


BLACK ARMED

JOY



Some Notes Towards
a Black Theory of
Insurrectionary
Anarchy

and two
responses

“...The Black Communes must arise
out of the Black insurrection...”

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Black Armed Joy:

**Some Notes Towards a
Black Theory of Insurrectionary
Anarchy**

**This essay is dedicated
to the memory of our
revolutionary elder,
theorist, and warrior
Russell Maroon Shoatz**

This essay was inspired partially by one of our comrades while we were discussing the failures of non-violence as a tactic and philosophy. She said something along the lines of “I was raised by radicals from the 1960s and 1970s. If you were a Panther and you got caught, you were doing something wrong”. The zine is a product of a variety of conversations among Black anarchists in the post-George Floyd rebellion although many of these strands of thought have existed prior to this moment. We have three questions we hope to address in this zine.

What would an insurrectionary anarchist position thoroughly rooted in black radicalism and black revolt mean? How does the current white insurrectionary anarchist milieu fail? How can Black revolutionaries extend the insurrection?

What is Insurrectionary Anarchy?

To those who are unfamiliar, “anarchism” does not mean “chaos” nor does “insurrection” mean “mindless destruction”. Anarchism is the concept of social self-rule etymologically translating from “anarkhos” in Greek meaning “no rulers”. Therefore, In the words of Elder Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, “Anarchists are social revolutionaries, who seek a stateless, classless, voluntary, cooperative federation of decentralized communes-based upon social ownership, individual liberty and autonomous self-management of social and economic life”. When we discuss insurrectionary anarchism, we are discussing a tendency within the anarchist movement that focuses on insurrection as the primary revolutionary practice. Insurrection meaning, the social phenomena of unmitigated rebellion; the forceful redistribution of private property, land, and justice by the unsettled masses. The concept of attack and constant conflictuality with hierarchical forces is central to insurrectionary anarchism. Insurrectionary anarchists do not believe that we can simply “dual power” or “vote” our way to freedom. The institutions which currently uphold racial capitalism and all other forces of domination must be smashed. There can be no revolution without revolutionaries who must be engaged in taking militant actions against the State and Capital. Finally, insurrectionary anarchists value the self activity of the masses as important. While not neglecting organization, insurrectionary anarchists understand that insurrections as a revolutionary phenomenon are social, not military. The self activity of the exploited and the oppressed drives revolution, not the actions of Leninist parties or so-called revolutionary unions. Insurrectionists emphasize the informal nature of revolution and organization. The revolution to destroy this world happens from the bottom up and includes all or does not occur at all. We define the terms of insurrectionary anarchism here before we launch into our critique to clarify for readers who are unfamiliar and to avoid any confusion.



Towards a Black Insurrectionist Anarchy

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

We have nothing to lose but our chains.

- Assata Shakur

The Critical Moment

It is imperative that we develop a Black insurrectionary anarchist position. The history of Black struggle in this kountry is a history of revolt by any means necessary. It is a history of constant attack by the Black masses against the capitalist and colonial powers which enslaved Black people. 2020 reminded many of us of this history and legacy. Despite this, many Black liberals hope to erase the George Floyd rebellion from our memories. Many on the Black “Left” hope to do the same so they can suck us into the same 50 year old organizations that have failed to produce anything other than symbolic protests and useless conferences.

Our History

Going even further, many on the more reformist and authoritarian ends of the Black Left wish to reduce the history of Black people and Black radicals down to simply formal organization. Despite lifting up figures such as Assata, they label any sort of Black rebellious activity as “too fast” or “not ready” or complain about the ultra-left “ruining” their plans for revolution despite the rebellious actions of Black youth in the summer of 2020. They do not want black people to study the Black Liberation Army’s tactics. They wish to erase Kuwasi Balagoon and his rebellious ways. They wish to erase how Assata Shakur was liberated. They wish to erase the general strike of the Slaves. They wish to ignore the Maroons. They just want us to participate in their reformist campaigns to “Defund the Police” or “Community Control of the Police”. The Black insurrectionary must reject these positions.

The Coming Insurrection

We seek unmediated and uncompromising conflict with State and Capital. It is abundantly clear that last summer, the Black masses proved they were uninterested in “Defund” or “Community Control” instead opting to fight cops and loot businesses. We reject non-violence and compromise. In the words of Elder George Jackson, “We must accept the eventuality of bringing the U.S.A. to its knees; accept the closing off of critical sections of the city with barbed wire, armored pig carriers criss-crossing streets, soldiers everywhere, tommy guns pointed at stomach level, smoke curling black against the daylight sky, the smell of cordite, house-to-house searches, doors being kicked in, the commonness of death.” We all saw the Third Precinct in Minneapolis burnt to ashes. We reject “tactical” arrest. We reject symbolic protests

and marches that continually lead to more violence from the police with nothing in return. We share a fundamental belief that the Black insurrectionist should seek to dismantle all oppressive systems even within the so-called “radical” organizations and scenes. Living anarchy means living by principle. Living by principle means we dismantle systems (as best we can) in this world at this moment.

