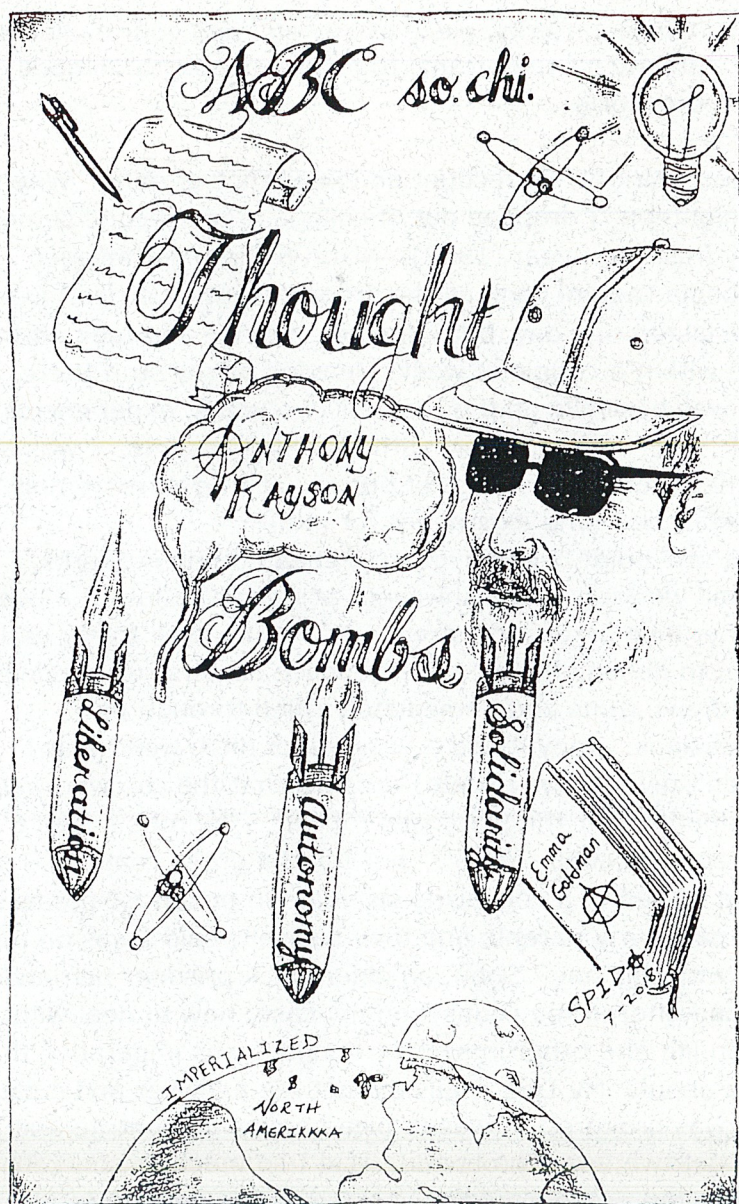


Interview with Anthony Rayson



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1. Offering (story, piece of art, etc. and your explanation of why it's important) to inspire people to do good in the world.

Answer: Alright, I'll recount an experience of mine. When I was eighteen, I dropped out of college in my second semester of my freshman year (1972). Nixon & Kissinger invaded Cambodia (again!) and all the schools went on strike. Our strike lasted one day, but I stayed on strike and took off from there within a couple of weeks, leaving all my stuff there.

I was basically on the road for two years, experiencing a lot of "real" life situations, without resources, etc. I was at the mercy of the kindness of others. It was an extremely important learning experience for me.

At one point, I was living in a cheap dump in Starks, Nevada working as a dishwasher at Harrah's Club. I moved to another dive across the street. As I came back to my earlier place, to get my things, several police officers surrounded me with drawn guns and immediately rifled through my possessions. They found a 1/2 nickel of ditch weed that I couldn't give away (I tried!) I heard that the cop who was the slumlord for the place was robbed. The robber was 6'2" with a green coat. I'm 5'7" but I had a green coat on. I soon found myself in a cell facing six years in prison for possession.

I called my parents and they basically said I was on my own with this one. Soon, an older black prisoner befriended me and offered me counsel on my case, how to deal with prison life and other important things it was imperative that I learn about. My Dad finally did get me a lawyer and a plea deal was brokered. I was to plead guilty, be contrite and I'd only get two years probation. Had I so much as smirked, I believe the judge would have thrown the book at me. I had to take a Greyhound bus from Chicago the next two years to check in with a parole officer, who could not have cared less about me. All for some shit that couldn't get a dog high!

This always stuck in my craw, as I really hadn't done 3
anything that was genuinely "criminal." If I didn't have a
lawyer, I could have been sent down the rabbit hole of prison.
What would happen if I was not so-called "white?" But my
black brother in jail went out of his way to help me and I
appreciated it enormously. I vowed to give back someday,
some way. So, it's kind of no wonder I focused on prison.

There are a lot of genuinely evil people in this world and
part of their evil is lying to people and instilling fear to gain
acquiesce for their really evil behavior (mass-murder & etc.)
People are unlike other animals in that their "instincts" such
as self-preservation, do not inform them of the dangers that
coercive society engenders. We use our reasoning, cognitive
abilities. If these have been manipulated to produce the
result those doing the manipulating are looking for (cowed
public, willing soldiers, etc.) then our efforts are side-tracked
into being accomplices to these bastards. This hurts all of us,
including our close family members and the future
generations. Think of the dozens of millions of family
members fucked over by the marijuana laws. Now,
corporations are raking it in, selling this innocent, yet highly
impressive plant! Still, people rot in cells for possession!

