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Strangers In a Tangled Wilderness
Life Without Law
An introduction to anarchist politics
Fall 2013

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Life Without Law

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- *Libertarias*
- *Land & Freedom*
- *Was tun, wenn's brennt? (What to Do in Case of Fire)*

Suggested anarchist publishers:

- AK Press
- CrimethInc.
- Eberhardt Press
- LBC Books
- Elephant Editions
- Strangers In a Tangled Wilderness (that's us!)
- Combustion Books

  We are going to inherit the earth . There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie may blast and burn its own world before it finally leaves the stage of history. We are not afraid of ruins. We who ploughed the prairies and built the cities can build again, only better next time. We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.

  —*Buenaventura Durruti, 1936*

Further Reading

> *People sometimes inquire what form of government is most suitable for an artist to live under. To this question there is only one answer. The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all.*
>
> *—Oscar Wilde, 1891*

Some cool historical anarchists to look up for fun include: Emma Goldman, Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, Errico Malatesta, Lucy Parsons, Nicola Sacco, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Ricardo Flores Magón, Jules Bonnot, Maria Nikiforova, Nestor Makhno, Noe Itō, Severino Di Giovanni, Renzo Novatore, Voltairine DeCleyre, Louise Michel, and Francesc Ferrer.

Suggested fiction:

- *The Dispossessed*, by Ursula K Le Guin
- *Bolo'bolo*, by PM.
- *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, by Starhawk
- The *Mars* Trilogy, by Kim Stanley Robinson
- *Woman on the Edge of Time*, by Marge Piercy
- *Just Passing Through*, by Paco Ignacio Taibo II
- *V for Vendetta*, by Alan Moore

Suggested films:

- *If a Tree Falls*
- *Breaking the Spell*

> *I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things.*
>
> *—Emma Goldman, 1931*

An anarchist is someone who rejects the domination of one person or class of people over another. Anarch *ism* is a very broad umbrella term for a group of political philosophies that are based on the idea that we can live as anarchists. We anarchists want a world without nations, governments, capitalism, racism, sexism, homophobia… without any of the numerous, intersecting systems of domination the world bears the weight of today.

There is no single perfect expression of anarchism, because anarchism is a network of ideas instead of a single dogmatic philosophy. And we quite prefer it that way.

The World Today

> *You're obliged to pretend respect for people and institutions you think absurd. You live attached in a cowardly fashion to moral and social conventions you despise, condemn, and know lack all foundation. It is that permanent contradiction between your ideas and desires and all the dead formalities and vain pretenses of your civilization which makes you sad, troubled and unbalanced. In that intolerable conflict you lose all joy of life and all feeling of personality, because at every moment they suppress and restrain and check the free play of your powers. That's the poisoned and mortal wound of the civilized world.*
>
> *—Octave Mirbeau, 1899*

There are those who say that anarchism wouldn't work, that we need laws and cops and capitalism. But we say that it is the systems that are currently in place which aren't working.

Industrialization is warming the planet to the degree that it might yet just kill us all. In the best case scenario, we've already created one of the largest mass extinctions in the history of the earth. Deforestation spreads the deserts in the wild and systemic racism expands the food deserts in the cities.

Billions go hungry every day across the globe because global capitalism makes it more profitable for the elite of starving nations to grow crops for export than to feed their own people. Science has been subverted by the demands of profit, and research is only funded if it explores what might make some rich bastards richer.

Even the middle class is beginning to fall into ruin, and in this economy, there aren't many left who buy into the myth of prosperity that they sold us when we were kids.

We're told that anarchy can't work because people are "inherently" flawed and are motivated solely by self-interest. They somehow make the illogical jump from this idea to the idea that we therefore need leaders and government. But if we don't trust people to lead *themselves*, why do we trust them enough to put them in charge of everybody?

Responsibility and Freedom

> *An anarchist is one who, choosing, accepts the responsibility of choice.*
>
> —Ursula K. Le Guin, 1974

One way some anarchists like to think about it is that anarchism is the marriage of responsibility and freedom. In a state society, under the rule of government, we are held responsible to a set of laws to which we did not consent. We are expected to be responsible

social justice, and many of those groups will let you join, or at least participate in their actions.