The Importance of the Attack

Although there have been some formations such as Salish Sea Black Autonomists which have linked Black radicalism and insurrectionary anarchy, we feel that it is continually important to point to how attack and conflictuality are central to any serious Black anarchist politics concerned with revolutionary change. With the resurgence of interest in Black anarchic forms of radicalism with the works of William C Anderson, Zoe Samudzi, the Anarkatas and Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, we think it is important that Black anarchists do not fall into the trap of believing that only prefiguration will be enough for revolution. We must physically attack the white power structure by any means necessary. Simply building Black owned co-ops is not enough. While we believe the work of the people in Cooperation Jackson is important, it is insufficient to simply build co-ops to “opt-out” of capitalism when the reality is that the State could easily repress these “communes” through laws or through just sheer force. There is no way out of this capital nightmare, but through relentless attack, struggle, experience, and introspection.

On so-called “Mutual Aid”

We find that the resurgence of “mutual aid” as practice is important for us to criticize. A lot of “mutual aid” work being done is in reality just redistributive work with a radical label. While we are not opposed to this type of work on principle as it helps build relationships between revolutionaries, the issue is that real mutual aid as a concept is more present in black queer communities doing GoFundMes for one another than in radical organizations doing what amounts to leftist branded charity. We posit, if the act of mutual aid does not contribute to the development of a revolutionary subsistence economy, then it is not “mutual aid” that is inclusive of society and must be criticized. Unfortunately, most “mutual aid” that happens now is not mutual in nature. Further than that, it does not confront power. We believe the the mutuality of mutual aid is critical as well as an insurrectionary element. For instance, many on the Left have dismissed the mass looting that happened in 2020 as the actions of criminals or as “not political” while in fact, Black people liberating resources and commodities from corporations is far more revolutionary than much of the “organizing” done by leftist or abolitionist formations in this kountry. Expropriation from the capitalists will create the basis for our subsistence economy. We must think of the revolutionary bravery and solidarity these acts inspired as we look toward militant property, land reclamations, and capital expropriations in the future. We should look more toward these types of examples of mutual aid as opposed to a more charity-NGO driven model. Our critique of mutual aid is similar to our critique of “dual power” or the “solidarity economy”. Alone, mutual aid is not enough to confront and destroy capital. We cannot simply “opt-out” of capitalism.

We must become ungovernable. The Black Communes must arise out of the Black insurrection as we learn from our elder Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin.

Against White Insurrection

We dedicate this section to the memory of Antonio Mays Jr who was murdered by a white leftist at the so-called CHAZ. We also dedicate this section to Michael Reinhoel, Eric G. King and David Gilbert. We encourage white revolutionaries in amerika to follow your revolutionary examples. If there is to be a revolution realized there must be less talk, more action.

From our vantage point, the insurrectionary anarchist milieus in the United States are mostly white in composition and analysis. Their racial analysis does not really recognize the insurrectionary capabilities of the Black masses, and their attempts to are often fetishizing. Most insurrectionary anarchist analysis and theory focuses upon Europe as the primary example of revolt. When the insurrectionary milieus such as the white boys at Ill Will do focus on Black revolt, they downplay the racial dynamics of the riots by labeling everything as “multi-racial”. Without a proper understanding of the experience of being Black, there can be no understanding of how to nurture the Black revolt beyond its infant stages. Needless to say, this experience and leadership must be led by those living between the margins of racial capitalism; women, trans-folk, lesbian, gay, and other sexually and racially oppressed groups. Beyond that, we understand the youthful character of the insurrection as those young-people living in our cities have the most to gain from the beginning stages of our revolution. While the character of the 2020 George Floyd rebellion was not limited to just Black people participating, the white insurrectionists seeking to universalize the black revolt are the “All Lives Matter” types of the anarchist movement.

We risk being accused of perpetuating the “white outside agitator” myth by writing this essay but the reality is that whiteness and anti-Blackness continues even during a riot and after it. It is anti-materialist to ignore these realities by suggesting that once we all get into street, all of our actions are the same in the eyes of the State. These white insurrectionists fail to grasp how their own whiteness continues to exist within and beyond the riot, instead opting to believe that race is magically transcended when they smash a window. White insurrectionists fail to engage with the long histories of Black insurrectionary history in this kountry by trying to import strategies and tactics from other revolts here into the United States...please shut the fuck up about France. This is not to say there are not elements of struggle in places like Palestine and Rojava or Central & South amerikan struggles against the state and police. Our oppression is similar in form and structure and so, our methods of resistance will also be similar. Indeed, we believe white insurrectionists have very little to teach us about our struggle. For instance, the fear and critique around guns at demonstrations that emerged last summer from a number of “anarchist” publications and report-backs speaks to this. Armed struggle has always been a part of Black insurrectionary activity.

Further, it makes absolutely no sense to struggle against state and fascist violence using lesser means of violence compared to their own.

Let us remember, amerika has the largest amount of civilian arms available to public citizens in the “developed” world. In fact, armed struggle is a core part of this kountry’s founding documents and cultural development. We plan on using every element of amerika’s creation to destroy it. Why is it not asked why George Washington, Lincoln, even Stalin, Mao, and white anarchists across the world, utilize(d) armed struggle? There are no changes to power or domination, but with force. Intuitively, we are well aware of the existence and “doomsday preparation” of far-right militia and fascist cells that are intent on furthering our extinction. We are also aware of the infiltration of these accelerationist fascists into our so-called federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and the national military. Therefore, we will wage war against white supremacy on all fronts. The white left may believe that either we have a death wish or that our lives are dispensable and we are intent on proving otherwise.

