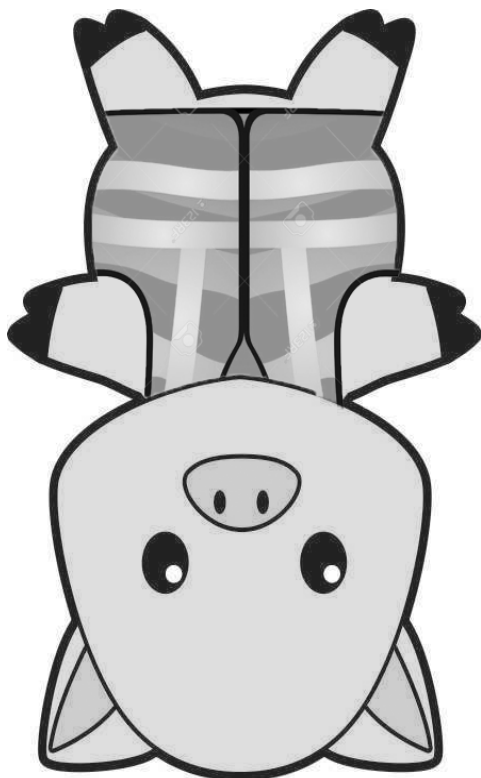


**AN ANARCHIST  
REPORT BACK AND  
SOME EMBEDDED  
CRITIQUES OF  
#OCCUPYICE  
PHILADELPHIA**



*These texts were written in response to our various experience during the first day and night of OccupyICE. While the encampment has changed a lot since, we feel that the power dynamics and social situation still warrant these critiques.*

## **REPORT BACK AND SOME EMBEDDED CRITIQUES**

The beginning of OccupyICE Philly started out as a beautiful event which had so much potential. Before the end of the first night that was actively squandered by the “central committee” of the “occupation”. What began as a direct interruption of ICE’s ability to operate their office devolved into a purely symbolic self-victimizing spectacle, one that was unable to defend itself or escape enemy capture.

To recap, throughout the day anarchists and other folk who were not complacently just linking arms and singing (as the Left has done in contemporary times, only to get beaten and arrested symbolically,) were taking actions of tactical defense and escalation. These were the individuals who are actively trying to destroy and shut down ICE via tangible, time tested methods.

Banners (and a couch) were used to initially block the streets, put up in open defiance of police asking people to stop, while also sending other radical and intersectional messages through their imagery. The occasional projectile was thrown. Barricades were built using construction materials, chairs, a dumpster, and a couch. Entire streets were blocked off in order to create a defensible zone for

the occupation. A van arrived to aid the blockade while blasting tunes for what was feeling like a beautiful and empowering block party.

Anarchists attempted to open up conversations to share thoughts, coordinate, and deepen analysis. The socialists' marshals and other self-appointed "leaders" were neutral or even hostile to these autonomous initiatives. The suggestion of open and horizontal discussion seemed to frighten and upset the marshals, who quickly swooped in and informed us that they were meeting and that we were welcome to send a delegate from our "group" if we wanted. A bottle thrower was shamed. Barricades were alternatively applauded and criticized throughout the night. Anarchists in Philly have been busy for years attacking capital, the state, and fascists. There is a certain familiarity with occupation and conflict that many of us felt we could contribute. It would be an understatement to say that we are disappointed (but not surprised) at how the marshals behaved.

The first concession to the cops was to obey their order to move the van. This is understandable since it was probably connected to someone's name, but it was replaced by a singing human chain. For some reason (another police order?) a little later, the socialist human chain then backed off the street and willingly lined up with their backs to the wall of the building. Anarchists then built barricades around them and began fortifying those in the streets.

This might point to a big difference in tactics and

experience. To anarchists it seemed obvious for many reasons to hold the entire space rather than just block the building: for one, it required less material (whether bodies or pallets) to blockade across the streets rather than along the entire building, but it also gave everyone more room and safety, and would have been more effective and defensible. The barricades asserted our autonomy and at the very least would have bought some time if they had to be taken down by the city.

The liberals (in which we include communists/socialists/red “anarchists”) got scared when the police gave their 4th or 5th “final” warning to unblock the street and take down the tents. Like good little subjects of the state, the liberal “central committee” of organizers convened and decided to take down all the barricades. They flipped a dumpster upright that was tipped over and they started handing barricade building materials and trash TO THE POLICE! As the police were trying to clear the area of all trash. Like they literally handed things to the police. After an entire day of ‘fuck the police’ this and ‘there’s no good cops’ that, they fucking helped them, this hypocrisy is disgusting, cowardly, and completely dishonest. Their “revolutionary” politics is nothing but a self-congratulatory and self-victimizing performative social scene. Why talk such a tough game only to retreat again and again?

