

# **Traveler's Guide to the Acronym Wasteland**

**Tankies and Authoritarian Entryist Groups in Philadelphia**

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## **PSL (Party for Socialism and Liberation) and WWP (Workers World Party) and ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism)**

These groups are electoral and mass-struggle based authoritarian vanguardists, somewhat 'new communist' in style, but nominally Trotskyist. Regardless, they still support all communist states, and many other non-communist authoritarian and imperialist states. These are seen as righteous opponents of the US and Western imperialist camp under PSL and WWP's 'Global Class War' doctrine. Classic examples of 'tankies' or 'campists', highly authoritarian and exploitative groups toward their members and movements, with extremely crude and simplistic 'anti-imperialist' dogma, which in reality is anything but.

Among the states, groups, and people they've expressed support for are: North Korea (to which multiple official WWP delegations have traveled), the USSR and contemporary Russia, China under Mao as well as after (they initially denied the Tiananmen Square massacre, later justifying it), the genocidal Khmer Rouge (WWP supported them until 2000; many historians believe the US government also at least tacitly supported the Khmer Rouge diplomatically, and potentially materially), Cuba, Iran, Saddam Hussein (another overlap with US support, albeit at different points), what they referred to as the 'Iraqi resistance' during the 2003 invasion (unlike the Iraqi revolutionary socialists they condemned, and like the US did with the Afghan anti-Soviet mujahideen, they didn't distinguish their support between the many diverging elements of the insurgency, which included Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the predecessors of ISIL, and other authoritarian theocratic and/or nationalist groups), Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad (elements of whose regime the US also has tacitly supported), Libyan dictator Muammar Al-Gaddafi, Romanian communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, and Serbian perpetrators of the Bosnian genocide such as Slobodan Milošević and Ratko Mladić.

PSL is the result of a 2004 split from WWP, (itself a 1958 split from the Trotskyist Socialist Worker's Party, aka SWP, due to the nascent WWP's support for Mao's China and the USSR's brutal crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution) however their politics are practically identical and they still frequently organize together, (including in ANSWER, a coalition they effectively control, which played a major role in the massive but ineffective protests against the Iraq War) which fits their pattern of dividing into numerous obfuscatory front groups (Philly Liberation Center is a prominent PSL project locally for example).

PSL has a horrible record of sexual assault and retaliation against outspoken survivors (including here in Philadelphia) systematically enabled within the party. They engage in cult-like recruitment practices and financial and labor exploitation by a high-control leadership with an instrumental view of members and participants. They have cooperated with the police, themselves acted as highly aggressive peace-police, and led protesters into police kettles. They continuously and successfully work to co-opt movements and protests into highly photographed, contained, and peaceful rallies (nevertheless dangerous for participants) where megaphone identity-politicians and class-reductionists spout empty revolutionary rhetoric and plug the party and affiliated electoral candidates.

In 2020, leaders of an anti-war rally in Denver jointly organized by PSL and the **DSA** refused to kick out over a dozen nazis who arrived to rally with them, including members of the Traditionalist Workers Party aka TWP, and Patriot Front. This was after they'd been warned by anti-fascists ahead of time that they would show up. The organizers allowed them to hold PSL signs, let them take photos, and protected them from the black bloc while they menaced people of color. One of the few more militant anti-fascists willing to break ranks to combat the nazis was arrested as a result. In an empty apology, PSL euphemistically referred to them as simply 'far-right' (as opposed to explicitly fascist nazis) and justified their collaboration and peace-policing on the basis of "wanting to avoid a physical confrontation that would put the whole demonstration at risk".

This is the same justification PSL gave in 2020 in Philly for leading a massive anti-racist crowd away from the Columbus statue and the racist crowd protecting it. The couple dozen that marched back to the statue to confront the colonial vigilantes were dangerously isolated. Several hours of pointlessly marching for miles and listening to speeches in a heatwave further depleted the group's capacity. These anti-racists, many of whom were young black teenagers, visibly queer or 'alternative', or unprepared for a physical fight, were heavily outnumbered and mostly surrounded by a crowd of hulking fascists armed with steel pipes and baseball bats, alongside riot police also focused on combatting the anti-fascists and at least one police helicopter. It was very lucky that more people weren't injured or arrested in the clashes that broke out, or while dispersing afterwards in the generally white, hostile neighborhood. In 2018, PSL Los Angeles similarly allowed the well-known fascist 'Baked Alaska' to remain at their protest against US war with Syria.

WWP/PSL and their front groups have systematically platformed, defended, and organized with members of the far-right, fascists, and hybrid far-left/far-right 'Third Position' style movements. This toxic assemblage congeals around tyrannical nationalists, bigoted populist puppet masters, and esoteric traditionalist patriarchal conquest cults. All have similar focuses on channeling and recuperating potentially revolutionary ruptures into resynthesized and more advanced versions of domination, with each side taking bits and pieces of theory and strategy from each other.

To list off just a few more of these noxious groups WWP/PSL has been involved with: numerous antisemites, Infowars contributors, followers of Aleksandr Dugin (an advisor to some in the Kremlin and the Donbas separatist movement, and the co-founder of the Russian 'Eurasianist' group the National Bolshevik Party, a bizarre mixture of communism and fascism, who use a Nazi German flag with a hammer and sickle replacing the swastika), Lyndon LaRouche followers (Former SWP Trotskyist turned crypto-fascist conspiracy theorist cult leader), pro-regime Syrian nationalists and Syrian fascists of the SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party, another group with a clearly Nazi German-inspired flag), known informants, and former or current political, military or diplomatic/intelligence agents for both Western and anti-Western powers, nazi-aligned Russian and Ukrainian Stalinist groups (as well as the extremely racist and homophobic Russian Stalinist party the RCWP), Holocaust deniers, Rwandan genocide deniers, alt-right white nationalists, and far-right black nationalists including Louis Farrakhan. This has taken place through their official publications and real-world conferences, speeches, and organizing. A particularly notable platform for these collaborations has been the regular program *Loud & Clear* hosted by PSL's co-founder and co-leader Brian Becker on Sputnik Radio, a state-owned Russian disinformation network, alongside former CIA officer and Infowars contributor John Kiriakou, with another fellow PSL leader as producer.

Members of the WWP affiliated **UNAC (United Anti-War Coalition)** also physically attacked and expelled Syrian activists from a 2017 conference. The activists had questioned a fascist-adjacent pro-Assad UNAC organizer's beliefs. One of the conspiracy-theorist UNAC members even denied that anyone was starving in Syria.

Another venue for these alliances has been the **IAC (International Action Center)**, a WWP front group founded by Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General and close WWP associate, who died in 2021. Clark, as AG, personally created and oversaw the Interdivisional Information Unit to coordinate the FBI's COINTELPRO and the CIA's Operation MHCHAOS. He later left the government to champion the causes of activists, alongside a litany of the worst dictators and war criminals in the world, offering legal advice and going beyond to personally speak in favor of many of his clients or offer personal or political advice. Clark has made speeches in support of Lyndon LaRouche for example, and was connected to his movement for years. He participated in a pro-Milošević rally organized by Serbian ultra-nationalists (Clark co-chaired Milošević's international solidarity committee with an explicit fascist). Clark even made a cause célèbre of former Nazi concentration camp director Karl Linnaas, flying to his deathbed in the Soviet Union to be with him.

Members of IAC, UNAC, and **FRSO (Freedom Road Socialist Organization)** traveled to Syria in 2014 to act as 'election observers' amidst the brutal civil war there. They were hosted by an Iranian NGO whose manager was appointed by a high-ranking official shortly after as a director in Iran's state broadcasting service, calling into question the 'non-governmental' status of that organization. This election was widely considered rigged by scholars and resulted in a landslide victory for dictator Bashar Al-Assad (with almost 90% of the votes), with foreign observers only allowed from groups already supportive of Assad. The foreign delegation predictably declared the election totally transparent and legitimate.

January 2020 in Philadelphia, PSL organized an anti-war protest also endorsed by the local section of the **BAP (Black Alliance for Peace)**. A look at their approaches to this specific issue should shed some light on their toxic approaches to anti-imperialism in general. The protest was against offensive US military posturing in Iraq towards Iran after the US killing of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Iraq. The assassination followed a mob attack on the US embassy in Baghdad seemingly covertly led by plainclothes Iranian operatives. This embassy attack was in the context of an intensification of Iraqi anti-government protests for its repressive stances, failing to provide for basic necessities, and elements of the ruling class acting under the influence of Iran. Protests also included opposition to increased US regional intervention. These protests mixed nationalist and sectarian motives with anti-institutional and anti-imperialist ones, against both Iran and the US. Meanwhile, PSL's framing of the issue was tightly focused on defending Iran and "the Iraqi people fighting bravely for self-determination", failing to consider Iran's own imperialist role. Chants included, "No justice, no peace, Iran is not my enemy!" and, "What do we want? Peace in Iran!". I personally would aspire to be an enemy of all authoritarian, imperialist states, and wouldn't be supporting repressive notions of social peace.

In late 2017, PSL had denounced protests in Iran which broke out against economic inequality and oppressive theocratic rule. These protests also had a mixed character and did include some who praised the former US-supported dictatorial Shah. Still, many communists and anarchists in Iran had called for engagement and support for some of the movement's genuine demands. The Iranian authorities brutally repressed demonstrations, cutting off the country's internet and cell service (a Russian and Chinese enabled capability) and killing dozens of demonstrators, many

unarmed. Waves of upheaval followed soon after over theocratic patriarchy and the mandatory hijab. Unrest intensified in 2022, with the murders of Mahsa Amini and Nika Shakarami, by state morality police and security services respectively, alongside numerous other state-enabled femicides.

PSL could only bring themselves to note the hypocrisy of Biden expressing support for the protesters (echoing the Iranian government's claim that the protests are just a CIA-funded regime change plot) and modifying sanctions to allow tech companies to, as PSL put it, "help protesters circumvent communications outages", while being allied with notoriously sexist Saudi Arabia. The only bit of ambiguous criticism of Iran in PSL's article is when they say with extreme diplomacy that "Women in Iran are subjected to reactionary laws governing their appearance. This sexist legal code is part of the system of government that is in place in Iran." They further highlight that Biden denounced violent protest after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, but supports the protests in Iran. Using a curiously passive tone and citing Iranian government figures, they point out that "Forty-one people have died in the protests, according to official reports, including five members of the security forces". As if the protesters themselves are responsible for being murdered by the government, or are bad for supposedly killing cops at 1/8 the rate they're killed by them. Never mind that some murdered protesters have been counted by the regime as security forces instead (their families threatened with death if they speak out), or that numerous other killings were covered up by the Iranian government.

Beyond murder, the institutional response included mass torture, sexual violence, systematic attempts to blind protesters with non-lethal projectiles, show trial public executions, kidnapping wounded protesters in fake ambulances, and vigilantism by regime supporters (whose counter-protests PSL of course takes time to highlight). A year after PSL's piece, the death toll had risen to as many as 551 documented killings, at least 70 of whom were minors. PSL assures their readers however that the "Authorities have pledged to conduct an inquiry, with Iran's president telling Amini's family that the government would "steadfastly investigate" her death."

