familiar surroundings. But as he and Moriko made their way through the woods, he experienced a completely different feeling. It wasn't so much a fear of the dark, but more of a fear of what hid in the dark. Little Connor couldn't help but feel as if there were something following him.

Connor whispered into the night, "What are we doing out here, anyway?"

"I wanted to get a closer look at the machine."

Hearing the echo of twigs snapping, Connor stammered, "Can't we do this when it's light out?"

"Of course not," Moriko said matter-of-factly, "that's when the workers are there."

The two little ones trekked towards the worksite. As
they walked through the valley, the moon provided nearly enough light to make it seem like it was day.

Moving through the waving reeds, Connor whispered, “Did you hear that?”

Moriko paused. The grass around her swayed in a breeze that was quite cool for a summer’s night. “I hear what?”

“I thought I heard whispering.”

The two stood still as the grass around them swayed and whipped in the wind. “Connor, it’s just the wind.”

“I heard voices,” Connor pleaded, “I swear!”

Moriko looked cautiously through the grass as they neared the edge of the valley. She raised her hand slowly, and through the wavering reeds, Connor made out the shape of a wolf in the trees. At first there was one, then there was another, and then the whole pack materialized slowly out of the forest.

Moriko stepped out of the grass, and she slowly tiptoed forward. But she suddenly stopped as one of the wolves paused and raised its head towards the two children. Moriko looked into the creature’s eyes before turning her own eyes away. The wolf took a step forward, and then another. Moriko moved forward, ever so slowly, and the wolf bolted through the trees. The pack turned and ran with it as it darted through the woods.

Connor let out a breath, and the two began ascending the hill. The moonlight illuminated the barren wasteland around them. The next day, the two little ones near the clearing, they began to see movement in the woods.

At first, it was as if a blinding wind was blowing through the trees, and it sounded as if animals were scattering through the forest around them. Leaves rustled and fallen branches snapped as figures rushed past. Moriko and Connor ducked to the ground.

The forest’s awakening broke the silence of the night. Were the trees moving and the forest alive? As fast as the thought came to the children, the noise stopped. The one doing underground the machine, but they watched as the one with the bag shook a can noisily.

Among the clatter of the group, a hiss served as a backdrop as the last figure moved the can across the machine. The two little ones watched in puzzlement as the figure sprayed in big red letters: “E . . . L . . . F.”

A smile shot across the faces of the little ones, and in a burst of excitement, they both exclaimed in voices probably a lot to burden for their circumstance. “It’s the elves!”

The last syllable echoed out across the clearing and through the woods. As if the two had flipped a switch, the elves stopped immediately. The one overseeing the group quickly waved the others to the woods. The figures grabbed whatever gear they had and scattered into the dark forest.

Moriko and Connor jumped out of their hiding spot and into the clearing, yelling, “No! Wait!”

But the figures had left in a trail of rustling leaves and snapping twigs. The two stood bewildered in the middle of the worksite.

The next day, the two little ones snuck through the woods to look over the worksite. The big yellow machine was moving across the clearing by the time they had arrived. It had taken the workers half the day to clean up from the night before. Half the chainsaws were unusable, but the rest roared after the crew of workers replaced a few of the parts that had been damaged. The two little ones walked away from the site, their feet heavy with disappointment.

“What are we going to do now?” Connor asked as he kicked at rocks. “We scared away the elves, the only hope of saving the forest.”

Moriko stepped to sit down on a fallen tree. One side of the tree was charcoal; it must have been struck by lightning. “If the elves are gone, then we’re going to have to be the elves and save the forest ourselves.”

“Do you think those shadows guard the machine?” Moriko asked as she whispered into Connor’s ear. “They might know we are here.”

One of the shadows stood near the edge of the forest peering down the barren strap. Two others moved across the site picking up chainsaws that lay scattered around the worksite. Another ran towards the machine and slid between its massive tracks. The last dropped a bag near the side of the machine.

The two little ones watched in silence as this orchestra of movement took place. They did not know what the two were doing with the tools, and they could not see what the one was doing underneath the machine, but they watched as the one with the bag shook a can noisily.

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“You’re experiencing diminishing returns from traditional whatnotspotting efforts?”

