

**YOU ARE NOT
DURRUTI
BUT WE ARE
UNCONTROLLABLE**

Beyond a Critique of Non-Violence



The following article was edited to appear in the book, Occupy Everything!: Anarchists in the Occupation Movement 2009-2011, but was not included. The edited version is re-printed here. Please make copies and distribute.

At a recent forum on “non-violence” vs a “diversity of tactics,” an event that was attended by over 400 people for the purpose of discussing the role of violence within Occupy Oakland, the MC of the event, Rahula Janowski, put many things in context. “The occupy movement, the movement of the 99%, has already had a pretty enormous impact. I’ve been seeing the language of the 99% and the 1% coming up in places like San Francisco Board of Supervisors... I’ve seen it in movie reviews, there’s a new occupy related meme on the internet practically every day. It’s not surprising given that [with] growth...there are divisions...”

For the Left, (the Democratic Party, the unions, non-profits, various Marxists sects, liberals, activists, etc), the Occupy Movement then is simply a democratic, albeit *directly democratic* push towards reforming the state and how it manages capital. We hear talk of abolishing the federal-reserve, giving more power to the unions, and stronger taxes on corporations. These are not even reforms that seek to gain concessions that might make life better for the working class; they only attempt to make capitalism ‘work better,’ or give more power to the institutions that manage the proletariat.

To the Left, the movement is showing signs of changing society when elected leaders and various social managers (media, academics, etc) begin to use the language that movement leaders (including both Marxists, unionists, Leftists, and anarchists) have been using towards us. The question of violence for the Left then is not an attempt at dialog on revolutionary strategy - or even a ‘moral’ question, but instead a discussion on how tactically should the movement proceed in attempting to reform and work within the state structure. Thus, for many on the Left, violence is problematic because it scares the state structure with the possibility of open revolt – not because people are opposed to violence, per-se. On the contrary, they support the monopoly of violence that is the state itself. Perhaps some Leftists will even be made to believe that ‘violence’ (often ill-defined), will be good for the movement as long as it is used to maneuver within the state structure. For us though, the dividing line is much more fundamental.

For revolutionaries that are against the state and capital, we must understand this clear divide. The question of violence is secondary to the question of how the movement organizes itself and how we see our activity directed. Is it against the state or is it not? We are not here to pressure the state into adopting our positions or ‘our language.’ We do not measure our power in such a way, instead these are examples of recuperation; the process in which antagonistic ideas and movements that could possibly negate class-society are instead used to make it stronger. Revolutionaries, who have pushed so hard in the Decolonize/Occupy Oakland movement, must again now draw clear lines in the sand as they have done before. This means coming into complete conflict with much of what makes the Occupy Movement what it is.

The Language of Leaders, Movement and Otherwise

Since the start of the Occupy Wall Street protests, the concept of the 99% has spread throughout the world and become a new identity in which many within the Occupy Movement see themselves a part of. Some radicals heralded this new classification, proclaiming a return to ‘class-consciousness’ in the United States. Others, while critiquing the exact semantics, still agreed that at least it was ‘better than nothing,’ and at least offered a start to analyzing society on which a better critique could be built. Leftists (including many ‘Marxists’) and liberals were overjoyed that many ‘anarchists’ and ‘anti-authoritarians’ had handed them such an easy made package that in fact swept away a class analysis of society and replaced it with something much more sinister.

The idea that the Occupy Movement has returned a sense of class-consciousness holds several false narratives. It implies that people’s understanding of power relations and their position within the dictatorship of capital comes outside of their own experiences and that moreover, it takes a vanguard of specialized activists to reinstitute such an understanding back into their lives. As the anarchist journal *A Murder of Crows* wrote in an interview with *Modesto Anarcho*:

[W]e don't need to be reliant on the Left for developing class-consciousness. Class-consciousness is not as scarce as some assume it to be. The widespread destruction of businesses and the attacking of the police in many riots make this very clear. What is not present is class solidarity and widespread class conflict. We believe that the experiences of the exploited, through direct action and social conflict, are the main force for transforming people's perspectives and relations.

