

# **Buffalo**

**Red & Black**

**Roja y negra**

**An Anthology**

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## Points of Unity

1. **Accomplices are entitled to a sphere of autonomy.** We neither impose nor appeal to authority--whether individually, within a formal structure, or vis-à-vis the State. We collaborate to the extent that we respect and trust each other. Anything that promises more than that is a lie. You are encouraged to act alone, or ask for help, to create your best world.
2. **All actions, however organized, work toward communization.** We strive to create living communism.
3. **Oppression knows no hierarchy other than exploitation, therefore we take direct action to combat oppression and abolish exploitation in all their forms simultaneously.** Exploitation is the material consequence of the domination that oppression imposes. Exploitation seeps into every social relation--colonial, queer, labor, gender, race--to extract from our collective strength. Working within a hierarchy of oppressions is not a tactic--it's a doomed strategy.
4. **We embrace a full diversity of tactics.** Intensity is foremost a matter of will and ability. When working toward communization, all actions reinforce each other.
5. **There is no unity beyond our sense of it.** If your sense of unity falls away, consider this an invitation to draft your own points!

**PART I**

**Communiqués**

# **Buffalo, NY: Black Bloc Organized to Provide Security for Counter-Protesters at “Spirit of America” Rally**

*April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017*

At a “Spirit of America” rally held at Niagara Square, what was effectively a city-sanctioned neo-Nazi rally with known white supremacists in attendance, Buffalo residents organized a black bloc to serve in protection of a coalition of anti-racist, queer, leftist, and anti-fascist counter-protesters. We countered their Trump signs, confederate flags, and SS tattoos with a queer dance party full of trans pride flags, rainbow and glitter fashion, fabulous makeup, DIY signage, and black masked attire.

The police protected the white supremacists with vigilance. Our show of force demanded the attention of all parties present. The pigs confronted us immediately upon our arrival and quietly surrounded us as we established our intention to keep our community safe. This confrontation did not stop us from making our presence known, circling the square, and settling in to the welcome of our community. A child of a Trump supporter looked on in fascination before their parent threw a blanket over the face of this young, future anarchist in an April-Fool’s-tier attempt to shield them from our influence. At no point were we in conflict with our own coalition of counter-protesters. Several expressed thanks and noted their increased sense of safety upon our arrival. We collaborated to embrace a diversity of tactics.



Aging right-wing Buffalo city officials delivered a series of bullshit speeches -ranging from sleep-inducing praises of the constitution to unabashedly deceitful Malcolm X references. Our coalition countered shouting the names of those killed in police custody and at the Erie County holding center: “Their blood is on your hands! Murderers!” The Trump supporters and neo-Nazis made several attempts to incite violence from safely behind a wall of cops. At one point a “Don’t Tread on Me” type crossed the police line to pick a fight. We closed ranks and protected our own, thus exposing the police’s unwillingness to do their so-called jobs. Multiple scheduled speakers referred to us as “masked cowards,” yet it was clear from our side of the blue line that our community is as courageous as it is vulnerable, and unbreakable through its solidarity. Our collective strength will not be leached by the institutions that simultaneously defend, sanction, and fraternize with white supremacists and Aryan Renaissance Society militants (Horace Scott Lacy and Todd Biro).

Toward the end of the rally, police presence was noticeably bolstered. We received word that the neo-Nazis planned to rush our comrades and jump our black bloc contingent. We coordinated an exit strategy on the fly, ensured our community exited safely and dispersed ourselves. No arrests were made, and nobody was hurt. While our primary objective of safeguarding our community was achieved, our secondary target—stealing the organizer’s tricorn hat—fell out of our grasp. Operation #GetThatHat will resume at a later date! In the meantime, we will work at every juncture to harness collective strength in the

name of self-determination, and to build our community's autonomy throughout liberated Buffalo.

# **Buffalo, NY: Anarchist Outreach on Earth Day**

*April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017*

On April 22nd in celebration of Earth Day, local anarchists, Buffalo Red & Black, organized a “clean sweep,” picking up trash and sweeping the sidewalks, along Grant street on Buffalo’s West side. Many passersby approached us to give their sincere thanks. One resident intimated, “we need more of you guys out here.” In addition to the clean sweep, we handed out free snacks, beverages, and political literature: “Know your Rights” brochures and CrimethInc.’s “To Change Everything” pamphlet. While going about our work, we had the pleasurable opportunity to talk politics with our neighbors. These talking points sparked inspiring conversations about alternatives to capitalism that are based in community building and community power.

Our clean-up initiative ran geographically parallel, yet ideologically counter, to a neighboring clean sweep of the “bourgie,” elitist Elmwood Village. The city organized clean-ups along the shoreline and in Elmwood, instrumentalizing Earth Day as advertising for the area’s businesses, bars, and restaurants that are responsible in part for environmental degradation in the first place. Meanwhile, without flows of capital to compete with Elmwood’s socio-ecological cannibalism, the elites ignored Grant street as always.

Distribution of city official's attention and monetary resources recapitulate class and racial hierarchy within the city at large. Grant street and its surrounding neighborhoods are home to many of Buffalo's migrant, working class, and POC communities. Wealthy neighborhoods like Elmwood come at our expense, and are indeed built on the backs of the rest of us.

We will continue to clean our streets on a regular, weekly or bi-weekly basis. Through voluntary means and by free association, Buffalo Red & Black does the work that the city will not. City officials and wealthy residents have no legitimate claim to our streets. It is us who own our streets. Whose streets? Our streets!

# **Buffalo, NY: May Day Banners and Disruption of Islamophobic Speaker**

*May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017*

We kicked off May Day at sunrise with two banner drops over the inbound 33: “POLICE + ICE = SLAVE PATROL” and “OUR LIVES, OUR STREETS, OUR COMMUNITIES ARE UNGOVERNABLE!”

Due to storm conditions, the “Unite and Resist” rally was rescheduled. In the evening, we gathered at UB North in solidarity with the Muslim Students’ Association, Sanctuary Movement, and other students to disrupt a far-right student invited lecture by Islamophobic, white supremacist SIOA (Stop Islamization of America), founder Robert Spencer. Flying black and red flags, and a banner “MUSLIMS WELCOME FASCISTS GET OUT,” we mercilessly heckled this joke of a lecture for over an hour. Other tactics included turning off the lights, group chants like “Who protects us? We protect us!” and using our voices to amplify students’ critical questions.

The joy of revolt reveals the contradictions of police-enforced free speech. Free speech does not propagate through a microphone from behind police protection. Contrary to mainstream media representations of the event, our heckling led to a more joyful, robust, and decentralized political discussion. To ignore this is to ignore the plurality of voices present. Those appealing to “polite” and obedient debate give fascists a

platform to manipulate and command. Community self-determination has no use for this top-down process. Failure to recognize the freedom and equality inherent to our methods is a failure to understand the principles themselves.

**We do not ask permission to speak. We speak freely.**

**Communization Now!**



## **Syracuse, NY: Statement from NY Antifa Alliance on Our Response to “March Against Sharia”**

*June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017*

We, the undersigned, represent a coalition of anti-fascists from across the State of New York. We have chosen to assemble in Syracuse on June 10 to take action in defense of people in this community who have been targeted for violence by attendees of the so-called “March Against Sharia”. As in many cities throughout the United States, today a collection of right wing groups and provocateurs will once again use “free speech” as a smokescreen in an attempt to gain a foothold for groups that use broad anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric to advance programs of racial exclusion and expulsion. Due to Syracuse’s central location within New York State, this provocation is being taken as aimed at the whole of Upstate itself, and along with our comrades in Syracuse, Upstate is responding.

