

attacking worker conditions and rights, and turning towards fascistic attacks on scapegoats and on all forms of resistance to its white supremacist, heteronormative, and patriarchal rule.

Resistance is surging: against fascism, white supremacy, nationalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and inequality. But in the US the radical left, and especially antiauthoritarians, are limited by at least two fundamental weaknesses. First, they are failing to challenge the most basic levers of capitalist power. Capitalist society continues to function quite smoothly. Even the ability of reformist unions to modestly divert economic exploitation has largely collapsed. Second, uprisings tend to quickly evaporate. They leave behind them little infrastructure for building mass, durable, and revolutionary power on the basis of their gains.

Radicals face the danger that socialist parties will step into this void, channeling the explosive energies of revolt for their own bureaucratic projects. This leads towards reformism or, at minimum, authoritarian and alienating kinds of struggle that only weakens us.

Anarcho-syndicalism offers a powerful alternative: a means for targeting the basic levers of capitalist power, and an organizational structure—a bottom-up, federated, dual council system—to build on our revolutionary power, instead of letting it dissipate into the air after every uprising. Today, and especially in the United States, we badly need to develop syndicalist groups and federations, and to support those—like the closely connected IWW—that already exist.

Anarcho-syndicalism is an idea whose time has come once again. It offers weapons we need to strike a powerful blow against a stumbling enemy. May this world burn as we build a new one.



Build the Revolution Anarcho-syndicalism in the 21st century



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example, a self-identified “anarcho-syndicalist” movement came to exist only *after* and on the *basis* of autonomous unions and federations—as a means of coordination and solidarity-building among those bodies. The model of syndicalist federation means not control but bottom-up affiliation and convergence *that maintains the power of decision-making and autonomy always at the level of the working class’s self-grouping.*

And in fact, federation seems to be one of the most important ideas for organizing in 21st century US capitalism. The increasing precarity and mobility of workers require a highly flexible form of organizing. The rigidity and top-heaviness of the party or traditional union work poorly under these circumstances. But federation—connections between autonomous councils of those in struggle across locales, and not rooted merely to specific workplaces or trades—all this offers a highly relevant model of developing radical power today.

3.4 AS and nature

AS drives towards the crisis of the social environment. But not only that environment.

In the epoch of global climate disaster, we know, one of our most basic tasks is to bring the means of production destroying the planet to a revolutionary halt. To do this, we must be able to actually materially affect the world around us, not just engage in symbolic or marginally disruptive actions.

But we should also recognize the profound weakness of the current, dominant model of organizing for exactly this task. As I suggested above, the dominant kind of anti-authoritarian organizing in the US emphasizes the local; small affinity groups loosely connected to each other; minimal large-scale organization; and a focus beyond the workplace. This model has been part of important struggles, especially in sabotaging earth-destroying machines and helping build resistance to corporate destruction of nature. But it’s hard to imagine it fundamentally disrupting how ecocidal capital works for anything other than the very short term. We need more powerful tools.

This insight—the necessity of seizing and destroying the means of ecocide—and the experiments flowing from it, have been more recent elements in AS experimentation. They lie at the heart of an emerging “green syndicalism.”

AS’s two-pillar structure offers a powerful tool for building an ecological revolution. In radical workplace councils lie the germs of insurrectionary seizures and stoppages of the economy. And in its community bases it can help coordinate and strengthen the forms of eco-sabotage, blockades, radical propaganda, and animal liberation needed to grind ecocidal machinery to a halt.

Conclusion: Why Anarcho-Syndicalism Today?

CAPITALISM IS STUMBLING. It is currently unable to recover from the financial crisis that it generated ten years ago. Desperate, the ruling class is slashing at taxes and social programs,

abolished, what can be abolished immediately? On them—in their regional, national, and international federations—falls the constantly re-radicalizing task of coordinating economic struggles. And in them one finds a powerful tool for organizing all of those workers whose paid and unpaid labor goes on in the home or otherwise beyond traditional worksites.

