

We Are All Illegal

An Intro to Brown Anarchy

Re-Existir Media



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PREFACE

From the fires of recent events, the palpability of *brown anarchy* burns brighter than ever. Years in the making, this text aims to provide an accessible introduction to the topic of anarchy, and its relevance to brown people in search of justice and freedom. In it, readers are offered concepts that can enable other forms of assembling and resisting. The text is an attempt to shift our perceptions, to recognize the forms of everyday anarchy and resistance that our communities embody: to tap into the potential of these forces, and foment ungovernable brown insurgencies.

This piece is not intended to be the final word on defining anarchism or identity labels. *We Are All Illegal* is a provocation written for all Mexican, Chicana, Chicano, Chicanx, Central American, South American, Caribbean, Afro-Latinx and all other anarchists yet to be. Illegality is intended as conceptual-practical intervention into the impasse of reformism. The era of immigration reform and assimilation is over. *All Illegal* is an elaboration of the final path before us: the fugitive path of autonomy, of territorial resistances that seek to create life beyond the walls and borders of citizenship and nation-state. The hope is that this text serves as material for active group discussion.

BROWN REVOLUTION IS HERE

If Latin Americans in the U.S. are determined and coordinated enough, we could accomplish **total revolution** within our lifetimes.

1 in 5 “Americans” in the United States are “Hispanics.” This country depends on millions of Latin Americans to maintain its social structure. We are the farmworkers: without us, most of the food in the country wouldn’t exist. We are the ones in retail, service, and domestic work: no business or household would survive without our labor. We are the logistics workers: goods and commodities would not move without us. We are the builders and constructors: without us, infrastructure and facilities would fall apart much sooner. We can strategically act on these facts in our favor: through the practices of *anarchy*...

“Anarchism is an open and incomplete word, and in this resides its potential. It is to *perceive possibilities not yet recognizable*; it hints at *what might be*, at modes of living and relation are unthinkable in the old frameworks.” — Saidiya Hartman, *The Nation on No Map*

Beyond all of the “-isms” that could exist, **ANARCHY** is a vision that seeks a re-making of the world in which all of its worlds may co-exist. Mass media and social media have conditioned the average person to think “chaos” when they hear of anarchy. Anarchy does not have a manual or a chairman. It isn’t named after a person—as opposed to Marxism or Leninism, which are named after white men—anarchy is named after a way of existing.

- *Anarchy as a mode of existence* organizes life beyond rigid structures and doctrines, and seeks to birth arrangements of joyful freedom unique to every people, place and time.
- “*An-arche*” is the name for all the moments throughout humanity’s history where people lived “without order:” without politicians or bosses to coerce human action, where free associations of people live in networks of autonomy—“*auto-nomos*,” meaning “self-norm.”

- European thinkers are not the reason that brown people are “anarchists”—we inherit anarchy from our grandmothers and ancestors. Like countless of our indigenous communities, anarchists today practice and envision relations free of government tyranny, capitalist destruction, or social hierarchies.

LATIN AMERICAN LIFE IN THE U.S. HAS ALWAYS BEEN ANARCHISTIC

‘Latino’ individuals and communities *already practice* many “anarchist” ideals in their daily lives, even though they do not call themselves “anarchists.” You may already be anarchist if: you know that Democrats/Republicans/all political parties suck; you’re tired of living in a racist, patriarchal, passive society; or if you say *fuck!* ICE, paying taxes, landlords, corporate greed. Check it:

- Countless of our youth practice **Anti-Authoritarianism** in their daily lives: living in daily defiance to and distrust of mechanisms of coercion—in the schools, our workplaces, on our streets.
- Hundreds of thousands of our people have practiced **Illegality**: countless relatives “illegally” cross the border, use fake ITINS and Social Security numbers, or participate in informal markets.
- Many of us are already versed in **Self-Organization**: ‘Latinos’ tend to assemble much of their collective life based on self-managed gatherings and informal social spaces.
- With the exponential growth of U.S. white nationalism, all Latin Americans will only continue to be marked as stateless, as potential “illegal aliens,” as people without rights. Our people increasingly inhabit proximity to life outside of the “social contract” and government. Now, it is on us to build upon this anarchistic life, by weaponizing our everyday *fugitivity*, meaning: undoing the chains that bind us to the system. Through networks of mutual reliance and material sustenance, we can create the lines of escape needed to abandon our forced dependence on this system.