Maybe it’s time to try out a new format! Simply xerox this page, tear off this instructive text, burn the edges with a lighter for that “time-worn” effect. Cork or otherwise seal the message in an empty bottle, and set it free into the world—say, sailing in a pond in your neighborhood, or floating in a clogged sink in the office washroom. For a more massive propaganda offensive, make a hundred copies of this letter and raid a glass recycling bin or center, then spend a night lobbing them by the dozen into public fountains and outdoor swimming pools.

Better yet, organize a party at which you and your friends all write S.O.S. notes of your own—nothing beats a personal touch.

Here’s a hint: if you want the recipient to be able to get the message out without smashing the bottle, roll the paper up smaller than the bottle’s mouth and wrap a rubber band around it.

Activity Page:

Whoever finds this—

Help, I’m marooned in an alien land, surrounded by dangerous savages, in desperate need of rescue!

I can’t know if this will reach anyone, but if it has, all my hopes rest on you.

I thought the last desert island I was stranded on was tough, but this one is really something else.

On a normal desert island, you spend all your time alone, with nothing to do except miss being around people; here, I’m surrounded by human beings at all times, yet it’s even lonelier than the South Pacific.

On a normal desert island, you’re at the mercy of wild nature, with only your ingenuity to keep you alive; here, technology surrounds me like an impenetrable jungle and even my ingenuity is useless.

On a normal desert island, the problem is that you’re shipwrecked and can’t travel home; here anyone can travel anywhere, but nowhere feels like home.

On a normal desert island, the days pass like years; here, time is subdivided into minutes and seconds, yet there’s never enough. I’m afraid I’ll turn around and find my whole life has slipped by, like the sailor in the fairy tale who lands on an enchanted island for an afternoon and arrives home old and grey.

My cry for help is probably doomed to be lost in an ocean of other cries—but if this somehow reaches you, please know that there is at least one real person out here longing for rescue.

For all I know, you’re marooned here too; if you are, please do what it takes to find me so we can help each other escape.

Yours,
Hey kids! Welcome to this issue's Stencil Gallery! You know what to do—pick your favorite design, photocopy it at the biggest size you can, stick the copy to cardboard or acetate and cut out the image, affix your stencil to a surface in need of decoration, hold your spray paint can eight to twelve inches away, and spray quickly! If you see any of these up anywhere, send us photos and we'll print them next issue! Remember—blank walls mean blank minds!

Police officers and insurgent courtesy of Ben Hydra; enraged youth courtesy of BORF.
Commodities

Rolling Thunder #3, Summer 2006—Our last issue offered coverage of the recent wave of anti-anarchist repression, a retrospective on the work of notorious graffiti artist(s) BORF, and a comprehensive discussion of the struggle against domestic violence. It also featured a how-to guide for funneling resources out of universities, a history of queer direct action, and the usual eyewitness accounts and adventure stories—including a spy’s-eye-view of factory farming and a narrow escape from the flaming Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

Rolling Thunder #2, Winter 2006—The second issue of this magazine featured an extensive critique of dropping out as revolutionary strategy, coverage of last summer’s protests against the G8 in Scotland and mountaintop removal in West Virginia, a retrospective on squatting in northern Europe, and a couple heartrending works of fiction.

Rolling Thunder #1, Summer 2005—Our first issue included a massive analysis of the past decade of direct action at demonstrations, feature articles on consent in sexual relationships and alternative conceptions of education, and testimonials from maniacs who squatted their own workplaces and set themselves on fire while fighting police.

Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook—A 624-page handbook for do-it-yourself subversive activity, illustrated with photographs, technical diagrams, and firsthand accounts. The sixty-two recipes run the gamut from Affinity Groups to Wheatpasting, stopping along the way at topics as disparate as Hitchhiking, Sabotage, Behavioral Cutups, and Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence. $12

Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners—Your ticket to a world free of charge: the famous invitation to the adventure of overthrowing capitalism, hierarchy, and everything else, by turns wild-eyed, romantic, and prophetic. $8

Evasion—The controversial chronicle of one boy’s saga of willful unemployment, crime, and vagrancy. $6

Off the Map—A punk rock vision quest in the form of a travel narrative, detailing the exploits of two women squatting, hitchhiking, and dreaming their way across Europe. $3

