BURNING THE BRIDGES THEY ARE BUILDING
ANARCHIST STRATEGIES AGAINST THE POLICE

Puget Sound, Winter 2011
interest in excluding materials must be a legitimate and neutral one, applied in a neutral fashion, without regard to the content of expression; Pell v. Procunier, 417 US 823, 94 S.Ct. 2807; Bell v. Wolfish, 441 US 591, 99 S.Ct. 1887. Prisoners retain those rights that are not inconsistent with legitimate penological objectives of the corrections system. Pell, supra. Prison walls do not serve to form a barrier separating prisoners from the protections of the constitution, Turner, supra. Core political speech is most zealously guarded and there is a public interest in having free and unhindered debate on matters of public importance— the core value of the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment.” Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 US 563, 573, 88 S. Ct. 1731 (1968).

Thus, exclusion of printed material on the basis of its political perspective, such as Anarchism, amounts to free speech retaliation and discrimination, which is illegal, Abu-Janam v. Price, 154 F.3d 128 (3rd Cir., 1998); Y v. Blatter, 175 F.3d 378 (6th Cir., 1999).

If you exclude printed material for an unlawful basis, such as expression of anarchist beliefs, or if you simply conjure up a false pretext for its exclusion, you have broken the law. The prisoner recipient of this mail has cause for bringing a civil rights action against you and has cause for gaining punitive damages—which means money. I too have cause for a federal action against you, as you will be violating my constitutional guarantees as well. You and everyone who permits this action, from your supervisor to the director of the prison system, may be named in those civil actions, and you may also be subject to termination from your employment. Because this primer is included in this mailing, you will not be able to claim you did not know your actions were illegal.

For these reasons, I ask that you conform to federal law and refrain from unlawful discrimination against the enclosed materials, permitting mail service of this literature that objectively meets all legitimate criteria set forth in prison regulations.

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Preface

The author of this text is a comrade, and is in fact perhaps my closest friend. We first met after we had both moved to Seattle in Autumn of 2006, both needing to leave the towns where we had grown up, and both hoping to fall into a vibrant anarchist milieu.

When we arrived in Seattle we felt disappointed with the almost non-existent anarchist activity happening in the city and it quickly became clear to us that there was no anarchist milieu, at least not any that we could identify with. If we wanted to participate in an anarchist space in Seattle, we were going to have to begin building that space ourselves.

After a year or so of participating in social gatherings, becoming regulars at vegan cafés, and volunteering at book stores we began to meet others with ideas similar to ours and, in 2008, we eventually formed the only explicitly anarchist house in the city at that time.

Things in Seattle have changed immeasurably since then, and I feel that it is important to recognize that in the context of this piece. Everything that happened over this past winter has been the result of a slow process of creating an anarchist space in Seattle and I feel that these actions would not have been possible even two years ago. When the author of this piece and I met in 2006, nothing existed for us in Seattle.

The author asked me, in regards to this text, if I thought that anyone would find it relevant. Other cities are not Seattle, the same tactics cannot always be applied in different regions, and as for the folks living in Seattle themselves, they were there throughout the winter. Why would they desire to read another account?

My own personal desire to see this text in it's finished form is a selfish desire. It is an account of my own struggle, as well as an account of the struggles of all those that took to the streets in the Winter of 2011. To me, the most important things about this text are not only the actions that were carried out, but also the people involved in carrying out those actions. The friends that had each others' backs in the streets, dearresting some and making escape possible for others, the friends that took me out to breakfast when I got home after being in jail all night, the friends that spent days in jail and never once regretted it, eager to get back into the streets once they got out, and all the new friends that participated in their
The friendships and bonds that have formed out of struggling in the streets together, and the tendency to seek support and solidarity at each other in the assemblies. We recognize each other not only as friends, but as part of the struggle against capitalism and to further our struggle.

Seattle has been more quiet, silent, and it has been more difficult for us to find the courage to stand up against the police. But now we are still fighting, still standing together and holding the line. As far as those in other places, it is my hope that they will find ideas and inspiration from these pages, but ideas are nothing without some fierce individuals willing to put everything on the line in order to realize them.

Find each other.

-R
Introduction

When I moved to Seattle many years after the infamous upheaval of 1999, I found almost no remnants of whatever had existed here. Certainly, I could find other anarchists, but for a long time I found myself in variations of the same conversation: How do we reach each other? What are we doing? Why does nothing happen?

And then, finally, I was with other anarchists in the street—friends and acquaintances, but others, too. Who are all these people? We were all in black masks. This was the first black bloc in Seattle in about a decade. Hundreds of posters all over town had announced a demonstration against police violence in the middle of Capitol Hill as part of the West Coast Days of Action Against State Violence April 8-9, 2010. The size of the demonstration was modest—probably around 80 people—but nearly half the crowd came en bloc.

Anarchists in the Puget Sound had been inspired by recent events elsewhere: the Greek insurrection of December 2008, the riots following the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009 in Oakland, and, most recently, the wild and disruptive demonstrations in Portland. These were significant to us for many reasons. Anarchists played an active and critical part in all of them; they showed that people can actively resist the violence of police; they revealed that when people act on their rage, they open a space in defiance of the violence of everyday life. In this space, new social relations come to be as the authority of the state and capital are challenged. These distant fires had stirred the flames in us, and we took the streets that day ready for a fight.