The white anarchists handwringing about “symmetrical warfare” or “horizontal violence” reflects a, perhaps willful, misunderstanding of history and power in this kountry. This kountry has already been in a civil war, the remnants of which form the foundations of the current cultural war. The 2020 rebellions resurfaced white anarchists historic apprehension toward Black insurrectionary methods, namely guns at protests/direct actions. We recommend they take a moment to reflect on the reality that, in the United States, Black people have been and will continue to be forced to face down white people who continue to act as proxies of the State. We intend to do as our ancestors did and use any means available to fight these people regardless of some white anarchists’ fear of guns. Idris Robinson speaks directly to this white fear in his open letter to Michal Reinoehl (shot and killed a fascist in Portland):

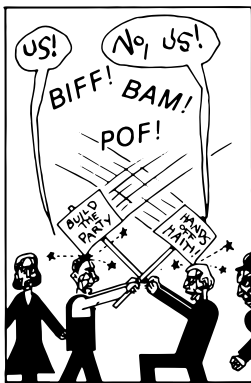
“What the double-standard with regards to your situation reveals is how violence in America will always necessarily have a profoundly racial dimension. And it is precisely this--the terrifying core of racialized violence--that they are trying to repress when they lie to both themselves and others when they say that their issue with what you did is a question of strategy or tactics. I mean, give me a break: in a country that is literally saturated in violence, from blind mass shooters to murderous police, no one can honestly claim that the few shots that you let off could in some way be misconstrued as an escalation. There is simply no way to avoid the spiral of violence that began at the very moment when the first wooden ships reached the shores of the Atlantic.”

The white left in the current era must become willing to not only come to terms with the fact that some of their own family members, so-called friends, and idols will have to be put down by revolutionary violence if they act as violent state proxies, fascists, or racists. Those that do not understand our struggle may see this position as “adventurism”, but it is only common sense to mitigate racialised violence with a united front of counter-violence that transcends the psychological and social racial boundaries of settler-colonialism at subsequent stages of the armed conflict. In other

words, we seek to generalise the armed conflict amongst the people on the north american peoples united against the state, all states until the hegemonic machinery and points of production for ruling class consumerism are reduced to ashes.

Greg Jackson critiques the white left in his *“Authoritarian Leftists: Kill the Cop in Your Head”* in the world of anti-blackness, whiteness is law and order and white people are deputized (made into cops) by the state meaning their actions are a result of the “natural way of things”. White led communes and autonomous zones replicate the state’s actions on a smaller scale. This is what Jackson alludes to in his essay, real white “comrades” know the importance of Black autonomy is killing the cop in your head. Thus, We will fight against white led “autonomous zones” as they replicate the state and antiblackness as shown in 2020 in the aftermath of George Floyd rebellion, when in the autonomous zone named CHAZ two black boys ended up shot and one ended up dead. This is not insurrection at all. Insurrections require deep networks of care and love or they will die out before they can develop into a revolutionary movement. These white led anti-black autonomous zones must be attacked with the same ferocity that we attack the cops and the white militias. It goes without saying that white leftists who kill black people and reimpose white supremacy onto supposedly liberated spaces are our enemies.

Supposed black anarchists or leftists who cover for the White left’s violent and anti-black tendencies must be considered enemies as well. Tokenism exists within anarchist spaces. We are tired of yt people claiming that their groups are multi-racial and unproblematic because they have the one token black anarchist. It is strange that anarchists and the Left in a broader sense seem to understand tokenism less well than liberals though this speaks to the failure of any sort of yt anarchist political orientation towards race. It is clear that anarchism exists as a scene rather than a revolutionary movement when there are multiple majority white “anarchist” projects in majority black or POC cities. Furthermore, publishing a black anarchist book or having one black anarchist in a project does not mean your anarchist project is not colonial. If you are a black anarchist covering for white anarchist nonsense, you should stop. We don’t care if these people are your “friends”. If they reimpose white supremacy on black people even as “anarchists”, they are enemies.



The white left, for the first time in human history, must collectively prioritize the rest of the world’s wellbeing in mind over their own cultural racism and privilege. It is the job of all other oppressed affinity groups across the kountry to ensure that they have no choice but to act in our interests. We are not our elders. We do not have the time or patience to wait for the white left to garner the moral capacity to become true revolutionaries while we are slaughtered like dogs in the street. Either you will aid the revolution as comrades or we will attack you as enemies until you do.

So, What Should Be Done?

We must begin to realize that only the community will effectively deal with the matter. Not the racist capitalist system, with its repressive police, courts, and prisons. Only we have the psychology and understanding to deal with it; now we must develop the will. No one else cares.

- Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

We believe in evolutionary and revolutionary change. Evolutionary change means prefiguring ourselves and immediate comrades towards organizational changes we can make on a daily basis towards our end goal of revolutionary abolition of the state. Our evolutionary changes opens the door to an insurrectional opening once the catalyzing event occurs. Revolutionary change is the accumulation of actions by the whole of the people that result in a mass movement with the goal of aiming of all humanity's resources towards the abolition of the state, capitalism, authority, and domination, simultaneously. It involves the whole of humanity in constant conflictuality with forces of oppression on an interpersonal, community, national, and international level. The insurrection is a social event which means it has social implications that span international borders. Thus, as the shackles of empire and militarism are attacked and destroyed in this nation-state, it should be made it all the more clear in other nation-states how to attack and destroy the nation-state. If amerika falls, so too does the manager of international capitalism and colonial oppression.

