

Love & Rage Draft Political Statement

Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation

March 1997

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This is the collection of versions of all the draft sections of the political statement that were approved at the March 1997 Conference. They are not necessarily in the order they will appear in the final draft. At the March 1997 Conference, the sections on **Revolution** and on **Race & Colonialism** were essentially finished. The versions presented here are *not* the finished versions, since they were sent back to a final Style Committee to be fine tuned. The finished versions will appear in future editions of the Handbook as soon as they are available. Readers should keep in mind that all the sections here are still *draft* versions, though we are comfortable enough with them to distribute them to give interested people a basic sense of what our politics are.

Revolution

We are revolutionaries. We believe the overthrow of the state and the existing social order are necessary in order to smash the oppression and brutality that keep people from having power and control over their own lives. Revolution must happen within society, within relationships and within our own consciousness. The revolution is not just one moment in history, but a process of building social movements that are able to converge at a point when the whole system is in a deep crisis and go on the offensive, to create self-organization of masses of people, to resist the forces of repression, to smash the state, and to continue the process of breaking down authoritarian relations and creating a new free society.

The Case for Revolution

The problems of the world today require a revolutionary response. Capitalism has not brought about freedom because it is not designed to provide freedom and equality, but to exploit, dominate and oppress humanity and nature instead. It is not that the system has failed, but that the system is doing exactly what it was meant to do.

Many people with strong egalitarian visions devote their lives to trying to transform the system so that it is moral, communal and just. The reform movements that they built have won many real gains. However, the reformist road to social change ultimately gets tripped up by the conflicts inherent in the system it is trying to change. It is impossible to build a truly liberatory and egalitarian society on a historical foundation of individual self-interest and exploitation. Reformist movements do not go to the root of misery in this society: patriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy.

Reforms won by social movements are sometimes taken away when they get in the way of the needs of capital. The social safety net of the welfare state which was won by social movements in the 1930's and 1960's is being dismantled now that capitalism is expanding globally and no longer has to make concessions to North American labor when it has access to cheaper labor in industrializing countries.

Often times, rather than taking away gains won by reform movements, the system transforms them to serve its own needs rather than the needs of the people who fought for them. Capitalism is a dynamic system that is constantly changing and adapting itself to its present situation. The struggle for labor unions is a good example of this process. The right of workers to organize and bargain collectively for the conditions under which they traded labor for wages was won through the struggle of the workers themselves. However, capitalism has been able to transform collective bargaining into a mechanism for regulating labor relations. Furthermore, the people that run unions now have a stake in preserving their own position and as often as not collaborate with bosses for their own gain rather than fight for the rights of the workers they represent.

These examples show the complex relationship between the system and those who struggle to reform it. The system generates its own opposition and is in constant negotiation with it. It

concedes reforms when it can't win a fight or when the costs of winning are higher than the concessions. With every concession, those in power choose who among us they will recognize and thereby seek to incorporate our resistance into the functioning of the machine. We can win certain reforms, but the bottom line remains: their power rests on their control over our lives and they will not give up that control without a fight. If we want to put and end to their power over our lives, we will have to fight for it and fight to win.

Our understanding that reforms cannot bring about the society we want does not mean we do not participate in reform movements. We participate in many reform movements and support the struggles of people to improve their lives. However, within those movements we seek to win reforms through revolutionary means.

What is Revolution?

The revolution is a process. There is no starting point and no end point. Revolution is the transformation of ourselves, our relationships with others and society. It is the means by which we realize our vision for a better world.

The revolution must be global. The globalization of economic forces and exchange of information have made us increasingly interdependent on one another. No one section of the world can smash the authoritarian structures it lives under and build a free society without the international ruling class uniting to crush it. The ruling powers cannot afford to let the people they rule see that it is possible to live freely without a state. Likewise, the revolution cannot limit itself to the liberation of only a section of the world's population. Revolutionary movements must make links that cross geographical boundaries and make connections between many different struggles around the world.

The revolution must occur in people's consciousness. Revolutionary consciousness is the heart of the revolutionary process. Without the transformation of consciousness, a truly anti-authoritarian revolution is impossible because some people will continue to be pawns in other people's games, because they will not be able to evaluate their situation and choose their own course of action. But with the transformation of consciousness, the revolution cannot be stopped. We believe that the development of revolutionary consciousness comes through struggle. Joining with others and engaging in the transformation of one's own material reality forces a person to engage in critical thought about one's self-worth, position in society, how one relates to others, how the world works, what forces shape one's life, and how the world might be different. The development of revolutionary consciousness cannot be separated from action.

The revolution must transform relationships between people. We are social revolutionaries as well as political ones. The revolution is a process by which we change the way people relate to one another, break down the walls that divide us, and allow people to express their humanity in a multitude of loving, creative and compassionate ways. The transformation of how we respond to strangers on the street, who we consider family, with whom we form sexual bonds is all part of revolution.

The revolution is the destruction of the political, social and economic forces that oppress us. We must smash capitalism and create new economic structures that allow people to live free from material want and be productive without being exploited. We must smash patriarchy and white

supremacy and create libertarian communities and families. We must smash the state and create democratic and decentralized forms of political organization.

What the Revolution is Not

Historically, the Marxist-Leninist strategy has been the one of the most common and popular strategies in the revolutionary struggle. We disagree with the Marxist-Leninist tradition on a number of points. Marxist-Leninists claim that their historical and social analysis is “scientific”, in that they are able to predict accurately which social struggles and forces embody the main problems in society and will lead us to a revolutionary situation. While we believe that certain forces and struggles will occupy more strategic places in building a revolutionary movement at different times and under differing conditions, we do not believe that any one theory or group has a unique and total claim to an absolute or “scientific” truth that will lead us to a better world. We believe that the revolutionary movement benefits from the existence of a variety of perspectives, reflecting not just differences in social position, but in developed revolutionary political theory. Because no single theory expresses the totality of the revolutionary process, we are not looking for the eventual triumph of the single perspective, but rather the triumph of the oppressed made possible by their approach to the creation of revolutionary organizations.

Furthermore, the Marxist-Leninist insistence on the existence of a “scientific” truth that they alone have a claim to leads to a vanguard strategy. The vanguard strategy is to build an organization of an elite cadre of militants, who have a unique hold on the true path to socialist revolution and who will guide the masses to a socialist society. This strategy has consistently failed to bring about human liberation because it is inherently incapable of allowing for the self-organization and determination of people to be in direct control of their own lives. Its highly centralized and undemocratic bases have reproduced inequalities of power in society, replacing one state with another.

We do not pursue state power. We reject the creation of a political vanguard party as a means of achieving our revolutionary ends. The revolution is not the act of a monolithic social group, it is the product of the convergence of many different struggles against many different aspects of this authoritarian society, some great and some small. In opposition to the vanguard party, we pose the affinity group, the revolutionary anarchist collective, the network or federation of local collectives and other forms of revolutionary organization. We do not strive for the creation of a single organization, but neither are we opposed to the development of large revolutionary groups.

The anarchist tradition in North America has had a different approach to a revolutionary transformation of society. This anarchist tradition is one that Love and Rage has its roots in, but one that we see as limited. This tradition has advocated creating collectives, infoshops, community centers and other points of autonomy within society which will inspire others to do the same. This strategy supposes that eventually the old society will break down as people organically self-organize themselves in democratic and anti-authoritarian ways. This strategy does not address the ruling class’s ability to crush such independent forces when they begin to threaten its ability to function. The ruling class has shown a consistent willingness to bring its power to bear in destroying liberatory movements world wide.

Our Strategy for Revolution

We believe that a revolutionary situation will develop when a number of different struggles are able to go on the offensive simultaneously. We call this situation convergence. A convergence will contain coordinated activities of different forces in coalitions and alliances. It will also contain spontaneous actions by new forces stepping into the process. This will inevitably be an uneven process. A convergence means the overlapping and blurring of lines between previously distinct struggles, communities and organizations. The convergence must happen at a time when authoritarian rule is in crisis. A revolutionary situation only becomes possible when the revolutionary movement is able to recognize and exploit the crises in authoritarian rule that periodically appear.

Counter-institutions are a necessary part of building for a revolutionary situation. Counter-institutions are alternatives to the existing order created by people who have decided they cannot live under the demands of the present society. Food co-ops, radical bookstores and squatted housing are all examples of counter-institutions. When a revolutionary situation develops, counter-institutions have the potential of functioning as a real alternative to the existing structure and reliance on them becomes as normal as reliance on the old authoritarian institutions. This is when counter-institutions constitute dual power.

Dual power is a state of affairs in which people have created institutions that fulfill all the useful functions formerly provided by the state. The creation of a general state of dual power is a necessary requirement for a successful revolution.

There will come a point in a revolutionary situation when armed insurrection will be necessary. In order to survive, the ruling class will be forced to smash the revolutionary movement by force and we will be forced to respond preemptively or in kind. Armed insurrection will most likely take a number of different forms. Strategic military operations, prison revolts, riots, attacks on physical institutions such as police stations, banks and city halls will all be likely aspects of armed insurrection in a revolutionary situation.