TOWARDS UNGOVERNABLE BROWN INSURGENCIES

Consider this: everyone is discontent as fuck, and this opposition is only continuing to grow. This is why our communities face intense repression everyday—through over-policing, mass incarceration, attacks on migrants—because the system fears not just a “**brown invasion**,” but a “**brown insurgency**.” If we multiply the possibilities of power in our midst, autonomy will be within reach:

1. We are dispersed throughout the whole continent, and concentrated near America’s vulnerability: the southern border. 1 in 5 workers are ‘Latino.’ More of us are anti-capitalist, and are ready to fight, as ‘Latinos’ become the youth majority in the coming years. Tap into **student and worker power**.

2. Consider the mass marches that ‘Latinos’ mobilized in 2006 in response to the Sensenbrenner bill that sought to make everyone “harboring illegals” into felons: millions of people took to the streets, culminating in a nationwide campaign that led to innumerable school walk-outs, strikes, and demonstrations that forced the government to kill the bill. Tap into **migrant power**.
3. During the George Floyd uprisings, the level of street insurgency against state power was the highest it had been since the 1960s. ‘Latino’ participation significantly contributed to the momentum: 50% of “Hispanic” adults in the US said they had participated in a protest in 2020. Now, the fight for Palestine has multiplied intense opposition to American empire. Tap into the **power of riots and blockades**.
4. If all ‘Latinos’ in the US decide to go on strike—no work, no taxes, no bills, debt, or rent—and if ‘Latinos’ organized uprisings in every territory—even with 10% of the population’s participation—this global system could be brought to its knees *within a few years*.

“Nos quieren obligar a gobernar, no vamos a cailler en esa provocacion.” // “They want to oblige us to govern, we will not fall for that provocation.” — Graffiti from Oaxaca, 2006

Countless ‘Latin American’ peoples have created societies in the past and present that embody anarchist visions. Latin American uprisings have historically served as an example of how spontaneous movements repeatedly demonstrate their capacity to bring down governments, liberate large zones from the state, create different forms of life, and have persisted in fighting for the survival of the most oppressed. In opposition to the leftists who claim that no change is possible without taking control of the government, and against the colonial notion that it is impossible to live without government, our people in Abya Yala demonstrate otherwise.

Let’s take our cues from the tradition of autonomous revolt in ‘Latin America.’ Imagine...

We push the system into reversing its neoliberal policies, like the **Caracazo** in Venezuela in 1989 or the **Estadillo Social** in Chile in 2019; We force every president to resign and take over key industries, as the **piqueteros** did in Argentina in 2001; We occupy and squat privately held land, as done by the **Landless Worker’s Movement** in Brazil since the 1980s; We recover the rivers and waters from private companies, such as the Bolivian **Water Wars** that went down in 1999, 2000 and 2003; We make entire territories impossible for the government to enter or control, such as in the 2006 insurrection in Oaxaca, and the **autonomous societies** like in Cheran, Michoacan and the EZLN territories in Chiapas, Mexico.

It was once believed that Spain would rule ‘Latin America’ forever. Slavery and caste systems were thought to last permanently. Today, all of these “inevitabilities” have been buried under the dirt. From Palestine to LA, our revolt demonstrates this: the colonizer is not invincible. Against all odds, our ancestors accomplished the impossible and survived. Now, it’s on us to carry on our shared, anarchic inheritance.

like the EZLN: fight for land and autonomy, not for legal rights or recognitions

“We Zapatistas say: ‘I am as I am and you are as you are. Let’s build a world where I can be, and not have to cease being me, where you can be, and not have to cease being you, and where neither I nor you will force another to be like either me or you.’ So when we Zapatistas say, ‘A world where many worlds fit,’ they are saying, more or less, ‘Everyone do your own thing.’”

The EZLN movement of Chiapas, Mexico is a shining beacon of light amidst the capitalist abyss. Their communities are anarchically organized, without the need for the Mexican (narco)government: they have self-managed systems of justice, health, education, and production. From their 40+ years of longevity, we can learn from the EZLN’s experiences, and incorporate the lessons they have learned in order to grow our own autonomy:

- The EZLN’s power is due to their successful strategy of ***militant rupture***, by bravely liberating the land, they recuperated essential resources for self-sustenance.
- They abandoned Marxist-leninist models in the 1980s, in favor of organizing based on ***indigenous ways of being***: this pivotal shift enabled their famous 1994 uprising.
- Through their 2006’s “The Other Campaign,” they abandoned all negotiations with the government, and refused legal recognition: they focused instead on building ***non-recognized autonomy*** (independence and self-sufficiency).
- Since the 2010s, they have deepened the ***decentralization*** of their decision-making bodies, and sustain them with “non-ownership” of “land without papers.”
- We can take up the strategy of ***non-visibility*** and building a force in the shadows—a force that brings the power of a new existence to bear from within the belly of empire.

