

Riding the Waves of Repression

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“Trust your instincts. To all people, and across all civilizations, you know what ‘normal’ is. You know what ‘beautiful’ is. You know what ‘good’ is. You know that families are right. You know that children are precious and beautiful and must be protected. You know that the criminal, and the junkie, and the predator, is a threat to normal, healthy, living.

This is so much deeper than issues about taxation and regulation, though they’re incredibly important. It’s about normal, healthy, ordered, living.” — Stephen Miller

These words, spoken by White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller at the Ministerial on the Resurgence of Political Terrorism, sum up the fascist project. Normal, healthy, ordered living. And to achieve this, the expulsion and extermination of everything deemed abnormal, unnatural, disorderly — in a word, uncontrollable.

This Ministerial, called for by the US, brought officials from 66 countries together in Washington, DC on July 16th, 2026. At the Ministerial, Stephen Miller and secretary of state Marco Rubio declared that, amidst devastating and accelerating climate-destruction, compounding economic crises, and genocidal and imperialist wars, “left-wing terrorism” constitutes the gravest threat to civilization, and that rooting it out and fighting it must be prioritized accordingly by world leaders and the states they command. Rarely has the essential function of the state* been laid so bare. Defenders of the state claim that the state exists to provide for and protect its people. At many times in history, this claim has been given a tenuous truth due to the pittance it has given in the form of social programs. However, the past year and a half has shown what the state really is when push comes to shove: a means of sorting people into categories of included/excluded, productive to the economy/surplus to the economy, to provide conditional ‘safety’ and support for the former, and violence in forms both dramatic and insidiously minute for the latter. And, as the crises continue to pile on, more and more people are being sorted into the latter category.

The Ministerial is merely the formalization of an ongoing global wave of repression of social movements on the part of the governments of this planet. Here in the United States, there is the Prairieland case, Spokane, the Minnesota 15¹. Overseas, in the Philippines and Indonesia,

¹ “About the Case” from the DFW Support Committee; “New Federal Indictment on Minnesota 15 Peddles DOJ ‘Antifa’ Conspiracy Angle After Raids” from Unicorn Riot; “Conviction of Spokane ICE Protestors Raise Free Speech Concerns” from Common Dreams

there are high-profile cases wherein anarchists are being targeted explicitly for espousing an anti-state, anti-capitalist ideology. In Indonesia, dozens of anarchist comrades have been arrested, kept in terrible conditions, and charged with being part of the so-called “Chaos Star Network,” a completely fictional entity made up by the Indonesian state. Some are calling it a renewed “Red Scare”². Comrades in the Philippines are calling it the “Black Scare,” to point out how much anarchism as an ideology is being singled out in the repression³. And of course, no matter what you call it, here in the United States the repressive wave against social movements is one in the same as the campaign of terror, violence against, and displacement of immigrants, further legislative attempts to eliminate transgender existence, a rollback of women’s rights in general, and an overall attempt to restrict any form of truly free expression and existence.

Here in Eugene, there are the federal indictments that came down for alleged actions during the unrest in January following the ICE murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, numerous arrests and detainments by feds for protest activity at the Federal Building, and arrests at various street protests over the past year and a half that indicate a growing intolerance for disruptive protest³. There is a steady trickle of ICE detainments, sometimes leading to deportations, numbers of which have increased since earlier this year. Not to mention, the continued war on the unhoused in the form of sweeps of encampments, and now recently, persistent ticketing, and arrest of members and supporters of longstanding local street-feed initiative Neighbors Feeding Neighbors⁴.

For me, the most poignant example of this repressive wave is the Prairieland trials. For those who don’t know: On July 4th, 2025, a small noise demonstration occurred at the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas — an ICE concentration camp. Noise demonstrations, or noise demos, are of course protests outside of jails or other detention facilities meant to communicate to those on the inside and let them know they’re not alone. At this noise demo, a police officer drew his weapon on unarmed protestors, and an armed protestor — Benjamin “Champagne” Song — shot at the ground in front of the officer to keep him from shooting anyone. Allegedly the officer was injured, but prosecution never produced evidence of this during the trial. All attendees at the noise demo were arrested, as well as some people who had given them rides, and later people who had nothing to do with the events that night besides knowing and being in relation to those who were present. One of the most egregious examples of this were the charges against Daniel “Des” Sanchez Estrada, who was charged with “corruptly concealing a document or record” for moving a box of zines on request from his wife, Maricela Rueda, who had been present at the demo⁵.

