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No Gods, No Masters Degrees

CrimethInc

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2007

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all this weight on the shoulders of a stranger. After all, you're clearly not a revolutionary. Maybe you have a job that is counterrevolutionary to the core, and what type of revolution can be incited by someone with that type of job?

This is the crux of the argument: you can approach any job, anywhere, in a revolutionary manner. The less revolutionary potential you think a job has, the more likely that it will actually be radical to subvert it, if only you can find the courage!

On the other hand, perhaps your background's not right, you don't feel like a capable and sexy young revolutionary. You're too old, or too tired, or not confident, and so on. Consider that this might be a hidden strength, that the very diversity of our lives is and must be the basis for a true revolution. A revolution brought about by only student revolutionaries, or for that matter by any other demographic alone, would lead to disaster. Yet a revolution brought about by cunning alliances between the least likely of us will create exactly the type of situations we need, situations that can break us free from the chains of habit and separation.

No matter how they are arranged, words alone cannot create revolution. Likewise, despite our constant calls for action, neither can action without thought. Revolutionary situations arise when people bring their words and dreams into alignment with their actions on an everyday basis. No book, no article, no matter how well written or insightful, can provide that last crucial step. That step involves closing the book, setting aside the computer, stepping back, and stepping forward into your own life.

So—go on. Confess your love, grab that gun, plant that seed, lay your body in front of that bulldozer. Seize your life by any and all means necessary. At the moment you take action, the giant lie that has cast its shadow across human history will begin to dissolve.

What lies on the other side of history, no one knows. Yet we can promise you this—we'll see you there.

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and dreams of clerks and janitors? You swear to write that book.

Or maybe you are a student who recently stayed up all night reading the *Communist Manifesto* and, after a binge of underage drinking, proceeded to declare your dormitory a People's Republic. Confronted with the choice of endless classes ranging from Linear Algebra to Biological Anthropology, it all seems so meaningless, and the university no better than a vast factory of obfuscation and bureaucracy. Instead of deciding what you want to do with your life, which seems tantamount to putting an end to your life then and there, you want life itself! Reading about academics trying to create that life in actuality, perhaps you may find it easier to feel that—even within the ivory tower—action can be taken, and *you* can take that action.

Or perhaps you are a professor who has spent countless hours lecturing students on obscure postmodern philosophy. As a young graduate student, you dreamed of changing the world, lighting it on fire with your ideas, writing famous books that would inspire the following generations to rise up and create a new world. Perhaps somewhere in the endless publish-or-perish cycle, you lost that dream, and now you write endless articles for journals no one will ever read, much less find inspiring. Now, reading this text, you wonder if you could change things, if instead of just talking about revolution, you could create it yourself. A dream has been rekindled. Who knows? These are just thought experiments. We don't know anything about you!

Yet this we do know: everything depends on you. Your actions, over the next day, month, year, decade, lifetime, will determine whether or not you survive, whether the world itself survives. If you surrender to a life-in-death of obedience to the system, you will be fully complicit in its bloody end. However, within the deepest recesses of your being, you have the resources to do something beautiful, something that can change the world. You might think it is unfair for us to put

Yet the true test is not whether we can push the system into collapse, but what we can do in the here and now—how we take advantage of any opportunity, including collapse, to spread anarchy. Let it never be misunderstood that the only path to revolution is for all anarchists to drop out. No, the important question is how we link the efforts and desires of those within the system to those without its assurances and controls. To this end, we need more analysis of how mixed-class alliances have helped push forward the revolutionary struggle throughout history. Such a study could begin with the impoverished masses who permitted Russian aristocrats like Kropotkin and Bakunin throw their lot in with them, and extend up to the mixed-class groups cooking and serving Food Not Bombs today.

Revolution

It's not just a question of using whatever resources we have to further revolution—we must also turn any and every situation to the ends of revolution, including white-collar jobs and university lecture halls. In this sense, every revolutionary must be a situationist, an artist of situations. If we are unyielding in our demand for world revolution not tomorrow, not after exams, not after the next book is written or after hours, but now, then we must put you—dear reader—in a precarious position

Admittedly, we barely know you. You could be an embittered revolutionary, who has already spent all your money on countless hours of organizing, and is considering getting a job at the postal service. Perhaps, reading about academics attempting to walk their talk, you feel jealous of their privilege at not having to deal with the monotonous and endless nine-to-five grind. Where is the book composed by a collective of revolutionary postal workers, the book speaking of the lives

Can students and white-collar workers play roles in an uncompromising revolution for total liberation?