WWP and associated groups have long been known to be heavily infiltrated by the US government and law enforcement. In 1974, hundreds of pages of internal documents stolen by the House Committee on Un-American Activities revealed the extensive sources inside the group. These documents showed how the use of front groups was a strategic and systematic technique of the group, allowing them to operate in communities they wouldn't otherwise have sway in, inflate their perceived support and size, and hide their control over movements. Members were instructed to conceal their academic backgrounds, and for men to claim they went to vocational school if they could get away with it. Non-white members and support were to be particularly cultivated for the access they gave to anti-racist and grassroots movements. These infiltrationist tactics of the WWP itself (and its fronts and descendants) made the group an ideal vehicle for government agents also looking to surveil and control these same struggles, as well as international rivals of the US.

A prime example of the WWP's manipulative tactics is their involvement with the highly influential black anarchist Martin Sostre. Sostre ran a radical bookstore in Buffalo, New York which served as a hub for youth resistance there. This led to him and his coworker being falsely imprisoned in 1967 for drugs, riot, arson, and assault as part of an FBI COINTELPRO operation. Inside, he was a pioneer in prison struggle as a jailhouse lawyer, winning important concessions from the administration. The WWP took control of Sostre's outside solidarity committee through a front group, where they failed to raise a mere \$12k in bail or find someone with property to sign

for it to get him out. They had easily done this for white activists in the past. Instead, they wrote a book off of his struggle which proved immensely profitable for them. They refused to publish his revolutionary newspaper because he wouldn't censor his writings when they complained it was too radical for the masses, threatening him that they're "all he's got". Sostre openly denounced them as counter-revolutionaries exploiting him for money and influence, boosting their party line at his expense, and allowing him to remain in jail because he was more useful to them locked up, as a disempowered rallying point.

Another example of this destructive co-optation is WWP's intervention in the 1971 Attica prison uprising. Tom Soto, a non-black Puerto-Rican member of the WWP front the Prisoners Solidarity Committee (who had been an intelligence officer in the Army Security Agency before joining WWP) went inside the notoriously racist and draconian prison during the rebellion as part of a delegation of outside 'observers'. Over 1,000 inmates had violently taken back a section of the prison, formed organizing councils, and taken 42 guards hostage, requesting the observers presence as a means of preventing abuses and documenting what occurred. Prisoners specifically stated they didn't feel the observers role was to independently negotiate on their behalf, as that would clearly subvert their autonomy. Nevertheless, the observers, with a New York state representative as their leader, did end up negotiating for a 28 point plan of concessions with the commissioner of corrections. This was done without proper prior consensus among the prisoners, and the demands were vague in important ways, with many dependent on non-immediate legislative action, where the prisoners would have to trust the state would implement these changes, and that prosecutors would keep their word and only prosecute prisoners for crimes involving physical injuries. This also was a step down from one of the prisoners main demands, for unconditional amnesty for the rebels. Soto and other observers tried to convince the rebels to agree to these demands, and separately pressured the uprising's leaders, but ultimately they would never be met. The wasted time and divisions between prisoners over this set of demands was exploited by the government, who stormed the prison. They massacred 30 prisoners, many in cold-blood after they'd surrendered, and 10 of the hostages. Over 80 other prisoners were wounded by gunshots, and vicious and systematic reprisals by guards followed for days after.

## Uhuru Movement

A black nationalist, communist 'non-profit' which is an offshoot of the **APSP (African Peoples Socialist Party)**. Their name is from a Swahili word for freedom. Locally prominent until recently as the Uhuru Furniture business, one of numerous 'economic self-determination' projects they run under their **APEDF branch (African Peoples Education and Defense Fund)**. This group is African socialist, African internationalist, and pan-Africanist. African socialism is a name given to a specific, but diverse, theoretical area (in this particular sense it's not identical to just socialism in Africa, or Africans who are socialists). It's generally described as distinct from classical socialism, and can include the idea that capitalism is the highest form of imperialism (instead of vice versa as Lenin held), and that traditional African society (often genericized and idealized in a Pan-African nationalist manner) is socialist due to its often communitarian emphasis and supposedly classless and democratic character. African socialists don't have the same opposition to religion as other Marxists, and hold that conventional socialist class struggle isn't directly applicable in Africa (due to wealth disparity in traditional African society supposedly not

having the same exploitative characteristics). The movement emerged in African anti-colonial and independence struggles throughout the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, with some of its most important theorists and exponents in statesmen like Kwame Nkrumah (prime minister of the Gold Coast colonies from 1952–1957 and then its first prime minister as independent Ghana until 1966, also the founder of the **A-APRP** aka **All-African People's Revolutionary Party**), Julius Nyerere (first prime minister of independent Tanganyika 1961–1962, president from 1962–1964, and after merging with Zanzibar as President of Tanzania until 1985), Léopold Sédar Senghor (first prime minister of independent Senegal from 1960–1980), Modibo Keita (the first President of independent Mali from 1960–1968), and Ahmed Sékou Touré (first president of independent Guinea from 1954–1984).

African socialism often places a strategic emphasis on national stability in the face of oppressors/enemies, divided loyalties and identities, and poverty. This can end up backfiring though; as authoritarian methods are employed to quash dissent and centralize the economy and development, new enemies emerge at the same time as capacities of government and production are created which often prove appealing to internal or external extractivists. African socialists have historically been central to the Non-Aligned Movement, a loose grouping of Global South states refusing to align with any particular foreign power bloc. In practice, this has often meant attempting to maintain profitable and appeasing relations with both the West and the Eastern Bloc/China (nowadays the latter is generally the non-communist anti-Western groupings: China, Russia, etc.), while occasionally denouncing one or the other. African socialists' relations with colonial powers have sometimes involved advocacy for building influence within the federal umbrella of a colonial government instead of outright independence or general anti-state action. Another occasional tendency has been the appeasement of former colonial elements by the newly independent governments, through attempts at favorable foreign relations, advantageous policies, or integration into power for those remaining in the new state. This has also sometimes been the case for policies regarding other domestic elites.

In particular, African socialism has a dodgy record when it comes to patriarchy. Many women played important grassroots roles in anti-colonial transformations and, in certain times and places, found their new situations to be partial improvements over previous ones. Social programs however often only distributed resources to male heads of households, farms, or villages, and women's movements were instrumentalized in service of the overall project, later to be disenfranchised. Nationalist, economic priorities meant women were alternately 'empowered' by increased inclusion (and hence exploitation) in the workforce or pushed further into strict gender roles of reproductive and domestic labor. African socialist leaders built their power on images of pre-colonial culture, often wearing traditional attire in office, but the actual nature of the changes they enacted were frequently replications of colonial patterns. This is in line with the frequently wealthy or powerful backgrounds of many African socialist leaders, often coming from Islamic, Christian, or noble families, and having studied abroad in colonial countries or served in colonial administrations. 'Tribalism' was sometimes opposed as a source of non-national loyalties (to either local community/lineage or tribal nation), or an obstacle to modern development. For example, Nkrumah at one point attempted to ban tribal flags.

In another case, in Ghana's North, through the late '50s and '60s, there was a concerted anti-nudity campaign by the newly independent state. The Dagara, Builsa, and Gurene-speaking peoples, as well as other groups in this region, traditionally don't produce cloth, and adorn themselves instead with leaves, skins, jewelry, beads, and scarification in a manner that has seemed



insufficiently covering to more imperialist outsiders, including Europeans as well as statist pre-colonial African groups. Though these Northern peoples don't consider this to be 'nudity' themselves, it has long been stigmatized as such by the neighboring complex of Mossi and Dagomba kingdoms to the North and South.

Sandwiched between these states, they have managed to resist conquest for hundreds of years, and are largely sedentary small-scale cultivators and traders, though hunting and fishing have also been important to some groups. Fields were traditionally moved roughly every seven years. They emphasize ancestrality and patrilineal descent groups as organizing principle for society and authority over it, and communities are based around shrines and ritual specialists for the veneration and custodianship of the divine earth. There is also an animist interaction with spirits during hunting, and an idea of malevolent forces or enemies as responsible for calamities. Farming plots are held by lineages and parceled out by religious specialists.

A genericized and specialized propitiation and worship of the earth as an inherently positive force (often in gendered archetypal form as feminine fertility and/or masculine power) with which a traditional, essentialized 'harmonious order' must be maintained is common to many agricultural societies. These also tend to have patriarchal, dominating patterns in gender, ecological relationships, and the reproduction of society. This is in contrast to more fluid, autonomous, or complementary experiences of 'gender' relations in egalitarian societies (often, though not exclusively, hunter-gatherers) that have more personally engaged, ethically ambivalent, dangerous, and ontologically unstable practices of sustenance via elements of the natural world. In these societies, ancestrality and static identity are often relatively de-emphasized compared to qualitative, relational character, and chaotic or conflictual principles interface with harmonious ones in a mutually non-hegemonic, but irreducibly dynamic way, outside of a linear, bounded model of entropy or ordering.

In Ghana's North, the 'nude' groups do exhibit many patriarchal and controlling aspects. Politically though, they're generally structured in a system where members of different lineages interdependently exert dynamic influence over different aspects of life, based around traditions kept by different religious specialists, hunting societies, and a council of elders from each lineage. Beyond gendered divisions, everyone participates fairly equally in subsistence activities. Traditionally, each local village was autonomous and there was no over-arching imperialist or state system, and no extensive urbanism, technologization, or fleshed out class stratification (there is patriarchal stratification and inherited inequality around brideprice payments and displays of social status, which is increasing, but most people traditionally live under roughly similar conditions otherwise). Shifting slash-and-burn cultivation combined with hunting, gathering, and fishing is fairly sustainable when practiced by low-density populations, though this has been changing with increased regional populations and intensive activity. More egalitarian, animist values are still relatively close to the surface, potentially contesting the more essentialist ones, as well as animating them in captured form.

The nearby Mossi Kingdom themselves incorporate a more formalized, rigid version of the system of communitarianism of distinct lineage groups (though conceptualized as occupational castes), earth worship (joined by Islam quite early in its spread in the region, unlike most of the 'nude' groups), and spiritual authorities/councils of elders. These likely pre-existing elements were expanded and repurposed by the horse-riding class of political elites who invaded these cultures and continued an expansionist, civilizing project through conquest, technological and

social instrumentalization, and accumulation, and now hold a position over them in an emphatically hierarchical system.

Descriptions of the advanced, orderly, and stratified nature of the Mossi civilization from the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius' 1904–1906 visit to their country later proved influential and inspiring to Pan-Africanists like W.E.B. DuBois and Léopold Sédar Senghor (who was also important in the Négritude movement), Kwame Nkrumah, and Aimé Césaire (Martinican poet very influential in Négritude). Frobenius however was serving the German Empire as well in this expedition, and would later develop a racist and unfounded theory of 'African Atlantis': the idea that there must have been a lost white Mediterranean civilization in the Sahara that was the hidden root of the African civilizations.

