



# Revolutionary Strategy



# Gaining Ground, Not Losing It: Questions from a Revolutionary Anarchist

How do we turn revolt into revolution today?

**A**nticapitalist resistance is surging in the face of a stagnating capitalism and the ruling class's desperate turn to fascism. But from Occupy and Ferguson to the anti-ICE movement, uprisings are dissipating rather than escalating into fundamental, widespread challenges to ruling class power. Radical movements have struggled to develop the mass organizations and shared revolutionary strategy needed to create such challenges. How can revolutionary anarchists help transform revolt into a crisis of class rule?

A central task for revolutionary anarchists today, I argue, is multiplying and connecting spaces for (a) combining disconnected but sympathetic radical struggles, and above all (b) hammering out shared ideas of mass organizing and planning.

Finally, I ask: how would we create a shared revolutionary program for organization and strategy? What kinds of questions would we need to answer? What specifically could revolutionary anarchism bring to such a program? I end by sketching some of those questions.

The time to build revolutionary power is now.

## Why a revolutionary program?

We have the chance to strike a powerful blow  
against a stumbling enemy.

Capitalism has been stagnating since the financial crisis 11 years ago. It is lurching towards another crisis.<sup>[1]</sup> Segments of the ruling class are turning to fascism in desperation to crush working-class resistance and restore its profit margins.

Crisis, stagnation, and repression—these are sparking a massive upsurge of revolts like the anti-ICE movement, anti-racist struggles, and militant antifascist, anarchist, socialist, and communist organizing.

But the recent explosions are more widespread and more powerful than we know what to do with. We don't have the tools we need to connect uprisings into a revolutionary challenge to ruling class power. For instance, the important "Occupy ICE" movement is being swept away without a clear, mass, coordinated plan to build on its gains. The prison strike now faces this danger. "Occupy Wall Street" confronted the same problem. We remain largely reactive to the latest outrage. We struggle to channel radical power in durable ways for definite, large-scale, revolutionary strategic goals.

Too often, radical struggles focus on tactics. We hope that a revolution will come eventually, the accumulation of small-scale victories. Ending capitalism requires more. A systemic problem calls for a systemic solution.

But we also seem to be overwhelmed with revolutionary plans. Many anarchist, socialist, and communist groups have ready-made ideas about tactics, strategy, and organization. Their answers are often disconnected from the concrete mass revolts we are witnessing. Revolutionary programs tend to stay in the

activist “silos” that have characterized radical organizing since the 1970s.

And to create a revolution, struggle must be on a mass scale. Capitalist firms exist only by extracting as much surplus as possible from the working class. At the same time, the ruling class pits groups of workers against each other—nation against nation, white workers against workers of color, men against women, cis-gendered people against non-binary people, the employed against the unemployed. White supremacy, patriarchy, transphobia, ableism—these help cement the racist, patriarchal bourgeoisie’s power. When workers fight each other, the ruling class can continue exploiting, dominating, colonizing, and waging imperial war. Radically challenging capitalism means widespread, intersectional class power that refuses to play capital’s games of domination.

The task ahead is combination, not isolation, of revolutionary efforts to help build the intersectional organizations we need. Combination here doesn’t mean an insipid “left unity.” It means connecting the various *antiauthoritarian* (even if not explicitly *anarchist*) currents that often lie at the heart of the most powerful struggles against capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy today. More broadly, it means coordinating, across far left ideological and community divides, the radical struggles that *can* work effectively together without endless bickering—and that often informally overlap anyway.

All of this means the most pressing questions for radicals today are about strategy and organization. One of the most important things revolutionary anarchists can do, I suggest, is help create, multiply, and federate experimental spaces to hammer out collaborative answers to those questions. (Some of us in RED have begun experimenting with such spaces.)

I don't offer my own revolutionary program here. Members of RED have a few contributions on this front.

My goal here is only to help spur the kind of shared, widespread discussions we need for building mass revolutionary plans.

### **Towards a revolutionary program: some questions**

What are some of the basic questions we would need to answer together to create shared, mass, revolutionary organization and strategy? Here are a few.

