

CrimethInc. Convergence Controversy

CrimethInc.

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This is a brief statement followed by personal accounts detailing the events of a controversial disruption that happened at the end of the CrimethInc. Convergence in Pittsburgh this July. These texts have been written by some anarchist people of color who participated in the convergence and were present the night of the disruption. There has been some discussion about it on the internet, but we hope to offer people more context from our perspectives about that night. Still, mostly questions remain about how to proceed. Hopefully at least, these accounts will provoke honest, open, humble conversations about all of the issues raised, so that we can figure out how to move forward as radical communities in struggle.

There is so much ground to cover to convey what happened throughout the weeklong convergence. Check back soon for further reportbacks about the rest of the convergence.

Brief Statement

What seemed like an awesome, performative disruption—a reclamation of space, an expression of anger, an opening up of dialogue—shifted quickly into something else entirely. At the end of a night of Cabaret at the CrimethInc. Convergence in late July, about half a dozen anarchist/autonomist people of color—some who had participated in the convergence all week and some who came into town just for this “action”—stormed into a hall full of people, reading a statement about gentrification and white supremacy, while screaming slogans.

People watched in silence, uncertain of how to respond to such intense aggression from this small group of friends. With no provocation, the disrupters** started grabbing people’s backpacks and sleeping bags and throwing them out into the hallway, under a rallying cry of, “Get the fuck out of here! Get the fuck out of Pittsburgh! We’re not fucking kidding!” They cleared people’s bags from the shelves, from off the ground; they grabbed lamps, chairs, anything they could get their hands on. Tossing everything out of the room, people’s belongings were dumped into jumbled piles everywhere. The disrupters screamed that white people were gentrifying the neighborhood the Convergence was in—neighborhoods everywhere—and that they wouldn’t stop what they were doing until all of the white people from the convergence were out of the building, out of Pittsburgh. It was the middle of the night, and almost everyone had been staying in that building. With nowhere to go, many people started to leave.

The disrupters became increasingly aggressive with the people in the room. They got up in people’s faces, and yelled at them to leave, “Go back to Europe! I’m sick of looking at your white fucking face!” Provoked into fear and panic, many people left the room, tears streaming down their faces. Others responded with a variety of racist comments demonstrating just how far a lot of people have to go in terms of understanding white supremacy and privilege. The disrupters used thinly veiled intimidation and threats, like screaming, “Get the fuck out of here! I am not a pacifist!” while pulling bags out of people’s hands; they muscled past the people who tried to block the flow of backpacks and purses out into the hallway, thrusting the belongings into people’s heads, backs, and other parts of their bodies.

In an attempt to deescalate the situation, people eventually started encouraging everyone to leave. Convergence attendees poured out onto the sidewalks, and started organizing alternate housing and carpools. Many people’s belongings were still lost and strewn all over the convergence space, but with the police arriving to investigate the scene, everyone had to go somewhere. By nearly 2 am, all of the people who did not identify as people of color—and all those too traumatized by the aggression of the disrupters—were out of the upstairs, yet the disrupters still refused to leave. Some people of color from the convergence called a caucus with the disrupters, but after an unproductive attempt at dialogue, finally, the disrupters left.

Apparently, a few friends of the disrupters had known about the planned disruption beforehand, but afterwards, everyone apologetically explained that they had expected the disruption to have a radically different character. Some people mentioned the feminist disruption of an anarchist gathering in the UK where women hijacked a meeting to screen a movie about feminism

when describing what they had imagined. We certainly hope people would have intervened if they had foreseen the aggression and violence the disrupters chose to employ.

—from *people of color who attended the convergence and oppose the disruption*

*We are referring to this group of people as “the disrupters” because the only way they referenced themselves was as people from APOC (anarchist people of color). However, they were certainly not acting on behalf of all APOCers. And like with any decentralized group structure, when a few people do fucked up things under a banner that many people feel affinity with, those people risk delegitimizing the whole movement rather than bearing the responsibility for their own actions. To be clear, this disruption was NOT an APOC action.

Account 1

It seemed really complicated for many people of color who were not a part of the disruption to sort out their feelings about it that night because it was all too easy to relate to the legitimate anger and distress that seemed to motivate the disrupters. I talked with many other people of color that night about our own feelings of isolation, the pain of our own invisibility organizing in anarchist spaces dominated by people with more privilege. We talked about the intensity of the white supremacy we have faced in radical circles, and the serious need to address it. But we also talked about the ways the kind of coercive actions taken by the disrupters could obscure those realities, making it harder to actually work through this stuff with our potential allies

For me that night, though, it was simple to sort out what side I was on. Watching the disrupters tear apart people's belongings, it was clear I had to intervene. Watching male-bodied disrupters scream into the faces of women with tears streaming down their cheeks, I had no choice but to put my body in between them. Really, watching the disrupters of any gender bring their rage upon my white friends of any gender, it was impossible not to get involved.

I am a small, woman of color. I have been assaulted—physically, sexually, emotionally. My whole life. The hatred in the voices of the disrupters as they screamed the absurd, “Go back to Europe,” was simply too reminiscent of the xenophobic slurs I’ve heard since childhood. The way they manipulated and controlled individuals and groups, screaming threats and rampaging through the room, felt just like life with my abusive ex-housemate. I will never watch that kind of violence and do nothing. Even if nothing that I did that night was useful, it was important to me that the disrupters could feel my opposition; it was important to me to resist.

Because people wanted to take seriously the concerns that the disrupters brought up, it also seemed really complicated for white people to figure out how to engage with them. Eventually, following the lead of people of color, some white folks started to passively resist the disrupters by blocking the doorways and removing stolen bags from the disrupters’ hands, but because the disrupters were anarchists, comrades, friends, no one wanted it to be a needless confrontation.

But the disrupters made it clear to me that they were there for a confrontation. “This is war,” they told me. “People get hurt in revolution.” “We are not afraid, and we are not pacifists!” For some reason, though, the disrupters had decided that their conflict was only with the white people at the Convergence. They consistently screamed at every white person to leave, while leaving the people of color alone, and so the people of color left in the space were uniquely positioned to try to deal with the mess. The disrupters tried to argue that it wasn’t about us—it wasn’t about the people of color left in the space. But for me, if you fuck with people I love, even if you never do anything to me, than, yes, your fight is also with me.

I spent much of that night trying to get the disrupters to leave. I tried to talk to them. I tried to stop them from destroying people’s personal belongings. I put my body in between them and other people—tried to stop the yelling and screaming, faces inches away from each other. I tried to stop the fight. I tried to physically remove individual disrupters from that space. I tried desperately to stop the fight. That night I felt so alone. So isolated. It was clear to me that I

needed to resist the abuse that was happening. But I didn't want to be fighting these people that were trying to say everything I also needed to say. I should have been standing along side the disrupters, we should have been speaking our fury together, but they made that impossible. The disrupters made no space for dialogue. They made no space for me—or other people of color who needed room for their rage. They told us all that we could talk later. When everything was over. But even now, everything is far from over.

We tried to reason with the disrupters, to get them just to leave. I asked them how they felt about how shitty they made people feel, and they quickly defended that they “gave people warning” to leave. (That warning was them entering the room yelling and throwing people's bags out.) Another disrupter responded, “Don't you support queers bashing back?” And I told them, I'm all for queer people—anyone, really—attacking their attackers, but that I didn't equate that with indiscriminately attacking a room full of strangers. I asked them how they felt about all of the women, queer people, trans people, and otherwise marginalized people they were pushing out onto the street in the middle of the night. The disrupters responded that they'd be safe wherever they had to go because of their white faces. Back and forth, we tried to get the disrupters to respond genuinely, but they gave up only rhetoric and nonsense.

After literally hours of this, after every bag was cleared out of the room, after almost every person was gone and the disrupters were just standing inside of one of the doorways, refusing to leave, I totally broke. With nothing left to do, I told them all to get out. I told them it was over, it was time to go. They just looked at me. I had been saying this all night, but this time I needed it to be real, I needed it to be done. I was done. I went behind the door that two of them were leaning against to hold open and started pushing with all my strength to close it. It closed halfway, and then the struggle really began. I don't remember everything that happened. The disrupters were screaming at me. I was screaming at them. Tears were screaming down my face; every muscle in my body cried out. At some point other people of color started helping me push on the door. Everything hurt. Everything was pain. Everything was broken.

That night, you broke me.

I am crying still as I write this one week later. All of the complicated pain and heartbreak won't let go. I want to be talking about white supremacy in our movements. I don't want to be talking about you. I don't want to be watching us self-destruct, taking sides, falling apart. I want to be talking about the ways our privilege and internalized oppression make us hurt each other. I guess that's what this is, but it all feels so needless, so thoughtless. I don't want to deal with your shit just because you didn't think through your actions, because you thought that everyone would just come back in after you left, that all of the panic attacks and pain could just be erased, that when people's hearts stopped racing they wouldn't feel the lingering fear.

Somehow, there was a moment of stillness when everyone else was gone, and some people of color called for a conversation with all of us, the disrupters and all of the other people of color that were left. We closed the doors to that upstairs room, and everything was quiet for a moment. Folks of color started trying to ask the disrupters about why they did what they did, trying to reason with them. It felt pointless to me. The disrupters were spouting the same rhetoric and absurd defenses they had been saying all night. They expressed feeling good about displacing people for the night because they wanted people to get a taste of how gentrification displaces people permanently. When I asked how they felt about being a force of domination, just like gentrification, they responded only that gentrification is a greater force of domination than they were that night. I'm glad at least that the disrupters were less of a force of domination

than gentrification, but that sets the bar pretty low for how we interact with one another. Even oppressed groups of people can dominate people with more societal privilege than they have.

People also brought up how dangerous and irresponsible it was for the disrupters to do something that could bring so much extra police attention to this political event. With the high level of surveillance of the convergence, the police certainly could have taken advantage of this opportunity to raid the space or otherwise intervene. Perhaps that didn't happen only because with some kind of intelligence on the inside, it was clear that the disrupters were doing a better job of creating division, panic, and controversy than the police or Feds could have. Someone later said to me that if the police had raided the space, it probably would have brought people together against the police, but this kind of drama will ensure schisms far wider-reaching and longer-running than anything the police can do to us.