Criticism of 'nudity' from African socialist Kwame Nkrumah's government based in the South was focused on the 'bad image' of Ghana presented to the world by these 'primitive customs', and the need to 'civilize' and incorporate them into the nation and economy. In this mission, they were helped by women's groups who saw the situation, where women in particular were often 'unclothed' and the men, who had become more incorporated into the patriarchal colonial economy, more likely and able to wear the clothing of that world, as a reflection of women's subordination and disenfranchisement. Identifying real patriarchy, disparity of economic conditions, and clash of perceptions and culture which was increasingly difficult for many Northern women, these mainly Southern feminists still saw the solution to the issue in patronizing and civilizing terms. Instead of fighting against the increasing pressure of participation in the market, and the statist attitudes toward the so-called acephalous groups, they sought to increase women's involvement in the official economy and to 'educate' them so that they would adopt more civilized customs. At the same time as they'd been on the receiving end of, and rightfully decried, white colonial feminists' excusing and replicating of colonial atrocities and patriarchy through condescending imposition of false liberation within their own gender roles, they often replicated these same dynamics in the North.

The African socialist movement in Ghana was itself primarily led by members of the Akan peoples, who include the Ashanti and Fante among others. The Akan were extremely powerful and rich kingdoms with substantial cities, where whole classes of imperialist bureaucrats managed their empires' affairs. Akan states grew immensely wealthy and powerful from taxing smaller groups, trading gold, cash crops, and large numbers of African slaves via the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan trades. Slaves captured included both Akan and non-Akan enslaved people, and they acted as both sellers and purchasers, with slaves notably used to clearcut forests in Ashanti land. The reality of slavery was different in Akan society and the other groups they bought slaves from than it was across the Atlantic, with comparatively less commodification and absolute social death than was often the case in European enslavement. The condition of being a captured enemy can certainly be something very different in more egalitarian, anti-state societies, and can indeed coexist with those characteristics. This argument is frequently made to minimize African states' complicity in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, while sensationalizing about the brutality of slavery in Africa has long been used by white racists to minimize European guilt and justify colonialism. In truth however, Akan kingdoms were not egalitarian, anti-state societies (nor were they fully realized global, industrialist, genocidal capitalists). Elites were at least somewhat aware of what conditions were like in European custody prior to the voyage as well as once across the ocean, with many having traveled to the Americas or Europe on official delegations, or sending their children to study abroad, sometimes making the journey aboard slave vessels.

Akan kingdoms were often at war with each other or non-Akan kingdoms, and as a result also suffered extensive enslavement themselves. Akan groups, especially the Ashanti, successfully defeated European colonial powers in multiple military campaigns. Yet in many other cases, the kingdoms had fought alongside the Europeans, and had gained much of their power in the first place from the European firearms they traded slaves and commodities for en masse.

While the anti-nudity campaign was ostensibly promoting dressing in “the Ghanaian fashion”, the actual clothing distributed consisted of second-hand, conventionally ‘modern’ clothing, primarily from sympathizers in North America and Europe. Ultimately, the feminists’ and womanists’ efforts were left without state support, as Nkrumah’s government came to see the increased publicity of the issue due to the campaign as counter-productive, and wasn’t as concerned with the welfare of these marginal women. Nkrumah would later ditch the traditional Northern fugu smock made from Southern kente cloth that he wore publicly for a Chinese-supplied Mao suit.

In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere’s African socialist party TANU also led a women’s dress-code crusade which at first glance appears to be in the opposite direction as Nkrumah’s vis-à-vis modernity. Women who dressed in miniskirts and short shorts, tight pants or dresses were targeted for their ‘indecent’ dress, alongside, to a much lesser degree, men who wore tight trousers. These fashions were seen as modern, capitalist corruptions contrary to the traditional, pre-colonial morality of the country. Groups of young men attacked women on the streets of Tanzania’s then capital Dar es Salaam for wearing clothes deemed indecent, and posters were put up with examples of decent and indecent dress. The ideology of Ujamaa (‘fraternity’ in Swahili, a Bantu lingua franca common across Eastern Africa, originally spoken by the Swahili people, rich and powerful global traders – evidenced by the numerous Arabic, Portuguese, Persian, Hindi, Spanish, English, and German loanwords – who were descended from Persian Muslim contacts with the local Bantu people) that Nyerere instantiated also revolved around ideas of Tanzania becoming modern, including in an economic and developmental sense. The aim was to meld this with a mainly rural, supposedly traditional and pre-colonial ethic, held to be totally compatible with a strong nation in a new global context.

However, Nyerere also launched an ‘Operation Dress-Up’ to coerce Maasai people to wear modern attire. A large part of Ujamaa was its villagization policies, where individual farms and small communities were reorganized into collective ones based around maximizing agricultural output while maintaining a communitarian, ‘classless’ form of organization, where all decisions in the village were to be made by consensus. In practice however, this villagization became violent forced resettlement and forced labor, producing for distribution or export elsewhere. TANU bureaucrats still held coercive power by their control of resources and the organizing of life and production, and Nyerere’s government soon adopted repressive measures of arbitrary imprisonment and one-party rule. The nuclear family with strict gender roles was promoted as building block of these Ujamaa villages. Forced resettlement, cultural loss and assimilation had negative impacts for hunter-gatherers like the Hadza, Sandawe, Akie, and Okiek among others, former hunter-gatherers like the Datooga, as well as pastoralists like the Maasai (who themselves have frequently had subjugating, hierarchical relationships over hunter-gatherers and smaller, more autonomous groups). Ecological balance was disrupted by the intensification and modernization of agriculture and loss of traditional ties to the land and knowledge of best farming practices for each specific locality, with soil fertility soon diminishing. While successful in developing some areas, Nyerere mismanaged the economy and ultimately failed to reduce Tanzanian dependence on imperialist states, increased corruption and political/economic patronage, while foreign in-

vestment fell as a result of his policies. Nyerere, while raised in a very rich family following the traditional Bantu religion of the Zanaki people, also became a devout Christian, and was heavily influenced by Christian socialism and pacifists including Gandhi.

Nyerere's politics, like other African socialists, were deeply based in ideas of unity and collectivism, seen as part of a pre-colonial, classless ethic applicable across the continent. This is often expressed, especially in Southern Africa, in terms of the Bantu concepts of Ubuntu. Roughly meaning 'humanity', these ideas are expressed by different peoples in maxims such as, "I am because we are", "Humanity towards others", and, "A person is a person through other people". While specific understandings are diverse, the general idea is based in an emphasis on sharing and interdependent interconnectedness between people as well as their environments, while acknowledging individual uniqueness and difference. People are considered human not in an openly essentialist manner but based on the degree to which they treat others (also not defined in an essentialist way) as human, and conform to the norms of the tribe or community to whom they're responsible. These norms should, according to Ubuntu, ideally not be upheld by harshness but be centered in harmonious, warm sociality. Redemption and re-integration are emphasized over punishment.

In many ways this is similar to Western socialist conceptions, while retaining a genuinely more potent and insightful core. However, a common thread between more Western, multicultural frameworks (including capitalist and colonialist ones) and Ubuntu can still be seen.

Around 2000 BC, the Bantu peoples' originators adopted agriculture in their highland origin areas around the border of Nigeria and Northern Cameroon, and began what's known as the 'Bantu Expansion'. They were themselves probably descended, like the Akan, Mossi, Dagbon, and the powerful Sahelian trans-Saharan slave, salt, and gold trading kingdoms like the Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu empires, from agropastoralists in the Sahara and Sahel region. These herding and farming chiefdoms had developed some socially stratified societies and some which might be categorized as 'heterarchical' in the sense that power was dispersed across multiple societal groupings that could contest each other but not effectively dominate (at least internally). These groups readapted each other's social models, along with those of the hunter-gatherers they encountered (and largely killed, absorbed, or subjugated) as they migrated South in tandem with the desertification of the Sahara. Agriculture had spread in fits and starts, adopted independently and repeatedly by convenience or perceived necessity, and almost as often dropped due to the problems that sedentary life led to. The Bantu Expansion itself is hypothesized to be at least two waves of migration from West-Central Africa down across the equatorial rain forests and over to East Africa, to Southern Africa along the coasts, and inland along the rivers. East Africa was reached around ~750 BC, Southern Congo around ~250 BC, and the furthest points of South Africa around ~400 AD. Enabled by agriculture and – soon after their initial expansion – iron metallurgy, Bantu groups absorbed, subjugated, displaced, or killed a large majority of the pre-existing populations. These included Central African foragers (often called 'pygmies', although this term is a derogatory and conflating exonym), 'Khoekhoe' Khoe-speaking nomadic pastoralists, Khoe, Tuu, and K'xa speaking hunter-gatherers (these last three sometimes known as 'San' or 'Bushmen', though these are conflating exonyms considered derogatory; they're also often grouped with Khoekhoe peoples, the Hadza, and the Sandawe as 'Khoisan', now no longer accepted as a linguistic family but still used as a term of convenience), and Nilotic and Cushitic pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. Animal husbandry may have been re-incorporated into Bantu cultures as a result of these expansions, further fueling their growth. Bantu groups established

powerful states and kingdoms by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with Swahili city-states trading throughout the Indian Ocean as far as China, and monumental urban centers dispersed across Bantu lands. Swahili culture itself had developed partly as a dissociation from the other Bantu people further South and inland, who were darker skinned and preferentially enslaved by the Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, and Somali slave-traders of the Indian Ocean that many Swahili traders worked with.

Beyond the initial expansion, Bantu peoples have historically had often racist and violent relations with the generally more egalitarian, less technological, and often nomadic ‘Khoisan’ peoples and Central African foragers. Bantu and mixed-Bantu people were heavily involved in the genocidal massacres of many ‘San’ hunter-gatherer bands in their traditional territories in South West Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Central African foragers have more recently been subject to genocidal killings based in long-standing Bantu prejudices in the Rwandan civil war and conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo, as well as systematic enslavement, sexual violence, and cannibalism.

Ubuntu is a Bantu philosophical framework which comes out of this complex mixture of heterarchical, egalitarian, and civilizing influences, while ultimately expressing its civilizing facet most prominently. The transition from heterarchy to kyriarchy (a power arrangement where domination is upheld by interlacing relations of hierarchy, wherein people can occupy the positions of both oppressor and oppressed in different contexts) is often messy and unclear, as can be seen here.

Nyasha Mboti (along with other scholars in this area) has drawn attention to the way Ubuntu’s definition has traditionally remained intentionally “fuzzy, inadequate and inconsistent”. Mboti sees attempts to universalize the concept as a Pan-African tradition which automatically favors harmony or rules out individual freedoms as suspect. Instead he points to a different understanding of Ubuntu, ~First, there is value in regarding a broken relationship as being authentically human as much as a harmonious relationship. Second, a broken relationship can be as ethically desirable as a harmonious one. For instance, freedom follows from a break from oppression. Finally, harmonious relations can be as oppressive and false as disharmonious ones. For instance, the cowboy and his horse are in a harmonious relationship.~ Even Bill Clinton has spoken repeatedly about his embrace of the philosophy of Ubuntu, referencing it in his charity work and at a 2006 British Labour Party conference to explain why society and collaboration are important.

We’ll explore some similar topics around unity and competing conceptions of the *Gemeinschaft* / *Gemeinwesen* (though not in these terms exactly, which are German ones for the sociopolitical commons of affective group self-definition, and which were influential to Marx as well as the Nazis) in the conclusion of this piece.

