



The Social and Survival:
Questions on Becoming a Threat

Anarchist milieus happen in cycles. There's energetic periods in which there's an influx of energy and activity, then there's slower seasons, where not much is happening. Active periods make changes in your brain. Doing risky shit, being in open conflict, fearing the retribution of the state rewires your brain in a different way, the stress and feeling of being on edge changes you. All of a sudden, the daily reproduction of life is even more soul-crushing and depressing than it was previously. Slower seasons surface underlying conflicts previously masked by activity, and these interpersonal problems, as well as the stagnation, can lead people to drop or be forced out. The subculture consumes itself cyclically as well.

Since 2020, a new anarchist subculture has popped up, with mutual aid becoming a mainstream idea, abolitionism being a hot opinion, and people taking fashion inspiration from the athletic gear fits of Hong Kong rebels, rather than whatever black attire they picked up in the free pile. Anarchy as the primary basis for subculture is an interesting more recent development (in this author's estimation). Anarchism has typically been tied to DIY punk subculture in a way, at least in the US, in a sort of inextricable way. Anarchists for the most part were punks, but not all punks were anarchists.

This is a shift for the geezers amongst us. In the absence of shared musical tastes that motivated the diy projects and spaces of yesteryear, what do these projects look like in the new anarchist scene? These spaces don't have to necessarily be architectural, they can be places like parks or other places that people gather. The project of space maintenance can build a sense of community, as well as providing a fixed location of encounter.

Fixed locations of encounter are important for anarchists. They provide a space for anarchists to consistently interact with each other (and sometimes members of the broader public) that helps people both develop their anarchism and make anarchism more broadly tangible to the people around them. This can create a stronger inter-sense of community as well as counter mainstream demonizing narratives of anarchism. It cannot be neglected that architectural social spaces typically take on an initial role in gentrification of the neighborhoods where they pop up, usually being in historically black neighborhoods where property is more affordable because of the antiblack racist framework the US is built on. What kind of role are the social spaces maintained in the anarchist subculture playing? Are they spaces that people

spend time in? Are they spaces of encounter, and if so what kinds of encounter?

In the absence of interacting in and working on a physically tangible project, such as a collectively maintained space, what do people have to culturally bond them? There have been things like the Anarchy Fair in Philly, partially inspired by the Skillshares that preceded it for the two prior years. Other events like 5K's, barbecues, bonfires, book fairs, discussions, dance parties, reading groups, movie screenings, etc. have formed the social scene of anarchism in the US. Do these social formations foment viable conditions for collective anarchist struggle? Are they meant for just socializing and having a nice time (this author is not that much of a curmudgeon, socializing can be fun, sometimes)? Is anarchism a necessary element of affinity for these events? Are these events impacting other anarchist activity? Are these the goals of these events? The listed events are diverse, and the answers are variable for each of them. Some are fundraisers (material support), some are purely social, some a mix of practical and social.

The usage of anarchism as an identity category for social alignment, and thus social capital accumulation, is one that should be seriously criticized. An unchecked game of social capital accumulation can play out in power dynamics that implicitly or explicitly dictate social norms that, in this author's opinion, any anarchist worth their salt (peter) would be critical of. This accumulation of power is more rare when an entire milieu is participating in perpetuating their respective projectualities. Multiplicity disperses the power that small numbers of individuals could exploit, even if that power and or social capital is accumulated unintentionally. Multiplicity is also an element of security culture, if there's a lot going on, it's harder to pin things down on individuals. Anarchist milieus tend to be clearing houses for those of us who reject a society that rejects us. If the milieu is recreating those same social hierarchies, just in a different flavor, do these anarchist-identified social alignments move towards anarchy? If not, then these social formations are just exemplars of micropoliticking and reproduction of society with different adjectives.

Moreover, scenes fragment along lines of conflict just like any other social relation, which can create distrust and security concerns. Direct communication and mediation are ways to mitigate this (our brains have a cool way of filling in voids of understanding called anxiety), if people know where they stand with people, then there is less uncertainty for one to contend with. But it further begs the question of is

the anarchist subculture even worth maintaining if it does not create the conditions in which we can communicate with each other in a way that demonstrates intentions and facilitates trust? Are these interactions based on a vague shared analysis worthwhile? How can we as an anarchist subculture move towards being capable of struggling together?

Anarchy can be described as the struggle to determine the conditions of one's own life. This is a hard struggle that is a little easier with some help. Formation of trust and bonds with people whom you struggle with is an important, but hard feat to accomplish. One such way of building up this familiarity and trust is through engaging in preparedness with people. Preparedness for what? Collective survival. The idea of the changes in the brain that high-intensity situations create was introduced in the first paragraph of this piece. A way to feed that in a skillfully constructive way is combat training. This could be martial arts training, training with firearms, or drilling emergency medical skills.