But the domination of the working class happens far beyond work too: in the production of hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, etc. For this reason as well anarcho-syndicalism's second pillar is so important. The federation of radical community councils is a weapon of revolutionary defense against white supremacist policing, prisons, gentrification, patriarchal and homophobic violence, the rise of fascist assaults, etc. It is thereby a tool for seizing the working class's revolutionary autonomy, the free creation of egalitarian racial, gender, sexual, and other identities. It is no aberration that syndicalism has so often looked far beyond the factory and farm. Throughout its history it has helped cultivate "students and artists, tenants' associations, consumer cooperatives, and 'groups of syndicalist solidarity.'"³ Ackelsberg notes that it was the two-pillar attack that made revolutionary syndicalism in Spain a force to be reckoned with, able to mobilize huge numbers of ordinary people to wrench entire sectors of the country away from the ruling class.

Calling for revolutionary community councils is not a utopian demand for things that don't exist. The resurgence of revolt in the US today is spurred in important part in the beginnings of radical, community council-like struggles. Seeds are found in groups and coalitions fighting to keep ICE out of their neighborhoods and struggling for police and prison abolition; in anarchist coalitions that organize across cities; and in the IWW's general membership branches and its General Defense Committee.

That is to say: AS drives towards the crisis in which *the entire social environment* is put into radical question. The workplace and the community council are weapons by which to dismantle *every* institution of capitalist control. The primary goal—the revolutionary strike—must be far more than economic. It must also be a general *social* strike. That means not just refusing to work. It means the active attack on every still-functioning institution of control and domination, shattering them for the sake of the autonomous, egalitarian self-development of the working class. The revolutionary general strike is also the insurrection that replaces this society with federated, revolutionary communes.

3.3 Federation and "entryism"

In fact, a reliance on radical, working-class, community councils is already developing, though usually informally. Leading the way are those communities resisting white supremacist and imperialist policing and becoming highly visible in the anti-ICE struggle. The goal of AS isn't to enter and assume control of such organizations.

This is what is meant by the idea and practice of *federation* that lies at the heart of so much of AS: connecting the autonomous power of the working class itself, and helping to build more connections for increasing that power. History can illustrate. From its origins in Argentina, Spain, France, and elsewhere, syndicalism emerged first and foremost as a means of more closely connecting free and autonomous working-class groups. In France and Spain, for

³ Vadim Damier, *Anarcho-Syndicalism in the 20th Century* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), 55.x

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Conclusion: Why Anarcho-Syndicalism Today?

Introduction

ANARCHISTS ARE DEBATING anarcho-syndicalism once again. If anarcho-syndicalism is a “ghost”—like some critics are claiming—it has proven extremely hard to exorcise. But it is something very different entirely.

The current debate was sparked by “Nothing to Syndicate,” which largely repeats standard criticisms of AS, some of the more recent of which can be seen here and here; see also the summaries here. Then came a critique of “Nothing” (“Aiming at Ghosts”), and then two replies defending the original piece (here and here). The debate has been fairly limited so far. The important first reply to “Nothing,” as well as the defenses that followed, have been wrestling over the details of the original piece. But what’s been missing is a comprehensive response to the original question. What does anarcho-syndicalism offer radicals in the 21st century US?

Some have given this kind of response to critics before, though often in more limited ways (like here). My goal is to go further and deeper. First, I give a systematic historical-materialist analysis of 21st century capitalism in the United States today: its basic drives, structures, and developments. Then I examine the profound limits facing anarchists and their revolutionary allies facing such conditions. (This section tacitly rejects the superficial analysis of the original article.)

And then I offer a vision of what anarcho-syndicalism has to offer. It is far from a ghost. It is a set of inherited, audacious, and sometimes conflicting experiments. Those experiments are still developing. (The ongoing evolution is obvious in more recent syndicalist praxis like green syndicalism and community syndicalism.)

I locate in AS explosive resources for our present—for moving past the fundamental limits of radical organizing today and building revolutionary power to strike at 21st century capital. Defending AS, I explore how its inner resources could be developed to meet the revolutionary needs of the moment.

Anarcho-syndicalism offers badly needed tools for building mass, durable, working-class autonomy inside and outside the workplace for the sake of the revolutionary overthrow of every institution of capitalist control. It is an idea whose time has come again.

1 The Dual Crisis of US Capitalism

THE GUIDING QUESTION—what can AS offer 21st century revolutionaries?—can’t be answered without an analysis of material conditions.