The Black Insurrectionary position seeks to replicate the destruction of "3rd Precinct" everyday and the takeover of an "Attica" every hour, until the amerikan project is deceased and the land has been reclaimed from those who it was stolen from. In other words, it seeks endless rebellion and uncompromising counter-violence to deconstruct our violent world into the peaceful one from which it came. Since the state and fascists will not hesitate to use all weapons at their disposal to achieve its aims, so will we to achieve the complete abolition of amerika as a nation-state in the social, economic, political, and cultural sense.

In order to prevent the isolation of Black & Indigenous revolutionaries and subsequent concentration of repression by the repressive state and fascist populists on our communities, the movement will necessitate the courageous actions of revolutionaries of every color, creed, and age but especially, white revolutionaries. We say this because of your historic failure to act. We refer to the words of Black Liberation Army's "*Open Letter To The White Left In The U.S.*",

"It should come as no surprise then, that the White-left in modern western nations is inhibited by their own urge for bourgeois legitimacy, by their own cultural racism, and by the very process of western, working class cooptation. The sum of these parts add up to the revolutionary bankruptcy of the traditional White left in the modern capitalist nations".

We believe that for any actions taken by white anarchists, socialists, communists, and whatever else you all call yourselves to be truly “revolutionary”, not only must they attack the white power structure at the pressure points of capital in solidarity with other assisting forces, but they must attack the white power structure at home. This means creating the psychological break with whiteness and privilege required for establishing new relations amongst human beings and nature itself. In other words, to preserve the lives of countless of oppressed Black and Brown folks across the world, you all will have to betray your white privilege to become a white infiltrator with intentions of eliminating your former family, friends, and compatriots who refuse change. Third World peoples do not have the time to wait for the “difficult conversations” you had during summer 2020 while now at the beginning of 2022 we have endured numerous show trials since the 2020 uprising illustrating the amerikkkan justice system’s desire to avoid further rebellions by the masses by convicting infamous murderers like Chauvin and Potter while the rest of the pigs get away with murder and assault everyday. This means white revolutionaries organizing their own anti-fascist teams to combat the state and fascist racism beyond just staging counter-demos. In the example of Michael Reinhoel, shoot to kill.

We do not believe in statist solutions. We do not support efforts to “seize” state power, either. Each of our methods is means towards an ends of abolishing the state. We prefer methods of decentralized organizations based on common affinities. Once they are formed we should grow these networks among local groups to national and international networks of aboveground and underground self-organized resistance. We prefer making decisions in a series of votes and consensus gaining meant to garner understanding and establishing solidarity among comrades in our network and in our communities. We encourage exchanging skills, arts, and trades and exploring new ones to eventually teach to others as we create new structures for employment and self-organization within our communities. We will have to develop our own autonomous trade unions and apprenticeships to challenge the state and white racism.

We currently observe what can be considered low-intensity warfare among the young people in our communities. We must initiate the creation of forums and safe spaces to discuss community-led interventions to deter, redirect, and reduce the violent and criminal activity in our community at which point the hatred, despair, and desolation that plagues our community will be converted into revolutionary armed joy against the state and capitalism.

We observe that we must cultivate a revolutionary culture to provide a counter-hegemony to the dominant themes of intracommunal violence and personal robbery offered by reactionary rappers Lil Durk, King Von, Pooh Shiesty, Dolph, Nudy, other celebrities in their music, and even the sports celebrities. These celebrities have been given amenities and been propped up by the white power structure for a reason. This does not mean we cannot mourn them or enjoy their arts and talents but that we should understand their purpose and function. There is a reason that rap went from an art form that was inherently conflictual, underground, and counter-cultural to one that has been coopted and mass-produced for profits and for white people.

A reactionary life of drugs, money, and fame may be appetizing to some but we must somehow invent ways to make the coming insurrection more appealing to black youth. We can build new futures based on our own dreams and communities. We must develop a new sense of care for one another and develop solutions to the violence by any means necessary. Let it be known, we can attack the state and white supremacy and build our community simultaneously. “Black-on-Black”, is a white invention as is “crime” itself. Abolish the kkkriminal justice system. Free all political prisoners. Free Larry Hoover. Free Tay-K. Free Palestine.

A failure to act is an implicit approval of state-sanctioned genocide. For example, as of December 2021, Black people comprise 29.6% of Chicago’s population but we account for over 80% of all homicides. So-called “Hispanics” comprise 28.8% of the city and just 13% of all homicides. Whites comprise 50.0% of the city and just 3.8% of all homicides. We observe that the vast amount of mental health and educational resources, healthy food options and after-school opportunities lie in the white communities. These resources must be seized and reproduced in all underserved communities over the course of the insurrection to benefit all. Otherwise, they must be destroyed to benefit none. Revolutionary violence must be spread to the affluent areas in the suburbs to create a new field of conflict for the state. It must be understood that the city, county, and state police, and by extension, the army are what holds this violent arrangement in place, by force and so, they must be destroyed by force. We must build networks of protection and movement from within our communities and without.