In this conversation with the disrupters, we also tried to talk more specifically about why they did what they did. From this vantage point, I honestly think that the rhetoric about gentrification was somewhat of a ruse for the aggression. None of the disrupters were from Pittsburgh. Three of them had arrived that day and not spent any time in that neighborhood. They claimed that the neighborhood didn't want the convergence there, but in our conversation, they couldn't offer a single story about talking to a neighbor with complaints. Whereas I had dozens of interactions with people in that neighborhood who were ambivalent to excited about the convergence being there—and I know many others did, too. I met neighbors who were curious about what we were doing, neighbors who offered us food, neighbors who helped out with copwatch, and neighbors who came to the convergence space to hang out.

When further pressed for information about why they were taking that action, the disrupters said that they came there only because they were asked to do this by "Pittsburgh APOC." According to one APOCista in Pittsburgh, there isn't an active APOC group there, but it seems like a couple of individual APOC folks likely asked the group to come. When asked again to try to defend why they were acting they way they were, the disrupters explicitly said that anyone could hold "Pittsburgh APOC" accountable for their actions. The disrupters said also that they were acting with the full support of Chicago and Philly APOC, as well as people in Milwaukee.

I want to make it abundantly clear that supporting this "action" is not just supporting a militant action taken by people of color; it is supporting abuse. Using intimidation, threats, controlling people's belongings and their movements is violence. The violence people of color feel in their daily lives and in anarchist circles is real and legitimate, but that in no way justifies this indiscriminant use of violence among friends and potential allies. It's like a woman, who distraught at the expression of patriarchy in her every day life, forces herself on her lover. It is fucking abuse, and we shouldn't ignore it just because it's complicated.

As for what happens next, I'm not sure. The way the disrupters acted is a totally unacceptable way to treat comrades or potential comrades, and the only model I have for sorting out how to move forward through this is some kind of perpetrator accountability process—although, that kind of accountability can only happen within communities of friends. That night, the disrupters said they wouldn't call any of the white anarchists there comrades, and maybe that is something they want to stick by. For now, I know that I don't want to organize with or interact with those disrupters until some kind of serious accountability process can take place.

That night was intensely triggering for many people. For me. For hours, I was under this consistent, medium level attack. I came out of that night with cuts and bruises, torn clothing

and trauma that one week later, still won't relinquish my body back to me. I don't get to be neutral or pretend it didn't happen. I hope we all take this seriously.

—*monica*

Account 2

I am puertorican. I too am fed up with the subtly alienating sub-culture of CrimethInc. and many other radical spaces with their ignored hierarchies and cold, individualist behaviors. If it were entirely up to me and if I had no one to care about in the convergence, I would've probably grabbed bags just the same and screamed just as loud. But liberation is not that simple, and thank goodness it isn't, or else a flashy vanguard might've been all it took for the oppressed all along. And we're definitely not into that vanguard bull after seeing the harm it's done (...right?).

Watching the disruption unfold and the split widen in the main room was like watching my own family fight with each other. I don't know which side I should take or if there are sides to take, and that made me feel all the more powerless. You'd think that watching fellow APOC act in autonomy and against white supremacy would make me feel emboldened to take further action... but I felt I couldn't do anything else but to sit there frozen and try to take all the surfaced conflicts in by force. I don't know if it's just a trigger of mine to freeze up in these situations, or if I was just plain afraid to join anyone. Some people's faces looked like that of white tourists back in PR who just got their luxurious vacation ruined. Some of the disruptors were completely ignoring the triggers the violent behaviors in the space set off for many with an abused past.

At a point where I was feeling the crack too much, I pleaded to speak to a disruptor face-to-face. The reasoning for the action was much of what I expected: fed up APOC who want to teach a lesson the loud way. As I listened on, it started to sound like some individual disruptors weren't all that sure about their action after all. While on the sidewalk a squad car raced by with sirens blasting and sped off. I thought to myself that the infiltrators must be laughing their asses off about this back at the station. I spoke then with a Latino friend that came back on the bike who was glad that finally people were taking this convergence seriously. Yea, true, it did wipe out a lot of the rose tint, but it could also create a whole new blindfold.

After the conflict settled down, the disruptors were outside and I confronted the loudest of them (at least) who explained they were acting as individuals (so much for their talk about white people oppressing the nearby neighborhood, apparently they weren't speaking on their behalf) and talked about some history of these POC groups and mentioned a very troubling term: "anarcho-nationalist". The fact that "anarcho" and anything that means could ever be related to "nationalist" is confusing enough, but I find the simple upholding of "nationalist" to be fucked up. Puerto Rico's nationalist groups, though greatly mythologized, have their own history of very, very fucked up shit in the name of national power for the "puertorican" so many people still revere. From Albizu Campos's correspondence with Nazis to constant and still going talks of "cleansing" the puertorican culture (whatever our culture is, anyways, esos son otros veinte pesos), nationalist goals didn't exactly conjure the liberated, autonomous communities we all strive for.

I talked with people of all sorts of contrasting experiences and conversations during the disruption but there's a very unique one that I wish to share. Shortly after finally calming down and walking without trembling, a male-bodied person who I had only met briefly before approached

me. They asked for advice. They were part of the organizing for the disruption but completely changed their mind at a moment they felt no identity. The person was of mixed-race. They didn't identify as a person of color though because of their experiences of having just as much privilege as any white person but in other ways, like class and gender. And their skin was light, and complexion could be judged as white as well. Did that mean they were gentrifying and oppressing just as much as white people? Neither of us knew an easy answer. But to me, it does show that gentrification isn't as simple as just race, as I myself have many privileges that could be easily ignored were I to take a quasi-nationalist stance based on race (I am male-bodied, middle-class, and my Americanized upbringing in the colony, including knowing the language well, has made it easier to be "accepted" in North American "culture"). And also, we need to be constantly evaluating what it means to be a "person of color" and what role do both, our apparent and our identity race/races play as oppressor or as the oppressed.

On my ride back from the convergence, I thought to myself of how it could've ended if there were no disruption. Maybe internalized white supremacy would've gone ignored. Maybe, after all, we could've finished the conversations in something productive and concrete. We'll never know and it's actually unproductive to think of whether or not it was necessary. It made cracks and it create some bonds while shattering others. It got a ball rolling or at least made the ball bigger on confronting our own spaces' racism. It hurt some people and caused some damage that a mere "sorry" won't help. It brought out some fucked up statements (some random person claimed "you can't kick me out, this is MY space"...). If anything, let's not ignore what discussions need to happen face-to-face, whatever side we were on. No causing a mess within own friends and then leaving the city like nothing happened (isn't that what we blame so many corporations and cops so much for?). I want to speak with all y'all and make honest connections. Anarchist people of color are all I have, because we reflect the complexities I need to confront so badly and need help with, in a world that enforces a single "normality". And I sure as hell don't just wanna impose some other kind of simple and separatist "normality".

Entre amor y lucha,

Luis hacktiffler[at]riseup.net

Account 3

There is a lot to be said as far as I am concerned around the disruption that happened during the CrimethInc. Convergence, but maybe this is not the forum in which to say it all. This is a short (relative to everything I want to say) account of my experience around the disruption.

When the disruption started, I didn't really know how to respond. In its beginning it seemed that the disruption was a performative protest against issues involving gentrification around the convergence, a more rebellious show that is a part of the cabaret, something that was done more to make a point than anything else. Very soon it became clear to me that the disruption was aimed towards something else entirely.

In the days before the disruption I was emotionally exhausted by several mediation processes I was involved in, and specifically by work around gentrification. When the disruption started I had no emotional capacity to take in any of what was going on. I stood there, watching friends try to stop the disruption, taking bags and belongings out of the disrupters' hands, without the ability to react or to get involved. Someone approached me and asked me to get involved, to do something, but I couldn't. If I am really honest, even though I was protected by my identity as a person of color, I did not feel safe. I had a personal relationship with some of the disrupters, but not with the two most aggressive ones. I actually felt that an intervention from my side might end with a punch to my face.

A white friend of mine was sitting in the corner crying, and I went to them and hugged them, trying to give them support. Their tears and sadness brought my emotions to the surface. I felt overwhelmed by the sadness that came with the recognition that apparently we cannot all just get along. Even though we are a part of a movement, it seems like some of us feel like aggression is the only way to get results from our comrades, and there is something so heartbreaking about that.

While me and a friend were comforting another friend, one of the disrupters came to us and asked if we were going to leave. The other comforter replied rather cynically, "Well, I am Colombian, is it ok for me to stay?" The disrupter, not noticing the tone in which the words were said, replied that we could stay. When I think about the disruption I keep going back to that moment. There is something so ironic in the disrupter approaching a group of mostly people of color with a request to leave. When you are at war, maybe there is no space for distinctions—and so people of color turn into white as you assume everyone around you is the enemy. And even if we weren't people of color, it seems so heartless to approach people in tears you caused in order to promote your interests. At that moment the disrupters made it clear, some vague political idea was more important than us, the people who sat with them in gentrification workshops all week.

A few moments later one of my white friends approached me and offered me a hug. I don't remember exactly what they said to me, but there was something in their words that felt liberating. Through the whole disruption I felt so dehumanized, as if I was erased, completely unpresent and unrecognized. The contradiction that such a friendly moment offered helped me suddenly notice the dehumanization I felt for so long. This was a bitter-sweet experience.

Soon after I went downstairs. There I was again greeted by many concerned friends offering hugs and asking what I needed. I left the space a little later, I felt drained and worried and wanted to be in a space that felt safe.

The day after I felt very concerned about going back to the space. I was worried that the conversation about yesterday's events will focus mostly on the fucked up way in which the disruption took place, and not enough on the feelings that motivated it. To me the disruption was mostly a wake up call, and I wanted others to take it as such. Happily, I think that most of the particles of conversations that have reached my ears were focused on the breach of trust people of color felt towards their white allies.