But if the mild clashes of April 9 set off any sparks, they didn't seem to catch in the moment. At one point, cops used their bikes as mobile barriers to push the crowd out of the street and onto the sidewalk. As a cop on a horse cornered the group, one demonstrator tossed a paint bomb right at the cop's head. Incredibly, the paint-filled light bulb bounced unbroken off the helmet of the dazed cop, whose only reaction was a look of dim confusion. The paint bomb broke harmlessly on the street in a red splatter. Worse, the blow didn't embolden the crowd. Instead, there was a collective gasp of shock: I can't believe someone did that!
Less than a year later, anarchists were in the streets in black masks again. But I wasn’t there in what I wished could happen. The smoke bombs hurled to keep horses away, the broken glass of police cruiser windows, the undercover police at bay, the youth chanting “Eye for an eye, a pig’s gotta die”—Seattle was seeing a series of riots like Oakland. But for a brief period between January and March 2011, the social peace that had inspired us the preceding April, people broke years of inertia to interrupt the flames.
   and http://tan.anarchyplanet.org/files/2010/04/PoliceViolencePosterTAN.jpg

15. http://arcticcirclecollective.net/articles/31/some-people-shoot-back


17. http://arcticcirclecollective.net/articles/51/


30. The Police Department's record of the minutes of this meeting are available here: http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/ABPub/2011/02/02/2014113681.pdf

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Violence, Counterattacks, and Counter-Information: A Brief Background to Anti-Police Tension in the Puget Sound

It would be an exaggeration to claim that anarchists are responsible for the most remarkable resistance to the police in the recent history of the Puget Sound. On the contrary, anarchists had no perceivable role in a string of unconnected attacks against police in 2009. For months, any casual reader of the mainstream media could learn that shots were being returned to cops and finding their targets.

Individual armed resistance to the police deserves analysis from anarchists, but falls outside of the scope of this article. I only have space here to mention the two most widely reported attacks.

1. On the night of October 22, four Seattle police vehicles were firebombed in the East Precinct parking lot. A little over a week later, on Halloween night, two officers parked in a residential area were ambushed with gunfire from a car. One of the two, Timothy Brenton, was killed; his partner returned fire but the assailant escaped. The next week, police shot and arrested Christopher Monfort after a neighbor reported that his car matched the description of the one used in the attack. Police also claimed to have found in his apartment an assault rifle matching the bullets used in the killing and bomb-making materials, as well as other materials linking him to the shooting and bombings.
Endnotes

1. The Puget Sound is a geographical region that contains Seattle and other cities, including Tacoma and Olympia. The larger demonstrations and actions of winter 2011 were centered in Seattle. However, stronger regional connections developed among anarchists in the Puget Sound during this period, and there was much collaboration between anarchists from different cities. The actions during this time in Seattle were not just the work of Seattle anarchists, but of anarchists from throughout the region.


3. Local anarchist coverage of the arrests (including video): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=312D4iBQMI

4. Local anarchist coverage of the assault (including video): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H97Qz4yz


6. Here it is worth noting that in some places, the police are moving to make videotaping a copy illegal: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66q36z566

7. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cBh4108w9A

8. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46h0w58656


10. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=312D4iBQMI

11. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=312D4iBQMI

12. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=312D4iBQMI


On the morning of November 29, a man named Maurice Clemmons walked into a cafe in Lakewood, Washington, where four police officers were working on laptops before their shift. Clemmons opened fire on the officers, killing them, but did not aim at any other customers or the two bartenders. Police went on to militarize the neighborhood where Clemmons was killed a month earlier, using armored vehicles to block roads and robot to observe a house where Clemmons was suspected of hiding. The police eventually found Clemmons early on the morning of December 1 and shot him dead.

These shootings took place in the midst of a string of high-profile instances of police violence:

1. In May 2009, Christopher Sean Harris was chased down a street in Belltown by two cops. The cops had not identified themselves to Harris. Deputy Matthew Paxton shot Harris in the head, killing him instantly. The police later claimed Harris was armed with a knife, but Harris had no knife. (The police also claimed in a report that Harris had broken a man's jaw in a bar fight, but the man later denied it.)

2. In November 2009, 15-year-old Malachi Californi was arrested by King County Sheriff's Deputy Paul Scherr. Scherr had already shot two people, killing one of them. Scherr was later acquitted of all charges relating to his assault of Californi.

3. On April 17, 2010, a group of Hispanic men were pulled over near Lake Union. Officer Shandy Cobban asserted: "I was trying to beat the f**king Mexican pills out of you homey, you feel me?" and stomped on one of the men as he lay comatose on the ground. No charges were filed against Cobban.
March 15, Olympia, WA: A police substation is firebombed. The action is unclaimed.

March 15, Santa Cruz, WA: A police cruiser is attacked with glass etching cream and its tires slashed. The communiqué reads, "Seattle. Montreal. Bahrain. Fuck the pigs."91

March 15, Vancouver, BC: A probation office is vandalized with anti-cop and anti-prison slogans. Pro-tourism signs are also obscured with paint. A communiqué declares the sabotage as a "small act of solidarity with comrades in prison on hunger strike in Chile and with comrades in the Puget Sound fighting the police!"92

March 17, Montreal, Quebec: Several vehicles belonging to the Public Security Ministry of Quebec are doused in paint stripper and have their tires slashed. A communiqué states solidarity with people struggling against the police in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest.93

March 18, Philadelphia, PA: A bank's windows are smashed, and a communiqué claims solidarity with struggles in the Puget Sound and elsewhere.94

March 20, Portland, OR: The windows and ATMs of a bank are destroyed and anti-police slogans are painted across the building. This is done in the presence of a cop, who chooses not to engage the hostile mob. The action was claimed in solidarity with anarchists in Seattle and Olympia.95

March 21, Montreal, Quebec: Windows are smashed and paint is thrown on the walls of two security companies. The communiqué explains, "One company was attacked for its role in the installation of CCTV cameras and the other because it trains security agents. Take aim and target those complicit in the maintenance of this society of domination. Solidarity to the Northwest U.S. in their struggle against the pigs & to Montreal area anarchists facing state repression."96

On June 14, 2010 Seattle cop Ian Walsh began harassing multiple young people attempting to cross Martin Luther King Jr. Way. When two young black women refused to passively accept his verbal and then physical aggression, he responded by punching one in the face and then arresting both.5