Capitalism in the US today is marked by a twofold crisis: of its *economic structure* and of its *social relations*.

not just the economic machine but also *every* institution of domination and subordination. The goal is to seize on and develop precisely those materials that offer us the most revolutionary possibilities under today’s conditions.

3.2 Two pillars

Today, AS’s revolutionary potential rests on two pillars. These correspond to the two arms of capitalist production—of surplus-value and of people. The first pillar is the federation of revolutionary workplace councils. The second is the federation of revolutionary working class community councils—across cities or towns, for example—to coordinate struggles both inside and outside work.

In the federated workplace councils, workers struggle to better their everyday conditions. They fight for better pay, better hours, more humane conditions. As I argued already, it is just as essential to struggle against every form of social hierarchy—racial, gender, sexual, ability-centered, and so on—that structures the workplace. In regional, national, and international federations, workers coordinate their struggles across trades, industries, and borders. But improvement is not the primary goal. Nor is it having an “equal say” at work. The aim is to stop work: the revolutionary general strike to overthrow capitalism entirely.

The revolutionary general strike is the primary large-scale goal. Such strikes mean to shatter the economy as it exists: placing the economic machinery in the hands of the revolutionary working class precisely in order to stop it. This means the abolition of wage labor and everything associated with it.

Organizing at work is not simply one possible option among many others for creating a revolution. It is essential. It wins time and energy—less time and energy for exploited work, more for rioting, meeting, thinking, writing, creating; more for pleasure, recuperation, play, and class hatred. Wins and losses prepare us for the kinds of collective action we will need for a revolutionary strike. It is an essential tool for building revolutionary solidarity against the social hierarchies that decimate the working class—against patriarchy, white supremacy, heterosexism, and beyond. It readies people who could seize, stop, and shatter all existing economic machinery. Workplace struggle holds out the prospect of fundamentally smashing capitalism. And as such it is a key tool for transforming our desires—alongside radical community struggles—from those of workers to rebels; from consumers to insurrectionaries; from those who want more commodities to those who need to unleash their creative powers of transformation.

With the shattering of an economy and work that exist for profit’s sake, a chance appears to reimagine the very purpose of an economy in the first place: to unleash the powers of autonomous human and natural self-development. The most radical elements of AS drive towards calling every industry and our very identities as “workers” too into question.

But both syndicalists and their critics have noted, over the past century at least, that workplace struggles face the danger of being incorporated into the system, losing themselves in negotiations over “bread and butter” issues. Revolution requires a second pillar: revolutionary community councils of the working class. On them above all falls the question: how do we radically reorganize work for unleashing human and natural autonomy? What can and must be

3 Two Pillars of Anarcho-Syndicalism

3.1 Explosive experiments

WHAT, THEN, IS anarcho-syndicalism?

It is a project for building revolutionary working-class power for the overthrow of capitalism and the state. Anarcho-syndicalists emphasize bottom up, anti-bureaucratic decision-making rather than ceding authority to a bureaucracy. We claim the working class's emancipation can only be seized directly, not begged for. Struggle is rooted in working class councils coordinating with each other by mandated delegates sent to regional, national, and international congresses. The strike, sabotage, insurrection—these are the basic tools of AS.

And yet this definition is too schematic. Anarcho-syndicalism comes to seem like a finished, homogenous body of ideas and practices.

It is far from a finished system. In important ways, Marxism must be understood in terms of the more or less self-contained systems of individuals—Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao. This can't be said of AS. It formed out of audacious, revolutionary, and clashing experiments of a complex movement with antiauthoritarian and mass working-class power. The experiments developed over decades of worker struggle and revolution combining, sometimes raucously and violently, with various streams of socialism, Marxism, communism, and anarchism. It isn't one thing. Above all, anarcho-syndicalism is a field of conflicts, attempts, and possibilities revolving around key ideas—like revolutionary unionizing and direct action—that continue their experimental developments today.