It is no surprise that the socialists were willing to cooperate/collaborate and do the cops’ work for them, because as statists they wish not to destroy the police but to become them themselves. This is made clear by

their incessant policing of others at demonstrations. For instance, after an anarchist, visibly upset that the barricades were being taken down, yelled into the crowd that the socialists had given up, he was swarmed by people in yellow vests (organizers). They proceeded to say things such as “Oh nuh, uh white boy, you don’t get to just yell, we’re going on a walk, you have to listen to me a brown woman of color” the same person proceeded to snitch jacket the anarchist, telling him that “I haven’t seen you around” “What do you organize?” “you’re acting like a cop”. The irony of calling someone cop-like for criticizing the marshals’ policing (and doing the cops’ work of clearing the barricades for them) seemed to completely fly over heads of the self-appointed leadership. The anarchist told the organizer he didn’t want to see them get lied to and beat up by the police and the organizer said that if that anarchist had a problem he could have approached an organizer. When he replied that he was actually fundamentally opposed to their decision making process, and that if they had announced the occupation to the public and were calling for public support then they’d have to let go of their control, the organizer shook their hands by his face screaming “You stupid fucking anarchist!” Very approachable. He was then told he could stay if he wanted but a few minutes later was asked why he was still there.

Earlier in the day, the same people got upset at the anarchists for shouting more conflictual things on a hijacked megaphone. They even tried so hard asking around to find out who the people on the megaphone were. The marshals did not seem to understand autonomy,

diversity of tactics, or horizontality. They made clear that their idea of solidarity was everyone doing the same thing (ie: doing what they said people should do) rather than the understanding the those who struggle against oppression without hindering each other benefit each other. One of the more strange hypocrisies coming from the organizers/marshals was their supposed support of both unity (“there can only be one line”) and a diversity of tactics, this is a contradiction that became more and more clear as they tried to reign in those who did not follow their plan.

In response to anarchists agitating and spreading messages against ICE and cops, marshals said that it was counter to the messaging they were trying to spread, while a line of people had their arms locked, ready to dislocate their shoulders, all while singing kumbaya or this land is your land. Again the irony of a group of mostly white people singing about land ownership at a demonstration challenging borders was lost on many.

Back to the organizers accosting and snitch jacketing a friend (snitch jacketing is the dangerous practice of accusing people of being snitches or cops without substantial evidence, often as a way to insult or discredit someone). Something happened and one of the organizers proceed to get in the face of another anarcho, trying to flex, this created a very tense situation. There was some arguing back and forth, the liberals saying they respected diversity of tactics (despite actively dismantling other people’s hard work which is antithetical to respecting diversity of tactics). The points were made that A.) a

lot of the anarchists have been around and seen the failures of several movements and here we are doing things we think could have made them better B.) Liberals literally do this every time anarchists try to participate in demonstrations and movements, they actively push us out, snitch jacket us, rat us out to the cops, etc. It is why a lot of anarchists, particularly in Philly do not fuck with demonstrations. This happens every fucking time. C.) We're anarchist, we're not trying to do what you tell us to do, we're gunna do what we want. There were more discussions, a liberal got socked for being an ass, and many anarchists left, those who stayed are anarchists in name, but their submissive and streamlined participation in hierarchical organization baffle us. We clearly were not wanted or respected at this demo that night. We were the ones going hard all day, the heat exhaustion and cuts on our hands show that. Maybe when the police move in and they are getting their asses beat and arrested, they'll understand. Enjoy the camp out, sucks you don't have tents, it's hot.

We hope a number of you socialists realize that you were being led by hypocritical bigots, getting conned into being beaten up for a symbolic protest. We hope that upon reflection you might recall that the space felt safer, more effective, and more fun when anarchists were building barricades and openly defying the police. We hope you realize the limitations, contradictions, and oppressiveness of hierarchical organizing, especially when it comes to public occupations, and that your leaders' authoritarian resistance to a diversity of tactics in effect sabotaged any chance of an effective defensible occupation. We hope

you quit your sheepish roles in your organization and to see you in the streets as individuals fighting for our collective liberation.

## **AUTHORITARIAN ORGANIZING**

It's important to take a look at some of the tactics that authoritarian organizers use to maintain their control over events like these. From the beginning, there was a necessary level of secrecy around the plan to take the space. Cool. However, once the space was taken (again, largely because of the efforts of autonomous elements to actually keep cops out of the space), organizers actively undermined efforts to open up space for conversation around tactics and strategy.