At the current stage of the revolutionary process, our revolutionary strategy is embedded in how we approach existing social movements. We believe that within social movements social change becomes revolutionary when people are able to make the necessary links to see the totality of what they are fighting for. To that end, we participate in the building of social movements, whether they be against police brutality, racist terror, homophobia, sexism, prisons, budget cuts, attacks on education and social services, or the rights of workers.

Within these social movements, we push for revolutionary pluralism. Revolutionary pluralism is a response to the growing complexity of capital and imperialism. We believe that the worker can no longer be seen as the sole agent of revolutionary change. Rather, the struggles of women, people of color, and oppressed nationalities, along with workers, constitute the potential, in their plurality, to be the foundations for a new mass movement. A revolutionary pluralist strategy has four key elements:

1. It embodies the vision of a directly democratic and egalitarian society;
2. It opposes all forms of oppression — not one more than others;
3. It promotes direct action;

4. It embodies the particular demands of the diverse groups of oppressed and exploited people by this society.

Within the movements in which we participate, we fight for direct democracy, that is, that the people who are participating in the particular struggle or movement are making the decisions about the direction the movement will go. We fight for democratic internal structure and real debate, discussion, and communication so that everyone's voice is heard. Accordingly, we fight against internal racism, sexism and homophobia within the movement.

There is no inherently privileged struggle or sector of society that is more important in the revolutionary process than others. This does not mean that we think all struggles are equally important or have the same revolutionary potential. We support the increased coordination of activity by political forces within various social movements, and we completely reject the attempt to create a vanguard organization that defines itself as the leadership of any movement.

Direct action is taking matters into your own hands. Rather than appealing to those in power for an answer to one's problems, taking direct action means retaining one's own autonomy and refusing to be pacified or co-opted. Direct action could mean taking over the school library when budget cuts threaten to shut it down, instead of writing letters to legislators. It could mean sabotaging the trucks of a logging company that is illegally chopping down old-growth forests, instead of taking them to court. It could mean using bricks and baseball bats to chase nazi skinheads out of our neighborhoods, instead of using the police.

Direct Action can sometimes mean using violence. The system that oppresses us is a violent one and requires a violent response in order to overthrow it. In a truly liberatory society, we believe that violence will become obsolete. Conflicts between people and groups will be resolved peacefully. However, until that day, the oppressed will need to defend themselves against the powers that be and violence will be a necessary, but not the only, tool in the revolutionary process. We understand that violence is a destructive force both for those who use it as well as those who it is used against. The psychic and emotional damage that violence has on those who perpetrate it cannot be ignored. However, movements of oppressed people have been crushed too many times in part because they have chosen, for just these reasons, not to use violence against their oppressors.

We do not participate in mass movements simply to mobilize people for the revolution that we want. Rather the demands and desires of the people must be the basis of the new society we are fighting for. The role of an organization like Love and Rage is not to lead the movement but to participate in it as equals in order to link related issues and to heighten existing conflicts in society.

Anti-Authoritarianism

Anarchists fight against all aspects of oppression: class rule, patriarchy, racism, homophobia, and many others. While other political movements focus on one “primary” oppression — which acts as a linchpin, holding together the whole oppressive system — anarchists fight all the things which keep people down. While we may conclude that one aspect of oppression or another plays a more or less important role at any given historical moment, we demand total liberation and refuse to compromise on one front for the illusion of a gain on another. All oppressions are deeply related to each other as facets of a single authoritarian system of coercion, domination, and hierarchy.

Associated with other facets of oppression is the ideological or social-psychological aspect. No society can long survive if an armed guard must stand behind each person. People must want to do what they have to do. Aspects of oppression, such as the rule of one class, gender, or race over all others, are not just a pattern of popular behavior but are also a matter of how people think and feel. Popular consciousness supports the oppressive patterns of behavior; while the popular behaviors continually recreate the oppressive consciousness. Basic ways of looking at society are passed along through the family, the church, schools, politics, popular culture, and the way people live and work. The system cannot completely destroy people’s desire for freedom nor their common sense, but these can be distorted into widespread prejudice, ignorance, and superstition.

The struggle for liberation, then, is not only about social structures but is also about consciousness. Systems of consciousness are composed of values, feelings, and ideas which may or may not be organized into deliberate philosophies or religions (that is, ideologies). Social oppression has generally been upheld by two apparently contrary systems of consciousness. One is authoritarianism and the other cynicism.

Authoritarian Ideology

“Authority” has been used to mean the influence of people who may know more about a particular subject than other people. Such “authorities” are not regarded as superior to others outside their field of expertise, and to the extent that they pass on their knowledge (such as good coaches), they increase other people’s independence. But “authority” has also been used to mean the “natural” and “proper” superiority of some people over others, their right to tell others what to do — to make others serve them. This is the authority we oppose, which we call authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism says that the rulers’ ideas are not merely the best ideas that fallible human minds could produce under certain circumstances. Their ideas are “supported” by forces beyond human consciousness: God or the gods, the laws of nature, or the historical process. The problem is not so much a belief that there is a supernatural God or “laws” of nature or a historical process, but thinking that finite and fallible human beings can know the intentions of God, nature, or

history, beyond any doubt whatsoever, with complete confidence. Inquisitions, holy wars, jihads, and Stalinist purges have been justified by this arrogance.

At times the authoritarian approach has been temporarily used for good ends, as when the Catholic church in the 1960s declared segregation to be a sin deserving excommunication. But now they use the same authority to condemn women's reproductive rights. Similarly, Marxists have long fought against the oppressions of capitalism, buoyed by the "certainty" that they knew the laws of history. But the same certainty of knowing history rationalized their establishment of totalitarian regimes.

Anarchists do not claim to have marching orders from God or to have absolute knowledge of historical processes — and we do not trust those who do. Knowledge is only the best approximation of reality that some people can create at any specific time, reached through the free and open exchange of ideas.

Cynicism

An apparent alternate to the authority of absolute ideas is cynicism. This is the rejection of all values, the belief that people should just "look out for number one," no one will help anyone and everything is a racket. These are widespread views in our society, consistent with the morally empty marketplace and its hypocritical politics. They are not really contrary to moral absolutism. People typically believe in an authoritarian morality, but one which is confined to the church on weekends, and a broad cynicism for the rest of life. The religious morality is seen as "too high a standard" for people to actually "live up to" in the "real world" of patriarchal capitalism.

For individuals, cynicism is more of an attitude than a worked-out ideology. Applied to groups, however, it becomes an important set of beliefs: "my" group above all others, my country, my race, my religion, we come first, "we're number one!" In the form of nationalism, group cynicism appears as a high ideal. This is not to condemn people's attachment to their cultures or groups, especially groups which are oppressed. It is to condemn the placing of any segment of humanity above all others. How often has a formerly oppressed grouping become a new oppressor? How often has one oppression been used to justify ignoring others? We stand with the oppressed because our values are universal.

Moral values are not written in the stars nor in an abstract human nature. They cannot be proven like a chemical reaction. But human beings have always been value-creating animals. Certain moral values have been advocated for ages: cooperation, kindness, universalism, respect for the lives of others, seeing the world through the viewpoint of others. These values have been used to support oppression but they have also been used to justify rebellion. They have been summarized in the great ideals of freedom, democracy, equalitarianism, and socialism — ideals which have been betrayed again and again but which have mobilized millions against human domination. We are proud to be the heirs of these traditions!

We have no new values to impose on others; we only ask people to be true to their own ideals. Our fellow subjects of the American empire generally "believe in" democracy, freedom, and the value of human beings — along with authoritarian and cynical beliefs. We will try to persuade them, in the course of struggle, that the only program consistent with their best values is that of revolutionary anarchism.

The Need for Commitment

Cynicism includes a belief that humans cannot know reality, not even approximately — a crude empiricism. It upholds the system of domination, precisely because it denies that there is a system. Liberals, who may see as many social evils as we do, see them as distinct problems, to be solved one at a time, rather than as part of an integrated system.

Absolute certainty is not possible; all the facts are never in. But at a certain point, decisions are necessary, hypotheses adopted, and a commitment to action must be made. The complexity of reality must not be made into an excuse for failing to make moral commitments.

Our best judgment is that international socialist-anarchist revolution is the only alternative to catastrophe. This social system is not stable and will not last. The question is what will replace it. Alongside the dangers of economic collapse or the rise of a new fascism or Stalinism, the very existence of the human race is threatened by nuclear war and by worldwide ecological imbalance.

Again, we have no values to impose on others. Virtually everyone is against the destruction of the human species. We intend to argue that the only way to prevent it is through our program, the anarchist vision. To this we have committed ourselves.

Patriarchy

One of the oldest and most persistent forms of authoritarian rule is patriarchy. Patriarchy is the system of male domination over women. The institutions of patriarchal power are not directed only at women: they are the main institutions that oppress kids and youth and that repress and pervert the rich diversity of human sexuality by trying to force it into the narrow confines of approved heterosexual relationships. Patriarchy also operates as a foundation of state power, used to justify a paternalistic relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Patriarchy has not always existed. We know that societies have existed in which women wielded the majority of power, and others in which power was more evenly distributed. We do not know exactly how patriarchy first emerged, but for as long as it has existed, women have resisted the expansion of patriarchal power and have created zones of relative autonomy.

