

## In Struggle for Liberation

*Thoughts on Destroying the State and Creating Anarchy*

The anarchist movement faces a number of challenges if it is to survive and grow in the coming years. In this pamphlet, anarchists from a diversity of backgrounds share their experiences and perspectives. From anarchist prisoners to anarchist mothers, the writers focus on building the struggle to destroy the state and create anarchy.

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Creating Anarchy



- It took nine years of traveling to develop the connections I needed. I've had the experiences God created for me. The traveling scene has a community. You could go to any town - you'd have a connection. Friends or lifestyle in common. We're both out here. We're both sleeping under this bridge. Traveling -- That gave me a vision of community initially. I realized I could stay in one place - could use those abilities to create something new.

Harrisonburg: Milking a university is a very fruitful means of generating fliers, banners, buttons, etc.

-I was just totally inspired by seeing people start similar places in D.C. and Charlottesville, because I realized that there's nothing that makes them extra special or more qualified to do things like that, it's just that they went ahead and got their shit together.

-There are a lot of risks, but if there is a healthy, functioning group of people who are honest with each other and are committed - I would say go for it!

**If people can start radical spaces in central Virginia of all places, so can you!**

### **Intro:**

Over half a decade into the twenty-first century, the anarchist movement in the US is growing in significant ways. In towns and cities across the country, anarchists are getting involved in community organizing, opening up social centers, infoshops, and independent media organs. But at the same time, we are losing the sense of empowerment, the feeling that things could change soon, that was pungent in the air before September 11th. The decline of "summit-hopping" has allowed us to commit to the necessary work of putting down roots, but it has also left many anarchist communities isolated and feeling alone. Are we building a foundation for the long haul, or beating a leisurely retreat away from confrontation with Authority? We are the ones who will decide.

From the ground up, many anarchists are starting to build the needed networks of solidarity from the essential basis of active, engaged communities. Recently, anarchists in the Northeast, the Great Plains, Virginia, and elsewhere have started organizing regional gatherings. Folks in Baltimore this summer are hosting a new anarchist bookfair, alongside the first Mid-Atlantic infoshop gathering. New chapters and gatherings of Anarchist People of Color are spring up across the country.

At the same time, we are beset with our typical problems. New groups pop up, and fall apart just as quickly. The internet is littered with obsolete contact emails for groups that are apparently no longer active.

To an outsider trying to get in, it would seem that anarchists cannot keep their shit together. From the perspective of an insider I would say that at least among many of the white anarchists I'm familiar with there is a critical lack of discipline and seriousness, and the rest of us tend to tolerate people treating revolution like a social club. A spirit of criticism and self-improvement is lacking. It's either a hippy-like "I'm okay, you're okay" culture of avoidance and comfort zones, or it's a hornets' nest of egoistic, armchair tongue-lashings like you'd expect on Fox News.

There are other problems the anarchist movement in this country will have to overcome if it is to survive, grow, and have a chance of success. One is passivity. Even anarchists who do not hamstring themselves with adherence to the "white, liberal doctrines" of nonviolence (to use the FBI's apt description from internal COINTELPRO documents) fail to take initiative and develop proactive strategies, as though victory were about to fall in our lap. Some anarchists today use an important critique of self-perpetuating organizations to avoid all organizing, excusing their inactivity and reliance on unforeseen crises. Others are just paralyzed from living in a spectator society that sucks all the will out of us. And few of us are learning the skills that would allow us to be competent and combative, while many of those that do drown militancy in such macho adventurism that it is likely to remain the self-gratifying boys' club it is now.

Another major problem in the anarchist movement is that few of us seem to be rooted in any populations that could actually sustain rebellion. Among us alienated white anarchists, we're intent on dropping out of our communities rather than attempting to transform or rebuild them. Anarchists of color I've spoken to often seem to feel that their peers are skeptical of their political orientation. And let's face it; most of the people who would be crucial to a far-reaching anarchist revolution are not currently in the anarchist movement. Significant numbers of anarchists in this country keep our movement irrelevant to people of color, prisoners, indigenous people, and people of the Global South, by engaging with issues instead of communities, and denying solidarity to sincerely liberation-minded people in resistance because they have ideological differences with us, and do not identify as anarchists. Yes, yes, I know, in the Spanish Civil War and elsewhere the Communists backstabbed us and destroyed the movement. It's important to recognize the mechanisms of co-optation, recuperation, and authoritarianism. But if we can't see the difference between people in resistance, and political parties in resistance,

#### HOW TO DO THIS

Charlotte: I don't think there should be any boundaries as far as what every infoshop needs. I have been to ones that have their own feel and goals on what they want that place to be. Information for people is a standard. Books, zines, anything to challenge people's minds.

-Most of the people that were in the collective donated their own books and we would have people give us theirs also. None were bought.

- Location is a very important thing to select. You want it to be safe for everyone to come by but at the same time I think that there should be outreach towards the homeless. I think it's good having it where public transportation goes.

Charlottesville: Create space in the library for book donations. Libraries have free shelves. See if your town has a "Friends of the Library" -volunteer there or go to their sale. AK Press gives 40% off to infoshops. When you travel around, pick up zines. Often you don't have to pay for them - you can trade or if you say you're starting an infoshop they'll even give them to you (try writing to AK Press for free books). We got that copier for \$75 at a thrift store. The video projector's from an auction at the university (\$125). Some copy chains have the honor policy. For food -food stamps, dumpstering, food not bombs, gardens, employee theft, etc. Furniture - dumpster the local college at the end of the school year. Freecycle.org

-Have games and activities (like ping pong or foosball) available.

-I think it needs to be a place that's comfortable to be in. If it's a shitty punk house or something...not a lot of people are gonna want to hang out there. It's important for it to be clean and presentable.

Lynchburg: You can get historic grants from the state or federal gov., but it really limits how you build and the people who you have build it. 85% of the materials we use are scrapped off of other jobs (from the THOR construction company). We're insulating things really well. We are going to have a green roof with lots of plants for shade. For light, there will be lots of windows, and skylights, and of course the courtyard with the open roof.

cussed. I think Social centers making information available that's otherwise hard to access is important.

-I've seen other people let go of their private property instinct and donate their favorite books here - one person in the collective donated his computer and comes here to use it. I think that's significant for an age in which we're individuals with personal phones, personal computers, personal ipods, etc. Fuck that. If we share our resources, we don't have to consume nearly as much - not to mention risk arrest as often.

-For travelers, these places can really help out- with food, internet, information, new friendships. Free stores are great for travelers. Ideally, when we travel, we can exchange ideas, get inspired, inspire, and support each other (mutual aid).

Harrisonburg: Ideally I think there would be a shift in how people pursue recreation and get help for their activities and hopefully this would give people the feeling that they were part of something bigger and that they could call on this bigger network anytime they needed help on something.

I've noticed that it has started to bring different activist groups in the area together.

-There is a mutual aid group against depression that deals with our unhealthy society and how it affects mental health. The highlight I think is the Free Store. There is a barter list, both for Spanish and English speakers. I think it can generate an alternative means to giving and receiving help without resorting to consumption/capitalistic means. That it is PROOF that we can live and grow from one another in a non-competitive way with little to no money involved.

-I think what makes us radical is that instead of relying on "authorities" or charitable organizations to solve our problems, we are using this space to take those solutions into our own hands. We offer research resources, food when people need it, and a comfortable place for people to come when they're feeling lonely - and everything's free. I think that's pretty radical in itself, but it's the possibility of what people can use the space for that's really radical. We don't say that we'll solve everyone's problems for them, but we'll provide the space and the energy to help them solve problems themselves.

and habitually avoid both, we've got some problems.

And on a softer note, we anarchists could use more compassion. Sure, we throw good parties (maybe too good), but do our radical communities do anything to sustain us? Are we learning skills like child care, healing, fixing cars, distributing free food and clothing, and availing these services to the broader community, to make us all less dependent on wage labor? Are we there for our friends and neighbors with depression, substance abuse problems, eating disorders, histories of abuse, or is it accepted that once people get sick, get kids, get a full-time job, they'll just have to drop out of the movement because we conform to the lifestyles of students, drop-outs, bachelors and traveler-kids, but no others? Being rooted in a community also means acknowledging that community's immediate concerns and trying to improve conditions, like you actually care. Finding the angles that allow you to push at the walls of power and deliver short-term benefits while encouraging people to take more is key.

In my town we recently started an Anarchist Black Cross chapter, focusing more on normal prisoners than political prisoners. With the aid of a great organization started by women of color to help Virginia prisoners and their families, we got the addresses of some inmates who wanted pen pals. We set up a PO Box, compiled a list of zines and pamphlets, and started writing, to just a dozen people to start with, offering them a pen pal, free literature, and help with legal research or fundraising (though being upfront about our sorely limited resources). The response has been great. We've all learned a lot from our pen pals; they've taught us about race, class, prison, and resistance; they've gotten meaningful support, contact with the outside, extra resources, a small measure of protection from bad treatment; and some of them who were already anti-authoritarians are now increasingly interested in anarchism (though we make sure not to proselytize anyone). For stage two, we doubled our scope just by going to the local jail during visiting hours and handing out flyers offering support to inmates. A bunch of prisoners and their family members wrote us, and now we're building community support to pressure the jail to improve conditions. Not to get a new rule on the books (having been in prison I know the rules don't mean shit anyway), but to stop our new friends from getting messed with, to let the authorities know that if they don't cave in they'll get publicly embarrassed or worse. And by tactfully involving the prisoners, responding to their needs, their desires and suggestions, but letting them choose their own level of risk, we're helping them empower themselves, and building relationships of

solidarity with them.

For all our shortcomings, anarchists across the country are starting work like this. We need to be more vocal, to spread our experiences and learn from them, to overcome isolation and support each other. I put together this pamphlet for these purposes: to encourage strategizing and taking the initiative; to share lessons and increase our effectiveness; and to re-center the anarchist movement around those who are at the front-lines of the struggle. So, rather than put out an open call for contributions to this pamphlet, I was more selective, to make sure that voices less prominent in the anarchist movement take center stage in this pamphlet. Of the eight contributors, five are people of color, and two are prisoners. A glaring omission is that none of the contributors are latinos or immigrants, and none have written about the growing movement of immigrants in this country. Who knows better that borders and laws are inhuman than people declared illegal? Unfortunately, all the latino anarchists whom I asked to contribute to this pamphlet were too busy with other things. Hopefully, all of us are still doing what we can to support the struggles of immigrants, latino and otherwise, in our area.

Three of the eight contributors are women. I have noticed that even among groups that generally have equal participation between men and women, women do not take part equally in discussions of tactics and strategy (regardless of whether the group is pacifist or militant). This is distressing, because of the internal hierarchy it represents, and because we are already short on strategy and cannot afford to cut out half of the minds in our movement. Patriarchal groups are damaging to their members, rather than supportive, and they are more likely to fracture under stress. This criticism has been made enough times; perhaps what is lacking is for people in dominant categories to give up some power and learn from people at the bottom of our society's various fucked-up hierarchies.

May we work through these weaknesses, and hone our strengths, support each other, and smash the systems that oppress us.