For now, let’s return more concretely to the Uhuru Movement. Uhuru sent three delegations from its Florida headquarters in 2015 and 2016 to Russia for conferences organized by the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia. The AGMR, previously called just Anti-Globalist Resistance (note the use of ‘globalist’, often a far-right or antisemitic dogwhistle, instead of ‘globalization’), is a Third Positionist mixture of Orthodox Church members and Russian nationalist communists. It has protested in support of Milošević, held homophobic protests, and supports Belarusian dictator Lukashenko, as well as Hugo Chávez, LaRouche, Assad, Gaddafi, and North Korea. They’ve organized with Duginists, members of the German far-right AfD party, US white nationalists, fascists, Holocaust deniers, and former Soviet and Russian military officials.

Members of FRSO, BAP, the **Black is Back Coalition** (which has the same chairman as Uhuru – Omali Yeshitela – and is also connected to the BAP, WWP, and **Black Agenda Report**), UNAC, the **Green Party**, and the WWP had previously taken part in the series of ‘anti-globalist’ conferences starting in 2014. The 2014 conference included open fascists, such as Russian and Ukrainian Eurasianists, Italian Third Positionists, the Texas Nationalist Movement, and the neo-confederate League of the South, as well as politicians from the pro-Russian separatist Donetsk People’s Republic. The content of the conference was heavily geared toward Duginist Third Positionist fascism. WWP and FRSO represented the event in a positive manner afterwards, with UNAC referring to a notorious fascist and Holocaust denier as “a leading anti-zionist writer from Israel”. These groups sent further members to the following years conferences, and FRSO republished AGMR’s articles.

Uhuru publicly supports the Russian state, as well as the Assad regime (in solidarity with which they’ve organized with the WWP and many previous AGR conference attendees), with Yeshitela calling for “unity with Russia in its defensive war in Ukraine against the world colonial powers”. Members of Uhuru, including Yeshitela, were indicted by the US in 2023, for allegedly collaborating with a Russian foreign agent as part of influence and propaganda/disinformation campaigns from at least 2014–2022. They’re charged with receiving Russian state funding for actions on their behalf, including a successful election of their pro-Russia candidate for City Council of St. Petersburg, Florida. It should go without saying here that the FBI is our enemy, and that government repression is never ‘good’ even when it’s against other enemies. Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov, the leader of the AGMR, who had paid for Uhuru’s all-expenses paid trips to the Moscow conferences, was allegedly willingly acting under the direction of the Russian FSB intelligence agency, with the AGMR being directly funded by the Russian state. In emails allegedly intercepted by the US government, Uhuru organizers appear to explicitly acknowledge that Ionov is working on behalf of the Russian state to “sew division” and express support for this. This may be part of why the Uhuru Furniture store closed in 2023, as much of the organization’s funds have been frozen by their bank in response. After the indictments and store closing, Kendra Brooks (Philadelphia City Council member, of the **Working Families Party**) sponsored a resolution, which passed, honoring and recognizing Uhuru Furniture and the APEDF, with a copy to be presented to the Deputy Chair of the APEDF (Yeshitela’s wife).

Uhuru has stated their affirmation that, “All the vast resources of Africa are our birthright”. They’ve chauvinistically attempted to control and sideline other pan-African socialist movements actually based in Africa, who’ve called them out for this. Their economic operations are heavily dependent on unpaid, volunteer labor by mainly marginalized black workers. This includes schemes where housing in Uhuru halfway houses is provided to newly released black former prisoners, but under the condition that they stay employed at Uhuru businesses. Despite claiming to work for economic self-determination for black people, the funds they raise (including from 9” apple pies stamped with an outline of the African continent which they sell for \$30 each, and member dues, with a separate rate for the unemployed) overwhelmingly go towards propagating the organization itself, and to the leadership, through a huge network of dummy corporations.

The leader of Uhuru, Omali Yeshitela, has been called out publicly since before 1977 for physically abusing women, and was taken to court for refusing to pay any child support for three of his children. Despite his huge income through the organization, he claimed to have no money, saying that even if he did, he wouldn’t pay, since it would be more important to spend it on advancing the organization. Yeshitela decried the allegations against him as a ‘lesbian-COINTELPRO’ opera-

tion. He was defended by his inner circle of rich white people within the group, notably including some who were themselves lesbians. This Euro-American Solidarity Committee is the financial engine of the group (Uhuru revolves around white capital, once moving their headquarters 2,700 miles to San Francisco explicitly for this purpose) and consequently hold power over all major decisions, where they protect and side with Yeshitela, and serve as a conveniently white scapegoat of responsibility for his actions.

## RCA (Revolutionary Communists of America)

The group behind those obnoxious ‘Are you a Communist?’ stickers, a 2024 rebrand of **Socialist Revolution**. This is a Trotskyist group which is the US section of the **RCI (Revolutionary Communist International)**, itself a rebrand of the **IMT (International Marxist Tendency)**. They oppose working with the Democrats but are in favor of other electoralist participation (having historically been one of the Trotskyist groups most focused on participation in moderate politics, rejecting anything more radical that would ‘scare off’ the masses), and support a mass-based party led by a strict, dogmatic vanguard with close ties to the working class (especially its industrial component). Participation in social movements and labor/local organizing is practiced as part of an ‘entryist’ insertion into them, as well as other Left parties, in order to form coalitions, control, remain in touch with, and transform these groups from the inside. Union organizing is specifically emphasized, as a means of unifying and organizing the working class and its struggles under their subtle but pernicious control.

Their strategy is strictly stage-based (an easy way to call non-revolutionary things revolutionary and indefinitely delay real revolution, while making a target of those who revolt in the here and now without being controlled by manipulative, de-escalatory ‘organizers’ of reality) and focused on proper procedure. In ‘developed’ countries their aim is to first implement a ‘democratic workers’ state with a planned and nationalized socialist economy. This will starve imperialism of its participation and act in solidarity with other more advanced socialist states which may arise, without immediately abolishing the market, classes, or prisons as a whole. From this point they’d supposedly push the revolution on as before; in a unified mass-based process of the working class, solely under their party’s leadership (carefully framed as benevolent and collaborative, but strictly programmatic and totally justified in using any effective means) as exclusive, ‘scientifically proven’ vanguard.

Like most other Marxist-Leninists, especially Trotskyists, RCA are highly pro-technology and development, viewing the ‘bourgeois-democratic revolution’ of industrial growth and modernization of regions they refer to as ‘very backwards’ as a net positive for people. To them this is a causative, if insufficient, factor toward future revolution, due to its strengthening of the industrial working class which they see as exclusive revolutionary subject. This includes cases like the Soviet Union/Russia, China, Brazil, Japan, and India, even as they criticize the imperialist capital, states, and Stalinist bureaucracy which they acknowledge carried out those transformations. They support the limited popular framing of the seizure of power as only aimed at ‘bourgeois-democratic revolution’, as a strategic omission in ‘backwards’ regions before carrying out the actual aims of ‘worker’s democracy’ and economic socialization. As well, while they criticize the Stalinists for their halting of the revolution internally and externally in the bureaucratic maintenance of class domination, and Mao for the inappropriate peasant character of his ‘proletarian-

bonapartist' revolution, they still view the nationalization and socialist central planning of the economy in these cases as a positive development.

The RCA are attentive to axes of oppression like imperialism, race, gender, sexual orientation, environmental damage, fascism, and police violence, and claim to address their root causes. However, they narrowly identify these with an essentialized idea of the capitalist organization of labor (of course not the same thing and not a valid revolutionary target when RCA are the ones controlling a nominally socialist industrial market economy in a statist, authoritarian class society) and the economic oppression of the industrial working class. Their analyses of these issues are focused on the idea of working class unity, a framing which minimizes the reality of oppression, conflict, or difference between groups. This leads to portrayals of oppressed people who don't support the party's limited, oppressive and simplistic solutions, or don't accept their leadership, as counter-revolutionaries.

The RCA says they would nationalize extractive and fossil fuel industries, not immediately end them, claiming against the plainly obvious truth that "On this basis, a massive expansion of the world economy could be realized in complete harmony with the environment". In other fantastical industrial solutions to the world's problems, they'd embark on "An extensive program of useful public works to create millions of quality jobs and upgrade public infrastructure, transportation, and housing". They advocate for the confinement of people under "a full-time job or a place in education for all", with the unions under their vanguard's control in charge of hiring and firing, and the means of production owned and controlled by the state. They limit their demands to a 20 hour work week, \$5k monthly minimum wage nationwide, rent no more than 10% of income, and support a socialist globalized economy.

The RCI's founder Alan Woods, who's also a co-founder of the IMT, worked prominently as an advisor and defender of Hugo Chávez, meeting him personally multiple times and even being driven around the country in Chávez's motorcade. The IMT and later RCI likewise actively supported Chávez as organizations. Hugo Chávez led an authoritarian government in Venezuela which enacted numerous vaguely Marxist-inspired policies, funded by an early 2000s rise in oil prices. Chávez created social programs and subsidies to increase food access, literacy, health-care access, housing, and education. He created workers and farmers cooperatives, carried out agrarian land reform and nationalized large proportions of the country's economy. These programs were somewhat successful in immediately improving quality of life and reducing inequality, however they ultimately failed to seriously address deeper structural inequalities and poverty. The programs were also often neglected after Chávez had periodically consolidated authority in elections, being strategically targeted at whichever specific poor population's support was most crucial at the moment. Chávez also significantly increased centralized authority, and held to a nationalist, indoctrinating line with elements of a cult of personality. He increased market participation and extractive activity in rural and indigenous areas, and was brutally repressive towards anti-authoritarian resistance.

Venezuela eventually suffered a devastating economic crash, partly due to Chávez significantly overspending to prop up these social programs to maintain popular support, and creating an overwhelming economic dependence on nationalized oil exports, leading to crisis when the prices fell. Chávez's economy depended on foreign market participation and tightly effective state functioning, but huge debts, strict price controls, and hostility to private business isolated it and increased its heavy dependence on exploitative multinationals and anti-Western imperialist states. Meanwhile, the state was functional only to the degree that it bought support for its



authoritarian practices, and the resulting political culture of patronage, corruption, and cronyism prevented efficient management of nationalized sectors. The overall structure was something like a pyramid scheme.

Chávez allied with authoritarian states like Iran (which the IMT, while criticizing Iran, justified as a shrewd economic compromise, citing Lenin's consideration of granting Western capitalists concessions in Siberia in order to 'develop the productive forces' of the revolution; this party line led to the IMT's Iran section leaving the group), Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Libya, and China. He also allegedly hired the Colombian communist guerrilla group FARC (which targets civilians in indiscriminate attacks and parasitizes rural and indigenous communities with extortion) to assassinate his political opponents. His police and supporters viciously attacked protesters, including shooting attacks in the streets of Caracas which left numerous anarchists wounded. Chávez never really held a clearly articulated ideology, bouncing around between incompatible reference points. He was animated by conspiracy theories and a personal quality of erratic behavior that many close to him suggest was either untreated bipolar disorder or the manipulative behavior of a disordered personality. By the time of his death, Venezuela was worse off than before his rule, with higher inflation, shortages of food and other products, growing inequality and violent mafias, peaking in an ongoing extreme humanitarian crisis. His successor, the dictator Nicolás Maduro, only intensified and accelerated the previous administration's failed policies and authoritarianism, carrying out extensive atrocities as the country's economy and ability to provide for basic necessities collapsed.