So doing solid humanitarian work is essential for our
collective survival, as those in power do not care about our
lives, our future - or even the future of their own children!

As well, as my little story would suggest, when you do
someone a good turn, without any strings attached, they
remember it! They want to return the favor - and then
some - either to you or to other people. Like a baby who
wants to share her food with you, people are caring at heart.
Unless, of course, they've been ruined, one way or another.
It is psychologically healthful to help other people for the
person going out of their way to do it.

Think of owning a dog. If you treat that dog with love,
she will forever pay you back tenfold. Mistreat a dog or train
them to be mean, you have a snarling police dog that is a
danger to anybody but their controllers. People are social
animals and cooperation is basic for the sustaining of life. All
animals share this with their species.

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Human beings have long since been victims of coercive authorities, who use many vile methods to keep those under their thumbs ignorant and intimidated, making it easier to enslave them and sustain wealth and power for themselves. Now, more than ever, people are dummy-downed, impoverished and chock full of dreadful ideas shoved down their throats at every turn, every day. Humanity desperately needs many people who genuinely have their interests at heart, and be willing to cross the "fear line" and provide useful information and services that are otherwise lacking or only available to "white" people with plenty of money.

2. Tell us about your early influences in anarchist thought or about individuals who inspired you to be involved in the movement.

Answer: Well, I was born in 1953, so I came of age in the explosive sixties. As I became a teenager, I was aghast at the monstrous action of the U.S. government, who were murdering an average of 1,000 Vietnamese per day. They showed stacks of bodies ("body count") with smiling G.I.s next to them. It was horrific on a daily basis. Vietnam was not the only place. In 1965, the U.S. orchestrated the slaughter of 500,000 Indonesian "communists." The government even seemed to be at war with young people, here at home. I was driven into the arms of the counterculture. Cool rock bands, weed, demos, underground papers, etc. Some people had a brain that was functioning!

But, before that I was a paperboy and actually had three routes, a morning, afternoon and Sunday. I was an avid reader of the papers and of books, which my parents had many of. I'd read all kinds of books - even during class.

My father, Leland Rayson, was a progressive politician and took us to demonstrations and meetings. I actually was at Martin Luther King, Jr's march in Cicero, where he was stoned. I was thirteen. We went up to Milwaukee to march with Father Groppi, a radical Catholic priest, who had Dick Gregory there, on a 43-day hunger strike. My Dad was an early anti-war activist, a freedom rider supporter and for a

while, the state's main abortion rights advocate. He got death threats all the time. 5

As the sixties moved on, social strife increased and I went to many demonstrations and meetings with activist groups, while I was still in high school. I started organizing with kids from other schools, specifically with YAWF (Youth Against War and Fascism.) My older brother hooked up with YSA (Young Socialist Alliance) and I tagged along with him some. In 1969, I went to the Moratorium in Washington with an SDS group. This was the Maoist Progressive Labor group. They were splitting with the Weathermen. We went to a raucous conference in Washington, where these two factions battled it out. I grabbed all the literature I could get, as I did at every demo, conference and meeting.

We had a rally at the Department of Labor in support of the then striking General Electric workers. While we did this, 10,000 maniacs (Yippies) went by on their way to do battle at the Justice Department. I was swept up in the excitement and followed for a few blocks, but had to turn back to make sure I could make the bus back home. Heady stuff! I was reading Marx, Lenin, Mao and Trotsky. I appreciated their clear class analysis, but could never stomach their dictatorship worshiping and their authoritarian manners.

My best friend had a brother going to school in Dekalb and he ran a grotto. He had the underground papers and comix from around the country - and porn, to make ends meet. I appreciated guys like Abbie Hoffman, who had courage and intelligence and was a kind of anarchist. Now, there was no internet then and no AK Press. There was no literature at all that you could find that could be called "anarchist thought." I had heard about Mikhail Bakunin, but didn't really know what he had written.

In my reading, I was blown away by Dostoevsky, Harriet Beecher Stowe, history in general and the existentialists. I read Sartre, Camus, R.D. Laing - stuff like that. I adored Claude McKay, who was a black communist. I got radical books and magazines, but knew nothing of "zines" - although when I returned to Illinois, at age twenty, I set to work

furiously on a zine, I titled it "Peoples' Polar Express." I made fifty copies, showed it to my friends, who enjoyed it and thought I was crazy. This was in 1974. 6

Later, I read an interview with Noel Ignatiev in the Progressive magazine. This was a big epiphany for me. I thought "finally - someone who tells the goddamn truth!" I wrote a letter to Race Traitor, a journal he was co-editor of. They printed it and I met with a Chicago connection to it, a professor named Kingsley Clarke.

I also got hooked up with the zine underground and ordered all kinds of zines, like The Match, by Fred Woodworth. I went to a meeting at the University of Chicago, where students put together a solid publication. I asked "where can I meet anarchists?" They told me to "go to the A-Zone!" A black lady took me to a Black Muslim restaurant. I did go to the A-Zone and started to go to meetings.