*Understanding capitalism: How does capitalism work today? What and where are its weaknesses?*

- How does capitalism function—internationally and nationally?
- How is capitalism developing and changing?
- What weaknesses does that development show? How can revolutionary anarchists and their allies best exploit those weaknesses?
- How do its structures and developments play out where I am organizing?

*Understanding the ruling class: Who is our enemy? What are their strengths and weaknesses?*

- How is the ruling class organized—internationally and nationally?
- How does it enforce its rule and command obedience? Where and how specifically does it wield the power of the state and the economy against the working class?
- How is the ruling class's power developing? How is the state, as its most direct weapon, developing? What weaknesses and strengths come with these changes?
- What are the most important sectors of the ruling class to target?

- How can revolutionary anarchists and their allies best exploit those weaknesses?
- How do the ruling class's structures and developments play out where I am organizing?

*Understanding the working class: How is the working class structured today? Where is it the most radicalized? Where does it have the most potential power?*

- How is the working class structured—internationally and nationally?
- How is the working class developing and changing?
- What strengths come with that development? How can we help to seize and enhance those strengths?
- How do the working class's structures and developments play out where I am organizing?
- Where are the working class's most militant and powerful sectors? What "layers" within important sectors are the most militant and powerful? What is their relationship to other, more conservative "layers"?
- How do those structures play out where I am organizing?
- How can we help more militant and powerful sections of the working class infect the other layers and draw them into the struggle?
- What non-working class/non-bourgeois sectors exist? Which parts of the petty bourgeoisie, for example, or the mass of students, could be won over to the cause of revolution? How?
- Where and how is the working class best organizing itself against capitalism—internationally, nationally, locally? What lessons can we draw from that resistance for the future?

*Strategy and tactics: What are our long-term and medium-term goals? How do we work towards them in our short-term actions?*

- How do we picture the overall, long-term strategic goal of a world without capitalism? What would that kind of society look like? If we can't decide on this now, can we create spaces to continue discussing and experimenting with long-term ideas as part of our struggle, to stay inspired and excited?
- What intermediate or medium-term goals do we have? What parts of local, national, and international capital are we going to target for revolutionary action—what sectors, what firms? Why and how? How will their power be radically disrupted? What are the desired results and how do they fit into the larger plan?
- What short-term tactics do we need to build towards our intermediate and long-term goals? What “molecular,” small-scale tasks will build towards intermediate and long-term ones?
- As we hammer out answers to these questions: what dominant strategies and tactics are guiding revolutionary organizations today? What works best and what doesn't?
- What lessons can we draw from *past* organizing for the present? Where are the most inspiring and relevant struggles to be found and how can their ideas be best incorporated into the present?

*Organization: What kinds of organizations will help us build the strongest possible working class power and achieve our goals?*

- What organizations do we need to achieve our short-, medium-, and long-term goals?
- How can we ensure spaces that are safe, caring, and nurturing for our comrades, especially those who are the most punished by capitalism and targeted by the state? How can we learn from each other to make sure our

organizing is perfectly hostile to sexual assault, racism, misogyny, transphobia, ableism, and all other forms of domination? How will grievances be handled and accountability maintained?

- How should decision-making work on a mass scale? Will consensus—the “common sense” for many groups today—work to build something mass and revolutionary? Are there other kinds of decision-making that could be more effective? What works for other groups and what doesn’t? How can we make sure we’re not overly dogmatic about decision-making—perhaps by using hybrid models that ensure we’re the most powerful we can be?
- How can our organizations cut across the silos we often find ourselves in? How can they be deeply intersectional in order to combat the intersectional domination of the ruling class?
- How can we best avoid harmful versions of “left unity” that only paper over irreconcilable differences between radical groups (some communists and some anarchists, e.g.) only to create schisms later?
- As revolutionary anarchists, how can we help push mass organizing as far left as possible? How can we be non-dogmatic, and yet help challenge many radicals’ fixation on the state and elections, wholly reject liberalism and liberal influence, and build radically equal federations of horizontal power?

[1] See Michael Roberts, *The Long Depression: Marxism and the Global Crisis of Capitalism* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2016); Andrew Kliman, *The Failure of Capitalist Production: Underlying Causes of the Great Recession* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).