The gynocidal witch hunts from 1250 to 1550 were an all-out war by the patriarchal Catholic church and the various state authorities against women's power. While the patriarchal church and matriarchal pagan traditions had co-existed uneasily for centuries, some women's religious orders were becoming more autonomous from the church. The witch hunts were aimed at destroying this autonomous women's power by mass murder and general terror. In the process, the church and the male aristocracy were able to accumulate vast amounts of wealth. This kind of wholesale looting financed the opening rounds of exploration and conquest, which eventually succeeded in expanding European-style patriarchal exploitation to include the women of the colonies.

With the Industrial Revolution, women were super-exploited in the fabric mills and were involved in the earliest workers' struggles. The collective experience of the workplace broke down the isolation experienced by women doing domestic work and laid a new foundation for women to assert their collective power.

The struggle against slavery, both by slaves and free abolitionists, witnessed the widespread reappearance of women as participants in public life. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, the Grimke sisters, and many others were leaders in the fight for the abolition of slavery. Amongst white people, women were the main force for abolition.

The abolitionist movement brought together women who went on to build the first modern feminist movement. While this movement was seriously compromised by frequent expressions of white chauvinism, it was the first continuous expression of women's autonomous political power in centuries. Struggles for women's suffrage, the legalization and distribution of birth control, and the extension of other basic freedoms to women marked the beginning of a long struggle to destroy patriarchy altogether. Emma Goldman spoke about the limitations of all these reforms and consistently argued for a more radical program that attacked the institution of marriage and demanded full sexual liberation.

In the 1960s, with the widespread entrance of women into higher education, and participation in the mass movements for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam, women became active not only in public life but also in "revolutionary" movements that consistently relegated them

to a subservient status. So the late 1960s saw the emergence of a mass women's liberation movement with a strong revolutionary wing that expressed a radical critique of patriarchy and related systems of oppression. This movement won the legalization of abortion, the prohibition of job discrimination, the dramatic expansion of women's presence in public life, and initiated a general transformation of personal relations between women and men-and between women and other women-that continues to this day.

The second wave feminist movement, like the first wave, was dominated by white and middle class women. The late 1970's and early 1980's saw an explosion of writings by women of color. In her book "Ain't I a Woman?", bell hooks wrote in the tradition of Sojourner Truth's famous speech, exposing the racism of white feminists who assume that their experience as women is universal. She urged women of color to "re-appropriate" feminism to provide "all women a feminist ideology uncorrupted by racism."

Women of color feminists like Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and Gloria Anzaldua have written about the need to acknowledge the differences between women, and to recognize the ways that many women are oppressed by racism, class exploitation, and homophobia. The influence of these ideas on the feminist movement and other social movements has laid the foundation for a powerful new kind of coalition work that doesn't ask people to prove their loyalty to one struggle or another, but to fight together for the liberation of humanity.

The Patriarchal Family

Patriarchy translates literally as "the rule of the father." The patriarchal family is a basic social unit dominated by a single husband/father who is the final authority. Women give birth, but within the patriarchal family, men are given control over women's sexuality and capacity for reproduction. Though disguised as protection and support, the rule of the father is often enforced through violence and sexual terrorism.

Even people who are not in patriarchal families are subject to the rule of the father as handed down by the boss, the church, and the state. The maintenance of the family is a major component of all reactionary ideologies. Current attacks on single moms and queers punish those who stray from the patriarchal family model, and blame them and the decay of the nuclear family for all social ills. This attack on poor women and queers has legal sanction in anti-queer ballot measures that have passed, and in "personal responsibility acts" which, for example, require mothers under eighteen to be married to receive public assistance.

In place of an outmoded patriarchal family, the church and the state have stepped in to ban sex ed in schools, restrict access to birth control, and outlaw abortion. Sterilization without consent and other "population control" programs have been pushed by the U.S. government and the World Bank and are continually used as weapons of imperialism against women of color within U.S. borders and around the world.

Sexual Terrorism

Rape, incest, harassment, and other forms of sexual terrorism are the main weapons used by patriarchy to enforce its rule. One out of three women in the U.S. can expect to be raped in her lifetime. All women live in the shadow of sexual violence, and it dramatically limits their

freedom of movement and ability to have free lives. Women are often forced to turn to men to protect them from violence, but the price of that protection is the total power of the “protecting” man: the father, boyfriend, husband, or cop.

Sexual terrorism is institutionalized. Men are trained to carry it out so routinely that they often don’t even recognize it. Women are so consistently beaten down, humiliated, and dehumanized that men come to see this as normal. Women’s bodies are transformed in the minds of men into objects for the realization of their own needs and desires, without regard to the wishes, desires, or needs of the women involved. Men are trained to hear consent where it does not exist and to wear down women who assert control over their bodies.

Women and Work

Two thirds of all the work in the world is done by women. On top of the work women do to support themselves and children, women do unwaged work like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of kids. This work makes it possible for themselves, husbands and boyfriends, and future generations to go out and work. Bosses profit from this unpaid labor, but women remain economically dependent on men. The patriarchal division of labor devalues the work necessary to maintain the human species. Cooking, cleaning, and childcare are common social responsibilities which as a revolutionary movement we must value and share.

Male supremacy is reproduced in the workplace where women are paid less, confined to conventionally “female” occupations, and subject to sexual harassment. Under the global economic restructuring known as neo-liberalism, this division of labor is becoming increasingly brutal on an international scale. Multinational garment and electronics corporations based in powerful Western countries superexploit women around the world, pay them starvation wages, force them to endure unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and often, to live in locked dorms.

Women bear the brunt of cutbacks in social programs, and are the first to be pushed out of relatively well-paid jobs and pushed into lowwage, low-security jobs where they’re isolated and it’s hard for them to organize, such as temp work, part-time jobs, and domestic work.

The Women’s Liberation Movement that We Want

Love and Rage builds upon the long history of insubordination, sabotage, and organized resistance by those subject to patriarchal terror. Our freedom will not come through the passage of yet more laws but through the building of communities strong enough to defend themselves against anti-choice and anti-queer terror, rape, battery, child abuse and police harassment. We need to follow the example of projects like the Jane Collective and develop strategies to provide women-controlled health care and abortions.

A revitalized feminist movement must be relevant to the experiences of the majority of women in the world. When women organize, we break down the isolation between us and learn more about our own and each other’s lives. We need to build a feminist movement that fights the oppression faced by women of color, queer women, and poor and working-class women. We need to build networks across borders, between women who are resisting the cutbacks in social welfare programs, other austerity measures, and super-exploitative labor practices that are part of neo-liberalism.

The international working class is predominately women. We need to understand the ways that capitalism is expanding its control over our lives and feeding off of pre-existing forms of patriarchal domination. Patriarchy existed in feudal times, and it is possible for patriarchy to operate in an anarchist society which fails to treat the family as a public institution or to operate in a socialist society which assumes that patriarchy will dissolve with the end of capitalism. We must fight to overthrow the institutions of patriarchy as well as those of capitalism if we want to build a truly free society.

The Oppression of Kids and Youth

Instead of being members of a whole community, children are a possession of their parents. Over the course of “growing up,” they are beaten down, their desire for knowledge is stifled or extinguished, and they learn to be ashamed of their bodies, thoughts, and feelings. In the family, we first learn the pattern of domination and obedience that follows us through our lives. Incest, beatings, spankings, and scoldings are all part of a process of socialization that prepares us to accept that our bodies are not our own, that our wishes and desires have no value.

The state denies young people civil rights until they are 18 or 21, enforcing curfew and mandatory attendance in schools through police harassment and brutality. Under the guise of education, kids are taught obedience and conformity, and generally prepared to be either good workers or bosses. We support young people’s resistance to the forces that seek to control their lives.

Compulsory Heterosexuality, Gender, and Queer Liberation

Almost from birth, kids are forced into strict gender roles. They are dressed in pink or blue, given gender-specific toys, and taught to imitate their mothers and fathers and to desire the so-called opposite sex. Girls have their sense of autonomy, pride in their physical strength, and dreams crushed. Boys have their capacities for empathy, nurturance and interest in the desires of others beaten out of them.

There is nothing “natural” about this strait-jacketed gender and sexuality. Humans are playful, sensual and curious animals who find many diverse and wonderful ways of pleasing themselves and each other sexually. Because free sexuality challenges the structures of the patriarchal family, and because it breaks down the separation and alienation between people, it is potentially disruptive to the functioning of authoritarian society.

Queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered) people are therefore denied civil rights, subject to police brutality, and are attacked by fearful and repressed people. The “closet” refers to the requirement by heterosexual society that queers hide their sexuality and pretend to be straight. While public displays of heterosexuality abound in the media, on the streets, and everywhere else in our lives, the slightest indication of queer affection generates hysterical responses that at best kill the pleasure of the moment, and at worst end in violent assault or murder. This suppression of a huge area of human sexuality has a global character. It is justified with the Bible in the U.S. and wrapped in the red flag in Cuba.