In struggle for liberation,  
Peter Gelderloos

*Peter, who edited this pamphlet, is an anarchist writer and activist living in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is the author of How Nonviolence Protects the State and Consensus: A New Handbook for Grassroots Activists, as well as a pamphlet on the prison system and on democratic government. A forthcoming book will describe what a global revolution and a resulting fully functioning anarchist society might look like...*

-We have the leverage for all of us to be able to do what we wanna do. To do something besides drinkin' under a bridge.

Harrisonburg: I have learned not to be afraid of bureaucracy. Yes, opening the space was a fucking pain in the ass, but it's not difficult to understand or figure out.

Charlottesville: One of the things I learned is to listen to other people and not to try to impose what I think.

-I definitely changed - The idea of an alternative community space and being exposed to everything that it's connected with had never occurred to me before. Being aware of organizations like Food Not Bombs, being more politically involved and aware - this is a way to be part of things that are happening in your community and get to know people.

-I think reading the literature has opened up my awareness and made me challenge a lot of things like work and just fundamental cultural things. Just meeting people that have gotten rid of things that are not healthy.

-I used to be in college, pay rent and work a job. It's not like I felt any community in my school or in my work. Now I feel like I'm part of something.

WHY SHOULD ANYONE DO THIS?

Charlotte: Words can't describe how important this is. There need to be alternatives to challenge people's minds.

Charlottesville: A key idea behind social centers is that we get to create our own culture so we don't have to use the economy of domination and subordination. We are social beings so we go beyond DIY [Do-It-Yourself] to D.I.Together. We choose what happens at Better Than Television, so we have reclaimed part of our landscape from capitalist pursuits. Part of being radical is this clearing of colonized space, and part of it is cultivating equality and mutual aid in ordinary and extra-ordinary ways.

-Corporate interest dominates so much of mainstream culture, so I think it's becoming more and more important to have alternative media outlets, and places where those voices are not only heard but are dis-

a project with people you want to get involved.  
 -The volunteers have to have some sort of desire within themselves to help. (not just because they're your friends)  
 -We have a volunteer sign up list next to the mailing list at the door that people must pass by to leave. We have a big colorful sign so people can't miss it.

Harrisonburg: We try to get people involved by making sure that we follow up on suggestions from the people who visit our shop, and that we continue to stay in touch with people who have expressed an interest in getting involved.

Charlotte: I was inspired. Everyday I went there to volunteer or to just go hang out when I wasn't volunteering. It felt like home and I felt safe and wanted to make others feel that way.

Lynchburg: It started out just Eric, Ben and Rocco - we had an idea - but not much to back us up. Just the 3 of us pounding away at it. Now people come through town all the time. They share the work and the vision. They're saying we're not totally crazy - they understand what we're doing. The foundation is hospitality and inclusion. Anyone that passes through town - we hook them up with a place to stay and work if they want it.

An idea from Alex - he's part of a collective cafe/infoshop called the Root Cellar at Bard College in NY. They have a zine for new volunteers. The zine details how to run the space. This makes it easier for new volunteers to do more than wash dishes.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?**

Charlotte: I feel that everyone that was a part of that space grew as people and are still growing into the people they want to be. That space is still a part of me and always will be.

Lynchburg: I want a good place for my daughter and her friends - to have a decent place to hang out. When I first started taking care of my daughter I didn't think I'd see any of my friends again. I want to have my friends around. This is exactly the kind of situation I'd want. (He's a single dad.)

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**Rejecting the Political Spectrum and Breaking Out of Thought Prison**

*Tariq Khan spent four years in the U.S. Air Force during which time he learned first hand that the military has nothing to do with protecting freedom and everything to do with tyranny. He has since involved himself in anti-authoritarian activity which he finds more fulfilling than the military ever was. His recent activities include anti-racist organizing, Food Not Bombs, counter-recruitment/anti-militarist action, public speaking, writing, and doing workshops about militarism and authoritarianism, actions against corporate imperialism, campus organizing, and co-editing the anarchist journal Rebel Stew.*

The liberal sees the system itself as neither filthy nor rotten. The system, according to the liberal, is basically good or at least necessary but it does need to be reformed; there needs to be a different person voted into office here, a new government program initiated there, the amending of this law, the introduction of that law, the reinterpretation of these policies, more tax money for this, less tax money for that, and so on and so forth. The liberal does understand that there are serious defects in the system, but assures us that we can fix these systemic problems and reach our goals by working through the system. The courts, the jails, the police, the military; there is

nothing inherently wrong with them, says the liberal, they just need to be controlled by liberals instead of conservatives.

The conservative puts full confidence in the system. The conservative is an authoritarian through and through. S/he loves the military, loves the police, esteems the government as a sacred institution no matter what it does, and holds the corporations that are most tied to the government to be upstanding, righteous organizations. There is a misconception that conservatives stand for small government but that claim is undermined by the actions of the many conservatives in power. While it is true that conservatives support cutting government spending on social programs like welfare and healthcare, conservatives are always increasing the size and scope of military, law enforcement, and "homeland security". Like liberals, conservatives are constantly at work making new laws that require new agencies and increased bureaucracy. The differences between the conservative and the liberal are minor. Both support the practice of locking disobedient humans in cages (correctional institutions they call them) but the liberal wants to make the cage a little bit less threatening. Both liberals and conservatives are willing to send military troops to attack and destroy weaker nations but the liberal wants to do it through the U.N. In other words, while the conservative is a cold, callous authoritarian oftentimes with an authoritarian haircut, the liberal is a hip, friendly, kinder-gentler authoritarian.

What about libertarians? The term libertarian was once used to describe those who believe in free will and unrestricted liberty coupled with personal responsibility. There are still places in the world where the word retains its original meaning but not in the U.S. In the U.S. the term libertarian has been co-opted by ultra-conservatives who want to abolish all government except for its most outwardly oppressive, violent, coercive parts. They wish to do away with all government-run social programs such as welfare and funding for the arts but at the same time they want to keep the police, keep the courts, keep the prisons, keep the military, and keep other similar machinery of repression such as the FBI, CIA, Department of Homeland Security, etc. In other words, while they see that government-controlled social programs encroach individual rights, they see no violation of rights in police force, war, extortion, threats, and imprisonment (as long as they themselves are not the victims). They do make it a point to speak out against the tyranny of big government (not the tyranny of all government mind you, just big government) but they don't seem to have much of a problem with corporate tyranny, as they see "privatization" to be the cure for many social ills. They point out the dangers of centralized government,

We want to be totally accepting of everyone who comes down.

-There's no way I'm expecting to include everybody.

PRINCIPLES?

Charlotte: We tried to make it a safe space - so everyone felt welcome. We would have a set of rules - respect other people, respect the space - obviously nobody verbally abuses anyone - no physical abuse.

Charlottesville: Some kind of goals or purpose is needed - why have a cultural center?

Harrisonburg: As a collective we decided on a list of principles of unity which also works as a mission statement. To come up with it, we essentially brainstormed a list of things we're all passionate about as a group and consensed on the final list together, so it really is something that everyone feels strongly about. It states, "We believe in community empowerment, mutual aid, consensus, the right to self-defense, the freedom to or from religion, solidarity for resistance, and being anti-authoritarian and queer friendly. We oppose white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and government."

I think the booze thing at shows can damper things. The Paper Street Collective here in Richmond just had to stop having shows due to this problem. Too many people were drinking outside. Now that is one less way people can enjoy the space and maybe look at some of the events and books that they have to offer. I don't think it is too much to ask for people to be sober for a few hours.

HOW TO GET VOLUNTEERS?

Charlotte: I think the more community events where you are outside your "Space" where you might encounter others who would like to be a part of the collective, (tabling at social awareness events or having certain days open to the public, with free food), the more volunteers you'll get.

Charlottesville: Don't only think of involving other people that identify as anarchists. Look to friends you like to hang out with and ask them to help out with something in the space. They're more likely to get involved if you directly invite them in. Try to start

But look around at your collective. How many people look something like you? Is there a problem?

Charlotte: In the Boiling Point collective there were mostly white males between the ages of 18-20. With our society already granting white males this certain privilege when we are born, I am glad that there are white males that are denouncing privilege and trying to reach out to other Races and Genders to truly work together in our community and society as a whole. The way we're subjected to society when we're growing up - we're alienated as far as we've got these gender roles in the back of our heads. It's buried deep in the psyche. What to do to counter this? Women's groups are good. But there should be a certain time when men can be allowed in - they need to touch base with the women and know what they go through every day - I'm not subjected to that.

-Young kids - they're ambitious. But young kids need to grow and travel. It's good to also include more mature people in the collective.

#### IN THE SPACE

Harrisonburg: The main problem I see is the absence of diversity, which I think suffers from a lack of bilingual outreach and outreach in communities of color.

Charlottesville: Diversity is really important because we're trying to serve the community and not just certain people in it. I learned that - being diverse - all it takes is putting on activities that more people will be interested in.

-When we don't advertise what's going on it's just a small group of people who know what's happening and it's just the same group of people attending. When we advertise it we get a more diverse amount of people.

-Not just setting up your own ideas and expecting everyone else to come and wondering why they don't come but also going to find out what the people you want to come - your audience - is interested in - like if your interest is race relations in Charlottesville, show up to a minority group and what meetings are they having, what events are they holding- what the church groups are like and stuff like that- so that you're equally interested and I think give them a chance to see what your social center is involved in as well.

Lynchburg: -I want church people to feel comfortable.

but what about centralized corporate bureaucracy and domination? Also, let us not forget that for all their talk about how government is evil, they still run candidates for political office including the office of Head of State. If something is evil, why join it? For example, if the Ku Klux Klan is evil (which it is), does one who hates it decide to join up and try to become the leader of the KKK in order to change it from the top down? Or does one simply not join it at all and possibly fight it from the outside? Libertarianism is not about liberty. A more accurate name by which it may be identified is capitalist fundamentalism.

At the other end of the spectrum stands the state socialist. The state socialist believes that human emancipation can be achieved by placing business, healthcare, education, and other aspects of social life in the hands of a centralized government bureaucracy. In other words, by giving government even more control over people's lives, people will be free. To be more exact, state socialism is the theory of the emancipation of the proletariat and of the organization of labor by the state. Yes, that's right, the state; a coercive, centralized governing body. So workers (whatever that's supposed to mean), instead of taking orders from capitalist bosses will take orders from the state, but the fact that workers will take orders does not change. State socialism is yet another idea that is permeated with authoritarianism. It is no coincidence that so many socialist revolutions ended up in despotism.

The point is, the left, the right, and everyone in between all share a common feature, which is force. All have no qualm with coercively enforcing their will on society through the officially sanctioned mechanisms of violence such as military and police. All four of these types from the political spectrum have no qualm with forcing people to pay money (what they call taxes) in order to fund those mechanisms of violence. Socialists, liberals, conservatives, and libertarians alike would and do put human beings into cages (prisons) as punishment for certain types of disobedience to their "laws". Socialists, liberals, conservatives, and libertarians alike would and do force people to pay the government money (fines) as punishment for certain types of disobedience to their "laws". Socialists, liberals, conservatives, and libertarians alike have no reservations about binding people with agreements that those people never took part in making (i.e., you had no part in the making of this particular law, you never agreed to it, but you will still be punished if you break it). Socialists, liberals, conservatives, libertarians, and for that matter monarchists and fascists alike all preach and practice the imposition of a social order based on coercion; a coercion that is rooted in

violence and threats.

