

Don't Call the Pigs

An Informal Guide to Creating an Anarchist Justice System

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Contents

How to Deal With the Pigs	3
How to Deal With Statist Courts	3
How to Deal With the State's Prisons	4
Don't Call the Pigs	5
Don't Use Their Courts	6
Don't Fill Their Cages	6
Creating a Less Violent Society	6

Anti-police sentiment is on the rise in America and around the world. In the wake of the death's of Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and countless others (Rest In Power), even the DoJ admits that at least some police departments are highly racist in practice and the Black Lives Matter movement has sprung up in response. Those from all sides of the political aisle have come out against police militarization. Pigs have been routinely denied service at various business establishments across the nation. On the inside, prisoners around the country have been on strike since September 9th, the 45th anniversary of the Attica uprising, with guards having recently gone on a solidarity work strike in support of the prisoners at Holman in Atmore, Alabama. So how do we, as anarchists, help provide tactics in the here and now for dealing with the state's armed injustice system? But more importantly in the long run, how do we build alternative defense and justice systems?

How to Deal With the Pigs

It's almost inevitable, especially if you're working class, queer, a person of color, or an activist, that you will have to interact with the pigs at some point in your lifetime. This is why it's important to hold community "Know Your Rights" workshops such as those offered by the ACLU or the National Lawyers Guild. Hold these workshops at your local infoshop, library, church, community center, or anywhere else where people, activists and non-activists alike, can learn how to hopefully more safely interact with the police. The ACLU also has an app which allows you to film police interactions and upload them automatically to the ACLU's database for protection in case you phone is confiscated or broken. Groups like Copwatch and Cop Block also encourage people to film the police and hold them accountable for injustice and police brutality.

Movements like Black Lives Matter are currently fighting to curb police brutality by calling for police demilitarization, body cameras, community review boards, community election of police officers, disarming the police, actual punishment for pigs who break the rules, and the end of policies such as Stop and Frisk and Stand Your Ground. These demands hope to curb the worst violence on the way towards abolition.

"Unarresting" people can be very risky, especially when you don't have much support, but has been used as a tactic to free people who are being kidnapped by the pigs both at protests and elsewhere. If you're up for the challenge then go for it! We need more people like you.

And don't believe any of that sovereign citizen crap. Some of it sounds good in theory but none of has ever really held up in court.

How to Deal With Statist Courts

If you are arrested and/or have to go to court, finding a lawyer is usually key. Sometimes you can luck out and find a more radical public defender who took the job to truly help poor people but chances are you're better off crowdfunding or throwing other fundraisers or looking for a lawyer who will work pro bono. Some groups, such as the Industrial Workers of the World's General Defense Committee, are also set up to help pay for bail and legal fees for activists victimized by the state. If you're looking for a good radical lawyer, depending on your case you could look towards the National Lawyers Guild, the Institute for Justice, or the American Civil Liberties Union. You could also ask you other radical friends for their local recommendations.

The now defunct nonviolent agorist defense agency Shield Mutual offered anarchists and libertarians protections against the state. Instead of armed protection, they promised services attuned to the needs of the individual. They could help with obtaining lawyers, crowdfunding for legal fees, setting up a public freedom campaign website, public relations, media promotion, and networking. They've even paid for a woman's new plane ticket after she was detained by the TSA and missed her flight. The group operated as a friendly society where members paid monthly or yearly dues which went to the cost of helping its membership. They also had a peer-to-peer mutual aid network where members could request funds from other members for emergencies, business ideas, or other projects. Sadly this group has since disbanded (although their website is still up) but it still serves as a model for other agorist defense services.

If you ever happen to be summoned for jury duty, don't try and skip out. Instead try and use the practice of jury nullification to keep people from being thrown in the state's cages. The Fully Informed Jury Association has plenty of materials to read and learn from and regularly canvases outside courthouses where they're active. Join or form a chapter, spread the knowledge. We can decide their laws are not worth enforcing.