Despite these attacks, the queer liberation movement has, in a couple of decades, vastly increased the public visibility and acceptance of the diversity of human sexuality. The AIDS epidemic has had a devastating impact, at first on gay and bisexual men, and more recently on

women and children. In the face of this devastation, coupled with a rise in queer-bashing, the queer community responded with one of the most powerful, militant, creative, radical, and nonauthoritative movements of this period.

Patriarchal domination is perpetuated by the system of gender which is forced on us. Women everywhere have resisted being defined by their capacity to bear children. Queer people have created a tradition of subverting and re-creating gender that is potentially liberating for all of humanity. People will always form identities and groups based on these identities, even in a free society. But our identities and social formations must be based on self-determination if we are to build a real human community where people have the freedom to be who they want to be.

The Empire of Capital

We live in a capitalist society in which a minority ruling class controls the means of production and the rest of us are compelled to work for them by one means or another. Humanity has the collective capacity to meet all of our basic needs, but under capitalism hundreds of millions go hungry, are homeless, die of treatable illnesses and work under the most brutal conditions. Even the middle classes and more privileged workers who do not live in fear of hunger have little control over many important decisions that affect their lives. Furthermore, capitalism has created a commodified culture that drains all our lives of meaning and corrodes the bonds of human community.

What Is Capitalism?

Capitalism as a system is characterized by commodity production, the making of things to be bought and sold. While commodity production has existed since antiquity, it first began to become the dominant system around the world with the conquest and colonization of the Americas by Europe. The history of capitalism is the story of the relentless expansion of this system of commodity production into new areas. This expansion has introduced capitalism into every corner of the globe and increasingly into every realm of our lives. Sex, food, music, poetry and all the other things that make life good become things traded on the market and in the process lose their ability to really fulfill us.

Like all forms of class society capitalism is based on exploitation. The laboring classes in all societies produce more than they need to survive. By direct or indirect means the ruling class takes this “surplus value” from those whose work produced it. Before the rise of capitalism this process of exploitation was direct. The ruling class obtained its wealth through taxes, rents, tributes and the work of slaves. Under capitalism the process is hidden by the impersonal workings of the market. Workers are compelled to sell their labor for less than it produces in order to survive. This is only possible because the workers are separated from the tools and machines they use to produce things. This “alienation from the means of production” means that workers are also separated from the products of their labor and ultimately from themselves. The “products of our labor” are not just physical things; they are all the things that make up society. The psychological feeling of alienation that characterizes life under capitalism is a direct consequence of this concrete and material alienation from the processes by which we make and remake the world.

The seeds of capitalism have existed so long as there have been people who live by buying and selling the products of other peoples labor. But this layer of merchants only rose to dominance with the creation of a global market by European expansion. The trans-Atlantic slave trade and the plantation system it supplied with African labor in large part financed the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America. The Industrial Revolution saw the wholesale transformation of labor into another commodity to be bought and sold on the market. In this sense chattel slavery

was the foundation on which the system of wage slavery was built. Since then every imaginable form of human activity has been turned into a job.

Capitalism is the most dynamic form of class society in human history. Because profits are immediately plowed back into the further development of new productive forces capitalism is characterized by relentless growth and change. As a result of this, capitalism has “revolutionized” many aspects of this society. When old prejudices become an obstacle to capitalist growth they are often swept away. At the same time capitalism uses long-standing oppressive relations and ideologies for its own purposes, often transforming them in the process. The place of women in the processes of economic production, for example, has undergone many radical changes and this has created openings for women to challenge particular aspects of patriarchal rule. At the same time capital has continued to maintain the generally subordinate social position of women in spite of these changes. We must appreciate the always dynamic and sometimes revolutionary nature of capitalism if we want to destroy it.

Capitalism has been dependent not only on the exploitation of wage workers, but also on the superexploitation of women in the home and colonized peoples who produced raw materials for industrial production. The working class, then, is not simply industrial workers or even all those people who perform wage labor, but the whole social complex of people whose lives sustain capitalism. This includes unwaged producers (semi-proletarianized peasants producing for the market and houseworkers), children who are being prepared for work, as well as the unemployed who serve to keep wages down.

From its inception capitalism has depended on and developed unequal relations between different peoples and nations. This inequality was made explicit by the actual conquest of peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Imperialism is the systematic subjugation by direct and indirect means of the majority of the world’s peoples by the ruling classes of a handful of imperialist countries. Imperialism has evolved from the direct rule of overseas colonies to the domination of formally independent former colonies by increasingly transnational capital. Following the Second World War anti-colonial national liberation struggles significantly challenged imperialism worldwide. In the name of socialism many of these movements established some variety of state capitalism based on the nationalization of private property and the direction of economic development by a party-state. These changes did not constitute a break with capitalism but they did force it to reorganize and put the dominant capitalist powers on the defensive for a generation.

Capitalism has always generated resistance. Indigenous resistance, slave revolts, Luddism, resistance to enforced domesticity and sexual subordination, the creation of cultures of resistance, and housing struggles are just some of the many forms that anti-capitalist resistance has taken and that inspire us today. It is this self-activity of all people oppressed and exploited by capitalism that is the germ of a new post-capitalist society.

Because its labor sustains capitalism, the only class that has the power to overthrow capitalism is the working class. This does not mean that other classes can’t contribute to the struggle against capitalism or don’t have legitimate demands of their own. Neither does it mean that the struggles of other sectors of society (youth; women; queer people; oppressed national, ethnic or racial groups) are any less central to the revolutionary process. The overthrow of capitalism is only one part of the larger revolutionary process which also includes the overthrow of patriarchy and all forms of racial, national or ethnic oppression.

Neo-Liberalism

The anti-colonial struggles following the Second World War and the simultaneous social upheavals in Europe, North America and Japan seriously undermined the stability of international capitalism by the late 1960s. In response to these challenges capitalism embarked on a new strategic orientation that has come to be called “neo-liberalism.” Taking advantage of the increasing mobility of capital and the globalization of production processes resulting from the development of new technologies, neo-liberalism has attacked the various gains won by the working class, by anti-colonial struggles, and by the new social movements.

Starting in the early 1970s, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank began imposing austerity measures on Third World governments in exchange for development loans. More recently, these same demands have been made of First World countries as a condition for participation in regional and global agreements like NAFTA and GATT. The dramatic expansion of industrial production in parts of Asia and Latin America has been accompanied by deindustrialization in the old imperialist countries and the complete social collapse of parts of Africa. The old imperialist countries have witnessed a dramatic reorganization of their working classes with the expansion of the service and information economies and the expanding use of part time and temp workers. These changes have contributed to and been accelerated by the imposition of neo-liberal policies.

Neo-liberalism refers to the policies of eliminating barriers to international investment, privatizing state-owned industries, dismantling social services, and attacking various guarantees that protected the rights of workers, peasants and other poor people. These policies have been accompanied by a dramatic expansion in the repressive power of the state (more cops and prisons) and the rise of fascism and other reactionary movements as more privileged sectors of the working class attempt to prevent what they see as their submersion into its lower ranks.

Huge sections of the population are being made marginal to the production process and are being treated more and more like “surplus humanity.” The explosion of the prison population and the imposition of police-state techniques for controlling housing projects and poor peoples’ neighborhoods reflect this chilling attitude. While unemployment and underemployment are used as tools to divide the working class the dramatic growth of the unemployed has made them a sector from which significant struggles against the status quo are emanating.

The Fight Against Capitalism

We are fighting for the overthrow of capitalism. We are fighting for a world in which decisions about what is produced and how are made by the people affected by those decisions. This means we are fighting for the complete democratic reorganization of production. This must involve workers at the point of production, directly affected communities, and ultimately the whole of humanity.

This vision depends on the development of the capacity of the working class to consciously act on its own behalf unmediated by the power of politicians and bureaucrats. As the experience with state capitalism in the 20th century demonstrates, without this development of workers autonomy any effort to establish a just economic order will fail and reproduce the hierarchical class relations of capitalism.

We understand that only by overthrowing the privileges and inequalities of power of race and gender, that divide the working class itself as much as society as a whole, is it possible for the working class to achieve the unity necessary to overthrow capitalism. Consequently the overthrow of these hierarchies is an interest of the class as a whole. At every turn we must fight within the working class for this understanding.

The class struggle is a daily fact of life. But it only becomes a revolutionary struggle when the oppressed classes become conscious of the nature of the system they are up against and the possibility of overthrowing it. The creation of strike committees, workers councils and other forms of workers' self-organization in the course of the class struggle prefigure the reorganization of a post-capitalist society.

Race and Colonialism in North America

We live in a racist society. Modern racism is primarily, though not exclusively, the product of the period of European global expansion. The system of racial power and privilege known as white supremacy was built up over the past 500 years through the process of the European conquest, colonization, genocide, and enslavement of the peoples of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Elements of racist ideology can be traced to before the period of European expansion and those ideas have since been adapted to the needs of non-European oppressor groups around the world. Racism, however, refers not only to the poisonous ideas of racial supremacy but to the institutionalized relations of inequality that to this day deny basic dignity to the majority of humanity. In the Americas these relations have been expressed mainly in terms of white power and privilege. Accordingly we are committed to the uprooting of all forms of racism and national oppression, the complete overthrow of the racist system of white supremacy in particular, and the creation of a society that respects the full diversity of all human cultures.