In mainstream culture in the U.S. - meaning mainstream schools, mainstream media, mainstream politics, mainstream religion and such - there is often discussion about which way society should lean, in a more conservative or a more liberal direction. Such discussion falls short. While there is much questioning and challenging of certain laws, policies, and programs, there is still far too little discussion about the nature of the authority that enacts those laws, policies, and programs. Whether or not the decision making/enacting authority is even legitimate in the first place is an issue that is virtually ignored by both left and right alike. Too many people take it for granted that the authority is legitimate and they go directly to work on using that authority as the means to their desired ends.

Are they justified in doing so? Is the government they revere even a legitimate institution? What is the true nature of that authority? Dominant U.S. culture teaches that the U.S. government is the most righteous government in the world, so let's take a deeper look at the basis of the authority of the U.S. government.

### **The Greatest Nation in the World**

How did the U.S. come to be? Agents of the Spanish government sailed to the Americas and planted a flag claiming that the land belonged to the corrupt rulers of Spain. Soon after, agents of other corrupt European governments such as France and England sailed to the Americas and similarly claimed parts of the land for their own corrupt rulers. The problem was that there were already people living on the land that the European governments were claiming as their own. This did not stop the European rulers. They backed up their land ownership claims with threats, violence, and by depriving natives of liberty in various ways. Is that ok? Is it justified to carry out the claim that land that others already inhabit is suddenly the property of aristocrats who personally never set foot on that land? With a few exceptions, the natives of the Americas did not consent to the European invasion. Nor did they consent to be subject to the supposed authority of the European governments. Rather, the European governments took over the Americas by coercion. Contrary to the words of European statesmen, moral superiority and divine favor had nothing to do with the ability of the European armed forces to conquer the Americas. They conquered by virtue of their superior methods of brute force. Torture, rape, murder, and all manner of brutality are what gave this land to the rulers of colonialist European states.

At one point, some colonists living in the area conquered by

friends.

- Nothing makes me feel worse than bitching about politics or "the system" and then feeling like I'm not doing something to try and stop what I hate. I do get joy and meaning out of working with the space. Working together with people I love and admire makes me feel hopeful for the future.

Charlottesville: If you're not passionate about it you won't get any joy out of it.

Charlotte: There is a sacrifice a person has to make to be a part of a collective...it is like a relationship with the giving and the taking.

Lynchburg: 80% is inspired hard work, but not a pain. The other 20% I hate it. I'm not used to being this dependable.

Charlottesville: You can't start a revolution without pancake dance parties.

### **DIVERSITY**

#### **WITHIN THE COLLECTIVE**

Harrisonburg: Our primary strategy at the moment is to get people involved that we've worked with in the past through other groups like Copwatch and Rising Up, both to join the collective and provide ideas for events.

Charlottesville: I think we're diverse age-wise. (We have a 12 year old, an 18 year old and a 19 year old - all of them contributed to this article - and several older people). We are somewhat diverse racially, several of us are African American, and several are Latino. We have a good number of women now.

- While making decisions using consensus, without allies it's difficult to block something. I feel outnumbered often when the issue of race comes up (usually brought up by me). This was a mostly white collective until recently, and the one 17 year old woman who was definitely an ally left to travel. At one point I refused to come to meetings unless my friend Kim, who's anti-racist and identifies as working class, white trash, and queer, or my friend John who's biracial African American, like me, started coming to meetings. I suggest that if you go to a gathering where anti-racism training is offered, go. There will probably be more 'sexy' workshops in the same time slot.

ings/emotions/interpersonal relationships and dynamics of individuals and the group as a whole. The human dimension is always an integral part in making a collective work, and if focus is only put on the success of the space, then the energy that is used (your emotional, physical, mental energy) is not fully taken into account and stress/repressed concerns or emotions or ideas may cause conflicts.

- Most of us have jobs, school, or family on top of the space, and balancing everything can be pretty overwhelming. Because it is such a commitment and the success comes from the amount of enthusiasm of the people working, it's really important to have a time set apart to see how people feel about what is going on.

- Personally I think the thing that would have helped me most is if we had sat down and come up with a plan of where we wanted the space to be in 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years, and that this was written down somewhere. This plan should and would have to be constantly revised but I think it would be useful to create some sort of concrete statement of where the group would like to go with this social center and propose some concrete actions to help get there.

Charlotte: Have your meetings sorta planned out beforehand, give individuals a limited time to talk so they avoid ranting and getting off the subject. Have someone facilitate the meeting, someone writing notes of what the collective are saying. See what progress was done on ideas from prior meetings. If all you are doing is talking about them and have no action...well you know the rest. Overall I would say keep it exciting to make people want to come back with more ideas, and make them take more action in their lives.

An infoshop in Tucson, AZ had guidelines for consensus decision making, and their mission statement, written on a board and visible at all times. This must have helped new people.

#### DUTY VS. JOY

Harrisonburg: Our overall vision of social revolution is very important to what drives us, but we believe that local work is the most important thing we can be doing to further those long-term revolutionary goals. - The important part for me is that people find this place useful...and most of the time I enjoy going through the process of building this place with my

English government brute force decided that the land was no longer under the English crown's authority and they decided that the land belonged, not to the natives mind you, but to a new government which they themselves established. Those colonists declared that all who lived within the borders they created would henceforth be subject to the new authority rather than to the authority of the English crown. While the colonists declared independence for themselves they continued to abuse, drive, and kill natives off the land in order to make way for the new order. They also took people of African descent to be their slaves and they made sure that their new government would continue to uphold the institution of slavery.

The simple question arises: Is it justified to uninvitedly walk into someone else's home, declare it your own, and physically coerce the original inhabitants of that home to acquiesce to the new order, brutally punishing all who defy the declaration; all this not by right but by force? The simple answer arises, certainly not. Such an act is nothing short of thuggery.

But such thuggery is exactly how the U.S. government was born. This nation-state like all nation-states in existence on this planet, was born of coercion, brutality, violence, force. To accept the U.S. government as a legitimate institution is to accept violent conquest as a legitimate means to obtaining authority, for were it not for violent conquest - complete with rape, torture, murder, mutilation, and deceit - this nation-state would not exist. Were it not for violence, threats, loss of liberty (such as imprisonment), and threats of loss of liberty, no nation-state would exist because the very foundation of the state is coercion. The doctrine that the state is necessary to ensure social order is a false one. To accept the state as a legitimate institution necessary to ensure social order is to accept violence as the legitimate foundation of social order, for the foundation of man-made government is nothing short of brute force.

Hence in popular discourse the "strongest nation" means the nation with the strongest military. The "strongest military" means the military that has exhibited the greatest capability for killing the most people. Is this not true? Therefore, the greatest nation is only the greatest because it is capable of creating more damage, bloodshed, and loss of liberty than any other nation. It is no coincidence that the U.S. government incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other government on the face of the earth, imprisoning over two million people (a higher rate even than Soviet Russia in its heyday). Today the U.S. government is capable of causing more damage, bloodshed, and loss of liberty than any other government in the world and therefore is given the unofficial but widely recognized title "Greatest Nation

in the World".

Let us not fool ourselves. Government is not a safeguard of social order nor is it a dispenser of justice. The U.S. government is no exception. How can an unjust institution dispense justice? The idea is absurd. Government is the highest, most refined, most sophisticated form of organized crime.

### **Government as Organized Crime**

Let us rid ourselves of all self-deception as to what government is. Government is institutionalized violence - i.e., police force, military, war, etc. It is institutionalized kidnapping - i.e., "handcuff her and take her to jail". It is institutionalized theft and extortion - i.e., taxation. To add insult to injury, government uses that stolen money to fund more violence, more kidnapping, more theft, and more extortion. This is all done quite openly for government has convinced the majority of its subjects that all the violence, kidnapping, theft, and extortion are necessary for the people's own protection. The blindfolded multitudes believe that government is safeguarding their freedom.

Protection?! It's very much like when the mafia collects "protection" money from shop owners. Shop owners who don't want the mafia's "protection" and therefore don't pay end up feeling the wrath of the mafia. Likewise, individuals who don't want the government's "protection" and therefore don't pay end up feeling the wrath of the government.

The mafia kills people from time to time. They can always justify it. "He was a dirty rat. He had it coming." Governments kill people all the time. They can always justify it. "They harbored terrorists. They had it coming."

Due to superior resources, governments kill far more people than all of the mafias, serial killers, and street thugs combined. Yet the schools, the mainstream media, and the dominant religious institutions send the message that while the mafia is an illegitimate, immoral organization the government is a necessary, righteous organization. Hmm. The schools, the corporate media, and the dominant religious institutions are deluded about the nature of the state. Destroy the delusion and one will see that by the same logic that the authority of the mafia is illegitimate, the authority of the state is illegitimate. Society must rid itself of the state for the very same reasons that it must rid itself of the mafia.

### **Social Contract a Social Fraud**

So the truth has been exposed that it is not ethical or moral principals, God's will, or the people's will that upholds the state. The very foundation on

-I don't think it's a good idea to have an open collective. It gives people the feeling that they can come or not come and it still happens - there's always gonna be someone else ready to do the stuff.

Lynchburg: It's not something we want to purposefully label a collective. It's like the whole idea that two heads are better than one. One thing to test community: people can come and go and we can maintain community. Everyone should be able to travel and have time to do more art and music, and not spend as much time cooking.

This is how humans worked for so long - tribally. Anybody who has a good idea, wants to be personally invested, claims ownership, can help to shape the space - as long as they include others. We want to provide leverage for artists and musicians.

Hopefully our decisions will be more by consensus as it goes on. People participating more have more of a voice.

-I'm surprised we have as much togetherness as we have - most people who ride trains like to do things their own way. We don't want to be dogmatic - we wanna be subjective - relating on an individual basis to an individual problem. Not every situation is cut and dry. I have a feeling this is gonna be a fairly transient community just from the people we know.

Harrisonburg: There are 14 founding members, but we have about three or four other people who come to meetings and help out with various projects. We are a closed membership group that makes decisions based on a consensus process. Only members have the power to block a consensus decision. To become part of the collective new people must be able to fully commit themselves (time-wise, financially, physically).

We have a sign up list and ask that there be at least two people working at the space during open hours. If someone is doing a disproportionate amount of work, it is usually addressed at the weekly meeting.

-The most important thing for us has been to keep morale up in the group, and to make sure we value emotions in meetings just as much as we emphasize the practical work of making decisions and getting things done.

-Honesty meetings are separate from regular logistic/planning meetings, and focus on more of the feel-

Lynchburg. We spent one and a half years coming down to Lynchburg, taking pictures, then writing up a proposal and eventually meeting with city council to defend the proposal. Our vision was the selling point. They wanted something more community-minded.

#### PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITY

In Lynchburg, the conservative right has such a strong hold on the town - they shut down all the clubs and there is no music scene.

-Most places have a central place where you can get together - a centralizing location where a different mix can get involved, but Lynchburg doesn't.

-Problems? How segregated the town is. It's extremely noticeable.

Charlottesville: Racism, brainwashing culture, diluted liberal complacency, consumerism, mis-education, sexism, homophobia.