But you can also just, well, *do it*. Find yourself a like-minded group of people and get to it. Organize all the gardeners in your neighborhood to share produce for free or organize against a multinational like Walmart moving into town. Squat a building and steal electricity to throw shows and raise money for anarchist prisoners. Attack symbols of power. Spread information. Act in the ways you feel compelled to act.

But the most important things about being an anarchist are: treating other people with respect, as masters of their own lives; and taking control of *your* life, seizing freedom, but remaining responsible to yourself and those you care about.

As a word of warning, there are predators in the anarchist movement.

Agents of the state infiltrate our movement and do their utmost to destroy it. They prey upon new people in particular, setting them up to break the law and then sending them to prison for years or decades. Don't commit felonious crimes with anyone you haven't known for years. Never let anyone convince you that if you "really cared" about anarchism or some other cause that you'd take some dangerous action. Read up about what happened to Eric McDavid, David McKay, and the Cleveland 4.

And even if you're acting alone or with your closest childhood friends, think carefully and maturely about the ramifications of any illegal action you might take. While we cannot let ourselves be paralyzed by fear, we need to remember that certain types of actions will be treated very, very seriously by the authorities and far more good can be done from outside of prison than from within.

But that aside, welcome. We need you. The world needs you. Together we can get some things done.

But we cannot be weighed down by the past. We have our own history to make.

Present

> *Anarchism is not a concept that can be locked up in a word like a gravestone. It is not a political theory. It is a way of conceiving life, and life, young or old as we may be, old people or children, is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day.*
>
> *—Alfredo M. Bonanno, 1998*

In the past fifteen years, anarchism has been, as a movement, on the up-swing. First with the anti-globalization demonstrations at the turn of the millennium, now with the rise of anti-austerity riots and movements across the world, people are beginning to reject authoritarianism. Which makes sense—capitalism is quickly destroying everything, and we won't soon forget what a nightmare the authoritarians made of revolution, whether the right-wing fascists or the left-wing Stalinists.

So Let's Say You Want to Join

> *In a society that has destroyed all adventure, the only adventure left is to destroy that society.*
>
> *—Anonymous French Graffiti, 1968*

Anarchism isn't a membership club. Even as a political ideology, we're more of an anti-ideology than we are one with a strict set of rules. So there are no membership forms to mail in and there are no fees. There *are* anarchist groups, all over the world, working on any number of problems that might interest you, from ecology to

without being trusted with freedom. There are laws about everything: whom we can love, what imaginary lines we can cross, what we can put into our own bodies. We are not trusted to act on our own authority, and at every turn we are being man-aged, observed, policed, and, if we step out of line, imprisoned.

The reverse—freedom without responsibility—is not much better, and it forms the mainstream myth of anarchy. Government thrives off this misconception, the idea that it's only the existence of cops and prisons that keeps us from murdering one another wholesale. But in reality, the people in this world who act with total freedom and no responsibility are those so privileged in our society so as to be above reproach, such as the police and the ultra-rich. Most of the rest of us understand that in order to be free, we must hold ourselves accountable to those we care about and those our actions might impede upon: our communities and families and friends.

Anti-Capitalism

> *The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said "This is mine," and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this imposter; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.*
>
> *—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754*

There's this idea, which has proven demonstrably false on a global level, that it's "good" or "healthy" or "more natural" for most

everyone in a society to act solely for personal gain. In economic terms, this is the central myth of capitalism: that everyone should try to get one over on everyone else all the time, and that if everyone does that, most people win. The people who want you to believe that myth are the people who *do* win: the people who already control everything.

Capitalism does not, as is popularly misunderstood, mean an economic system in which people work for money that they can exchange for goods or services. Capitalism is, instead, an economic system in which people can leverage their access to *capital* to extort money from other people. That is to say, capitalism is the system by which people who own things don't have to work and everyone else does. The owning class makes money just by already having money. They make money off investments, off renting property, off the value produced by their employees. They live in luxury because they are in the process of dominating everyone who makes money through work.

Capitalism is a system by which one class of people dominates another, and we oppose it. Instead, we suggest all kinds of different ways of organizing our economies. Some anarchists argue for **communism**, in which the means of production are held in common by communes. Others favor **mutualism**, in which means of production are owned by individuals or collectives and money is used but money can only be made through work, not through capital. Still others push for a system of **gift economics**, an organic system in which people give to one another freely and without compulsion, sharing when and what they would like with whom they'd like. There are many more ideas than this besides, and most anarchists believe that any given group of anarchists ought to be free to choose the system that they prefer—as long as these ideas steer clear from demonstrably oppressive systems like capitalism.

coined the term in 1840 and was the first to self-identify as an anarchist.