# Popular-Front Antifa: Towards a Broad-Based Struggle

**T**he resurgence of Antifa has placed the problem of fascism front and center for radical politics today. It also raises a key strategic question: if we are to disrupt, dismantle, and transform fascism—to ensure “no platform for fascists”—what is it that makes the Trump regime fascist, and what are its sources and mechanisms? Discussions on the left surrounding these issues have often been limited. They tend to focus on governmental or state fascism, endlessly comparing and contrasting past fascist governments and the current, American one. In doing so they miss a broader *socio-political fascism*: the Trump regime is one expression of a diffuse fascist desire for violent domination as well as of the fascist social structures in which that desire is generated and cultivated.

The task of Antifa must be to challenge not only narrower, governmental fascism but also its broader social roots. This project entails standing in radical, active solidarity with struggles against white supremacy, misogyny, anti-worker class warfare, transphobia, xenophobia, and beyond, as one node in a broad-based, radical left struggle. In this post, we sketch the need for such a popular-front Antifa.

## **Some Limits to How We Are Talking about Fascism**

Discussions about the term “fascism” raging on the left since the Trump campaign have often been deeply limiting. They tend to be obsessed with a fairly narrow understanding of fascism as a phenomenon of state, which they explore by comparing and

contrasting 21st century America and 20th century fascist governments. Such analysis certainly has value, particularly in raising the alarm, but leaves us with a seemingly endless debate. Many argue that we can and should unequivocally call the administration fascist given its white supremacist and nationalist policies, cultivation of white supremacist violence, demonization of immigrants, attacks on the media, and so on. But as others point out, certain hallmarks of past fascist states are missing, like a wholesale attack on individualism. Others chart a middle path: “No, but ...” Across the debate we find a dizzying array of new terms: Trump is a “proto-fascist,” “neo-fascist,” or maybe an “ur-fascist.”

This endless battle misses history. It presents “fascism” as though it were a fixed set of characteristics, failing to ask: how might fascism, like a virus, become “resistant,” taking on new forms and strategies that allow it to survive in changed contexts? Moreover, when we assume that fascism is solely a function of who is in charge of a country’s political machinery, we come to see Antifa, in turn, as a highly specialized struggle, implicitly rejecting any deep connection between Antifa and the vast array of other social struggles with which it might create a mass radical project. We thereby also ignore the much wider, fascistic base on which Trump builds. To combat the limits of this discussion, we must shift our gaze.

### **Fascistic Desire and a Popular-Front Antifa**

Beyond the left’s endless debates, we should recognize that the Trump regime’s ambiguous state fascism embodies a much broader desire to violently dominate humans and nature that is diffused throughout American society. State fascists cannot rise to power without mobilizing and constantly reproducing this desire, but the latter can and does assume *both explicit and implicit* forms, within and outside the machinery of state. The desire for domination is generated in structures that have always organized life in American society: imperialism;

militarization; local and state police; misogyny; the construction of masculinity as authoritarian violence; white supremacy; American nationalism's constant refrains of exceptionalism; and many more. The capitalist order, inherently authoritarian, provides the framework in which all these develop: it seeks to capture every part of society and every moment of life for a brutal competition in which a few heroes will rise to rule over the unwashed masses.

Such structures organize the violent domination and eradication of human and non-human life, constituting *socio-political* fascism. When we call them, and the desire for domination that they nurture, "fascistic," we point out that they make state fascism possible. At the same time, the term highlights the fact that state fascism is a symptom of a much broader problem that must not be reduced to an issue of who runs the government. A fascist state is the reflex of an obscene social order trying to defend itself against the threat posed by a dominated populace.

From this shifted perspective, we do not need to endlessly debate just how fully Trump fits into a fixed definition of fascism derived from the past. Instead, if we recognize the Trump regime as emerging out of the convergence of particular fascistic tendencies at a given time and in a given place, we can see that its ambiguously fascist form is tailored to the American context and sensibilities, accommodating itself, for instance, to American individualism by forgoing appeals to mass unity. Whether Trump is a "proper" fascist—whether he fits into a rigid definition taken from the past—matters much less than that he is opposed as the governmental voice of a pervasive fascistic violence.