The IMT/RCI's Mexican section supports the vaguely populist social-democratic party Morena of the former president AMLO (Andrés Manuel López Obrador). Their Greek section previously participated 'critically' in the SYRIZA coalition in 2013 (a big tent party of radical Left and centrist groups which disingenuously drew from anti-establishment protest movements only to become a pro-EU, harshly pro-austerity, repressive government when it took power in 2015 via coalitions with the right-wing) and currently critically supports the KKE communist party (a parliamentary, pro-order group which has repeatedly physically attacked anarchists and autonomous demonstrators, collaborated with police and Golden Dawn fascists, and opposes drug decriminalization).

The RCA fully justifies and supports the brutal crushing of the Kronstadt Rebellion by Trotsky. This was a 1921 rebellion in Russia, whose participants included many sailors who had fought in the 1917 revolutions and Civil War. The rebels fought against the Soviet Party apparatus in favor of the original goals of the revolution, for full autonomy of the worker's councils and unrestricted struggle against the remaining class structures and prevailing bureaucracy and authoritarianism. Trotsky led the Red Army campaign against the rebels, whose diverse motivations and participants included a very significant anarchist component, resulting in the killing in combat of around a thousand rebels and the execution of 1,200–2,168 more. Repeating Trotsky's description of it as a tragic necessity, the RCA insists the rebellion was 'petit-bourgeois' and motivated by hunger amid wartime rationing (I suppose starvation is a proletarian virtue). They also point to antisemitic and pro-White Army statements from some of the rebels, which would obviously be reprehensible, but which frankly I'm not historically versed enough on Kronstadt to fully parse the validity or generalizable significance of, though it's apparently a contested subject. Ultimately, RCA's defense of the repression however hinges on their contention that they had to be massacred for their refusal to accept the unjust compromises of a centrally planned administration and military, which prioritized the industrial urban proletariat over the rural peasants.

RCA frames their struggle in polluted and oppressive terms, “We are fighting to defend... the most elementary conditions of a civilized existence, to defend culture and civilization against barbarism.” They see almost all modern or contemporary thought, like existentialism, post-structuralism, etc. as bourgeois atomization containing no worthwhile insights. The IMT has long portrayed cops as “workers in uniform”, and police unions as a potentially liberatory working class institution. They now admit that police unions in the US are irredeemable, but that they should still be supported in some of their demands in other countries. It was only in 1999 that RCI’s predecessors finally made any statement in support of queer people, having previously published anti-gay rhetoric. As recently as 2018, they’ve called protests against TERFs “thoroughly reactionary” in how they supposedly stifle debate. They hold to a strictly biological vision of sex, weakly claiming to support trans people (their first international article defending trans people was published in 2023) while criticizing the vast majority of queer theory as anti-materialist. In regards to transition for minors they’ve been firmly opposed, “Of course, there is no question of children taking such a drastic step”.

## **RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA) aka the Revcoms aka Refuse Fascism aka Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights**

Founded in 1975, this group is an unhinged ‘new communist’ cult of personality around its leader Bob Avakian, who they reverently refer to as ‘BA’. They follow an interpretation of Maoism unique to them, and constantly emphasize the ‘scientific’, unquestionably correct nature of this theory. They oppose electoralism (though Avakian did support voting for Biden in 2020 to defeat Trump) and charity, claiming instead to work for mass-based revolution. The RCP uses a strategy of intensely manipulative co-optation of coalitions, social movements, and protests through front groups. The goal is invariably to get media coverage and disseminate their ubiquitous protest signs and stickers, always complete with their URL (the promotion of which is specifically enshrined in their prospective Constitution for the new communist state). In spite of their militant rhetoric and support for guerrilla groups in other regions or time periods, their current public organizing is strictly non-violent (the conditions aren’t right yet!), and usually based around symbolic demands for reform. This is part of a constant attempt to manipulatively funnel new members into their cult-like pyramid scheme organization. Another core practice is their trademark penchant for aggressive sidewalk Party missionizing, recruitment, and donation collecting. These donations rarely reach their intended causes, instead going toward the group itself, as was the case with their for-profit front group Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights.

‘New communism’ is a tendency which emerged from the New Left and SDS in the ‘60s, inspired by Mao’s China, Third-Worldism, communist Cuba and Vietnam, and the Black Panthers. They focused on anti-racism, anti-sexism, immigrant rights, environmental grassroots struggles, and industrial organizing. However, many of these groups were rigidly programmatic and vanguardist in their engagement with movements, persistently homophobic, and supportive of brutal authoritarians like the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Shah of Iran (RCP doesn’t support the Shah, but he was supported by other new communist groups despite coming to power as a pawn in a US-enabled coup, as a bulwark against the post-Stalin Soviets, who they saw as too revisionist), and the Shining Path in Peru (a Maoist, Quechua nationalist guerrilla cult of personality

which has tortured, killed, and mutilated tens of thousands of civilians in often indiscriminate attacks, especially targeting queer and indigenous people).

The RCP was a co-founder in 1984 and member organization in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, which also had Shining Path as a member organization. Until 2001, the RCP held that “struggle will be waged to eliminate [homosexuality] and reform homosexuals”. The RCP doesn’t have quite as crass an ‘anti-imperialist’ outlook as the WWP/PSL, refusing to support China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, Castro, the Khmer Rouge, etc.. However, they do publicly support the actions of the NLF aka Viet Cong, North Vietnam, the New People’s Army of the Philippines, Shining Path, the ‘Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)’ (who systematically deployed child soldiers and killed numerous civilians with indiscriminate land mines and bombs in crowded public places), and the Naxalite-Maoists in India (many of whom have also used child soldiers and engaged in indiscriminate landmining and attacks, sexual violence, drafting, and extortion and exploitation of tribal and peasant communities).

In 2023, Sunsara Taylor, a prominent organizer with the RCP and cofounder of Refuse Fascism and Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights gave a speech at UCLA titled “Woke Lunacy’ vs. Real Revolution’. In it she ridiculed valid criticisms of how absolutist ideas of Scientific, Objective Truth are tightly linked to eurocentric, patriarchal worldviews, and spouted crypto-TERF ideas while defending Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights insistence on framing abortion as an issue about women, calling more trans-inclusive terminology “an ugly erasure of women”.

RCP’s goal is ultimately for their party as exclusive revolutionary vanguard to forcefully seize control via agitprop based mass-struggle which would unilaterally implement the new communist state and its original laws and administration. Elected central and local legislatures would be empowered after 6 months, with 50% of legislators nominated by the Party, and all being bound by the RCP constitution and subject to approval of their election and of all laws and government actions by a Party controlled judiciary. An Executive Council also effectively controlled by the Party would have full authority over government, society, defense etc. All basic institutions of society such as neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools would be controlled by government bodies of whom 50% of delegates are nominated by the Party. The economy would be collectivized, state owned and planned, including a market, with private ownership of the means of production and hiring of wage labor allowed when it’s in the interests of the Party, supposedly temporarily. Those able to would be obligated to work on tasks assigned by the state. Compulsory education would be implemented, with the Party line presented as the scientific, objective truth of a purely materialist reality. All natural resources and forests would be state property. Prisons and border controls would still exist. External and internal military and security/law enforcement would be under full Party control with the option for a draft. The media, arts, culture and sport would all be controlled by the Party. Allowances are made for oppressed minorities to vote to form autonomous regional governments largely composed of representatives of the same ethnicity, albeit subject to the same mechanisms of ultimate Party control, or to secede entirely and form their own states.

The RCP makes frequent reference to the importance of democracy, people’s rights, diversity, dissent, liberation from oppression, and fairness. Under their proposals though, almost all rights, including voting and electoral candidacy, would be subject to suspension as punishment for crime (which includes broad definitions of being a counter-revolutionary) or in case of declaration of emergency (which also includes any threat to their conceived state or its specific character, and under which the death penalty is reinstated). Standard democracy after all.

## Philly Socialists

Compared to some of these other organizations, this local group is more focused on labor and community organizing, as opposed to symbolic marches and electoral actions. They criticize the Democrats as well as Putin, and to their credit praise looting in some of their writings. They tend to peace-police quite emphatically in person however.

Philly Socialists were among the main ‘official’ organizers of the 2018 Occupy ICE protests in Philly (alongside Socialist Alternative, PSL, DSA, Green Party, IMT, IWW, WWP, and Philly for REAL Justice). At the initial Occupy ICE action, the organizers moved a van which was blocking the street, took down barricades and handed them to the police, tipped a dumpster which had been flipped over back upright, and were generally hostile toward anarchists and more confrontational or horizontal elements. Organizers shouted at bottle-throwers, and snitchjacketed an anarchist who was calling them out for cooperating with the police by handing barricade materials to the cops. Using identity political excuses to justify their authoritarian peace-policing, they apparently yelled “Stupid fucking anarchist!” in that person’s face and asked why they were still there when they said they were opposed to the entire leadership and official process based organizing framework. When the organizers megaphones were hijacked, they inquisitorially asked who those people were. Claiming to want unity and support a diversity of tactics, in practice passively linking arms (ready to have their shoulders dislocated by police) and singing corny protest songs was the exclusive tactic they supported. Ultimately an organizer was punched in the face by an anarchist fed up with this.

The Occupy ICE protests and encampments developed serious splits between organizers, uncontrollables, and unhoused people after the organizers’ actions the first night. Organizers were quick to favor ending the encampments after winning some of their demands, and lack of contribution/engagement with the ongoing actions spearheaded by unhoused people, and condescending behavior by (not only) yellow-vested organizers increased these internal tensions.

Philly Socialists also run the Philadelphia Tenant’s Union. In 2020, the PTU was publicly discouraging rent strikes and not acknowledging those already taking place outside their control in West Philly. One rent-striker wrote in an account from this time published in the local anarchist periodical *Anathema*, of their involvement with about a dozen houses on strike, in touch with a dozen more not currently striking, and also in touch with 2 or 3 different strikes in other neighborhoods. PTU regularly recommended individual negotiations with landlords, presumably to work out the kind of payment plan debt schemes opposed by the other coordinated strikers. PTU again stated in an interview with the *Inquirer* that they still didn’t recommend rent strikes, in response to a question specifically about the ongoing strikes. On Twitter, their organizers called rent strikers irresponsible, adventurist, ultraleft etc.. PTU did eventually put out a call for city-wide rent strikes (again without acknowledging the already ongoing strikes), which took over and absorbed into their formal structure much of the autonomous self-organization of the rent strikers.

In 2019, Philly Socialists published an article about drama involving longtime West Philly anarchist center The A-Space. This was over a person with some local popularity, who held daily morning meditation classes there, no longer being allowed to hold events in the space by the very small anarchist collective behind it. The collective didn’t want to reveal publicly the reasons for this, for the person’s privacy, but they said it was the result of a culminating event after a long pattern of incompatible behavior. A member of Philly MOVE who was also in favor of change from

the collective repeated what they'd heard to Philly Socialists: that this event involved the person allowing someone to stay overnight in the space, but that he didn't explicitly say either that they could or couldn't stay. Philly Socialists called for more 'community dialogue' and reported on a petition going around for this, pointing to the event schedule no longer being physically posted on the front door, and the collective not having formally separate representation from residents in building meetings.