Anarchists have played an enormous role in revolutions, labor struggles, uprisings, and culture ever since. In the 1880s, anarchists fighting against wage labor in the United States got caught up in the fight for the eight-hour work day. After a series of labor rights culminating in a fight in Haymarket Square in Chicago, eight anarchists were put on trial explicitly for being anarchists. Four were hanged and one killed himself in jail as a result. Their martyrdom changed labor history in the US, the eight-hour workday fight was won, and anarchism continued to be a strong voice in the labor movement.

At the turn of the century, we killed kings and other heads of state, forever earning a reputation as bomb-throwers and assassins which some of us wear with pride and others would prefer to forget.

We fought for revolution in Russia for decades, only to be betrayed when the Bolsheviks turned around and murdered us in 1917. For three years, from 1918–1921, seven million Ukrainians lived as anarchists until the Bolshevik army betrayed an alliance and conquered us while we were busy fighting armies hired by the capitalists.

We had another three-year go of it from 1936–1939, when syndicalist labor unions took control of Catalonia, a region in Spain, during the Spanish Revolution. Once again, while anarchists were busy fighting a right-wing invasion, the Bolshevik-controlled communist party opened fire on us and the country fell to fascists.

Anarchists were heavily involved in Korean independence from Japanese colonial rule and labor struggle in South America. We were involved in the Mexican Revolution. We organized hobos with guns in the US and we robbed banks in France. And we've been involved in numerous art, literary, and music movements—from André Breton's involvement in surrealism to Crass's influence on punk.

Obviously, despite our best efforts, we live within a capitalist, statist world. Anarchism is aspirational and optimistic—it is not, however, delusional. Just because we do not approve of the state's existence doesn't mean we don't understand that the state exists and has material power. We don't "believe" in prison, but that doesn't keep the state from locking us inside it. Every action we take, as individuals and as groups, needs to accept the reality of the situation. Perhaps if we were perfect anarchists, we would destroy our state-issued IDs and not pull over the next time a cop puts on their lights behind us, but we must all make strategic concessions. Similarly, we want a world without wage labor, but this does not make us hypocrites when we work for the money we need so that we can eat.

History

> *The anarchists of revolutionary Spain would probably rather we fight our own struggles today than spend so much time discussing theirs! The Spanish anarchists were just regular folks, and they did exactly what we'll do when we get the opportunity.*
>
> *—Curious George Brigade, 2004*

Anarchists are more concerned about the present than the future, because how we live here and now is more important than some illusory utopia. And we're more concerned with the future than the past, because we have control over the future and we will live in it. But we *do* have a long and rich history, from which we can draw inspiration, pride, and numerous lessons.

While anarchist-influenced philosophy may be found throughout and before recorded history, from certain Taoists, Stoics, Hindus, tribal groups, and others, it was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who

Anti-State

> *Government is an association of men who do violence to the rest of us.*
>
> *—Leo Tolstoy, 1894*

For the past several hundred years, the progressive rhetoric in Western societies has been around what sort of government to have. But the division of people and geography into "states" under which they are ruled is itself preposterous and harmful. To an anarchist, asking what sort of government to have is like asking whether it's better to be eaten by wolves or lions. What is not asked often enough is whether or not we ought to be "governed" at all.

Anarchists do not eschew organization, however. If anything, we spend too much of our time concerned with its intricacies. We are opposed to government because we are opposed to being ruled, not because we are opposed to organizing amongst our peers for our mutual benefit.

But this is not to say that what we want is democracy. At its worst, as is practiced in the US and elsewhere, we have a "representative" democracy in which we appoint our rulers. At its best, we might hope for a "direct" democracy in which we all get to vote on decisions. But a democracy is a government still, one that makes up a set of laws that everyone is compelled to obey—like when six wolves and four sheep get together to plan what they would like for dinner.

Amongst ourselves, we create organizing structures that allow for the full autonomy of every individual, wherein no person can be compelled to go along with the wishes of the group. Because we are not interested, by and large, in static organizational structures with fixed and official membership, anarchists are able to organize organically. People come and go from organizations and the organizations themselves come and go over time based on the needs

of the people who make use of them. When larger structures are deemed useful or necessary, various groups often form networks, which are horizontal structures for disseminating ideas and information and for planning complex operations.

