

why i am an anarchist

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anarchism is the ultimate intellectual and ethical high wire act without a net. it starts with rejecting the principle extant political institutions and dominant paradigms – but to get very far you need to build something. you need not build based on great thinkers of the past (tho some are available). you can go where you find your passion and create something based on what you experience as true. it is a broad anti-orthodoxy and thus everyone has their own slightly different personal flavor. this is mine, i hope you like it.

i **share**. perhaps the greatest challenge to the dominant political models is the idea that you do not have to possess things exclusively. widespread change in only this cultural value could result in a far more economically just world, using the same or fewer resources. i own little myself and live in places where material things are held in common.

anarchism deals with more than just the physical. **feminism** is about sharing power. it is training people to listen, helping the quiet find voice, flattening hierarchy and finding consensus – this is the beginning of building justice. i like the adage that anarchism is the philosophy and feminism is the practice.

polyamory is sharing lovers – i do not claim sole rights to my intimates, and they as well have other lovers. i find it a great poison that intimacy should be locked up and made exclusive. it is the commodification of love. some of the hardest work of my life has been moving thru jealousy, balancing time and establishing clear communication.

radical spirituality is about sharing the planet with all of its life forms and respecting their rights. as **pagans** we seek to build relevant rituals. we explore how to move symbols and create meaning. this is the reclaiming of magic from the scientists and spirituality from the church. it also dovetails with environmental politics and the development of the connection to things greater than the self. these are the critical extensions of our language and culture we need to evolve.

i am a **communard** – i choose to live in an intentional community, where we work and live together, sharing income and resources, we build our own buildings, grow much of our own food organically, we don't use money internally. there are basically no locks, no tv and virtually no crime. it is far from utopia – we have little shared vision, for example – but it is working model of what can be.

anarchism is embracing flexible strategies in face of structural dilemmas. a central example is the prefigurative politics versus the “length of the fuse” debate. it is intellectually attractive to

say “we will limit the tools we use now for the social change to the ones we want to still have in our new society.” violence and property destruction are the tactics most often excluded by this reasoning. the length of the fuse argument is “if you are running out of time to change things you need to use fast tools”. sadly, prefigurative approaches are generally slow. the resolution is that there is no fixed strategy – the workers (or activists) decide, the people who are on the scene at the relevant time make the choices. it was a pacifist who convinced me that violence played a central role in ending nuclear construction in Germany. when you are looking at preventing thousands of years of uncontrollable toxins, can you risk failure because you could not reach consensus on strategy?

i **smuggle** – borders are perhaps the most offensive static structure of the state. i had the good fortune to help smuggle 3 Tibetan monks across a thousand miles of the Himalayas and into Nepal to see the Dalai Lama. i have carried banned documents and other contraband. i’ve gotten caught a few times, but i’ve been lucky and made it thru basically unscratched.

i am a **lobbyist** – i have run thru the halls of parliament and congress trying to get elected officials to behave as i thought they should. i am not especially good at it, but i have been the best available. simply because we can see that a governmental system is corrupt does not justify failing to engage with it. we have more tools than protest.

i am a **propagandist** – i don’t believe i or we have any monopoly on the truth – i have debated ideologues and i know they are sure they are right as i think i am in my most arrogant moments. we have an obligation to put out our beliefs brilliantly and we need to remember that we are trying to sway people to think like us, not because we know we have a better way, but because we believe we do.

i’m an **outlaw** – i shoplift, counterfeit, trespass, destroy property, break and enter, hop trains, panhandle, violate curfews, copyrights and security clearances, trade on the black markets, tax resist, enter and exit countries illegally, black ride (ride without a ticket), lie to the police, default on credit cards (for \$50K), forge signatures, falsify visa’s, hitchhike, cut handcuffs, leak state secrets and don’t wear seat belts (for somewhat crazy reasons). i wish i could say all of this has been done for the greater good and to advance the revolution – in fact, some was self-serving and some just frivolous. But i certainly don’t start from the place of assuming laws are right – this is the anarchist prerogative.

i am a **life style terrorist**. someone who asks uncomfortable questions to people who are comfortable, about what they really need and what they can contribute. of course, this is only credible from a place of doing it yourself and is best served in a humorous and non-dogmatic way. when visiting people we don’t really know my Dutch lover Hawina and i try to be “ambassadors from where we want to come from”. this is about pushing the positive aspects of our lifestyle choices, hoping to inspire folks to try to do more progressive political work. This can be as small as recycling and using mass transit to as large as quitting your corporate job and running campaigns or moving to a commune.

i am a **clown** – my favorite fairy tale ends with the line “don’t take yourself too seriously”. i make a point to remember jokes and riddles and try to make people laugh. i don’t believe things are so bad we can’t make it without humor. similarly, one of the things i like the most about my community is that we strive to be a **great audience** – anyone willing to get up and perform is highly appreciated. i have watched it change the self-confidence of our kids and improve the overall quality of our cultural life.

i **travel**. i have hitchhiked on sail boats from Mexico to Australia, trained across Europe and Asia, crossed the Atlantic twice on polish tramp ships, worked briefly on the north slope of Alaska and the bottom of the ocean near Hawaii. years ago i quit flying, for energy and environmental reasons, but i continued to travel more than most people i know – i am writing this on the train across the US. i have had to change my perception about the importance of the time spent traveling – correspondingly, i make fewer but longer trips. but i have basically stopped going to places where i don't know anyone – this is the difference between tourism and traveling. i strive to discover the culture thru the eyes of people who live there, rather than a guide book.

i **raise funds** – money is an oft necessary great evil. i learned how to make it come towards projects and campaigns which were important. i never escaped the feeling that there was something wrong with this solution, and my ego did unhealthy flops around successfully finding money. when i was doing this a great deal, it felt best to be homeless, without salary and living very cheaply.

anarchists seem to be either of the individualistic/loner type or cooperators looking for allies. i am always **looking for allies**. the success of the recent World Bank and WTO protests has been the ability of divergent groups to put aside their differences long enuf to come together to make an effective mass protest. globalization and these oft media-invisible institutions which drive it are now the subjects of popular debate and they can not continue unchanged. we are a long way from closing them, but debt cancellation is gaining momentum and the WTO fast track seems derailed – both good things. anarchists were central in organizing these actions.

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building these broad coalitions. and there are lots of other types of alliances – my wordsmith lover jazz edited this piece ... almost every project of significant scale is a collaborative effort, and many which fail simply did not gather the right allies.

i am an **organizer**. there are several key differences between an organizer and a leader. the first is that no job is too low for an organizer. they are self-aware enough to know what they can teach and humble enuf to know there is still lots to learn. always pressed for time, good organizers don't get stuck and don't overwork problems. they replace themselves before they leave work undone (something i have often failed in) and they are most generally invisible to the eye of fame.

in a tiny train station in Czechoslovakia, i helped a man buy an international ticket and we got to talking. he told me he had the best job in the world, traveling from place to place **telling stories**. After listening to one of his stories and thinking about this for a while, i decided that it was a wonderful and important job and have been working on my storytelling ever since.

i am an **optimist** – if the anarchist principle is that “you can do what ever you want, but you must take responsibility for it” and you believe the new age principle of “we create our own reality”, then we have an obligation to be optimistic – or else we are creating the wrong reality. For seven years i lived in eastern Europe working with small anti-nuclear groups against the most powerful corporations and the state. i was constantly reminding them that it was groups exactly like theirs which had stopped reactors around the world. it is as papa Chomsky so well put it:

i am in the hope business. and **that is why i am an anarchist**.

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