We refuse to allow fascists a platform to organize and incite racial violence. In so doing, we are not suppressing “free speech.” In these current matters of “free speech,” we are not dealing with opinions that have withstood the scrutiny necessary to place them on par with those which provide meaning and purpose to a just and fair society. Instead, we have emotions dressed up in the language of a victim, paraded and bleated from soapboxes in such a manner as to play to the sympathies many

would otherwise reserve for the oppressed and vulnerable. Right now, other groups aligned with these alleged crusaders for the first amendment are threatening speakers and harassing students on university lecture and book tours.

The overstated threat of “Sharia law” is a dogwhistle to the anti-Muslim sentiment that has crept through communities across the country, especially since 9/11. Religious law is not only unconstitutional, but Muslims comprise just 0.9 percent of the religious makeup of the United States. This overstated fear of the minority has, for years, translated into calls for mass deportations, the erosion of civil liberties, and flat out violence against Muslims. There is nothing original to the script of ACT for America in their crusade against depictions of Sharia law. This is the same script used by the Nazis in their genocide against Jewish people in the 1930s and 1940s.

We affirm the rights of the people of Syracuse to resist bigotry in whatever capacity they find appropriate. We embrace a diversity of tactics in the struggle against fascism, and we respect the right of other counter-demonstrators to assemble. As such, we do not plan to interrupt other counter-demonstrations. We urge all attendees to refrain from acts that would compromise the stated intent of this counter-demonstration, to respect the boundaries and safety of one another, and to be cognizant of public perception. The fringes of the right have grown increasingly violent, even when faced with nonviolence. As such, we would also like to address the tense situation in the city of Portland, Oregon after the brutal attack on three men



coming to the aid of young women who were being verbally abused by a white nationalist who presumed them to be Muslims. We stand with Portland at this time as they cope with loss, increasing threats, and the task ahead of rooting out fascism from their community. We, the groups assembled, are prepared to undertake this burden in New York State if need be. We send our love and solidarity to Portland. You are not alone.

We also wish to clearly convey that our purpose for gathering in Syracuse is not to incite violence or destroy property. We will be there to represent organized resistance to fascism in our communities. While we do not plan to commit acts of offensive violence, we cannot say the same for the groups who have assembled to “march against sharia.” We cannot fully anticipate the reaction of the groups assembled with ACT for America, like the Syracuse Proud Boys, affiliated motorcycle clubs or patriot militias. Any escalation into violence will be at the hands of the previously mentioned groups and/or the Syracuse Police Department. We will not stand by idly if these groups incite or organize violence. We will defend our communities and ourselves by any means necessary.

Signed,

**NEW YORK ANTIFA ALLIANCE**

**Buffalo Red and Black/Roja y Negra**

**Capital Region Anti-Fascist Action**

**Central NY AntiFa**

**Great Lakes AntiFa**

**Hudson Valley Anti-Fascist Network**

**Upstate NY IWW – John Connolly Chapter**

**Eastside Antifascists Rochester**

**North Country Redneck Revolt**

**Syracuse Antifa**

**Utica IWW**

**Western New York Antifa**

## **Syracuse, NY: Regional Anti-Fascist Coalition Blocs Up to Confront “Anti-Sharia” White Supremacists**

*June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017*

On the morning of June 10<sup>th</sup>, a coalition composed of several regional antifa, IWW, and anarchist organizations awoke early to converge in Syracuse, NY to combat “anti-Sharia” white supremacy. As mentioned in a previous statement, these “anti-sharia” marches function as a smokescreen to enable state-sanctioned fascist rallies in our city centers. These fascist actions must be countered, disrupted, and shut down by any means necessary.

On our march to the protest site, a lone police patrol car announced via megaphone, “It is illegal to protest while wearing masks.” Whereas an individual or small group may have been met with police harassment and physical confrontation in this situation, our coalition laughed him off and marched by unaffected. **The State is not omnipotent. We have situational power to nullify the law.** Let’s keep it up!

We arrived at the scene and settled in for what turned out to be a five hour shouting match. While verbal confrontation may seem liberal in appearance, we clearly stated our defensive position in advance and kept our word. With children, dogs, and a variety

of community members present, it is important we remain accountable in this way.

Cops, militia, and white supremacists all photographed us from the same vantage point. This line defines the strength and unity of our position, while exposing the bootlicking acquiescence that forms theirs. Although the resources of the State are at times imposing, in reality, this group's sense of solidarity is laughably weak. Even with the help of a megaphone, their retorts amounted to petty schoolyard style comebacks. Occasionally, if we listened carefully, an uninspired "U-S-A!" chant filtered through their congregation. One passionate man showed his true colors with an amusing yet perplexing rant on bestiality. At one point, a courageous, misguided patriot's voice soared above the rest, "You are all a bunch of communists!," to which our coalition erupted with cheers. They finally got something right!

In notable difference from more liberal-minded protests, our chants took on a radical tone. Among other points made, we criticized settler-colonial occupation of stolen land, demanded the abolition of nations and borders, affirmed our radical queerness, condemned the State's white supremacy, "Cops and klan, Hand-in-hand!," denounced capitalism and fascism, "Ronald Reagan is dead!," and called out racist, anti-Muslim, right-wing appropriations of feminism.

While within the security of our coalition we can afford to enjoy ourselves, we must remember the importance of maintaining a tight bloc. Plainclothes NY state police lurked on the outskirts of our coalition. They attempted to isolate us, lead us away from

our comrades, and fish for information. Regardless of what they claim, or perhaps even believe themselves, they are not looking to collaborate on equal terms—even if, especially if, they claim to fight white supremacist extremism too. **Agents of the State are completely incapable of working with us by free and equal association. Our fight leads to our victory. The State has no place in that world.** Stay tight, be wary, and give absolutely zero statements. Your mask does you countless favors here, but it does not prevent correlation between various anonymous statements and social media. If you are approached, bid farewell as politely or offensively as you wish, walk away and return to your friends. Report to your organization any information you may have unintentionally divulged. No shame here. We all get tricked sometimes, trickery is their trade after all, but as a matter of security and longevity we gotta know what's up!

Police and fascist-militia presence aside, through our numbers, we had control of the situation. Whether or not we realized it in the moment, any escalation was in our hands. The size of our bloc compelled the police to escort the fascist-militia to their cars. Oh the irony!

Meanwhile, we protected our own and made a safe exit. Special thanks here to the medics and others who kept everyone hydrated. Many bystanders thanked us with high fives and expressed their approval, “We love you guys!”

This action gave us invaluable experiential knowledge for future tactics: when we claim them, the streets are ours. Let's offer sympathizers our extra bandannas and flags!

From community self-defense to regional mobilization, it is clear that a plurality of horizontal, decentralized organizations are capable of uniting to defend themselves.



# **PART II**

# **Thought**

## **Continuation of Class War: Fight For 15 in Buffalo**

*Anonymous*

It is no mystery that with the crushing of the Labor movement starting in the 1970's, we have seen an exponential growth of productivity and capital accumulation while also seeing a stagnation in real wages, a halt of benefits, and near evaporation of full-time work for most entering the workforce. As productive jobs continue to be exported to exploit workers in other countries, and increased automation of the jobs here, there is almost nowhere else for workers of all backgrounds to end up: service and retail work. It must, therefore, be demanded that these cashiers and fast-food workers receive at the very least a living wage - which, as we know, is simply not the case. While there are many strategies that can be employed to combat capitalist plunder, and indeed we should enthusiastically embrace a diversity of tactics, a militant movement needs a broad base of support in order to be sufficiently effective. Knowing this, and employing labor rights to raise class consciousness among my fellow workers, I decided to join the Fight for \$15 movement. Our message is simple, yet terrifying to our bosses: a living wage and union rights - today, damn it! Their wealth is nonexistent without our labor, nor their conquests without our consent.