The victims of these assaults were all attacked for petty defiance of authority—such as jaywalking—or without any reason at all. These incidents don't indicate an increase in the violence perpetrated by the police; the police have always been brutal. Rather, while the corporate media ignore or downplay police violence whenever possible, all these events were caught on video. When police are caught red-handed, even the complicit media can be forced to show their true face, lose their legitimacy be challenged by video websites.6

Rather than expose the growing tension between the population and the police, corporate media were careful to hide it behind a narrative of individual instances of "bad apple" police violence on one hand and the supposed insanity of Monfort and Clemmons on the other. In the Seattle Times, a spokesperson for the police called Brenton's death an "act of terrorism."97 A local Fox News affiliate alleged that a confidential source had reported that child porn was found on Monfort's computer; no other news sources ran this information and the city never filed such charges. The Seattle Times also reported that Clemmons had previously been convicted of a felony child rape charge among other crimes.9 According to the Times, this was evidence of his deteriorating mental health—the only plausible reason one would take up arms against the police.

Clemmons never got a chance to speak for himself, but there's no need to speculate about Monfort's feelings. Monfort used his appearances in court and in the media to present a coherent critique. Despite surviving being shot in the head only to face the death penalty in prison, Monfort was calm, collected, and assertive—not at all the madman the media had presented. In particular, he decried officer Schene's beating of Calhoun. In court, he read aloud a list of people killed by cops in Washington state.10 His courtroom statements became infamous; in another, he said, "We've had enough. The people will not take it any longer. We will not take it any longer. We'll fight and we're everywhere. You can't see us coming."11 He openly invoked the language of war.12
Liberal Reform and Social War

of why people would attack police.

moderation extremely lacked any communists that interacted in understandings
for the socialist, I propose to be considered. Why are we the people? Apart from self-help, our personal freedoms are threatened. The police are an instrument for maintaining the status quo, which we oppose. The King's County processors recognised this, declaring that in
but the frequency of these increased through February and March 2011. It's impossible to tell, but this seems to indicate that new people were taking up this approach. Covert attacks also serve to strengthen existing connections between anarchists, preparing them for future acts. As one communiqué put it, "These acts of sabotage not only allow us to lash out at the symbols of domination in our lives, but also serve as a means to forge bonds of trust and experience acting with one another."72

Another communiqué added, "It is our hope that our struggles, and further, the struggles of all anti-authoritarians, will be mutually inspiring. The police have always used violence to uphold the institution of capitalism, and for that they should expect nothing less to be attacked."73 The geographic distribution of solidarity actions shows that comrades around the country felt inspired by what they saw here. When Seattle anarchists faced repression, destruction flared up elsewhere—spreading the revolt further and helping to stave off fatigue in Seattle.

It's interesting to note that the timeline of attacks lags behind the timeline of demonstrations. It isn't until after the largest demonstrations against the police that the attacks began. As the ability to pull off inspiring acts openly in the streets began to recede, the number and intensity of clandestine attacks increased. One should be careful not to confuse correlation with causation, however. It is not the case that anarchists in the Puget Sound, faced with repression, have withdrawn from public activity to focus on desperate underground acts. On the contrary, the number of public actions and events has also increased since the peak of the anti-police struggle. The distinction between open acts and secretive attacks has also begun to blur; for example, on April 22, a group of anarchists attacked a bank in daylight on a busy commercial street, smashing almost all its windows, leaving leaflets, and disappearing before police could respond.74

1. February 18, Seattle, WA: Police report over their radios that a precinct must be evacuated because a gas line has been opened. The timing of the discovery coincides exactly with the starting time of that night's anti-police demonstration. Because no action claim ever surfaced and the mainstream media did not report on the event, it's unknown whether this was sabotage or mere coincidence.

2. February 18, Seattle, WA: Following the large street demonstration, arson is used in an attack against a police substation in Seattle. This substation was a frequent target of anti-police vandals and was subsequently closed.

The anarchist position of social war differs from Monfort's war, even if there is a connection. As another leaflet put it,

"What we want most is to fight strategically by cultivating our will to be free and then connecting with others committed to the same struggle: to create a world where cops are not welcome and where individual or systematic assaults on our friends and communities are met with full, sustainable expressions of our rage [...] We will not calm down as a war is waged against us. We do not seek to make peace with the police. We bring fuel to the fires."77

But the dominant visible sentiment in Seattle did not embrace this. The fervor that followed Brenton's death sent many running back to the side of the police. The Seattle Times ran a photo of pedestrians stopping to put their right hands over their hearts—Starbucks cups still firmly grasped in the left—as Brenton's funeral procession drove by. The political climate of Seattle is largely liberal-progressive and produces much ideological incoherence—in this particular instance, moral outrage over out-of-control cops alongside an inability or unwillingness to understand the inherent brutality of the police, their place in the violence of capitalism and government, and their historical role and development. The liberal critique of police brutality demands reforms and reaffirms the role of authority in the same breath.

This cognitive dissonance was especially apparent in a clash between the union newspaper of Seattle police and the more liberal media of the city. The Stranger ran an article titled "What Some Seattle Cops Think the Problem Is."78 The title itself is telling, as it reveals the reluctance of liberals to grapple with systems of violence, focusing instead on the opinions of the individual bad cops removed from their larger context. The article was about editorials written by officers in The Guardian, the SPD's union's newspaper. These are surprisingly honest: cops refer to the citizens they police as "the enemy," mocking community accountability efforts as "sidewalks" that "exist only for chiefs and sheriffs to provide an illusion of citizen accountability." Anarchists affirm all of these statements. Liberals and progressives, on the otherhand, value these sidewalks because they understand the police as a social service. In their view, if public servants run afoot of civil society, they should be better managed. Comment after comment on The Stranger's online article protested, "But you work for us!"
The Murder of John T. Williams

Strawberry Field, the Williams family's sprawling apple orchard, nestled in the rolling hills of rural Connecticut. It was a peaceful setting, a far cry from the bustling city life John had grown accustomed to in New York. The Williams family were known for their generosity and love of nature, which made Strawberry Field a haven for the local community.

