

A Year Without Masters

A Look Back On My Journey As An Anarchist Writer

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Meeting By Chance

I began my journey as an anarchist two years ago, though the roots of that transformation stretch much further back but that's a story for another time. Before then I was a diehard libertarian, obsessed with the word freedom but uncertain what it truly meant. Since my teenage years I'd been searching for a philosophy that matched my instinct that power should never be worshiped. That search brought me, one unassuming weekend, to a Really Free Market in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a gathering that would change the trajectory of my life.

I arrived curious about socialism but suspicious of anything carrying the scent of authoritarianism. It was there that someone who is now a dear friend, suggested I read Peter Kropotkin's "The Conquest of Bread." Only later did I realize how unusual that recommendation had been for him. Maybe it was the way I looked that day, rough around the edges, full hillbilly drawl, the picture of a backwoods redneck which made him think of the book's rural compassion. He laughed and told me that rednecks were, in their origins, leftists; that the miners who fought at Blair Mountain were my people, too. That single conversation cracked open a door I've never since closed.

Incidentally, I had picked up a factory job around the same time I first encountered Kropotkin. The rhythm of welding: metal sparking, heat roaring, and the hum of machinery, became the backdrop for his words in my earbuds. I listened to "The Conquest of Bread" as if it were a sacred text. Every sentence seemed to illuminate the obscure interconnections of the world around me: the factory floor, the time clock, the hierarchy of foremen and owners. I would leave shifts feeling electrified, as though I had glimpsed the architecture of oppression and, at last, understood its design. I felt as if I could grab at the threads of society and force its hand.

That discovery sent me spiraling into obsession. I spent the next year devouring every piece of anarchist theory and history I could find: Errico Malatesta, Nestor Makhno, the Makhnovshchina, Bakunin and Proudhon, Goldman and others. It wasn't only the politics that captivated me though; it was the living cultures behind them. I fell in love with the histories and peoples of Syria, the Slavic North, Japan, Greece, each one revealing new expressions of defiance and solidarity. The more I read, the more I felt the absurdity of borders: how lines on maps are defended with guns while curiosity and solidarity are treated as crimes. I grew up furious at the idea that crossing an invisible line without a passport could get me shot. I'd never wanted anything more than to travel the world as a poor nomad suffering to see the sights of the world and couldn't because a government claimed to own me and therefore could tell me where I could and couldn't go.

I felt drunk on power obtained from knowledge, I'd been handed a forbidden fire and suddenly saw the world lit from within. Each new discovery felt like an act of rebellion, every idea a spark that burned away another layer of ignorance. For the first time, I understood how dangerous and liberating thought itself could be, how knowing even a fragment of truth makes you restless to change everything built on lies.

In time, I even gave Marx a listen, an act that felt like trudging through a swamp of dense, relentless theory. It was, to put it mildly, a fucking chore. Yet somewhere beneath the weight of his dialectics, I heard a man clawing at the same monster we all face: capitalism. Marx, I came to realize, was no villain, but a prisoner of his own faith in authority. He saw clearly how capital consumed workers, how it turned our hours and our bodies into commodities but his remedy was simply a different hierarchy wearing a red flag.

Even so, I couldn't deny the brilliance of his diagnosis of labor. Having stood in a factory myself, welding mask fogged, lungs full of metal dust, I felt every page reflected back at me. He described my exhaustion before I had the words for it: the alienation, the repetition, the theft of time and even the exhaustion. What struck me most was how profit works like a magician's trick: each dime I earn is stolen, repackaged, and sold back to me for less than a penny. Reading him made me angry because he was so nearly right. I wanted to finish the argument he started: to free the worker not by replacing one ruler with another, but by abolishing rulers altogether.

So indeed, I kept looking, chasing names and ideas like constellations in a dark sky. I was convinced there had to be a new word that fit exactly what I felt: something beyond anarchist, something that captured the idea of freedom without chaos, order without authority. I toyed with the word "Supracrat," as an anarchist utopian prescription, a vision I could make out which decapitalized space colonization for Earth's ecological survival. In this conception, humanity would offload volunteers to dead worlds, harvest resources from lifeless asteroids, and transform automation into a tool of liberation by fully automating, and thus abolishing, menial and dangerous labor. But no matter how I defined it, I found myself a step behind others who had already said what I was trying to say in different languages. It was humbling, even funny at times, to realize that history had already charted every path I stumbled down. Eventually I dropped the title entirely, keeping it only as a private shorthand for my evolving anarchist philosophy. I realized what I sought wasn't a new label, but a deeper understanding of liberation itself.