How to Deal With the State's Prisons

If you get locked up, it can seem like the end of the battle but that is far from true. Groups like Books for Prisoners supply reading materials, both radical and non-radical alike, to inmates for entertainment and education. Black and Pink and other letter writing groups provide companionship through becoming pen pals with those held hostage by the state.

In order to help change prison conditions and aid their eventual abolition, groups like Families Against Mandatory Minimums, the Free Alabama Movement, the Free Virginia Movement, the Prison Ecology Project, the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty are essential. While some of these groups are inherently reformist, groups like FAMM and NCADP help fight against specific issues which will roll back the power of the state. Groups like the Prison Ecology Project focus on the high environmental costs of prisons. While on the inside, groups like the Black Guerrilla Family, IWOC, and other prison gangs, organizations, and unions offer a way for inmates to collectively organize against the pigs holding them hostage. IWOC, as a project of the Industrial Workers of the World, helps prisoners set up IWW branches inside prisons to organize against prison slavery and unfair living conditions.

The Anarchist Black Cross is dedicated to fighting for political prisoners and prisoners of war within the radical movement. They collect dues from its membership which are used to help prisoners with little to no resources obtain them, usually in the form of a monthly donation to an inmate's commissary fund. They also help fundraise and advocate for POWs as well as doing letter writing and in person visitation. The Black Cross is organized by both allies and inmates who control the organization through directly democratic means.

For those trying to obtain freedom, having an outside network fighting for your freedom with online promotion, political pressure, phone blasts, demonstrations, etc. is a huge help. Nobody is going to pay attention to your case unless there's enough pressure, such pressure works better in numbers, and such support comes through public awareness and media campaigns.

Failing that, there's always escape.

Don't Call the Pigs

One of the biggest things we can do in the here and now is stop relying on the police for protection. Don't call them, don't report crimes, don't allow them in your businesses, don't snitch. There are better ways of dealing with crime than turning to state violence.

Instead of calling the police, set up your own emergency networks. Have a network friends, family, or neighbors who are willing and able to respond to emergencies and call them instead. Apps such as Peacekeeper and Cell411 make this process simpler allowing multiple people to be contacted at once with GPS directions and everything. Choosing the right network could lead to a faster response time and more adaptive tactics ranging from arbitration and conflict resolution to armed defense.

Essential to living in a society without pigs is learning self-defense. Martial arts, kickboxing, women's self-defense courses, and firearms training allow individuals to help protect themselves and others from violence. Groups like the Sylvia Rivera Gun Club for Self Defense, Pink Pistols, and the Huey P. Newton Gun Club offer community firearms training to those in their community. The Huey P. Newton Gun Club actually promotes the idea of arming every black and brown citizen that can legally be armed in order to effectively protect themselves from police and white supremacist violence.

The Huey P. Newton Gun Club also advocates Black Panther style community patrols where they both protect the community from internal crime and violence in their communities and track police activity, filming them and yelling legal advice to those being harassed by the pigs while making it known that they are fully armed just in case the pig has any violent inclinations. Other anti-statist directly democratic community watch groups have also sprung up throughout history to protect communities without the need for the pigs.

In some places, especially in those where war or violence is more prevalent such as Rojava, these community watch groups take the form of voluntary militias. From the Zapatista Army to the Kurdish People's Protection Units, community regulated militias have proven an effective response to statist military and police forces. Currently the militia movement in America is of a decidedly more right-wing viewpoint, with groups like the 3%ers, and tend to carry with them underlying statist messages of patriotism and nationalism but one can hope that a leftist militia movement will grow into a reality.

Grassroots rape crisis centers offer support geared towards the needs of the survivor and most will not go to the pigs unless asked. Some already offer restorative and transformative programs to help deal with the perpetrator as well while others should be so encouraged by their communities. And as communities look towards other institutional alternatives, the creation of private detective, forensics, and arbitration services can offer attempts at filling those needs.