While European countries have been the main colonial powers for the past 500 years and therefore the main object of our analysis they can claim no monopoly on the horrendous practices most closely associated with their ascendancy. At different times Asian, African and American Indian empires have also conquered and ruthlessly subjugated peoples. In modern memory Japan carried out great crimes in its attempts to conquer East Asia. On a smaller scale we can find the systematic oppression of ethnic minorities in practically every corner of the globe.

The Conquest of the Americas

The wholesale slaughter of indigenous peoples initiated by Columbus and continued for the past five centuries was initially justified not on racial but rather on religious grounds. The crimes committed against the Indians were justified because they weren't Christians. But the exploitation of the labor of the native population by the Spanish conquistadors established some of the basic features of what would quickly become a system of racial oppression.

The great civilizations of Mexico and Peru were systematically destroyed and the Europeans began to define the native peoples as "savages" and to justify their rule on paternalistic grounds. The conquest of indigenous populations took two main forms. In Mexico, Central America and the Andes, after an initial period of slaughter the indigenous peoples became the main subordinate social group whose exploited labor would support the colonial system. In the United States and Canada the native peoples were targeted for extermination and those that survived were pushed to the geographic and social margins of a society dominated by European settlers. It was on these foundations of native conquest and genocide that the particular social structures of the Americas were built.

Colonization and Slavery

The European colonies established in the Americas were business enterprises designed to deliver cheap raw materials — gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, cotton — to their respective mother countries. Their profits depended on a reliable supply of the cheapest possible labor. In the highlands of Peru and Mexico this need was met by indigenous peoples tied to the hacienda system. In the Caribbean, Brazil and much of British North America this demand for labor was met with African slaves.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade is one of the greatest crimes ever committed in human history. Flourishing African societies were devastated by the predatory pursuits of the slave traders. Millions of Africans perished crossing the Atlantic packed into the living hell of slave ships that were followed across the ocean by sharks waiting to feed on human flesh. In the Americas the enslaved Africans were subjected to a systematic effort to break their spirits, destroy their culture and strip them of their humanity. The plantation system sought to squeeze the enslaved African for every penny of profit possible. Most slaves were simply worked to death. Only in British North America did the African population become self-reproducing before the abolition of slavery.

The slave system gave rise to many forms of active and passive resistance. From resistance on the job to escape to open insurrection slave resistance raised the costs of slavery until the system came crashing down. While the support of white abolitionists and contradictions between the slave system and industrial capitalism contributed to the defeat of slavery these forces too were set in motion by the determined resistance of the enslaved themselves. To this day the overthrow of slavery stands as the greatest achievement in the struggle for human liberation and as the most compelling evidence that the most wretchedly oppressed people have the capacity to overthrow their oppressors.

Origins of Racism

In popular consciousness race is associated with skin color or other physical characteristics and presumed descent. In reality race is a mark of relative social power and privilege that has been socially constructed through the historical development of this society. The first Europeans and Africans to settle in the Americas did not think of themselves as white or black in the sense that those words have today. They were Spanish or English or Igbo or Hausa. They were Catholics or Protestants or Muslims or practitioners of Vodun. While they were undoubtedly aware of differences in their appearances and cultural practices they did not yet think of themselves as members of distinct “races.” While ethnocentrism of different sorts has existed at least since antiquity, the modern system of racial classifications was developed during the period of European expansion as a mechanism of social control.

The European colonies in the Americas could only be operated profitably if a cheap source of labor could be secured. In much of the Americas this gave rise to a system of racial slavery. This system was defined as much by who it did not enslave as by who it did. This system was developed in response to the threat of united resistance coming from the servant class as a whole. Poor Europeans were given powers and privileges (guns, land, the vote) that were denied the Africans and in this way drawn into a web of white racial solidarity with their rulers. The enactment

of legal distinctions between servants of European and African origin enshrined this system in law. In the U.S. the division of the colonial populations into free European settlers (whites) and enslaved Africans (blacks) and the establishment of special power and privileges for the white population became the most powerful weapon of the white ruling class. Thus was born the white race.

Simultaneously Africans of diverse ancestry were cast together on plantations where they were compelled to develop a common culture in order to survive. The creation of this syncretic culture drawing from a variety of African sources as well as European and Indian ones was a profound act of collective resistance. It is this culture of resistance as much as any white-imposed system of racial categories that is the foundation of black racial or national consciousness. This Black national consciousness has expressed itself in many different forms. In religious practices on the plantation and in the Black church the unity of Black people through the cultural connection with Africa has been reaffirmed from generation to generation. Only in the 20th century was this tradition of grassroots nationalist pride in one's African roots linked to a Black nationalist political program, first by Marcus Garvey and then by Malcolm X.

In Mexico and other parts of Latin America, where Indians and not Africans were the primary source of exploited labor, a different system of racial categories emerged. Whites were on top and Indians on the bottom but a Mestizo group of supposed mixed ancestry also emerged, eventually becoming the majority group. In the Caribbean a caste of Coloreds-people of mixed descent-occupied this middle position.

In contrast to the North American colonies that became the United States, the colonies that became Canada were originally built on the expansion of trade with Native peoples rather than the labor intensive plantation system. When labor was brought in to Canada it was largely European and only later Asian labor. When the French colony of Quebec came under English control the Francophone Quebecois became the socially subordinate group of settlers ruled over by an Anglophone elite. The result is a distinctive system less closely associated with the super-exploitation of non-white labor and more closely resembling a European-style system of class divisions.

The Function of Racial Ideology

We reject all ideas of ethnic, national or racial essentialism that have developed in the service of white supremacy or in response to it. We reject the whole idea of racial categories which we know in no way correspond with any classification recognized by natural science. Rejecting racial categories does not mean denying or denigrating the existence of distinct cultures which may correspond roughly with those categories. We recognize the existence of distinct cultures but also the permeability of the cultural boundaries that separate them. All American culture is syncretic — drawing in different measures from African, European, Indian, and more recently Asian roots. Many individuals have found themselves with one foot in one culture and the other in another.

While there is no scientific foundation for the division of humanity into races that division has become an oppressive social fact in the lives of hundreds of millions of people. In the Americas and around the world racial ideology remains a major instrument of social control. Their reconfiguration over time has served the changing needs of an exploitative social system.

Racial ideology has also been used by historically oppressed groups to build solidarity in the struggles against white supremacy. Currents within Black nationalism and the Mexican idea of La Raza are examples of this tendency. While upholding the right of all oppressed peoples to self-determination, we reject all racial ideologies as ultimately reactionary and oppressive. Racial purity has always been a myth and therefore we stand for a truly non-racial society in which the integrity of distinct cultures is respected. The primary task in achieving this vision is the overthrow of white supremacy and the complete destruction of white racial power and privilege. Accordingly, in all cases we are committed to participating in the fight to redress historical racial inequalities.

Nationality

Like race, modern ideas of nationality are of historically recent vintage. Nations are imagined communities created by aspiring ruling classes. Common culture, language, religion or history is used (or, where it doesn't yet exist, invented) to unite antagonistic social classes into a "nation" with a market and a patriotic army to defend it. The US and Haitian revolutions and the independence movements of the mainland Spanish colonies turned colonial societies made up of people of diverse origins and social status into modern nations ready to go to war on behalf of the interests of their new national ruling classes. The creation of "new" nations out of old colonies in the Americas in turn provided a model for the rise of 19th-century European nationalisms. Later European nationalism would serve as a model for anticolonial national liberation struggles in Africa and Asia.

In the 19th century the major European powers divided up much of Asia and almost all of Africa. The colonial empires they created were justified in terms of European nationalism. When the colonized peoples of these empires rose up during the 20th century they did so in the name of their own nationalisms. While there are important similarities between them it is important to distinguish between the nationalisms of oppressed and oppressor nations.

The nationalisms of oppressed peoples speak to popular desires for a sense of community that was destroyed by the process of imperialist conquest. The attempt to revive old suppressed cultural traditions is often an important part of the effort to create a new kind of community.

The anti-colonialist national liberation struggles of the 20th century put the imperialist countries on the defensive and politically mobilized the oppressed classes of the colonized countries. But these struggles — even when they proclaimed themselves socialist — were in fact led largely by middle class forces. While the upheavals created openings for the peasants and workers of these countries the regimes that were brought to power were ultimately state capitalist.

We uphold the legitimacy of national liberation struggles while recognizing the limitations of what they can accomplish. We also know from history that the efforts of aspiring leaders to enforce particular standards of race or nationality deny the true diversity contained within all cultures and by their violence demonstrate that there is nothing natural about those standards. The creation of every nation has involved the systematic suppression of difference within the nation. True self-determination must extend to all members of a cultural community or it is meaningless.