[T]here are many on the Left who are much more ideologically committed. These people propose more symbolic activity intended to appeal to those in power, or activities that seek to show large numbers of people while deemphasizing direct action. On occasion they propose direct action as a last resort and as simply a tactic – a means – towards political power.

[In every revolutionary moment and struggle] the Left recuperated and liquidated uncontrollable radical and anarchist elements. People should really study and learn from the history of failed social struggles. We've got to think about these things and be sharp in our criticism and opposition to the Left, not through obsessive anti-Left ideologies that become ends in themselves, but in order to understand how we deal and interact with them.

Activists believe that consciousness is something that comes from the Left (the management of the proletariat), and is something that must be raised and mass produced until the number of adherents have reached a point of intensity where enough converts can then change society. On the contrary, consciousness instead comes from the experiences of people in their everyday lives and is not something that has ceased to exist since the 'passing' of the worker's movement or the liberation struggles of the 1960's and 70's. Furthermore, much of the delusions that many have that act as real barriers during class conflict and help to hinder solidarity between people, are the ideologies which have been imposed from above as well as from much of the Left. Thus, one of the tasks of revolutionaries is to attack these false concepts be they nationalism, statism, pacifism or the concept of the 99%. As the revolutionary theory site prole.info wrote in an interview:

I'm skeptical of the approach that people need to recognize something or see something clearly and then they will start trying to change things. People's consciousness is a very contradictory thing...even people who have very well-thought out political views on things. In most workplaces I've ever worked, everyone steals from work.

At the same time, the people stealing from work, if asked, would probably say that of course they're for private property and are likely to be in favor of harsher sentences for people caught stealing. The point is that I DON'T think that "consciousness raising" does much of anything.

Being working class means struggling, even if it's just struggling to survive. Just standing up for our own interests brings us into conflict with capital. Your average wage worker has any number of problems that are the same as everyone in their workplace and similar to those that workers have all over the world. By fighting together, against the boss, we can begin to see each other as allies. The stronger the struggle, the more we will see as possible. Of course, we need to put forward our ideas in the clearest and most coherent way we can, and argue for them strongly, but much more important than that is to make concrete contributions to the struggles that happen in our workplaces, neighborhoods, cities, etc...

The only thing that is a real threat to the system is a class movement—working people coming together, fighting for our interests, refusing to work, blocking the flows of commodities, fighting the powers that hold this society together and finding other ways to produce and live collectively.

Far from generating a critique of daily life, the Occupy Movement has instead attempted to sweep away the class analysis which inherently exists in many of us. Police, landlords, prison guards, border patrol, most politicians, property owners big and small, members of the extremely rich but not the "1%," are all considered now part of the 99%, and thus according to the current analysis, all have similar interests in common. We do not have anything in common with police because we are the ones they police. We have nothing in common with the landlords, or the banks that hold us hostage through rent and mortgage payments in exchange for shelter. We have nothing in common with property owners, be it Goldman Sachs or the Co-op down the street because we do not own property – we are slaves to the regime of work. The concept of the '99%' sweeps away the very real dynamics of power we all feel everyday in an attempt to create some vague form of populism that hopes to manage the economy, but preserves the regime of capital and the state that manages it.

We can clearly see the recuperation of the Occupy Movement's language (which itself is an attempt to recuperate organic

class consciousness) from state institutions such as the Oakland Police Department which proclaims itself to be “part of the 99%.” It has also been a way for activists and Leftists to try and actually cool down class conflict by trying to manage those who engage with property or their protectors (the cops), by stating that they are attacking other sections of the ‘99%.’ For instance, during the end of the General Strike, some people wrote graffiti and looted businesses in the wake of the absence of police in the area. Many within the movement condemned the vandalism even though such actions were very logical for many of those there, (and were also a feature at past conflicts in Oakland, namely the riots around Oscar Grant). It is the police themselves that ensure a relationship to property and which keeps people from expropriating commodities, and with the General Strike having pushed them out, some followed this logic to its end. Thus, when the innate ‘consciousness’ of people (who by and large were not activists or even ‘anarchists,’) came out, it was condemned by those who screamed the loudest about the ‘99%.’ Any ideology that seeks to manage class conflict is the enemy of the proletariat and must be destroyed.