I started writing articles and sending them far and wide into the zine and progressive world, looking for like-minded writers to collaborate with. I had a job that allowed me to read and write, while on the clock and I took extreme advantage of it! I met some amazing anarchists, like Lorenzo Komboa Ervin and his mate, JoNina Abron. Sam Mbah from the Nigerian Awareness League came to speak at the A-Zone. I met several solid Chicago A's, such as Gale Ahrens (aka Jane Doe), Mike Durschmid, Bill Burns & Camille, Ken Wong, Darrell Gordon, Jeremy & Jason Hammond and others as well as many others from around the country, inside and outside of prison. I started reading real anarchist literature from books, zines, letters, etc. I finally felt empowered to do what I always wanted.

- a. What was your early environment like?
(Community, family, etc.)

My early years were lived in Tinley Park, which was then a small suburb in the southwest suburbs. I-57 wasn't even built, yet. It was named after the Tinley brothers, who were railroad men. I was the fourth child out of seven, born on my sister's birthday. A lot of our neighbors had a lot of kids, too.

So, we would sort of float from yard to yard or house to house and rampage around town. We all had bikes and played a lot of baseball, football, tennis, went swimming, etc.

Tinley was an all-white, racist place of mostly German people, at that time. The grade-school boys would go around the school chanting racist slogans during recess. Meanwhile, my Dad would have black activists over to the house for strategy meetings and they sent us to the Harvey YMCA every Saturday, where we could actually mingle with black kids.

I had five brothers and one sister. I didn't like being bullied by my older two brothers, so I kept to myself a lot and read voraciously. I tried to look after my younger siblings. My Mom was a stay-at-home Mom until 1970 or so, when she went back to grad school and became a psychologist. One of my uncles, Delwyn, my Dad's brother, had been a minister in Hawaii, when he decided it was all a sham and became a socialist. He was sympathetic to me, when all hell broke loose and I was seriously alienated from pretty much everything. To this day, the people I grew up with (who aren't already dead) are still, mainly racists.

3. Can you tell us about how the movement differs now from the time you first got involved?

Answer: My first effort at organizing was with my brother's girlfriend, Patty. We tried to change the school's rules that girls must wear a skirt - even in the winter. Why should they freeze? It seemed so stupid! Eventually, they were allowed to wear culottes. Mostly, we took the train downtown for the big anti-war demos and so forth. People we knew, neighbors, had gotten sucked into the military and some died and some came home shattered. Some we got weed from. People who could, went to college to avoid the draft. High school was divided into various groups, which we called socialites, hippies, jocks and greasers.

But, it was an explosion of issues that concerned me. I wanted the whole thing scrapped and society to become something genuinely humane to replace it with. But, we were

ignorant, conflicted and naive. I was still quite young. We held meetings to discuss strategy, but they were controlled affairs, led by white men, almost invariably.

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In 1968, when the Democrats held their convention in Chicago, my Dad was actually a delegate. Didn't matter. He got gassed, too! I was too young (fourteen) to go down there, but my brother and Mother did. I was transfixed by the TV coverage. It sent chills down your spine hearing "The whole world's watching!" The highly suspicious assassinations of the Kennedy's, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. underscored this decade. I followed coverage of Che Guevara's adventures in Bolivia. It was in the papers! Soon after his murder, a book of his diary came out, published in Cuba and available at the Rexall Drugs store! Shortly after the 1969 Moratorium, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were gunned down by the Chicago pigs. On the "L" I met a couple of brothers who said they knew him and would introduce me to him. I went to visit them in the 'hood, too!

After I got back from hitch-hiking, I was ready to "join the revolution" but I had no idea who to contact or anything. My friends were just moping around getting loaded, with crappy jobs. And, when in 1973, the draft was ended, it seemed like the air went out of the balloon, as far as mass action was concerned. It was quite depressing, as everyone got hung-up on disco music, which I hated. So, I did what I had to do to transition into adulthood, such as getting a job and trying to find a mate. I was a frustrated writer and a lowly peon. I knew that I wouldn't be able to make a living writing what I wanted to write, so I had to settle for what I could get.

One big difference from then and now is that there was a strong prisoner support movement. We were all in on the "Free Huey" movement and it eventually worked. The Panthers were quite visible and growing and doing some good things for their community, had a national newspaper and an international presence - until they were destroyed by the government. The few "reforms" were soon reversed bigtime and harsh mass incarceration would soon be upon us. For a time in the mid-1970's most of the U.S. prisoners were

Vietnam Vets. Welcome home, boys! Enjoy homelessness and prison! I had a few neighbors who came home in coffins.

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a. Any pitfalls today that didn't exist in the past?

Answer: Well, yes I would say so! We now live in basically a fascist surveillance state, where technology has enabled our oppressors to pretty much know where each hair on our butts is located! Cameras everywhere, all our information known to them, from our phones and computers, cops once bumbling idiots, now armed with sophisticated tracking devices, all kinds of deadly weapons, etc. Big Brother, indeed!

When I was young, we could "get away" with stuff because there were so many of us and a lot of the nasty bastards were in Southeast Asia menacing those people. Now, my generation is composed of the worst nazis in our history and (almost) all of the progressive "heads" are either dead, in prison, in ill-health or despairing. Obviously, we failed miserably in creating a better world!