-Local problems? All restaurants in town sell meat and/or dairy products and contribute to the suffering of animals. Yuppies, segregation, gentrification, things are more expensive, not enough going on here for young people. Charlottesville was voted best place to live in America, but 25% of people live in poverty. Global problems? capitalism. It fuckin sucks, the government, political system we have.

Harrisonburg: There is a definite divide between the University, and the rest of Harrisonburg, and there are also cultural divides that have yet to be bridged (between poorer areas, Latino neighborhoods, Black neighborhoods). The Harrisonburg Police department is also a force to be reckoned with. People face the same problems most Americans face of working hard to make ends meet, but then feeling alienated and lonely.

#### THE COLLECTIVE

Charlottesville: I think that the way we're trying to do the women's group is the way that any collective should start. We have a group of women that have the need to get together...so we got together a few times and did fun art projects, now we're gonna get together and talk about things we all want to do and WHY and then we do it.

-You should have the collective in place first and make sure you have similar goals and vision and then start a space.

which the state stands is violence, which is why a century ago Leo Tolstoy made the simple point, government is violence.

That statement is simple but crucial. It is a declaration that the emperor is wearing no clothes. It is in direct opposition to what the schools, the government, the corporate media and other mouthpieces of authority tell us.

What the mouthpieces of authority tell us is that there exists a social contract. This is a lie that serves to delude our minds as to the nature of the human authority that demands our obedience. The lie goes something like this: Left to themselves humans will tear each other to pieces and chaos will reign. To establish greater peace and safety the people entered into a social contract, agreeing to give up certain liberties to a governing authority that in exchange would safeguard social order.

This old story is flawed on a few different levels. We shall deal here with only some of those flaws. The first has to do with the word "contract", the idea of an agreement "man entered into". There is no contract! Power was usurped. It was not contracted out. Few people agreed to give up certain liberties. The state was imposed, instituted through violence and threats. Agreements and consent had nothing to do with it:

The history of the State, then, is the effort to maintain these personal prerogatives of power, the effort to convert more and more into stable law the rules of order, the conditions of public vengeance, the distinction between classes, the possession of privilege. It was an effort to convert what was at first arbitrary usurpation, a perfectly apparent use of unjustified force, into the taken for granted and the divinely established. The State moves inevitably along the line from military dictatorship to the divine right of Kings. What had to be at first rawly imposed becomes through social habit to seem the necessary, the inevitable. (Randolph Bourne, The State)

As Bourne so clearly stated, power was rawly imposed by unjustified force. A social contract had nothing to do with it.

In relation to the age of humankind this idea of social contract is a rather recent one, popularized most notably from "enlightenment" thinkers such as Hobbes. In countless old legends that existed long before Hobbes the state is depicted as an organization instituted not by "the people" but by men known for their brutality and insanity. For example, the violent, insane, authoritarian, bloodthirsty Nimrod is often depicted as "the founder of the first state, the builder of the first walled city, and the organizer of the first real army. In countless old legends Nimrod illustrates the idea that he who would own the world is insane." (Hugh Nibley, The Ancient State). The

Ancient legends make no mention of a social contract.

The idea of a social contract is a form of mystification that serves to cloud our thinking and deceive us into believing that the authority of the state is justified and to lull us into acquiescence as the state strips us of our individual liberties. After all, what can be more official than a contract?

Besides the use of the word "contract" to describe what has no characteristics of a contract lies the mystification of who the contract is between; the people and the state. Who are "the people"? It is far too abstract an entity to have any sort of binding authority.

Beyond that, even if this contract really did exist - which it does not - and was created and signed by actual individuals, then the only people who would legitimately be responsible to uphold it, the only people who would legitimately fall under its authority would be the parties who made the agreement and no one else. As so clearly stated by Fred Woodworth:

We are not bound by constitutions or agreements made by our ancestors. Any constitution, contract, or agreement that purports to bind unborn generations - or in fact anyone other than the actual parties to it - is a despicable and presumptuous fraud. We are free agents liable only for such as we ourselves undertake.

This is not to say that human beings have no antisocial instincts. This is not to say that without the state human beings would naturally deal justly with one another. It is only to say that the establishment and maintenance of the state has more to do with coercion than with free association. It is to say that the state rather than minimizing antisocial behavior actually institutionalizes, enables, and even rewards antisocial behavior on a scale that would be impossible without the machinery of the state. It is to say that the state forces people to be subject to agreements that those people were not a party to making. The point being, as already expressed; the authority of the state is a "despicable and presumptuous fraud."

#### **Authority**

Not just state authority, but authority itself is a most despicable thing worthy of nothing but caustic, unrestrained condemnation. This does not refer to authority in the sense of somebody learned and skilled in a certain field, such as a botanist as an authority on the subject of wild flowers. This refers to authority in the sense of vested power over and supposed right to coerce, such as the policeman's authority to pull you over or the judges authority to force you to pay a fine. Such authority is dependent on the fear it can inspire in its subjects. It is the power wielded not only by the policeman and the judge, but by the boss who orders you, the landlord who evicts you, the

Lynchburg, VA, The THOR Building (Train Hoppers and Oliver Restorations). Due to open summer of 2006! Building was bought for \$1 by Virginia developer Oliver Kutner. Since then he's put in \$60,000 to restore it so far, and Ben, Rocco, and friends (train-hoppers who have temporarily settled down for this project) have put in thousands of hours of work. It's a giant warehouse space - old meat packing factory with an organic mix of old industrial and modern recycling. Will have an open air courtyard in the middle, a big stage, a café, an infoshop, a bike shop in the basement. Exposed brick everywhere, steel rafters, welded spiral staircases. Plans: a forum where people can speak about political, philosophical issues on the stage - a variety of music, including hip hop. Food by donation. We want to keep a pot of rice and beans at all times - that can be free.

#### **HOW THEY STARTED**

Charlottesville: Better than TV started backwards - we started with the space and then tried to form a collective. There were very few anarchists in town, that's part of why we did it that way - just saw the opportunity for a space and hoped more people would get involved. I'd really recommend starting the collective first.

Harrisonburg: The Rocktown Free Space was started in November of 2005. A group of us had just successfully organized the first Virginia Anarchist Gathering, and we felt energized to do more in our community. We decided to go for opening a radical space, and opened up the call for anyone who was interested to get involved. We started with an original collective of 14 founding members. For half a year in 2001, Harrisonburg had an anarchist community center that got shut down but also provided a lot of lessons for our infoshop.

Lynchburg: We met Oliver while squatting on his property. Oliver had gotten some reports that he had trespassers on his property - at the old coal tower in Charlottesville. He came down and talked to us. Said he didn't mind us camping there, and eventually offered us jobs. We ended up working for him whenever we stopped in town. Oliver heard that some run-down city-owned buildings are available for \$1- in

want to host, groups you want to organize, and services you want to provide for your community. It's like a home-base for activists and a starting point for people just getting interested in social activism. Also, if you do it right, the community at large can feel welcome and comfortable there.

#### 4 SPACES

Charlottesville, VA, Better than Television. Opened July 2005.

Rent on the whole space is \$990, we pay \$490 - subsidized by donations, renting out the darkroom and storage closet. Basement space below a movie theatre on a downtown pedestrian mall. Kitchen, darkroom, stage, kids' section, library (includes a video library), free store. Every week we have library open hours, a women's group, Thursday night free movies, pancake dance parties, vegan cafe (by donation - our main fundraiser). We've had book talks, circuses, music shows (hip hop, punk, noise, indierock), poetry readings, art shows, skill shares, all kinds of workshops.

Harrisonburg, VA, Rocktown Infoshop and Free Space. Opened February 2006.

\$650 for rent and utilities. Most of rent is covered by donations. Small storefront located downtown on a street with primarily Latino-owned businesses. Radical Library with a Spanish section, zines, a store where we sell local crafts, herbal remedies, and books, a free store (like a thrift store except free). Also a meeting area, events calendar, bulletin board for local events, and a barter-exchange list where people can offer specific goods and services they have in exchange for others. Thus far we've had free movie nights, concerts, dj nights, free guitar lessons, a mutual aid against depression group, lectures, and a grand opening.

Charlotte, NC, The Boiling Point. Fall 2001 - Winter 2003

\$600 rent. Most of rent covered by shows and benefit shows. Workshops - anarchist readings one night, arts and crafts one night, Spanish class, youth oriented programming. 2 or 3 nights a week we were a venue. We had movie nights twice a month. We had a free store - with a small fridge - dumpstered food - non perishable foods too, for people to take.

bureaucrat who hassles you, and the administrator who lectures you ever so condescendingly. It can range all the way from the abusive parent to the warmongering head-of-state.

Authority is the enemy of equality because it inevitably sets some individuals up as superior to other individuals. Whether in the home, the school, or the workplace - in an authoritarian society, one who is not vested with authority, an inferior, may not do certain actions without first obtaining permission from one's superiors.

That is why the antithesis of liberty is not only the state but is any doctrine, cause, theory, attitude, institution, behavior, or system that sets any person up as another's superior. Liberty knows no superior. Liberty claims no subordinate. Liberty will not be ruled over, nor will liberty rule.

Man-made law and authority are not natural, and the vast, unending labyrinth of networks and systems of coercion set up to uphold and defend such authority is proof of this fact. The power to coerce; to boss, legislate, force, or by any other means control another human being is a power achieved not by right but by might. And it is this principle of might equals right that authority cannot exist without. It is this principle of might equals right, along with the institutions and systems that are founded on it, that must be destroyed.

#### **Liberal Solidarity, Radical Politics**

international anarchist support in a time of domestic crisis

*Roger White is a Criminal Justice Researcher for the DataCenter in Oakland, California, and the author of the 2005 book Post Colonial Anarchism.*

I was talking with a friend of mine from Chile about a year ago about U.S. activists who traveled around the global south working with various revolutionary and autonomous struggles against neo-liberal colonialism. Mainly white, multi-lingual kids from upper middle class homes who cared enough about the struggles and suffering of others to catch a plane and do something to help. Sounds nice. But she said something that stuck with me. If U.S. activists really want to show

solidarity towards struggles for self determination around the world we need to focus on reining in and shutting down our government and our corporations first. Once Empire America is defeated the whole world's prospects for social-liberation and economic justice will greatly improve. Che Guevara put the same sentiment another way 40 years ago "I envy you. You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all--you live in the heart of the beast."

U.S. activists on the left have often failed to distinguish between liberal humanitarian universalism which, due to its Christian roots, emphasizes aid in return for obedience and cultural renunciation and radical solidarity which seeks to address the direct damage that neo-liberal colonialist foreign policies have produced by standing with the prime victims of these policies in their fight for human dignity. The term "standing" should not always be taken literally. In the international context it often means standing up in your hometown against corporations that pillage the world. It may mean coordinating a divesture movement against a foreign government or a corporation. It may mean "bring the war home" by confronting recruiters on campus, sabotaging the instruments of war, or other more creative things...

The point is that the focus of international solidarity for people who don't come from the places/movements that they seek to be in solidarity with should be weakening the concentrations of power from within the empires. If you're from North American or live here you don't have to go anywhere in order to infiltrate a hegemonic empire. You're right in the middle of it all- geographically and historically. Empires use law, force, geography, politics, and bribery to protect themselves from their victims. Being in the "heart of the beast" is a privilege because it affords us access to all of the pressure points of the institutions of global power. This doesn't mean anarchists should never go abroad to support struggles in other parts of the world. It's nice to get out of the U.S. if you have

our children grow out of clothes, we should have places where we can take them, clearly marked anarchist clothing exchanges and have no bones about looking for clothing there first. And of course we should relearn how to preserve food; we must learn construction and ways to take back our lives, help each other move and stay in shape.