John T. Williams, the youngest son, had recently returned from his studies abroad, eager to take over his family's business. His parents were proud of him, and the community looked up to him as a shining example of hard work and dedication. However, beneath the surface, there were whispers of discontent.

The story began on a quiet Sunday afternoon, as John was tending to his orchards. The sound of rustling leaves and the gentle hum of bees filled the air. Suddenly, a commotion broke the tranquility. A group of young men entered the orchard, carrying weapons and determined expressions.

"What do you want here?" John demanded, trying to keep his calm.

"We heard about your family's business and we want a piece of it," one of the men replied, his voice dripping with malice.

John was taken aback by the sudden threat. He had always been a peaceful person, and the thought of violence was foreign to him. He tried to reason with them, but it was too late. The group launched an attack, leaving John gravely injured.

The community was shocked and devastated by the tragedy. The family's orchard became a symbol of resilience, with neighbors coming together to support the Williams family. The investigation into John's murder was handled with care, as everyone hoped to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The case garnered national attention, with journalists and photographers descending upon Strawberry Field. The Williams family stood strong, united in their grief and determination to find justice for their beloved son. The community's support was unwavering, and in the end, the truth was revealed, bringing closure to a family no longer able to spend time in their orchard under a clear sky.
Further Reading

Pugetsoundanarchists.org
News for anarchists from the Puget Sound

Against the Police and the Prison World They Maintain:
Communique from the Pacific Northwest January-March 2011
http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/node/595

Postscript: A Chronology of Attacks and Solidarity Actions

Eventually, the particularly egregious details of Williams’ death forced the mainstream media to tell the story of what truly happened. They still looked for ways to justify the murder—for example, emphasizing Williams’ record of minor criminal convictions. But no attention was ever paid to the most shocking fact: Williams was only one of five people murdered by police in the Puget Sound that week.

1. August 31, police shot to death David Charles Young, age 23, in Federal Way. Police opened fire on him on the basis of the supposed theft of a Ford F20 pickup truck. His father said: “He didn’t deserve to die. They murdered an unarmed man.”

2. In Spanaway, on August 31, King Ramses Hoover, age 27, was tasered to death at a house where he was staying as a guest. While tasing Hoover, police put him in handcuffs and bound his feet. The cops later blamed his death on drugs—not electrocution.

3. On September 3, Richard Sims was shot to death by Tacoma police. Police say he was wielding a knife, although witnesses disagree.

4. On September 4, in Gold Bar, Adam Colliers, age 25, was tasered to death for “causing a disturbance.”

Anarchists, now is not the time to fear the baton of a pig and slink into hiding. Now is the time to muster up courage, scheme evil plots, and seek revenge. This was not simply an attack against the police, this was a call to make every one of those motherfuckers pay dearly! Not just for beating a fellow rebel, but for the everyday management and misery these spineless bastards heave upon our backs. In the coming nights it is our deepest desire that others will take it upon themselves to launch a greater surge of aggression against the swine that fill our streets. — from a communique claiming an attack on two police cars and a police substation in Olympia, WA, in solidarity with anarchists in Seattle.

In addition to coordinating open revolt, anarchists in the Puget Sound also carried out clandestine attacks. While it takes a confident black bloc to break even a few windows at a demonstration and arrests will likely ensue, in the dead of night a handful of friends can wreak havoc on a target with relative ease. Public acts have advantages that covert acts lack; for example, a tactic is more likely to spread if it is demonstrated in the midst of a crowd.
be better prepared to face the names.

The next time it happens, we will
continue. And although there is a stillness in
strategies. And although there is a stillness in
life, and solidarity actions has increased.

The frequency of attacks, information
energy. There is more cohesion, more drive, more
winter. Things are not the same here now.

Here in Seattle now, our feet remain firmly

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The First Assembly
assemblies, a more open assembly that invited non-anarchists would have provided an opportunity for anarchists to present their positions directly to others. This would have been more challenging than speaking with people who shared the same politics, but it would have been worth it. Even if differing positions were not reconciled, when the inevitable media backlash began many people would already have an understanding of who anarchists are and why we do what we do—derived from experience, rather than corporate media distortions.

As for our own media, anarchists were remarkably on point. A local website, PugetSoundAnarchists.org, exploded with analyses, calls for action, reportbacks, communiqués, and leaflets and posters for printing. This provided a center for online communication throughout the region. When the mainstream media reported on anarchists, they usually mentioned the website by name. Many people, hearing something shocking about rioting in Seattle, visited the site and read anarchist arguments for themselves. The production and dissemination of leaflets was entirely decentralized; several new leaflets appeared at every demonstration. After the black bloc grabbed many demonstrators’ imaginations on February 16, for example, a leaflet appeared that explained, on one side, “Why We Wear Masks”—and on the other, “Tips for Rioting.” At The Stranger’s accountability forum, a leaflet announced “The End of Dialogue.” When discourse centered on justice, anarchist leaflets exclaimed “Justice Is Impossible, and So Are We!”

This point is also critical: anarchists shunned the language of justice and accountability. By setting our sights on nothing less than total freedom, anarchists in the Puget Sound made our position inherently resistant to co-optation. Calls for accountability had already been reabsorbed into the system of domination—see, for example, community accountability forums.

A call for justice is always an appeal to authority. One form of justice would rely on the authority of the state to prosecute the perpetrator—but as anarchists, we must also oppose the justice system and its prisons. The vaguer model of justice—“social justice”—still relies on the moral authority of society, and remains easy for the state to assimilate. Consider, for example, the official response to the calls for justice following John T. Williams’ murder. The SFD has unveiled the friendly new face of repression: “justice-based policing,” explicitly aimed at policing more efficiently by rebuilding trust between the police and society.57

To act on one’s desire for freedom or vengeance is another matter entirely. Such action is direct and predicated on no authority but one’s own. As one reportback put it:

As anarchists we know we cannot find justice under the State and Capitalism. Instead, we seek vengeance. Vengeance for those whose lives can never be given back and vengeance for our own lives they had prepared in advance and that they were committing to carrying out with whoever else was interested. The assembly closed with informal discussion among individuals and groups attracted to each other’s analysis and proposals—an opportunity to exchange information for future dates to flesh out plans.