A World Without Law

> *How noble the law, in its majestic equality, that both the rich and poor are equally prohibited from peeing in the streets, sleeping under bridges, and stealing bread!*
>
> *—Anatole France, 1894*
>
> *No great idea in its beginning can ever be within the law. How can it be within the law? The law is stationary. The law is fixed. The law is a chariot wheel which binds us all regardless of conditions or place or time.*
>
> *—Emma Goldman, 1917*

Some people have an unfortunate tendency to insist that you can't be *against* something unless you know what you're *for*. We reject that idea. We don't feel the burden of proof is upon the oppressed to identify what they would like to replace their oppressor with.

If I'm being hit with a baseball bat, I don't feel the need to articulate what I would prefer to be hit with instead. Or, more to the point, police hit us with batons and the media insists that if we wish to stop being hit with batons we need to articulate exactly how it is we'd like to see crime and punishment handled within an anarchist society. But while identifying and destroying systems of domination is the task immediately before us, we do spend some of our time imagining what a world without law would be like. And occasionally, we have the chance to enact such a world for

in increasing strength and frequency, allow for a generalized revolt that could break state power. It has been argued that insurrections do not provide lasting change and can often simply serve as an excuse for government repression, but insurrections have also played important roles in numerous anarchist struggles.

A third strategy that anarchists have historically tried is **syndicalism**.

This method is a "workerist" method that suggests destroying the capitalist state economy by means of workers taking direct control of their factories.

While largely popular and indeed, often successful, in the past, the nature of modern labor and the shift in developed countries away from manufac-turing makes syndicalism less popular than it has historically been.

Another strategy is referred to sometimes as the **dual power** strategy.

This is a strategy of building up "counter-infrastructure" along anarchist lines to fulfill people's needs and desires while simultaneously attacking the mainstream institutions that are destroying the world.

This list is clearly not all-inclusive. Some anarchists find themselves primarily concerned with strategies based around decolonization, education, or intervening in crisis. Others are likely hard at work scheming strategies that have never been tried, ideas that we can't wait to test.

Engagement With The System

> *The individual cannot bargain with the State. The State recognizes no coinage but power: and it issues the coins itself.*
>
> *—Ursula K Le Guin, 1974*

strategy

> *An anarchist strategy is not a strategy about how to make a capitalist or statist society less authoritarian or spectacular. It assumes that we cannot have an anarchist society while the state or capitalism continues to reign.*
>
> *—Aragorn!, 2005*

A lot of broader strategies have been suggested for how we might go about creating an anarchist society—or even just strategies of how we might best live as anarchists here and now. Each has their proponents and detractors, but few people believe that there is one single correct path to take towards freedom, and all of these strategies have in the past and will continue to overlap.

The most famous strategy is that of **revolution**, in which a single, reasonably organized mass uprising allows for the oppressed classes to seize the means of production and take their lives into their own hands. Many anarchists remain skeptical of how we might go about organizing such a thing in a way that doesn't simply leave a different class of people, an anarchist government of sorts, in charge.

Furthermore, exemplified in the recent uprisings in the Middle East, revolution does not have the best track record in terms of increasing liberty to those in the revolutionary country. Quite often, state communists or other authoritarian groups have essentially seized control of the revolution at the last minute, stepping into the vacuum of power. This, many anarchists would argue, doesn't mean that an anti-authoritarian revolution is impossible, only that it faces numerous challenges.

A second strategy is that of advocating and participating in **insurrections**. Insurrections are moments of freedom and revolt, often occurring in times of crisis. These insurrections would, ideally, allow for areas to be liberated from state control and, if they came

days or weeks or years in groups both big and small and we've met with a fair amount of success. A world without law is not a world without guidelines. We are opposed to law because law is a way of understanding human conduct that was designed—and has been implemented—for social control rather than for the furtherance of justice. Laws are designed to be obscure yet rigid, creating a series of traps for those who are already disenfranchised by society.