After the really really free market we all met and went through an accountability process around some racist reactions some white people had towards the disruption. The process caused me to feel a lot of anxiety. In the moments before it I took many emotional supporting tinctures, and drank tea. I was scared of how I would feel about the things that would be said, and was worried I would not have the capacity to contain myself. The beginning of the process was very frustrating for me. There was a lot of discussion around how the process should go, what people can or cannot say, etc. To me, a lot of the discussion seemed like an attempt to evade the actual accountability that needed to be taken. My feelings about the conversation shifted completely when we actually started going through the list of racist reactions to the disruption. I was surprised by the fact that people actually admitted when they did not know why something was wrong or offensive. Things were not just brushed under the carpet, but each act was examined by the whole community and explained. The strongest part of the process was when people actually stood up and identified themselves as the ones who took some of the offensive actions, and recognized their mistakes in front of the whole community. It felt like a very deep process started in that conversation, one that will hopefully have long term affects on our community as a whole and on each of us as individuals. To me, this proves that we have the potential to protect each other and fight for one another. I can get you to think about my oppressions without breaking you.

I guess that the main things I am left with from this experience are questions about the integrity and honesty that we have towards one another. Throughout the convergence I was closely involved with some of the attempts to confront the convergence's gentrifying effect on the city. Often, it seemed like those attempts were very constructive and successful. After hours of conversations on this subject, I felt like we were getting somewhere. From my post-disruption perspective, I am not too sure what to think about those conversations now. Some of the disrupters participated in those conversations, and I am left to wonder what their intentions were in doing so. A part of me fears that they used those conversations in order to have a one-way conversation, in order to educate others as to their feelings around gentrification without really trying to come to a resolution around the problem. I want to believe in the honesty of the dialogue we had, because doubting it will have heartbreaking consequences for me, but at the same time, I do not want my naiveté to help anyone get off the hook too easily.

I think that I am standing in a unique position towards what has happened. I have close personal relationships with the convergence organizers and some CrimethInc. writers, and at the same time I am a person of color who understands the rage of the disrupters and often feels disappointed with white "allies." In many ways, I feel I am in the middle of this. Throughout the convergence I heard some of the disrupters (as well as others) criticize CrimethInc., critiques I shared as well. At the same time I was surprised. My experience with having the exact same

conversations with individuals who are involved in CrimethInc. or the convergence have always been positive. I've always found listening ears to my difficulties, and have always received invitations to step in and create space for what I want and need. When I tried to convey these feelings to others they replied that they would not participate in a dialogue because it would be fruitless. This despair is actually based on legitimate past experiences, and it is so depressing.

I hope that people will take the disruption as a sign as to how people of color specifically feel in this community. There is a huge breach of trust when it comes to how we respond to white supremacy. So many times in the past this community has not responded to abusive or oppressive individuals, and now many of us feel like other anarchists do not have our back. How are we supposed to stand together against the threat of prison time or pepper spray, when we don't stand together in front of the mirror? I need this community to have a very clear zero tolerance policy towards oppression. I need us all to make it very clear to each other that we are in this together. I expect nothing less from us.

I hope the disrupters know what they've done. I hope they understand they have torn this community apart. And now, I do not know how to go back home, how to deal with friends who are traumatized, how to think about my identity as an anarchist person of color, what to do with one of the disrupter's phone number that is still in my phone book, how to deal with "friends" who have supported your action. Now, I am not traumatized, because this fucked up shit has broken my heart to a point where I have no space to be traumatized. I have no space to feel anything. Our identity as people of color is meaningless when your actions bring tears to our eyes. Maybe it will seem rude or inappropriate, but I have but one thing to say: fuck you.

Maybe you should consider the struggle as a two-way road. For me the disruption is a wake up call to how we communicate with each other as a community, around white supremacy as well as other issues. We need to cut each other some slack and take more leaps of faith. We are all a part of a common struggle for liberation, and maybe we need to trust that others will be interested in hearing what we have to say and go through an accountability process with us when needed. It is something that is hard to do, but assuming that other anarchists are fundamentally on our side will help us create a stronger community. The alternative is what brought the disrupters to play an abusive role towards others. Admitting that we do not share common interests and in fact do not function as a community is something I am not willing to even consider at this moment.

—L.

Account 4

The account below is a personal, partial, and situated perspective on the disruption that took place at the 2009 CrimethInc Convergence. I claim to be speaking on behalf of no one except myself, although I am speaking from the position of a queer woman of color who attended the convergence, participated in the APOC caucus that took place at the convergence, and was present during and after the disruption. Here is my account of what happened. Although I cannot claim to be more “right” than anyone else, I can try to offer an honest perspective.

About a week has passed and here I sit, trying to sort through notes, thoughts and feelings, but feeling little motivation to pull it all together because what gets written here will just be one piece amidst the War of Representation which has already begun. But something needs to be said; because there are people out there claiming to be speaking on behalf of APOC and people of color in general, and it needs to be known that they are not speaking on behalf of me. It needs to be known that although I share the rage, frustration, and hurt felt by the “disruptors,” I do not agree with their actions. Not only because white people were hurt and forced onto the streets without warning, but because other people of color were hurt and felt silenced by the disruptors’ actions.

I can’t talk about the disruption without first talking about the shit I was feeling and all the things that happened leading up to disruption. I woke up on the same morning as the disruption thinking, I need to get out of Pittsburgh. Something about the space felt alienating—I didn’t know many people there, conversations often felt dishonest and polarized, and I was often the only woman of color in various workshops. I felt small and unmotivated to speak. It would be unfair to say that an atmosphere of hostility toward people of color is what caused this feeling. Although I did hear racist comments get thrown around by a small group of ignorant folk, it was largely the result of being outnumbered by white boys, and feeling like there was no place or entry point for my perspective.

The morning of the disruption I sat waiting for a discussion on cultural appropriation to begin. I sat next to another person of color, who later was a participant in the disruption. They engaged me in conversation and we exchanged contact information. It felt good, especially after feeling invisible for much of the convergence. When they asked me how I was feeling at the convergence, I started crying and quickly left the room.

Later that day the APOC caucus met. The discussion revolved mainly around the issue of gentrification, and racism/alienation in the radical community. Toward the end of caucus I started crying again, and walked back to the convergence space with another woman of color. We had an awesome conversation, and she asked me if I wanted to be the MC at the Cabaret, which was the event happening that evening. At dinner I talked briefly with another person from the APOC caucus, who later was a participant in the disruption. Although an action/intervention had been planned, nothing was mentioned to other APOCers during the caucus. A few people from Philly, who were not at the caucus, met in private with a few people at the convergence who were in on the plan, but other APOCers were intentionally excluded.

So I was one of the MCs at the Cabaret, the event that was taking place when the disruption happened. When the last planned act finished, the outburst happened. The disruptors started yelling at white people to get the fuck out, screaming “We’re not fucking kidding! We are not pacifists!” A person of color from the caucus came up to me and whispered, “Are you with us? Help us get people’s bags out of here.” This is what really pissed me off. What the fuck was I supposed to do? These people did not attempt to talk to me at all, left no room for dialogue with other folk of color and yet expected us to join their action. When this person asked me to join I felt pressured to choose allegiances. In some ways, I did feel like it was my “duty” as a person of color to participate in the “eviction,” but at the same time I knew that what they were doing was fucked up—that the indiscriminate eviction of and aggression toward white people (many of whom were survivors of abuse and queer, trans, and womyn identified) was not okay. So I did not participate. But part of me felt guilty. Because I shared their rage toward racism, but felt alienated by their tactics and exclusionary approach.

It should be known that none of the people who actually participated in the eviction were from Pittsburgh. Yet the rhetoric used by the disruptors was a rhetoric of extension, and by this I mean that people who declared war on the white people at the convergence were claiming to speak on behalf of “the neighborhood” and people of color in general. I felt infuriated by the sense of entitlement and arrogance of the language used during the eviction, because when you speak on behalf of other people you essentially silence them. And I know from talking to other people of color that many other perspectives were silenced by the action.

Although the “smack a white boy part 2” statement released by the disruptors framed the others as the aggressors, what actually took place was a two-way aggression instigated by this small group. Emotions were fucking high. Yelling, pushing, and offensive comments were exchanged back and forth between white people and the disruptors, people of color and the disruptors, white people and white people. The chaos went on for what must have been a couple hours. Eventually, it was just a few white people and a group of people of color from both sides. One of the last white people in the room was an arrogant white boy who was acting cocky, making inappropriate comments, and sitting shirtless on a chair. I yelled at him to get the fuck out of the room, and he left.

Some fighting took place between people of color and disruptors and they made it clear that their war was not with us (other folk of color). They told us we could stay, but when they were asked to leave by a woman of color as some fighting was happening, those who were people of color not participating in the action were called “Obama,” a race traitor, and accused of siding with the oppressors. One mixed person was accused of siding with “the part of him that was a colonizer.”

The conflict among people of color was starting to really wear me down emotionally. Both sides did not want to talk. I started to cry as people were pushing on both sides of a door and asked if we could sit down and have honest conversation about what was happening. A few of the disruptors knew from the caucus how alienated I had felt that day, but I made it clear that I felt equally alienated by their actions. I could tell by the look on the faces of the disruptors that they genuinely felt bad about this, that their intention was not to hurt other people of color. When I asked them why they excluded myself and others from discussion about the action, one person said “We didn’t tell X and X because we knew they wouldn’t approve, and we didn’t tell you because we didn’t know if you’d be with us.” This approach and the intentional exclusion

of people who may disagree seemed suspiciously vanguardist to me, especially when acting on behalf of APOC.

When participant and non-participant people of color finally sat down to talk, the first thing I asked was, “Is anyone here actually from Pittsburgh?” Sadly, not one person was. Here we were, arguing about the feelings of a community that was not ours, and I wondered, why do we feel entitled to speak and act on behalf of a neighborhood we are not from? The whole thing felt embarrassing and insincere.

But that’s not to minimize the issue of gentrification. What kind of impact would a 6-day convergence have on a neighborhood? How did the neighborhood residents feel about the outsider presence? I imagine the response was varied and incapable of being reduced simply to positive or negative. When I walked around I smiled and spoke with people, one person offered me help as I was fixing my bicycle, another person asked me if we’d be coming back next year. But who knows, maybe my personal positive interactions with locals was the result of also being a person of color who doesn’t look particularly punk. I know there were also concerns raised about increased police presence, and this is definitely a legitimate concern. But a meaningful and productive response to the issue of gentrification is not one sheathed in dishonesty and dogma.