The first assembly was a success, socially speaking. Around forty people participated and made new connections. However, very few of the plans proposed were carried out.
Social Stability and the Maintenance of Order

No Justice and No Resolution
the cops and banging it on the street in front of them. A few people from Seattle graffiti crews came; despite the heavy police presence, at least one took the opportunity to paint anti-cop slogans on the opulent walls of downtown.

Still, much of the 15th was a repeat of the unfortunate events of the 4th. Turnout was small, and police simply smothered the demonstration. Black bloc participants had decided ahead of time to play a defensive role, using reinforced banners and sticks to help hold the street when the police tried to push the crowd off it. But when the cops used their bikes as mobile barriers, anarchists were forced to join the rest of the crowd on the sidewalk. In frustration, most of the black bloc parted with the demonstration before it had even left downtown. The crowd then marched up the hill toward the East Precinct. By now the route had become routine. When it reached the precinct, a line of riot cops was waiting. The march moved up and down some of Capitol Hill’s busier streets, losing more participants along the way, until finally a small group gathered at a nearby park, still chanting slogans.

People felt dispirited. It seemed the old Seattle had returned—the Seattle of April 9, 2010, the Seattle where nothing happens. No one bothered to write a reportback about the 15th, and the frequency of callouts and assemblies dropped drastically.

Nonetheless, something concrete remained from the period of unrest. Days after the March 15 demonstration dispersed, leaving anti-cop leaflets scattered on the ground, posters adorned the walls of Seattle advertising a benefit dinner for all those arrested during anti-police demonstrations. The dinner was held at the new anti-authoritarian social space in Seattle, Autonomia. The dinner was crowded and new friends spoke excitedly about everything they had seen, about the photographs projected on the wall from all the demonstrations, about what would come next and the meaning of solidarity. Perhaps the poster said it best:

"True solidarity is the recognition of your own struggle in the struggle of those suffering repression and then carried out through the continuity of that struggle; the maintenance of active revolt. The momentum that was born in the streets lives on even in the face of repression." 66

evidence to show malice. There’s no evidence to refute Officer Birk’s claim that he acted in good faith. 25

City Mayor Mike McGinn held a press conference the next day to sternly but sadly nod his head in agreement: “I know the public finds the lack of action frustrating. So do I.” 27 Eventually, the city paid $1.5 million to the Williams family, with McGinn admitting that the point was to buy back “the trust of the community.” 28 The only other state-sanctioned option was to undertake the hopeless task of trying to replace the politicians and laws. This is, after all, a democracy.

The Seattle Police Department had more plans for rebuilding their bridges to society. First, SPD established a direct line of communication to Williams’ family, giving them the personal cell number of a sergeant they were instructed to call with any concerns in the aftermath of their relative’s murder. According to a police spokesperson, this move was unprecedented in Seattle. 29 In another novel tactic, SPD leaders participated in a “restorative healing circle” 30 influenced by Native traditions with Williams’ family members in an attempt to curb “fear and mistrust” between the Native community and Seattle police. The police spokesperson explained this as an opportunity for the police department to apologize without affecting any legal outcome. The William’s family’s attorney described this meeting as a success, noting that the circle created a feeling of “connection.” 31

But what about the rest of the outraged populace? Might the police finally lose good citizens’ loyalty? Through organizations like the East Precinct Crime Prevention Coalition—whose mission statement explains that it exists to foster “partnerships among residents, schools, businesses/merchants, the Seattle Police Department, social service and government agencies”— SPD organized community forums for police spokespeople including Chief Diaz himself to speak with self-appointed representatives of society.

The media also stepped up efforts to maintain order. The same newspaper that had heightened tensions by publishing the secretive police union papers then sought to resolve that tension by implementing a pressure release valve. In January, The Stranger began promoting its own “police accountability forum” under the name “Where Do We Go From Here?” The event was little more than a press conference for SPD and their friends—the chief of police, the head of the police union, the mayor, a city council member, and the head of the police-controlled Office of Police Accountability. A lawyer in favor of filing charges against Birk and a representative from the ACLU were the wild cards on the panel.
March 15: The Moment of Uproar

Organize, organize, organize. That's the lesson we've learned from our struggle for freedom. The police may try to keep us down, but we will rise up and fight back. We will not be silenced. The power of the people is greater than the power of the police. We will continue to fight for our rights and our freedom. We will not be stopped. We will not be intimidated. We will stand up for what we believe in. We will not be pushed around. We will not be afraid. We will be strong. We will be united. We will win.

The Jolts Williams Organizer's Committee was a call to action. The struggle continues. We must not give up. We must continue to fight. The fight for freedom is not over. We will not be defeated. We will not be broken. We will not be silenced. We will continue to fight for our rights and our freedom. We will not be stopped. We will not be afraid. We will be strong. We will be united. We will win.
The next day, sixteen people were surrounded by nearly two dozen police in cars and on bicycles as they left the jail after bailing their friend out. The cops insisted that they identify themselves; when they refused, six were arrested on suspicion of trespassing at the jail. This was a blatant attempt to identify demonstrators. The six spent the day in jail and were released that night. The charges were eventually dropped.

**The Third Assembly**

The terrain was changing rapidly. The previous courses of action no longer seemed adequate, and many people felt disheartened. Anarchists needed to look carefully at what was happening and reformulate.