A law is not actually a particularly useful tool for judging human behavior. As the folk wisdom suggests, good people don't need laws and bad people don't follow them. Laws are black and white, forcing people to obey the "letter" of the law while gleefully ignoring the "spirit." And what's more, because they are enforced through violence at the slightest provocation, they polarize society into those too afraid to step out of line but without knowing why they obey and those who disobey simply for the sake of disobeying. Either way, they hinder people's ability to develop their own personal sets of ethics. They don't help people learn to respect people for the sake of respecting people.

People who are encouraged to act socially tend to act socially, and people who are treated with empathy will, by and large, respond in kind. There will always be exceptions, of course, but for dealing with those people, guidelines—which remain mutable to circumstance—are a significantly more useful tool than law will ever be. Further, many anarchists work towards what is referred to as "transformative justice." This is the concept that, while it is impossible to repair the harm done by the perpetrator of an unjust act, one can work to help the perpetrator take personal responsibility for what they have done so as to prevent them from returning to such behavior in the future. An anarchist society, like any other, will still defend itself from those who cannot or will not take responsibility for their actions, but this self-defense is done in the name of protection rather than "punishment" or "revenge." It's worth acknowledging here that like many of our ideas and meth-

ods, transformative justice is practiced—and was developed—not just by anarchists but by a wide range other marginalized groups.

And of course, we *don't* live in an anarchist society, free from the influence of the culture of domination that surrounds us, and any thoughts we have about a world without law are reasonably hypothetical. Once more, we reserve the right to condemn atrocities, like the culture of prison and police, without feeling an obligation to field and implement fully-developed alternatives.

Mutual Aid & Solidarity

> *I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.*
>
> *—Mikhail Bakunin, 1871*

Mutual aid is a fancy way of saying "helping each oth-er out," and it's one of the core anarchist beliefs. We believe that people can interact in meaningful ways by sharing resources freely, without coercion. We share because it helps ourselves and everyone around us live more meaningful lives. We put more stock in cooperation than competition.

Solidarity is a fancy word for "having one another's backs." Solidarity is the most powerful force that the oppressed can bring to bear upon their oppressors. Every time they come after one of us, we act as though they are coming after all of us. Solidarity can look like a thousand different things. It can be when someone tackles a cop to free another protester, it can demonstrations or actions in the names of those whose voices have been silenced by the state. Solidarity can be offering childcare for new parents, it can be medical aid. Solidarity is when we show the world that none of us is alone, when we choose to intertwine our struggles.

action is probably that of breaking out the windows of banks, court houses, chain stores, and other institutions and symbols of domination. The second most-well-known action black blocs engage in is that of defending demonstrations from police attack, often by using shields, reinforced banners, and the occasional weapon like flagpoles or thrown rocks. The black bloc tactic remains popular today because it is effective at empowering those who participate in it and, compared to other tactics, effective at keeping those involved safe from police repression. This does not mean that every anarchist participates in—or even supports—black bloc tactics, nor does it mean that people who participate in black blocs don't engage in other tactics as well.

There are many, many more tactics that anarchists are actively engaged with all over the world besides wearing black and taking the streets. (We also, for example, sometimes wear color when we take the streets.) We organize demonstrations. We organize free dinners for ourselves and anyone else who needs food. We organize workplaces into unions and we start worker-owned cooperatives. We work towards cities designed to suit the needs of people and the ecosystem instead of the desires of the wealthy. We throw pies at politicians to show the world that they are not untouchable. We run magazines and blogs and write as journalists. We hack security databases and leak information to the public about the ways in which the public is being spied upon. We tell stories that heroize resistance to oppression. We help people cross borders. We fight fascists in the streets. We've been known to burn down a building or two. And it's been awhile, but we used to kill kings.

We openly advocate what's called a "diversity of tactics," meaning we've got as much respect for those practicing non-violent civil disobedience as we do for arsonists— that is to say, only as much respect as the individual actions themselves deserve on their own merit at the time, place, and social context in which they were used.

Sometimes we call this intertwining of the means and the ends "prefiguration." Anarchists aim to act in ways that maximize other people's autonomy. Most Marxists, state communists, and other "revolutionary" ideologies suggest a vanguard with which to seize power. We've no interest in seizing power for anyone but ourselves, and we oppose anyone who thinks they ought to rule us, "revolutionary" or not.

What's more, prefiguration means that we don't put up with oppressive attitudes in our circles, because we seek a world without oppressive behavior.