My first participation was on April 4th of this past year; the anniversary of the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. Gathering at the Best-Main Metro Station, which was symbolic of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the parade marched to City Honors School to draw attention to attacks on education by Trump and his sock puppet Betsy Devos. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," and an uneducated and conditioned population makes for obedient workers as well as passive citizens. From City Honors, we continued on to the National Guard Armory and imperialist recruiters located nearby, to voice our outrage over the plundering of the Middle East on our tax dollars for the benefit of Wall Street bankers, arms manufacturers, and oil robbers. To quote labor organizer Eugene V. Debs, "Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder... And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles." We finished the procession at MLK Jr. park, with food and hot drinks furnished by our comrades of Buffalo Food not Bombs, all the while enduring freezing temperatures and brutal Buffalo wind. Alas, the one issue we cannot (fully, at least) blame on capitalism.

Several months later, on Labor Day, Fight for \$15 went to action once again to organize a nation wide strike to protest our poverty wages as well as the assault on Labor rights and working people by the Trump administration. Fast food workers from over 350 cities went on strike and turned out in their respective cities to send a firm message to our corporate overlords. In Buffalo, we

gathered outside a McDonalds (read: McExploitation) where community organizers and workers chanted and gave speeches to draw attention to unfair business practices, low wages, long hours, and extend our solidarity to the workers of the world. From here, we proceeded to the Labor Day Parade in Buffalo and set a combative tone to their bourgeois-appropriated parade. Labor Day is our day, for the workers, and the simple fact of the matter is working people everywhere are not benefiting the full fruit of their efforts; that corporate swine make nearly 500 times what their workers do; and that the land "by the people, for the people" is a hoax. We have been duped, and we will not celebrate it.

As a direct result of their participation in the strike, a fellow worker faced some repercussions from their employer. The message is very direct and very clear: organizing will not be tolerated and this store was not a union store. Seeing the challenge, Fight for \$15 quickly gathered all our energy and set into motion. Very quickly, formal mechanisms were set into action against the employer to demonstrate the clear violation of Federal Labor Laws. Our union thugs gathered organized a bus ride from Buffalo to the location in Niagara Falls, and on the day of the protest more than 30 fellow workers showed up to extend their solidarity and show our collective might. Once again, Buffalo Food not Bombs was right by our side, making several dozen free vegan and gluten-free tacos for any and all to indulge in. Members from the NAACP and Niagara University Faculty Union were also in attendance, side-by-side with fast food

workers and community members. The sense of solidarity was awe-inspiring, and a reminder that each of us have more in common with working people of all countries than the managers and corporate leeches that command us. I wanted to quote a segment of the speech given by a fellow worker, who was the center of the repercussions:

Corporate entities - shadowy figureheads like McDonalds, Tim Hortons, Burger King, and yes Mighty Taco included - continue to threaten our rights as human beings and especially as members of the working class. We will labor all day in order to line their pockets and buy their luxury cars, and in return we receive barely enough for our lowly existence. We often speak of the great abundance in the United States; but, I will argue, that wherever there is great abundance, there must elsewhere be a great poverty. That great poverty is seen among every one of us - by fast food workers in Niagara Falls, NY, as well as industrial child workers in the Philippines and mine workers in Columbia. We rally here today for all of them, and hope that our actions today and in the future will lead to a better deal for all of us. We workers have more in common with each other, transcending the borders that divide us, than we have in common with the very wealthy businessmen who dictate us.

The gathering concluded with the collective voices of all echoing Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act at the

chain; Section 7 being the clause that grants workers the right to join, form, or assist labor organizations, to participate in concerted actions, and collectively bargain. In the end, all repercussions facing the worker were found to indeed be unlawful, and actions were taken to correct the business practices of the employer. This is the direct result of solidarity, agitation, and relentless efforts of a countless many. While the battle is far from over, it is the minor day-to-day victories that chisel at the corporate domination of our time, resources, and mind.

From the Labor movement, we can begin to attack capital wherever we see it arise. It is worth noting that unions can efficiently be applied to other areas, such as attacking racism, misogyny, and the rampant homelessness crisis seen everywhere. It becomes a center of organizing the right to well-being of all and each, one that has the benefit of legal protections. While it has this benefit, which some may attack as an appropriation of revolutionary tactics, make no mistake, the way we decide to organize and apply our unions can gather the strength we need to attack capitalism and imperialism, racism and other injustice elsewhere. From my own experience, I encourage all my fellow workers to join in the class struggle through union organization, and follow in the footsteps of Joe Hill and Big Bill Haywood. Abolish the wage system! Worker control of our industries! Together we can grind the twin death machine of state and capital through the removal of our labor from their systems of control.

In closing, I wish a very Red 2018 to all of us.  
Agitate, Educate, Organize!

## **Report-Back from Buffalo Food Not Bombs**

*Anonymous*

This is a report-back from Buffalo Food Not Bombs, written by one member of the collective. I cannot speak for the whole group however this is my account of the past few months being closely involved with the organization.

For those of you unfamiliar with Food Not Bombs, we are a worldwide organization committed to fighting poverty and hunger through direct action protest. We take food donated from local grocery stores and co-ops and we provide warm meals to anyone who's hungry down in Lafayette Square, Mondays and Saturdays around 1:30pm. We do this to highlight the amount of resources our society wastes while recovering as much as we can and redistributing it to those who need it most. While we spend an unimaginable amount of money on war, violence and imperialist conquest, people around the world, even in our own nation and city go without basic necessities like food, water and shelter. The city, state and federal powers have done a piss-poor job of taking care of their people, and that's where we come in.

These past couple months in Buffalo Food Not Bombs have seen many ups and downs. Back on May Day of 2017, we experienced police harassment by B-District chief Joseph Gramaglia. He had ordered his officers to shut down our share due to an alleged complaint they had received, which he could

not give us the nature of the complaint nor who filed said complaint. We were told we needed a permit to serve food, and upon arriving in city hall and talking with three different clerks, were told a permit did not exist for the activity we were doing. In response to this, we made sure our health department paperwork was in order at the location we prep the food, and we decided to move ahead and share anyway the following Saturday. The story ended up going viral receiving many thousands of views and shares from other international FNB chapters, the amount of solidarity displayed was heart-warming. The share was one of the largest rates of attendance we have ever had, and the police did not stop us. This was a fantastic example of the community coming together to look after one another despite pressure from the police to disrupt our activities. More than anything, the incident highlighted the role that police play in the systemic oppression of the lower classes, it makes clear the use of hunger as a weapon by the state against the poor and houseless population.

Since then, we have been working to establish a grassroots justice system to prevent abuse and misconduct within the community, to provide a safer environment for anyone who wants to help out. We have also been receiving very generous donations from the local punk scene, a few different food drives and other individuals and groups who have been nice enough to send some extra food and clothing our way. With this increased community involvement we have been able to provide many warm clothing, care packages and lots of delicious vegan food

to the people who need them. Our plans for the future include expanding our program to possibly include another share-day, possibly in other parts of the city which have minimal access to affordable and healthy food, as well as establishing a Niagara Falls chapter of the group. For anyone who wants to get involved with what we do, we can be reached at the Buffalo Food Not Bombs Facebook page. We will continue to build strong ties in the community and try the best we can to catch our fellow humans who fall through the cracks in this capitalist society.