Let's keep the American and Canadian flags flying at half mast... I refuse to believe that Direct Action has been captured.

## Radical Social Centers

*This article is a compilation of interviews with activists at different social centers in and around Virginia. About the interviewer: my name's rat- I'm an anarchist, biracial, and female. I helped start the Better than Television space after seeing lots of social centers during 6 months of traveling in Eastern and Western Europe. For a copy of my zine about European social centers, or if you want any more specific info about the centers here in Virginia, write to me at railrat@rise-up.net . Thanks to all the great people who run these social centers and contributed to this article.*

### WHAT GOES ON?

This article is a collection of interviews about "social centers" - or radical gathering spaces. They are community centers but without funding from the local government - and they are generally anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical in nature. Generally no one is getting paid a dime - it's all volunteer. Often the names "infoshop", "free space", and "social center" are interchangeable. The word "infoshop" tends to imply the informative aspect of the space - the library, the literature, maybe the movies and events. Often (not always) infoshops sell books, patches, and underground cd's to pay rent. "Free spaces" imply that most everything is free in the space - it could be an infoshop where most things are free or by donation (people are encouraged to donate however much they want for the item but they can also take it for free - there is no "price"). "Social center" is what they call many of these centers in eastern and western Europe.

Harrisonburg: Radical spaces are awesome! They're a blank page for any idea you might have for events you

extent doesn't make it any less a shame. Our inactivity creates a void that this police state with its reactionary press and definite goals are filling. The parts of people's lives supposedly touched by mass organizing and revolutionary inspiration that sheds a light that encourages them to unveil a new day, instead are being manipulated by conditions of which apathy is no less a part than poisonous uncontested reactionary propaganda. To those who believe in a centralized party with a program for the masses this might mean whatever their subjective analysis permits. But to us who truly believe in the masses and believe that they should have their lives in their hands and know that freedom is a habit, this can only mean that we have far to go.

In the aftermath of the Overtown rebellion, the Cuban community conceded as lost souls by Castro came out clearly in support of the Black colony. And predictably the Ku Klux Klan, through an Honorary FBI agent Bill Wilkenson, made no bones about supporting the rights of businesses and the business of imperialism. Third World colonies throughout the United States face genocide and it is time for anarchists to join the oppressed in combat against the oppressors. We must support in words and actions, self-determination, and self-defense for third world peoples.

It is beside the point whether Black, Puerto Rican, Native American and Chicano- Mexicano people endorse nationalism as a vehicle for self-determination or agree with anarchism as being the only road to self-determination. As revolutionaries we must support the will of the masses. It is not only racism but compliance with the enemy to stand outside of the social arena and permit America to continue to practice genocide against the third world captive colonies because although they resist, they don't agree with us. If we truly know that Anarchy is the best way of life for all people, we must promote it, defend it and know that the people who are as smart as we are will accept it. To expect people to accept this, while they are being wiped out as a nation without allies ready to put out on the line what they already have on the line is crazy.

Where we live and work, we must not only escalate discussion and study groups, we must also organize on the ground level. The landlords must be contested through rent strikes and rather than develop strategies to pay the rent, we should develop strategies to take the buildings. We must not only recognize the squatters movement for what it is, but support and embrace it. Set up communes in abandoned buildings, sell scrap cars and aluminum cans. Turn vacant lots into gardens. When

the opportunity and struggles often can use allies on the ground. But we should no longer view international solidarity work on the part of white first world activists as revolutionary notches in one's belt. There's plenty of work to do at home. The strategic access that North American anarchists have to "the beast" is indeed worthy of envy. What are we going to do with it?

### **Prisoner Resistance**

by Jameel Allah

I am what some would call a product of the environment. I derive from the slums of poverty, and a broken household, which is the case with almost all homes in the ghetto. My father was killed when I was seven years old. This left my mother with the responsibility of the role mother/father. She did all she could as a single parent to instill morals and values in me. But she was incapable of displaying the discipline only a father can give. This probably would've diverted my attention from the streets, which are designed with the sole purpose of destroying black people. My introduction to the injustice system began at the age of ten and hasn't ceased since. I'm twenty-seven now, and have been in the belly of the beast since the age of seventeen. Before my incarceration I knew not what I'm about to share with the reader.

The prison system is a modern day form of slavery built off the false pretense that it rids society of criminals, and makes the environment safer. This is the lie politicians use to deceive the poor when they want to line their pockets. These government officials are the criminals responsible for the social/economical imbalances the poor suffer from. Prisons only precipitate the destruction of poverty in a lightning-like fashion. The lower class citizens that are housed behind these prison walls are not given any hope of rehabilitation, so recidivism becomes the only option. Benefits that were once available to prisoners to help those that wanted to rehabilitate do so, have been removed from prison system. This had to be done to help the government kill hope in the minds of those prisoners fortunate enough to leave this monster. This system can only operate if the prison population rapidly increases. For this to be, the poor have to be the primary target to keep the door revolving.

The shadow of the prison system includes poverty as a whole-it doesn't exempt the individual not confined to a cell. The prisoner in society has more to offer than those already confined. You are the future that's secretly being targeted to fill the next prison. This is the reason massive quantities of drugs and guns surface in our communities. Crime is perpetuated by those creating the laws which restrict us, they hire licensed crooks (police) to arrest, murder, and do all their dirty work. Their hands remain clean while they take credit for all the good that's allegedly being done in our communities.

*"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [and women] do nothing."* Edmund Burke

When prisoners become jaded and reluctant to compromise any longer, revolutionaries are born. Change becomes the focal point of these individuals who refuse to be recipients of oppression. These individuals are cast with labels and categorized in groups that are deemed rebellious by the government. Resistance exists in the minds of those aware of the aim this capitalistic, avaricious regime compels on the poor. It is the responsibility of these individuals to enlighten those not aware of the reason this social/economic imbalance plagues our communities. Educating, and stirring the people to fight for their rights as humans prevents the triumph of these evils. Once the people understand the nucleus of this machine (government), cessation is the only means to rectify these ills. All it takes for this evil to triumph is for the people to keep investing trust in the government.

An immense number of society's revolutionary minds are muffled by prison walls. Some are fortunate enough to make contacts that allow their voice to be heard. There are organizations that are vehicles for these individuals to spread their message. The majority of these organizations are not-for-profit, and resources and help is limited. Support from the outside gives prisoners proof their fight is not for naught. A large percent of these prisoners are without family or other outside help, which should be there for everyone who is locked up. Political prisoners are dedicated to compel change for the betterment of all restricted to poverty. This should give the people the initiative to extend their hands in support, not sympathy.

*"It is the rich and powerful who have committed the sin, the sin of oppression, exploitation, and deception, but it is the poor who have suffered and*

Angola; that the war continued in Southeast Asia after the Americans had done the deed; why the Soviet Union, the product of the first Socialist revolution is not providing the argument that it should and could through being a model

This is not to say that the people of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Zimbabwe or Cuba aren't better off because of the struggles they endured. It is to say that the only way to make a dictatorship of the proletariat is to elevate everyone to being proletariat and deflate all the advantages of power that translate into the wills of a few dictating to the majority. The possibility must be prevented of any individual or group of individuals being able to enforce their wills over any other individual's private life or to extract social consequences for behavior preferences or ideas.

Only an anarchist revolution has on its agenda to deal with these goals. This would seem to galvanize the working class, déclassé intellectuals, colonized third world nations and some members of the petty bourgeois and alright bourgeoisie. But this is not the case. That China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Mozambique would build round a Marxist ideology to drive out invaders and rebuild feudal economies in the midst of western imperialism's designs and efforts to invade and recolonize is a point that can be argued in the light of the international situation. It is one thing that they don't back the will of the people as much as they chose allies in the East- West wars fought on the ground of the non-white colonies. It is another thing that Anarchy ceases to inflame or take the lead in combating fascism and imperialism here in North America with the history of the Wobblies, the Western Federation of Miners and other groups who have made their mark on history. It is a denial of our historic task, the betrayal of Anarchists who died resisting tyranny in the past, malingering in the face of horrible conditions. It is the theft of an option to the next generation and forfeiture of our own lives through faint hearts.

We permit people of other ideologies to define Anarchy rather than bring our views to the masses and provide models to show the contrary. We permit corporations to not only lay off workers and to threaten the balance of workers while cutting their salaries, but to poison the air and water to boot. We permit the police, Klan and Nazis to terrorize whatever sector of the population they wish without repaying them back in any kind. In short, by not engaging in mass organizing and delivering war to the oppressors we become Anarchists in name only.

Because Marxists and nationalists ain't doing this to a large

a truly free and equalitarian society and must to some extent embrace the socialization process that makes exploitation and oppression possible and prevalent in the first place.

When I first became a revolutionary and accepted the doctrine of nationalism as a response to genocide practiced by the United States government, I knew as I do now that the only way to end the evil practices of the US was to crush the government and the ruling class that shielded itself through that government, was through protracted guerrilla warfare.

Armed with that knowledge, I set out the initial organizing of the Black Panther Party until the state's escalation of the war against the Black people that was begun with the invasion of Africa to capture slaves made it clear to me that to survive and contribute I would have to go underground and literally fight.

Once captured for armed robbery, I had the opportunity to see the weakness of the movement and put the state's offensive in perspective. First, the state rounded up all the organizers pointed out to it by agents who had infiltrated the party as soon as it had begun organizing in N.Y. It charged these people with conspiracy and demanded bails so high that the party turned away from its purposes of liberation of the black colony to fund raising. At that point, leadership was imported rather than developed locally and the situation deteriorated quickly and sharply. Those who were bailed out were those chosen by the leadership, regardless of the wishes of the rank and file or fellow prisoners of war, or regardless of the relatively low bail of at least one proven comrade.

Under their leadership, "political consequences" (attacks) against occupation forces ceased altogether. Only a Fraction of the money collected for the Purpose of bail went towards bail. The leaders began to live high off the hog while the rank and file sold papers, were filtered out leaving behind so many robots who wouldn't challenge policy until those in jail publicly denounced the leadership.

How could a few jerks divert so much purpose and energy for so long? How could they neutralize the courage and intellect of the cadre? The answers to these questions are that the cadre accepted their leadership and accepted their command regardless of what their intellect had or had not made clear to them. The true democratic process which they were willing to die for, for the sake of their children, they would not claim for themselves.

These are the same reasons that the people's Republic of China supported UNITA and the reactionary South African government in

*continue to suffer the penance."*

Bernardo Vega

Anarchism gives the prisoner, and the poor, a government-free society, which in essence allows the oppressed an opportunity to control their own destiny. The middle and upper classes will no longer be in control of the futures of the poor. Usurping this power from the rich and putting it back in the hands of the people creates an even playing field, where dignified work, medical care, self-sufficiency, education, etc., become available to all. Racial/gender discrimination will no longer be in the equation to deny the poor these positions or benefits. Prison gives an individual the opportunity to recondition their thought-pattern if they desire. Every life form begins in a single cell, therefore the confined begin a second life. Prisons are filled with intelligent minds from all schools of thought. Prisons and poverty are responsible for some of the world's most brilliant minds. This aspect gives the confined an advantage over society. The books, literature, and zines that permeate these plantations give those that want to become active in the war against poverty the opportunity to condition their minds any way they see fit. This conditioning instills lessons that help one understand the different levels of government. Our priorities now are to rectify the ills that plague the poor, without the help of false leaders.