Over a week later I sit here contemplating the significance of it all, besides feeling slightly traumatized and drained. I feel somewhat disillusioned with our capability as people of color, as anarchists/anti-authoritarians/autonomists, to speak from a place of honesty and not ideology, to act on an ethic of care and not entitlement, to let our rage be known without alienating the people we claim to be fighting for. I feel angry about what took place (both the disruption and the response of some white people), confused about my allegiances, but ultimately, I can’t hate the people who participated in the disruption. Because these are the same people who had reached out to me earlier that day as I sat alone feeling invisible, the same people I’ve talked to at other APOC caucuses, the same people who share my disdain for white supremacy, the same people I will probably be fighting with in the future. But there needs to be accountability taken for how their actions rendered other people of color invisible, and hurt both ally white folk and people of color.

—Jackie bitte_ein_kuss@yahoo.com

Account 5

The disruption of the crimethinc convergence is, at the very least, a complicated issue. There are some very legitimate issues raised by the disruptors: the level of permissiveness and lack of internal critique or review surrounding matters of racism, racial privilege, and white supremacy within the anarchist movement for one. On the other hand, there is also the aggressive, impertinent, and peremptory character of the disruption.

The disruptors stated clearly and repeatedly that they were not interested in conversation, negotiation, or mediation; and they issued no demands except the immediate dispersal of everyone present. Even in their own statement after the fact they offer only a rambling account of what they did and why they chose this course of action, which demonstrates a marked lack of clear thinking other than creating controversy and spectacle.

Despite claims that “the convergence was ended effectively and efficiently” the scheduled events resumed the next morning and people slept in the building the next evening. In terms of effect on the surrounding neighborhood the disruption was only effective in creating a brief mob scene in front of the building and an increase in police activity in the middle of the night on day five of a seven-day convergence.

In recent conversations with a friend who considers himself a “member” of APOC since 2003, he explained to me that APOC was always supposed to be people of color organizing in non-authoritarian fashions within their own communities—not engaging white people or taking on the role of “racism police” (his words). The disruptors’ interest in not only having the eviction be a physical confrontation but claiming it as a revolutionary action betrays their purported disinterest in the attention of white anarchists.

I was as torn in the midst of the disruption as I am now wondering whether my voice has a legitimate place or value in this discussion. I have always identified as Nicaraguan, as I have always been aware of the privilege gained from my white skin. This placed me in a peculiar position as individuals walked around the room on the night of the eviction singling others out and yelling in their faces “Why aren’t you leaving?” I wondered whether it was better to aid in deescalating the situation by leaving or to stay on principle in order to demonstrate that the situation was not, in a variety of ways, as black and white as it was being framed. When the question was leveled at me I heard the words “I’m Nicaraguan, does that count?” leave my mouth and I decided to stay.

While I was trying to convince a particularly belligerent white male to leave I was chastised for even engaging him in discussion. I walked over to where people who knew each other, or at the very least were friendly acquaintances, had been forced on to either side of an argument. Initially the disruptors were using grandiose language claiming to be the voice of APOC, the entire neighborhood, and all gentrified neighborhoods; essentially representing a lot more than they probably had agency to discuss. When challenged about their right to representation they would fall back on the explanation of “autonomy” whenever they felt backed in to a corner. This

clearly illustrated the absence of a logical foundation for the “action.” At this point I left feeling completely frustrated and helpless to improve the situation.

The next day there was a meeting for people to come and discuss what had happened. The meeting, though necessary, was frustrating for a variety of reasons. Most of the white people who had made the most egregiously offensive statements had opted not to attend the meeting, and missed the discussions and explanations of why those comments had been hurtful. A lot of time was spent painstakingly creating a record of what had happened and only an hour at the end was spent with an eye to the future.

I remain very upset and angered by defensive racist comments made during the eviction. I should have known better than to have trusted the level of understanding of privilege professed by some of the white people present. If anything can be gained from this experience it is the knowledge that as an aspiring counterculture we are much further behind in the depth of our discussion of racism (and many other forms of oppression) than is acceptable. We’re left with a lot of the same problems that radical communities have been attempting to address for decades. How can we foster a community that enables people to comfortably address instances of racism in a productive manner? How can we create and demand accountability for institutions as well as individuals?

Situations like these are unfortunate because they force many people to choose sides when they would rather not. There are clear and critical ways of engaging with each other around issues of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, etc. This was not one of them. Hopefully we can avoid the steps backward in all directions that our current situation invites. Hopefully we can have discussion instead of division.

— *welch*

Account 6

It took me awhile to put this together, but here is my account and response:

APOC Caucus

I attended the caucus this year, and had been a part of the APOC caucuses at both the Athens '07 and the Milwaukee '08 CrimethInc. Convergence. Like many of the organizing volunteers that year, I had been distracted from the convergence by dramatic dynamics in my personal life and the anxiety of having such a large gathering in a city. I had originally made the call for an APOC caucus, and put it on the workshop schedule. Sistah Souljah approached me about changing the time to something that would work better for their schedule, and I agreed. They moved it to the end of the day on Friday.

When the time came around for the caucus, I was overcome with all of the things I wanted to talk about. I was looking forward to the opportunity to discuss things with my peers-of-color, and had rushed to eat some food before dinner, should the discussion run late. I missed the first few minutes of the meeting because of that, and had missed the agenda discussion. When I arrived at the circle with a companion and fellow organizer, the group was sitting in a circle listening to Otto read a statement from the gentrification workshop that had gone on earlier in the convergence. After they were done, a report of the entire discussion was passed around, each member of the caucus was expected to read part of the dialogue. Essentially, we reenacted the conversation that happened during the gentrification workshop. Every time someone read something that someone had said that had implications of socialized racism, a few members of the caucus would scoff or chuckle. At first, I felt like people were taking the opportunity to decompress, but I slowly began to feel as if certain members of the circle were trying to stimulate this sort of response. I was frustrated that we were spending so much time accelerating our frustration with the whiteness of the space, and no time discussing how it was affecting us and especially take advantage of having a safe place to do that within the caucus. I tried to take a time out from the reading to ask if everyone wanted to use this time to discuss this. Otto shook their head assertively, saying that the group had already come to that decision. I looked around and didn't see anyone that looked particularly excited about reading Otto's gentrification notes for the entire caucus, and shortly thereafter people started sharing their experience. Several people broke down to explain how isolating the space had been. Otto attempted to characterize CrimethInc. as a force of white supremacy in the way they depicted the *Rolling Thunder* project. I'm assuming that they didn't know that two APOCers in the circle work on that project regularly. My opportunity to open up and discuss things I had been holding on to for months, waiting for this particular group of friends and acquaintances to ask for help sorting out things that had been going on for me in my life as an anarchist. The caucus broke for dinner. I didn't return to the second half, I didn't feel like I had the space to make proposals to the agenda. It was clear that some of the APOCers present had an agenda of their own.

The Disruption

Screaming began in the back of the room. It was timely; the open-mic style Cabaret had just ended its roster and the floor was opened for anyone who wanted the space. My ears heard the language from the open letter, and I knew it had something to do with the APOC caucus that had happened earlier in the day. When I turned to look at who was doing all the screaming, my heart sunk. Thinking it was a skit prepared by some of the tearful APOC caucus-goers, I thought to myself: “Finally! Something prepared and practiced to call this shit out.” Then I saw Jordan.

I had come to appreciate Jordan’s attitude during APOC conversations that we had shared and caucused. Last year, In Milwaukee, Jordan swore to never attend another CrimethInc. Convergence, or anything else organized by white, able-bodied, cis-gendered, males again. I respected Jordan’s decision then, and felt empowered knowing that one could continue to be an anarchist and not have to be subjected to the socializations and out-right oppression that linger and evolve in anarchist spaces. I felt empowered knowing that one could do that; when they lost their patience, if it hurt them to go on forgiving ignorance and oppression, if they were hurt irreconcilably—knowing that there was a back door I could jump through should the time come when I just couldn’t take it anymore, when what I perceive as being good reasons to organize with other anarchists and attempt to work out our differences and privileges in the process aren’t worth the isolation of experience, the loneliness. Most of all, I took strength in knowing that I could walk away from that shallow space forever and be well-adjusted, and find an environment where people understood the privileges they had and didn’t have, and which ones I have and don’t have and work with them. When I saw Jordan screaming: “GET THE FUCK OUT, THIS IS NOT A JOKE. WE DON’T WANT YOU HERE!” in their full-bodied wind suit and sunglasses and gloves, I knew the myth of the “well-adjusted” abstinence Jordan spoke of was gone. It was only a year after I heard that oath, and there they were, unable to move on. Still a stuck, bitter reactionary.

I looked around at people’s faces – white faces – confused and uncomfortable. I felt like there was a spotlight on me. Every time the disruptors shouted “APOC”, I felt like I was somehow implicated in the action for announcing the APOC caucus earlier that week, for returning from it earlier that day frustrated and confiding in my friends about it. So I stood up and left the room. I think that I was one of the first people to leave the room—it only took me about 30 seconds to piece everything together.

I left the room. I knew that they were there to carry something out, whatever it was, and I didn’t want to be responsible for ending it.

I pulled myself together about 20 minutes later and walked back into the building to see chaos. Personal items were scattered everywhere, medicine bottles rolling on the floor. I walked past people crying, drinking rescue remedy out of the bottle. The space looked like it had been raided. When I entered the main hall, where the disruption began, I could see that the same rhetoric was being presented. Nothing had changed since I had left besides the atmosphere of the space. I walked around and asked the people that I knew who were involved in the action why they felt like an eviction was direct action, why they hadn’t asked me to participate, whether or not they had considered how their action was affecting the APOC present and participating in the convergence, whether or not they had considered their action as a breach of my consent—as they hadn’t included me because they knew I would have had reservations; is that really how

anarchists should deal with the way their actions affect their comrades? I didn't get satisfying answers to any of my questions.