In the article, they even quote an unnamed anti-prison organizer who says, "The long term goal has been to get rid of A-Space... The entire building is owned by the Life Center Association by law as a low-income housing organization, but in all reality it's a middle and upper-class gentrification organization!" This is true in general regarding the land-trust they're referencing, started by the thoroughly pacifist and recuperative Movement for a New Society, and is a fair criticism of 'social' anarchism. It seems at least partly off though in the context where The A-Space was primarily being used by 'the community' for socialist or non-anarchist organizing and 'non-political' events, with little evident interest in involvement in the collective's day to day tasks. If anything, a more explicitly conflictual stance and programming seems necessary in retrospect, not more control over the space by those best at channeling power and popularity in the local mainstream community. The Philly Socialists article ends with them echoing an ask from the anarchist collective for more people to get involved in the space.

A response to this controversy was published in Anathema, saying that asking people to be formally accountable to you for their decisions when you haven't agreed to or practiced a relationship based in understanding and helping each other is misguided. As well, that 'community' which isn't based in a shared desire to help and be around each other is a nebulous idea. The author says the community has expressed very little interest in holding anarchist events at the space, and that those who are upset assume that the space should cater to them, but that there isn't shared intentions, agreed-upon association, or mutual help for each other. They say the petitioners invoke community and accountability, but without a real understanding or practice of the necessary elements that go along with those: free association and mutual aid. Those complaining claim to be practicing direct action, but the author points out that while there's nothing wrong with their practices of holding meetings, attempting conversation, and spreading propaganda, it isn't in fact direct action but negotiation and representation. The author of the Anathema piece says it's an attempt to exercise power over others, which is entirely understandable given their non-anarchist politics, but that it's also understandable for them to refuse to allow this as anarchists.

The A-Space ended about a year later, mainly from the onset of COVID, as well as a lack of people interested in participating in the collective coordinating the center, with narratives from some that the previous drama had also played a role in the dissolution.

Philly Socialists support **Anakbayan**, and have organized with groups including DSA and YCL.

## **BAP (Black Alliance for Peace)**

This group describes their mission as, ~to recapture and redevelop the historic anti-war, anti-imperialist, and pro-peace positions of the radical black movement~. BAP tellingly has a WWP member on their coordinating committee, as well as a member of the WWP-linked US section

of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party. The A-APRP notably sent a representative on an official WWP delegation to Syria in 2013. Ajamu Baraka is the BAP's National Organizer and National Spokesperson. He was the vice-presidential running mate of Green Party candidate Jill Stein, and was on the Holocaust denier, antisemite, and 9/11 conspiracy-theorist Kevin Garrett's show twice (which other WWP leaders have also been on), and had his article published in a book of Garrett's. Baraka himself is a false-flag conspiracy theorist who boosts Russian state propaganda narratives about the war in Ukraine. He also supports Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, traveling to a 2019 labor conference in Syria presided over by Assad himself. Baraka is an editor for the WWP and PSL affiliated Black Agenda Report, which denies the Rwandan genocide and defends Milošević, along with using fascist conspiracy theorists as sources on issues like Syria, many of whom have also been hosted by Baraka.

The Black Alliance for Peace has issued statements of solidarity with the Uhuru Movement after their 2023 indictment, alongside the **NLG** (National Lawyer's Guild), **Samidoun** (One of the lead organizers of the 2024 Tacoma 'Block the Boat' action, where yellow-vests misled the militant crowd and ultimately facilitated the loading and departure of a ship loaded with arms for Israel), the **National Jericho Movement**, and several local Green Party sections, as well as Jill Stein.

## **CPUSA (Communist Party USA) and YCL (Young Communist League)**

Fairly small and uninfluential group, who support 'Bill of Rights Socialism', are class-reductionist (although historically important in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century black labor and civil rights movement), and have been loyally pro-Soviet. They're openly revisionist, unlike many of these other groups, and followed the Stalinist rejection of world revolution, but criticized Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika initiatives after the USSR's fall. CPUSA are opposed to violent struggle, and support democratic, very moderate mainstream reforms (ie. \$15 minimum wage), electoral and non-electoral mass social action. They're open to multi-party coalitions or transitional anti-colonial/anti-imperial revolutions prior to socialism. CPUSA supports at least critically the governments of China, Cuba, India, Vietnam, North Korea (Beyond their explicit support, CPUSA and the North Korean ruling party WPK both send delegates annually to the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, a conference which ends with a joint declaration), Venezuela, and Russia, from a campist 'anti-imperialist' standpoint. They're generally more willing to criticize some of these states than others like PSL/WWP however, and are more openly pragmatist. They're in favor of coalitions with centrists, the Democrats (most of their energy is spent on getting out the vote for Democrat candidates), and capitalists against the extreme right, and coalitions with smaller corporations against multinationals.

For decades the CPUSA was deeply engaged in espionage for the Soviet Union, and received most of their funding from them, only separating with the USSR's dissolution.

The YCL, which was reconstituted in 2019, is somewhat more energetic in non-electoral action than the Party in general, and is more focused on radical coalition based participation in social movements and protests. In Philadelphia they've supported the Working Families Party's electoral efforts. YCL and **ACT UP** were the main organizers of a 2023 'dance party against fascism' outside of a conference in Philly of the transphobic, fascist-aligned group Moms for Liberty.

Despite agreeing not to peace-police, they did so aggressively, yelling at and even chasing off people who tried to throw things at the Moms, preferring to engage in about the most ineffectual and recuperated symbolic ways possible.

## Anakbayan

An international youth organization for ‘national democracy’ in the Philippines. Their activities in the US are mainly consciousness-raising about imperialist domination of the Philippines, and about the extensive corruption and abuses carried out by successive governments there. They also express support and lobby institutions in solidarity with persecuted activists from the Philippines. Anakbayan participates in numerous coalitions in anti-imperialist, communist, progressive, labor, and grassroots anti-oppression struggles. Their tactics generally center on electoral reformism and symbolic protests. While openly communist revolutionary rhetoric is not this group’s mainstay, they have published explicitly supportive statements about the Filipino guerrilla group the NPA (New People’s Army), and their associated political wing the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines). Anakbayan decries criticism of these associations as ‘red-tagging’, however a connection between the two is broadly accepted, with Anakbayan forming part of the above-ground, politically vague/pluralist coalition component of the National Democracy Movement. The NPA and CPP respectively would be the armed and specifically Maoist vanguard party underground sections.

The NPA has received funding from North Korea, China until 1976 (they’re now enemies and the national democrats denounce China’s imperialist stance toward the Philippines), and Shining Path, and worked with the Japanese Red Army (who indiscriminately targeted and killed dozens of civilians in their handful of attacks). The NPA carried out intense purges of its members and others deemed ‘counter-revolutionaries’ or ‘criminals’, torturing and killing hundreds to thousands. These purges have been disavowed, but their causes weren’t adequately addressed, and they still continue in more subtle form. The NPA has a highly authoritarian ideology, including the strict subjugation and control of members’ sex lives by the revolutionary party, with firm ‘family values’ moralism and gender binarism. The group does notably allow trans and homosexual members within this still conservative framework, after a change in policy.

The WWP has publicly supported the CPP and NPA, as well as being a frequent co-organizer with Anakbayan, despite Russia and China (both of whom the WWP support) having developed imperialist alliances with the former Filipino dictator Rodrigo Duterte to exploit the country. The DSA have also worked with Anakbayan.

National democracy is a Stalinist/Maoist-influenced strategy favoring a cross-class, multi-party coalition led by a proletarian communist vanguard party alongside other progressives, anti-imperialists, anti-fascists, or democratic socialists. The aim is for the coalition to carry out a ‘popular democratic’ revolution prior to the socialist revolution and finally the communist revolution. The resultant people’s democratic state would still be directed by the party however, with ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ powers. This is supposedly only in order to suppress reactionary forces that would bring back the previous bureaucrat-capitalist democracy and semi-feudal, semi-colonial conditions. In practice though, this often ends up as a pretext for abusive state power and continued class society and oppression. The participation of ‘progressive’ bourgeois elements, national capitalists, and other non-proletarians in the people’s democratic coalition is supported.

The aims of the new state would be to carry out industrialization/modernization and national development of the mass proletarian revolutionary base. Additionally, there would be partial land reform and limited nationalization and redistribution of capital and the means of production away from semi-colonial-allied 'comprador' semi-feudal landlord bureaucrat capitalists. Corrupt government elements would be disempowered. This would all be possible through the political and economic support of more powerful socialist states/groups (no chance for new imperialist relations there!). The new state would in turn give support to other anti-imperialists and communists as part of this international alliance against pro-capitalist Western imperialism.

These 'people's democratic' ideas have historically been used in different parts of the world for often deceptive purposes, including as a euphemistic misrepresentation for those who in practice are standard authoritarian socialist statist. For example, North Korea being the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or in a predecessor form, the sometimes vague framings initially used by the Bolsheviks about their revolution, of it being for internal and external national autonomy, industrial development, and people's self-determination. Immediate or uncompromising revolutionary action is not generally supported in this framework, either out of determinist conceptions of historical progress building towards communism, or as undermining the necessary manipulative alliance with other members of the Popular Front (often failing to see how these other parties are themselves strategically manipulating the partnership). Another common excuse for moderacy or de-escalation often seen (not only) in these frameworks is based on the ideas of an exclusive revolutionary subject; they or we shouldn't revolt because we aren't peasants, industrial workers, colonized people, or a sufficiently organized vanguard with the necessary levels of revolutionary consciousness and scientific expertise in applying Marxist theory.

People's democracy has also been a way for communists to justify participating in traditional capitalist democratic states and avoid true criticisms of how they've been co-opted and are upholding an imperialist, capitalist, oppressive status quo. In one case, Maoist guerrillas in Nepal helped initiate a popular movement which in 2008 forced the monarchy to disband. The Maoists then formed a governing coalition in a multi-party democracy, and renounced armed struggle to amass personal wealth and power, court Western and anti-Western imperialists, and largely disavow further revolution. Another example (though many Maoists would of course deny any relation to such revisionist Stalinists) is the parliamentarian communist parties in post-war Europe who played blatantly counter-revolutionary roles, such as the PCI in Italy or the KKE in Greece.

The strategy also sometimes allows for a limited practice of armed struggle, in many cases, including in the Philippines, through the strategy of protracted people's war. Here, fighters first establish base areas in the countryside through limited revolutionary restructuring, as well as coercive control guided by a traditional military logic. From there they encircle the cities, in which the struggle is supposed to take an electoral or reformist mass-struggle character, and draw government forces into lengthy and costly counter-insurgent campaigns in rural areas. In some cases, protracted people's war can include strategies of mass protest or insurrection inside cities, but as a means of pressuring institutional opponents in parliamentary struggles or war negotiations. Urban guerrilla actions are another occasional element, with attacks on the enemies of the revolutionary subject of the people's democracy as part of a selfless, mechanical, and reality-choreographing military framework. These attacks can also be under the rubric of the party's proletarian dictatorship exerting control (openly or not) before or after taking power by targeting 'ultraleft' competitors or internal revolutionary elements who fall victim to purging



accusations of ‘crime’, immorality, informing, factionalism, ‘wrecking’, counter-revolutionary identity or actions etc.