All leaders of today have hidden agendas for wealth or material gains. Society blindly aligns with these false leaders, investing all their trust in the hands of leaders who profess to bring about change once in position. These leaders are controlled by the same powers we rebel against. Money is distributed amongst these leaders by other powerful leaders to placate the cries in the ghetto. These leaders are of the same hue of the oppressed, but they are part of the status quo. We have to compel these leaders from their posts. There has to be a chain of command controlled by ourselves if we are to compel change. Without discipline and rules of our own we can never have an iota of congruence in our fight.

There cannot be one individual that's placed above the next. Everyone has to have the same status in this movement. This prevents egos from clashing. When there are individuals that are slower than the next, someone should step in and help out in a way that shows this individual that it's a family and there's nothing to feel ashamed of. No one can obtain more power than the next, if this is to happen we will be inflicted with the same ills that plague the so-called leaders we have already. Unity is necessary, without this element everything crumbles.

*"Criminals are a small minority in any age or country, and the harm they have done to mankind is infinitesimal when compared to the horrors-the bloodshed, the wars, the persecution, the confiscation of property, the famines, the enslavement, the injustices, the wholesale destruction perpetuated by mankind's government."*

Ayn Rand

The government fears the conscious political prisoner solely because their agenda poses a grave threat to the orderly operation of their system, and anything that poses a threat to the government has to be repressed or eradicated. All revolutionaries know that death is imminent, due to their teachings, so messages are spread to the masses with this factor in mind. The government will go to all extremes to silence these voices, using gratuitous violence, murder, coercive tactics, torture, planting informers, all of which has built the power structure today.

The media helps assist with this mission by painting pictures of revolutionaries in a negative fashion, and cramming them into the memory banks of those who are not aware that these individuals fight passionately to free them of oppression. The media is extremely clever with the work they do, the pictures they paint sub-consciously causes the people to harbor ill-thoughts towards freedom fighters, which diverts the focus away from the government, allowing them the ability to keep us ignorant to their aim of exploitation. Where there is poverty, violence lies parallel. Whenever a class of people are restricted to an environment without adequate materials to survive, crime becomes the prerequisite to achieve survival.

The strong prey on the weak for what little they have, and the weak have no means of defense but submission. Drugs and guns flood the ghettos, increasing the mortality rate through black on black crime. Drugs are the only way to cope for some, while on the other hand it is the only way to climb up the ladder for others. This pits the strong against the strong which results in gratuitous violence. Those that are fortunate to escape these traps are killed, abused, or locked up on manufactured charges by legal gangsters (police). Justifiable homicide is their green light to kill whenever the urge arises. These crooks are not residents of these communities, not the white nor the black ones.

All these pigs know of the poor comes from the propaganda they digest from the media. These pigs are trained with this racist perception of the poor and taught death is the only way to mediate and placate the

there are millions of us. Many of those are white children of suburbia, ready to bite the hand that poisoned us. I think we can be dangerous. We have it in us to be at the forefront of the struggle against the consumer culture of suburbia. Our natural allies (and there is no clear line between us) are the secret shames of suburbia, the bold survivors of sexual abuse and eating disorders. And if we have any clear understanding of the pathologies of this world, we will act in solidarity with other crazy people of all backgrounds, with people of color fighting racism, workers and the unemployed fighting capitalism, and people all over the world fighting imperialism. We can do this best from within a struggle of our own.

Tim Wise, *White Like Me*. Soft Skull Press.

The Icarus Project, *Navigating the Space Between Brilliance and Madness: A Reader and Roadmap of Bipolar Worlds*. [www.theicarus-project.net](http://www.theicarus-project.net)

## "Anarchy Can't Fight Alone"

*Kuwasi Balagoon was a former member of the Black Liberation Army who was captured by the State after the failed Brinks robbery at Nyack, New York, in 1981. He wrote this piece several decades ago, and it is even more vital now. Kuwasi died of AIDS in prison in 1986. More of his writings can be found in A Soldier's Story: Writings of a New Afrikan Anarchist, published by Kersplebedeb.*

Of all ideologies, anarchy is the one that addresses liberty and equalitarian relations in a realistic and ultimate fashion. It is consistent with each individual having an opportunity to live a complete and total life. With anarchy, the society as a whole not only maintains itself at an equal expense to all, but progresses in a creative process unhindered by any class, caste or party. This is because the goals of anarchy don't include replacing one ruling class with another, neither in the guise of a fairer boss or as a party. This is key because this is what separates anarchist revolutionaries from Maoist, socialist and nationalist revolutionaries who from the onset do not embrace complete revolution. They cannot envision

to white suburbanites, or even that craziness can easily unify afflicted whites and people of color, the way that some white feminists proclaimed a common bond of sisterhood across color so they could ignore uncomfortably relevant divisions created by race. The exclusion, violence, and dehumanization of racism probably play a major role in the experiences of people of color with mental illness, and that is something that whites cannot fully understand, though we may have many other similar experiences, through our depression or whatever we call it, with people of different races. Crazy whites should not think it hopeless to work with crazy blacks and crazy latinos on mental health issues. In fact, meetings of our mutual aid group that were multiracial have seemed as emotionally safe as meetings that were all white, and we learned a lot from one another. I think the rule of silence that our society uses in response to abuse, oppression, and in our case, pathology, applies on both sides of the color line, meaning it can be really empowering for people of color and for whites to get together and talk about our problems. Crazy whites enjoy the added bonus that when we learn to talk about how fucked up we are in the heart and in the head, and how our society tolerated and encouraged this, these new skills of communication and understanding can be critically useful in tackling the pathology of privilege, which we also must do in order to be healthy and to be free.

I was always skeptical of folks proclaiming that you have to heal yourself before you take on the world, and most of the time it's cowardly, hypocritical bullshit: people are afraid of the big fight so they stick to the comfortable ones. Healing ourselves will make us more effective in the fight, true, so action for mental liberation and for social liberation must be simultaneous: they complement and inform each other. Things like free clinics and support groups could be reformist, but they can also be part of a revolutionary infrastructure. We're healing ourselves so we can better fight and help more people facing the same shit liberate themselves.

A radical support group can't be like the medicine and numb the rage. It needs to pry our rage out of the self-destructive patterns and aim it at deserving targets. We will regain our self-worth as we study our minds alongside the pathology of our culture, and realize how right-on our craziness is. Let me return to the first sentence of this rant:

violence in these communities. Countless numbers of poor blacks have been murdered by police and it has been written off as justifiable homicide. Every time this occurs the same statement is given to the people: "the individual appeared to have reached for a dark object." When viewed in the proper light, the only dark object was the human being.

These acts of violence from crooked pigs and poor blacks vying for power divides the people. This makes congruence a mere illusion amongst the poor, which in turn causes those wanting to disassociate their families from these individuals to put up fortresses. Isolation is dangerous, because it alienates one from the rest of society. This causes the isolated to feel like they are better than those who are responsible for their isolation. This plays into the hands of those inflicting oppression, and their aim of black on black, poor on poor murder becomes a reality.

*"When fear and hatred enter the mind, logic rarely lingers."*

Mumia abu-Jamal

As long as the oppressed continue to remain idle, the powers that be will continue to win an uncontested fight. Our communities are targeted to keep this system operating in a slot machine fashion. Police departments have embedded a deep sense of fear in our communities by murder, racial profiling, and abuses of all sorts. This abuse from these same officials that allegedly serve and protect has deleted the non-violent approach and made it a joke. This abuse has made it extremely imperative for the people to arm themselves and counter back against these powers. There should be a neighborhood headquarters used to keep tabs on the activities of the police. We have to police these police with militants, this prevents them from trumping up charges on innocent people.

It's going to take voices from amongst the masses to lead in this war, ones that are stoic in the face of adversity, articulate with a by-any-means approach, sharing the same propensity, passion, and candidacy to stir the people to unite and revolt against the terrorists committing these acts of genocide.

Schools are to be controlled by the community, reconstructed, and the curriculum needs to be updated so that the children learn on the same level as the privileged. This is mandatory if the children are expected to actually learn something. This will eventually give the children something to attend school for. I speak from experience and observation of the public school system. This system is designed to subtly force children out of school and to the streets to become career criminals. A large

percent of these teachers are not mentally fit to structure their own lives, let alone the lives of children.

I speak about a large percentage, not all. There are some capable of performing this duty, but they are not compensated for their dedication and passion, so they are forced to switch careers in order to survive. Others come from identical backgrounds. They may have the experience of the profession, but mentally they carry more baggage than the children. They bring these problems to work and taken them out on the children, who counter back with the same anger. This causes a large percentage of the children to drop out of school. They leave home to come to school and are confronted with the same problems they are trying to escape. This builds a false sense of family in the streets, with individuals from an environment afflicted by the same problems, creating a bigger problem than before.

These children come from an environment where they are not shown love, due to broken homes and drugs. All they need to feel is a sense of love. Love is the highest degree of understanding. To say you love something or someone, you have to understand the mechanics of what ever the word love is attached to. So in order to be a teacher, you have to understand what these children require. This is why they show up in the morning, but when they sense you're incapable of this quality, they crave it elsewhere.

Community programs should be set up to give children an oasis other than the streets, to hang out. The best individuals qualified to run these programs are individuals that walked the path these children are attracted to. They are able to give these children the harsh realities of the streets, and prison life, and the children will take heed. These individuals will forever have credibility in their neighborhoods, and they're respected for being able to reform and do someone some good. They can teach these children a lot.

In these ways, the cycles of poverty and prison will be broken, and the poor and oppressed may determine their own destiny, free of the violent authority of government.

empowerment throughout their lives, even as they pretended they were free. Naturally, the school administration repressed us with an iron hand, and as the "leader," I was suspended from school. Shortly thereafter, a suicide attempt and incarceration in a psych ward interrupted my activism, and the group didn't fully rebound for Round 2. But I've always thought that was some of the most empowering and exciting organizing I've ever done, and wished I could aid some other students doing a similar thing, because high schools are a veritable powder keg and for most people, it's too late if they wait till college to "get involved." They're already trained monkeys.

Over five years later, and my craziness still interferes with my organizing. In particular, being crazy makes it hard for me to coexist with the people in my group who can operate more smoothly in the pathology of our society: so-called normal people. For one, they tend to buy into the bullshit about keeping polite distance, whereas I call things as I see them. So, I make a lot of criticisms, and people get offended or threatened. They're used to ignoring the pink elephant in the room--in fact their ability to do so is what makes them sane, in some ways. And with the urgency of the crazy I lose my patience with them, forgetting that their politeness also has advantages. They haven't seen the depths and the heights that I have; I get frustrated that I can't share my perspective, and they've all agreed to see things one constricted, mundane way (which, of course, is highly practical). They're also short on the ability to throw themselves into the struggle with a manic fury because, well, they're not manic: they're balanced. And I lose even more patience. The power of my emotions comes to control me, and what could be a gift for my friends turns into a weapon. It gets to where I hurt my friends, and impede the group. Scary shit. Let's take it head-on.