At times, syndicalists have failed badly. For example: the CNT collaborated with the Spanish government and embraced repressive bureaucracy during the Spanish revolution. Syndicalists at times have embraced purely economic struggle and remained blind to the crucial importance of non-work organizing. But to reject AS for this (as “Nothing to Syndicate” and others do) misses the fundamental conflicts and experiments surrounding these issues that *constitute* AS in the first place, and the revolutionary possibilities those conflicts and experiments present us with today. It misses the foundational, vibrant resistance to all forms of bureaucracy, the history of militant feminist and community syndicalists and syndicalism, and so on, from which radicals today have a great deal to learn.

For example: to throw out AS for capitulating to bureaucracy is to cut ourselves off from some of the most crucial revolutionary lessons history has for us. Overthrowing capitalism will require a mass working-class movement. The task will always be threatened by emerging bureaucracies that drag the movement into reifying, reactionary self-betrayal. AS contains essential historical examples of struggles to create mass organizing while at the same time resisting, often successfully, the slide of organizations towards bureaucracy and reformism. In it we find means to address central questions of bureaucracy—how do they form, even in anarchic structures? Why? How can this be undercut?—that we cannot stop asking ourselves.

Its complex, developing, experimental, and multiple histories have made AS into a storehouse of revolutionary resources. We inherit from it a set of tools for the revolutionary shattering of

1.1 The economic crisis

Capitalism has a structural drive: to accumulate more and more profit for ecocidal, genocidal, and endless expansion. This drive is spurred by competition. Companies survive if they can generate more profit and grow faster than their competitors, absorbing or destroying other firms in the process. Profit is the main driver of every industry from the production of sheet metal to restaurants. The logic of maximum productivity infects every institution, whether for-profit or not. The constant mergers concentrating capital today; the stagnation of wages; the desperate turn of the ruling class to risky financial tools; the inability of the ruling class to reign in global warming even when it threatens the global economy; the reshaping of universities through competition to be more corporation-like—all these are confirmations of the basic drive.

Exploited workers stand at the heart of this dynamic. This is because only workers produce profit.

Profit is created by paying workers less than the value than they produce—and appropriating the surplus-value they generate. Automation—more machines, relatively fewer human workers—is a key side effect. It is one means by which workers are made to produce more surplus-value.

But this does not mean that companies can eliminate workers altogether. In fact, the drive to automate sends capitalism into crisis. When capitalism relies more and more on machines, it erodes the foundations of its profit: exploited workers. As companies turn increasingly to automation, and rely on relatively fewer workers, the rate of profit—the amount of surplus-value created relative to the costs of production—declines. Eventually this leads to a fall in the overall amount of profit. The ruling class becomes more and more desperate. They push workers ever harder, faster, and longer. They shriek that taxes must be cut. They dump money into risky financial tools, gambling to drum up more profit.

The celebrated “digital labor” can't save capital from this dynamic. Facebook and Twitter, crowdsourced advertising and research—these don't escape the drive to maximize surplus-value. Christian Fuchs shows that digital labor is designed to work us for as long and fast as possible, always pushing us to generate more products, units of information, per unit of time—often for free. The firms specializing in this kind of labor compete, automate more and more, and so repeat the same cycles as any other firm. And it should be noted: when radicals claim digital labor is wholly new, wholly different, not subject to normal capitalist logic, they repeat the fever-dreams of a ruling class desperate to find escape from its destructive spiral.

Eventually: crisis. Profits can't sustain expansion. Firms and banks collapse; capital must retool and discover new realms for profit. That means war, colonial expansion, privatization, attacks on organized labor and every form of resistance, new and better means of exploitation. The domination of workers at work becomes ever more essential, as capitalism becomes ever more vicious, all-encompassing, and exploitative survive.

The world is living through such a crisis right now. The crash in 2007 was the culmination of a desperate capitalism unable to overcome the basic contradiction at the heart of profit. And capitalism still hasn't found a way out of its problem. This is why working hours are increasing; why workers are being pushed harder and faster; why wages remain stagnant; why bosses rely

on increasingly precarious workers who can be paid less, worked more, and forced to operate in worse conditions; why the global economy is slumping even while the ruling class attacks social programs and slashes taxes.

1.2 Capitalism's two forms of production¹

But the capitalist mode of production can exist only if it goes *beyond* the production of surplus-value. It must also produce people inside hierarchical identities, produced through intersecting patriarchal, white supremacist, heteronormative, ableist, class, and colonial, etc., institutions.