I was so happy to see the Occupy Movement of 2011 and the outraged wave of actions throughout the country in 2020 in the wake of the televised George Floyd murder. People now do have access to intelligent (and some confusing) anarchist literature, actual groups that can be easily accessed and young people who are a helluva lot more aware and caring about what is going down, than the schlubs I grew up around. Of course infiltration, disinformation, and repression has also grown to all-encompassing levels.

A lot of things remain the same, only worse! Racism, sexism, homophobia are still rampant, the gap between rich and poor is now gargantuan, endless wars are even more ubiquitous and future-ruining, the prisons are bursting and uber-repressive and the brainwashing is suffocating. From only 3 or 4 TV stations, we now have hundreds, but the shows and movies all still suck and are violence-glorifying testaments to how low people will go to ~~whore~~ for this despicable country. The fate of Earth herself is in a death spiral before our very eyes, which many people have zero concern for. I have two sons and two grandsons...

People have been so manipulated that they don't seem to care to learn the truth about things, but just exist in a fantasy coma of comic book heroes and cell phone usage. The prisons used to disallow TV's, but since they have been totally cowed, they are used as guards and mind-drainers.

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4. Prisoner support. Why did you get involved? Why should anarchists get involved in prisoner support if they are not?

Answer: Once I started outreaching to other folks spreading my writings around looking for feedback with the goal of finding comrades to network with, it became more and more obvious that the people giving the most serious look and response to my work, were prisoners. This was around 1996-97. I soon began my own personal zine, "Thought Bombs." I made 33 issues of that, each about 64 pages.

As well, in 1998 I had a very big year. I co-founded STAND (Shut This Airport Nightmare Down!) to fight the proposed Peotone Airport in Eastern Will County, where we moved to in 1990. I became the Secretary and helped to conceive actions, as well as do argument crafting, which we used to educate people about the myriad issues surrounding this threatening politician/corporate boondoggle. I started writing zines and collected other information about the dangers that this project would create. I even got to writing a quarterly newspaper, with tens of thousands of issues we spread all around this area. I even got the local printers to print up prison abolition anarchist newspapers!

I also started a South Chicago ARA (Anti-Racist Action) group in the south suburbs. I went to an ARA conference in Columbus, Ohio and saw other groups from around the country and Canada, who had little literature tables. I thought 'wouldn't it be nice if this literature was available from one source?' Others agreed, but it soon became apparent that if this was to happen, it would be me who would do all the work. So my distro started out as an ARA/ABC distro.

I'd seen distros out there, usually done by punk band enthusiasts. I soon focused almost exclusively on the prisons, as it seemed to me that ARA literature was somewhat limited and easily dated, but the massive American gulag system was basically the black hole of society and woefully ignored by many. I wrote back to prisoners who I felt made intelligent points in other publications and started to acquire prisoner support publications and develop relationships with prisoners and their supporters. Then I self-taught myself how to make nice digest-sized zines and started working up prisoners' material. My first prisoner zine was called *Decidedly Radical*, by Frank J. Atwood, a lifer. 11

Soon, I ran across a wonderful mentor - Sean Lambert, a self-described bisexual prison abolitionist anarchist, who did lengthy prisoner zines, in tiny print mixed with his own anarchist punk band lyrics, graphics and other contributions.

So the South Chicago ABC Zine Distro was launched. I got a P.O. Box in Homewood, Illinois and I've kept it going ever since. I put ads in several zines and leftist journals and magazines offering to collaborate with prisoner writers and artists. The response was beyond my wildest imaginings.

Well, I guess I opened up a can of worms because once I started to understand and delve into this whole prison mess, I came to realize that genuine anarchist-driven information and polemics was also a serious need in this country, not just for prisoners, but for everybody. So, although prisoner writings and analysis were very important for other prisoners, they and many other people on the "outs" also had important things to say which I felt people needed to know, and so should be part of this distro, too.

Very few other prisoner support groups did this type of one-on-one collaboration with conscious prisoners, nor would they even think of doing all the work to create these types of publications, much less make them freely available.

Since it took until I was forty years old to consider myself an anarchist, I thought "shit!" Why did it take me this long to realize this? I'd been reading forever and basically, been an anarchist without knowing it, my whole life. Obviously, or so

I told myself, anarchists had been doing a poor job of getting the word out and doing serious and useful work with the most downtrodden of our brothers and sisters.

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People in general are woefully uneducated about politics and pretty much all other important subjects - deliberately maleducated! Also, I was a self-taught writer and I could make myself an editor, a publisher and a distributor. As a serious and reliable anarchist, by supplying useful information on many topics hungered for by prisoners, freely through the mails, I could also flavor this work with my own anarchist rants and analyses.

Prisoners are wary and understandably so. Many alleged supporters are fly-by-night operations, who crow about their own work, but rarely give prisoners the time of day as far as spreading their opinions is concerned. Doing this consistently for the last 25 years has given me a lot! I've learned an enormous amount, collaborated with brilliant and talented prisoner writers, activists and artists and gained their trust. I've gained incredible friendships and assistance in this work from prisoners, other support people and their family members. I now have over 1,300 zines which I make freely available. I've been hellbound for leather for a long time!