Manifest Destiny

The United States was created in a war for independence by a population of land – hungry white settlers. Freed of the constraints of English treaties with various Indian nations the new American nation set about conquering much of the rest of the North American mainland. The mass extermination and relocation of native peoples was justified in terms of the Manifest Destiny of the United States. In the South the expansion of the United States meant the expansion of the slave system to new realms. The Trail of Tears, the US-sponsored settlement and secession of Texas from Mexico, the Mexican-American War, and the permanent occupation of more than half of Mexico were each driven by the demand of slaveholders for new lands for new plantations and greater profits.

The US conquest of Northern Mexico transformed former Mexican nationals into an oppressed people in what had once been their own country. The Chicano population of US-born people of Mexican descent has grown over the years with the constant movement of Mexicanos whose lives defy the US-Mexican border. The reconquista of parts of the US Southwest by Mexican immigrants and social upheavals in Mexico itself inevitably raise the question of the revolutionary reunification of Mexico.

From Reconstruction to Jim Crow

Slavery was overthrown in the US during the Civil War when hundreds of thousands of slaves rose up against the slave system and sought to join the Union Army. In the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War Black people carried out the most sweeping social reforms ever attempted in US history. Universal education and basic democratic rights were extended more broadly than ever before. Former slaves were denied the land they had worked for generations but none the less challenged many of the most oppressive features of US society. The northern industrialists who had emerged from the Civil War as the dominant force in US society progressively abandoned Reconstruction. A period of racist terror against Black people inaugurated the system of Jim Crow segregation that was to dominate the US South until the 1960s. In addition to the establishment of separate schools, swimming pools and water fountains, Jim Crow established a system of racial preferences that relegated Black workers to the most dangerous, worst paying, and least secure jobs. Once again the loyalty of poor whites to the system was bought with racial privileges.

US Imperialism

By the end of the century the US had largely reached its current borders, but the continuing extension of US power did not stop. The Spanish-American War turned Puerto Rico and the Philippines into US colonies and Cuba into a puppet regime. The US came increasingly to dominate the political life of Latin America, imposing compliant governments by direct military intervention where other means proved inadequate. With a few exceptions the US avoided the establishment of outright colonies, preferring the creation of economically subordinate but formally independent puppet regimes. The US policy in Latin America developed in the 19th century was a precursor of the neo-colonial regimes established in parts of Africa and Asia following decolonization.

The Second World War established the US as the dominant power in the world. This power was economic, military and cultural. From Korea to Guatemala to the Dominican Republic to Viet Nam the US sought to maintain its power by militarily propping up puppet regimes often in the face of popular insurgencies. These imperialist wars and interventions reproduced globally the patterns of white supremacy that characterized the US from its inception. Through pop culture, prostitution and antipersonnel weapons the US asserted its “cultural superiority.” Not coincidentally the countries most deeply penetrated by US imperialism became major sources of new immigrants to the US in the 1970s and after.

From Civil Rights to National Liberation

The rise of the US to global domination made the persistence of legal white supremacy in the US a source of international embarrassment. At the same time the example of anti-colonial struggles in Africa and elsewhere became a source of inspiration for Black people in the US. Starting with the Montgomery bus boycott and continuing with the sitin movement and voting rights struggles, the civil rights movement successfully challenged Jim Crow segregation. The US ruling class responded to this challenge by dismantling legal segregation through the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The 1965 Immigration Act, which opened the US to substantial non-white immigration, was another major victory of the civil rights movement. But the forces set in motion by the civil rights movement would not be satisfied by the elimination of state-sanctioned inequality.

The urban uprisings of the mid-1960s put the economic condition of the Black community on the agenda. Increasingly Black people and then other oppressed peoples in the US came to see their struggles as movements of national liberation that were part of the larger anti-colonial upheaval of the period. At the same time their struggles were inspiring other sectors of society to struggle. Students and youth, women, queer people and others saw in the openings created by the black liberation movement the opportunity to fight for their own freedom and for a better world.

Neo-Colonialism

The response of the old colonial powers to victorious anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s, 60s and 70s was neo-colonialism: the recognition of formal independence and the maintenance of economic domination. The organization of colonial economies to provide raw materials for the colonizing power leaves the decolonizing society highly dependent on the old colonial power for its survival. The result has been that a new nationalist elite raises a new flag and steps into the positions of power of the old colonial administrators. The new elite become the defenders of the systematic exploitation of their people. In this way the victories of national liberation movements and the rise of neo-colonial elites has exposed the danger of presuming that all members of an oppressed nationality share the same interests and has brought forward underlying class conflicts within the oppressed nation that were submerged during the struggle for independence.

The White Backlash

In the US the increasingly revolutionary character of the movements of the late-1960s were met with two main responses. The first was naked repression. Black revolutionaries were shot in their beds and thrown into prison and the movement as a whole was targeted for disruption. The second response was the deliberate creation of an enlarged Black and Brown middle class. Expanded educational opportunities and affirmative action created a buffer between the increasingly insurgent ghettos and barrios and the powers that be. This new middle class was largely dependent on the state and a handful of major corporations for employment in mid-level professional positions.

In many ways the Black and Brown middle classes were being asked to fulfill the same role as neo-colonial elites in the former colonies by putting a darker face on a still-intact system of racist exploitation. But the creation of a Black and Brown middle class meant dismantling some of the privileges that had previously separated the poorest whites from the lower status of people of color. In a period of layoffs, wage cuts and increasing attacks on the working class in general these chinks in the armor of white privilege have given rise to an increasingly militant and openly fascist white backlash. This backlash has developed in tandem with a dramatic increase in state repression directed at poor communities of color. The explosion in prison populations, the use of counter-insurgency techniques in the policing of communities of color, the cuts in spending on education and social services, the attacks on affirmative action, antiimmigrant hysteria, and the rise of openly white supremacist organizations can only be understood if they are seen as part of this larger white backlash.

Immigration

Historically immigrants have been brought to the Americas as cheap labor. Successive waves of European immigrants have experienced oppression and discrimination before they were incorporated into whiteness. Until recently non-European immigrants have remained largely outside this circle of privilege. Chinese, Japanese, and Philippino workers were brought to the US to build the railroads and work the fields and then crowded into ghettos where they became a permanent lower caste of US society.

Since 1965 immigration laws have favored immigration by skilled and educated workers, including many professionals, with the result that many new immigrants from Asia and Latin America rapidly join the middle class. At the same time low wage immigrant labor continues to come from Mexico, China, the Caribbean and elsewhere. The different social positions occupied by immigrants from different countries and the immigration of low-wage and professional workers from the same country has begun to fracture the once seemingly simple racial stratification of US society. At the same time non-European immigrants in general have become a major target of the white backlash in their efforts to restore that old System.

Nationalism, Integrationism, and a Multi-Cultural Society

We stand for the overthrow of white supremacy, the redress of historical racial inequalities, the right of oppressed peoples to self-determination, the elimination of borders and frontiers, and the

creation of a multi-cultural society. Oppressed peoples have historically been forced to choose between nationalism and integrationism, between upholding their dignity as a people and demanding equal rights within this society, between political separation and assimilation into the dominant culture. We reject this choice, as neither option offers real hope for freedom. The experiences of the 20th century show that national liberation struggles have been more successful in the creation of new ruling elites than in solving the pressing problems of the people. Similarly, integrationism has resulted in the dismantling of autonomous institutions in exchange for the entrance of an elite minority into positions of privilege within the old order. Neither nationalism nor integrationism speak sufficiently to the complex realities of people's lives and identities. Immigration, cross-cultural relationships, and the rapid cross-fertilization of different cultures have all contributed to a fragmentation of cultural categories. We regard cultures as living and evolving products of human creativity-influencing each other, merging and redividing along new lines. Both nationalism and integrationism flatten out this diversity.

In opposition to both nationalism and integrationism we uphold the vision of a truly multicultural society in which distinct cultures are respected and able to coexist on the basis of equality and in which the fate of an entire people is never trusted to an elite of any kind. We look forward to a world in which human diversity is not a problem but a pleasure. We are neither interested in the creation of a single grey monoculture nor in the establishment of fixed barriers between different cultures but rather a world in which the free development of a culture — including its openness to other cultures — is never constrained in order to maintain an oppressive social order.

The State

We are enemies of the State. The State — the police, the army, the prisons, the courts, the various governmental bureaucracies, legislative and executive bodies — is the enforcer and regulator of authoritarian rule. These structures provide the means with which to maintain control in a class-divided society and enforce patriarchy, white supremacy, ecological destruction, and other forms of domination. The State is inherently authoritarian. It represents the interests of the rich against the poor. It is run by representatives — self-selected and sharing a similar ideology — ratified by the increasingly diminishing percentage of the population that bothers to vote. The State is not democratic, in the best sense of the word, but elitist. It is a specialized institution standing above the rest of society, alienated from and oppressing most of the population.

The State maintains a monopoly on violence, coercion, and surveillance in the service of the interests of the elite. Whether it is their police shooting down poor people of color in the streets or the more systematic elimination of the Black Panther Party and American Indian Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, the State will not hesitate to destroy those who dare oppose it.