History tells us to be wary of the inactive white left. We believe that inaction is complicity with white supremacy. In fact, we believe it to be intentional, willful inaction due to the characterization of collective movements for liberation by white people since we were brought here as slaves. Throughout our time on this continent, a status quo with Black people as victims of racialised violence via slave owners and later police has been quite acceptable. We understand that we are still slaves in this system and you understand this as well. A failure by the white left to organize a counter-violence to white supremacy in coalition with us will result in the Black people left with no other choice but to move on the white community with force. If nothing, we will prove that we are all humans that can live and die by violence all the same and at the same rates. In the words of Elder George Jackson, “Our pledge is to arms, our enemies are institutions and anyone with vested interests in them, even if that interest is only a wage. If revolution means civil war — we accept, and the sooner begun the sooner done.” That is our pledge, in the event that a revolutionary movement against the ruling-class is made impossible by the white masses across the kountry.

Black youth matriculating through the amerikan university system must accept the university as a site of white supremacist machinery and work to bring its operations to a halt. We must take whatever information is useful from the universities back to our communities to educate, organize, and propagandize those both younger and older than us. The university, much like the state itself, only serves the further development

of the neo-colonial class of Blacks and the cooptation of movements led from the bottom-up. The university in amerika whether “historically black” or otherwise is the pit of “crisis management” that will never find actual solutions for the problems it creates. It is a cesspool of student loan debt and worker exploitation. We must leave bourgeois affiliations and corporate opportunities behind at the universities in preparation for the coming insurrection.

The only alternative for the masses to revolution is death. The protracted genocide of the oppressed masses are reacting to COVID-19’s political, social, and economic crisis and the slow collapse of this system. The time for change is now.

The current insurrectionary tendencies in the United States tend to lack any sort of genuine politics which are anti-oppressive or move from the Margins as the Anarkatas say. They instead tend to be dominated by men who just want to fight. We do not believe there is revolt without care. This is completely erased by the “insurrectionary” tendencies who dismiss all collective care work and long term organizing which prioritizes building relationships as “liberalism”. We fail to understand how a serious insurrection will be sustained without deep networks of care and love let alone supplies and infrastructure.

We must begin to build dual-power. We want to be clear that dual power if it is built must be tied to the insurrection. Leftist cooperatives or projects that do not serve the spontaneous revolt of the black masses are simply vanity projects. We see this with how most “infrastructure” built by leftists was irrelevant to the George Floyd uprising. Dual Power, as defined in anarchic terms, is the strategies of building self-organized counter-institutions to combat the current decadent, capitalistic institutions. Emphasis on the *combat* part of that sentence. As we build our affinity groups we must come up with new alternatives to the current power structure to begin building. *New systems of justice, fresh food gardens, community entertainment, community defense, etc. As institutions are destroyed, new consensus-based, horizontalized, self-managed structures will take their places. At the same time, we must begin armed squatting of our homes and community centers to defend ourselves from gentrification and forced displacements.* It may end up being inevitable, but we will also need to find suitable places for communities in the event our homes are destroyed by the capitalists’ military bombs. If it happened to MOVE in 1985, it can and will happen today. We must build solidarity networks and create anarchic solutions to the problems faced by those seeking refuge at the southern border. We must do this all at the same time and the revolutionary anarchist minority can start action in these areas immediately.

We should especially prepare for an escalation in repression and likewise in resistance should a general strike develop among the Black masses over the course of the next insurrection.

We must have support and love for our homies who are locked inside of the prison for making the ultimate sacrifices for the revolution. We must also devise clever ways of aiding in their liberation. The actions of building care networks (we don’t use mutual aid as we feel that this term has mostly been co-opted) is an insurrectionary

act if done in a way that does not mediate conflict with the State. Many of our comrades cannot risk arrest, injury or death because they are providers for others or they cannot participate on the streets because of disability. If insurrections are meant to be social and not military, why do most insurrectionist formations and theories seem to not include the most marginalized in our society? Everyone must take part in an insurrection, and that requires us to center the most marginal.

The Prospect of Revolutionary Violence

This section is dedicated to Sandra, Rekia, Breonna, Korryn, and many more we lost too soon. We love you. We fight in your memory.

I don't have any illusions. Words are or are not comprehensible according to their actual situation. We only give them space and credibility if they fall into our patterns and certainties. Defence mechanisms become automatic and prevent the very reception of the message. If that was not so the illuminists would have definitively changed the world two hundred years ago.

- Alfredo Bonanno

Make no mistake -- we intend to use every method at our disposal to create a new world. This means in a literal sense, changing ourselves, the world around us and the conditions of those changes by any means necessary. We understand the revolutionary potentiality of violence over the course of the insurrection and subsequent revolution and we also understand the reactionary propensity for violence in the current era of fascism, racial, sexual, and cultural oppression. We understand one of the tools historically at our disposal has been the utilization of arms in the struggle. It is important to note that this is not the only tool at our disposal but an ongoing development and synthesis of current and past struggles. Indeed, both the life and blood of our current youth, elders, and ancestors has been spilled to provide the economic impetus for the current ruling-class corporatist arrangement and the sociological impetus for the pervasive racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia plaguing our current society. This system cares nothing about our lives, families, homies, or hopes and dreams which we intend to protect with arms as we attack each of capital's major productive points. These strategies will develop as future rebellions develop into longer insurrections, as society shifts into a condition favorable for the revolution that is fomenting amongst the masses of dispossessed peoples. We will unite, inspire, and protect our community and build bonds with autonomous armed revolutionary projects across the world. We desire the destruction of capital, policing, racial and sexual hierarchies, and all forms of sexual and cultural oppression. The insurrectionary movement of the near future will build upon the aforementioned networks of care developed through revolutionary reclamations of capital and property to create conditions favorable to the growth of a Black Commune. The only way to begin to protect these revolutionary projects while delivering blows to the state is by the understanding and proliferation of Armed Joy.