Nor do we have to see Antifa as a specialized, narrow struggle against a particular regime. Antifa can see its work as inseparable from all those that struggle against fascistic desire in the diverse, irreducible forms that make an obscenity like Trump

possible: against white supremacy, misogyny, transphobia, anti-worker class warfare, and beyond.

Pursuing its task—“no platform for fascists”—Antifa would then attack *socio-political* fascism in all its many forms. It would stand in radical solidarity with, and constantly learn from, a vast array of left social struggles—and so aim to be one part of an intersectional, popular-front Antifa.

# Building Autonomous Power: Radical Struggle in Philadelphia

“ The Summer of Rage has begun! Get your sun screen on because it’s gonna be a hot one!

—Summer of Rage Anarchist Crew

**R**adical struggle is on the rise in Philadelphia. Since at least 2016, anarchist actions—by the **Summer of Rage Anarchist Crew**, **Antifa**, and many others—have been intensifying and broadening in a city that has a long history of antiauthoritarian struggles. Other groups have been energized too, like prison and police abolitionists, socialists, and Marxists. With anarchists, they are challenging gentrification, police brutality, mass incarceration, predatory landlords, and attacks on workers. These far left forces are starting to converge and overlap—seen in reaction to the killing of a local activist, in the abortive 2016 anti-DNC protests in the city, or in actions against local white supremacy. But the radical scene remains disconnected. It is still struggling to develop on the mass scale that would be needed to challenge capital in a revolutionary way.

Anarchists and their allies confront a city in the middle of a neoliberal transition. Since the collapse of much of the local industry, Philly has been undergoing a process of transformation by corporations like Comcast and the flood of bourgeois managers, lawyers, and others that corporations bring with them. Internal colonization, displacement, police brutality, and a

savage “gig” economy inevitably follow. They deepen the already obscene racial and economic inequality here. But Amazon is threatening to build a new headquarters in the city, a move that would accelerate and intensify Philly’s forces of displacement and domination.

Anarchists play an important role in radical organizing in Philly. They offer a set of ideas, practices, and experiences for building power beyond the state and capital—especially important as capital increasingly relies on an authoritarian, fascistic state to survive. And they provide some of the most important spaces—the **Wooden Shoe**, **A-Space**, etc.—for far left groups to meet, hold events, and spread a revolutionary culture.

But what possibilities and obstacles exist here for building revolutionary, autonomous power? To ask this question, I place far left struggles in Philly against the backdrop of their material context: neoliberal capital’s crisis-ridden development on the local, national, and international scene. The point isn’t to give easy answers—there aren’t any—but to help chart some of the potential tasks ahead. Ultimately I ask: what would it take to make a revolution here?

### **I: Context**

Radical left groups have long been a force in this city. Their work was on display, for example, in the explosive revolt against the RNC in 2000 and in the continuing fight to abolish the police and prisons by groups like **Philly for REAL Justice**. Since the election of Trump, far left, and especially antiauthoritarian, struggle has been on the rise. **Philly Antifa** is shutting down local fascist groups. Upheavals spread across the city in 2017 against Trump and the forces of domination he represents, and they continue. The Summer of Rage Anarchist Crew recently announced a “summer of rage” against gentrification and the impending Amazon move.

What's next for radical struggle in Philly, especially for anarchists? What possibilities and obstacles are we facing? To answer these questions, it is helpful to see our struggles in their historical and material context.

### *Neoliberal capital and crisis*

The counterrevolution of the 70s and 80s shattered the revolutionary left. This laid the groundwork for neoliberal capitalism. Financial and corporate power was unleashed. The years that followed witnessed an orgy of privatization, union busting, and destruction of hard-won social services. Capitalists paired union busting with neocolonialism: they increasingly moving production to countries—Vietnam, Indonesia, etc.—or to domestic “**mini-mills**” to maximize their exploitation of workers. Today’s “gig” service economy of precarious and atomized workers is the result. At the same time, the ruling class turned to mass incarceration to attack the revolt of people of color. Prisons are a new source of corporate profit and a laboratory to reinvent slavery. The capitalist patriarchy is dismantling women’s historic gains in the 70s and driving towards ever greater control over women’s bodies and more rigid gender binaries. A white supremacist and patriarchal state and economy drive women and people of color, along with immigrants and precarious workers, into a pool of hyper-exploited workers. That pool helps to guarantee stagnating wages.