A physical confrontation followed—admittedly paraphrasing here, an exchange of words between opposing APOCers along the lines of: “Some of the white people you're evicting are my friends and family, you don't have my permission to kick them out.” // “We're at war, x--, we want them out, and we're not asking.” // “If you're at war with my family, you're at war with me.” \ which initiated a push-of-war from either side of the door. Personally, I wasn't interested in a physical conflict. As a sizeable man of color, I have been wrestling with the space I physically take up for a long time, especially in recent months, which was in fact one of the issues I had been intending to find counsel through the convergence's APOC caucus. I don't feel comfortable using my body, more my strength, to express my will. This has seemed like a white-privilege-discussion blind-spot for me in the past. I wish the white people around me could understand what its like to be a tall, strong, brown-skinned male in this world—especially in the anarchist community—and what it feels like to be an intimidating presence in the eyes of the white people around me. I can feel it, and the fact that it's threatening really affects my sense of self, my confidence in my body. This is what made it particularly difficult for me to participate in the back and forth pushing that followed. Knowing that had I wanted to, I'd have been able to physically remove each of them using whichever intensity of force of violence I desired. It strikes me as ironic, thinking back on it now, that I had been looking to my fellow anarchists of color for supportive conversation earlier that day only to be shut out by the opportunistic use of legitimate disillusionment during the APOC caucus and that I was now wrestling with those issues alone, along side of my friends, while physically wrestling with those who I had hoped would be most helpful.

I was pushing the door against the disruptors only because people who I cared about, who I knew cared for me, felt so strongly that the disruptors needed to be forcibly removed. I wanted the disruptors to express some concern for my feelings, to incorporate my needs into their action enough so that we could feel like we were confronting white supremacy together. Eventually, I grew impatient with the “We're not here to discuss anything” // “This is not a dialogue.” \ rhetoric expressed by my former comrades to even the other people of color present. So I joined in the pushing. This was an opening experience for me. It felt good to draw a line—another admission is that as a person of color in a predominantly white community and circle of friends, I rarely draw such line—and feel safe in doing so. It also felt powerful to be checking in with the people I was pushing against—it followed the logic of “agreeing to disagree” in that I was able to say things like “I'm going to push the door now, really hard, and it might hurt.” It felt empowering to allow the disruptors an opportunity to brace themselves and consider their convictions rather than indulging in a reactionary physical confrontation. When the “White Allies” Marvel and Sand joined in, I lost my sense of productive conflict. They had been making me uncomfortable all convergence long with their obliviousness to the real struggles facing anarchist people of color. The couple had spent the entire convergence guilt tripping the mass of white folks with shallow rhetoric about gentrification and privilege, but never once helped the organizers communicate the policy information we had put together to lessen our impact on the community. It became clear what they were really there to do when they put their hands on the door opposite to me and pushed—they were agitators, doing the bidding of whichever force they felt redeemed their white mark of guilt. At some point it would be worthwhile to analyze how these two white folks

were used by the agenda of the disruptors, and whether that is the model role the disruptors propose all “White Allies” play, if so, White Allies be warned.

This was the point at which I picked up a sheet of 4×8 plywood and rushed the disruptors. I wanted to smear them out of the space with the broad piece of lumber, to attack in a way that wouldn’t be striking. Of course, I had been thinking emotionally rather than logically and instead of reducing the engagement, it escalated. Later during this conflict I redislocated my right shoulder, and pulled a muscle in my left. I would be sore for the following week.

When the conflict finally ended hours later, the remaining people of color tried to have a conversation. During that conversation only two of the disruptors that had participated in the convergence expressed any remorse for the severity of the action. The others listed all the criticisms typical of the anti-CrimethInc. platform: too lifestylist, too white, drop out culture isn’t relevant to people of color, the project is too exclusive, dumpster diving is privileged, etc. As someone who has, on frequent occasion, contributed to CrimethInc. projects, I’ve never been particularly impressed by those who judge the entire project on their dislike of the book *Evasion*. I don’t feed myself shoplifting or dumpster diving, I’ve never hopped a train, I’ve worked as a carpenter for years, I dropped out of high school and can still contribute writing to the project, I responded to a call for volunteers and it was literally that easy to become a part of the group. All this is to say: the common critiques of the project have never spoken to me. They seem completely contrary to my experience. I knew many of the people at the convergence didn’t fall into this narrow view of CrimethInc., many of them my close friends; I was saddened to learn that the reason for this premeditated act was based mostly on these political disputes. The few who were recruited to participate in the disruption were misled by the ringleaders. I heard that Jordan said something to the effect of: “I’ve been searching for allies in the anarchist community for years and I haven’t found them here, but I’ve found them elsewhere.”

This begs two questions. Firstly, where has Jordan been for those years? How have they not found any allies? I live in a small community with only a few anarchist friends, I rarely travel or network within the anarchist scene and I’ve met dozens of amazing, supportive anarchists who are white. Secondly, where is elsewhere? I’m an anarchist partly because I’m convinced that anarchism offers the most proactive self-determined approach to overthrowing oppression. Socialism, Communism, Nationalism, none of these approaches seem at all appealing—I’m not saying that as a politician defaming opposing parties, I’m speaking as an individual seeking tangible paths and ways of organizing my life to better find my way out of modern life under capitalism and western civilization. I’m not convinced there is an elsewhere, not to say anarchists are the only allies—but if not anarchists...? I’m worried about Jordan’s intentions and direction.

Two of the most problematic things about this event for me involved the appropriation and presumption of locals. First, the presumption that our neighbors during the convergence were angry that we were there, identified us as part of the gentrifying force, or felt displaced by our presence. This was flat-out untrue in my experience. I had arrived days before the convergence began to offer assistance in making last minute preparations. Over those days and those of the convergence proper, I participated in many conversations with locals. Most of them were casual well-wishes. Some of them were discussions about what was going on in the building, which they seemed at the very least indifferent to. I had two conflicts, if you can call them that, out of maybe 30 interactions. The first was with an older black woman who asked us not to park in front of her house so her daughter could have a parking space when she returned from work. I apologized to her for taking up the space, and apologized about the space the convergence was taking up as

a whole. She thanked me for the apology, and insisted that all she cared about was the parking space. The second was the night of the confrontation. I was dazed, sweaty, and upset, and I came down from the second floor to see people gathered outside planning the rest of the evening. A black man maybe a few years older than me was making small talk with the people hanging outside. He could see that I was upset and offered me a nod. I nodded back. He extended his hand for a shake. In my delirium—having just given long, heartfelt hugs and embraces to my friends after the disruption—I held his hand in mine, in a tight, folded grip, for a little too long. It was a humorous cultural faux pas. “Ey man, don’t be squeezing my hand like that,” he thought that I was making a pass at him. I explained that I had just been fighting with former friends, and was a little out of it, and he accepted that. When he continued talking to me, he outright refused to continue the conversation until I “jumped in some water.” I was stinky and sweaty and off-putting to him. I explained that I agreed that it was probably time for a shower. Even after our embarrassing handshake misunderstanding, and being sweaty and dirty and barefooted, he offered to take me to his brothers house to get showered up. I could tell that he meant it. Of all my interactions with people up until the disruption, these are the only two that suggested any kind of conflict with the neighborhood. I’m not dismissing that we had a tough impact on the neighborhood, just that the people of the neighborhood would need seven brave black-clad vanguards to step forward and confront the convergence, if they really wanted us out. In 2005, not more than 250 miles away, over 600 black and brown folks rioted in Toledo to intervene in a National Socialist Movement/white power demonstration and ended up setting fire to the bar frequented by local politicians and police. If the kind of anger and resentment the disruptors felt was really shared by the neighborhood, it seems likely that CrimethInc. would have been targeted similarly. It is disgusting that the disruptors tokenized the Garfield community the way it did.

My second major issue with the legitimization of the action was the way participants claimed it for APOC, specifically Pittsburgh APOC. During the POC discussion after the disruption, the disruptors began by proudly claiming that the action was called for nationally. Then regionally. Then finally, they retreated to say that Pittsburgh APOC called for the action. When I asked if I could hold Pittsburgh APOC accountable for the action, they said yes. But afterward they insisted that they were carrying out their autonomous will. I saw this pattern as a reflection of the poor communication they had with each other about the intentions and legitimacy of their motives. Regardless, admitting that didn’t excuse the fact that the disruptors misled the convergence attendees about the support (read: lack there of) from the larger APOC community. They only admitted that the action wasn’t APOC sponsored, but led by individual autonomist people of color after all of the white people had left. It was clear to me that only two of the group really understood that the action was meant as a political attack against CrimethInc., not as a self-defensive action of people of color present at the convergence. I was satisfied with the answer they gave me about Pittsburgh APOC, and I intended to bring my complaints to them, as I was convinced further conversation with the disruptors would be fruitless. I came down from the upstairs where a local APOCista was waiting. They saw in my eyes that I was about to ask a question that had been asked many times already that night: “Do you have the contact for the Pittsburgh APOC?” her answer: “There is no Pittsburgh APOC, we haven’t had meetings in months.” Some part of me knew that this had been true all along. The puzzle pieces fit together—Otto had been the token local who the entire disrupting team could use to validate their action. Otto spoke for Pittsburgh APOC because there was none. The disruptors marginalized APOC by claiming it as an APOC action, for the remainder of the convergence most people who had been

present for the action referred to the disruptors as “APOC”—APOC this, APOC that. “If APOC believes X then how can I support them?” “APOC wants all white people to go back to Europe.” This was perhaps the least productive repercussion of the action. In the days following, calls were made to APOCers all around the country, and I kept hearing that there was very little support for the disruption in the way that it occurred. I’d like to request that APOCers join me in maintaining the distance between APOC as a network and project and the “APOC” claimed by the disruptors by public censure of the “Smack a White Boy 2” action. We need to hold the distinction or risk being pushed into further marginalization and isolation.

Account 7

I don't know what my account will contribute, as I feel as though much of what I am about to describe has already been documented by other 'APOC against the action'. So I will keep it short and try not to repeat too much of what has already been said.

The 2009 Crimethinc. Convergence was the 3rd consecutive convergence I participated in. I arrived Thursday night into an environment I felt less than comfortable in. The first conversations I overheard were arguments about race and how 'we're all the same on the inside' and that 'race shouldn't matter,' by a very aggressive and dominant white male. This first impression of this years convergence made me feel quite alienated. Unlike previous convergences where I felt liberated and welcomed when I arrived, all I felt was anxiety, and incredible amounts of tension in the atmosphere in Pittsburgh. This was enough to make me decide to sleep in the car rather than in the convergence space.