The world has changed—it seems for the worse—since the high tide of revolts by unions and student radicals. Contemporary schools and universities in the United States are not exactly hotbeds of revolution. In fact, with the exception of some union organizing among graduate students and janitors, they are barely keeping the leftovers warm, in contrast to their contemporaries in France and Chile. This is a shocking state of affairs, given the once-respected position of students as igniters of global insurrection. What has become of the student mobs throwing teachers out of classrooms and lecture halls, the general assemblies in university auditoriums, the walkouts, the communiqués sent to presidents and prime ministers advising them of their coming demise?

And where are the masses of organized workers struggling for the destruction of capitalism? We need the second coming, the Wobblies of old, or the union organizers in West Virginia who were ready to take on the army itself at the Battle of Blair Mountain. Organized labor today seems barely able to combat the decline of wages and benefits, and is more terrified of strikes than capable of calling them. With people now feeling lucky to have a job, any job, it seems radicals have the impossible task of organizing a nation of phantoms: office workers, single mothers, the depressed and uninspired, the brokenhearted and overworked, all caught up in the system and unable get anywhere no matter what they do. What about the infamous dropouts? Has the composition of classes changed so much that revolution is now impossible beyond personal rebellion and individual revolt?

Meanwhile, the United States government and its allies seem to be hell-bent on bringing about a worldwide apocalypse, and an explosive revolutionary situation in the belly of the beast might be our only chance of survival. While students in the US have always been tamer than their comrades

worldwide—research what students did in Mexico in the Vietnam War era and prepare to have your paisley-colored glasses blown away—things are quieter than ever on the Western Front. Worse, those closest to the source of the problem—the middle-class, the “creative class,” the white-collar workers, office managers, high school teachers—are living up to their reputation as mere drones.

Rather than complain about all the sectors of society that don’t live up to our revolutionary ideals, however, we have combed the files of CrimethInc. agents who made the ultimate sacrifice, going to schools and workplaces with the explicit goal of undermining capitalism. In the course of several years in and out of high schools, universities, offices, and other psychiatric wards,¹ these agents have formulated strategies and tactics for expropriating the white-collar world for revolutionary ends.

Here follow the assembled notes of one such class mutineer.

Escaping the College-Industrial Complex

Education as we know it exists primarily to indoctrinate habits. It is designed to produce obedience and nurture a willingness to complete mindless and meaningless tasks without complaint. Since humans naturally prefer to have meaningful lives and do practical, useful things, this innate tendency must be repressed at all costs by authorities at the earliest possible age. Given enough time, the educational system can usually stamp out all traces of creativity and critical thinking. Indeed, now that the family, in former times the oppressive institution par excellence, is breaking down, only education can fill the gap it leaves. For children in school, every moment is regimented and controlled, every moment is devoted to some task—any task except actually pursuing their own desires.

Previously, keeping most workers until the end of high school was enough to ensure their domestication, not to men-

meetings, we should return the favor and place anarchist infiltrators in their offices!

Anarchists often talk about getting our comrades out of jail. Why not get jobs as prison guards? Qualifying should be easy enough for those of us without arrest records. One could learn the ins and outs of a prison and plan the perfect escape route for prisoners. (Russian nihilists did exactly that in the 19th century.) Anarchist librarians, anarchist carpenters, anarchist chefs, and anarchist bankers—there should be no job that we cannot subvert. If there is a job we cannot turn to the ends of anarchy, that will attest to our lack of ingenuity, not to the strength of capital.

We anarchists need both material and human resources to fight the system successfully. Let us make no mistake about this: we’re fighting a war, and in war, you have to make use of everything you can get your hands on.

The capitalist system seems to be doomed to collapse. Revolutionaries need urban social centers, both legally paid for and—if possible—squatted. Revolutionaries sometimes need jobs, so we may as well start up cooperative vegan cafés and similar ventures, so long as we channel all the resources we can into the struggle. To buy land and to buy buildings requires cash some anarchists can earn, while others who have more time than money can learn to farm and cook and so on. These roles should never remain fixed, though certain roles will be more accessible for some than others. If we take the idea of dual power seriously, we will develop counter-institutions that people can fall back on as the scanty remains of old social safety nets are destroyed by looting capitalists. If all anarchists do is travel from protest to protest, we’ll never build the local strength, momentum, and roots we need for others to trust us and—more importantly—themselves when the system enters total collapse. A total collapse hopefully caused by us.

decided to blockade the President and his cronies by whatever means necessary.