BECOME UN-REPRESENTABLE

Decades of well-intended efforts to “work within the system” continues proving that the master’s tools use us, we don’t use them! Time shows that ***non-integration*** is now our strongest tool. Most ‘Latinos’ do not vote, and many more will never vote. It’s whack, it’s cheesy, and it’s impossible to force participation with a system rightfully seen as illegitimate by almost everyone. Biden, Trump, PSL, DSA, CPUSA... doesn’t matter: those foos *do not and will not* care about you or your family. With autonomous societies, we can remove the need for presidents, political parties and government.

Waking the “latino sleeping giant” can no longer be a civic project of assimilating into America. Since the creation of nation-states, power corrupts. All the back way to the first indigenous elites of Latin America that cooperated with Spaniards “in the name of the people,” we must push back on those insistent on selling us out in the name of “proper representation.” Predictability and co-optation are the death sentences of autonomy. Instead, let’s become ***un-representable***: by subverting the mechanisms of selling-out, and remaining incapable of being sold-out.

Our movements must be expanded without trying to “take control” of the government. Following the plans of Marxist-leninists and “leaders” is an obsolete practice of the past. Why? Movements with leaders and uniforms are identifiable, then jailed or murdered. Do not lead, or be led. Beyond mass rallies, our power lies in *opaque infrastructures of daily action*. Against all opportunists, waking the “sleeping giant” can now only be an abolitionist endeavor. As a never-ending horizon, it means expanding our autonomy to the point of boundless fugitivity.

LIBERATE OUR TERRITORIES

The greatest lesson of anarchist-based revolt is the power of *anonymity*. The black bloc is its most infamous example: it minimizes the risk of identification and capture. Everyone gets stoked by anonymous direct action—such as when anonymous fighters smash on ICE or cops. Behind every anonymous act, our people feel like it’s also them defiantly fighting back. This is how resistance will multiply, through *resonance*: people identify not with leaders, but with the act itself, its meaning and purpose. The take-away—attack and expropriate the targets that contagiously spreads support.

Instead of direct armed clashes, we can win through *guerrilla anarchy*: chipping away at the enemy’s bases bit by bit, through un-traceable, un-predictable sabotage that undermines their sources of power. Taking cues from Zapata to Sandino to Katari, it means striking the enemy only at a place and time of our own choosing, and only if escape is guaranteed. Our task is to make our territories off-limits for the state. This will entail creating the conditions that renders movement through our cities difficult, costly, or impossible for the colonizer.

Every time the state invades our hoods, every time they arrive to kidnap our people, they need to know that *the entire environment* will inflict violence upon them. Our territory is our best accomplice—we know our streets, the folks on the block, the surroundings and our gente’s ways of life. It will be our committed ability to leverage local connections and flows, community cohesion and cultures, adaptability and perception of enemy vulnerabilities that will halt their operations. By weaponizing our everyday forms of life, the occupation will be expelled when we *become the territory*.

WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN EXTREMISTS

It is now the time to realize the truth of our situation—we will always be criminalized, and our resistance will have to travel this line of criminality. Legality has never been and will never be a viable method of liberation. This must now be our threat: that we will always seek to exist outside of the law, and never settle for any crumbs of rights, reforms or state power.

Every single project for freedom is fundamentally illegal. The fight for our survival will entail the greatest crime ever committed: the act of liberation.

From the first illegalist liberators that fought back against the Spanish colonial governments that subjugated our Latin American homelands, up to the most recent waves of immigration and caravans, we are the children of over 500 years of illegalisms.

This is the dilemma we now confront: ethnic cleansing, or insurrection. If survival and resistance are outlawed, then those who seek their unshackle the chains will always already be considered extremists. We will win when we are *all illegal*.

“The law conserves; the revolution renews.

For the same reason, if one must renew, one must begin by breaking the Law.

Throughout history, the liberties conquered by the human species have been the work of *illegals* who took the law into their own hands and tore it to pieces.”

— Ricardo Flores Magon

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