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Local Anarchists Miffed By Trump's Designation Of NYC As Anarchist Jurisdiction

Jake Offenhartz

September 22, 2020

President Trump's attempt to paint New York City as an "anarchist jurisdiction" in a bid to withhold federal funding has left local anarchists feeling perplexed, amused, and eager to correct the record.

"It reinforces the trope, and that's kind of fucked," Thom Kennon, a self-proclaimed anarchist and adjunct marketing professor at NYU, told Gothamist. At the same time, Kennon said he hoped the national attention would get more Americans interested in the left-wing political philosophy. "I immediately signaled one of my comrades and said, 'Look, what a chance this could be to educate people about what we're really like.'"

He added that Trump's terminology is also wrong, because "anarchists don't do jurisdictions, we do what's called prefigurative politics, building new more equitable worlds now."

In a memo released on Monday, the Department of Justice identified New York, Seattle, and Portland as cities "permitting

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Retrieved on 25th September 2020 from
<https://gothamist.com/news/local-anarchists-miffed-trumps-designation-nyc-anarchist-jurisdiction>

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anarchy, violence, and destruction.” The designation follows Trump’s threat earlier this month to cut funding to so-called “anarchist jurisdictions,” part of the president’s campaign strategy to paint Democratic-leaning urban areas as lawless and violent.

The Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council, an active NYC-based anarchist group, condemned the move in a statement released Tuesday.

“We denounce Trump’s attempt to scapegoat anarchists, distract from his disastrous regime in the run-up to the election, and pit other leftists and progressives against us so that we fight each other rather than building the world we want to see,” it read.

The group, whose organizing principles are “horizontalism, anti-oppression, mutual aid, direct democracy, and direct action,” said NYC had a long way to go before it could claim the mantel of full anarchism.

In Anarchist NYC, all New Yorkers will be as involved in building and caring for our city as they want to be, from block associations to councils for local food production or promoting racial justice. NYC will be free from hierarchies based on race, class, gender, or anything else. Our city will run on cooperative economics based on mutual aid and solidarity, not capitalism based on profit or competition. All New Yorkers will get our needs met and our desires nurtured simply because we exist, regardless of our identities, immigration statuses, bank accounts, or disabilities. We will embrace transformative justice and collectively determined community agreements over punishment, policing, or locking people in cages. The land of the five boroughs will be collectively nurtured and called upon to restore our health and our communities instead of sold, owned, rented, or polluted upon.

Legal experts say there’s no constitutional basis for the president’s threat. Both Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo vowed to sue if the White House does take concrete steps to slash federal grants to NYC, which is currently facing a \$9 billion revenue shortfall.

Meanwhile, many New Yorkers took the designation in stride, sharing videos and photos of the city’s purported descent into chaos.

Daryle Lamont Jenkins, an anarchist who runs One People’s Project, said he worried that Trump’s choice of language was “playing to a base that wants an excuse to go after people they already hated — whether they’re Black or wearing black.”

“What Trump does, and this is where it’s not funny and it is scary, is basically say we’re giving the bad people cover to do whatever they want,” he added.

Still, Jenkins admitted he couldn’t help but laugh when he first heard news of NYC’s anarchist takeover on Monday.

“I saw the New York Post cover where they had the Big Apple with an anarchist ‘A’ and I said, ‘Remind me to use this next time we put on a punk show.’”