At this meeting, we had the horrible realization that very few of the participants knew the layout of the city. So under the cover of night, we snuck even more comrades into the Department of Political and Social Studies to mass-produce maps of the locations to be blockaded and research the details about important local centers of global capital. We turned on the departmental photocopier, and, thanks to a stolen password, proceeded to make thousands of copies of blockade maps, while burning CDs with photos of important locations on the secretary's computer. We rushed the mysterious box of maps right out the front door and to the cars waiting for us at the Indy-media Center.

As I was leaving, I noticed that it was nearly nine in the morning, and to my horror I saw the head of the department, an ancient and respected professor, climbing up the stairs to the front door. He looked at me and smiled, "Up all night, eh? You won't believe it—those unwashed protesters just spray-painted an anarchy symbol on our building!" I just smiled and walked out with the secret plans.

Turning the White Collar Black

Let's take this story to its logical conclusion. Being a parasite and scamming money from a job is not the be-all end-all of revolutionary activity. If anything, anarchists invading the university is uncreative. It would be more creative for anarchists to invade everyday jobs at all walks of life, for the express purpose of causing trouble. As the surveillance state shuts down possible avenues of escape, strategically placed anarchists in the DMV and security agencies would be worth their weight in gold. If the state and corporations send infiltrators to our

tion provide them with the basic reading and writing skills necessary to pay taxes. With the advent of global capitalism and the subsequent specialization of work on a global scale, new and more intensive forms of education are increasingly required. Universities, formerly havens from reality for the spawn of the ruling class to network and mate with each other, have now been opened as holding cells for the children of the serfs.

Within the modern university, the sciences serve as convenient cover for state research into control techniques and methods of mass murder and exploitation. Likewise, the empire of machines requires people with mechanical backgrounds to fix cars, program computers, and balance the books of its various corporations. Since these require technical aptitude beyond basic arithmetic, schools offer everything from business and accounting classes to engineering and computer science programs. From time to time, the system needs apologists for the terrifying destruction caused by capitalism, so people are ushered into journalism schools and departments of economics.

Departments of political science and international relations prepare others to join the minor bureaucracy of the state apparatus itself, where they can participate in repression and murder by relaying commands to soldiers and police themselves. Holdouts who still believe in romantic notions of education are directed to humanities curriculums or "art schools" where they waste years of their lives myopically burying their heads in books or other self-indulgent activities until they are humiliated enough to take up service industry jobs for which their high school diplomas would have qualified them. How many dishwashing philosophers does the world need?

The truly remarkable thing is that people subject themselves to these forms of "education" willingly. In a massive scam, capitalism convinces people to pay for the privilege of

being “educated,” and thus to go into debt from which they can never emerge, permanently yoking them to the system!

Permit me to zoom in on my own experience here. Many of my comrades—hell, most of them—approached school solely for the sake of a career. A nice stable family. A job, respect in the community. Despite their punk bands and their activism, their causes and their marches, they still wanted fundamentally the same thing as their parents, or at least, they couldn’t imagine anything else. Whatever their political commitments were, they seemed to regard those essentially as a hobby that they would have to give up sooner or later for the inevitable assimilation into working life; “politics” and “work” formed a dichotomy that could never be bridged or mixed.

I found all this incredibly disturbing. After all, the jobs they sought consisted for the most part of endless processions of paperwork, number-punching, and pointless meetings—and we’re not talking about working-class jobs, but privileged white-collar work! What joy could there be in that drudgery? When we were children, most of our parents were so busy they didn’t even have time to play games with us or to read us books. Instead, they put us in front of the television with a fast-food meal before collapsing in front of the television themselves. What community respected jobs like that, especially when most of them involved directly or indirectly pillaging the world’s remaining free resources and peoples? The most that my parents had for “community” was a few friends from work unlucky enough to be in the same circle of hell as them, plus the people they saw at church. Did it matter if the job was selling organic food or working in a supermarket? Being part of the Social Security bureaucracy or killing people in the army? It all seemed like one big scam.

In despair, I did what most people in that situation do. I began drinking heavily. I developed a taste for malt liquor, calculating that it was the cheapest way to obliterate consciousness. I started cooking bags of instant rice in malt liquor. I figured if

their rounds, warning everyone to avoid suspicious characters that asked to rent large amounts of camping space.