Despite these obstacles we are anti-statists. Opposing State power is an absolute principle of our revolutionary practice and one of the most defining elements of our anarchism. The repressive apparatus of the State can not be defeated by obeying its laws. For this reason we believe it is essential to actively meet State repression with organized solidarity and resistance. There is a spectrum of resistance possible within a political context. From our commitment to defending each other against arrest at demonstrations to providing both legal and political defenses for people brought to trial to supporting imprisoned revolutionaries, we believe that our commitment to each other is our strongest defense against the power of the State. We demand the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of war, but we also work for the abolition of the prison system.

Because we have grown up in a statist society it is often difficult to imagine not living in one. One demonstration of the power of the State is the fact that it has so colonized our imaginations as to make itself seem natural, leaving us unable to think of a different way. Yet for the majority of human existence we have lived without the State. Initially peoples lived communally, sharing what they had. Early human communities developed a sexual division of labor, with men going out on hunts and for the most part women gathering and taking care of children. Eventually this division became increasingly rigid, and as hunters competed with hunters of neighboring tribes, male warrior groups emerged. Along with the early rise of patriarchal hierarchies other divisions, such as the old over the young and the hoarding and accumulation of wealth, began to emerge. In time these early stratifications developed into imperial families, complete with their own armies, land, and subjects. These were the precursors of the modern nation-state.

Alongside the development of capitalism arose an entity to serve emerging class rulership in the form of the nation-state. Nation-states were created through the merger of various imperial families, establishing economic units that were geographically cohesive, that shared a common language and culture, and therefore made for a common labor pool and market. The nation-state furnished an ideology of national identity that made it easier to rally people for military

adventures their rulers considered profitable. The “common language and culture” of each of these new entities was in no way a natural human community like the early tribes and bands. Rather they were created by brutal conquest such as that of the British over the Irish, Scots, and the Welsh, or the Castillian Spaniards conquest of the Basques and the Catalans.

The emergence of the nation-state proceeded from the unification of Spain in 1492 until the 19th century when nationalism emerged as a general phenomena throughout Europe. Every step of the way the builders of modern States encountered resistance. The indigenous peoples of the Americas resisted the European conquest. Captured slaves from Africa resisted and rebelled every step of the way. In Europe, peasants consistently resisted efforts to force them off their land and into the workshops and factories. The English Diggers seized common lands that the nobility had claimed. The distinct cultures that States have sought to incorporate have fought back, as is the case today in the Basque region and Northern Ireland.

Those running States today, both the ruling classes and their political lackeys, seek to preserve their power. Sometimes to do this they make concessions to strong popular movements which challenge them, by engaging in direct action, from below. In fact, every major State reform has come in response to the strength and power of grassroots movements. In the United States we can look to the examples of the Reconstruction period in response to slave revolts and the abolitionist movement, or to the civil rights legislation passed in response to the civil rights movement. As anarchists we see State reforms as positive, opening up new space for action. We do not sit back complacently when reforms are won. Historically, winning reforms too often co-opts a movement, as when massive labor strife in the 1930s U.S. was quelled with the legalization of unions. We will not get real freedom as a concession from rulers. Real freedom we will have to win for ourselves. We seek a true democracy, where the people run their own lives directly. We do not want a “better” State, or a “smaller” State, as many socialists and even politicians now advocate.

The State is not an instrument of liberation. For this reason we oppose strategies for social change that rely on the power of the State. Whether it is participating in elections, petitioning those in power, or trying to seize State power, we see such strategies as self-defeating. Strategies based on State power either fail to appreciate the need to exercise autonomous power to win demands, set the struggle up for co-optation and sell-out, or give us a new set of rulers.

The Marxist-Leninist strategy of seizing the State to create a “dictatorship of the proletariat” has proven a mockery of social revolution, better resembling the old societies they professed to destroy rather than the liberatory vision upon which these revolutions were founded. In Russia, for example, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” quickly became the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks, as Soviet prisons filled up with anarchists and other left opponents of the new regime and even the original cadre were systematically eliminated. The way to the Stateless society is not to seize State power, but to completely destroy the State. Contrary to Marx and Marxists, we do not believe the State will “wither away.” No State has ever done this in any real sense, and we do not see this as likely in the future. On the contrary, modern States, sided by newer technologies, have found more effective ways of spying on, killing, and imprisoning their own populations as a means of controlling those segments of society that pose a threat to the existing social order.

In place of the State we propose the self-organized community. We advocate that local people affected by decisions should be the ones making them. For larger geographic coordination, say at the regional or continental level, local assemblies can confederate, sending accountable, and immediately recallable delegates to present the positions of local communities. All policy would

be made by the people in a directly democratic fashion, with the administration of that policy carried out by accountable and recallable bodies to serve various functions. Various experts, those who know how to build bridges, for example, or design alternative energy technologies, would inform the decisions of the assemblies. But ultimately it is the people who decide, not the experts. This way of organizing society would be one part of an overall redistribution of wealth and power, which would fundamentally change our relations to each other. Of course this directly-democratic form of self-governance runs the risk of evolving into a new State, alienated from and above the majority of people, thus constant vigilance and flexibility will be required to prevent the emergence of new elites and an alienated administrative apparatus.

Another dangerous institution will be any sort of military organization developed to defend the gains of the revolution and fight those who would seek to destroy our new found freedoms. A libertarian armed force will need to be created to fight the revolution and preserve its victories. The anarchist ideal is democratic popular militias, an armed people. Yet to be successful this force will require a certain degree of coordination and even levels of centralization and command. The danger here is that this force too could become an institution above society. In these conditions we advocate only as much centralization and discipline as is temporarily necessary to win the revolution and beat back any counter-revolution with as much internal democracy as is possible. How to strike this balance may not be obvious; it will be a matter of political debate and decision by the people.

The State is born of the conquest of other people. The self-governing community is a creation of the people themselves in the process of overthrowing the State. The free society is characterized by the radical decentralization of all kinds of power. Confederal structures do not rule over communities, they are the means by which communities cooperate. An anarchist society is not one free of conflict. It is a society in which the resolution of such conflicts is not monopolized by an elite. The structures of a free society would not be mystified as natural and never changing. Rather they would be open to constant modifications in light of changing conditions.

Social Ecology

We work to create a free and ecological society, a society in which human hierarchies have been abolished and humanity no longer attempts to dominate the natural world. An ecological society is a society in which there is a general consciousness of the ecological consequences of human activity and in which those consequences deeply inform all the decisions that we make. In a society in which decisions affecting our lives are made directly, rather than by elites, an ecological awareness will go hand-in-hand with our commitment to ending social domination.

The present world system — the inter-locking institutions and attitudes of patriarchal, racist, capitalist, and statist domination — is the outgrowth of a long history of hierarchy and exploitation, which is at the very root of the ecological crisis. The attempt to dominate nature — and the very real exploitation of nature we experience and witness every day — has grown out of the earliest domination of humans by humans. Understanding the link between domineering social relations and institutions and the attempt to dominate nature, we believe that the struggles against social, political and ecological domination need to find their commonalities. For this reason actualizing social freedom is the precondition for creating an ecological society.

Local self-sufficiency, sustainable agricultural practices, and importantly the utilization of ecological technologies can aid in restoring and replenishing the planet's endangered ecological communities. Confederated ecological towns and cities, based in principles of freedom, mutual aid and communalism, could engage in a widespread transformation of social life, ensuring that cultural diversity thrives, and ethnic, gender, sexual-orientation and other identities make up a whole, while fighting those institutions, social groups and others who would deny us our freedom or seek to profit from continued exploitation.

Many people today the world over understand and experience daily the consequences of the ecological crisis. It manifests itself in the polluted air we breathe and the water we drink. It shows up as cancer and other defects in our bodies and in our increasingly weakened immune systems.

We see and work against garbage transfer stations and incinerators; radioactive and toxic waste which continues to pile up and is dumped in poor urban and rural areas; and the ongoing destruction of this continent's last forests, from the Andean rainforest in Brazil, to the Selva Lacandona in Chiapas, and up to the Pacific Northwest. The list is endless, from the most immediate and debilitating to that which affects global ecological disruption, such as ozone depletion, the warming of the Earth's climate, reduction of biological diversity, and loss of cultivable top soil.

Much attention has been focused on the contemporary ecological crisis over the last thirty years: environmental and ecological struggles — both reformist and revolutionary — have come and gone. Yet the social forces and institutions responsible seem as entrenched and persistent as ever. A variety of social and ecological struggles continue today. Some of the best are local struggles led by people from all walks of life who are directly affected by the viciousness of this anti-ecological society. Many folks are making connections and fighting against the inter-locking forces of racism, capitalism and ecological destruction — what has come to be called environmental racism. In the Pacific Northwest Earth First!, now largely a left-ecological activist

movement, continues to draw connections between the destruction of Old Growth forests and the class nature of US society. In some places the ecological crisis connects most clearly with racial domination, in others with gender. It is important to make these links, but it is essential that we move beyond a defensive mode and work to develop an overall analysis and practice. Current grass-roots ecological organizing points to the importance of taking on social problems to resolve society's ecological problems.