## **W.E.B. DuBois Movement School and Saturday Free School**

Based in a fairly rigid, campist, Marxist understanding of the black radical tradition, this group is mostly focused on theoretical proselytizing and political ‘education’. Led by former CPUSA member (they’re now, at least in words, against CPUSA, PSL – although they’ve organized actions with them, DSA, Bernie etc.), and have hosted events with WWP. Fiscally sponsored by the Abolitionist Law Center. They support North Korea (holding a whole conference on it in 2023), Russia, China, and Castro. The Movement School has been involved with recent Decolonize Philly conferences. After the police murder of Eddie Irizarry in Philadelphia, they held a peaceful march with his family, PSL, and BAP. Following the extensive rioting and looting which broke out, they put out a statement saying that it isn’t their task to either celebrate or condemn the actions of the looters. They were recently critiqued by a black anarchist in the local anarchist periodical *Anathema* (‘What The Fuck Does Reconstruction Even Mean To Y’all?’) for these and other recuperatory, elitist, and hypocritical tendencies.

## **DSA (Democratic Socialists of America)**

A democratic socialist party, this is a mainly reformist big camp, which includes Marxists, progressives, communists, anarchists, etc. They claim to reject authoritarian socialism but often work alongside PSL, WWP, Anakbayan, and BAP. They’ve been quite active in supporting the Working Families Party’s electoral efforts. Elected US representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib are members, along with others. The DSA was pro-Israel until 2016. Some representatives from the DSA have voted in support of increased funding for Israel and in favor of pro-Israel resolutions, calling criticism of the Israeli state antisemitic.

In 2021, a DSA delegation of the International Committee traveled to Venezuela to meet the dictator Nicolás Maduro, lending him legitimacy, staying in an expensive hotel, and partying despite high levels of COVID transmission. Sections have also organized ‘anti-imperialist’ marches defending Russia alongside PSL, CPUSA, and FRSO.

## **FRSO (Freedom Road Socialist Organization)**

Another tankie groupuscule, this one merges the Revcom’s Maoist ‘New Communism’ with gross anti-imperialist campism in the style of PSL/WWP (who they frequently cooperate with), while largely supporting mainstream reforms and electoral campaigns in practice.

## **Socialist Alternative**

Slightly further left than DSA, these are Trotskyists and democratic socialists. Claim to support revolution but spend most of their energy on minor reforms like a \$15 minimum wage (even this has been a back-and-forth issue due to their reluctance to diverge from class-collaborationist

unions) and the Bernie campaign. Aggressively photographs their marches and despite pushing for an independent electoralist strategy, have tended to align themselves with reactionary ‘progressive’ factions like the Democrats, or the NAACP and conservative black ministers during anti-racist mobilizations for example.

Socialist Alternative held a march in 2022 in Philadelphia protesting the striking down of Roe v. Wade, organized together with the DSA and the Working Families Party. This was the standard disempowered and obedient mass event, and after some protesters got fed up with this, their organizers aggressively redirected the breakaway marchers and lead them back to the main rally. This dangerously isolated the smaller groups which had ignored them and went ahead from the huge mass of those who initially followed them, and reduced the considerable potential for more uncontrollable, disruptive action.

Socialist Alternative supported Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein in 2012 and 2016, with the fascist-adjacent pro-authoritarian Ajamu Baraka as vice-presidential running mate. Stein is pro-Brexit, posted a 2008 RIP message for the homophobic and repressive dictator Fidel Castro, and attended a 2015 banquet celebrating Russian state media agency RT’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, where Vladimir Putin was in attendance and seated at the same table as her, along with Trump’s national security advisor Michael Flynn (who was reportedly paid \$45,000 to attend).

## **Workers’ Voice/*La Voz de los Trabajadores***

Founded in March 2022 as a fusion of **Workers’ Voice** and **Socialist Resurgence**, this is a Trotskyist, and more specifically Morenoist group. They’re oriented toward union organizing, mass action led by the party vanguard, electoralism, and insertion in anti-racist, feminist, and queer movements. Morenoist groups in the US have more broadly been notable for their unique degree of latinx predominance. Workers’ Voice are a sympathizing US section of the IWL-FI (International Workers League — Fourth International). While their affiliates have sometimes fallen on the opposite side of conflicts in terms of the questionable groups they’ve allied themselves with in comparison to PSL and others, the underlying logic is similar in many ways. These Morenoist groups are very focused on rhetoric of social justice, liberation, opposition to bureaucracy, and participation of marginalized people in the struggle, however they’re firmly in opposition to more libertarian anti-capitalists, and replicate many of the toxic dynamics of the other groups they aim to distance themselves from.

The broader Morenoist current emerged from the Argentine militant Nahuel Moreno (active from 1942–1987). Moreno was a Trotskyist initially active in the area dominated by left-wing Perónism, a complicated mixture of tendencies coalescing around the ‘anti-imperialist’, pro-welfare, populist, and fascist-adjacent military dictator Juan Perón. While at first allying with fairly liberal, bourgeois groups in a front against Perón, Moreno would later switch to collaborating with Perón, out of anti-imperialist concerns for defense against the US. Moreno soon flip-flopped with regards to Castro as well, initially viewing him as a US stooge, he soon fell whole-heartedly behind him (now of course, his predecessor organizations support opposition protests in Cuba fairly unreservedly). While remaining a devout Trotskyist and allying with the the SWP party in the US, Moreno opened to elements of focoist, Castroist, and Maoist thought. In particular this included the idea of the legitimacy of so-called democratic revolutions, or inter-

mediate anti-imperialist revolutions. In 1982, Moreno advocated for an anti-imperialist alliance with the Argentinian state of right-wing military dictator Leopoldo Galtieri against the United Kingdom, following Galtieri's invasion of the British occupied Falkland Islands.

The IWL-FI framed the explicitly pro-capitalist Polish government of Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki formed immediately after the collapse of the USSR as, "a workers' government". They held similar, un-nuanced positions about the complicated character of the Maidan movement in 2013 Ukraine, characterizing even some of the later turns of the mobilization as revolutionary despite, as they put it, the, "far-right layers, which may even have played a 'vanguard' role in clashes with the police" (and the Trotskyists certainly love their vanguards). During the Syrian Civil War, IWL-FI called for, "unconditional solidarity, full support for the military victory of the Syrian people, which is expressed in the FSA, rebel militias, the Islamic Front, local committees, local councils, and a wide range of sectors, secular or not". The FSA however has highly varying degrees of Islamist, Arab nationalist, and Turkish involvement/support between constituent groups, and the Islamic Front has itself fought intensely with the FSA, while more genuinely revolutionary local committees have been victimized by both. The Islamic Front is a Saudi and Qatari supported Salafi jihadist coalition which seeks a theocratic sharia state and has committed multiple atrocities in attempting to achieve that goal, but this doesn't stop IWL-FI from noting that "despite its Islamic programme [it] is fighting the dictatorship alongside the rebels".

Similar sentiments can be seen in their analyses of the recent US military withdrawal from Afghanistan, characterizing the Taliban as, "the political-military leadership of the national resistance against imperialism, and thus... the architect of the imperialist defeat. This was a progressive struggle of the Afghan masses against imperialism and we supported this fight." Declaring that they, "recognize this defeat as a triumph of the struggle of the masses", they quickly qualify, "However, we must not forget... that the Taliban's bourgeois character means that they will not complete the struggle against imperialism." They then proceed to turn around and rightly support the necessary struggle against the Taliban.

## **Anti-Social Social War?**

Recently, the messaging from many organizers around the Gaza solidarity occupations has been loud and clear, "Don't COINTELPRO yourselves!" Criticism of other groups should be private and restrained, to counteract divisions created or exploited by the state. This same sentiment was part of the St. Paul Principles, the agreements adopted by the coalition protesting the 2008 RNC, which also included the resolution to embrace a diversity of tactics and not peace-police, while maintaining a separation of time and space of more directly confrontational actions from peaceful ones. Notably, the guidelines against infighting or criticizing tactics are meant to apply only to those who agree on objectives. Beyond some common sense insights, this framework has serious flaws in the ways it's often invoked by hierarchical organizations, and uncritically accepted by others.

Before getting into that though, doesn't it seem ironic that this milieu in particular is implying, as they so often do, that we're stooges for some CIA psyop (pallet of bricks anyone?). WWP and PSL were directly connected to COINTELPRO through Ramsey Clark, and the list of connections these groups have had with the state intelligence and media services of Russia, Syria, Iran, North

Korea, Cuba, Libya, etc. as well as fascists goes on and on. I'm not saying it's so simple as most of these groups being conscious, direct organs of any particular actor. Many do appear to have good intentions (as they seem to always be having to ask us to assume), or at least their own corrupt motivations, for their often severely fucked up actions. The web of manipulations and unholy alliances that is at play is extremely complex and goes in all directions.

Further hypocrisy leaps out in their peace-policing and authoritarian co-opting of movements. Is it leftist infighting when PSL condemns anti-authoritarians fighting their favorite pet regimes? Or when they protect property and our enemies, intentionally manipulating popular mobilization to benefit their controlling, ineffective, counter-revolutionary organizations? How well have popular fronts alongside authoritarian communists and liberals fared historically, could someone remind me? Something about the Russian Revolution, Spanish Civil War, anti-fascist WWII resistance, practically every protest movement in the last 25 years... Oh well, can't seem to remember!

It's certainly true that a culture of public denunciation can run into some of the more noxious elements of Maoism, which many of these groups exemplify. It can also be a means for the maintenance of stratified in-groups and out-groups, 'punching down', settling for low-hanging fruit, and 'society of the spectacle' style power-politics and manipulation. However, this doesn't mean we should reject any kind of criticism with simplistic common sense about the woes of 'cancel culture'. Such knee-jerk reactions, beyond being accidentally interesting by paradox (cancel the cancellers?), are a way by which all kinds of abuse are conventionally justified. Indeed, the same system which Others with one mouth also upholds itself with another, by conveniently choosing to invoke disingenuous versions of relativist, 'tolerant' unity in the name of the community, movement, and its more-moral-than-thou oh-so-humble superiority. Hierarchical, all-subsuming group politics are as dependent on the suppression and capture of difference and conflict within the group as they are on heightening it with the outside (Note for example, reactionary mayor Cherelle Parker's new tagline, "One Philly, A United City! Safer, Cleaner, Greener"). Certainly the binary anti-imperialists of the PSL ecosystem can understand this when it comes to their national liberation struggles, despite their unconvincing blindness to the replication of these dynamics by the newly totalized nations and themselves.

Without pretending that the 'public' sphere of the existent actually is such or doesn't in itself maintain domination, I'd question how, if criticism must remain private or in internal channels, can this be a movement that exceeds such compartmentalized, legible, categorizing, and flattening structures? How thus can it open/dissolve into direct participation and wild transformation in and of worlds?

Bear with me for a moment here, as words can't exactly grasp what wants to be said, and a short detour seems necessary to convey my point.