The capitalist mode of production can't function without both kinds of production, which interpenetrate, reinforce, and drive one another. And yet neither can be reduced to the other.

The production of hierarchized identities happens at work. But of course it happens far beyond work too: in basic institutions like education (at every level); the patriarchal, heteronormative "family unit"; popular media in all its forms; religions; sports; the military; the police; the prison system; in every level of the state's bureaucracies; and so on.

White supremacy, patriarchy, etc., have their own relatively separate, though interacting, institutions, histories, mechanisms for discipline and punishment, and traditions of resistance, reform, and rupture. Far from being mere aspects of class, identity hierarchies cut across every class in various ways. For example: patriarchy underlies every capitalist institution and structures every class in various ways, while generating class and racial struggles within itself.

Nor are the institutions of white supremacy, patriarchy and beyond merely *tools* of class struggle. Those institutions make use of the economic system for their own purposes: as vehicles to survive, flourish, and develop. The corporate bureaucracy, for example, is one way that patriarchy—very much older than capital—survived. And white supremacy today continually reinvents itself through commodity production and the capitalist state—like in its transformation of the prison system into a new plantation generating enormous corporate profits, and in the resurgence of state fascism.

Each such structure of domination is cut across, throughout its history, by resisting upsurges of *autonomous* identity—whether small- or large-scale, radical or reformist. Domination always presupposes a surplus: the dominated people's creativity, power, autonomy. It cannot exist without those things. Hierarchies of identity exist only by constantly attempting to recapture and channel or simply destroy the creative force of those who are dominated. This surplus cannot be reduced to class either.

But the production of people inside identity-hierarchies can't be entirely *separated* from either class or work. In fact, the production of hierarchies is absolutely essential to extracting surplus—precisely as, precisely *because*, it is relatively independent.

Social hierarchies function to blunt class and workplace clashes. Fascism is a prime example. By championing nationalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, resurging fascism cultivates a racial, national, and gendered alliance across classes. It rallies a segment of the working class—

¹ In this section I am especially indebted to both Selma James' "Sex, Race, and Class" and Tithi Bhattacharya's "How Not to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class."

Anarcho-syndicalism offers a set of revolutionary tools *not only* for developing workplace struggle, *but also* for expanding and developing community struggles as well. That is, it offers means for building a truly revolutionary power beyond the limits facing radical struggle today.



we would need to move from win to win—channel our surging energy into structures that could increase its scale, its disruptiveness, and its durability. This is not a call for increased centralization—far from it—but we must have a way of coordinating and developing our struggles in a logical way.

2.2 A new cycle of worker struggle?

Moreover, conditions are developing today for a resurgence of workplace struggle—if we know how to seize the chance. The global growth of capitalism is slowing, finally affecting the United States economy as well. To survive the crisis that has been shaking it since 2007, and in fact since the 1970s, the ruling class has squeezed workers more and more while also attacking working conditions. This is especially true in the public sector. The assault on free public education is an attempt by the ruling class to reduce the tax drag on profits while opening up a new realm of privatization. Worsening conditions and frozen wages are fuel to revolt, as we see in the rank and file rebellion of teachers.

And the very collapse of bureaucratic unionizing—the AFL-CIO, SEIU, etc. etc.—is likewise laying the groundwork for a new and militant worker upheaval. Those unions, with their tiny reach into the working class and highly reformist bent, can't hope to channel the rage and resistance spurred by the rise of fascism and the new round of attacks on workers. At the same time, interest in union membership is skyrocketing among 18-29-year-olds. Imagine if that interest were tied to a unionism that goes beyond mere reform and reaction—a revolutionary unionism, which requires an organized labor union of sufficient size to make demands while at the same time being revolutionary in nature, a "One Big Union" if you will.

In this context, the massive wave of teacher strikes, often wildcat, in 2018 does not seem to be an anomaly. It did not occur in a vacuum. It looks more and more like an opening, a chance to build something bigger and more radical. We see some evidence of this in the explosive growth of the IWW, a cousin of AS sharing basic syndicalist principles.