# **The Queer Agenda in Buffalo: or, Your Rainbow Crosswalks Will Look Even Gaye Covered in the Blood of the Bourgeoisie**

*IRRUMATRIX FELLATOR*

*(Collective Orifice of the Queer Communist  
Community Center)*

It *should* go without saying, in 2018, that the complete destruction of heterosexuality is a necessary component of the overcoming of capitalism and its replacement by a society “in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”

Heterosexuality, by its very nature, requires the existence of two discrete, “opposite” genders; without this as a basis heterosexuality loses all coherency. It requires that these two genders relate to one another in very specific, restricted ways. Thus, gender and sexuality are closely related forms of social relation (relation to others and relation to self).

But saying this is not saying much. What kind of social relation are we dealing with? This isn’t a difficult question to answer -- just ask a queer person. Just as the wage-laborer experiences the truth of capitalist exploitation by being a direct target of the violence required to maintain capital accumulation (the violence known as “Monday”), the queer experiences the truth of the

heterosexual order by being a direct target of the violence that constitutes it.

We're not dealing with mere abstractions here. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, around 1:30 a.m., two gay men were attacked and beaten by a group of homophobes. This attack occurred at the corner of Allen Street and Elmwood Avenue, ostensibly at the heart of Buffalo's own "gayborhood," Allentown. Since then, several trans people, including a trans woman of color, were also attacked in this neighborhood. (This is not even mentioning attacks that have gone unreported in less affluent neighborhoods – police violence against queer people of color is widespread here as it is in every city in America.)

Allentown is rapidly gentrifying, with its queer and non-white residents being displaced by businesses catering to people from more affluent areas of Buffalo and the surrounding suburbs. Allentown is poised to become what Chippewa Street in Buffalo has long been – a party/club district for affluent, mostly straight college students and "professionals". The city government's response to this attack was:

- 1) On the one hand, to use it as an excuse to increase police presence on Allen, thus strengthening the very forces that are accelerating gentrification. Anyone who has spent any time on Allen at all knows that the police are far more interested in harassing the homeless and protecting the ever-increasing

weekend throng of heterosexual white men who yell slurs at *us*, than they are in protecting a bunch of faggots.

2) On the other, to install rainbow crosswalks at the intersection at which the attack happened. While this might help maintain the market-value of Allentown real-estate by highlighting the “charm” of its status as an “historically gay neighborhood” (emphasis on the “historically”), it does little to solve the underlying problem – when your skull hits concrete, it doesn’t really matter to you whether that concrete has the equivalent of a Facebook “pride” filter slathered thinly over its surface.



That this attack happened should not surprise any queer who's set foot in Allentown lately. Nor should it surprise us that the "official" response to this attack was not only ineffective, but outright counterproductive. Most "LGBTQ activism" in this country is deeply implicated in the nonprofit-industrial complex, the Democratic Party machine, and other institutions whose interests are ultimately on the side of the cops and the gentrifiers. This is not to downplay the efforts of comrades who need our solidarity and support in working hard at establishing a viable radical alternative to the HRC-style homonationalist politics that dominate our city. However, we have a long way to go if in fact we are trying to dismantle these mutually supporting structures of heterosexual violence and the violence of the market and the state.

Why is this? Well, this isn't New York or the Bay (not that those are paradise either). Being a gay gender weirdo in this city is fucking hard. Walking around this city – even "historically gay" Allentown – feels to us as if we're entering a warzone; we must exercise caution and rely on safety in numbers, lest the sound of our voice, or the rhythm of our gait, or the quality of the eye contact we make with those around us, lead to a physical or verbal attack. And for many of us, not even our homes are safe from violence.

What does this tell us about the nature of heterosexuality as a social relation? Well, at this point it might be useful to ask "what purpose does heterosexuality serve"? Because every social

relation that is maintained by violence is always done so in the service of maintaining the inequalities of our society, a society in which those who have nothing must give their labor to those who have everything in exchange for the the value of their labor-power. But how is the value of this labor-power constituted? Well, a body must be fed, clothed, emotionally and psychologically cared for so that it might be in “good working condition” for the capitalist. “Productive” labor (jobs that suck) requires “reproductive” labor (recovering from your sucky job, which is basically a second job). Here we come back to gender and sexuality. Under capitalism, gender is economically important in that it creates a division of labor between productive (“masculine”) and reproductive (“feminine”) labor – even if both members of a heterosexual couple work, it’s likely that the man has a higher-paying job and the woman performs a greater share of the unpaid reproductive labor (cooking, cleaning, listening to your man complain about his job and nodding sympathetically). The nuclear family is a major site of this sort of unpaid reproductive labor, but this dynamic transcends its narrow limits.

Those whose own genders, or whose relations to others’ genders, defy the imperatives of capitalism as an overall productive-reproductive system, are punished by being marginalized with respect to this system. Any queer person who has been rejected by their family knows this all too well. Those who defy the imperatives of capitalism’s norms of social-reproductive activity will find themselves placed in a precarious position, their access

to the means of social reproduction jeopardized just as those who refuse to obey market imperatives no longer have access to productive activity as a means to their own livelihood.

In these conditions, queer people must band together to create alternative means of reproducing their lives, outside the bounds of the heterosexual family. What capitalism considers the social reproduction of labor-power as a commodity, is experienced by us as something quite different; non-Marxists usually call it “having fun”. Collective structures are required to have fun, to relax, to process our emotions effectively – in short, to maintain ourselves in good working order, which for the capitalist means we can be better workers but for us means we can be better revolutionaries. The most marginalized members of the queer community are those with the most to gain and the least to lose in the abolition of the present state of things. But they are also the ones least likely to have the time for politics when they barely have the tools they need to simply survive – to maintain the social and emotional stability required to live under capitalism.

The existence of radical queer political resistance requires that queers – especially the most marginalized, such as the poor, people of color, and those with disabilities – are able to think beyond issues of mere survival, and this in turn requires that we as a community develop collective forms of survival based upon consciously anti-heteronormative forms of mutual aid. You need

to be able to defend your emotional and physical integrity as a subject before you can even think about going on the offensive.

Thus, a necessary (though not sufficient!) component of queer resistance involves finding ways of effectively living together, of organizing support systems for each other, and of building spaces where we can gather to have fun without having to worry about violence. This is what our collective aims to do, but the scope of this project goes beyond our particular organization; indeed, there are other groups in Buffalo doing similar things, and we support their efforts.

Gays that escape desperation together fight domination together.

Beyond the need for safer spaces for queers to have fun and organize, we need to think of more concrete steps as a community for reclaiming our streets and our city from state, market, and heterosexual violence, and we need to support and further the work already being done to provide mutual aid, from housing to hormones, to the queer community, while building solidarity among queer and other marginalized people, to realize our common interest in ending this violence and building a new society.

## **There are Cops Among Us: Report Back on the Teaching Assistant Living Stipend Movement at SUNY Buffalo**

*Anonymous*

This report back will not be a case for why teaching assistants (TAs) deserve a living wage. This argument has already been trotted out more than once in local and national media. Instead, it will focus on the revolutionary actions of TAs, adjuncts, students, and their allies at the University at Buffalo (UB) during the previous year. While recounting the major events, their tactical efficacy will also be assessed. The goal is not just to describe what *had* happened, but to plan for what *will* happen.

The Living Stipend Movement, despite being active for over a year, regained its momentum in the summer. New faces energized the stale infrastructure and brought with them new ideas. One, which would become the guiding light of the movement, *praxis* and *telos*, was the Petition. The Petition, which laid out an economic case for increasing the TA stipend, was signed by thousands of TAs, faculty, and even some undergraduate students. At the height of its popularity in the early fall, it was decided to hand-deliver the Petition to the president of UB, Satish K. Tripathi.