It happened that a friend of a friend in our local Indymedia collective had attended high school with a left-leaning member of the local government. After nearly endless meetings (“But you realize we can’t have peaceful protesters sleeping next to the black bloc!” If only he had known to whom he was speaking!), the town government decided it was better to get all the anarchists in one place, instead of having to deal with them squatting all over town. They hadn’t suspected that we’d prefer to have somewhere legal and safe to sleep rather than getting ourselves trapped by the police in a squat defense the day before the big action, anyway.

Yet there was still no place for anarchists to meet and plan! I was morose—until one day, a thought struck me. The police would never raid the Student Union at the oldest, most privileged university in town. It was a virtual historical monument!

With a little convincing, the head of the Democratic Student Union handed over the keys to the building, ostensibly to be used for a conference that happened to run the duration of the protest. As the big event approached, anarchists from all over the country showed up, and they all needed Internet access and photocopying machines. Almost overnight, my previously quiet little Department of Political and Social Studies metamorphosed into a full-scale hotbed of revolutionary activity, and one anarchist even snuck in and got his own desk as a “Visiting Professor.” I had managed to procure the keys from the night-guard, so when night came, we simply took out our sleeping bags and crashed in the office.

As the protest neared, it became clear this was no ordinary conference. There were direct action trainings, medical trainings, videos shown about previous summit protests. A horde of black-clad miscreants occupied the Student Union. Shortly before the day of action, a huge anarchist assembly took place upstairs in the Union, at which the forces of global insurrection

more exciting projects when squatting is an alternative! Crime-thInc. agents have inhabited broom closets in libraries, set up shop in empty rooms in philosophy departments, and even lived in tree-sits while being “in school.” And for the clever revolutionary, not only is there a limitless supply of pencils and paper, there are countless other opportunities. One can walk in and steal just about everything from chalkboards to trashcans, and furnish a whole collective house!

If one is privileged enough, it is also possible to become a schoolteacher, or even a professor. Becoming a professor gives you a few more years of graduate school to live off of and continue the lackadaisical student life. Once one is a teacher of some type, one can also, as all great teachers since Socrates have done, corrupt the minds of the young. For example, one could focus on books like *1984* that have snuck into the curriculum of many schools when picking readings. You could have your students make zines as an assignment or more ambitiously, take on projects like building community gardens. If you are a professor and have enough leeway, you could teach classes on revolutionary theory or subjects like “Social Movements.” A truly great teacher should be able to make even geometry a revolutionary discipline! Teachers can encourage students to organize everything from radical student unions to street demonstrations.

And so, once more, we’ll return to my own experience, at another point in my life. The university where I had spent the last three years had become a hotbed of revolution. As a giant anti-globalization protest came to town, we few local hosting anarchists were overwhelmed. As former out-of-town shock troops against capital ourselves, we understood how important it was for the out-of-town black bloc to be able to meet safely and get a good night’s sleep to be ready to riot in the morning. After the G8 protests in Genoa in 2001, we had the unhappy suspicion that the police would raid any private landowner that rented space to us. Indeed, the local police had already done

life was just a long and drawn-out suicide, I might as well end it quickly and enjoy the trip down.

Then one day, in the supermarket getting ready to buy my next forty-ounce, I met two lanky individuals who were in the process of stealing no small amount of food, the smiling woman running a distraction while the other escaped out with a bag full of groceries. Shocked by how easy it was and their suave confidence, I approached them outside. It ended up they were homeless, jobless... but they were also artists, anarchists, lovers, writers, and creators. As I sat talking to them, I realized that their lives had meaning. Their eyes shone with an energy I saw lacking in my all peers who had to drink themselves to bed just to wake up the next morning and face work. Impressed, I decided that at the next opportune moment, I too would drop out of school, drop out of work, and never come back.

It didn’t take long for my opportunity to come. Sitting among the ruins of our house with my friends, with a degree and no cash, I decided I was going to do it. I was going to drop out, to go all the way in pursuit of my dreams. *I know what we’ll do: we’ll go on tour! We won’t even need a band!*

After criss-crossing the country, running countless scams, throwing donuts at cops in the middle of street fighting, making love underneath the canopies of ancient forests, and composing and performing a full-scale musical about anarchism, I felt something I hadn’t felt in years, despite the fact there wasn’t a cent in my pocket and my prospects for survival looked grim at best. I realized I was alive.