And these developments echo *international* worker struggle. Beyond North America, recent global uprisings have been consistently preceded and accompanied by a resurgence of worker struggles, especially in the form of the strike: in Argentina, South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Latin America, and Europe between 2008 and 2017. General strikes shook Argentina in 2008; Guadeloupe and Martinique in 2009; and Europe in 2012.²

This global resurgence of the strike is a response to the developments of global neoliberal capitalism, thrown into crisis since 2007 and tightening its grip worldwide to rebuild its profitability. These conditions often look different in the United States than other countries—and yet the attack on workers here is nothing else but the arrival of the same trends at home, unevenly but surely. The possibility is growing for a new cycle of radical worker struggles, if we know how to seize it.

² Jorg Nowak, Madhumita Dutta and Peter Birke, "Introduction: The New Upsurge," in *Workers' Movements and Strikes in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Perspective* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

white and importantly male—alongside ever more precarious small business owners, aligning both groups behind corporate and finance capitalists to provide cover for the movement of wealth upwards and the attack on worker power and white supremacist patriarchy. Fascism is very good for the ruling class and for business.

And intersecting social hierarchies make the working class more exploitable. For example, white supremacy and imperialism target groups for prison, legal or extralegal violence, expulsion from the country, and so on. Those populations become hyper-exploitable. They can be paid much less than other workers, or nothing at all. They can be worked harder and longer, and they can be forced to work in much worse conditions than others in the class. Many immigrants face such conditions: terrorized by the repressive tools of the state, hyper-exploited by bosses, and targeted for white supremacist violence by the political elite. At the same time, hierarchies of race, gender, ability, and nationality break down the solidarity among the working class. All this opens the way for the ruling class to attack the wages and conditions of workers across the board. The wage level is set not by the highest paid, but the lowest paid, worker. Capitalism needs extremely vulnerable populations. White supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, ableism, and beyond help provide them.

The two quasi-independent systems—production of identity-hierarchies, production of surplus-value—continually reinforce each other. Surplus-value floods into and feeds the ever-expanding white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal institutions of the state, civil society, and the economy. Investment in for-profit prisons is a prime example. And at the same time, all such institutions—the school, the family, the prison, the corporation—generate the hierarchies necessary for a maximally exploitable, disciplined workforce that is necessary for the extraction of the most surplus-value possible.

All of this means that "ruling class" and "working class" are not merely economic categories. They are always also social ones. The ruling class is made up of all those who control the means for producing surplus-value *and* social hierarchies. The working class is made up of all those who lack that control, who are forced to sell their labor and who find themselves the playthings of the violence of institutions of white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative, colonial, nationalist, ableist control.

And as a result, for the working class to be truly revolutionary, it can never be concerned only with economic issues. Selma James points out that struggle against every social hierarchy is essential to the autonomy of the working class. When it is the most revolutionary, working class struggle attacks *every* structure of social domination. This is why—as I say later—the revolutionary general strike must also be an insurrection raiding and destroying every center of capitalist and state power.

1.3 The emerging crisis of social relations

Capitalism is experiencing a crisis not just economically—in its production of surplus-value—but also in its *production of humans* in hierarchies of identity. To see this crisis we must step back briefly to take a broader historical view.

In the US movement upsurge of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, the ruling class was forced to concede important gains. Struggles against white supremacy, for instance, achieved limited but historic

achievements: voting rights and protections, racial integration of education, and so on. The feminist struggle secured (among other things) a limited legal right to abortion. This era also witnessed a large-scale surge of worker struggle—especially in the form of the strike.

Then came the hammer of counterrevolution. From around the mid-70s through today, the ruling class has used the state to roll back civil and legal protections, like in the elimination of voting rights protections. It has reestablished the power of white supremacy via mass incarceration. The patriarchy marches unevenly forward, attacking freedoms of women and non-binary people wherever and however it can. Unions have been smashed. Militants in the more radical elements of struggle were murdered, permanently exiled, and imprisoned for life: the fate of the Black Panthers and AIM. Social spending (on education and healthcare, on support for the under- and unemployed, etc.) has been subjected to constant attacks. On the basis of this assault, corporate and finance capital have been deregulated while the drive to privatize runs amok. Wages are frozen while productivity skyrockets. Workers are being pushed harder and faster for longer hours, while precarity is becoming a more and more widespread condition of work.