Every year, I make a catalog, so people can let me know what they want. It's extremely rewarding, nose-to-the-grindstone work! I've done interviews with some of the most prominent political prisoners and many, many zines with them and really, some brilliant anarchist prisoners not that well known. My thing is, if I think what is presented to me can genuinely benefit someone else (usually a prisoner, but not exclusively) then I'll work the material up into a zine and stick it in the distro. Once a zine is "in the can" it can theoretically live forever! I don't need a mainstream publisher or barcode or price tag!

Being free and made available is my contribution to the struggle. I think it also gives the idea of anarchism a front row seat in the battlefield of ideas and is something no other belief system would do. Zines fall in the cracks of prison censorship. Religious groups send their "bibles" and whatnot,

but they have an agenda. They want people to join their particular sect. I have material from several different strains of radical thought. I don't tell them they have to become anarchists to receive anything. I think we can out-argue all the other belief systems, but I feel they can make up their own minds on what and how to think about things. I offer many choices, plus my own take on things. That's solidarity & mutual aid to me! My entire archive of zines and prisoner artwork is also housed at DePaul's Special Collections Library. The curator sends these zines to prisoners, too! They use them in class studies, at conferences, etc. 13

Just because a person considers himself or herself an anarchist doesn't mean they should stop learning. Who better than prisoners can hip us to what dastardly deeds are being done to people by the government? Often, they have helped me in areas of research, providing graphics for my grassroots efforts and sending me in useful directions, contacts wise. When I'm down, due to say, the death of one of my family members, prisoners provide the comfort and solace I need - even more genuinely than my own family! Anarchists need love, too! They have my back like no one else. Another interesting point is that prison writings, such as poetry, essays, rants, stories, documentation and letters are a unique (usually) extremely clear-minded and to-the-point type of literature - as is their amazing artwork. To be a part of this project, many brilliant prisoners are made to suffer terribly. It's extremely important to them - and it sure as hell should be to any self-respecting anarchist, too!

For, anyone can do this. To become a publisher, all you have to do is make up a name, have a stamp made and get a P.O. Box. Use the stamp for the return address on an envelope and on the last page of each zine and BAM! - you're a publisher. You don't have to get a degree or pay a fee. Plus! The material is only edited by you - not some stuffy board of gutless people looking to maximize a profit.

I tell prisoners my zines are free because ideas should always be free and I'm an anarchist! I've already paid for all this with a lifetime of time, money and effort. So no one

needs to pay for it again, do they? And if you can't pay me back somehow (usually I ask for essays or artwork or stamps) help the brothers and sisters around you. Share the zines and spread mutual aid and solidarity wherever you go! Anarchists, in my opinion, need to go where the suffering is the worst and the help needed is the greatest! Remember Katrina? Who came to help those people? Anarchists!!

5. Recommendations or thoughts for how we should use or not use chip-based technology (like computers) as a medium between us or in our lives.

Answer: Well, personally I'm a computer dumbass and I don't really like it. It's been taken over by businesses, mainly and poor people and prisoners don't really have access to it, even nowadays. Back in the day, I didn't even like PacMan. I played pinball. I do think it is much better to write (and edit) material with than the good old Smith-Corona. Texting and email can be useful, as is getting directions or information quickly. But if you are at all "political" the snoops are all over your computer and phone.

Make no mistake, Big Brother is all over the internet and basically it knows almost everything about anyone they care to look into. I can't really speak for other people and what they do with it. I know it is useful in situations such as calling people to action or coordinating fluid situations. There are all kinds of things you can do with it. I have no magic solutions to keep people from being harassed due to smart phones or computers. It's easy to buy stuff from home, too.

What I do is not do anything remotely considered "illegal." I go by my real name and am very upfront with my work. I think being an anarchist is a very important responsibility that I take very seriously. Most of the time, I don't even use the "A" word as I talk and relate to people who don't have a clue what it truly is about. It's a buzzword, like "gang-related."

I consider myself "Joe Normal" because to me, it seems entirely appropriate that I am doing this type of work and am puzzled why so few others are engaged in it. We are

(allegedly) endowed by our white slave-owning "fathers" with the "right" of free speech. Of course, this is being tossed into the dustbin of history by today's fascists. Personally, I think the Constitution isn't worth the parchment it is written on, as it allows for human slavery (of prisoners) to this day!

Many, many people need (and deserve) to learn the truth that anarchists, guided by these excellent principles, can share with others. Can you use computers to do this? I'm sure you can. Personally, I prefer letters and zines, phone conversations and personal meetings. What I tell people is that I think they should pursue their talents and interests in the service to humanity. This, to me, gives a person a sense of self-worth and positive accomplishment. It's a life fully lived - even amidst such a depraved environment.

6. What security dangers do anti-authority movements face here in the USA? And how should anarchists respond to these dangers?

Answer: Well, there are many dangers. We're all in danger, whether you consider yourself an anarchist or not! I'm no expert on this subject. I usually work alone or in close collaboration with an individual. I'm 69 years old now and can't do much hell raising, anyway. I've always detested violence and guns and any type of bullying or coercion. There are all types of ways anarchists can comport themselves, just like anybody else. Individuals or groups need to figure out how best to accomplish what they feel is important in life. You must do the research and adopt the tactics that are deemed most suitable and safe. It's just like any other situation. You drive a car, you put your seatbelt on, drive carefully and arrive at your destination safely, whether alone or in a group.