8 of the Prairieland defendants who did not cooperate with the state’s investigation who have been sentenced so far have been sentenced to a combined 450 years in prison. Des Sanchez Estrada got 30 years for moving zines. Champagne Song got 100 years for firing a gun in arguable

² “Trump’s New Red Scare,” Vicky Osterweil on the Death Panel podcast discussing the Ministerial on Political Violence. The analysis here of the contemporary fascist project strongly informs this essay.

³ “The Black Scare and the Party of Anarchy,” a report from Filipino comrades. From Indonesian anarchists, “Chaos in the Archipelago of Fire.”

⁴ Charges against Soren Polzin; Detainments at the Fed Building; Protest arrests on and around May Day 2025 (with accompanying drama) and May Day 2026; Regular updates on the police harassment of Neighbors Feeding Neighbors and others at Washington-Jefferson Park can be found at @junkartlady on instagram

⁵ “Extreme 30-Year Prison Sentence for Artist Daniel “Des” Sanchez Estrada in the Prairieland Case (TX) Highlights Federal Attack on Freedom to Dissent” by the Free Des Support Committee in New Politics

self-defense, in a Stand Your Ground state (the self-defense argument was disallowed by the judge).

Thinking about the Prairieland defendants fills me with waves of grief, fear, and dread. Basically all of the actions they are accused of and given decades in prison for — except for shooting at a cop — are things that I have done. They are all things that I plan to do again. And to be clear, I support Champagne Song's actions.

It has implanted in me a wheedling little voice, when I am doing things as innocuous as printing zines to hand out to people, or attending very basic, low-intensity radical events like letter- writing, meetings, or protests: "You could get decades in prison for this." Now, things are quite different here in Lane County than in Texas. The district in which those trials took place is stacked with far-right judges and prosecutors. But the Prairieland trials have certainly raised the stakes of radical organizing, and showed the priorities of those in power. And they have sent a chill into me that I have had to ongoingly shake off.

But even more so than the repression, what I want to talk about is how we respond to it, individually and collectively. As an anarchist myself, I am addressing this to other anarchists, but also to anyone who desires freedom and life in common beyond racial capitalism.

In response to this heartbreaking and terrifying moment, many comrades have been tightening up security practices, and encouraging others to do so. For example, after the Minneapolis indictment came down, I saw a lot of emphasis on the phrase, "don't say anything on Signal you wouldn't want in an indictment," and I don't disagree. And certainly it's always worthwhile to update our security practices. Be intentional about what you say on or around phones. Make a habit out of not carrying your phone around as to not map your movements and connections. Take another look at your digital security and pay for Easy Opt-Outs or another info deletion service. Get a Google Pixel and put GrapheneOS on it. Hell, get a burner Pixel with Graphene on it to use for rebellious activities, being sure to never turn it on at your house or other habitual places. Pay with cash more often so that it doesn't stick out in your payment patterns when you take cash out to buy gear for actions — and please, please pay for gear in cash only, if you don't already⁶.

These are all worthwhile things! I do some of these things, not all of them. To paraphrase Diane di Prima, we better damn well be good at operational security — but let's not get uptight⁷. I believe that underlying our obsession with security culture, and underlying a lot of how we respond to repression in general, is the idea that we can control whether or not the state represses us. That if we're smart enough, if we're careful enough, if we're paranoid enough, we can stop the bad things from happening. But that control is an illusion. We ultimately cannot control whether or not the state represses us, for the most elemental of reasons: we cannot control the actions of others. In fact, we cannot control life itself. And I happen to believe that this ultimate uncontrollability of life is the luminous source from which springs the potential of liberation.