On September 25, around a hundred TAs and their allies met in front of the Student Union to begin a march around campus prior



to delivering the Petition. By this time, the shiny new faces from the summer had congealed into a *de facto* leadership committee. The march was delayed as they gave television interviews. As TAs grew impatient, Tripathi's undercover police watched over the crowd. But the march eventually got started. The uncoordinated walk through the most desolate part of campus was mostly uneventful. A few people tried to move the group into the street, but the majority remained on the sidewalks at all times.

Once at Tripathi's office, he was nowhere to be found. Instead, Provost Chip Zukowski and another administrator were ready to receive the Petition. "Ready," we say, because they were alerted to the march well before it happened by the *de facto* leadership committee (let's just call it "the Committee"). After a brief rapport in the office lobby with the entirety of the participants in the march, the discussion moved behind closed doors with two TAs from the Committee and a few other folks who just walked into the room without invitation. The meeting, like all administrative meetings, only promised more meetings. While the Committee hailed it a victory, the rest of us were only just getting started. Those who were in that room that day found an opportunity to speak directly to the administration. They calmly explained that a living stipend wasn't a request, but a demand. Once this point was made clear, Chip clasped his hands, grit his teeth, and ended the meeting immediately.

Another meeting was planned for Thursday of that same week. This time, the administration had at least ten uniformed and

undercover police officers on hand. They used armed guards to not just intimidate, but also to limit access to the meeting to just two TAs and a lawyer. The lawyer became involved with the movement as an ally and volunteered to attend the meeting *pro bono*. The administration already had their lawyer on hand. While this meeting continued the propagation and perpetuation of more meetings, it was an obvious indication of how unwilling the administration was to work with TAs. When asked about why there were so many police around for the meeting, an administrator responded: “We were afraid.”

This statement alone should have been enough to show the movement organizers how much power they had, but, instead, they tightened the leashes around their necks. After the meeting, the Committee distanced themselves from the aid offered by the lawyer-ally, believing that they could work with the administration earnestly and without legal barriers. This would not stop the lawyer from writing a letter to Provost Chip in regards to the Thursday meeting. This letter, like the Petition, once again made the administration *afraid*. Word filtered down from Chip, to department chairs, to the TAs in the Committee. The message was, “We, the administration, are worried about you, the TAs.” The Committee proceeded to chastise anyone who was associated with the lawyer. This backlash marked the beginning of the end of the viability of the living stipend movement. It was increasingly evident that those in the Committee were just semi-official Collaborators with the administration.

Many of us believed the movement was worth saving. We sat in on meetings, deliberated, and even voted on future plans. However, this open-minded participation would not stop the collaborationist elements of the movement from taking full control. With full permission of the Collaborators, a few people planned the next march, which was to coincide with Tripathi's "State of the University" Address. The Collaborators instantly took issue with the language of the invitation sent out to the thousands of Petition signers, which likened Tripathi to a "criminal." They unilaterally decided to send out an email within 24 hours of the call for action that retracted it. In addition, one Collaborator, who had a well-known history of sexual harassment, phoned several people involved with the invitation and verbally harassed them. The movement was officially broken, but this would not stop the Collaborators from marching, with a police escort. As one TA succinctly observed afterward, "If you're not calling the president a criminal, what's the point?"

Toward the end of the year, the Collaborators staged their final action of the semester: a sit-in. The event was publicly advertised and the Collaborators, faithful until the end, notified University Police of their intentions. The sit-in, which was publicized as "Occupy Tripathi's Office," actually only aimed at the lobby of his massive office. Once the TAs got there, however, the doors were closed, locked, and guarded by at least ten uniformed cops and several administrators. So, for a few hours they sat in a hallway and spoke to each other about how shitty

their lives are. The cops smirked at them and Tripathi left out a back door, if he wasn't already comfortable at home.



If we have any words for the Collaborators, it is this: What do you really think? That there is a magic number for your Petition? That once it reaches some theological threshold you will be absolved? Do you honestly feel like Tripathi cares about you? *Do you really think that they aren't laughing at us?* Do you identify yourself, as they do, as a non-working student? Did you cry, as we did, when they raised the cost of your health

insurance, even after telling the media that TAs got free health insurance? Do you think they are afraid at all after we bargained away our right to strike? How much more extra labor can you put up with? When has “the movement” ever worked for you? How long do we have to wait, writing this tearful vitriol, until you join us in resisting?

The trajectory of the TA Living Stipend Movement can be summed up in three words: Committees, Collaborators, Cops. It has been long dead, if it wasn't stillborn to begin with. But the movement taught us valuable lessons this year and provided important opportunities. TAs and allies in every discipline are joining the struggle, yet this time they are not reporting to the University Police beforehand. They are gluing the locks of administrators' and collaborators' offices. They are composing and distributing manifestos and testimonies calling out the Collaborators for their collaboration, the University for its incompetence, and the Administration for its eugenic policies. They've set fire to multiple campus buildings and will burn the whole fucking campus to the ground if they have to. The administration is afraid of us. Now is not the time to calm their nerves and snitch on ourselves. Now is a time for action. The Graduate Student Employee Union is fond of saying that “UB works because we do.” Show the administration just how inoperable the university is with starving TAs!



## **Transformative Justice Is Only for Communities That Want to Transform**

*Hell Man*

This brief reflection comes from the experience of participating in a conflict resolution process within the Buffalo Red and Black network and, more specifically, watching the failures of a leftist network to thoughtfully confront concepts of community, transformation, and, justice.

First, I want to offer a word on terminology. The phrases “restorative justice” and “transformative justice” are frequently conflated and this confusion has serious consequences beyond a sloppy commitment to the paramount ideal of justice in our abhorrent world of human disposability. As the names suggest, restorative justice aims to restore community while transformative justice seeks to transform the community. Both projects work against punitive justice in important ways. They aim to recognize that intra-communal violence is committed by humans rather than monsters and look to place power with the survivor of aggression rather than attempting to resolve conflict through the violence of the state. The major difference is that restorative justice looks to aggressors and survivors of violence to resolve and restore the always tentative safety of a community while transformative justice expands outward to examine the whole community when violence is committed.

Transformative justice signals two things: (1) the recognition that any community is already fraught with violence, and (2) that the community should be constantly, permanently even, committed to transforming itself to be one in which members combat violence and protect each other. In this way, transformative justice can encompass a more varied approach to conflict resolution, including removal of community members or physical aggression. For example, if the community envisions violently attacking rapists as a tactic to transform the world and a survivor of rape desires this approach, then the community will attack this rapist in the name of justice and making a new and better world. Such tactics would not work under the practice of restorative justice, nor would it be the only means by which a community committed to transformative justice would combat sexual violence. In addition to violently responding to rapists, a community working within a transformative justice would constantly be working to educate and self-reflect on the persistent presence of rape culture and misogyny within the community.

This distinction between these two approaches to non-punitive, non-state justice is to emphasize these different visions of community and how these visions can be deployed to destroy the humanity of those who have transgressed with the aim of restoring a fantasy of radical community. If the community that wishes to restore itself cannot accurately understand itself and the forms of violence, historical and interpersonal, that persist in



it, then the project of restoration is ultimately one of protecting that violence and the privileges and protections that enable it.

What Buffalo Red and Black wishes to do is restore a fantasy of a community without discomfort or the implication of individual community members, their unearned historical privileges and personal shortcomings, in historical violence. This community does not wish to participate in transformative justice because it does not wish to transform. Even if deciding that someone who has transgressed means that they are to be expelled—or that any conflict would sort itself out—is demonstrating that there is no commitment to the transformation of the community or the world in which we live. Expelling someone from the community, or even attacking a rapist, without a reflection upon the community and its failings within a larger context of historical violence is a commitment purely to restoring a fantasy of an infallible radical community that actually supports the conditions of historical violence.