Friday morning I started preparing my workshop about the 2010 Olympics and indigenous and anarchist resistance to it, which I planned on presenting on Saturday. While doing this and burning copies of my CD for my performance at the 'Anarchist Dance Party', which was also happening the following day I was approached by one of the disrupters who introduced themselves as "Kill Whitey" and told me that they were supposed to be hosting a workshop on 'anti-racism' which nobody had showed up to. I thought it was pretty funny to see somebody who has given themselves a name that advocates killing somebody because of their skin color, hosting a workshop on 'anti-racism.' In any case, we talked about gentrification, white privilege, and the "Smack A White Boy" ANSWER (distr)action. "Kill Whitey" told me they had participated in that action, and I asked how it went down and if they thought it was successful. I made no secret of my reluctance to support this action until I could learn more about what exactly went down and what the consequences of this action were. "Kill Whitey" agreed that "Smack A White Boy pt 1" went over most people's heads and that most of those who were 'smacked' had no understanding of the motivations or goals of this action, and still don't have a clue. This confirmed my feeling that this was confrontation for confrontation's sake.

After this we both walked to the APOC caucus, at which many important issues were brought up, including gentrification, unchecked white privilege, white dominance in the anarchist scene (crimethinc. in particular), and the lack of safe space and recognition of POC needs, but "smack a white boy pt. 2" was never brought up for discussion, leaving many people of color in the dark about the pre-meditated attack that night.

That night, as the cabaret ended, and 6-8 folks stormed into the room yelling 'get the fuck out of pittsburgh', and 'go back to europe', while throwing people's bags around and making people cry, I immediately knew lines were being drawn and which side I was on. This was not a performative disruption, this wasn't calling people out, this wasn't forcing dialogue about issues, it was a repeat of "Smack a White Boy", and I wanted no part in it. I wanted it to stop.

I knew that most of the disrupters were from out of town, so their claim to be representing the neighborhood we were gentrifying fell on deaf ears. And their claims to be acting on behalf of

people of color didn't reach me either as I saw more people of color standing up to their senseless tactics than standing with them.

When the time came for physical confrontation between them and the APOC folks who disagreed with them I was ready. They declared war on Crimethinc. They didn't care what the consequences of their actions would be. They didn't give a fuck about kicking people out onto the street in an unfamiliar city in the middle of the night. They didn't care who they hurt. They attacked people for being white who didn't identify as being white. They attacked women, they attacked trans people, they attacked everyone in that room. They attacked other people of color and called them 'race traitors' who were siding with their colonizers.

They told all white people to leave, but told their 'white allies' to stay to back them up. One of these 'white allies' (they're no allies of mine) punched me in the face after trying to physically pull me away from the door where I and other people of color were attempting to push the disrupters out. So I guess it's OK for the disrupters to have their white friends back them up but not us?

The only feeling I had at this moment was "How fucking dare you! How dare you speak on behalf of POC. How fucking dare you speak on behalf of this neighborhood that none of you are from. How fucking dare you alienate us even more because we don't agree with your tactics."

After all the white people left, including their 'allies' we had a short meeting, and I asked if they took other people of color into consideration when doing this action. They obviously didn't and made no attempt to claim they took us into consideration. We asked if we could hold APOC, Philly APOC, or Pittsburgh APOC accountable for this action but then they fell back behind the safety of having 'acted autonomously as individuals.' I remember thinking 'what fucking cowards.'

Why not attack the real forces of gentrification while you're in town? Why not rally us to attack banks, real estate companies, condo developments, and individuals who are profiting from the gentrification in Pittsburgh? Why prioritize attacking those who would back you up in the real struggle?

I confronted them about how much they had fucked me over. I explained that I had put lots of resources into coming down here in order to promote resistance to the 2010 Olympics, which is a massive force of gentrification and colonization. Their response was and that I need not worry, that 'APOC' would handle it, and that white anarchists are useless and that I shouldn't try to find support or organize with them.

This was enough for me to disengage. I had nothing left to say. Their action personally fucked me over, alienated me, hurt my friends, and did serious damage to anarchist organizing.

That night I slept in the convergence space with real comrades, both white and POC. The next morning the convergence went on as planned, although numbers had been cut in half. Still there were nearly 100 people who stayed until Sunday when it was scheduled to end. We were not evicted, we were not intimidated into leaving Pittsburgh, we will not grant you that sense of accomplishment. Once again, as was the case with "smack a white boy pt. 1" you accomplished nothing.

P.S. You should consider smacking a cop, politician, or banker instead of anarchists and anti-war activists next time you decide to "Smack a Whiteboy."

-Testament

Account 8: Bad Move – Alternative Reportback from the ‘Smack a White Boy Part 2’ Attempted Eviction of the Crimethinc Convergence.

If I was an infiltrator I would have been laughing my brains out. I mean to a cop, what could be better? An anarchist conference attacked not by cops, not by white supremacists, but by other anarchists. A potential threat to the system divided and debilitated, not by race as the aggressors claimed, but by the egos of a few individuals.

What I experienced at the crimethinc convergence when a handful of people connected through Anarchist People of Color (APOC) interrupted and declared war, literally, on convergence attendees, was certainly the most obnoxious and absurd thing I’ve ever seen anyone do in the name of anti-oppression. The way I saw these individuals act – people I’d considered comrades moments before – was a manner of utter disrespect I would consider tactically appropriate toward neo-Nazis, maybe toward a board meeting of Lockheed-Martin, but never for anyone who I would consider a potential comrade, let alone an anarchist.

But I guess that was their point wasn’t it? This was an explicit act of anti-solidarity. During their so called action the disruptors repeatedly stated that they were “past” dialogue with white people. Communication with white people would now consist of belligerent yelling of hate-filled remarks in a relationship more akin to collies and their sheep herds than anarchists to their fellow humans.

With their declaration that they were beyond dialogue with whites they defined the terms of the confrontation, and compelled me to personal involvement as a person of color. Soon I was neck deep in an ugly confrontation with a few of the most obnoxious self-proclaimed anarchists I’ve ever dealt with. It saddens me that I am posting this for a number of reasons, the least of which is not giving those eyes in law enforcement a few extra minutes of bonus entertainment, but when a group of anarchists start acting completely below decency to other people in the name of anti-oppression, their mentality must be confronted.

Now, the grievance stated by the disruptors as the rationale for their actions was that the convergence furthered gentrification. This is a legitimate complaint, and I will address the issue a little further on in this article, but first I would like to hand back a few grievances I have with the disruptors and the stunt they pulled, sectioned conveniently for their response.

Please be clear on the following points when looking at this article:

1. I am speaking only for myself here, an autonomous Anarchist Person of Color who was present at the confrontation. However, I am not speaking only from my experience at the confrontation. I’ve known one of these individuals for well over a year, and I’ve had disturbing whiffs of their extremist mentality itching my nostrils for a while now. Before

recently, I've tried to explain these qualms away to myself, giving them the benefit of the doubt because I respected them as a comrade and a friend. Now I feel there's no choice but to confront their mentality head on.

2. These people did not represent APOC! These were a handful of self-declared autonomous individuals. I've attended a number of APOC caucuses and know this is not the dominant mentality. I'll also note that in this "action", it was two people really, who did the most talking (yelling). A third person was pretty vocal and obnoxious, but almost reticent in comparison with the loudest two, and three other folks largely refrained from yelling, mostly contributing their physical presence. Out of these three I believe at least two of them had some very mixed feelings about what they had gotten themselves into, and because of this I feel almost unfair for referring to the six of them together as "the disruptors." On the other hand, if they were really autonomous as was claimed, they could have at any time called out any of the moronic things their cohorts said. If you two are reading this, read: better late than never.
3. Although you will hear complaints of borderline acts of violence from both sides, I think pretty much everyone would agree, there was no actual fighting. Explicit threats like "Get the fuck out, we're not pacifists!" and some scuffle, like pushing and pulling, but none of them intending to knock people off balance or physically injure anyone. We even drank water from the same jug in the midst of arguing. Isn't that nice?
4. This is by no means a comprehensive analysis of the attempted "eviction's" reprehensible qualities. In respect to the reader's intelligence I will be pointing out only a few things which may not be quite as completely obvious to every single person reading this. Hopefully this will provoke discussion and be a positive effect of this most negatively minded aggression.

And now...

My Unhappy Grievances With the "Smack a White Boy" Disruptors and Their Actions.

1. Cowardice

In the report back from the first "Smack a White Boy" "action" last March, in which autonomous APOC disrupted a large anti-war protest, writing off the anti-war movement in the U.S. as defunct by internal white supremacy, the writer/s warned of "even more ambitious direct action in the future". Apparently these writers idea of "more ambitious" is attacking people closer in social proximity to themselves, and further from the apparatus of power where they should really be focusing their energy.

I don't deny that it takes a special kind of audacity to walk into a room of over a hundred people trying to have a good time, and in the dead of seriousness, begin screaming your head off at them, but I do not call this brave. In truth, the crimethinc. convergence was one of the easiest and softest targets for a stunt of this kind: they knew it was an explicitly anarchist space so they wouldn't get in trouble with the cops, they knew from first hand interaction that most of the people at

convergences are generally nice folk and that they would not risk major physical injury, and they knew that as white anarchists who considered themselves anti-racist, most whites at the convergence could be easily intimidated by the threat of being called racist.

That's just the truth.

2. Fatal Presumptuousness

Throughout the disruption, and particularly at first, the disruptors clearly implied that they represented people of color at large, and that they somehow spoke for the neighborhood. They later denied this when called on it, pointing out they never explicitly said "we speak for people of color", "we speak for the neighborhood" - but the message was clear enough. At one point one of them insinuated to us POC who resisted them as they tried throwing people's bags out the ballroom - with a surreal indignity - that we were somehow betraying them as people of color by resisting them. For the record none of the disruptors were native to Pittsburgh, let alone the neighborhood - but that didn't stop them from yelling "Get the fuck out of Pittsburgh!" repeatedly as a chief demand. This kind of presumptuousness about their mandate as individual people of color is dangerously unaccountable, and in this case, absurdly self-serving. When somebody pointed out to one of the disruptors that their demand was unrealistic - it being around one o'clock at night and impossible to hitchhike, a disruptor said they could all head out, packs in hand, to the train yard.