7. What are two important lessons have you learned for yourself in life?

Answer: I tried for a while to live by myself and tried to learn things that I thought were important, such as what is this

society really about? I learned a lot going about things in such a manner, but later on, I realized I couldn't just conjure up a legitimate or purposeful existence without having any real means or any real stability (love) in my life. So, I realized I would have to figure out a way to sustain myself, which meant I had to get a job, like every other Joe Blow, and try to find a companion who was willing to put up with me and who I could relate to. I came to realize at around age thirty (after having a brief marriage from age 23 - 26) that I wanted to have a "full" life, which meant me and my partner would have children. So, once I came back to this area at age twenty, I worked in restaurants and factories to begin this process. I lived frugally and actually was able to have a small house, as my first wife had \$6,000 for a down payment. After the divorce, I had to pay that all back with \$1000 more for furniture. That took five years. Then I sought a woman who was smart and loving and would make for a wonderful Mother and one willing to bear our children. Luckily, I was able to find her and all my dreams came true!*

The other lesson was to never trust the government, continue to hold the same attitude throughout life as I held at age fifteen. Treat people with respect. Try to learn as much as possible and keep striving to learn about everything I was interested in and fulfill my early desires to become a writer and try to do something positive, while alive on this planet. Sometimes I was depressed and alienated and saw no way forward. But, I kept a flicker of hope that never got extinguished. Later, I was able to figure it out, but of course, all our lives come with regrets that we cannot redo. I spent so much time on this vast project, I believe I neglected my wife and sons to the point of regret. I try to make it up to my sons, my wife and our grandkids. It was hard because I was very estranged from my own immediate family. I kept my promise to myself, when I was sitting in that stupid cell in Nevada - to get off my ass and DO something. We're all flawed and imperfect, but even after being traumatized, we can get up and do something marvelous, even if it seems nobody really notices. For a long time, I was too afraid to take this step. I was even afraid to read my own writings.

When I finally did, I realized I wasn't "crazy" at all. The society I was born, bred and lived in was the culprit.

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8. What important lessons would you like to impart to others for the sake of being successful in building Anarchy?

Answer: I would say that A's need to get away from cloistering themselves together and expand from an insular culture and deal with real life issues with those in their communities. Find out what their issues are and begin to work out some remedies. Any help we can provide is a positive. People need help desperately. We live in a very brainwashed society where up is down and truth is fiction. We must have a solid anarchist educational component with everything we do. Read a lot and seek out genuine analysis, whether it is openly anarchist or not. I just read a terrific book entitled "Death of a Nation - 9/11 and the rise of fascism in America" Read it! It's terrific. Is the author, George W. Grundy an anarchist? No, he is not. What matters is he provides a cogent 500 plus pages of distilled insight.

It seems A's are far too preoccupied with subsisting amidst a black-clad punk environment and not doing much of anything. Serious anarchists should be unbelievably active in their communities, not sort of hiding like a sort of group of goths. I see no reason to hide our unusual thinking ability from others. Yeah, we're demonized and vilified, but we have accepted anarchist principles as useful tools to help guide our life's work with. I head these principles, No Master, No Gods, Affinity Groups, Prison Abolition, Voluntary Cooperation, Solidarity, Feminism, Anti-Racism, Direct Action and Autonomy. Other A's have their own list, I'm sure.

We need to work hand in glove with oppressed groups, struggle against racism, sexism and homophobia and strive to be better human beings and social advocates. Their life and death struggles are where the focus should be. I think it is crucial to have an educational component with everything we do. Keep notebooks, pens and tape recorders handy.

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Encourage others to write about their opinions and experiences. Put it all together so others can glean the truth from what has and continues to happen.

Look at Spain in the thirties. Infoshops were everywhere. Books, pamphlets and newspapers were avidly read, discussed and meaningful. Children became literate from these sources - and became anarchists. Don't be afraid to take material from literature tables - and reproduce them. Start your own literary co-op. Seek mentors to help you. Be resourceful and find ways to make it happen. Dumpster dive for the truth and make anarchist-driven material freely available. Work on your own skills, constantly. Everything of importance takes time and effort to learn how to do effectively. It can be done! It takes personal resolve. Everyone has unique and useful abilities and talents. Don't let them lay dormant!

I remember, I met a Dutch anarchist twenty years ago or so, by the name of Tomas Johansson, I think. He was going to school at the University of Chicago. He was curious about my distro. He asked something like "How can we get six or eight infoshops in the south suburbs?" That's a great idea, but how is this possible without the painful, cautious first steps it takes to make even one happen? Last I knew he had moved to South America, where the anarchist movement was much stronger. It takes constant effort by A's to will it to happen, by focusing on it until it does happen. Black clothes and vegan food? Ok, but work your asses off doing productive work! I know! I'm just an old codger.

Don't burn yourself out, though. The task is extremely daunting and the rewards seem few and far between. Take care of yourself, personally and those around you. It's very draining work - a rollercoaster ride practically daily. Do your best and give full effort in everything you do.

I'm sure this sounds arrogant and preachy, but times are awastin'. You can think I'm a jerk or some old coot and you're probably right. But, just think - think for yourself, study the matter and decide for yourself what is true and what is not and act accordingly. Trust yourself. There's only one person capable of being in your corner at all times -

yourself! Don't make yourself your worst enemy. Overcome self-loathing by evolving into your best self. Self-love is then expressed by the good deeds you do for (and with) others.