The restoration of this fantastical community—one that is perfectly feminist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, abolitionist, and so on—is actually the restoration of a very different community: a pervasively white, masculine, college-educated, petty bourgeois community. This list of identity positions is not to fetishize another kind of fantasy in which “diversity” supplies an answer to community violence, but rather is to emphasize that a practice of restorative justice that, without self-reflection or criticism, works to restore the protections and privileges that come with

these identity positions without conflict is no different from the punitive justice enacted by the state via the repressive apparatuses of the police and prisons. If a community and its members are unwilling to actively confront and accept their positions within historical violence—such as, patriarchy and settler colonialism—then it does not actually want to imagine or enact forms of justice that transform the community and world into a more just or livable place for everyone, most especially peoples who have been historically oppressed to support and reproduce these the protections and privileges.

The conflict resolution process that I have been a part of within the Buffalo Red and Black network has led to the near pennilessness and homelessness of a person of color expelled from the network without care or support beyond a three-person support group committed to mutual aid. That the group has consistently avoided extended conversations about transformative justice, and the serious self-reflection and transformation it entails, and has decided that the just way to resolve conflict is abandonment, ridicule, and disregard for a person's lack of material support or even stable housing suggests that members are committed to restoring their protected and privileged positions from which to espouse ostensibly radical thinking rather than committed to the practice of transforming the community and world.

Geographer and prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore frequently says that prison abolition is not an absence but a

presence, which I take to mean that abolition is not exclusively about the destruction of prisons but building a new world and set of social relations. That is, abolition isn't simply not calling the police or even restoring a community to its pre-conflict conditions; it is remaking ourselves and our social relations build new communities and a new world. This transformation requires self-reflection, discomfort, conflict, and actively combatting of the protections and privileges afforded by historical violence. We have to want to live in a different world.

## **We Are Born in Flames**

*Anonymous*

A little over two years ago, I and others officially formed an anti-fascist trans-led organization in Buffalo NY. I've learned a lot about myself and my community since that time. It was with these peers one year ago that we watched the election results come in, it's was with those peers that we witnessed and fought against rising fascism and bigotry, and it was within those peers and within myself that I witnessed and experienced deep reservoirs of strength and resiliency that I didn't know existed. From adversity comes growth.

One organization that I worked with this year encourages members to "find their people" and I feel like I've finally done so. I'm not sure that I would have if we were still under a neoliberal administration; adversity forced us to find and show our true selves. "Our people" are not performative allies- they are our peers who are our *collaborators*, willing to put their bodies on the line and love our whole selves.

I have no patience anymore for white cis het "Easter and Christmas Catholic" activists who show up to grab a bullhorn for one or two rallies a year. I'm not sure that those folk have the self-awareness to realize that we see their actions and inactions the rest of the year; that we notice their absence in campaigns to remove white supremacists from local office, that we see them gentrifying marginalized people out of our homes, that we see

them pearl clutch, and that we see their discriminatory actions and inactions.

On the flip side, I feel like I've met and grown much closer to quite a number of fellow collaborators in this past year- I've shared extremely vulnerable and intimate moments with my peers in this past year through our work. I now have a circle of peers that I trust and rely on a great deal and that I that I love-something that I feel was unimaginable previously.

“My people” are rebels, not resisters.

Logically, we should be far more setback due to ground we have lost in this past year- but I feel that another world is now not only possible but within reach because we've discovered how resilient and strong we are and who we can rely on. Adversity has forged us into a stronger more loving movement. Bring on 2018- we're ready.

## **Fighting Gentrification: A Call for a Diversity of Tactics**

*Ty Tumminia*

Gentrification has begun in Binghamton in recent years. This is also true for most of Broome County, many areas of New York city and many other major cities across the United States. We have to ask ourselves, “What is gentrification? Who does it affect the most and how? How is this process being funded? What are some of the pros and cons of gentrification? How do we fight against it, and what are some examples of communities that have successfully fought against this?” Lastly, I will briefly state my opinion on this matter.

First, the definition of gentrification is the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents. The process can be clearly seen through the building of student luxury high rise apartment buildings. We have seen how our local government wishes to increase the police surveillance within the downtown area. Slowly, more and more property owners are leasing exclusively to student or young professionals. So, who exactly is affected by this change the most and how?

This process affects all of us one way or another. For the university students and upper middle class. Gentrification provides many benefits. Typically, the crime rate is lowered,

large corporations move into the area, the cost of living is lower than major cities, and there is an existing culture that these people get to feel a part of. However, for the poor, minorities and current residents. Gentrification has many negative side effects. Rent begins to rise, large development companies begin to buy up properties, lease practices become discriminatory, these same corporations are giving large tax breaks that hurt property value for current residents, an increase in police surveillance usually means a crackdown on Black communities and of other minority communities. We have seen this take place in Brooklyn, San Diego, Boston and now here.

I touched on it already, but how is it gentrification is funded. Typically, an urban area will have issues such as a high crime rate, communities hurt by drug use, gang violence, a poor job market and such. This will bring the property value down. In this society, this is the prime opportunity for capitalist to come in and make some easy money. Large corporations with deep pockets target these areas to being developing because of this low property value. Also, many of these corporations take advantage of programs such as PILOT or Payment in Lieu of Taxes. Here are some recent examples:

- Twin River Commons will pay \$91,144, 26 percent of the \$344,504 it would pay without the PILOT.
- University Lofts will pay \$23,093, 11 percent of the \$205,862 it would pay without the PILOT.

- 20 Hawley St. will pay \$105,872, 48 percent of the \$218,466 it would pay without the PILOT.
- Chenango Place will pay \$40,730, 21 percent of the \$194,308 it would pay without the PILOT.
- The Printing House will pay \$33,651.13, 10 percent of the \$340,302 it would pay without the PILOT.

Then there are the investors themselves. This list is too long for me to read, but it includes companies from all over New York state. Let's not forget Binghamton University's invested interest in this as well. With the NY Suny 2020 Challenge Grant. There is a lot of pressure to meet a demand for enlisting new students. These students need places to live, shop and need to be shown that there is a life in Upstate New York after college.

Boston, Massachusetts' Chinatown fought against gentrification well. These were some of the steps they followed.

1. Have Rent Controlled Areas
2. End discriminatory lease processes
3. Reduce or freeze property taxes to protect long-time residents
4. Protect senior homeowners
5. Prohibit large scale luxury development in at-risk neighborhoods
6. Continue to develop rental units, but not at the expense of the poor.



Lastly, I will try and be brief, but precise about my opinion. Gentrification is just the aftermath of the Great White Flight of the past. Now that the cities they abandoned are ripe for profit, have a culture that is attractive, and the people who lived there will be forced out. It couldn't be a better time. However, Black people and minorities are not welcome in the suburbs either. Mass incarceration, poor job conditions, racism, and capitalism will continue to destroy the Black and minority communities. Only through using various tactics including activism, non-violent resistance, and militant action can we see a true change. We all have to work together in order to change this society and the world around us, or we will continue down the same paths as before. New York City has done the community gardens, we have seen non-violent action during the Civil Rights Movement, and we have seen militant action by the example of the Black Panther Party. Where is the true change? Where is the hope that it will truly get better? There will be none until we recognize we need to take control over our lives, we need to take over how the money is spent in our communities, and destroy the barriers between us.