A word really needs to be said now about the APOC acronym and its potential for insinuating more than it means. The acronym APOC, obviously, is not owned by anyone, and any anarchist person of color can take up the banner. This is a good way for Anarchist POC to consolidate with each other; also as individuals and small groups, the acronym APOC brings an additional clout to our statements, especially toward white anarchists. This is terrific when used by responsible individuals; the problem comes when an individual or group, pushing their own agenda, uses APOC coercively. If you oppose a certain APOC individual for example, you have to be very careful in how you declare it, especially if you're white. Your opposition to this one APOC could be taken as opposition to Anarchist People of Color in its wider sense, which could then be taken as opposition to anarchist people of color in general.

In the case with the disruptors - and we have to keep calling them that, there's no other name to call them by - they haven't identified as anything other than autonomous APOCers, so those non POC who oppose them have to be super extra special careful not to refer to them as APOC. It's easy for them to sound kind of racist if they do.

Of course, by pulling this stunt, the disruptors have created a rift within APOC, so hopefully this won't be an issue in the future.

3. Bufoonery

The disruptors are particularly lucky crimethinc had a strict policy against cameras and recording without consent. A video or audio recording of the event would have entirely spoken for itself. You'd think at such a public stunt like this, one would put a bit more thought into her talking points, or, screaming points; instead they came with a bunch of slogans about getting your white faces the fuck out of Pittsburg, burying any potential for real communication under their rage, while the classic "Go back to Europe!" was repeated not once, not twice, but like, a lot.

4. Dogmatic Fanaticism

This entire stunt reeked of a kind of rigid one-sided thinking more appropriate to the Cult Of The Inverse Hierarchy or Ann Coulter Fan Club, than a group of supposedly independently thinking radicals. Of course, some of them would say similar things about me, and did, pronouncing that I must have been brainwashed by whites for opposing their stunt - then calling me a race traitor on top of it. Now personally I find the term race traitor to be particularly unforgivable among the genres of racial insults, because it's not something that flies out of your mouth when you're mad and stupid: you actually have to think about it before you say it. Race traitor. To anyone reading this who doesn't already get why the concept of Race Traitor is so oxymoronic, simply think about it: to commit treason you must first give oath to the thing you are committing treason against (it's called free will)... *then* you betray it; that's what traitor means. To call someone a traitor based on how they were born is utter dogmatic ignorance. *I* was born with Filipino blood so I choose what that means for me, and to me it does not mean spraying Roundup on the stalks of interracial solidarity that countless people of all colors work long and hard to develop.

Response note: in their "Smack A White Boy Part Two" report back, the disruptors said this about their use of the term: "*there are rumors afloat that the term "race traitor" was used towards mixed people and others who weren't participating, this is untrue. the word was used towards specific individuals and their personal history of posturing a role in upholding, defending, and ultimately furthering white supremacy. for instance, by the spreading the idea that it is because we are not doing enough, that it is our fault that we are oppressed.*" I don't even know what to say to this except that I've NEVER said anything like that, and the person who called me that name had never met me before that night.

It is *absurd* to think that people should agree with you, or have *any* obligation to sympathize with your hateful stunts, based on the fact that they are people of color.

5. Rationalizing Cruel and Indecent Acts in the Name of Anti-Oppression

I also want to express this bizarre sense of irony I felt in the presence of people who could scream into other people's crying faces, who could blatantly violate other human beings consent, and still felt qualified to scream-lecture people on any perceived lapses in anti-oppressive etiquette, or use of privilege, *at the same time*.

This just doesn't make sense to me. If you really need to be a huge ginormous asshole, don't castigate people for farting!

Favorite example: At one point nearing the end of the conflict when the disruptors were getting ready to file back in their car and ride back to Philly, one of the two most vocal of them saw fit to scream "Put your shirt on!" to a white guy about a hundred feet away, proceeding to call him both sexist AND racist for having exposed nipples in an "all black" neighborhood. Goodness gracious! Maybe if you're so full throttle eager to scream at anyone who disagrees with you for anything having to do with privilege, that you can't even get your *ists* straight, you might want to try breathing in between righteous call outs.

Look, all our work rooting out oppression in our interactions and mentality - to me, the whole purpose of it all, is very simply to *not be an asshole*. Can somebody please explain to me the important intellectual difference between being fucked up and being an asshole? Cause to me, it's all the same beast. You could say I'm being over simplistic and that I'm over generalizing

here, and yeah - you could be right, but you gotta admit, if you dedicate yourself to the cause of anti oppression, and strive to root out oppressive tendencies throughout your personality and lifestyle... and yet you still tower over people as a massive hyperalienating jerk - *you must have missed something somewhere.*

What could it be?

6. Enforcement of Hierarchy (in an Anarchist Space)

It is clear to me that this action was planned by people who want to turn hierarchy upside down, not level it. Cheerleading along to the attempted eviction were three or four “white allies” whose pre-arranged job was to help the disruptors move bags, and echo the eviction message to their white brethren.

Wait a second...

The disruptors repeatedly stated that they were beyond dialogue with white people... so if they're relationship with these “allies” was not one of dialogue, what was it?

It's one thing to tell whites to fuck off – I mean there, you're at least cutting off your relationship with them honestly – but to keep some of them around to echo your demands and move luggage for you? They're not worth dialoging with, but you don't mind letting them do your bidding? (I guess in a historical sense, this is a pretty accurate use of the term “Allies”) Establishing a relationship in which one party defines all the terms and holds all the power, is damn hypocritical for anyone who claims to oppose hierarchy.

So I guess you're not quite ready to break up with whites completely. In between insulting them you wouldn't mind keeping them around some of the time, as long as you decide the where, when, and the how. I know I'm no Dr. Phil, but if that's the only relationship you're willing to maintain with whites, maybe you should follow your words to their conclusions and stick to an honest break up.

—, at earlier caucuses with you I had misgivings about the relationship you seemed to want to establish with your “white allies”, but I assured myself that what seemed to be hierarchy, was a relatively insignificant and understandable response to white oppression. Now it is plain to me that you've gone too far. The relationship you want to establish with white allies reminds me of the relationship of the Catholic Church to its pupils.

Church to the Catholic: You were born into sin, but if you repent to me and do what I say without question, some of your sin will be absolved and you will be a better Christian.

You to the “White Ally”: Based on the way you were born, you are racist, but if you kiss my ass and follow what I say, without question, some of your racism will be absolved and you will be a better anti-racist.

By pointing this not-so-hidden hierarchy out, I am in no way advocating symmetrical race relations. It is undeniable that this society – anti-establishment movements included – is entrenched with white supremacy, and to combat this without getting assimilated into a systemically racist structure, minorities must claim the autonomy to organize amongst ourselves. In white dominated movements we must structure our involvement as we choose - but this doesn't give you some special mandate to establish hierarchy where it doesn't belong.

Personally there are two things I consider indispensable to any working relationship, and you deny them both. They are:

Dialogue – the ability of each party to have their say – and *Mutual Respect*.

Without both of these attributes, agreed on both ends, a relationship is clearly hierarchical and should be restructured, ended, or taken outside the anarchist community.

7. *Racism*

Yeah, I can say pretty much anything I want to a white person and I still won't be racist because reverse racism isn't real. Please! If you want to talk seriously about racism, stop using the word like it's a toy!

At one point during the confrontation, a white person responded from beneath a pile of racial insults that they thought the disruptors were being racist themselves. One of the disruptors responded by informing them that "reverse racism" doesn't exist, or wasn't real or something to that effect. They even cited some obscure etymology to support this argument. Impressive. This opinion that "reverse racism" doesn't exist was expressed by a few whites at the convergence as well, and I'm pretty familiar with debate on the subject.

If you think about it for a few seconds though, it becomes clear that the whole argument on whether "reverse racism" is real or not is founded on a false binary. In the real world there are many different races and many dynamics of racism between them. The term "reverse racism" implies only two types of racism, normal and reverse.

So yeah, "reverse racism" isn't real, in the sense the term itself is intellectually bunk, but that doesn't make yelling slogans like "go back to Europe!" and "smack a white boy!" and then denying any racism on your own part any less moronic. Ultimately the idiocy of your statements stands on its own, whether or not you deny their racism. I'm more interested here in exploring the irresponsible way in which you use the term.

Obviously, RACISM as a word, carries a tremendous amount of political power, especially among radicals. My question for you is, why do self proclaimed anarchists feel the need to own a word that carries so much political clout *but can only be wielded in one direction*.

Think about it: words – as you clearly understand – can be used very powerfully as weapons. But there's one thing about weapons: every person who takes up a sword or a gun, understands that the same power the weapon gives them, could be used against them if it landed in another person's hand. You can't have a gun that can only be pointed in one direction. Who would conceive of such a thing? (I mean, besides You Know Who)

We've all seen what happens when a group of people try to own and completely control a word as a weapon: look at the U.S. government's use of the term TERRORISM. In corporate media, the term Terrorism is ascribed only to enemies of U.S. interest; nothing the U.S. or its allies do could ever be terrorism. If you point out that acts committed by our military perfectly exemplify our governments very own definition of terror, they scoff at you, call you marginalizing names, and say your supporting the terrorists. Essentially they're taking an extremely powerful word and trying to keep all of its power to themselves. In doing so they preclude any use of the word, and its power, in a two way communication (dialogue), and monopolize it as a tool and weapon for one way dictation (monologue). What you're trying to do with the term RACISM is essentially the same function on a smaller scale.

You unaccountably and irresponsibly throw "racist" at any white folk who don't "ally" to you, but you won't admit to racism even in the midst of catching your breath after a hateful "You People" rant? Give me a break.

Honestly, if you wanted to use the term in such an unaccountably one way function like this, you should have *at least* been *way more subtle about it*. Instead you bluntly flaunted the contradiction in front of people's faces, time and again, thinking your irrefutable "no reverse racism" axiom protected you from being called on it. You have abused this power too much, and fatally, *you were painfully obvious in how you did it!* Now, like a little wanton child who's played too loud, and too hard, and hurt too many people with a grown-up tool, it's time your warped conception of racism was taken away from you.