Furthermore, the ‘99%’ is presented as a collection of people who come from ‘different communities’ yet share common interests in that they are not the ‘1%.’ This further helps to fractionalize the proletariat from itself while helping to maintain the various divisions that are created from class society’s existence. “People of color” are thus one community that thus has something in common with “police” who are “workers,” and they have something in common with “small business owners” and “trans people.” This “analysis” does nothing to examine the realities of patriarchy, heterosexism, and white supremacy within class society and instead glosses over very real class antagonisms. As prole.info wrote in their classic booklet, *Work, Community, Politics, War*:

The whole point of talking about class and “the proles” is to insist on the very basic way in which people from different “communities” have essentially similar experiences, and to show that people from the same “communities” should in fact hate each other. This is the starting point to fighting the existing communities. When we begin to fight for our own interests we see that others are doing the same thing.

Prejudices fall away, and our anger is directed where it belongs. We are not weak because we are divided. We are divided because we are weak.

The Occupy Movement and the concept of the ‘99%’ strengthens the separations within the proletariat which help keep it divided and society constantly reproducing itself. It is an activist invention that revolutionaries need to attack at once. We must destroy this populist language and politics and expose it for the counter-revolutionary swill that it is.

Revolutionaries especially those that choose to speak in front of cameras or update websites in which the movement is ‘represented,’ who still choose to use this language should stop – now.

Creating the Sea for Sharks to Swim

Revolutionaries have done something that the current Left in the US never could – they have created a situation and the context for the forming of real human relationships and experiences in which actual change on a mass scale feels possible. In doing so, they have brought together much of the Left in the process – the very same people that we know will sell us out and destroy us. While often not our own intention, we have created a new pool in which groups like ANSWER, the ISO, the RCP, and more can recruit from. People that before had politics totally antagonistic towards horizontal decision making and direct action now sell paper outside of General Assemblies and on the sidelines of riots. While these groups have remained on the sidelines, we must ask ourselves why we are allowing space to our political enemies and what we are doing in order to drive them out of the movement – or at least render them impotent.

The issue of unions is even more problematic. Many were excited by various union locals endorsing the General Strike as they scrambled to be two steps ahead of their own workers. Local union leaders, in an attempt to stop wildcat strikes from spreading and workers walking out, instead offered various ways in which workers could ‘legally’ strike or at least claimed they would not be disciplined if they did participate. This was an attempt to remain legitimate but

also to keep workers from taking action on their own. In this way, if workers were joining in the General Strike at least they were doing so under the direction of their own local leaders and as union members. And, moreover, they would be ensuring that the strike wouldn't move into a permanent general strike.

As in the case of the port shutdown on December 12th, unions such as the ILWU even reached out to those within the Occupy Oakland movement in an attempt to help them shut down the port in their battle against grain exporter EGT (which threatens ILWU labor control over that market). However, while many of us stood in front of police and waited for a labor arbitrator to rule that the port 'had been shut down,' ILWU members went home with a day's pay. Like a giant puppet, the corpse of activism was again raised, as people blocked the coming in of trucks in a symbolic fashion that had no intention of blockading the flows of capital beyond 'a warning shot to the 1%.' (Fuck warnings, shoot 'em!) We were in solidarity with port workers, but these workers largely (with exceptions) refused to even join us on the picket lines much less walkout in wildcat strike.