By “Armed Joy” we mean the self-organized armed struggle of the committed Black anarchist minority affecting and proliferating among the Black masses at-large to provide the gasoline fuel for the wildfire that will eminently burn the amerikan plantation in all its capitalistic splendor and initiate the long-awaited social revolution at the critical moment. By initiating this attack, we intend to give our children a fighting chance to survive on this planet regardless of the fears of white amerika in general and the almost non-existent white left in particular here in amerika. We understand from the fatalities in kenosha that the state will aid fascists that kill whites that stand against their occupation whether peaceful or otherwise. We encourage dedicated non-Black comrades to struggle against oppression in their own unique ways while genuinely learning from the struggle and leadership of Black comrades. We must find the best ways to resist together. However, we will not hesitate to use arms against those “allies” who willfully misinterpret our actions to justify state repression or whose reckless actions engender harm upon our communities. Due to the capitalists’ greed and reckless oversight in placing copious amounts of drugs and guns in our community, our communities are already well armed and proficient in the use of arms as tools of destruction and self-hate. They will be made to see who the real enemies are. The weapons the capitalists created to destroy us will destroy them. The capitalists’ international weapons manufacturers are also our enemies. There can be no peace until all the oppressive modes of production are destroyed. That is, our last gun will be stripped and destroyed when the last capitalist is dead and the methods of reproduction for firearms are no longer necessary. Until then, no cop is innocent and no military officer will be spared our bullets. We urge the new klan-type militias to think twice before attacking our communities as well. We will not hesitate to defend ourselves. We argue that the violence that once made racial capitalism in general and amerikan fascism in particular the cultural and economic center of the world will destroy it and all it represents from the inside-out.

Conclusion

This document by no means speaks to the objective will of the black masses as a whole. It is simply a reflection by a few anarchist comrades in our an attempt to document insurrectionary anarchism and the path forward to insurrection as we see it. This document was a product of conversations and struggle. We welcome critique, study, and practice. The social revolution in the context of the United States will flow from the actions of the black masses. While anarchists and insurrectionaries must participate, we understand the black masses guide the course of history. We cannot emphasize enough that black anarchists and revolutionaries must take up the critical questions of revolutionary strategy in the coming years. We cannot allow white anarchists or Black vanguardists to dictate how we move. We hope to see this document generate discussion, organization, and further action within black anarchist circles. While many black anarchists are busy doing anarchy, we do feel that black anarchist thought needs more reflection and theorization in order to broaden the scope of what is possible. Forward ever towards black insurrection and the black commune!

References/Recommended Reading List

We Will Shoot Back by Akinyele Umoja

Assata: An Autobiography by Assata Shakur

Armed Joy by Alfredo Bonanno

A Soldier's Story: Revolutionary Writings by a New Afrikan Anarchist by Kuwasi Balagoon

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Real Resistance to Slavery in North American by Russell Maroon Shoatz

The Black Liberation Struggle in Philadelphia by Russell Maroon Shoatz

16 Things You Can Do To Be Ungovernable by Indigenous Action

an enthusiastic response to “Black Armed Joy” - anon

i read “Black Armed Joy” and came away feeling energized. it felt like an opening. it was exciting and honestly a little messy but i respect the attitude a lot. some highlights:

“please shut the fuck up about France.” – lmfao

“On so-called “Mutual Aid”” – this whole section went off

“It is clear that anarchism exists as a scene rather than a revolutionary movement when there are multiple majority white “anarchist” projects in majority black or POC cities.”

“We cannot emphasize enough that black anarchists and revolutionaries must take up the critical questions of revolutionary strategy in the coming years.”

here i want to take up your invitation to critical engagement in order to push black insurrectionary/revolutionary theory out of north america to dig deeper and reach further. please forgive me – or not, fuck it! – for not spending too long on everything i agree with or don’t have much to add to rn.

one of the things “Black Armed Joy” does that excited me is take up the best parts of the long tradition of talking back to the cracker “left”, laying out how they’re not about that life while simultaneously pointing towards new directions to build. it models how criticism can be an enormously productive activity, and moves like these have often been part of the many long and wandering paths that black revolutionaries have taken in the development of anti-oppressive movements.

i do feel that part of this process means...internationalizing, taking a global perspective. you probably get this, but i wanna be loud and clear for readers: the problem with anarcho-scenesters picking up all their inspiration from europe isn’t so much that they’re importing strategies and tactics from elsewhere, but that they’re refusing to learn from us. (so inspired by the yellow vests and shit that they happily overlook the marches against immigration, fascist overlap, etc etc) let’s just remember that “us” doesn’t only mean “Black insurrectionary history in this kountry” but Black insurrectionary history worldwide. you’re right to name Palestine, Rojava, central and south america as places from which we can learn much. but i do feel that these locations are seen as important sites of international “solidarity” because white activists have chosen to make them so (and largely symbolically rather than materially). they have not granted this “honor” to most of the world. they have not been inspired by the waves of urban uprisings against neocolonialism that have swept Africa throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. they won’t turn to the South Pacific and recognize comrades fighting to liberate West Papua and Kanaky. they don’t know or care when our people are flipping police cars in Gwadeloup or Kòrsou. they seek france instead of Ayiti. we don’t have to follow this same path.