But capital is riven by contradictions. Its normal state is stagnation; it drives towards periodic, violent crisis.

In their blind quest for profit and growth, firms automate jobs away and suppress wages to maximize profits. They therefore create a working class with a limited ability to buy their glut of goods. And through automation, capitalists attack the very source of their profit—exploited labor. Confronting this reality, financial firms dump investments into extremely volatile

financial transactions. They push the working and lower-middle classes into an unsustainable debt to buy up commodities. All the while, bosses keep automating jobs away, and they intensify attacks on workers, all to escape stagnation. The bosses thereby drive the cycle of stagnation and crisis they are trying to escape. It is no surprise that growth and profit rates have been in a long-term decline for decades. Another economic crisis is coming. And with it comes another chance for a mass, revolutionary upheaval.

Radicals in the US and beyond inherit this history.

We confront a shattered revolutionary left. Since the counterrevolution of 70s and 80s, we have been slowly rebuilding mass resistance. We are still experimenting with ways to connect the vast array of class, racial, and gender struggles within durable and revolutionary mass movements. These experiments include the anti-nuclear movement of 1980s, the Global Justice Movement, the anti-Iraq War movement, and Occupy, important moments of our development. But they were each deeply limited in their own way. They were unable to create the solution to the far left's crisis of organizing—the crisis of collective, large-scale, long-term power.

But on the other hand, capitalism's stagnation has thrown it into crisis. A fascist state is emerging in America—and well beyond—to cope with that crisis. Trump is a puppet of the ruling class. He uses white supremacy and patriarchy to seduce working class and lower-middle class whites, marshaling them behind the ruling class that dominates them. The goal of fascism is to divide the dominated, to turn them against each other, in order to save capitalism from itself. But the more nakedly the fascist state attacks immigrants, people of color, women, and workers, the more it sparks revolt. Under the emerging fascist regime, the far left is growing and connecting in a mass way. And fascism does not eradicate capitalism's basic contradictions. Profit rates fall; growth can't be sustained; finance capital gambles recklessly.

Anarchists, and the far left generally, are facing a historic opportunity to build mass struggle.

### *Neoliberal capital in Philadelphia*

Philadelphia, like every city in the United States, is being fundamentally transformed by decades of neoliberal capitalist “development.” The increased flight of manufacturing beginning in the 60s ruined working-class neighborhoods like Kensington. Monopolistic corporations like Comcast, alongside universities and others in the “information economy,” fill the void. The city is flooded with mid- to upper-level managers who administer corporate and financial firms’ needs. They are trailed by a mass of professional functionaries—lawyers, consultants, university professors and administrators, and so on—that keep the machinery of domination running smoothly. Industrial work remains to a degree, but Philly is now driven by finance, the “information economy,” and the service sector.

Philly’s ruling class is composed of corporate board members, corporate and financial firm heads, upper management, hospital and university administrators; and so on. They are served directly by the professional and managerial classes loyal to them. But beneath these layers lies an army of low-paid, often precarious service and industrial workers. This mass is composed of overlapping communities of women, immigrants, people of color, downwardly mobile students and graduates. They are the janitors, laborers, nannies, waiters, dishwashers, canvassers, cleaners, Uber drivers, bike messengers, taxi drivers, temps, and store clerks that make Philly’s economy function. Since the city teacher’s union has been defanged, and since education is increasingly being privatized and defunded, public schools become factories that pump into that army of workers—or simply into prison.

Philly thrives on internal colonization; its firms are colonizing forces. The invading mass of professionals, entrepreneurs, and middle managers need someplace to live. The city government and real estate companies make room for them. Neighborhoods that were decimated by capital flight and ravaged by the new economy are demolished and their communities thrown out. Eco-friendly communities of liberal, hard-working professionals rise in their place. Chic bars, edgy restaurants, and homey shops arrive to soak up disposable income, raising property values even more. The ruling class' media outlets help out where they can. The colonized getting kicked out were lazy and violent anyway, we're told. Every colonizer tells itself this story.