If we are to have communities or movements worth coming together in, they will exist in constantly shifting fluxes of conflict and alliance – the principles already partly powering each existing social entity in more or less semi-captured, reversed, inside-out form. The desire for togetherness must be one which inexorably comes from within (perhaps an insurrectionary desire, but not a transcendental one, and not one conditioned by the existent of domination). The community exists only as long as the beautifully inadequate symbols of it serve to keep it from becoming just a symbol. A collective dynamic which has at its base a shared hostility to any separate, flattening rule which would subjugate and degrade its free, egalitarian relations (including

free conflict and dissociation). This refusal comes alongside an acceptance of the existence of suffering and death, and an active orientation toward desire, joy, and possibility.

The kind of hierarchical, imposed 'community' (including the national, democratic, or global examples as well as almost all of the local ones within, based in families, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, leisure/consumption, identity groupings, etc.) which administers vast, atomized peace for industrially omniscient war is in many ways the mirrored, distorted opposite of actual communities (for example small autonomous local groups of egalitarian, indigenous hunter-gatherers, whose proliferated warring and practice of transversal shamanistic anti-politics, or at least the real possibility of such, functions to prevent the emergence of a state or civilization and its cosmological underpinnings), and a condition preventing their existence. This is true in both a symbolic and concrete sense.

Let's take a critically anthropologically inspired look at the situation, in a generalized context. The theoretical pitfalls of images of the 'noble savage', colonial or orientalist Othering and cultural appropriation should be kept in mind, but hopefully we can indirectly address those phenomena as well.

Each genuine community (necessarily limited in scope, and in potential conflict with all of its peers) could only be through an active engagement with the common, conflictual, and sustaining social cosmos that exists via universal difference (which however is dynamic and non-essentialized, if often intentionally symbolized) of each from each. Importantly, the entities of this socius are not constrained by civilized conceptions of how the person is defined, either in the specifics of the outline de-limiting internal and external multiplicity, or in possible form or identity of people or not-people. Difference here is sometimes most powerful when at its most subtle (though not necessarily similar in a straightforward way), but this power can go in both directions. A crucial understanding is that the discrete, alike self or group has to be unstably, intentionally made, during dynamic alliance together in conflict and sustenance, *of* specific and opaque different-nature-hood (and remains partly different, including to itself), *from* a *given* ground of potentially actualized person-like similarity. This 'animist' similarity of perspectival constitution enables the self-construction of each, and the socius itself, yet is potentially threatening by this same principle in that it also is the capacity and drive toward predatory, mimetic, or cannibalistic transformational interplay. The different-nature-hood (the effective fact of one's world, of actively being in the first-person of one's distinctive position or 'culture'; but a genre of culture that what to us is 'nature' also uses to define itself to itself, like we do, as natural) is bodily (but agented, and not conventionally biological or materialist), and the 'natural' connecting ground here is cultural (but a culture which is both egalitarian and conflictual).

I've simplified and rushed over a lot in this gloss, and have still bogged us down with thought spirals, scare-quotes, parenthetical zigzagging, and inexact run-on sentences. I'm not intimately knowledgeable on many aspects of this topic, and we can't really draw this out without insurrectionary rupture. There will be no fully satisfying or clarifying conclusion on offer in any case. We should take note too to be careful to resist the rhetorical pull towards completely conflating (or essentializing as a totally separated binarism) the relations between communities of these kinds with those involving civilized ones. The recuperation carried out through conventional dialectics (progress via thesis+antithesis=synthesis) can be a dangerous, shapeshifting foe. Hopefully though, we can glimpse between the lines how the kinds of multi-natural, mono-cultural 'ontologies' typical of some societies against the state are in a sense the opposite of contemporary

civilization's multi-cultural, mono-natural framework, as well as how the two are like connected inverses of each other.

These illusory yet *uncanny*, and hence powerful, identities and symbols in free systems should stay tilted more, in their *necessarily* dangerously reversible function, towards that anti-civilized "multiplication of the multiple" (Pierre Clastres, quoted by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who informs much of this tangent). Like the indigenous institutions of chieftainships which exist expressly to be prevented by the group from exercising hierarchical authority, these tools should be aimed (as best we can amid the mirages) towards the neverending, anarchic becoming of ever-shifting, asymmetrical balance and imbalance, and not towards their more civilizing possible function, of totalizing, hierarchical, and flattening identity. We should remember that chaos too can play a role in upholding logical order, and that the *logos* (from the Greek for 'word') followed past itself can open onto chaos. The wild though, is something else altogether.

If "The People united will never be defeated", it will be because their uniting will have displaced their capacity for any kind of vibrant life that could experience a real death. If this lowest common denominator slogan still holds some irrational appeal and possible reference to a real community, it is if we twist it around for those united only under a refusal to be united, never defeated only in their smiles towards defeat. These two visions of community can not fail to criticize each other, criticisms which will often fall askew of their mutual codes of legibility.

'Real' community will require some measure of unstable balancing between the strategic and unpredictable conditionality of all positive or negative relations and the unconditional, excessive character of the immediate engagement with the figure of the enemy or friend, to whatever degree this exists in the actual situation.

As far as 'diversity of tactics', this shouldn't mean a handwave-y 'all tactics are valid', 'just do *something* !' Again, that mirage of tolerance. Some approaches simply are not compatible with each other. Stifling the ability to critically evaluate effectiveness means tacitly promoting the status quo, and that the tactics of those who do reject counterproductive tactics will themselves be impaired and sidelined. Actively de-escalatory recuperation via the system's counter-insurgency mechanisms means we may not be on the same side, and structurally prevents those engaging this way from authentically 'embracing' our conflict. This doesn't mean that a moralist purism mandating constant, transparent, frontal conflict with our enemies is the answer. Wars are not only (or even mainly) fought by warriors, and insurrection is not reducible to the purely military. But the ability to parse the fine differences between seducing and being seduced, that art of dancing with the devil, is critical to effectively acting in the subtle ways. This requires something perhaps correspondent with reasoning, as well as the chemistry to intuit when we must leap beyond, into the unknown or unmeasured.

We shouldn't assume either that a manipulative group's intentions impart a deterministic effect and exclusive meaning on their actions. This kind of mechanistic view of reality is intimately tied to the dominating character of such groups. Their thinking is also skewed by all of their other particular oppressive biases. False flags, divide and conquer tactics, provocateur accelerationism or recuperation; these tactics inevitably end up causing countless unintended effects, and often backfire entirely. We can't become a reverse image of PSL, supporting everything they oppose, or refusing to support or oppose anything. For example, when the propagandists try to justify the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a denazification operation, responding by just pointing out the nazis on the Russian side and claiming that it's actually imperialist to acknowledge that the

nazis of the Azov Brigade are significant is precisely the wrong approach. It's imperative to move beyond both 'both-sides-ism' and lesser evils.

Ultimately, I'm not saying that anarchists should only struggle alongside anarchists. This is all quite complex, and there are no easy answers. Deception (by us or others), tactical decisions amidst unknowability and desperation, and the dynamic, condition-based nature of people's desires and orientations can make these choices awfully slippery. But if I were to pick a different formula for struggling together, I'd suggest an engagement with the idea of autonomous base nuclei. This framework was articulated as such in railway workers struggles and those against the Comiso missile base in '70s and '80s Italy, and put forward by the Italian insurrectionary anarchist Alfredo Bonanno, Scottish anarchist Jean Weir, and others in this theoretical area. This approach acknowledges the power of what could very vaguely correspond to 'mass struggle' and 'revolutionary organization', without bringing in too much of the baggage associated with those specific concepts.

Expressed in my own slightly adapted understanding, the autonomous base nuclei are a diffusion of many groups attacking the state, capital, and other forms of domination in their specific, concrete manifestations. These limited and focused groups are a point of contact between more general, specifically anarchic, informal organization and mass, social struggles including non-anarchist-identified participants.

The qualities underlying each nucleus are the following:

- Each nucleus exists in combat at specific sites of domination in the lives of its participants, to deepen their autonomy, actualize specific joyful conditions for them (joy encompassing pleasure, wild play, beauty, and feeding one's interests along with a depth and richness including the fullness of struggle and suffering), defend against further exploitation, and inflict specific incapacity to who/what oppresses them. While it focuses in on specific, achievable objectives, those involved are not complacent with partial improvements, or the self-organization of oppression. The arc of struggle doesn't end at any pre-conceived, 'realistic' end goal. The specific objectives aim towards concrete achievements of the conditions for living out *as well as endlessly discovering* the desires and possibilities that we are currently structurally prevented from conceiving, and which in their content also point towards the unknown.
- The nucleus is anti-bureaucratic and anti-hierarchical, emerging in practical struggle and based on the continuing desire for and effectiveness of the cooperation of those involved. It is actively hostile to delegation or representation, including unions and political parties, which it does not collaborate with. The nucleus also does not act as a delegate or representative of anyone else. Every member struggles for their own autonomy and interests without allying with domination against others autonomy (but affirming the ultimately necessary, unavoidable, and desirable reality of divergences, linkages, and contradictions of interests existing, even and especially in a free world). They combine efforts with others on this basis, to the degree that their interests and desires are linked, obstacles to their autonomy overlap, and their effectiveness increases by joining forces.
- It is hostile to capital, the state, all other institutions of stratification, and all forms of oppressive domination, atomization, and totalization. These include but of course aren't

limited to cishetpatriarchy, racism, ecological devastation, and the many manifestations of ‘civilized’, monolithic subjugation of the Other.

- Participants do not negotiate with, compromise with, or make alliances with authority. They act to further their interests and autonomy directly, and practically affirm the necessity of attack to achieve this.
- All participants are engaged in struggle and this effective struggle is ongoing and permanent.
- The general method of the fight is based on exporting the struggle against the specific enemy/obstacle beyond the circumscribed limits of each specific conflict. This in both the breadth and qualitative character of conceptual and concrete attack, and in mutually effective engagement or coordination with the struggle of separate others oppressed in different arenas by the enemy/obstacle. For example, in a workers struggle this could mean broadening the front of attack and those involved by actively taking it into adjacent economic sectors, into domestic and public life and points of access to necessities, and into attacks against intersectional dimensions of the bosses oppression. It also means going beyond the limits of the workers (or whichever relevant instituted subject position) responding to their oppression *as* workers, to them also struggling against the social production *of* them as workers in the first place. A struggle in the everyday, against the everyday.
- The concrete efficacy of the nucleus and its approach in struggle should be periodically evaluated, remaining flexible and dynamic, and it shouldn’t be allowed to become an organization that exists just for its own continuation.

*Sources consulted include the far more extensive 2018 essay ‘An Investigation into Red-Brown Alliances’ by Radical Vagabond, the website [fleawar.substack.com](http://fleawar.substack.com) by A Million Little Fleas (although that blog is itself written from an often authoritarian campist perspective), and the official webpages and publications of the relevant groups.*

June 30, 2024  
*[reekingthicketspress.noblogs.org](http://reekingthicketspress.noblogs.org)*



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Nim Thorn

Traveler's Guide to the Acronym Wasteland  
Tankies and Authoritarian Entryist Groups in Philadelphia  
July 10, 2024

Retrieved on July 15, 2024 from Reeking Thickets Press

*From the original post:* A general, group-by-group overview of some tankie and authoritarian entryist Left orgs in Philly (though partly relevant to other contexts; many are national groups), to help more autonomous, uncontrollable rebels better understand and defend against their manipulations. Includes some reflections and propositions at the end ('Anti-Social Social War?').  
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