Repression will come, especially if we become powerful. Despite the violence and misery spread by the feds in Minnesota, Operation Metro Surge was made a political disaster for those in power by the strength of the insurgency it provoked. The indictment against the Minnesota 15, while frightening, reveals that the state is on its back foot and grasping at straws. Even the

⁶ Some of these tips are taken from "To the International Anarchist Movement: Three Security Proposals," by the No Trace Project — use a VPN to view this site! For information on what a VPN even is, and other digital security tips, see <https://activistchecklist.org/>

⁷ Alluding to "Revolutionary Letter #7" from Diane di Prima's Revolutionary Letters

tragic Prairieland sentences show a desperate empire endlessly bleeding legitimacy and seeking to white-knuckle some measure of control. Our fears in this moment are not just fear of the state: we fear the real power we know is bubbling right under the surface of our selves, our relationships, our neighborhoods and the streets we walk on, our movements. We fear the uncontrollable. And uncontrollable is exactly what we are at the core of our being — an uncontrollable vortex of potential, needing only to be unleashed and channeled via intention to completely transform the way we live. We already have the overcoming of this world within ourselves, too close for comfort.

Self-repression is the true goal of state repression. Producing us as closed-off individuals fueled by the fear of our own uncontrollable wildness is exactly the point. Because, even though we may speak of the State, of racial capitalism, of Empire, what have you, as if it was a real entity, a being who autonomously thinks and acts, civilization is not a being but a form of social organization. It is made up of nothing more than the actions of billions of individual people, reproducing what the actions of billions of people in the past have wrought. The continued existence of civilization requires that we continue to reproduce it in our daily actions⁸. This is why the fascists insist on “normal, healthy, ordered living” — because the way we live our lives matters. Our daily lives determine the forms of social organization that we reproduce.

Surpassing the normal, surpassing the individual we’ve been up to this moment, is an active process. It is not and cannot be automatic, because it is in fact the suspension of all prior automaticity. “Trust your instincts. [...] you know what normal is.” This is precisely how that automaticity speaks. And, if the Stephen Millers of the world had their way, automaticity would be the only thing that would ever speak, or act, or think. The complete sacrifice of subjective experience on the altar of the Normal; life impoverished to the point where it might as well be AI-generated. Luckily for us, and catastrophically for them, nothing can take away our ability to interrupt the automatic processes that we are, take a leap into the unknown, and create ourselves differently. Such is the origin of their constant paranoia, their need to create ever-new enemies in the name of securing the homeland: their control can never be total, but they refuse to accept anything less than total control. Governing under such a paradoxical principle becomes an unending series of crises and emergencies, one’s subjects an unruly mass of terrorists-in-waiting. They want the impenetrable purity of the body, the state, the nation, the race, the patriarchal family and its natural and immortal gender roles. Life is destined to slip through their hands.

As products of this paranoid, white world, we are by default, in our automaticity, the very same — though blessedly all a little more than we should be, a little less than they want us to be, when compared to the frozen ideals of the normal. But, nevertheless, we fear liberation like the state fears insurrection. They call it terrorism and we call it ego-death. They fear losing control, and we fear the same.

But we know something that they cannot. We know that we can ride within the flow of life, rather than futilely trying to harness it. Miller’s exhortation to “trust your instincts” only goes surface deep. There are deeper natures within us than the difference-hating, deviance-shunning, automatic machinery that comprise our capitalist selves. Accepting and moving with our wildness — channeling this force with intention — keeping in integrity with these intentions, recommitting to or reconfiguring them when we see we have strayed — this creates worlds completely

⁸ For an explanation of this concept through a Marxian lens, see Fredy Perlman’s essay, “The Reproduction of Daily Life”

unimaginable to and incompatible with this civilization. Let us grow and build these worlds together, toward the planetary commune of communes, ascendant as the crumbling edifice of the white Normal falls away completely.

* In this essay, I use the terms “the State,” “racial capitalism,” and “civilization” somewhat interchangeably, though they are distinct concepts. The State is a hierarchical form of government with a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, a monopoly which in the present takes the form of the police, but in the past has taken other forms. Civilization is a broader term, which encompasses both form of government and economic system, but I use it here to mean “state-based society.” My use of this term is also a nod to the fact that many economic systems before the emergence of capitalism (feudalism, for example) were characterized by social domination and hierarchy, in other words were state-based societies. There have, of course, been non-state societies throughout history. “Racial capitalism” is a term coined by Black marxist philosopher Cedric Robinson — I use it here to emphasize the importance of white supremacy to capitalism. White supremacy is global, as is colonialism. But in the United States it feels especially important to emphasize how foundational those systems are to the broader system of domination, given how this country was quite literally constructed via the plunder of Native lands and the forced labor of enslaved Africans, processes which have never ended and continue to amount to ongoing genocides against Native Americans and Black people

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