9. What are mistakes you'd like others to avoid that you wish would've been told to you?

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Answer: Well, this society not only bombards us with a blizzard of bullshit, fear, intimidation, coercion and a sick violence-glorying culture of hero worship for our oppressors and their hired thugs, but it also wants to crush your spirit. It wants you to detest yourself, to be self-loathing, depressed, feeling isolated and hopeless. That's what bullies do. They have no real arguments that are any good, so they rely on threats, the threat of violence and most certainly real violence. We can overcome these debilitating things.

I was like that for a long time. I was very active in the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, but pretty much cocooned throughout the eighties. I missed a whole fifteen years because I felt so helpless and isolated. But, once you get out there and make a genuine effort, solid people will cross your path and they can help you navigate your way to getting over that lethargy and sorrow. You will find you do have talents and can develop them in a positive life-affirming manner. Rely on your soul, your spirit, your mind and your body to redirect your life from a sort of dreading listlessness to an anarchist-driven engine of clear-minded action. It can be done and only you can make it happen for yourself.

10. What features of an anarchist Illinois do you see in place at the moment or that you think we really need to make special effort to build up?

Answer: Well, I'm down here, now in Kankakee County and I work rather autonomously from most ^{other} A's in this state. I do go to events now and then, around Chicago and the state. But, being old and white-haired, I seem more like a curiosity than a comrade. I don't wear black. I was never a punk,

although I loved the Clash. I think some even look at me as some sort of plant. That's ridiculous, but I'm sure there are some! So, you tell me where all the anarchist activity is happening. I'll write about it and turn it into a zine! 20

I know you good people are out there, as the explosion of people in the streets, not just in Chicago, but around the country proved it! Occupy and the response to the murder of George Floyd were mostly anarchist-driven, in my opinion, even though the commies claimed credit. I remember seeing a knot of them sequestered near the Occupy area in Chicago and I thought, they must be thinking, "How can we co-opt this?"

Anyway, anarchist collectives can spring up anywhere - someone's apartment, an abandoned building. We don't have to have an A-Zone, where rent is due all the time. College students are often pretty radical and they have student groups who focus on social issues and even get school funding, sometimes. They have resources, like copying machines. Use them to maximum capacity! Use their auditoriums and libraries. My whole archive of material is now a big part of DePaul's Special Collections Library. Donate your time and effort to groups involved in helping the community. You can work with non-anarchist folks, yet retain your autonomy. We can learn valuable skills from experienced grassroots organizers who have more limited and specific agendas than what anarchists wish would happen. We don't have to battle the death ship all the time. We can be involved in any number of ways that can slowly but surely add new people to the anarchist movement. It takes a lot of tedious effort. Working directly with prisoners offers a portal to a world where a lot of people respect our beliefs. Many comrades can be befriended, but it takes a willingness to get off the dime and start doing it.

11. Atheism and metaphysics.

Answer: I do consider myself an atheist. I was brought up with a sleepy Methodist upbringing in Tinley Park. I never

liked it. We tried to avoid it and just watch Sky Pilot and the Honeymooners. It was so boring. In the summer our 21 summer vacation was messed with by two weeks of pointless Bible School. Reading the Bible seemed confusing and rather divorced from our present lives. I never cottoned to the idea that even though you have "free will" if you don't kowtow to being meek and gullible, hideous things will happen to you - once you die. You'll go to hell forever! Or, you have to suffer and be miserable your whole life, then you get to go to heaven, also forever. What if heaven is boring? Maybe I don't want to lie around eating grapes all the time.

I remember, back in the day, Frank Zappa wrote a song entitled, "The meek will inherit nothing." I agree with him. Being meek certainly hasn't helped the starving and dying masses, has it? There are thousands of so-called religions, yet they all claim they have the one true deal. Bullshit! The "word of God" was written overwhelmingly by men looking to control other people - not women - men! A lot of it is contradictory, vague, bullying nonsense! It was historically used to build power bases and assault other peoples. The history of religions is a very bloody one. God is very coy. His "word" means everything, yet no proof of even one syllable by him (it's always a guy, right?) being said by him, exists. We're told to trust the shaman. We're supposed to believe he created the infinite universe but just can never seem to get over on that rascal, "the Devil." Well, anyone can walk on water - if it's cold and hard enough! No thanks!

Governments and religions go hand in hand. The more reactionary the government, the more the dominant religion is harped upon. It's a way to cloud peoples' thinking and to keep them more docile - more controllable.

A lot of people spend a lot of time thinking about "religious" doctrine. I don't think anyone really knows anything much beyond what transpires, here on earth. The laws of physics and nature apply. No "miracles" happen. There are major forces that keep things as they are. I see no reason to waste my time worrying about something no one has ever figured out. We only have a finite time here. We

should not waste our time, but deal with reality, as we come to know it. Do good things, not to get a ticket to heaven, but because it is good for you and others. It's not only good but especially now, extremely crucial for sustaining life. It's our responsibility as caretakers in the present and we're doing a piss poor job of it. 22

I don't see a problem with meditation, calming thinking about things and working out solutions. I do that every day in the periods between wakefulness and sleep. But "praying to god" once or five times a day, seems like a cop-out. Besides, maybe he's busy several billion light years away and can't be bothered.