your essay takes on real declaration-of-war energy by the time we reach “The Prospect of Revolutionary Violence”, which is good. i hope you can take some time to engage

with the history of revolutionary guerrilla warfare, so that as things kick off we can actually win. when we give the Black Liberation Army and its veterans (some of whom are still with us) their appropriate place in history, we should also remember that they fought alongside contemporaries in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, and Azania; they learned from the Tupamaros in Uruguay and the OIPFG in Iran; they scared the shit out of the same NATO fascists as the Red Army Faction in Germany; they expropriated the same wealth as the M-KA in Denmark. we can and should learn from armed struggles in Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere without imitating their politics or structure wholesale.

ultimately, an insurrection is a beginning. the outbreak of an uprising marks a departure from the status quo; the persistence of an uprising holds the potential of transforming an insurrection into a revolution. what will keep the fires burning are strategies that allow black people newly politicized by their circumstances ways to participate that are attentive to their abilities and desires; tactics that give black people who've seen rebellions fail before good reason to believe that this time will be different; and agitprop that reminds everyone why we are never fucking going back to business as usual.

we should understand that military history and [counter]insurgency studies aren't the exclusive province of "war in terror" fascists and creepy ass crackers hoping to bring back the glory days of colonial conquest. we should understand that no matter how prepared we think we are, we will need to make plans for how to keep the struggle going when people are unexpectedly captured, tortured, deported, assassinated. we should understand that while the struggles of colonized non-black people may often converge with our own, they are not the same as our own, and any alliances we form should be dissolved if they transform into same old hierarchies. for that matter, we should understand that "allyship" is as much about building relationships with black people in circumstances very different to our own as it is about dealing with white and other non-black people who are supposedly "on our side".

i don't wanna ramble forever, so i'll bring my reply to an end. just keep in mind that social war is not a metaphor: if you escalate, you can expect the same from both your open enemies and fake allies. this is the lesson that liberatory forces have learned the hard way in past revolutionary struggles, and the grim reality that numerous practitioners of revolutionary guerrilla warfare are facing in their own campaigns today. the situation on the horizon looks better for revolutionaries everywhere if we take up our task while heeding the lessons of those who fought before us, wherever they are now.

as the BLA wrote back in the day: "THE SOONER BEGUN, THE SOONER DONE!"

(by the way, some of the leading personalities behind Ill Will are nb" poc". they might not be white, but they sure think white, and no doubt there are some black clowns cosigning them too. watch out for those types, "anarchist" or otherwise...)

Another Response to Black Armed Joy - anon

I was very excited when I came across Black Armed Joy! I'm longing for Black anarchist writings and Black anarchist action, and I was especially happy to see something new that came from an insurrectionary perspective instead of the same old socialism dressed up as anarchy. Personally I'm an insurrectionary anarchist, although I think my ideas of insurrection feel more anti-social than the authors'. For me insurrection starts on the individual level with the decision to not allow oneself to be managed. It's not necessarily about revolution for me, I'm pretty pessimistic about that possibility, but if a revolution happens and it's anarchist that could be interesting. I include my politics here to give some contexts for where my ideas are coming from. I think my politics are pretty different from the authors of Black Armed Joy, so take my critique with a grain of salt.

The authors mention the masses and specifically the Black masses, as well as the people, and even the whole of humanity. For me these groups are too big to think of as uniform. I don't think it makes sense to say that "the Black masses proved they were uninterested in "Defund" or "Community Control" of the police or to talk about "the whole of humanity in constant conflictuality with forces of oppression". These flatten large groups of people, and is a set up to be disappointed when those groups are more mixed up and complicated than that. Some Black people are cops, or have liberal politics, or own businesses, or don't care. The whole of humanity is not going to rise up all together, if they did there wouldn't even need to be an insurrection or a revolution since everyone would already be on the same page in that scenario. Some people will rise up sometimes, many won't.

One of the interesting things about insurrectionary anarchy is that rebels don't need everyone to be on the same page as them before they struggle. Insurrectionary anarchy is proactive, creating struggle by struggling. Attacking, self-organizing, and developing the affinity to do it is a way of starting to fight, and it doesn't require anyone but maybe an accomplice or two to start. From a more social/revolutionary point of view it makes examples of how others can start to fight domination and hopefully inspire other people to take initiative autonomously. What I'm trying to say is that insurrectionary anarchy has lots of space to expand and scale up but it's not tied up with or limited to mass-struggle and can even be practiced alone.

Often when insurrection — as an event — is mentioned by the authors, it's assumed to be coming. Either generally on the way or provoked by a catalyzing event. This brings up two dilemmas: 1) an insurrection might not come at all, then what? 2) what does one do when there isn't an insurrection happening? Again the beauty of insurrectionary anarchy is that it skirts both these issues by simply beginning to struggle regardless! If insurrections comes, great, there will be some rebels who have already started revolting, and have experience and confidence as participants, and if it isn't happening now (yet?) there are rebels fighting, that at least are coming into conflict with domination and maybe agitating for insurrection.