Throughout the more promising hours of the occupation, anarchists tried initiating conversations in a number ways, from just approaching People With Vests and asking "Is there a plan to initiate some sort of assembly?" to just stealing megaphones and declaring that such a conversation would take place.

In one-on-one conversations, People With Vests frequently responded that The Plan was ultimately to withdraw from barricades and use bodies to block the garage doors. Often, these individuals didn't seem to know who made The Plan, if it was a *\*good\** plan, or how to create space for broader numbers of people to discuss. During one more open conversation, a couple authoritarians asserted that the police were going to successfully reclaim the space *\*no matter what\** so therefore efforts



to build up barricades *\*or even make space for tactical discussions\** were futile.

So, organizers were starting from a place of assumed total weakness and with zero intention of actually attempting to hold the space in a directly disruptive way long-term. However, their attempts to stifle broader conversation meant that this was never asserted plainly, nor was there opportunity to propose that other approaches could be possible or desirable.

During the arguments later in the evening, People With Vests who were berating anarchists insisted that they were and had been available if anyone had any questions or proposals. Thing is, we weren't trying to just ask clarifying questions or seek approval from these self-appointed leaders. We wanted to make space to assert that it was possible to emphasize building up the space so that it could be better defended and to find and encourage others for whom that idea resonated.

People With Vests and other official organizers were able to prevent that from happening by presenting themselves as the only ones to talk to, and then dismissing any ideas that ran counter to their strategy of preemptive defeat. They deftly managed to gatekeep information, shut down participatory decision-making or discussion spaces, then made decisions in closed (or at least not announced) meetings of authoritarians. After making and imposing unilateral decisions, they'd defend this by insisting "well, this is the decision we democratically voted on."

Just wait until you hear our thoughts about democracy!

Our idea of struggle is to struggle ourselves, their idea of struggle is to manage how others struggle.

## **WHAT WE LIKED**

Despite our frustrations with the way things went down, there were still some things we really liked about the occupation and wanted to voice appreciation for. First, it's important that people even took the initiative to make the occupation happen in the first place. It started off tactically smart by blocking all the entrances to the ICE building, which was a crucial element to the actual disruption of ICE's functioning. The use of a bike barricade was also effective in blocking the cops, and the van which served as part barricade, part sound system created a fun atmosphere for the crowd. These initial barricade tactics helped form solid barriers between our space and the cops, which allowed for more freedom of movement within the space itself and created an overall more pleasant mood. The stronger the physical barrier between us and the cops, the more time and effort it will take the cops to break the occupation, which also means the more time people have to escape arrest, and less of a likelihood of people getting hurt (especially compared to people using themselves as an obstacle). Our favorite part of the night, was building stronger and secure barricades of pallets and larger materials including an overturned dumpster and stolen police fences. It was really cool to watch the spark of inspiration spread as more people began to take it upon themselves to source supplies and

contribute to the construction without being told to by anyone. Shout out to all the anarchists and unknown comrades who held it down. It's unfortunate that all of the hard work put into these tactics was repeatedly willfully abandoned or destroyed at each request of the police. The cops were probably laughing as the protesters wound up doing their dirty work for them. Besides that, we thought it was great to see so many people bringing in supplies. There was never a shortage of food and water and its not surprising that sharing and comfort were such strong priorities for the commies, we just wish they could have expanded their imagination on other types of supplies, strategies and possibilities needed to create and maintain an effective occupation. Our goal is to destroy ICE (and all forms of prisons and replications of the state honestly), but their goal is simply "to stay as long as possible." What does that even do? Causing a spectacle is merely a parade and does little to dismantle this horrifying reality we face.

## **WHO WE ARE**

We are anarchists. We are enemies of authority, hierarchy, and domination. This means we fight government and economy, both within and outside of our struggles, in this case specifically we are against both ICE and the protest marshals who imagine themselves to be our leaders. We do not organize anyone but ourselves, and we refuse to allow others to make decisions for us.

Additionally, anarchists aren't making moves in order to loudly take credit. We also tend to do things that need to

stay anonymous for multiple reasons. So, when you shout “I haven’t seen you at anything you do literally nothing ever!” that’s because we’re not trying to recruit people to a cultish political party, get our faces on the news so we can raise funds for said cult, or get arrested just to collect war stories.

We want some of our shit to be opaque. We also want it to be inviting. To act in ways that refuse the specialization and elitism of Activism and assert that anyone can attack, defend, build, whatever, in innumerable ways.

We don’t want a state, which you [authoritarians] do and are trying to prefigure. We know about the comments after the arguments when you finally got honest and said you’re gonna shoot us if you win. Please maintain that level of honesty in the future! You actually got people to line up against a wall, this time just to get sacrificed to the police. When you become the police... yeesh.

