

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Why I Left the PSL... or the DSA or Socialist Alternative or whatever

a filler kid

July 2021

For six years, my sights were always set on spamming out emails and event invitations, optimizing social media engagement, writing press releases and meeting agendas, recruitment, discourse pissing contests...

Leftist organizations were the center of my life until the day I burned out, and I regret the time that I wasted on them.

Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of formal organizations that do genuinely radical and important things. But that shit just doesn't work for me anymore. And it honestly sucks that it took me so long to realize this.

At the time of my involvement with my former organization, I was only vaguely familiar with some of my friends' projects, yet I felt they were never serious about taking the Next Step (electing delegates to send to our meetings). I came to dismiss them as lifestyle lists and anarchists.

a filler kid

Why I Left the PSL... or the DSA or Socialist Alternative or
whatever
July 2021

<https://fillerpgh.wordpress.com/2021/07/20/why-i-left-the-dsa/>

theanarchistlibrary.org

I lauded the anarchists for their absence from the struggle against gentrification and landlords, even as I heard about the squat evictions and the solidarity attacks that followed, even as I walked through the neighborhoods where a creative and hostile graffiti culture kept the developers at bay. I made tired jokes about vegan burritos, even as the food distribution centers and groups multiplied across the city without needing the direction of any central committee.

I used to treat organizing like a try-hard student treats a group project. Other radicals' ideas, activity and efforts were only Good if they were useful to whatever campaign I was working on. My friends helped out here and there, but they lacked commitment to the organization and would fail to return to meetings after completing the project they helped with.

While I was hard at work trying to recruit strangers for the next meeting, or preaching the gospel of the Proper Position on some trending issue, or educating "The Masses" about the merits of yet another piecemeal reform campaign dressed in last century's revolutionary garb, my friends were busy growing together.

By the time I had finally burned out of my organization and started hanging with my friends again, I had become so accustomed to organizational processes that it took me *years* to repair my relationships enough to begin to see and understand how anarchists organized. At first, the informality felt like a mess; I couldn't keep track of who was doing what *unless I was directly involved and needed to know*. And that was difficult to adjust to, especially when I could see projects everywhere but still didn't really know who might help me find a way in.

There was never any rush to invite "everyone" and so I never really knew when things were happening. There were no unified plans to link Events into a Campaign, or any real pressures to even attend events, really. I often wondered if I should return to the Real political work, which obviously had to be elsewhere. But else-

where still meant within the range of my former organization's influence... and I just couldn't bring myself to go back to that world.

When I was a Leftist organizer, the movement that I imagined myself to be building was always something exterior to my life — something that took place outside of myself, my friends and their projects, the spaces that we inhabit. But “the” movement isn't elsewhere.

Leftist organizers told me that the Project emerged from the Organization. My friends showed me that organization emerges between our individual projects.

I never want to wiggle my fingers for “consensus” again. I'm sick of attending “meetings” instead of just talking and working on shit with my friends. I refuse to be marginalized for questioning the decisions handed down by the party leadership or the coordinating committee or the whatever-the-fuck jargon is used to disguise hierarchy these days.

No, I don't want to join a fucking politician's street team. No, I don't want to listen to another boring speech. No, I really don't think trying to convince people that the legacy of Stalin or Mao (or any other dead dictator) is worth redeeming here, in fucking Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the Year of Their Lord 2021, in the heart of an empire built on stolen land. Are you fucking serious.

I wasted years on general assemblies and GBMs trying to force an insurgent network into existence, when all I had to do was just start paying attention to what was already going on, take a second to realize that no Party could ever “organize” all of it into a coherent movement, and then take a step back far enough to see ***that's actually a good thing.***

If the alphabet soup of communist parties ever actually pivoted toward militancy (they won't, but if they did) then they'd literally be setting themselves up for immediate repression.

Anarchy, on the other hand, is a flawed and centerless constellation of relationships, which is to say anarchy is built on affinity, trust, and reciprocal knowledge. Pittsburgh anarchist scenes are just as fragmented as the Left. It is true that “we” do struggle

to sustain coordination and momentum, beyond the intermediate term. Like every movement, anarchy waxes and wanes. I couldn't care less. Any communist or anarchist who believes that revolt in the united settler-states actually depends on the strength of "the Left" is deluding themselves. Revolt happens with or without us. So rather than waste my time obsessing over the strength of some organization or ideology's influence in a given region, I'd rather learn more *projectual* approaches that might contribute to conflictuality. I know some of you reading this are studying this framework as well, and I look forward to discovering your projects, wherever they may incite or strike.

To me, it makes more sense for "the movement" to refer to a circulation of tactics, skills and projects *within and between radical social scenes...* and that movement sure as hell doesn't have much to do with the political organizations that fill my email's spam folder.

At the end of the day, I'm still not sure what giving up on The Organized Left *actually* means though. What I do know is that despite all our grandiose beef, I'm still gonna see the real commies by my side at the barricades from time to time. And in those moments, the fragmentation in Pittsburgh will weigh heavy. But the moment passes. I've finally left the Party, and I know what I'd rather be doing.

I want to elaborate my search for affinity, and to discover where my projects might collide with yours. Lately, I've come to think that sorta thing is all a movement is actually about, anyway.

It's about navigating social life & conflict with the intent to find accomplices through what we do, rather than what we say.

It's about negating passivity and reimagining the spaces you inhabit, assessing the possibilities that your every action could open up.

It's about understanding the things you do as already being part of an insurgent project.

It's about that rush of euphoria that hits when your projects start introducing you to all sorts of punx, plugs, insurgents, accomplices,

rebel artists, mentors, lovers – and then collaborating organically because *you're never to meet a "new recruit" ever again.*

It's about the decisions you make every single day, from the ways you choose to get your food to the people you choose to share it with.

A graffiti crew, an urban garden, an anti-fascist patrol and workout schedule, an electronics repair workshop, a social center, a variety of accountability models, an Addicts Autonomous of sorts, an anarchist distribution center, a weekly prisoner correspondence night, several counter-repression projects and firearms trainings, many attempts at collective living, bursts of short-term direct action groups, a squatters' network and tool-share, a dumpster CSA, a successful (though unpublicized) rent strike, a compost pick-up & drop-off site, a weekly poetry workshop, several food distribution networks and groups, a recording studio, a neurodivergent support group, an insurrectionary study and research group, a begaydocrime sex worker crew, a homeless shelter, a traveler kid rest stop...

The movement is everything that you're already fucking doing – here, now, individually, collectively.

This world is ending. No global revolution is coming to save us. What worlds emerge is dependent on the particular trajectories the collapse will traverse in each region. Empire will survive in the places where workers still prioritize the needs of the techno-industrial economy – be it capitalist or communist – over the needs of the world they inhabit.

Elsewhere, anarchy spreads like cracks in the concrete. Anarchy, not anarchism. A diverse, decentralized mosaic of struggles for autonomy.

Until the land beneath the ruins of the colonial order is reclaimed by a life beyond Leviathan.

– *a filler kid*, July 2021

Partially plagiarized from a column that appeared in *Filler* Volume 2, Issue 1, published December 2019.