In other words: in the era of counterrevolution—our era—the ruling class has established an ever more naked and brutal form of control. The resurging fascism in the US and beyond is only another step in a dynamic that lies at the very heart of capitalism. After the crisis of 2007-2008, a panicking ruling class has turned in part towards more authoritarian means of securing social control and reclaiming profitability.

But the era of counterrevolution has also now begun to generate a crisis of social relations. The erosion of race, gender, and class compromises and the more and more naked and direct means of social control are undermining the production of stable social hierarchies. The popular resistance to Trump has been historic. Radically anti-white supremacist, anti-capitalist, and feminist revolts are exploding. The movement against ICE, spiking in scope in 2018, is a key example of the crisis. The movement's militant form of solidarity expanded and intensified the struggle against capitalism's production of hyper-vulnerable, hyper-exploited populations. (For more about this, see these two volumes of collected writings of the anti-ICE movement: vol. I and vol. II). In other words, counterrevolution is helping stir and polarize radical struggles against social hierarchies.

A truly revolutionary struggle must address *both* kinds of production, *both* these sources of ruling class power: inside and outside work, the production of surplus-value and the production of every social hierarchy. This is precisely what AS offers us today.

2 Limits and Possibilities of Revolt

21ST CENTURY US CAPITALISM, then, is stumbling. A new chance is emerging to build a revolutionary power to strike back at the ruling class and avenge the era of counterrevolution. But the radical left—and revolutionary anarchism in particular—face profound limits.

2.1 The limits of revolt

On the one hand, militant workplace organizing is at a historic low. A small fraction of workers are in unions. The unions we have are overwhelmingly reformist, often reactionary, bureaucratic machines terrified of revolution and usually resisting militant struggle. The number of strikes involving 1,000 or more has been extremely low in recent years—and it has been declining. 2017 had 7, the second lowest ever recorded.

On the other, movements *beyond* the workplace have explosively grown in recent years. Such struggles are highly local. Very loosely interconnected, like in Occupy or the anti-ICE struggle, each “section” overwhelmingly tends to focus on converging on local political or economic sites. It might seem that struggle is bypassing the workplace more and more, and may do so completely. But this is deeply misleading.

Recent movements almost always express precisely *working class* concerns. Occupy famously highlighted the wealth inequality embodied in the ruling class. The anti-ICE explosions gave expression to a solidarity with some of the most exploited and terrorized workers in the economy. Anti-white supremacist uprisings in Ferguson and beyond were expressions of freedom and resistance to the capitalist state emerging within working-class neighborhoods. Standing at the heart of many recent US uprisings stands a core of precarious young workers alongside various working-class organizations.

The explosions of revolt, in other words, emerge out of the intersectional working class in its struggle against the ruling class. It is therefore no surprise that recent movements are often accompanied by (fleeting) alliances with labor unions and by brief strikes and pickets. We should not see recent uprisings as alternatives to worker struggle, but as channels into which working class radicalism is flowing in the absence of viable unions.

Given the surging power of struggles beyond the workplace, there is a temptation to declare workplace organizing passé, outmoded, defunct, and to place our hope in the current model of organizing. This is dangerous. The current model that dominates the anti-authoritarian and radical scenes in the US—locale-specific, minimally organized, very loosely connected struggles that largely avoid the workplace—faces two fundamental and serious limits

The first limit is one of revolutionary force: an inability to disrupt capitalist power. While movements like the one against ICE are challenging social hierarchies, they do not upset the functioning of the capitalist mode of production. We are nibbling around the edges. This is not to dismiss the real gains of such movements. Here in Philadelphia, the anti-ICE movement spearheaded by Juntos and others forced the mayor to declare an end to the information sharing program between the city's police and ICE. And yet it is essential to ask how we can build the revolutionary power we would need to actually abolish ICE and fundamentally challenge the system that requires ICE in the first place.

The second limit is organizational: an inability to build on our gains towards revolutionary force. The surges of rebellion in the United States fall into a familiar pattern: an initial spark or call; rapid multiplication of movement sites; militant but often symbolic actions; sometimes, the extraction of important gains; and finally, rapid dissipation. We are missing the infrastructure