

lunge the status quo, and dismisses the courage of those who are prepared to do so. This allegation is typical of privileged people who have been taught to trust the authorities and fear everyone who disobeys them.

We face a system that controls our lives by forcefully aligning them to its miserable terms, whose prisons lock up anyone who acts on their desires for autonomy and freedom by disrupting the reproduction of power and the economy. There is nothing in this world currently deserving the name peace; from governments carpet bombing villages and police torturing people, to the daily coercion of living under the rule of power maintained by the threat of prison. 'Violence' is just a moral category, a meaningless term used to control our struggles which pretends to be able to compare the incomparable. It equates the state's domination to acts of revolt like destroying commodities, defending yourself from police, fighting to free prisoners, and indigenous people taking back stolen land. It should be clear that legalistic pacifism only makes movements obedient, harmless, and delusional.

**No government—that is to say, no centralized power—will ever willingly put the needs of common people before the needs of the powerful.** It's naïve to hope for this. The center of gravity in this movement has to be our freedom and autonomy, and the mutual aid that can sustain those—not the desire for an "accountable" centralized power. No such thing has ever existed.

That means the important thing is not to make demands upon our rulers, but to build up the power to realize the desires behind these demands ourselves. This is called direct action. Ironically, if we do this effectively—realizing that anything these systems might concede is only to serve as a distraction from the continuation of their misery—the powerful will have to take our demands seriously, if only in order to try to keep our attention and allegiance. We attain leverage by developing our own strength.

Today's entrenched systems cannot be reformed away. Those who hold power in a hierarchical system are the ones who institute reforms, and they generally do so in ways that preserve or even amplify their power. Anarchist revolution means fighting to overthrow these elites in order to begin to create a free society.

Countless past movements learned the hard way that establishing their own bureaucracy, however "democratic", only undermined their original goals. We shouldn't invest new leaders with authority, nor even new decision-making structures; we should find ways to defend and extend our freedom, while abolishing the inequalities that have been forced on us. Freedom cannot be given, it must be taken.

**The occupations will thrive on the actions we take.** We're not just here to "speak truth to power"—when we only speak, the powerful turn a deaf ear to us. Let's make space for autonomous initiatives and organize direct action that confronts the source of social inequalities—capital and the state.

**Thanks for reading and scheming and acting.**  
*May your struggles bring you closer to freedom.*

**For more information: [crimethinc.com](http://crimethinc.com), [riselikelions.net](http://riselikelions.net),  
[sabotagemedia.anarkhia.org](http://sabotagemedia.anarkhia.org), [waronsociety.noblogs.org](http://waronsociety.noblogs.org)  
*text altered from original crimethinc pamphlet***

# DEAR OCCUPIERS

*a letter from anarchists*



**Support and solidarity!** We're inspired by the occupations on Wall Street and elsewhere. Finally, people are taking to the streets again! The momentum around these actions has the potential to reinvigorate resistance. We hope these occupations will increase both in numbers and in substance, and we'll do our best to contribute to that.

**Why should you listen to our ideas?** In short, because we've been at this a long time already. We've spent decades struggling against capitalism, organizing occupations, and making decisions by consensus. If this new movement doesn't learn from the mistakes of previous ones, we run the risk of repeating them. We've summarized some of our hard-won lessons here.

**Occupation is nothing new.** The land we stand on is already occupied territory. The nation-states of 'North America' were founded upon the extermination of indigenous peoples and the colonization of their land, not to mention centuries of slavery and exploitation. For a counter-occupation to be meaningful, it has to begin from this history. Better yet, it should embrace the history of resistance extending from indigenous self-defense and slave revolts through the various workers' and anti-war movements right up to the recent anti-globalization movement.

**The "99%" is not one social body, but many.** Some occupiers have presented a narrative in which the "99%" is characterized as a homogenous mass. The faces intended to represent "ordinary people" often look suspiciously like the predominantly white, law-abiding middle-class citizens we're used to seeing on television programs, even though such people make up a minority of the general population.

It's a mistake to whitewash over our diverse identities and experiences. Not everyone is waking up to the shitiness of capitalism for the first time now; some populations have been targeted by the power structure for years or generations. Middle-class workers who are just now losing their social standing can learn a lot from those who have been on the receiving end of the domination of capital and the state for much longer.

**The problem isn't just a few "bad apples".** The crisis is not the result of the selfishness of a few investment bankers; it is the inevitable consequence of an economic system that rewards cutthroat competition at every level of society. Capitalism is not a static way of life but a dynamic process that consumes everything, transforming the world into profit and wreckage. Now that everything has been fed into the fire, the system is collapsing, leaving even its former beneficiaries out in the cold. The answer is not to revert to some earlier stage of capitalism—to go back to the gold standard, for example; not only is that impossible, those earlier stages didn't benefit the "99%" either. To get out of this mess, we'll have to rediscover other ways of relating to each other and the world around us. We'll have to put an end to the systems, identities, and relations imposed on all of us since birth, so that we can finally create our lives in the joyous revolutionary possibilities that arise from continuous struggle against all forms of domination.

**Police can't be trusted.** They may be "ordinary workers", but their job is to protect the interests of the ruling class. As long as they remain employed as police, we can't count on them, however friendly they might act. In fact, we'll have to be in conflict with them. Occupiers who don't know this already will learn it firsthand as soon as they threaten the imbalances of wealth and power our society is based on. Anyone who insists that the police exist to protect and serve the common people has probably lived a privileged life, and an obedient one. In the same way, politicians, reformist bureaucrats, and the enforcers of legalism (like 'peacekeepers' at demonstrations, and the leaders who always denounce those who act against authority, including theirs) can only be enemies to a struggle that seeks what power will never be able to give us: our lives.

**Don't fetishize obedience to the law.** Laws serve to protect the privileges of the wealthy and powerful; obeying them is not necessarily ethical, and considering the context of why laws exist, it probably isn't. Slavery was legal. The Nazis had laws too. We have to develop the strength of conscience to do what we know is best, regardless of the laws created by our rulers and enforced on the rest of us.

**To have a diversity of participants, a movement must make space for a diversity of tactics.** It's controlling and self-important to think you know how everyone should act in pursuit of a better world. Denouncing others only equips the authorities to delegitimize, divide, and destroy the movement as a whole. Criticism and debate propel a movement forward, but power grabs cripple it. The goal should not be to compel everyone to adopt one set of tactics, but to discover how different approaches can be mutually beneficial.

**Don't assume those who break the law or confront police are agents provocateurs.** A lot of people have good reason to be angry. Not everyone is resigned to legalistic pacifism; some people still remember how to stand up for themselves. Police violence isn't just meant to provoke us, it's meant to hurt and scare us into inaction. In this context, self-defense is essential.

Assuming that those at the front of clashes with the authorities are somehow in league with the authorities is not only illogical—it delegitimizes the spirit it takes to chal-