The Third Assembly to Address the Problem of the Police took place a few days later on March 8. Unfortunately, participants failed to use the space to analyze how to counter our enemies' most recent moves. This could have been for several reasons. First, the simple matter of fatigue: after a month of several actions a week, each involving material preparation, arrests, and days of jail support, many admitted that they were tired and looking forward to taking a break. Many new faces did show up for the third assembly, promising fresh energy, but the conversation was more confused and meandering than in the past. There seemed to be general agreement that, as the last demonstration had been utterly suppressed, a new tactic must be tried, but the emphasis on concrete proposals for action had been lost. After an introductory summary of the preceding events and a short analysis of recent developments, the dialogue quickly filled with vague recommendations of what people should do. What if we blockaded a highway? What if we occupied a politician's office? Because these ideas had not been developed before the assembly, and because no one was taking responsibility to actualize them, the assembly ended after everyone was tired of talking without having set any new course. The only proposal was for a demonstration that had already been planned for March 15. It would prove to be the last demonstration of this period.

In the final analysis, the third assembly might have failed to develop a coherent strategy simply because the anarchists in attendance either did into their strategy to achieve meager reforms—a strategy doomed to fail. As shown in Oakland and in Greece, the state only turns the legal system against murdering police to the extent that it fears an actual upheaval. But the managers of social revolt fear this as much as city officials do.

The other organizing group did not shy away from the language of social upheaval. They proudly announced *A revolution is what we need!* But their revolution stank of authoritarian politics. The October 22nd Coalition is a national organization that promotes annual protests against police brutality. From their website, it is difficult to discern who exactly is behind the group; but in Seattle, it is evident that O22 functions as a front group for the Revolutionary Communist Party—a Maoist cult of personality based around leader Bob Avakian, known for remorselessly capitalizing on unrest to swell their party ranks or at least sell a few newspapers. The revolution that they claim will solve the problem of police violence does not include the abolition of the police; it is merely a changing of heads of state authority.

Because the RCP's agenda is to grow their so-called revolutionary party, they actively discourage revolt in the streets, which is always to be put off for some future, official Revolution under party management. Shortly after the murder of John T. Williams, O22 called for a protest to start at the intersection where he was killed. About seventy people gathered for speeches from Williams' tearful and enraged relatives. The crowd then began to march on the sidewalk towards the nearby SPD West precinct. RCP members pushed their newspapers and used bullhorns to try to lead the crowd in chants for "justice." A small but vocal group of anarchists began to outshout those on bullhorns, and chants of *Cops, Pigs, Murderers! and No Justice! No Peace! Fuck the Police!* quickly became more popular with the crowd. The pace of the march picked up as it neared the precinct, and some participants took to the street. The energy had shifted from quiet mourning to palpable anger.

The precinct building appeared unguarded. For a moment, it seemed the crowd would charge it. However, the energy was headed off by a series of amplified speeches that turned the demonstration into an audience rather than an active group. Protest leaders implored the crowd not to be "violent" or "ignorant." One speaker even suggested that the solution was for police to use tear gas more often, or at least shoot people in the knees first. The anti-climax was a recorded speech from Bob Avakian played over the loudspeakers. The crowd quickly dwindled, and those who remained wore expressions of confusion and embarrassment.
Meanwhile, the SPD were paying careful attention to the role anarchists played in sharpening anti-police activity. Their previous, heavy-handed response—breaking into a local anarchist house and assaulting its occupants—had only kicked the hornet's nest. If they couldn't move to block the further proliferation of anarchist ideas and tactics, the situation would continue to spiral beyond their control. Thus began a combined effort from the police and other forces of social order to separate anarchists from the rest of demonstrators and crack down on them.

The February 26 action was nationally reported as a violent riot. Although anarchists delighted in hearing an hour of targeted attacks played up as part of "a coordinated effort to end capitalism and the Western way of life all over the globe," the media portrayal provided the police an opportunity to frame themselves as helpless victims of anarchist violence. A few months later, in an attempt to curb militant demonstrations, the police in Denver used the excuse of a small firecracker being thrown at police to beat and arrest demonstrator Amelia Nicol, charging her with two counts of attempted murder of a police officer, criminal arson, possession and use of explosives, and inciting a riot. Similarly, in Seattle, a firework tossed at a police car was described in the media as if it were a bomb: "the explosion could have injured [the police] or other persons nearby." The police had already portrayed themselves in the media as being "under siege."

On March 3, a day before the demonstration, SPD spokesperson Sean Whitcomb addressed the press about anarchists. Anarchists, it turned out, had been the ones repressing people—not the police, who were strong proponents of civil rights: "It concerns us that certain people are trying to exercise their first amendment rights and are being marginalized by a well-organized group of a few people that are looking at this as an opportunity to commit wildness and mayhem." While some amount of protesting is to be expected, things had simply gone too far: "We understand that there is a lot of anger and some amount of distrust [but] the Williams case is done. We're not gonna let some anarchists destroy the city that we're sworn to protect."

Days earlier, mainstream media had widely reported that John Williams' brother, Rick Williams, was denouncing the "violent" protesters: "I'm honored that a lot of people are touched, but sad that they are going overboard [...] If you want to protest, do it peacefully and honorably. Yelling at the police just disrespects yourself and it disrespects my brother." Rich O'Neil, the president of the police union who had defended Ian Birk as "a good young officer" after Birk murdered John, she stood there defiantly, she began to mock the other demonstrators for their passivity and cowardice. The few anarchists quickly joined her in the intersection. Next, a handful of street youth, known to congregate on that corner, walked into the middle of the street and sat down. As one stepped off the sidewalk, another cautiously commented, eyeing the nearby cops, "Hey, I don't want to be around here if something is gonna go down."

His friend replied, "I don't want to be around here unless something is gonna go down!" Talking to the anarchists, some of the youth explained that John Williams had been a friend of theirs, and that tonight they were ready to fight and go to jail in his honor.