For a text so focused on the potential of the Black masses to revolt I was surprised to not see much about propaganda and dialogue to build up insurrectional desire and capacity in the Black population as a means to get to a mass insurrection/revolution. I think that by assuming that an insurrection is on the way the authors have left out that they can be part of actively creating the conditions to make it possible. They mention briefly community-led interventions and cultivating revolutionary culture. I feel it's important to flesh out what this could look like if mass participation is a goal rather than an assumption.

One thing I feel it's important to mention is that as much as someone may want unity, by having radical and anti-authoritarian politics, rebellious individuals and groups are going to bring some people together and also drive some people apart. My experience has been that most people aren't anarchists and that being Black isn't enough to drive someone to agree with, let alone participate in anarchist struggles. Radical ideas lead people to grapple with issues that they might not all be on the same page about, and are likely to pit Black people against other Black people who are invested in better integrating into and moving up within society. This is okay, as has been said before; not all our skin folk are our kin folk.

In all honestly, I'm tired of the critique of the white left. It's not that the white left is great (it's not), or that critiques of the white left are often wrong (they aren't). It's that the white left, and the left in general are mostly irrelevant outside of the world of activism. In moments of big pop-off sometimes the left tries to intervene but they're usually pretty behind and playing catch up. It's correctly pointed out by the authors that the white left has failed Black people over and over again. Still the white left is held up as an important force within insurrections, treated as a sort of ally/enemy that needs to be coerced into doing the right thing. It seems strange that so much energy is spent trying to convince white leftists (and threaten them), when the authors know that the white left is historically unreliable and cowardly. There are many more interesting people to engage with than white leftists; non-politicized Black people, other Black radicals, non-Black people we can find solidarity with as Black people, even unaffiliated white people.

My questions to the authors are why so much focus on the white left? Does it make sense to invest energy into them or would Black struggle be better served by doing our own thing and letting the left catch up as seems to happen organically? What would it look like to focus on our autonomy and liberation as anti-authoritarian Black people? What do our struggles have in common with the struggles of non-Black people and who can we team up with?

Black Armed Joy has a really militant tone. It critiques the fear of Black armed rebellion that is so common among white leftists and anarchists, and I think it's right to do so. The state is ready and willing to kill Black people and let vigilantes do so too. In "An Enthusiastic Response to "Black Armed Joy"" it's said that when rebels escalate the level of violence it makes sense to expect an escalation from enemies also. That text also points out that there's so much to learn from past and present Black

struggle and armed struggle, on Turtle Island and elsewhere. I wanted to throw my support behind those statements, there's a lot to learn, a lot to be careful about, and the stakes are really high.

One confusing thing about Black Armed Joy was that the authors say that they're intent on showing that their lives aren't dispensable ("The white left may believe that either we have a death wish or that our lives are dispensable and we are intent on proving otherwise.") and also that if the white left doesn't make a good enough coalition that they're ready to kill and be killed about it ("If nothing, we will prove that we are all humans that can live and die by violence all the same and at the same rates.). I'm not sure what to make of this and it seems like something that's important to think through.

Despite all my criticism I'm glad that Black Armed Joy was written and there's a lot I liked about it. I wanted to respond to it to broaden the conversations around Black insurrectionary anarchy and among Black anarchists. I'm trying to write from a place of solidarity and I hope that that shows through. I'm also happy to see that someone else has already responded to Black Armed Joy, I'm excited that dialogue among Black anarchists of different perspectives is developing in writing and I'm happy to be able to contribute to it.

The critique of mutual aid without teeth rang true to me. Especially since the start of the covid-19 pandemic, mutual aid has been watered down to mean something indistinguishable from charity. Placing mutual aid alongside and as a part of insurrectionary approaches to struggle makes so much more sense, and has a much more pointed potential than giving stuff away just because things are hard right now.

Black Armed Joy takes some uncompromising positions and refuses to clean up history for the sake of liberalism. The authors remind readers that the history of Black struggle is much more than civil disobedience and peaceful protest. The recent riots, the movements in the 1960s and 1970s, and even as far back as the maroons and slave insurrections are all remembered and reiterated. It not surprising that they hold up uncompromising struggle in the present, rejecting liberal stances, reformism, and self-victimization. They hold up taking apart oppression in the present, they remind readers that alternatives and "opting out" won't destroy capitalism and that attack is a way forward. In light of so much Black liberalism and recuperation of Black struggles seeing these perspectives written out is a breath of fresh air.

I really like the questions that the authors of Black Armed Joy are asking. I want to see more Black anarchists grappling with them. Finding, making, and developing Black insurrectionary anarchist positions, and experimenting with pushing and extending insurrections as Black radicals to me feel like worthwhile goals! Critiquing the white insurrectionary anarchist space is not usually a top priority for me, but it's a generous thing to do, especially coming from a Black anarchist perspective that also seeks out insurrection. Beyond the three questions that Black Armed Joy aims to address, I also feel strongly that Black anarchist thought can be both broadened and deepened.

I hope that others continue to engage with the questions the authors are asking and bring up new questions as well.

What would an insurrectionary anarchist position thoroughly rooted in black radicalism and black revolt mean?

How does the current white insurrectionary anarchist milieu fail?

How can Black revolutionaries extend the insurrection?



**“We must become
ungovernable...”**