During the black liberation movement, community clinics and free breakfast for school children made black communities stronger, more able to fight. Organizing mutual aid--people helping people--for mental health will make crazy people stronger, more able to fight. And a radicalized, localized culture, an understanding of the poisonous nature of privilege, and a fierce rejection of the pathologies of whiteness will make suburban white people stronger, more able to fight.

I don't mean to suggest that mental health as a cause belongs

Remember that line about strong communities being a factor in decreasing mental illness? Take note. Alienated people need to be rooted in something solid, to heal them and make them stronger, and to give them something they'll fight to the death defending. One of the things we have at this community center is a mutual aid circle (support group) for mental health. Once a week we meet, after closing the center so we can have some privacy. We have a facilitator, who mostly sits back and makes sure the atmosphere remains emotionally safe. The first half-hour, we go around and say how we're feeling and how our week has been—not in the superficial way we're taught in polite conversation to talk about our feelings, but in a way that really gets a load off our chests. The second half-hour, we focus on anyone who is having a particularly bad week, wants to talk about and hear feedback on a particular problem, or who needs the group's help. For the final half-hour, someone who volunteered last week brings up a provocative anecdote and question, for a free-flowing discussion on the broader societal aspects of mental health (like: what are ways our society creates trauma or suppresses the result) or on our own particular coping strategies (like: what are ways your physical health-diet, exercise, etc.-affect your mental health, and vice versa). The group is still new, but my hope is that it will help us grow stronger together, decrease our reliance on the medical authorities, and sharpen our resolve to fight the pathological system that is the source of our pain and rage. We have also been publicizing this group, in the hopes of rescuing others from the isolation of depression or the sterilization of the medical establishment. So far, the group has spread entirely through personal contacts, but I hope that we can get into the high school, get younger folks involved, so they can get a helping hand early.

I said before that my first activism was college-campus stuff focusing on the far-away. That's not entirely true. Even before that I started a student opposition group in my high school to protest the authoritarianism of the administration and the complacency with which most students accepted the invasion of their privacy and the total control exercised over their lives, even as they were being indoctrinated with the history of their free country and taught their constitutional rights, so-called. I surmised that it was this very hypocrisy that trained young people to accept varying forms of submission and dis-

### **Peace at the Mill:**

#### Reflections on Growing Up in a Queer Family

by kristina grace k.

*Kristina is an anarchy-feminist living with her partner and 3 cats in Falls Church, Virginia. She has done a variety of actions against homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia since the age of 14. She has identified as an Anarchist since the age of 19. She currently works as a tutor and educator for people ages 8 through 18 and has also taught in college classrooms. She is a trainer in a program out of Fairfax, Virginia that helps participants learn what it means to be an ally to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, ambiguous, queer, intersex, two-spirit and questioning communities. She is eternally grateful for her family and for D.C.'s intimate anarchist community.*

It's hard to eat pizza when your Mom's girlfriend tells you he's a man. I wasn't at all disgusted when I found out that Stacie was becoming Thomas, but I wasn't in the mood for pizza. I was 15 years old when Stacie and my mom took Elese and me to that restaurant. It was an odd outing. They had actually broken up a month or two before this get together; and they had been together a long time. They had been together long enough for Stacie to help me through adolescence - and to become a permanent part of my life.

I don't remember how it came up, but Elese and I needed to be told something very important. The food hadn't even come yet when Stacie told us that he was Thomas and always had been. Struck with confusion, Elese began to cry, "But I want Stacie." I sat silently and thought about what it meant. New pronouns: He not she. A new name: Thomas not Stacie. Here was a whole new component to the already queer structure of my family. And that meant having a whole new concept to explain and protect. Thomas tried to clarify to my little sister that, "No, the Stacie that you know isn't going away. I'll be the same person, just happier." I don't remember my exact response to my parents sitting across from me in that booth, but I do remember settling into the request for dignity and identity that had been placed before me.

I'm what some call, "the result of an alternative upbringing." I easily envision myself on an examination table, surrounded by them all: the man waving his bible at me from the curb at the parade when I was 12, telling me I'm going to hell; my classmate in 10th grade saying matter-of-factly that "kids of gay parents are lower than dirt"; my friend's

mom asking, "Remember that phase your mom went through when she dated women?" and my biological father telling me half-drunk that all he has to do is "tell the courts that your mom is a lesbian and they'll take you away." I imagine them all blaming my "masculine" traits and my "deviant behavior" on the fact that I was exposed to two women in "conflicting gender roles" and never had a "strong father figure." Of course, they get stumped at the part when I choose to be with Tariq - a man.

I never even knew anything was "wrong" with my family until much later in life. More so, I learned that we made people uncomfortable. Our existence as a family unit was threatening.

I never remember doubting the sanity of my family situation. All of my needs and most of my wants were met. My mother valued individuality, love, and compassion more than anything else. When we would come home in tears, hating someone or something my mother would say calmly, "Come from a place of love", which of course always makes an angry teenager even angrier, but it is this kind of upbringing to which I owe my dedication to a philosophy like anarchism. Common sense and a sincere love for my family led me to believe that, in fact, nothing was wrong with my family. Instead, there was a profound misunderstanding and ignorance penetrating society. I had been a daughter and a sister in a family that - to the outside world - appeared at one point to have "lesbian" parents and at another point appeared to have a mother and another parent who was "transsexual." To us we were just Beth, Thomas, Kristina and Elese.

My first year of college was spent in Santa Cruz, California. Thomas flew to San Francisco to have "top surgery," an operation that would create pectorals. I went up to help my mom take care of him. He spent a few days in bed, propped up with tubes protruding from layers of bandages at each side. At the end of each plastic tube hung a small round container in which excess blood and fluids emptied out of the chest. Thomas had already been taking Testosterone (a hormone injection that must be taken every two weeks for the rest of his life) and was experiencing what many appropriately term a "second adolescence." All of a sudden I became a parent, waiting on an irritated and uncomfortable teenager.

Back at school, I focused my studies on gender. I was turned off by liberal feminism, which seemed to me to create as many problems as it tried to solve. I soon, though, found writers like Kate Bornstein, Gayle Rubin, Emi Koyama and Judith Butler. And when I came across Emma

the far-away people, and could affirm their existence; we were validated and went on with *our* work.

Some white anarchists, since our early years, have better learned the meaning of solidarity. It is: playing a support role, guided by input from the people most affected by a particular oppression, with the goal of providing material aid and relief, or distracting or threatening the oppressor. But most of us have not learned the complement to solidarity, which is fighting on our own turf, for our own cause. Until then we white anarchists won't fully know the meaning of liberation struggle.

Just because we're privileged doesn't mean we don't also have a war to wage. Our privilege is our poison. In a way, we are oppressed by suburbia, by consumerism. I don't say this to conflate different pains and imply that we have it as bad as people of color, poor people, people in the Global South; and I don't say it to obscure the fact that we white children of suburbia get a shitload of material privileges (education, healthcare, safe communities, relatively clean environment, a whole lot of commodities) stolen in one way or another from people of color in this country and abroad. In many ways, we are put in the role of oppressors, but the very point is it's not worth it. Our privileges are sure as fuck not spiritually nourishing.

So we do have our own struggle to fight. It is a struggle against consumer culture, it is a struggle to yank our parents out of conservative complacency and save our kids or younger siblings from the traps that wounded us. We will fight this war in the suburbs, in the schools, in the shopping malls. The goals of this war are psychological: to shatter the bubble of false peace, to show the ugliness implicit in the culture, to begin healing, and to terrorize the State with rebellion from the most loyal segment of its subjects; and the goals are physical: to halt the spread of suburbia, to occupy spaces for the building of an autonomous culture, to bring war to the comfortable headquarters of the bureaucracies engaged in genocide and slavery, to open a second front and bring relief to oppressed communities in resistance, and to make capitalism unworkable.

Like any revolutionary struggle, it starts with building an infrastructure that can support a strong movement. One of the things I'm involved with in my town is starting up a community center.

we are, that turns us into empty-headed, status-obsessed pocketbooks or leaves us with nothing at all. I'm from white suburbia, I never had to worry about gangs, police violence, malnutrition, or hard drugs, and yet I almost didn't survive childhood. I suspect for me and people like me, our hollow culture-the fact that our parents had achieved the American Dream but we were left spiritually hungry-deserves some of the blame. Not all of it, mind you. The fact that when I was about ten years old I had to stop my dad from beating the shit out of my mom, and then had to be the diplomat through the five years of their divorce, also has something to do with it. The patriarchy, that forced who-knows-how-many generations of my forefathers to violently bottle up their emotions, that subjected too-fucking-many of my women friends to bulimia and rape, is also a major cause of mental illness. But I know quite a few people from suburbia who never directly experienced these problems, who still have to take a pill to survive.

For better or for worse, I did survive childhood, and now I'm an anarchist, and I want to burn the whole fucking system down. But I also need to understand the weaknesses programmed into me-and into my revolutionary ideals-by my background. These include susceptibility to an easy nihilism and abstraction. The privileged kid is more likely to burn his house down, and expect everybody else to do the same, not realizing that plenty of folks are lucky to have a house (for folks like me, but few other people, temporary homelessness can be a kind of liberation). And not having to worry about the material necessities, we seek our liberation through ideas, in abstraction, and if we're not careful this leads us to a kind of ideological totalitarianism: *if you don't have the same ideas as me, then you're not on the same side, or: let's perfect our ideas first, and then act.*

Well, the first few years of activism that I got involved in with other white children of suburbia was all focused on the far-away. Sweatshop labor. US foreign policy. The World Bank. Opposition to wars and occupations. But it wasn't solidarity work. We weren't working with the people who were affected by sweatshops and the World Bank. Occasionally, we went to see one of those people speak, some person of color, maybe a former sweatshop worker, or more often a white activist, equally educated and talking to us with the same language, who had just come from the far-away place, had spoken with

Goldman I was struck with a sense of self-recognition. She wrote as if she were alive today. Everything was still relevant, empowering, and revolutionary. I came to understand Gender as not just a social construct but as a means of control and oppression. Of course, gender isn't always that, but our submission to its flimsy, skeletal outlines of what defines a Man and what defines a Woman is a kind of self-imprisonment.

With red hair and soft freckles, Thomas will always look young to me. (As young as a parent can look to a child.) He asks me about Anarchism. "What is it, exactly? How does it work?" I explain anarchism to him in a similar way I explain gender to my high school and college students:

"The oppressive function of Gender is a deep kind of authority," I say, "It results in the most inhumane acts imaginable: rape, domestic abuse, torture, suicide, and murder. Anarchism, among other things, rejects binary gender systems. Because it respects the individual as a member of a community, a community of anarchists will therefore respect an individual's identity.

"Liberal feminism, however, prides itself on assimilating women into current oppressive institutions with the theory that such changes will alter those institutions for the better. But in doing so, liberal feminism steps on the backs of women of color as well as the working class and takes no risks in order to combat misogyny, patriarchy, homophobia, and heterosexism. It has become watered-down; a pathetic plea for reform from governments whose actions seem only to reflect a disgust for women, not to mention queer and trans folks. It becomes a part of socializing submission to authority, hate, and violence. And while not all who claim to be Anarchists understand or respect Transgender issues and struggles, Anarchism's very nature encourages us to do so."