Dismayed at their failure to corral the demonstrators and their anger, RCP members used their bullhorns to announce that this blockade was not the organizers' intention and that anyone in the street could be arrested. But it was no use. Now passersby were interested in what was happening. Anarchists insisted that the bullhorns be passed around to allow anyone to speak out against the police. One woman came running from down the block and upon reaching the bullhorn announced, "I just want to say—fuck the police!"

Contrary to organizers' misgivings, no one was arrested when the police arrived. In fact, the cops seemed at a loss. After repeatedly people to leave the street, they resorted to dragging people out of the clogged lanes of traffic. Incredibly, folks simply stood up and returned to the places they had been sitting. It seemed that, out of fear of further agitating the population, the authorities had ordered that force should not be used. The best the cops could do was to use their bodies to form a line, allowing one lane of traffic to remain open as the modest intersection occupation carried on for hours.

This showed that people were angry but had been bored by the innocuous and manipulative protests of reformists and authoritarians. Sadly, anarchists had allowed those groups to dominate the discourse surrounding police violence. And the hands of the police seemed bound—they were temporarily incapable of the repression they typically could exert. It was time to act swiftly.
March 4: The Changing Terminus

The Second Assembly

...
stories they had heard about anarchist noise demonstrations and wanted to create their own. Riot police formed a line to block the way, but this time the demonstrators forced their way through, despite more pepper spray. When they arrived at the jail and the noise demonstration commenced, the silhouettes of prisoners inside could be seen banging on the windows.

In the end, the demonstration followed the path of the one two days previous, up to the East Precinct only to be blocked by many riot police, and then up and down busy streets and eventually back down toward Westlake. A (perhaps former?) organizer for the John T. Williams Organizing was seen fearlessly taunting and yelling in the faces of riot cops and blocking busy lanes of traffic by himself. On the way, different groups that had splintered from the original demonstration rejoined it. One point, members of the RCP began to try to lead the crowd in chants. Youths carrying black flags responded with their own chant: Boring leader! Boring leader!

Despite arrests and diminishing numbers in the street, the night’s events had people feeling alive and afire. Demonstrators had proven that the unrest of February 16 wasn’t a flash in the pan. What would happen if we just kept doing this?

February 26: Action Against the Police and the Prison World

Little more than a week passed before anarchists took to the streets again. This time the occasion was the February 26 and 27 West Coast Days of Action Against the Police and the Prison World They Maintain, called in solidarity with the struggle unfolding in Seattle.

In the weeks leading up to this, anarchists in the Puget Sound had increased coordination between different crews and cities, gained new comrades in the streets, increased their material preparedness for conflict, and held the streets in several successful mobilizations. People wanted to organize something bolder than a clandestine attack in the dead of night. They attempted to keep ties to the society that was losing faith in them; and finally, for anarchists to organize their own demonstrations.

The assembly did not represent any constituted group or function as a formal decision-making body. There was no vote or attempt to reach consensus. Rather, a loose trajectory arose in an open discussion among comrades who tied their analysis to concrete proposals. Individuals were free to flesh out nuances and debate disagreements without pressure to resolve them. One advantage of this approach is that it produces mutual understandings of different and even conflicting positions. Individuals’ natural tendency to gravitate toward the analyses and proposals that resonate with them reinforces respect for a diversity of tactics. In hindsight, it’s easier to see how these different tactics proved mutually beneficial; what seemed like a series of different plans later revealed itself as a cohesive strategy.
They Are Building

Burning the Bridges

Destabilizing Force

Anarchist Action as a Practice: The Strategy
The crowd wanted to break through the line and swarm the precinct, but no one seemed prepared to. This was one error anarchists made that night: there were many flags, but not enough projectiles. If the paint bomb hurled on April 9, 2010 had been thrown on this night—followed by several more—there could have been an explosion. To be sure, this lack of material preparation was not the only limitation that kept the situation simmering rather than boiling over; few in the crowd had any experience fighting cops in the street. But many people were waiting for the first brick to be thrown.

Instead, the stalemate withered the energy of the mob, and differing thoughts as to how to proceed led to smaller groups splintering off and looking for busier streets to march down or other ways to approach the precinct. Ultimately, a dwindled march returned downtown and reoccupied the same intersection that had been blocked by a few people in January. People remained in the street as midnight approached; no one was arrested.

February 18: Birk’s Resignation Means Nothing

Whatever the limits of February 16, it was unlike any protests in the recent history of the Puget Sound. This brief flash of activity could not be the conclusion of the struggle. We felt compelled to maintain momentum and increase our material preparedness. Now that we knew there were sparks of discontent, we moved to lay tinder around them by setting a time and place, inviting as many people as we could, and staving off the extinguishing forces of social order. We had to create the same situation again—but this time bring gasoline to the flames.

An opportunity came immediately: the same day demonstrators had swarmed across the city, Ian Birk announced his resignation from SPD. Anarchists responded quickly with another anonymous and open call for a demonstration: “Another Rally at Westlake—Birk’s Resignation Means Nothing!”

There were two ways to avoid this trap: to present our call for the abolition of all police as something completely alien and hostile to the conversation unfolding within City Hall, and—with any luck—to destroy that conversation. We decided to try both.

The night of the forum, an explicitly anarchist manifestation gathered outside City Hall with banners, black flags, and leaflets. The banners read Cops = Murderers, Judges = Executioners, and Police Violence Is Not an Accident—All Cops Are Bastards. The leaflets were uncompromising, articulating the media’s role in defending the function of police in the violence of capitalism. This group openly shunned dialogue with the police but communicated with other forum attendees.

Meanwhile, a handful of anarchists donned their best courtroom clothes and attended the forum with the intention of disrupting it. As the chief of police began to speak, one sharply dressed person after another stood up to interrupt him, bombarding him with epithets. The moderator meekly tried to quiet them, but couldn’t. After this, many more from the audience who were not anarchists also refused to politely wait their turn to speak. Again and again, objections from the crowd derailed the panelists. Many people walked out and encouraged others to do so. Banners and signs were displayed across the stage calling for the resignation of the chief and the jailing of Birk. The rows of uniformed police in attendance watched, powerless, as the fragile bridges to society their leaders were trying to build went up in flames. While anarchists were not behind all of this, their unhesitating defiance set the tone for the whole event.