It seems that many anarchists and anti-state communists have forgotten that 'the representation of the working class has become an enemy of the working class.' Those that seek to manage the proletariat do so in order to stop workers from taking the kind of actions that many of us believe are necessary to create a revolutionary situation. This is not to say that we should stop encouraging union members to participate in actions or join us on the barricades (although we should be conscious that union members make up only a small number of workers in the US). Instead, we need to encourage people to take action outside and against the unions. We must also be clear that the unions have been one of the main institutions helping to push through austerity measures (such as the SEIU) – we must harbor no illusions that even a defensive struggle against attacks on the working class means an offensive attack on unions as labor brokers and policing agents of the proletariat. We must resist the forming of popular fronts with other organizations of the Left, be they

unions, Leninists, or liberal non-profits. Not only will these people always sell us out, but they are antithetical to doing what must be done.

This is not just wishful thinking, it is also possible. By sheer will, revolutionaries within Occupy Oakland found comrades that like them, refused to work with police, politicians, and political parties – and together create real moments of rupture and attempts at non-mediated and non-alienated forms-of-life. What is to stop us from taking steps further and realizing the managers of the working class to be what they are?

Movement Vs Insurrectionary Situation

Activists often talk about social movements (read, popular fronts) yet rarely talk of class conflict and actual social struggles happening within society. What social movements have happened in the US since the anti-globalization movement that have not either been strange collections of Leftists or been completely recuperated by Leftists? None.

When we intervene in such movements, it is always to break these movements out of control of the Left and to push the subversive and insurrectionary tendencies to their fullest extreme. We seek to push the breaking of windows into full-scale looting. To push street battles with the cops into full blown revolts of entire neighborhoods against the security forces. In doing so, we come up against the activists that put their bodies in front of the property of capital (hey, two for one right?) and the ‘movement leaders,’ from Leftists like Klein to ‘anarchists’ like Starhawk. Other social movements; ones that often originate outside of the established Left, such as those that developed against HR-4437 or SB-1070 (anti-immigrant legislation), included real genuine class conflict as people walked out of school and work in mass, sometimes getting into battles with police as they held the streets. Of course, these movements were quickly recuperated, and with the defeat of much of the legislation, for fear of an immigrant uprising, the momentum that developed soon dissipated. Other so-

cial struggles and eruptions of class conflict, such as the riots against police follow a similar trajectory.

When revolutionaries get involved in social movements, it is always to expand class conflict into full generalized revolt against the control of managers and Leftist politicians and activists. When revolutionaries intervene in class conflict and social struggles, it is always to support the subversive elements of these struggles and to try and connect them to others that are acting against class society.

'Social movements' often act as blankets to keep the fires of class conflict from erupting. More and more, it is the insurrectionary situation that holds the possibility of revolution. It is the psychological break that people experience when they realize that revolt is possible and that enough people have the ability to attack this society that often comes in the wake of a police shooting or some other egregious offence. It is no wonder that in these insurrectionary situations; Oaxaca 2006, the Arab Spring, Greece 2008, and the recent riots in the UK – that that very real antagonisms within (at least some of) the proletariat often slip away. Social crime and gang tensions, racial divisions and neighborhood drama – all are often superseded by the desire to attack the forces of misery. These insurrectionary moments draw directly from the experiences of class conflict and social struggles (the London rioters noting their awareness and participation in the UK student revolts for instance), and the very real daily hatred of the realities of this society.

Thus, our movement is nihilistic, in that it is a conscious negative force that attacks the existing order as a means of demolishing the dictatorship of capital. Yet, at the same time it is also a positive material force – that while destroying the separations between us, it communizes the means of existence in the same breath. There is no way to separate these things; for they must be one or not at all.

Likewise, for many people involved with the occupations, their revolt against work (from the homeless person to the declassee petite-bourgeoisie) couples itself with a very real desire to share in

collective living, decision making, and labor with other people. This desire is much stronger and always more subversive than a push to return to working class drudgery “before the crisis.” But in experimenting with these occupations, the very real nature of a state based on constant counter-insurgency comes directly out in its very naked and brutal form. We are then left with the task of either getting serious - or going home.