Police are the vanguards of colonization. Their deadly, white supremacist harassment helps drive out decades- or generations-long residents and fill prisons. More than this, though, the police are the Philly government's general tool for disciplining the pool of unemployed or low-wage workers. With racist policing and through general intimidation they try to create a populace that won't revolt. This is a lesson in local politics. Liberals flocked to Kenny when he promised to end stop-and-frisk—an essential tool for clearing land for corporate capital's lackeys to live on. Stop-and-frisk disappeared only from the mayor's speeches. Meanwhile, monuments to white supremacist policing dot the landscape. The city refuses to remove them. All of this is rooted in the fact that the police are not some neutral tool that can be changed with the whim of a government official. They are the foot soldiers of capitalist development and expansion and the basic tool of state repression. City hall has a progressive paint job; scratch it just a little and you find a baton and a gun.

Universities help drive displacement and domination. Schools like Penn and Drexel are major employers of highly exploited, precarious workers—who do the cleaning, cooking, and serving and who teach the classes, too. Universities drown lower-

middle- and working-class students in debt, and eject masses of downwardly-mobile workers into the gig economy. Meanwhile, they recruit and train the newest members of the ruling class and their professional lackeys: corporate heads, university administrators, lawyers, academics, middle managers.

And universities thrive on gentrification. They compete with each other for the best, richest, and most students. They need to constantly expand to make room for state-of-the-art dorms and the most advanced stadiums and gyms. Universities ape the blind and catastrophic growth of corporations. This means obliterating local community housing, displacing residents, and relying on increased police surveillance and harassment to clear the way for even more growth.

If Amazon's new headquarters comes here, the dynamics of domination and displacement would be radically accelerated. Philly would witness another wave of managers and professionals, another intensification of colonization.

## **II: A very rough sketch of Philly's radical struggles**

At the same time that corporate and financial capital's power is growing, radical power is beginning to concentrate in Philly, too. This is clear in the expanding and deepening of upheavals in 2017. The growth and power of the radical scene here is rooted in the basic dynamics of local, national, and international capitalism.

The far left in Philly comes out of Philly's highly exploited, often precarious social strata. Its struggles are driven by overlapping groups of service workers; alienated industrial laborers; radicalized students within or about to enter that workforce; and the under- and unemployed. Some of the far left groups congealing within the lower social strata include:

- Antiauthoritarians like Philly's powerful **Antifa**, the **Summer of Rage Anarchist Crew**, the group surrounding the important local zine **Anathema**, Philly's **Black Rose/Rosa Negra** helping organize workers and build an internationalist perspective, and radical environmental anarchists;
- **Philly for REAL Justice**, calling for police abolition and confronting white supremacy in the city;
- **Decarcerate PA** and the related **Coalition for the Abolition of Death by Incarceration (CADBI)**, fighting against mass incarceration;
- The **Stadium Stompers** and **Philly Tenants Union**, challenging gentrification;
- Queer radical struggles;
- Socialist groups like **Philly Socialists** as well as
- Radical worker groups like the **IWW**, who are helping to organize communities and workplaces;
- Several **Food Not Bombs** chapters (North Philly, West Philly, and South Philly) that give crucial support to the far left;
- Student and teacher organizations like **Penn's Students for Justice in Palestine** and the **Radical Education Department**;
- And many more beyond. (The list is very far from complete.)

These groups struggle to dismantle some of the most central forces of neoliberal transformation in Philly: mass incarceration, gentrification, the rise of the far right, and the increasing exploitation of workers.

Such groups have been overlapping more and more in the past two years, a result of the increase of (both reformist and more revolutionary) mobilizations: the Women's March, J20, anti-Trump regime actions, etc. A shifting core of activists tends to support and advertise one another's work. One person is even

using the old Occupy Philly Facebook page and email to do the extremely important job of gathering together and advertising as many leftist group events as they can. The local blog **Philly Anticapitalist** is also crucial, advertising Philly anarchist actions and posting report-backs and analysis.