Anarchy In Practice

I think the funniest thing about becoming an anarchist is realizing how wrong the propaganda had made me expect it to be. After a lifetime of being told that anarchy meant chaos, firebombs, and masked revolutionaries lurking behind every protest sign, I half-expected to find a world of AK-47s and Molotovs waiting for me. What I actually found was something infinitely more powerful: a global web of care, resistance, and imagination.

Being terminally online, I'd mistaken visibility for vitality. I didn't yet understand that the anarchist network lives in the quiet solidarity between people who build gardens, share food, and hold the line against despair. Back then, my life was still defined by the rhythm of the factory: wake, work, collapse, maybe shower, repeat. My world shrank to a loop of exhaustion, headphones, and the dim glow of comment threads. Yet even in that isolation, listening to audiobooks and scrolling through obscure forums, I began to glimpse something living beneath the surface: a current of people who had refused obedience and were building something freer in the shadows.

It was then after the first year of my journey that I made the decision to get in the mud with the people already putting their blood, sweat and tears into our cause: In Tulsa (Oklahoma) I found a little community garden: a patch of green tucked between the noise of the city and the fatigue of the workweek. Out of respect, I'll leave it unnamed until I can write about it with their blessing, because the community deserves consent. The garden needed a pair of rough hands, and truthfully, I needed it just as much. Turning soil beside strangers taught me more about mutual aid than any text ever could. There, every seedling was an act of cooperation, every harvest a quiet lesson in shared abundance. I came to see that anarchy, even when unnamed, thrives in these everyday acts of trust and collective care... so common, so humble, it's almost invisible until you step into it and realize it's everywhere.

The truth is that anarchism hasn't been about throwing bombs for nearly a century; its real explosions now are acts of care. By the turn of the twentieth century, anarchism evolved toward mutual aid first and foremost. The fight and the danger remain inevitable, but they're no longer the starting point, in fact they've become the last resort. Until that moment, our responsibility is to lift as many people as possible, to teach them through compassion who their true allies are.

"From each according to their ability, to each according to their need" became more than a quote to me, it became an ethic, a compass. Coming from a right-libertarian background, I struggled deeply with ideas of who 'deserves' what, and with unlearning the invisible hierarchies that shaped my thinking. Confronting privilege and saviorism wasn't comfortable. It forced me to see how even good intentions can replicate domination but it was necessary work. Only by facing those contradictions did I begin to understand that privilege can be repurposed as a tool against oppression. When wielded with awareness, it becomes a weapon in the fight for collective liberation.

During this time I learned what empathy and cooperation truly meant. I had once been cold and disconnected, driven by anger toward everything that sought to control me and the pain of everything I've lost. But through the law of solidarity I began to understand that endurance itself is a form of resistance. Surviving, organizing, and caring for one another are the most potent answers to fascism. Martyrdom and vengeance have their place in history, yet they rarely build what they die for; living examples of our ethics do.

The more I practiced this, the more I found that my rage began to dissolve into something stronger: compassion. I came to feel a deep, painful love for everyone around me: comrades, strangers, even those still trapped in systems I now reject. Each act of care felt like defiance. Even as I look toward a fractured America and the threat of civil conflict, I hold tight to that defiance. What keeps me writing, teaching, and organizing is not despair but hope; The belief that love, informed by memory and sharpened by history, is our greatest weapon against tyranny.

Painful Lessons

It wasn't all joy and compassion, though. There were hard fucking lessons to learn and they cut deep. I had to confront ego and pride, to face how my own words and habits could unconsciously replicate the very domination I claimed to oppose. I learned, painfully, that conviction is not the same as clarity. In those early days I was convinced I was helping, but I was still acting from a place of arrogance. I was, in a way, the so-called "white savior anarchist" who speaks over instead of alongside, who assumes solidarity means leadership and being from marginalized neighborhoods friends with marginalized people didn't negate that cultural upbringing.

That realization broke me open. It forced me to sit with discomfort, to listen, and to learn humility from those who live oppression I can only theorize about. I started to see how nationalism and cultural chauvinism lurk everywhere, even among people who claim to hate authority. It wasn't just governments and flags that carried those poisons: it was buried in songs, in jokes, in the subtle hierarchy of whose suffering we consider 'real.' The hardest truth of all was recognizing that some of the thinkers, heroes, and movements I once held dear had been complicit in atrocities, or blind to the people they trampled in the name of liberation. That knowledge didn't drive me away; it made me more determined to strip away the illusions and keep learning. Revolution means constant self-correction, and growth often begins at the point of humiliation.

Another phrase became dear to me, “Decolonize your mind.” There are ideas you grow up with because of your culture, especially if you come from an impoverished white background. They shape how you talk, how you cooperate, and even how you move through spaces where guilt and history hang heavy in the air. That awareness doesn’t mean life is harder because I’m white it means I had to learn to live as an equal among others, not as someone owed comfort or leadership. The difficulty wasn’t oppression; it was humility. I had to face that privilege doesn’t vanish just because you reject the system that gave it to you. It becomes something you must consciously unlearn and repurpose.