At the ceremony following Tariq and mine's wedding, Thomas made a toast. The first time it snowed that winter was on that night. It fell peacefully through the woods, onto the creek, and around the old stone building in which we had gathered. Tariq and I finally got to sit down and eat when Thomas read the words he had written just for that night. The room looked on respectfully - warmly. Our ceremony's attendees were humorously and powerfully different. Muslims, punks, childhood friends, Mormons, siblings, and lesbians all gathered together. After the toast, the mill filled up again with noise. I stalked up next to Tariq's mother, Clara, and said, "You know, the only reason we really did this was to put all of you in the same room together to see what would

happen." I still tell her that whenever she recalls that day and she laughs every time.

Tariq's family is so different from the one I grew up in. They are religious and they have heterosexual expectations for their children: marriage, children, and grandchildren. They have had to question those expectations since taking me on as their daughter but like the rest of us, they are bravely in the process of un-learning what they have been taught about Men and Women.

Sometimes I think most people don't believe that they have any connections to families like mine. I'm sure that most of us never thought we would have to face issues like these on such personal levels. And while the acceptance I've witnessed has outweighed the threats and snide comments, there is a person somewhere in an office, or a church, or at their dining room table who wants nothing more than to make families like mine illegal. Well, if my family is illegal, then we only join countless others who also struggle daily for dignity and freedom, and who resist authority in all its horrid forms; because no government or president is ever going to give us those things, we already have a right to them.

\* \* \*

Each community is different and thus, has different needs, weaknesses, and strengths. There is no one way to combat transphobia, so don't expect anyone to give you the answer. There are some suggestions I can make, though, coming from my own experiences. I do not speak for trans folks. I do not speak for children of trans or queer folks. I only speak for myself. The first thing for me to do was to take responsibility for my own education. This was a concept I learned early on while studying feminism. I have to make the initiative to read, ask questions, and create my own ideas about something. Then, I have to choose whether or not to act on those ideas. That is the essence of self-liberation. What I know can set me free.

I also have to understand some basic ideas that often get pushed aside like, "What is the difference between Gender and Sex?" and "What is an ally?" I have to unlearn what I have been taught about groups of people. I have to become conscious of my role as an oppressor and ask how my actions and words affect others. What may seem "basic" is usually quite radical. Some communities need slow, well-explained processes focused on these "basic" themes while others may be prepared for waging widespread gender-fucking campaigns across their cities.

Finally, I need to understand that lots of people have never heard

## **How Crazy; Can Take On the Pathology of Privilege**

(or: Locking Arms for Porcupines)

by moonshot

Millions of people in this country are crazy. It would take me about five minutes to look up the statistic of precisely how many million are crazy, but as one of those crazy people I find it highly absurd to quantify craziness, both because the people in bow ties or white lab coats jotting down the numbers have got to be fucking pathological, and because I've known folks who at times have been five crazy people but they only ever got counted once.

Don't think, just because I'm counting crazies, that nobody else has to take a number. Folks who don't get counted among those millions of crazy people are let off the hook only because they've peaceably surrendered control of their reality to a pathological culture.

Recently, a prestigious assortment of accredited psychopaths and licensed pill-pushers released the largest study ever on rates of mental illness across the world, and-surprise, surprise-the US got ranked number one. People at the heart of Empire go crazy (e.g. depression, bipolar, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders) more often than anywhere else. To make sure we're on the same page, we all gotta understand that mental illness is a response to your environment, to your health, and to built-up stress or traumatic experiences in your past. Susceptibility to mental illness may or may not be genetic-there's no proof either way-but genes are not the cause. There is also no proof or even consistent evidence that brain chemistry is the cause, and this is admitted by the medical establishment, but they still pursue chemical "solutions" because pharmaceuticals is how they get their money.

So let's get back to this study I mentioned. People of color in the US have lower rates of mental illness, despite greater poverty, exploitation, and state violence, because they tend to have *stronger communities* (read: environmental factors). The exception to this is immigrants who are unable to live with immigrants of similar background, that is: *people who no longer have a culture*.

I would argue that white suburbia also does not have a culture-not in any organic, wholesome sense. It is a meaningless, rootless, superficial, interchangeable, commercial culture that does violence to who

awareness to overcome that is high. Parenting can be viewed as a sacred task and one that should be actively supported by our communities and societies as a whole.

Under an anarchist model, school as we know it would not exist. As my friend S. said, "putting my son in school would be like caging a wild animal." It is the perfect system of control and indoctrination. You are taught to abandon your natural body rhythms, many times by the influence of pharmaceuticals, you are age-separated, your every move, down to drinking and going to the bathroom is monitored. You are force-taught subjects that may have no interest or relevance to your life. The socialization process is nothing more than a veiled caste system. The types of intelligence that are valued in no way reflect the spectrum of gifts humans have. The food served is for the most part sub-standard and far from nourishing. The saying goes that school prepares you for work but in some ways it prepares you for prison as well. What it doesn't prepare you for is a life of authentic self-expression.

Kids want to learn. We don't worry about "teaching" a baby to walk or talk. Those skills naturally occur and we lovingly encourage it. Older kids will also naturally want to learn, if that desire hasn't been destroyed by outside influences. Once again, our role can be that of actively encouraging and supporting. And as adults our natural love of learning can be supported by our kids. The state has created an environment of fear where we feel that learning must come from without versus within; imposed instead of sought. So home-schooling often becomes school in a home environment. It takes a lot of trust to allow your kids to unfold at their own pace.

Anarchist societies stress freedom, autonomy, mutual aid, creative self-expression, etc. The family being a microcosm of and a building block for society, it makes sense that organizing/living family life in such a manner is a vital part of the revolution.

the word "Transgender" before, and I must be prepared to talk to people like that. I must also not assume that so-called Anarchist spaces will automatically be safe spaces for transfolks just as I should not assume that all trans folks are anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, or anti-statist. I certainly can't have a heart attack every time I trip up on someone's pronoun! There are endless ways to organize with trans folks. As far as education goes, here is a list of good books to get you started... Good luck!

Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us or My Gender Workbook, by Kate Bornstein

The Last Time I Wore a Dress, by Daphne Scholinski

Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender, by Riki Wilchins

Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arch to Rupaul, by Leslie Feinberg

Transmen and FtMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities, by Jason Cromwell

### **Anti-authoritarian Parenting:**

#### Specific Strategies Related to an Anarchistic Society

*The author of this piece is an anarchist and mother of three living in Virginia.*

I have heard, more times than I can express, over and over again that you shouldn't be friends with your kids. Doing so would certainly create an environment of chaos and "children in charge." The control that is your right as a parent would be gone. From personal experience and knowing many other antiauthoritarian parents, I find this scenario doesn't ring true.

The key issue here, in my mind, is control. We live in a society/culture based on control, in the worst sense of the word. Our lives are managed by seen (parents, preachers, bosses, teachers, cops, doctors), and usually unseen (government officials, corporate bigwigs, media moguls) forces, and this process begins from the time we are born - being "delivered" into a sterile medically-focused environment. Many parents, modeling only what they've experienced, get kids to "tow the line" from a very early age. Discipline, in our culture can run the gamut from "a talk-

ing to", time-out, grounding, withholding of affection, spanking, humiliation, beating. Many of these methods are effective in the short term, seemingly creating the desired result. The child will most likely comply and internalize that feeling we all know of being "powered-over". It seems to me the more healthy outcome of discipline would be one of self-empowerment through self-control. But this involves looking at discipline in a different way than most of us have experienced or witnessed.

According to one dictionary definition, discipline means 1) teaching, instruction; 2) that which is taught to pupils; 3) training which corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects; 4) punishment, chastisement. It seems most discipline falls under definition #4, i.e. punishment. I like the concept of discipline as teaching or instruction. Even more true to my heart and intuition is the idea of guidance; parents as guides or fellows, more weathered travelers in life's journey.

Just as an anarchistic/antiauthoritarian society is often equated with out-of-control chaos and mayhem, so too is the family that operates around that model. But in neither case is that blanketly true. Anyone who has spent time around young children knows it certainly can be chaotic but that is part of the spontaneous, unrestrained nature of children. Much time and effort is spent trying to tame that spirit. In an anarchistic model this sense of freedom and exploration is encouraged and supported. The ideal goal is to create a home environment and eventually a societal environment where people feel natural expressing who they truly are, as "dictated" by their soul, and being as free from oppressive influences as possible.

This process doesn't mean boundaries are non-existent and kids are free to do whatever they want, whenever they want. That wouldn't be safe for them or fair to those around them. Part of guiding kids is letting them know that their behavior has consequences and hopefully we as adults can be honest about those consequences. When C., who is 2, throws a rock at the cat, the consequence isn't to smack him or somehow punish him but to let him know the cat will not think of him as a friend and will be scared of him. If C., who loves our cat, Saco, wants him to know that, then he needs to gently pat or stroke the kitty. If C. scares Saco, then Saco may scratch. Of course, this may need to be stated over and over again and Saco's safety needs to also be protected. Helping children learn healthy boundaries and self-control takes great patience on adults' parts. Say it over again and again! But the eventual outcome will be a person whose behavior is guided by an internal compass of self-

awareness, compassion, and consideration instead of fear of some external force.

Seeing myself in the light of a "guide" freed me to be open to all I have learned from my kids. The pressure of having to know it all is not there. I can fuck it up and apologize and discuss what happened. I have been called on my shit many times, especially by my now 14, 17, and 20-year-old family mates. This lack of authority over them has enabled me to learn and grow so much because of their wisdom. We are all here to navigate this sometimes whacky, sometimes oh-so-high life and having the honor to parent someone through the early years is a great gift.

So sadly and frustratingly our society is completely unsupportive of this form of living. I had been told many times by some friends and family that one of my sons "needed to be spanked" for his behavior, which was making them very uncomfortable. Strong emotional display of any kind is frowned upon in our culture. It was apparent to me that his system was not yet mature enough to handle all the myriad of experiences life can give you. He'd flip out with overload. I intuitively knew he was not just trying "to get his way". As he aged, it became apparent that his emotional outbursts were still not quite in his control, and he wished they wouldn't happen. I tried as best I could to provide a safe space for him to process these intense emotions and at times it was hard for me to keep myself from flipping out too.

Parenting is tough and to do that under the oppression of a capitalist patriarchal system can become stifling. We are so separated from each other and so dependent on the various systems provided by our capitalist society. We don't learn how to organize and create a culture of interdependence. Creating communities where folks can count on one another and learn from each other is vital. Kids can only flourish with lots of uncles and aunts in their lives, and the load of parenting can be lifted giving parents much needed time for themselves. We are so isolated by age in our culture that many times young adults have had no exposure to young kids. It is easy to mythologize what parenting is all about when you're not around families. My baby sitting and day care experience gave me very little insight into the reality of being a parent. Mixing up ages and non-parents with families is an amazing growing experience for everyone.

The value placed on parenting is so low in a patriarchal frame of reference. My experience of anarchistic communities that are alive now is just the opposite. The oppression of children is recognized and people's