Dispute resolution organizations (DROs) have been proposed as an alternative to police, insurance, and alternative dispute services. According to Wikipedia, "The firms would be voluntarily contracted to provide, or coordinate with other firms to provide, services such as mediation, reimbursement for damages, personal protection, and credit reporting."

Don't Use Their Courts

Instead of relying on the state's court system to solve disputes, turning to arbitration services, trained mediators, direct negotiation between either the two parties, or non-statist alternative dispute resolution between the parties' lawyers or DRO(s) can offer solutions that are more adapted to the specific needs of the victims and the perpetrators. Community tribunals or courts could also be established in smaller communities to deal with situations directly as a community. Retribution for damaged property can be negotiated in such ways as could the establishment of a restorative and/or transformative justice process which normally takes the form of an accountability process negotiated by the victim and voluntarily fulfilled by the perpetrator. Indemnity services can also help pay for property damages in certain situations especially if no victim is caught.

Don't Fill Their Cages

Establishing accountability processes for perpetrators of violent crimes helps address the needs of both the victim and perpetrator, helps to repair the damages made, and transform the perpetrator's behavior in hopes that they do not continue to harm others. Un-cooperative perps are subject to social ostracization and denial of community services or support until they are cooperative. Repeatedly violent criminals are likely to eventually see the wrong end of a barrel of a gun in an armed anarchist community as self-defense is encouraged but in the here and now it's best to familiarize yourself and your community with the local gun laws so as to know your rights when being attacked. Hold workshops to spread the knowledge you discover in your research or find a radical lawyer who will help you put together a workshop. Sometimes there are laws that make shooting to kill is legal while warning shots are illegal and that is just one example of such strange and backwards laws. Very rarely is shooting someone worth going to prison yourself so know the laws and weigh the options.

Freely available mental health resources such as medication and counseling or even support groups such as the Icarus Project would help alleviate the crime rate as those who suffer from mental health issues won't be left untreated. This will not only allow for a way to deal with criminals who are mentally unstable in becoming stable but will help prevent crimes before they happen. Groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and other addiction and rehabilitation programs offer a way to deal with drug and alcohol addiction without turning to punishment as the answer.

Creating a Less Violent Society

Moving forward we must continue the fight to demilitarize and disarm the police, to train in self-defense, and to set up our alternative justice systems but we must also get at the root of most crime in this country. Excessive laws and regulation, racism, sexism (including heterosexism and cissexism), and poverty are at the heart of most crime in this country. Repealing prohibitions on guns, drugs, prostitution, squatting, conducting business without a license, and the myriad of other prohibitions the state enacts will empty their prisons of a majority inmates who are locked up for victimless crimes. Taking care of their economic needs by making sure folks have

food, shelter, medical care, and their other needs met either through better job opportunities in a freed market (or the agora as it stands today) or through mutual aid such as through groups like Food Not Bombs, free clinics, community lending programs, and grassroots labor unions will help combat economic crimes. As it stands most of those caught for theft, embezzlement, identity theft, robbery, and other economic crimes more often than not did so out of desperation to escape poverty. Taking care of the basic needs of your local community helps relieve such desperation and offers them the resources of survival so that they do not have to steal to obtain resources.

Nonviolent parenting, education, nonviolent communication techniques, and conflict resolution training can help to lead us to a better future where we can solve our own problems instead of relying on the state's goons to kidnap and throw our enemies – and friends – in cages. The Audre Lorde Project's Safe OUTside the System campaign teaches people how to set up safe spaces where police are not needed or welcomed. All of these ideas and more are things we could establish and do in the here and now to create our own justice systems in the traditions of agorism, dual power, and "building a new world in the shell of the old." And with people begging for solutions with both the current ongoing national prison strikes and the movements for black lives and against police militarization, now is as good a time as ever to begin building and put these ideas into practice.

Spread the Word, Break the Chains!

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