It doesn't mean, however, that we have to be non-violent. While we do believe a responsible anarchist world would be more peaceful than the world we inhabit today, most anarchists accept that domination may occasionally need to be met with violent force in order to stop it. Our problem isn't with violence itself, but the systems of domination that make use of it.

Tactics

> *An anarchist is anyone who denies the necessity and legitimacy of government; the question of his methods of attacking it is foreign to the definition.*
>
> *—Benjamin R. Tucker, 1895*

The same as there is no unified idea of anarchist economics, there is no universally accepted framework for anarchist tactics. We know we believe in direct action, but what kinds? Almost every individual anarchist or anarchist group might respond to this question differently.

The most famous anarchist tactic so far in the twenty-first century is the black bloc. The black bloc is a tactic by which we obscure our identities by wearing identical black clothing and then engage in various direct actions, usually in public. The most iconic

Solidarity is, in some ways, the opposite of charity. Charity is a way of providing aid that reinforces the hierarchical relationship between groups. Rich people donating money to charity makes poor people even more dependent upon the rich. Poor people, however, organizing to share resources as equals, are acting out of solidarity.

Consent & Consensus

> *Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and tyrant, and I declare him my enemy.*
>
> *—Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 1849*

Since we anarchists are committed to only doing things with people that those people want to do, we utilize a number of methods to determine what those things are.

On an individual level, we're interested in practices based on **consent**. It's rather amazing how little mainstream society teaches us to value one another's consent.

Consent is a way of finding out what other people are interested in doing with you. Mostly, this just means asking people before you do things with them. "Do you want to come to this demonstration?" "Can I kiss you?" "Would you like me to touch your back?" "Can I help you with that?" Some people consciously develop non-verbal ways of communicating consent, but the important thing is to not act without knowing if the other person is informed of the ramifications of an action, is in a headspace to make decisions, and is enthusiastic.

One tool we use for finding consent in larger groups is **consensus**.

Most anarchist decision-making is built around this method. Consensus is a way of determining what everyone in a group is comfortable with doing. "Do we want to blockade this building?"

"Do we want to sign our group's name on this public letter?" "Do we want to publish this book?" A group that respects the autonomy of every individual within it will generally act via consensus in some form or another. Some people mistake consensus to be basically the same as voting but where everyone agrees instead of a majority. This thinking however, is still built around voting, which is a form of competitive decision-making that is not designed to respect people's autonomy. Consensus, instead of being a way to convince everyone to agree to the same plan, is a way of exploring what the logical limits of any given group are. If all members of a group cannot agree on a specific action, then it clearly needs to take place outside of that group, if at all. Unlike consent on an individual level, however, it is not always the case that a group seeking consensus needs everyone to be enthusiastic about the given action, and "standing aside" on a decision is common and respectable behavior.

Not all collectives and groups are very formal in their consensus decision-making, and many groups tend to work more on an "autonomy" model in which everyone is trusted to act on behalf of the group and then be responsible to everyone else for the actions and decisions they made on behalf of the group.

Direct Action

> *Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.*
>
> *—Lucy Parsons, 1890s*

Anarchists do not want to reform the existing political system, we want its abolition. Instead of political advocacy, by which we

might appeal to others to change our conditions, we generally practice direct action.

Direct action is a means by which we take control over our own lives, by which we regain the autonomy and agency that is systematically stripped away from us by governmental systems, by which we become self-thinking individuals.

Rather than plead and beg for the government or corporations to start protecting forests, we put our bodies between the trees and the chainsaws—or sneak in at night and burn their logging trucks.

No system based on industrialization and capitalism is ever going to prioritize natural ecosystems over profit, so we won't waste our time asking nicely. Rather than ask the capitalists to repeal their trade policies that are gutting developing nations, we will show up en masse to their summits and block trade delegates from ever having the chance to scheme. Rather than campaign for the right to marry, we'll live our queer lives however we feel with whomever we choose, and we'll defend ourselves from bigots instead of asking the state to intervene.

Prefiguration

> *If you took the most ardent revolutionary, vested him in absolute power, within a year he would be worse than the Tsar himself.*
>
> *—Mikhail Bakunin*

We participate in direct action because we find the means and the ends to be inseparable. It's quite likely that none of us will live in an anarchist society, but that doesn't mean we can't act like anarchists now. To be an anarchist is at least as much about the ways in which you engage with the world and how you treat people as it is about what fantastic utopia you hope to one day live in.