We do not believe that an ecological society can be brought about by reforming the State, "greening" capitalism, or simply changing our personal habits. We recognize the importance of "privileged" people living in the Metropolis — whose relatively higher standard of living is based upon the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism — in changing their consumption habits, engaging in recycling activities, and appealing for new sensibilities to stop the worst effects of ecological degradation. But it will require much greater effort — an organized, clearly conscious, and forward looking political movement to meet the basic challenges posed by the aggressively anti-ecological society in which we live. Nothing short of an antiauthoritarian, directly-democratic reorganization of society will solve the ongoing ecological crisis.

The Vision of Liberation

The Vision

Fundamental to the views of revolutionary anarchists and related anti-authoritarians is our vision of a new society. We are not only against this society and its evils but we propose a drastically different one. Liberals and revolutionary statist (such as Marxist-Leninists) also oppose many social evils, but they have no alternative except a smoother running, more benevolent version of this society. With the liberal concept of automatic “progress” and Marxist theory of the “inevitable historical process,” there is no need for a vision of a better world as a yardstick to measure this one by. Yet the economic, ecological, and military crises threatened by the collapse of this dying society suggest that there is nothing so practical as an ideal vision.

Freedom

Central to this vision is the ideal of freedom. Individuals should be able to develop their potentialities to the fullest. While respecting the rights of others, people should be able to make their own decisions about how they want to live their lives, including making their own mistakes. Freedom is not just freedom from but also freedom to — not just freedom from oppressive authority but mainly the capacity to take action, to make initiatives, to do. People should not be defined by their gender, age, race, or even occupation but by the totality of what they do.

While we do not know the limits of human improvement, people will, no doubt always have limitations and imperfections. Humans will never be angels. This is all the more reason we can not trust anyone to have power over the rest of us, for even the most benevolent masters will have their limitations and imperfections (and most are not benevolent but cruel and stupid). In the complexity of the modern world, in the midst of interlocking world crises, there is no alternative to a society where the people are alert, concerned, intervening, and deciding at every level and on every issue.

Many believe that “too much” freedom would result in chaos (“anarchy” they call it). We believe that such a chaotic society is caused by oppression and the capitalist market. These set each person in competition against every other person, so that only the state can hold things together. On the contrary, a free society would make possible increased cooperation, respect for others, and the formation of voluntary associations. A free society would consist primarily of an interwoven network of voluntary associations, of all types, sizes, degrees of permanency, and purposes. They would be organized cooperatively, voluntarily, and democratically, not for power or profit. They would manage production, distribution, and consumption, mutual protection, the free flow of information and opinion, education, the fulfillment of social, artistic, and spiritual needs.

No Guarantees

There can be no guarantees that such a world will come into existence, or, once founded, that it will not decay into the old world of power struggles, oppression, and competition. A truly new society can only be created out of a series of great struggles, which will change not only social structures, but the struggling people. In the course of revolutionary upheavals, people will have to decide whether they want to continue the old way or to find a new way of living together.

Nor will the struggle be completed on the “day after” the revolution. There will need to be continuous, permanent struggle to improve the society and to fight the remnants of the old ways of thinking. In particular, women and men, together and separately, will have to organize to fight against sexism in ideology and practice. Similarly, racism will continue to have to be fought against. “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.”

However, the social system of decentralization, pluralism, and direct democracy — a living system of checks and balances — will make it difficult for new rulers and oppressors to arise without challenge. In a society based on free association, previously oppressed groups, such as women will be able to organize themselves autonomously to fight for their interests.

Direct Democracy

There are libertarians and anarchists who claim to oppose democracy. Yet a free society can only exist as the most radical extension of democracy. Free associations must be rooted in direct democracy: people who are affected by decisions meet face-to-face to make the decisions themselves: town meetings, neighborhood assemblies, shopfloor committees, factory councils, and so on. There will be many opportunities for women to participate in decisions which affect them and all of society.

A society of voluntary association and participatory democracy will be stateless. When everyone is involved in self-governing then there is no government.

Instead Of The State

Instead of the military and police forces, there would be the self-organized armed people: the militia. For a time, it would be needed for defense against internal counter-revolutionary armed forces or against attacks by imperialist states which have not yet had their revolutions. Instead of prisons, there will be communal approaches toward rehabilitation and restitution. Instead of courts, there will be popular organs of mediation and arbitration. But there will be no bureaucratic- military machine over and above society.

Anti-Authoritarian Socialism

The economy will be cooperative, with production for use rather than profit, with control in the hands of the working population rather than the owners of capital, the state, or the distant market. It will be self-managed socialism, with worker management of the workplace, consumer and producer cooperatives, occupant-managed housing, and communes which integrate production and consumption. Since everyone works for the community, women would be economically

independent of men. Childcare, however organized, would be a communal responsibility. Economic associations will be federated from local to regional, continental, and international levels where useful.

These views are in the broad tradition of revolutionary anarcho-socialists, such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, the anarcho-syndicalists, the guild socialists, the IWW, and other antiauthoritarian socialists.

Decentralism and Federalism

If people are to directly control their lives through direct democracy, then institutions must be on a scale that can be self-managed. Society must be decentralized to a human scale, so that where we work and live can be understood and managed by groups meeting face-to-face. To an extent, large institutions may be decentralized, so that a city could have many neighborhood assemblies, but there are limits — there is no place for the immense, cancerous, “cities” such as New York City or Chicago.

A certain amount of centralization might be necessary; certainly smaller units will federate into regional, industrywide, continental, and international associations of various sorts. Some sorts of delegation of tasks will be necessary in such situations. However, unlike present-day centralized organizations, all such associations will be structured from the bottom up. Without being organizationally rigid about it, there would be as much decentralization as possible and only *as much centralization as is necessary*.

Whatever delegation is necessary would come out of a society whose members regularly participate in face-to-face collective control over their daily lives, people who live in vibrant democratic communities. This is qualitatively different from people who spend their days as wage slaves for bosses and then vote, every few years, for someone to “represent” them in distant places.

Technology

Modern technology was developed primarily to serve the needs of capital and the military. While much of technology can be used for liberatory ends, this is only if there are drastic changes in the way it is used. Some reject all science and machinery since the middle ages or the stone age. But technology can be deliberately and consciously applied to fit a free society: to fit decentralized production, sustainable and nonwasteful use of energy, an adequate supply of goods for all, sufficient leisure time for all, work which is creative and interesting rather than drudgery. In planned communities, human beings can live in balance with the natural world rather than as a cancer on it.

Efforts would be made to decrease the division of labor. While some specialization may still be needed, the split between brain work and physical work can be abolished.

In principle, such a split has begun to be overcome when workplaces are self-managed by all who work there, former “blue collar” and former “white collar.” The reorganization of industry, technology, and the division of labor would end “housework” and “women’s work.”

Internationalism

Freedom may break out anywhere in the world, but its survival will require world-wide freedom, international revolution. A free world will lack borders and border-guards. There will be

voluntary movement of individuals, goods, and ideas from people to people. International federation for economic, cultural, and scientific purposes will span the planet. When asked, the former imperialist nations will provide material help to the former oppressed peoples to aid them in industrializing in their own ways. It will be in everyone's interest to develop a prosperous and peaceful world.

Internationalism does not mean that all communities will dissolve into one world-wide sameness. On the contrary, there will be many cultural, historical, and linguistic differences among the world's peoples. We value the pluralism and decentralism of such world variety. Some of the currently most oppressed peoples, such as the "Fourth World" native peoples, may have the most to contribute to world culture, speaking out of their own cultures.

Experimentalism

There have been important areas of debate among various types of anarchists, Greens, and related anti-authoritarians. For example: should industry (and maybe all of society) be run by workers' councils organized at the job site or by consumers' cooperative *or* by integral communes?

Should the economy be completely "communist" (in the sense of completely cooperative and using no money) or should it be some kind of "market socialism" (with craftspeople, producer co-ops, and small farmers on public land competing in a communally-regulated market)?

Should popular decisions be made by majority-rule elections (maybe with parties) *or* by consensus?

There will be formerly-oppressed groupings within a former US/Canadian free society: African-Americans, Quebecois, mainland Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, other Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native American first nations, and others. Should they (or segments of them) separate out into independent communities *or* integrate into the broader society or choose some combination (being part of the broader society while organizing for their rights and to preserve their cultural heritages)?

How will people form sexual/romantic relationships without the patriarchal family? How will they organize to rear children?

As an organization we do not take positions on these issues. We are not vanguardists and we do not know all the answers. *A free society will be experimental and flexible.* It is able to adjust and re-adjust to changing conditions.

Covering all of North America (or the world), a free society will include very many communities and regions, with different cultures and ideas. Surely they will organize themselves in different ways. Some will try "communist" anarchism and others market socialism — and that is alright. Some will attempt almost complete decentralization while others will combine direct democracy with regional planning by elected people — and that is alright. One of the virtues of a decentralized federal system is that different regions can try different approaches and then learn from each other's experience. By experimenting in real life, people will invent many varieties of the free society.

“It is no less than reasonable that those whom we try to involve in the great struggle for a better form of life than that which we now lead should call on us to give them at least some idea of what that life may be like.”

— William Morris

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