But in Philly, like elsewhere, radical struggles tend to be siloed. We often remain in the scattered state we have been in for decades. This has been particularly clear in mobilizations against ICE in comparison with other cities. In New York, admittedly a very different context, anarchists were able to create the infrastructure for one of the ICE occupations occurring across the country. The occupation effort was rooted in important part in the work of the Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council, a spokes-council for connecting and coordinating multiple anarchist groups across the city, which facilitated gathering resources and planning. Philly does not have this kind of tool. Coordinating on a large scale an event or actions tends to happen in an ad hoc way. The important anarchist and revolutionary responses to ICE here have therefore been more scattered and delayed.

At the same time, we have to recognize another crucial and potentially revolutionary set of forces in the city. In Philly, like everywhere else, seethes a mass of radical *informal* organizing that happens every day among the dominated. Networks of creative revolt—at times subtle, and other times more obvious—constantly develop to resist police violence and gentrification; dehumanizing work; unemployment; and beyond. People are stealing shit from work; building local community support systems so that police don't have to be called; etc. This mass drives and flows into many far left groups. But it also stretches well beyond them. Its revolt and dissatisfaction can draw it in a number of directions—towards either liberal groups or towards more revolutionary ones.

Among others, anarchists continue to play a key role in organizing revolutionary struggle in Philly. The connections between the state and capital, between economic and political violence, are becoming clearer and more important to recognize and cope with in neoliberal capitalism. It becomes increasingly important, then, to think about how to build collective autonomy *against* the state and capital—networks of revolutionary mutual aid that not only can help us survive but also help us strike back powerfully and effectively. Anarchism is bringing to this context its local and international experience, filled with ideas about rejecting the state and capital and experimenting with something else.

At the same time, anarchists offer something even more concrete as well. Some of the most important spaces to develop radical thought and praxis are anarchist: the **Wooden Shoe** and **A-Space**.

### III: Obstacles and Possibilities

How can anarchists help build autonomous revolutionary power in Philly?

Building a revolutionary challenge to capitalism in this city would mean attacking *on multiple fronts*. The analysis above shows that class domination is, at the same time, white supremacist and patriarchal. Helping construct autonomous power in the city means *helping build radically intersectional power*. To develop that kind of power requires tools for connecting the revolutionary layers of the dominated groups that make the city run: precarious workers, disaffected students, community members displaced by gentrification and exploited by landlords, the imprisoned.... A *combined* revolutionary strategy also allows us to break out of our activist silos, connecting with each other to share the crucial experience, ideas, and practices that our groups have long been developing in struggle.

A key path towards greater power runs through *increasingly coordinated, large-scale attacks on the control that bosses, cops, managers, teachers, and administrators have over the lower strata of the economy.*

This raises some key questions for anarchists and their radical allies in Philly.

- How can anarchists help build mass struggle that is both *intersectional* and *revolutionary* in Philly—against capitalism’s multiple fronts of domination? How can it help build a congealed, radical scene that goes beyond our activist “silos”? What could a shared revolutionary “culture” look like here?
- How can we help centralize and coordinate radical struggles on a mass scale in Philly—in a way similar to New York’s MACC? How can we make sure we’re ready to strike back when the next political and economic crisis hits?
- At the same time, how can we avoid building watered-down coalitions that go nowhere, simply sapping the far left’s energy and leaving it demoralized?
- How can anarchists help further inject radical struggle in this city with autonomous, anti-state, and anti-capitalist power? How can we build up our work with groups, especially community groups, who aren’t anarchist but are struggling for a revolutionary, liberated world?
- How can we support the creative and vibrant *informal* resistance that happens every day among the dominated? How can we help it build its radical and autonomous power? How can we connect it to the broader far left radical scene in Philly?
- How can radicals in Philly connect to other struggles across this country—and beyond? How do we avoid being parochial, and develop a broad revolutionary *internationalism*?

- What are the steps we need to take to make a revolution in Philly?





Published by the Radical Education Department (RED)

2019

radicaleducationdepartment.com  
radicaleducation@protonmail.com

Notes:

Many thanks to the comrades in conversation with whom these ideas developed, and to *It's Going Down*, which first published slightly different versions of "Gaining Ground, Not Losing It" and "Building Autonomous Power."