## Of Enlightened Self-Reliance

*The Rev. Extremo Deluxe*

“People are born free, and everywhere they are in chains.” The present arrangement of our modern politicorporatist state of affairs is largely one of naked, systematic, enthusiastic exploitation of human beings for private profit. Thankfully, there are exceptions to this rule, and as we will endeavor to show, a better way of living is in fact possible. The people—each of us individually and all of us collectively—can not only diminish or eliminate the ability of the State (and its giant squid-monster pet called Capitalism) to exploit our lives for others’ gain, but also to make our own lives richer and more fulfilling. The method of accomplishing this which we’ll discuss today is often called “DIY”, but we feel that this term both connotes amateurish sloppiness and does not capture the full flavor of the ethos. We prefer to say “enlightened self-reliance”.

Enlightened self-reliance is not something that should be undertaken lightly. It is not a hipster fad or “this one weird trick that oligarchs hate”. It is a *survival strategy*, and that is not an overstatement. The modern hypercapitalist ethic strives to reduce all human experience and relationships into a never-ending series of transactions. Everything must cost money: I pay you (or you me) some money and we each get something in return. It then follows that in such a system, the one who has more money is more free. We argue that having an economy of some sort is an

inherent property of any human society, that some human relationships are transactional in nature, and that this is desirable. Humans are luminous beings with a very wide variety of skills and talents, which differ from person to person. Because we all differ in our abilities and skills (“No person is an island”), there must be some kind of exchange taking place with others if we’re to survive at all. The exchange of goods, skills, and talents between human beings is the basis of all commerce and is a method by which societies evolve. But people can certainly exchange goods, skills, and talents for our mutual benefit without relying on the State or its pet to place a value on doing so. We can do so more fairly, more cheaply—because nobody’s getting an undeserved cut—, and best of all, more securely, because we can do so without the State or its pet even being aware of what’s going on.

Enlightened self-reliance is the deliberate cultivation *and application* of useful abilities and skills for surviving and thriving as a human being on this planet, and then sharing knowledge with others so that humankind might benefit thereby. In essence, it is DIY as a martial art.

Let’s explore how this ethic works in practice, by way of a personal anecdote.

Like many people, I own a car. (Whether this makes me a “bad anarchist” or not is debatable and not germane to the present essay, because I am not an anarchist; I am a *libertarian syndicalist*.)

[We'll discuss what *that* means in a later essay.] I used to drive a Volvo, but I don't anymore. A major reason for this is that Volvo vehicles, despite being tough, reliable machines, are considered "fancy import cars". They have their own specialized parts which have to be ordered from Sweden and installed by a mechanic who actually knows how to work on Volvos; and those are few and far between. Volvo *experts* are even fewer. Maintenance on the car was both expensive and endlessly frustrating because I had to depend on the skill and expertise of someone who I didn't know and who wasn't vouched for by a friend.

So I sold the Volvo and bought a used—ahem, *pre-owned*—Hyundai Elantra. I also bought a shop manual for the Hyundai which contains detailed instructions for the maintenance, repair, or replacement of virtually every part and system in the vehicle. They simply do not print these sort of manuals for Volvos; or if they do, they're not available to the general public. Even though I'd never worked on a car before, I'm fairly handy with tools and can follow directions; and most everything in the manual seemed fairly straightforward.

There was just one problem, though. Literally the only system listed in the manual as "repairable only by a professional" was the car's automatic transmission, and of course that was the system that decided to break first. Again, I was put in the position of having to shell out a large sum of money to someone I didn't know and who wasn't vouched for. Granted, the shop did do good work, but I found myself quite upset over the inability for

self-reliance once again rearing its ugly head. I vowed that this wouldn't happen again.

Pre-owned cars often come pre-broken in several ways. In the present case, there was (still is) a lot of deferred maintenance that needed doing, and I'm happy to say that *those* procedures are in the manual. I've since replaced the spark plugs (twice), tightened the fan belt, and replaced the rear hatch hydraulics ... and I'm not remotely through. In doing my own vehicle maintenance, I'm gaining practice with my tools and experience doing something I've never done before; plus, by sharply increasing the amount of work I can do myself, I reduce my dependence on people who I don't know and who aren't vouched for—people who probably don't have my best interest at heart—and I reduce my vulnerability to the predations of the State and its pet.

This principle is applicable not just to automobiles, but to a broad spectrum of tasks. Another good example is home maintenance. A couple years ago, I awoke one November morning to find that my furnace wasn't working. So what did I do? I researched the symptoms and narrowed the possible problem down to either a faulty part (a "pressure valve", if I recall correctly) or a broken motor. After replacing the part, the furnace still didn't work, so again I was forced to call a professional. But instead of leaving the repairman to his work, I watched closely as he removed the furnace motor and extracted a desiccated bird carcass from it. "You wouldn't believe how common this is,"

said the repairman as he put the furnace back together. “I’d install a chimney cap.”

Fast forward to a couple months ago, when the furnace started displaying the same symptoms. You can guess what the problem was; but this time, it was fixed in short order. (I’ll be installing that chimney cap in the spring.)

Up to now, this essay has been fairly personal, and that’s not the point of this collection. So let’s return there now. I am not the only person who’s capable of doing their own car or home maintenance, and there are lots of things in which I’m not so skilled. The solution to this is obvious: we ought to cultivate good relationships with other self-reliant people, so that when a problem occurs, we can address it together, perhaps even without using money. There exists an economy of mutual favors and gifts which largely goes unnoticed by the State and its pet, because they simply cannot conceive of people acting other than in their own self-interest. By cultivating useful skills, by becoming proficient with tools, and by sharing those tools and skills with others, we become more powerful, more resilient, and better able to resist socioeconomic tyranny.

We’ll be exploring this topic more fully in a later edition of this journal; but until then, I’ll leave you with some homework.

Consider your own circumstances. Consider your own skills and talents, and what resources you currently have available to you.

How can you put those skills to good use? Can you improve them? Are there things you'd like to be able to do yourself that you currently don't? Ponder these questions carefully, and when you've arrived at answers to them, *go and make them real*.

# **In Defense of Being Openly Anarchist, or: the Cops Join Anarchists and So Should You**

*Anonymous*

Security culture is a concept integral to contemporary anarchism, yet for all our vast cultural production we lack security. We talk about it enough, but we are still learning. Somehow, despite all their IQ-restricting-2.0-GPA dumbfuckery, the cops have security culture. If they embed an informant, nobody is talking about it. And the only people who know are those who need to know, that is, the informants and their managers. Here is where we have an advantage: we don't have managers. In our case, even fewer need to know. Do you take this observation to be true? Then why aren't you openly anarchist?

The TOR network works on this principle. TOR has come under scrutiny for allowing the U.S. military to use it, to allow them to run relays if they like, for the developers to occasionally pitch their project to the feds. This may seem suspect, but why shouldn't the developers incorporate this into their design? Network based anonymity only exists if enough people are using the network to mask a given individual's activity. Further, if you *exclude* the U.S. military, you have effectively told them where everyone *else* is.



The status of anonymity is the inverse of the claim in support of surveillance: “you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide.” I have things to hide, but I have nothing to fear. Within a decentralized network, I am masked as long as I don’t tip my own hand—as long as I don’t incriminate myself. Any user of TOR knows this intuitively. Fuck, any internet troll who ever had a screen name knows this.