We want to end domination. We are your enemies.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZERS**

Obviously, we want to call out the organizers of this occupation for the many faults that were present because we hope this critique will cause them to think more critically about their strategies, tactics, and shortcomings. We want to offer some insights and suggestions so that maybe they’ll be less alienating, authoritarian, naive, and submissive if they attempt to do things like this in the future. We also want to provide these suggestions

for anyone who may organize a similar action or find themselves in the midst of one and feels it could be improved upon.

### *Suggestions on how to not be alienating:*

In any situation where there are intentions of liberation, it is important to be open to dialogue with other people and to listen to critiques. If you're on some "we the people" tip you're gonna have to expand conversation to outside of your governing body of marshals. There were multiple times in the night where conversations surfacing outside of the jurisdiction of the marshals were shut down. We thought it was especially dismissive that after bringing mad energy and ideas to the occupation, the People with Vests refused to engage in critical dialogue with us and even went as far as to propose we send them an email instead of talking directly. Welp, here's your email.

All the while this was happening, there were plenty of people who were shouting their opinions and trying to discredit the anarchists. You don't need to be rude to people who are trying to help just because they're opinions and strategies are different from or unfamiliar to you. Conflicts are healthy and good to explore. Don't just shut them down or ignore them, they are prime ground to learn from.

### *Suggestions from an anti-authoritarian perspective:*

Consensus is not the same as being in charge, even though often times it is used as a ploy in making things play out in a limited and restrictive way. Removing people's

individual autonomy for the uniformity of a group is stifling and restrictive. It's impossible for everyone to come to an agreement in a group where people's needs and desires are manifold. Don't hide your objectives of running things or trying to control a specific outcome under the guise of false unity. We don't all want the same things. Another suggestion is to make proposals and suggestions instead of giving orders. When you tell someone what to do you're policing them, and assuming you know better than them what they should be doing. As anarchists, we hate all cops, even the self appointed ones. So don't be a bastard and don't tell us what to do! Being leaderless and uncontrolled feels better and honors autonomy-- is freedom not your ultimate goal anyway? If so isn't non-hierarchical organization an essential part of getting there? If it's not, you are just replicating the state and we want nothing to do with you.

Throw away your yellow vests, they send the message that you're in charge, when really no one should be "in charge". If you let go of your hold onto power there'd be a lot more room for things to open up in interesting ways.

Along with abandoning control and a central organizing body, decentralizing activity not only allows for the potential of people to figure out their own desires better and to make their own moves towards them, it is also a really smart strategic move to confuse and baffle the police. Whether at a public occupation, or in other means of direct action, when there is no central group for cops to pinpoint activity on, we become harder to trace, fostering a better culture of security and safety. This not

only makes it harder for the cops to figure out what we're up to and know how to plan for what moves we'll make, but also gives us more chances of being successful in our actions by remaining outside of their reach. Additionally decentralization leaves room for any and everyone to struggle and express themselves as they see fit, to associate with whoever they want to collaborate with, and distance themselves from whoever they do not want to cooperate with. If we believe none are completely free until all are completely free, we should organize ourselves in ways that reflect this idea.

### *Suggestions on flexibility:*

Understand that you may have to adapt to the situation at hand. We heard over and over that people had been planning this for weeks and that every decision was strategic, but you can't cling to a rigid model; it's important to be able to switch up your methods, especially when attempts grow predictable. The cops being able to predict what is going to play out is a bad idea, and why it's cool to embrace diversity of tactics! This argument was relied on as an attempt to undermine any unplanned tactics used. Stop clinging to your 'Activist' identity, and instead be receptive to new and changing ideas and methods.

### *Suggestions regarding media:*

Don't depend on the media to represent you fully or garner you enough sympathy to make your struggle 'successful'. The media will spin their story however they like, generally cooperate with the cops and will hand over footage to them if they want to arrest or convict people. It seemed a huge part of the tactical strategy

for the marshals was to time it appropriately for media attention, which seems to hold far too much faith in the media. There's also a difference between spreading information and being preoccupied with self promotion (get off your instagram). Again, what goes online can be used against people.

### *Suggestions on anonymity and security:*

Get yourself some damn masks.

### *Suggestions for the naive:*

Why does it feel reasonable to use yourselves as barricades when you could place objects in the street instead? This means barricades only need to be built once and then you are free to spend your time doing something else. If it feels important to create a human chain to stop the cops, it can always reform when the cops are advancing. Regarding the police; they are the enemy! They should not be trusted (we heard they beat and arrested some of you after telling you they wouldn't, which is very unfortunate, but should come as no surprise). They are the modern day slave patrol. It is their job to maintain the social order, crush dissent, kill and imprison the excluded and exploited, and generally stand in our way. To draw a connection that should be obvious; ICE are cops! Aren't we against ICE?