Reconsidering Dropping Out

Let’s not lose sight of the obvious—no one is an island, including those who have dropped out. Like everyone else, dropouts depend on a whole network of people to keep them alive. Dropouts must learn survival skills such as dumpster

diving and scamming, but it is the sympathetic cafeteria worker who turns a blind eye to the anarchists sneaking into the school cafeteria, the social worker who gives them food stamps, the employee who knows that there is no way these people bought this multi-hundred dollar electrical tool but will let them return it for full cash—it is these people who create the holes in the system that dropouts need, in which it is possible to eke out an existence with minimal work. These workers are crucial to the survival of the unemployed, even if some of them do their anti-capitalist work almost unconsciously.

But how long can the unemployed anarchist, the prototypical dropout, survive off the kindness of strangers? When the last scam is shut down, when even the school cafeterias require retinal scans, when every store is crawling with armed security thugs and scrutinized from closed-circuit cameras, what then? Is our dropout doomed? And if capitalism ever undergoes a major economic collapse, when the oil is gone and the food has stopped coming to the shelves of the local supermarkets, what then? Is our dropout just on a more enjoyable trip to hell with the rest of us?

Let us return to the idea of the network of sympathizers and transform that into the network of revolutionaries. There is sometimes an unequal power distribution between dropouts and their sympathizers, with the former having no material ways forward and the sympathizers being stuck in some hellish corner of capitalism. In order to overcome this, we must go beyond this dichotomy of “dropouts” and “workers.” Let us inspect the more interesting roles of “sympathizer” and “revolutionary.” The difference between a sympathizer and a revolutionary is mainly a matter of commitment.

In this regard, many dropouts are themselves just sympathizers. Sure, they may be minimizing their impact on the ecosystem by not working, but the entirety of their activity is made up of just trying to survive. The main risk for revolu-

of state-sanctioned employment. What is the world going to look like in twenty years, anyway? Also, one generally has little work to do as a student—if you can manage to read books outside of class or impress the professor with your intelligence, you don’t even necessarily have to attend classes regularly to get good grades. One can show up to a class, travel to another state to fight the minions of capital for a few weeks, come back, and often nobody even notices. Few jobs offer such flexibility.

Additionally, schools are known to give money to students for the flimsiest of reasons. If the locals of a heavily repressed country are calling for international assistance in the preparations for their next protest, say in Russia, what better time to go abroad for an immersion course in Russian? Or if you want to support revolutionary efforts to help people become self-sufficient in the wake of a disaster such as the one in New Orleans, why not make it a school project? You can band together with like-minded students and form an organization to seize control of even more funding, with which to set up conferences for local anti-capitalists and invite revolutionaries to speak at your school—in return for a fair bit of cash, which goes right back into the struggle.

There are all sorts of other resources in schools that are as good as gold to the revolutionary. Schools may offer access to computers—and even free printing—that are hard for most people to come by. You could steal copies from the school to stock local infoshops or to distribute anarchist propaganda.

Schools also have cafeterias, which are often unguarded. One could steal food from the cafeteria and bring it to deserving fellow revolutionaries, and if one has some sort of “meal card,” one could always bring local hungry people into the cafeteria for a meal at your—or preferably the school’s—expense. Schools also feature strange locked closets, small rooms, and even entire abandoned buildings. There’s no reason to pay for rent, even if you’re working—that rent money can be spent on

How I Became *the Man* and Lived to Tell the Tale

When one is shoplifting, a bizarre inverse logic operates, the inverse of the logic applied by the usual shopper. Since the punishment is always more or less the same, you seek to steal the most expensive items as opposed to the cheapest ones. This inverse logic operates in a similar fashion in workplace scamming. Conventionally, people are accorded social status according to their rank in the workplace, but many revolutionaries get credit for their job in proportion to how low-paying their job is—for example, working at a organic health food store for low wages—or for how obviously their job relates to social justice—such as going door to door with petitions. Revolutionary union organizing is as laudable as ever, but the revolutionary who works for the primary purpose of seizing resources should aim for the job with the most resources that requires the least amount of commitment.

In this regard, the educational-industrial complex is especially ripe for looting. With the exception of recent events in the Sorbonne, most teachers and professors today seem to be in full support of the system, whether this manifests itself in papers about global macro-economics or in postmodern literary analysis. Even professors who oppose systems of oppression rarely make their voices heard beyond the world of papers and journals, let alone take action beyond that. If you look at the modern educational system not as a site for resistance but as a supply depot for looting, things brighten up quickly. While it is rapidly being destroyed by neoliberal “reforms,” the domain of the ivory tower is still notoriously slack easy to take advantage of.