If we are in reality building decentralized networks via affinity-based organizing, and we find this idea to have a scaling and mass appeal, then why would we not be openly anarchist? Are you a snitch? Are you sticking your nose in places it shouldn’t be? Are you actually just playing the part to subsume other energetic individuals into a mass movement? Perhaps one in which you’ve signed away your bargaining rights to a union based upon (re)achieving a \$15 wage, a wage that, given inflation, many wage workers at one point have had? *Do you understand that consent is only such if it is both continuous and enthusiastic?*

Let’s allow the cops to build mass movements (Occupy via Sabu). Let’s watch them model what snitching looks like. But let’s also encourage them to join a decentralized network. If our security culture is sound, their duplicity should only fortify it. Anarchism is about unique empowerment—our personal opposition to authority. If the personal is political, then we have comrades and accomplices by default. Our friends have lived parts of our lives, and us theirs. I refuse to be friends with cops.

By now you have likely pointed out the apparent contradiction between my call to be “openly anarchist” and the credit on this essay as “anonymous.” The resolution of this contradiction is the understanding of my argument. If you know me, you know I am an anarchist. If you don’t know me, you don’t need to know. If you think you *might* know me, simply because you know an outspoken anarchist, or whatever, then this is an exercise in security culture. Do you actually need to know? Does anyone else? Wait, are you a snitch? This text is anti-copyright, so seize it for yourself if you must. Be an anarchist, but don’t stick your nose where it doesn’t belong. Now, take the above as a mantra: “I have things to hide, but I have nothing to fear.”

Don’t tell anyone what you do, and forget *being* an “anarchist.” But for the death of the State, the destruction of Capital, and the life of the Planet, tell everyone who *you* are.

## Retire Solidarity

*Anonymous*

Here's an ambivalent proposition: retire the term "solidarity." Retire it, if only temporarily, from your vocabulary, until you have a concrete working definition of what it means, what it looks like, what it must look like, and what it *cannot* look like. I'm not suggesting that solidarity is impossible, but I am suggesting that it is, under usual circumstances, incredibly precarious, fragile, and temporary, and should be treated as such. What this would mean is an end to greeting card solidarities, text message solidarity, solidarities with convenient and deracinated abstractions like the "people," an end to cataract sympathy, the prehensile function by which we convert a body into an image and then tack that image to the wall. I'm not writing this not from a position of moral superiority, but as someone who is also guilty of using "solidarity" as a social expedient, as political shorthand, or as a way of smoothing over the frictions and discomforts that come about when people try to make politics happen with other people.

When BRB came into being, its ostensible goal was to incubate relationships between individuals with ideologically diverse perspectives in order to facilitate anti-fascist and anti-capitalist direct action and organizing. The governing principle, for theoretical and practical reasons alike, was that affinity would guide the form and content of these activities. Affinity is a sticky

principle for me. For anyone who has attempted to organize with others – or even to find common intellectual ground with them – it carries an intuitive truth—you talk better, you work better, and you trust more intimately those with whom you share specific goals and attitudes, with people who are, if not your friends, the people with whom you might want to build or dismantle a world. But in this sense, affinity is also nuclear and restrictive: its strength is its limiting tendency, the way it keeps people in tight orbit. It's really, really hard to find, harder still to maintain. And I've got lingering questions about the ability of our social context – something we want to resist and to change or scrap altogether, but which often confers the terms of that resistance – to shape and structure our affinities.

There's a tension between the thing we call affinity and the thing we call solidarity. My sense is that these are structures of experience and action whose character we know when we feel them happening, and the nature of which we forget as soon as they start to break down, for whatever reason. Over the past few months, I've struggled to maintain affinity with most of the people I regularly address as comrades, and I've felt it sharpen with others, a select few whose politics – or whose political commitments – I trust implicitly. Shedding that former sense of affinity is painful but clarifying. Feeling something more organic, truer, and more durable rise in its place—that's harder to pin down. But it feels good, or close enough to good.

Solidarity doesn't feel good. I don't think it should. I think it's grounded in foregoing access to yourself, to your time and resources, to things you barely have. What that means, or what it looks like, is contextual and variable. Whether I've been "in solidarity" is something that varies moment to moment—and perhaps it never quite gets there. It's not adequate. That seems to me the point. Within the context of a profoundly anti-Black world at large, within the context of a nation-state defined by settler colonialism and anti-indigenous genocide, and within an imperialist economic world system that operates by throttling, denuding, and immiserating the peripheral Global South for the benefit of the Northern imperial core, I question whether dependable or consistent solidarity is possible (at least, from my vantage as a non-Black, non-Indigenous person raised in Amreeka). For people in this position – or set of positions – I don't think it is, at least not along the lines of flight to which we typically refer. Many of us, most of us, are exploited *and* liberated—our exploitation, that is, depends on the continued oppression of people who are rendered civilly, socially, and economically dead. In the absence of concerted, militant resistance, I think the character of our solidarity is, in the sense of a speech act, performative: it exists, or "succeeds," when we commit ourselves to a goal and then actualize that goal under certain conditions. We can *do* solidarity, maybe, but most of us, anyway, are not "in" it. When we stop "doing" it, it's over.



One of the key points of friction between me and comrades in my immediate proximity – and one of the things that has made me feel a loss of affinity for them – is the status of solidarity in its relation to political commitments, and more specifically, the way we bring to bear what we know about the world in which we live to bear on our immediate formations. We haven't had real affinity here – or we've had it sporadically – because we haven't had something like trust, or a real sense of shared purpose. In Buffalo, we non-Black and non-Indigenous "radicals" have failed, as ever, to live something like an anti-racist politics. We've failed as anarchists – or at least as radical socialists – who *claim* to understand and oppose the long history

of American settler carcerality to think about the way it influences the way we think about and relate to one another—and the same is true for our supposed opposition to the settler colony that is, for many of us, albeit to different degrees, the historical context that has made us. We’ve failed to grapple with the contradiction of knowing that we can harm and be harmed, to think outside the binary of safe and harmful spaces. We’ve failed to acknowledge that the material reality we live in is a function of constant violence and oppression, and that for those of us who exist in privileged relation to anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and white supremacist systems of oppression, our position as oppressors is not something we can exit through ideological conversion.

We’ve failed to think beyond a politics of disposability, to think the difference between conflict and abuse—or, for that matter, to think the overlap between them. Most crucially, perhaps, we’ve failed to understand and work with an analysis of oppression that hinges on position, and a positional analysis that takes into account the legacies of historical violence, the way we live history every day, rather than one which, somewhat confusingly, derails *either* into vulgar identity politics or an abstract commitment to an imagined homogenous entity called “workers” or “the lower class.”

I write with an awareness that, as the anniversary of J20 approaches, there are increasingly severe and punitive consequences for militant resistance; that we live under an

intensifying climate of surveillance; that the trends of capitalist and fascist violence that define the Euro-American context continue to accelerate, and that we can and do experience this violence as people who labor, mostly for very little, under the regime of that capital. But momentarily, I am less concerned with describing the ways that we non-Black and non-Indigenous “anarchists” position ourselves against that violent constellation, and more so with taking stock the myriad ways we continue to align ourselves with it—the way we continue to live and breathe out its rhythms, and our inability to wrestle with the embodied contradictions that we ourselves represent; the way we can commit intellectually and culturally to solidarity, or solidarities which we materially betray on a daily basis. I want to keep thinking about what it might mean to minimize those betrayals while endeavoring towards the end of the systems that make them possible. That’s what I’m sitting with. And the people with whom I find affinity will be doing the same.



# **PART III**

## **In Memoriam**

## **Jenny (Lovely) Keys**

“As an alienated individual who attempts to assert my individuality against the oppressive power of a dehumanizing social system: If I'm not free to be me then I must not Be!”



*Nov 15, 1987 - July, 29th, 2017*

## Ty Tumminia



*May 9, 1992 - Nov 5, 2017*