A right-winger rejects that discomfort, insisting everyone was equally guilty, that no one bears special responsibility. But that’s cowardice. I had to learn that, yes, everyone participated in the crimes of empire but our people did worse than most, and the legacy of that doesn’t disappear just because I despise capitalism or the state. People are understandably wary when they see a white man stepping forward; I had to learn to step with others instead. To me, that’s what “decolonizing your mind” really means learning to share space without dominance, to lead by listening first.

I also had to learn that my historical understanding wasn’t quite the same as the reality lived on the ground. Take, for example, communists. Tankies remain, without question, an enemy of anarchism. Imperialists and authoritarians who’ve cloaked themselves in the language of revolution. Yet I’ve learned that not everyone who calls themselves a communist fits that mold. Many who claim the label do so out of hope, not dogma: they believe in socialism, in mutual welfare, in the dignity of labor, but are afraid, or simply unaware, of what anarchism truly represents. Some inherited the word from family or movement history; others cling to it because it seems safer than confronting total anti-authoritarianism in a world addicted to control.

In practice, many of these people already live and organize as anarchists without naming it. They practice horizontal democracy, mutual aid, and collective care almost by instinct. I came to understand that the division between us isn’t always ideological it’s often linguistic and historical. We have been taught to hate each other through centuries of propaganda and betrayal, but beneath that, our shared yearning for autonomy remains the same. That realization reshaped how I write, speak, and listen. Communism, itself, remains a vehicle for authoritarianism, and I’m not telling you to begin advocating left unity.

You cannot discern someone’s ideology by what they call themselves, but by their rhetoric, their behavior, and the power structures they defend. Words can be masks, but actions always tell the truth. I learned that when you start recognizing this, when you see how fascism seeps into ordinary politics, into language, into the posture of authority itself, people begin to think you’re paranoid, that you’re “crying wolf.” The result is a kind of social gaslighting: you see the creeping authoritarianism everywhere, but others insist it’s not real until it’s too late.

I’ve come to understand that calling someone a fascist isn’t about slapping on a label; it’s about recognizing a pattern of submission and control. I don’t believe in calling someone a fascist who isn’t, but I’ve seen how easily every ideology that places order, hierarchy, or purity above freedom begins to rot into it. Liberalism becomes bureaucratic coercion, conservatism slides into nationalism, Marxism turns to vanguardism and each, without constant vigilance, starts echoing the same authoritarian heartbeat. Only anarchism, with its ceaseless demand for equality and self-critique, holds the tools to resist that decay.

I’ve learned that many liberals do care deeply about justice, about equality, about compassion, and yet, frustratingly, it’s nearly impossible to hold a truly ideological conversation with them.

They are so certain of their moral framework, so steeped in institutional faith, that they can nod along with every critique you make of power and still return to defending the very system you're describing. It's not malice; it's indoctrination. Liberalism trains people to believe that the right tone or the right vote can fix a structure that was never meant to serve them. I find that they can agree with every premise of anarchism and still recoil from its conclusions, as if freedom without hierarchy is too frightening to imagine. They'll say, "I agree with you, but..." and that "but" is the chain they can't yet see wrapped around them.

Learning about misogyny and the struggle of LGBTQ+ communities has been an experience that shook and refined me in equal measure. It wasn't enough to read theory or shout slogans about equality, I had to confront the biases buried in my upbringing, the quiet assumptions about gender, love, and worth that society instills from birth. I learned that even a fighter like me, someone forged in anger, must ultimately fight for love itself. Because without love, what is there left to defend?

Absolute freedom demands absolute equality and anything less is hierarchy reborn under another name. To fight for liberation while excluding women, queer, or trans people is to betray the very meaning of anarchism. These struggles are the front lines of human dignity. If I have learned anything, it's that defending love isn't a weakness, it's the fiercest act of rebellion there is. What else is there to say but to demand that everyone, in all their forms, be left the fuck alone free to live, love, and exist without permission.

Contradictions In Praxis

The heaviest chain I've ever dragged has been my fear of ideological war within my own country and, worse, within my own blood. My dearest little brother and I were both drawn into the same poisonous current when we were young: the seductive myths of national socialism, sold to us through survivalist rhetoric, hustle culture, and the white gang circles that passed for community in our world. It promised strength, identity, belonging, everything that poverty and alienation had denied us. When I finally broke free of that pipeline and found my way to anarchism, I couldn't find the words sharp enough or gentle enough to pull him out with me.