Not only do these skills feed that high intensity craving, they are also practical in that the state and fascists are actively trying to kill us. Formations such as these breed trust and familiarity with those who you engage in them with, you can learn each other's strength and what you need to improve upon, and those with more skills and knowledge can pass those on to people who want to learn. The continual practice of knowledge passing is likely more culturally integral than one-off social events. This is not to glorify physical conflict as the most important project. Many other practical group projects can be taken on, things like hacking and computer security, plant identification, hunting & fishing (with associated post-processing), canning & jarring, building mesh networks, building fire, etc. Taking group camping trips to places without a lot of amenities is a great way to develop your skills with a group of people. So is sneaking around in the night. These are just suggestions, there's a bunch of different practical ways that anarchists as a subculture can be capably skilled and pass that knowledge along to others.

Aside from preparedness with other anarchists there remains the question of how does an anarchist subculture struggle alongside other groups of people who are also struggling against the racist settler-colonial system of the US, namely black and indigenous rebels outside anarchist subculture, who quite often struggle more regularly and spectacularly against these systems than an anarchist subculture that tends

to be more white. The zine “Towards Insurrection” is a suggested read in beginning to address these questions, alongside the recommended readings at the end of it. Instead of focusing on what anarchists have done well, especially in the context of the 2020 insurrections, it takes an appropriately and constructively critical look at the anarchist movement in the context of riots and movements in general. Within the first few sentences the author states that 2020 “highlighted some of our deficiencies,” which is a necessary intramillieu criticism to sit with. The zine further highlights anarchist attempts to participate in the 2020 uprising in West Philly following Walter Wallace Jr.’s murder by police. It addresses some of the anarchist, and particularly white anarchist, missteps/ham-fisted participation in the riots around 52nd street. For brevity, it touches on a subcultural clinging to black bloc dress in contexts where it does not make sense and how subculturally acceptable behaviors do not translate as demonstrations of solidarity towards people who there may be affinity and opportunity to struggle alongside with against common enemies. In the final section, A Broader Strategy, it presents several points of moving forward. This piece will highlight 3, namely Multi-racial struggles and white “race-traitors”, Collective Survival, and Land.

The zine correctly situates the necessity of a betrayal of whiteness and eurocentrism in an anarchist struggle on this continent. Anarchism can be understood as a struggle against white supremacy, settler-colonialism, the state, civilization, and society...but it is still coming to these conclusions through a tradition of eurocentric western thought for the most part, this is an element of anarchism and self-identification as an anarchist that should be interrogated. Participation in good faith in struggles against white supremacy and settler-colonialism require white people to make strides in becoming race-traitors, this also includes the excising of whiteness and eurocentrism out of subculture, or the outright destruction of said subculture. What this could look like is demonstrating that anarchist subcultures broadly are willing and capable to fight against the white supremacist settler-colonial projects in serious, tangibly visible ways, alongside black and indigenous people outside of said subcultures engaged in that struggle. None of this is easy, the lineage of the project of the US has intentionally made that so, however, these are necessary factors that an anarchist subculture, and specifically predominately white anarchist subcultures should consider and make attempts at addressing.

On Collective Survival and Land, parallels can be drawn in the concern of a subcul-

ture based on sociality rather than practicality in struggle. The author notes the text “A Wager on the Future,” which quotes a Mapuche comrade on community resistance, tying a community of self-sufficiency to ability to struggle. As fragile flesh machines run on electrochemical gradients and nutrients, we require a few things to maintain our ability to struggle against our enemies, at the end of the day, these struggles remain those for a self-determinacy of our life conditions. A failing of anarchists in general is creating the necessary conditions in our subcultures that maintain our needs, so that we can continue to struggle and prepare in the ways we’re best at. What this could look like is collective housing, collective meals, libraries of equipment, consistent sharing of knowledge and training, etc. These things make the simple struggles of maintaining our physical forms easier, and thus maintaining capacity to struggle easier.

Another major source of burnout is a lack of genuine community of care for one another. What’s the point of struggling with others against leviathans if we can’t collectively maintain the conditions for the survival of our individual bodies. This all ties into the concept of land (and space). Autonomous space is necessary for the project of self-sufficiency. Wrenching land from the grasp of the US and being capable and willing to defend that land against the colonial empire in the aims of returning the land to Indigenous stewardship should be a major concern of settlers attempting to participate in a decolonial struggle. “Towards Insurrection” quotes Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in saying “Indigenous peoples offer possibilities for life after empire.”

This piece attempts to look at anarchist subculture as it currently exists and ask the question of its necessity. Is anarchist subculture addressing the conditions of its arisal? Does subculture put anarchists in a better position to struggle alongside each other? Alongside others? Are the bonds of trust necessary of participating in intense struggle together being formed? Are people confident in the capabilities of the people around them? Does the subculture address desires of genuine community for those of us who society is explicitly in opposition to? Does the subculture situate itself in an appropriate way to encourage self-sufficiency and collective survival? As of now, this author does not believe that is broadly the case.

Resources:
~Always Use TOR!~
(<https://www.torproject.org/>),
no smartphones.

warriorup.noblogs.org

unravel.noblogs.org

csrc.link

actforfree.noblogs.org

scenes.noblogs.org

phlanticap.noblogs.org

<https://scenes.noblogs.org/post/2023/10/26/how-to-have-a-fun-night-to-forget-zine/>