As a student, one can qualify for all sorts of loans and money. If you wish to, you can default on them and just keep the cash, as long as you are willing to commit to a future free

tionary dropouts is that they become mere *dropouts without adjectives*, secretly wanting cars, jobs, careers, heating, and a regular source of food rather than taking advantage of every moment to push for liberation. (Ben Morea of Up against the Wall, Motherfucker called this “Pancho Villa syndrome,” when illegalist revolutionaries end up as petty criminals.) But if a dropout can indeed be a revolutionary, then an employed person can be more than a sympathizer too.

What would it entail to be a working revolutionary in this day and age? Would it involve organizing a union? Perhaps. Would it involve selling Marxist-Leninist papers to fellow workers who have not yet “Got Revolution?” Certainly not. One of the most obvious tasks confronting the working revolutionary is simple: seize and redistribute resources. Instead of feeling guilt about privileges, the working revolutionary does anything and everything to “abuse” those privileges, cashing them in for the material resources needed by revolutionaries who lack access. This could mean anything from sneaking out photocopies to smuggling guns. Imagine the countless resources that are at the disposal of clever employees if they approach work as a scam that they milk as thoroughly as possible without getting caught.

Revolutionaries need resources, need to eat, sleep, and have clothing. For people of color, unemployed people, people with families they can barely support, especially people brought up in generations of poverty, to be a full-time revolutionary without income is impossible. Yet if some of their friends and allies can work, can find jobs, they can make this easier. If the employed revolutionary is willing to live frugally, she can provide for dozens of her comrades—especially if she is absolutely merciless towards her superiors, always looking for a way to steal something, anything, from work to be put towards the revolution. No job but the inside job!

Even for the staunchest of politicized dropouts, the goal is not unemployment, but revolution. Both the unemployed and

employed revolutionary—and all those in between, who take jobs when necessary and refuse to work when they can—face occupational hazards. The occupational hazard of the unemployed revolutionary is simply to become merely unemployed, indistinguishable from their grizzled peers who are just spare-changing for the next drink. The occupational hazard of employed revolutionaries is probably more dangerous—to begin to believe in their jobs and the system they play a part in, or at least to accept these as unchangeable elements of reality. To accept their positions in the economy and actually start following the rules, slowly adjusting to the idea that they are somehow different from, perhaps even superior to, all those unemployed people out there. To betray their dreams and begin living their death in life. It's a slippery road, and every employed anarchist should watch out.

Let us here resume the story begun above, taking up the thread some time after we left off. It was September 11, 2001, and my friends and I conceded that our careful preparations for the upcoming IMF/World Bank protests had been rendered moot by the terrorist attacks of the day. A couple of us raised in various suburbs in the United States had converged in a sushi joint outside of Georgetown to reflect on our experiences as dropouts and plan for the years ahead. Our conversation was a heady mix of despair and tactics. Both of us had similar “résumés”—we were anarchists from middle-class or upwardly mobile working-class families. Both of us had been primarily concerned with destroying capitalism for several years, and had college degrees but no plans for utilizing them. We had hopped trains across the country, fed our friends and whoever else showed up at Food Not Bombs, and donned black masks to take to the streets. Yet after organizing protests, skill-shares, conferences and feeling closer and closer to revolution only to watch it all go up literally in flames, we felt strangely empty. Where to go next? Somewhere else, somewhere unimaginable...

What would we do? We both had families at this point—families not of blood, but of something stronger—families of life. People beside whom we had fought tooth and nail, with whom we had experienced the greatest joys and the bleakest hells. People we would take bullets for. It happened that by chance—or perhaps not—our comrades weren't from white, middle-class, college-educated families. They were high school dropouts, folks who had wised up before us or grown up in poor families. Our friends—and more recently, we as well—had been sent to jail. Been raped. Been hurt. Starved. Lived in tents in the cold, beneath concrete pillars under bridges. It seemed so unfair that the noblest and most creative of our generation, people who had departed from the standard career path by force or by choice, were pushed to near death. We were always struggling for the next dollar, having to hustle just to get by. How the hell were we going to take down the entire fucking government, the global capitalist system, if we were always worried about our next meal and couldn't find a place to lay our heads?

While this state of affairs kept us sharp, it was slowly having an effect on the less hardy of our comrades. One by one, those who could started settling down, getting jobs, having children, and becoming “normal” again. If we were truly serious about a revolutionary future, we would have to find the resources to take care of children and the elderly in our communities.

We cooked up a plan. It seemed crazy and morally wrong, but in our experience such plans were often the only ones that worked. What did we have going for us at this point? We had degrees. We could read and write. We could do the impossible. We could get jobs.