For years, I've lived with the haunting fear that one day fascists might force me to choose between my brother and my ideals, maybe even at the end of his gun... or mine. We've been through everything together: hunger, violence, grief, and the thought of standing across a battlefield from him feels like a wound that never stops bleeding. That is how I came to truly understand what war means. The soul-breaking kind where love and conviction collide. In that realization, I saw what anarchism had really called me to: not just rebellion, but the painful commitment to break the cycle of domination even when it lives in those I love. This is the war I inherited: a two-hundred-year struggle for the soul of the future, waged in the hearts of siblings, friends, and strangers alike.

It makes me dread the idea of civil conflict all the more, because I now understand what it means on a human level. How easily war tears through families, how quickly ideology becomes a weapon against love. When I look toward the gathering storms in the United States, I feel both terror and inevitability. The fracture lines are visible everywhere in the economic despair, rising authoritarianism, and hunger for someone to blame. I dread it because I've seen the seeds firsthand, because I know the faces that could one day stand on either side of that divide. And

yet, dread doesn't mean surrender; it means preparation. It means doing everything possible, here and now, to keep love intact amid the collapse.

The lines may be drawn, but you must still reach across them, rescuing every straggler of ideals you can. Even when battle lines seem inevitable, compassion remains a revolutionary act. Not every person lost to ideology is beyond redemption; some are simply waiting for someone to remind them that love, not obedience, is the truest strength. We must become the hands that pull them back from the edge to reclaim what fragments of humanity we can before the abyss swallows everything.

A Radically Different Man

After reckoning for so long with every flaw I had, I finally feel like a better human being one forged through humility rather than pride. I can sleep through the night without the weight of denial on my chest and speak with courage, knowing that my conscience is clear, if still scarred. Growth, I've learned, isn't about perfection; it's about accountability. Every misstep, every wrong assumption, every hurt I caused and then faced has shaped me into someone more patient, deliberate, and unafraid to question himself. For the first time, I feel not just awake, but aligned; my ethics and my actions walking in the same direction.

These days, I identify as a Makhnovist and Platformist. To me, that means believing in the necessity of a disciplined yet voluntary people's partisan force, a modern Black Army, united not under a state or party, but under the collective will of its communities. Such a movement would answer only to its free soviets and councils, embodying self-organization, federation, and defense without hierarchy. I see it as the synthesis of Makhno's vision of a revolutionary black army with an updated Platform: coordination for cohesion, accountability without command, and unity through shared purpose rather than imposed authority. In short, a revolutionary structure that fights like an army but governs like a commune.

The basis of survival for such a structure is mutual aid and solidarity. No movement: social, military, or cultural, can endure without logistics, but anarchist logistics are unlike any other. They're built not on cooperation, not coercion; on trust, not orders. Mutual aid forms the bloodstream, prefiguration the bones, and dual power the living muscle of resistance. It means building the future in the shell of the old. Organizing production, defense, and care networks that sustain communities even when the world around them collapses.

To win and to endure, an anarchist movement must be as self-sufficient as it is compassionate, capable of feeding, sheltering, and protecting its people while undermining every dependency on the state. Mutual aid isn't charity. It's strategy, the very logistics of freedom itself.

It's with this understanding that I now work as a revolutionary. I dedicate my studies to the revolutions of bygone eras as a form of reconnaissance for the struggles to come. I search for the fractures and triumphs within anarchist strategy across centuries, mapping where solidarity thrived and where ego or disorganization led to collapse. To me, history is a tactical manual written in blood and hope. My goal is to extract lessons, refine our methods, and help new generations of revolutionaries avoid the same pitfalls. In every movement, I look for the moments where ordinary people seized their freedom and ask how we might do it better, more sustainably, and without losing ourselves in the process.

Through this practice, my awareness of current events has sharpened dramatically. Studying revolutions past has given me a kind of historical sight, a sort of sixth sense for when conditions are shifting, when rhetoric hardens into violence, when patterns of control resurface in new disguises. It's helped me recognize how fascism mutates rather than disappears, learning to spot its symbols and language long before they regain open power. This historical grounding doesn't just make me more informed; it makes me more capable of countering fascism in the present, connecting today's struggles to the lessons and warnings left by those who fought before us.

Call me a grim optimist or an optimist-realist but I see clearly the violence, waste, and failure around us, and that clarity can make my voice feel heavy. But that weight comes from grief and responsibility, not cynicism. I believe we can become a truly free, equal, loving people if we commit to disciplined solidarity, practical prefiguration, and relentless self-correction. My bluntness is meant to wake us; my hope is what keeps me working. I live to see what we can become.

Here's to one year of writing. And here's to many more years of learning and resistance.

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