We suggest it's best to figure out what you want to do and then how you'll make it happen. There was a lot of flip flopping the first night. Organizers saying they were cool with barricades only to take them down, saying they respect a diversity of tactics only to shame those whose



actions didn't fit their program, wanting anarchists to stick around and then completely alienating them, etc. For authoritarians who had discussed the occupation together for days you all seemed awfully hesitant and unsure of what you wanted to do. We feel like some of your preparation time would have been better spent researching and understanding other tactics. The only proposal (order/command actually) you had on offer was to link arms, and prepare for symbolic arrest. Occupations have been popping up all over the country, and there have been occupations here and elsewhere before we can learn from. One that we found particularly interesting was the train track blockade in Olympia, WA against fracking supply transportation.

There was a genuine fear and aversion to anarchist ideas and organizing styles, we have our bias as anarchists, one of which is that you should get over this fear and aversion. Anarchists have been involved in struggles against borders, policing, and imprisonment for a long time. Local anarchists have years of experience fighting against these systems. Our tactics and approach may seem confusing to those who don't understand them, but we assure you they are thought through and taken with intentionality. Consider that anarchists started the Occupy movement to which the ICE occupation is tactically and strategically indebted, that anarchists have been organizing against imprisonment locally for years, and that anarchists have been at the forefront of direct efforts against gentrification, against Amazon, and other struggles here.

## *Suggestions on overcoming submission and complacency:*

Stop it with the tired chants that are dishonest. When you say “no justice, no peace” and “we’re not scared of the police” how are you going to stand by what you say? Are you really not afraid of the cops? why wouldn’t you be? Don’t talk big only to submit, we have yet to see you stay true to your words. If you say “no justice, no peace” what are you including in your measures of “no peace”? More often than not, violence is a necessary response and/or offensive move in systems as violent as the ones we live in, we have yet to see the you toe your own line about this. To add to that, defense without offense is bullshit. If you are just retreating and responding, you are not actually fighting anything. Expanding is better than shrinking. We mean this in the most literal sense. Shouldn’t an occupation be about building our power, expanding our reach and the capacity of what we can achieve? You can’t grow “a movement” by cowering the crowd into a corner. The cops should be the ones cowering, but to do that we need to be conflictual. Conflictuality delays cops, not submission. You make it easier for them every time you submit to their orders of what they want you to do.

The last tip of advice is just to have more fun. Fun and joy are some of the most powerful strengths we have that can help thicken our solidarity to each other and our causes.

## **SOLIDARITY GREETINGS**

Shout out to all the anarchists near and far who stay making shit happen, holding it down, all the while having

to deal with heaping loads of liberal bullshit. Shout out to the unknown comrades who actively decide how they engage with the occupation rather than choosing the easy path of obeying the marshals or the cops.

*“Maybe we just didn’t fully grasp our own power, and their strength on the inside and the result of that. Like every other direct action we just stopped at the gate, thought that it’s not going to succeed, that we’re just gonna go and make a stand, that people are going to film and we’ll have a little beef with the cops and that’s that. Maybe I’m guilty of not thinking enough of the possibilities, not imagining enough, not being fucking utopian enough, or hopeful enough... Maybe not fucking joyous enough, that we can bust them out and that we \*can\* do this. We were just not prepared, to run them out, to get it right...”*

-participant-accomplice in the 2002 breakout from the Woomera detention center

-some anarchists

## **SUGGESTED READINGS**

<https://belliresearchinstitute.com/2017/02/22/a-field-guide-to-protests-the-protest-marshal/>

<https://belliresearchinstitute.com/2017/02/24/dont-just-follow-along-some-critical-notes-on-tactics-and-discourse/>

<https://crimethinc.com/2018/07/01/the-ice-age-is-over-reflections-from-the-ice-blockades>

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/another-word-white-ally-coward>

<https://radicaleducationdepartment.com/2018/07/04/dispatch-from-occupy-ice-philly-ab/>

FUCK ANY WEAK ASS  
PRAXIS TANKIE WANNABE  
COP AUTHORITARIAN  
WHOSE TRYING TO  
“ABOLISH ICE” BY HOLDING  
HANDS AND SINGING  
KUMBAYA WHILE ACTIVELY  
DISMANTLING THE HARD  
WORK OF OTHERS WHO  
ARE LITERALLY TRYING TO  
ATTACK ICE VIA DIRECT  
CONFLICT!