Rusty String Quartet—Raegan Butcher’s new collection, several hundred poems long, chronicling the first few months following his release. $10

Filastine “Burn It” CD—A wide-ranging melange of driving rhythms, electronic experimentation, on-site sampling, and multilingual vocals from a member of ¡Chuska! and the Infernal Noise Brigade. A full $5 from every CD sale goes to the non-cooperating defendants targeted by the FBI’s “Operation Backfire.” $10

Requiem “Storm Heaven” CD—Nine songs ranging from mournful, muted beauty to operatic hardcore punk to the apocalyptic marching drums of street rioting. $10

The Spectacle “Rope or Guillotine” CD—This is the album that picked up where Catharsis left off. It would destroy the world and remake it utterly, and for some, it almost did. $10

Zegota “ReclaiN!” CD—The third wide-ranging full-length album from these expatriate geniuses. $8

Countdown to Putsch “Interventions in Hegemony” double CD—A blend of punk rock, free jazz, and radical theater that stands as one of the most daring experimental works to come out of the do-it-yourself milieu. $10

Blacken the Skies CD—This was Stef’s band between Catharsis and Requiem; imagine early Zegota as a de-beat crust band. $9

Zegota “Namaste” CD—Seventy-one minutes of improvisation, medley, and soul. Many still consider this the defining Zegota recording. $10

Catharsis “Passion” CD—Even eight years after it was recorded, what can be said about this album? We hoped it would destroy the world and remake it utterly, and for some, it almost did. $10

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When Prometheus was a rash youth, impatient with the ironies of civil society and eager to establish himself in the world, he stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity. Human beings, of course, didn’t know what to do with it at first, and some of them—his childhood playmates—gasped about how he was putting on airs now, acting like he was better than them.

A little time passed, and a few young people found uses for the fire. Word spread, and a newspaper ran a story about the new wave of theft and disrespect among young demigods, prompting Prometheus’s mother to scold him caustically for bringing such negative attention to the family.

Not long after the newspaper ran this article, a young woman setting her first fire accidentally burned down her village, and there was an angry backlash against Prometheus, especially among self-righteous young people, who accused him of selfishly endangering everyone just to have adventures for himself. A few rebellious teenagers did side with him, associating with his deeds their own desire to run wild and to distinguish themselves; but, as they failed to recognize the similarities between themselves and him, they put young Prometheus on a pedestal and praised him to the skies, asking what great thing he would do next.

Prometheus was suspicious of such simplistic glorifications, but, in the face of public attack, he was also desperate to feel good about what he had done, and so he couldn’t help but take a guilty pleasure in them. He wondered anxiously what indeed he could do next to live up to the notoriety he had established. Word spread that he was planning something much bigger and grander than the fire theft. The gods, who had overlooked him until now, decided that he was finally becoming too much of a bother, and had him arrested.

He was chained to a rock by the sea, and every day a vulture would descend to tear open his body and gobble at his liver. His mother cried and railed at him, wailing that she had been right all along that his rebelliousness would bring him and the family to ruin; but after the cult of young fan-worshippers died away—which didn’t take long, as the romance of associating their rebellious urges with his defeat and punishment wore off quickly—she was the only one who would still come to see him, wiping the sweat from his forehead and the blood from his belly and feeding him prunes.

Years passed. Prometheus became an old man, more patient than bitter, and the crime of his youth seemed further away than creation. But back in human society, his story had become quite celebrated, since an author had used it as the basis for a popular novel and many poets and balladeers followed suit. Finally Hercules, in a publicity stunt arranged to distract attention from some recent drunken escapades with the wives of prominent statesmen, came to release him from the rock. There was a flurry of publicity, flashbulbs, interviews, and then Prometheus himself disappeared from the public eye—or rather it disappeared from him, since the appeal of his legend was only diminished by the real life of an old man.

He spent his remaining years visiting his mother’s grave and responding with polite sincerity to occasional letters from young people who felt that, unlike everyone else, they truly grasped the beauty and nobility of his epochal act of rebellion. They spoke of attempting similar feats themselves; in perhaps the only truly heroic act of his life, he didn’t try to dissuade them.
empire (not yet submerged)

don’t give up hope, little ones

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