The anarchists gathered outside decided to move their banners, chants, and leaflets inside. Bandanas went over faces, but there was a pause—no one wanted to be the first to step into City Hall. It was a regular participant from a Seattle workers’ and tenants’ organization, Seattle Solidarity Network43, who first stepped into the forum, unmasked. The skills learned in demand letter deliveries to the offices of crooked bosses and corrupt landlords had found a new use. The others followed, and chants of Cops Pigs! Murderers! echoed off the high ceiling of the government building. The forum ground to a halt again. Police and security came running to block the mob, journalists to snap photographs. The situation was finally defused by John T. Williams’ brother, Rick Williams, who announced, “I came here to listen to these people! Quiet!” Many of the disrupters were unsure of how to proceed. The media was poised to announce that anarchists were disrespecting the wishes of the Williams family. Some argued briefly with Rick Williams, but most simply filed out, tossing the remaining leaflets into the air behind them.
Noise Demonstration

A Home Invasion and a

opportunities to begin in 1st or 2nd Phase. Any

opportunity to begin in 1st or 2nd Phase. Any
was heard by many who hadn't attended the demonstration. Anarchists had loudly announced the end of passive protest. But would anarchist action become only another spectacle, with most of those who cheered remaining on the sidelines? What could mobilize the rage of a dormant population?

In only a few days, anarchists got an opportunity to find out. On February 15, reports circulated that the next day the city prosecutor would announce that no charges were to be filed against Birk. If there was a moment for large-scale anti-police revolt, this was it. Anarchists needed to act quickly to announce a time and place for a large gathering that could go in any direction as the night unfolded. Any hesitation and the moment of conflict would be framed and constrained by the forces invested in maintaining social peace. At the time, there was much talk of the use of Facebook to spread the popular uprising in Egypt weeks earlier. Anarchists in the Puget Sound are understandably skeptical about social media tools; nonetheless, they decided that Facebook might be the best way to reach large numbers of strangers quickly.

The callout was posted to Facebook anonymously as an event page. It was carefully worded so as to be as open to as many people as possible without compromising the anarchist analysis of the police. There was no call for self-restraint, no particular demands. The statement simply asked people to converge at 6 p.m. at Westlake Center, the closest thing to a public square in downtown Seattle and the starting point of many protests, in order to act on their rage. Overnight, the event page grew from 400 invites to over 8000. A commenter on the page asked, "Who is organizing this?"

Another responded, "At this point, we all are."

Confirmed attendees online and actual bodies in the street are two different things. But as evening fell, it was clear that the night would be different than the small protests of the past. The John T. Williams Organizing Committee and October 22nd Coalition had both called for their own protests a bit earlier. Now, their numbers headed to Westlake to join the swelling mob. All the previous protests had drawn less than 100 participants. The crowd on February 16 was huge by comparison, although probably under 1000. It was hard to estimate the number because more people were still arriving as the march left the square, taking the street despite innumerable police on bikes and horses and in unmarked cars.

Marchers took over every lane of traffic. The black bloc was a massive, shifting shadow in the sea of bodies. Some people weaved in and out of the crowd, writing anti-cop slogans on street signs and walls with markers, punching one in the face, and arrested three on flimsy assault charges. As the man they came looking for was carried out, one cop yelled at him "I will kill your motherfucker!"

Friends quickly arranged bail and jail support, and many people spent the day waiting at the jail for the arrestees to be released. When they still had not been released that night, anarchists called for a noise demonstration outside the jail.

To everyone's surprise, about fifty people gathered—a larger crowd than the anarchist presence at any of the preceding demonstrations. Because the speaker system malfunctioned, the only noise was the sound of flag poles banging against walls and street signs and the screams and chants of the crowd. Nonetheless, the roar that assailed the concrete walls was tremendous. It was around 10 p.m.—lights out in the jail—but on several floors, the silhouettes of hands could be seen in the windows, waving back enthusiastically.

One cop car appeared. As the occupant exited the car to approach the mob, individuals ripped apart the grating of the jail guards' parking garage, flinging the bolts and hunks of metal at him. He returned to his car to call in backup and await instructions. As the noise continued, people began to smash nearby surveillance cameras.

Another police car arrived and tried to box the crowd in, but the demonstrators effortlessly walked around it, the cops inside afraid to face the group. The demonstration circled the jail a few times while more police cars arrived. Another officer attempted to approach the demonstration; a metal trash can was hurled at him, and he hastened back to his car. After half an hour, the demonstration suddenly dispersed, leaving the cops in their cars waiting obediently for orders. No one was arrested.

The three who had been beaten, threatened, and arrested were released the next day. The charges against them were dropped at their first court appearances.

The significance of the house invasion was clear: the police were threatened by those who wouldn't play the game of "accountability." Because of the swift response from anarchists, the cops' plan had backfired. That night many different crews from the Puget Sound, some of whom had never worked together before, discovered that they could face down the police—even on the enemy's home turf.
February 16: No Charges for Birk

The march moved quickly through downtown Seattle, heading east.

The march was comprised of several thousand people, many of whom were carrying signs and banners. The atmosphere was one of celebration and solidarity. The march began at the Seattle City Hall and continued through the downtown area, attracting more people as it progressed.

In the city's center, the crowd continued to grow, with police and the justice system present. Despite the demonstration, no arrests were made. The police were seen walking among the crowd, ensuring the peaceful nature of the protest.

The successful conclusion of the demonstration was due in part to the coordination and preparation of the organizers. They worked closely with the police to ensure the safety of all participants.

Submissive Protests

For the Attack: Subverting Expectations