Revolutionaries involved in ongoing actions within Decolonize/Occupy Oakland should keep all of these things in mind. Social movements, consisting of popular fronts of various Left groups, will not create the insurrectionary situations that are needed for the transformation of society – they will only attempt to smother such things from taking place. Thus, when such actions do appear to be taking place (or have the possibility of taking place) we must defend and deepen them not only from the state, but also from the Left.

We Are Still the Crisis

Many busy themselves with “fighting the crisis,” or attempting to create social programs which will respond to attacks on the working class. It seems that many have forgotten the call of “We Are the Crisis!” and the very real threat of the realization that the proletariat – the force of generalized human negation of class society – will be the gravedigger of the old world. Capital creates crisis, and in an economy based on speculation and boom and bust will continue to create crisis after crisis, war after war, and disaster after disaster, just as capitalism itself is built on the struggle between the classes. This is not to say that we should not take care of each other in our times of need, but simply that our revolutionary program must not be one of charity and social service. We are not here to help people get through the hard times because we are activists and we feel bad. On the contrary, we are here to push the realities of the crisis to its most subversive and explosive end – the complete destruction of our current way of life and the end of the separations between us.

Many who talk of occupations often talk about fighting this

or that offense for this or that subjectivity, or this or that part of the proletariat. Students, for instance, or to be more precise, student struggles, have often blocked participation to those outside of the academic world. Despite this pettiness, the student struggle must be superseded by the communization of (and thus destruction of) schooling. The mass occupations of universities and schools must begin at once. Namely because the degree in which these buildings can be used for our own purposes is so great; the infrastructure is so inviting. As an essay written by 'Three Non-Matriculating Proletarians' after the occupation of UC Berkeley in 2009 stated:

Going halfway always spells defeat, and so, the spreading of movement is our only assurance against this stagnation. Complete self-abolition necessitates that the logic of revolt spill out of the universities and flood the entire social terrain.

Renew the strikes and extend their reach. Occupy the student stores and loot them. Sell off the computers in the lab to raise funds. Set up social spaces for students and non-students alike to come in and use freely. Appropriate the copy machines and make news of the revolt. Takeover the cafeterias and bars and begin preparing the communal feast. Burn the debt records and the construction plans. Chisel away the statues and vandalize the pictures of the old order. In short, create not an 'alternative' that can easily make its fit within the existent, but rather a commune in which power is built to destroy capitalist society. When faced with a university building, the choices are limited; either convert it to ashes or begin the immediate materialization of the international soviet.

To all waged and unwaged workers – students or not, unemployed, precarious or criminal we call on you to join this struggle. The universities can become not only our playgrounds but also the foundations from which we can build a partisan war machine fit for the battle to retrieve our stolen lives.

While we must push for the occupation and then communization of universities now, many have begun the process of taking over buildings and other terrains as we speak. Squats, foreclosure defense, and community centers have all sprung up. All of these things are needed and all of them meet real needs, and we must only expand this process, defend what we have, and deepen the degree in which we can expropriate the means of existence and bend them to our own will. But we must also think beyond taking only shitty homes and property that banks currently aren't using. We must think of the

ways in which we can meet our real material needs – food, clothing, water, and space – in other ways.

The Days to Come

On one side stands Leftist populism; with its desires to reform the state to better manage capital and in its most cray cray form, to prop up a certain leadership to carry out that management. On the other side us, we wish to completely and utterly negate all that makes us who we are as proletarians and create an entirely new way of living, meeting our needs, and actually being human. We are faced with a question of whether to build popular fronts with those that do not share our politics (albeit often begrudgingly), or to push and expand unmediated class conflict, expand social struggles, and deepen and defend insurrectionary situations. The fires lit in Oakland will not die out; the processes, experiments, and beginnings of communization will not soon be smothered. We must understand the tensions that exist in the revolutionary movement and proceed, attacking what makes us not free, taking space that we need, and forever trying to divorce ourselves from the regime of work, diving into the joy of the commune.

We must popularize new practices, normalize certain ideas and actions, defend with greater intensity what we have taken, and draw lines in the sand with those that refuse to do so.



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