Again, you cannot skew these arguments to say I am advocating symmetry in race relations within the radical community. The principle of equality is only an abstract ideal when not considered in the context of privilege inequity that is our society. White people do need to realize that having racism perpetrated against them does not suddenly give them any excuse to deny their privileges within the social framework of this society, nor does it mean they suddenly know what it means to be POC in the U.S.

There; that's the long way to say it. The short way is this: You organize an "action" called "smack a white boy" in which you scream hatefully into a group of white people *you don't even know*, and still try to hold that you're not racist? You'll have better luck convincing me that two plus two equals five.

Now, Some Words on Gentrification

Okay, gentrification is a very complex issue. It does nothing for anybody to oversimplify it and put it in black and white terms. Am I saying that's what the disruptors did? Yeah, pretty much.

In the disruptors' eyes they were taking this hard, line in the sand, don't step across it, Whoops, you already stepped across it now you're gonna get it, stand. I don't know all of what they've learned about gentrification, but if my knowledge on the issue is remotely accurate, it generally takes *months* for gentrification to occur, often *years*. The convergence lasted for a span of about a week.

Gentrification in poorer, darker skinned neighborhoods generally occurs through permanent settlements, especially ones that bring capital into the neighborhood. The convergence clearly did not bring a lot of money into the neighborhood. One of the disruptors reiterated the talking point that white convergence attendees were the "pioneers" of gentrification. They seemed to have forgotten that pioneers generally stay where they pioneer to for more than one week.

I am not saying that the convergence didn't contribute to gentrification. We know it probably did, but in an intangibly small way. Please read carefully here, I am not saying it contributed to gentrification in a *negligibly* small way, I say an *intangibly* small way - as in, whatever gentrification occurred as a result of the convergence, the damage is immeasurable because the convergence was such a minor and short term event.

Compare to spending money at a corporate establishment: when you buy some crap at Best Buy, you know you are feeding the beast. You also know you are not contributing nearly as much as if you owned the store and that this act of consumption alone will not keep the establishment going - but in the overall scheme of things, you know your doing something bad. While most of you know what I'm talking about here, I know there's the few perfect anarchists reading this who are like, "well, I *never* give money to corporations, period." To you folks, I can only earnestly

hope that you never use the pedestal of your virtue to castigate us imperfect anarchists for our sins – and if you do that you won't be such vindictive jerks about it.

Some might argue that this is a bunk comparison, that what the organizers did by planning the convergence in a mostly black neighborhood was much worse than spending X amount of money at X corporation. Maybe. Maybe not. One thing we should at least agree on is that it's an immeasurable, incalculable crime, not because of its size and magnitude, but because of its lack of size and magnitude. Nobody really knows how bad it is.

I'm going to quote Jesus here alright? I'm not a Christian but this quote seems really apt: "Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone." It seems to me that this quote is actually congruent with the disruptors rational for their stunt; as far as I can gather, in their minds they are without racial sin. But anybody within U.S. borders who believes they are beyond race privilege is kidding themselves. The privilege that being "American" grants us is inextricably linked with race privilege: the global system of capital and governance itself is racist through and through.

If this is a precedent for future actions – which the disruptors made clear of – who is an unworthy target? Since we are truly all guilty does that mean we should all scream at each other endlessly to somehow be better activists because of it?

I wasn't at the first half of the convergence. I know numerous discussions took place around race and gentrification. Although I wasn't at these discussions I can pretty safely bet they did more to educate the white people at the convergence about gentrification than the eviction stunt did. Though screaming can be fun sometimes, it usually sucks as a tool for education. What I am saying here is that it was not unreasonable for the organizers to have *hoped* that more long-term good could have come out of bringing this discussion about gentrification to the forefront of the conference, than damage to the neighborhood done by the short-term spike in white faces visible on that particular corner of the neighborhood. Maybe they were wrong. Maybe the convergence should not have been there. Nobody really knows because it's an intangible, incalculable sin. If somebody has credible data on how much a week's fluctuation of white skin on a street corner contributes to gentrification in Pittsburgh, I'd love to see it. Until then my crucifix stays in the garage.

There have been various speculations on how people native to the neighborhood felt about the convergence, but most of us know it would be silly to think there was anything resembling an overall consensus. Nobody I talked to had a problem with it, but I'm sure some people were weirded out as well. As for disruptor's reference to the area as an "all black neighborhood" – that is simply inaccurate. Nobody can speak for the entire neighborhood. As far as I can tell from their rhetoric, the closest thing they've offered as a coherent response to gentrification is hard-lined segregation. "Get the fuck out of all-black neighborhoods!" "Get the fuck out of Pittsburgh!"

Am I naïve for thinking it possible that some infoshops in minority dominated areas, like the one less than a block down the street from the convergence space, might actually contribute more good to the neighborhood than harm through the apparatus of gentrification? If the only response to gentrification is truly total segregation, the divisive mechanisms of capitalism have succeeded in dividing and dismantling us once again.

Conclusion

If I, at any time came off as kind of caustic during this article, it's cause I'm fucking pissed. This is not about crimethinc. This is about human decency, about free thought, about knowing who the enemy is, and about not doing *exactly* what the feds want us to be doing by tearing each other apart.

To any fellow anarchist people of color who feel tempted, or obligated, to fall in line with this kind of hate-filled action - please consider how damaging and far reaching such explicit acts of anti solidarity will be to the real things we should be fighting for. Please, don't subscribe to a mentality that buries reason and communication under the noise of vengeful group think - a mentality that throws fuel on the fires of racism rather than extinguishing it.

To those few aggressors who perpetrated this stunt, please, I ask you to consider the damage you are doing to a movement that could pose a real threat to your true enemies. Please consider what's really at stake here and ask yourself if it's really worth imposing yourself, so forcefully in gashes of division, upon spaces for potential solidarity. To make change happen you always have to work with people who are different than you, who have different values, different prejudices, and yes even different backgrounds - *but if you cannot work with them it does not mean you have to directly work against them.*

To those self-styled "white allies" who thought they earned some kind of anti racist points by assisting or endorsing to this action, I have very special note for you:

A Very Special Message for You – Aspiring Ally Who Supported or Endorsed the Attempted¹ Eviction.

Dear Aspiring White Ally.

I see that you are very interested in listening and coming to terms with your white skinned privilege, by supporting people of color in establishing our ground in a largely white demographic. Awesome! I also see that you've aided or endorsed an "action" of outright anti-solidarity and ignorant buffoonery, that has disastrous repercussions far beyond crimethinc. to the below/left struggle against imperialism as a whole. Hmm... Did you think these two activities somehow go hand in hand? I find this somewhat disturbing.

I know some of you sometimes feel uncomfortable disagreeing with people of color, especially when the issue involves race. I have heard a few of you say "I don't think it is really my place as a white person to object to the actions or tactics of a person of color". To me, these statements sound like a young child saying "Since I'm a kid, I can't really object to the things that grown-ups do."

It's hard for me to know how to react to statements like this, but one of the first questions that comes to my mind is: "What if two grown-ups disagree?"

To some of you, it seems the answer to this problem was to go with the more radical-seeming answer. Maybe to some of you this is what being radical means. Maybe some of you thought the disruptors would not call you racist if you supported them – or that they would only smack you once, and not very hard. Maybe you thought if you went along with their initial demands

¹ The convergence didn't end, by the way. It's simply a lie to say it did

for eviction, you wouldn't have to really go *all the way* back to Europe. Whatever you thought, I hope you're thinking a little clearer now, and out of your sense of reason; not guilt.

The truth is, you don't need me, or any other person of color to give you permission to question, and object to this stunt, this mentality, this ignorance, because you are a grown-up. You've already had years to explore the tortuous maze of implications that stretch out behind the Two Grown-Ups Disagree Paradox. You know there's no easy answer.

You know that POC are not really as monolithic an entity as a small group of presumptuous individuals may construe us. We speak, think, and act for ourselves, and if any person of color claims that they represent the interests of *real* POC - as opposed to race traitors - they should be viewed with the firmest suspicion.

Why, as a person of color, would I be telling you this? One explanation is that I have been brainwashed by you, as one disruptor suggested.

Really, it's simple. As a POC I can easily imagine a number of benefits to white people who are so willing to go along with what a POC says, concerning race issues, that they may be willing to put their ethics and critical thinking on hold to support them or stay passively out of their way; but, I can also think of at least as many negative consequences to such white people... especially if they share the same community with me. What if, for random example, they become influenced by POC of, say, questionable character?

Likewise, it does not comfort me as a POC to know that there's white folks who will take hate filled insults like "Go back to Europe!" to the face, from a POC, and still condone their actions and act as apologists for them, any more than it comforts me as a male to know there are women who will take blatant verbal abuse from their husbands and still not leave them. It actually makes me kind of sad.

Before concluding, I would like to extend a plague on anyone who uses my words to rationalize their ignorance of white privilege, or their perpetuation of white supremacy. The distinction I try to draw here is really not all that complicated. It is the difference between listening without asserting yourself, and following; between respect and ingratiation; between being patient and letting yourself be blatantly disrespected.

I'm not trying to draw perfect fine lines here. The formation of more rigid lines and easy binaries is the last thing I'm hoping for. There are no easy answers when it comes to being a good ally, especially toward people of color. Being a good ally toward one person of color would be easy. A small group of POC with erratic internal dynamics - a little harder. Being an ally to people of color in the world at large: that is a long term objective worthy of the most ambitious anarchist - a goal that brings endless questions and paradoxes along with it. At this point, an essential step toward this goal is understanding that supporting the actions of a small group of POC, does not necessarily make you a better ally to people of color, it makes you a better ally to *those People of Color*.

It is possible, without extenuating the reality of privilege disparity amongst ourselves, to remember that beneath it all, nobody is immaculate of privilege. Unless you are dead, or about to die, you can be humbled by the fact that you live with privilege. And only a fool assumes they can know the privilege of someone they've never met before.

For me, the most important distinction, if we are all guilty, draws between guilt and humility. Guilt is heavy, opaque, and reactionary. Humility is buoyant, reflective, and proactive. Generally under the influence of guilt, people act more stupidly, while when humbled, the possibilities are endless.

*Thanks everybody who took the time to read this,
Yours in revolution,
Dooiter*

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