As for metaphysics, I don't know. There are unexplained phenomena, but scientists don't know everything. I don't believe a guy can bend a fork by just thinking about it hard. really don't concern myself with it. I don't even read much fiction. I like to keep my feet on the ground - no snow or water skies, no roller skates or skateboards or roller coasters. I don't like that feeling of having my stomach churned.

I accept that gravity exists and stick to reality and nonfiction. I don't think I or anybody else has the cosmic answers. I accept the fact I'm just a dumbassed Earthling and leave it at that. I would think there are places in the cosmos where beings are smarter, kinder and hipper than us. After all, the bar is set low. You mean to tell me the universe can't outdo Donald Trump? We have real issues down here that need our full attention. Stick to what is doable, I say.

Metaphysics is said to be one of the four basic strains of thought. It basically means the study of the fundamental nature of reality. It's about the first principles of change, space and time, cause and effect, necessity and possibility. Einstein seems to have known more about it than anyone, it seems. I never studied physics that much, although I do find the study of the universe to be fascinating. It seems without question that this whole universe is composed of only around one hundred elements and within the narrow band of ideal conditions, such as we are fortunate to have on Earth, they can combine into molecules in such a way as to create life,

which in turn is capable of evolving into various species of living organisms divided into five families, those being 23 viruses, bacteria, fungi, plants and animals and not too long ago, mammals were able to push forward Homo Sapien Sapien which was able to develop the humans we see today. We are beings with incredible potential. Einstein was said to have used a mere five percent of his brain.

It's an amazing reality, but the history of humankind is an endless litany of coercive authority enslaving the vast majority of people, which is repeated over and over again, down through the many generations. It's a sad reality that this is how we have used our collective intelligence. As well, we've destroyed the lives and autonomy of all other life forms and their future (except maybe the cockroach!) Ridiculous. I can't believe that other "intelligent" beings do not exist in this universe. Life on Earth even exists even under the harshest of conditions and the possibilities are so endless that it seems statistically impossible that these one hundred atoms could not have similarly recombined to create life and somehow flourished. We're just too far away from it all to realize or detect it - yet. I don't see any type of Scotty being able to "beam us up." We can't go faster than the speed of light. We can go faster than sound, though. Whoopee! That's astronomically slow. The universe started, what, fifteen billion years ago? It's kind of late in the game to try to catch these other worlds, as the universe is expanding at an ever accelerating rate. It's too late to hook up with other populated planets. The big bang was one mofo of a ...cracker! We'll have to get real and be satisfied that the wondrous bounty and diversity of Earth is pretty much all we're going to experience. Sure, we can look at pictures and moon rocks, but folks, face facts, we are on our own!

Einstein theorized (and was pretty much proven) that time and space "bend" and can be different than things on Earth. Causes do have effects, change is inevitable. Necessity is real and without it people perish and the possibilities are literally endless. Reality is an important realm to concentrate on and amidst, even those in power spend enough amounts of time

and resources trying to obfuscate it. Our job is to untangle the lies and mine the possibilities for the good of our continued existence. "Everlasting life" means how people remember you by and what you have left for them to study, that is at all relevant. We live a short time and die. After that? Who the hell knows, except the bacteria consuming our corpses. Being afraid to become our best selves is self-defeating and a pointless waste of our abilities. It doesn't help anybody. Bullies are basically miserable useless cowards! Every generation needs guidance. Think about George Orwell. He saw a problem (the fascist takeover of Spain) and decided to get the fuck involved! DO something! And guess what? He was a fuckin' "writer" Man! So, write! 26

When I was in high school, I was very good at math, but I didn't really like it, once it became complicated. I didn't see the point of trying to solve an extremely difficult equation as the goal was not the correct answer but rather, sticking to the rules, somehow. I certainly didn't want my intelligence to be sucked up into improving Amerikkka's nuclear arsenal or something.

I guess I felt like Sundiata Acoli, who was a brilliant thinker who I believe worked for NASA at one point. the real battlefield of ideas is not to work helping to make the mass suppression of humanity easier, but to do the opposite - helping people understand the reality of their situation and ways to make the lives of people transcend this despicable model of slimeball assholes making decisions so they can exercise extreme power while enjoyed unearned obscene wealth, which is what we see - worse than ever - today. I throw my lot with the oppressed and have genuine love and respect for life, not scorn, not contempt. I choose to love myself and others instead of hate others just because some sick Hitler-loving bastards have had their minds poisoned.

12. Liberation Theology experiences.

Answer: I mentioned a little bit about going to Milwaukee and participating with the folks up there, led by Father Groppi

and his special guest, Dick Gregory. We marched through a racist neighborhood chanting (among other things) "Police did it. Burned down the freedom house. Police did it. Burned down the freedom house." The freedom house suspiciously burned down the night before this march. Afterwards, we came back to Groppi's church where we heard Dick Gregory speak, were given a nice dinner and even received -shirts.

Another time, our father took me to a weekend event at the Ecumenical Institute. This was a sort of radical offshoot of some church on the west side of Chicago. We held a mass meeting and were taken to our dorm rooms. I was only fifteen and appreciated that I was allowed to smoke 25 cigarettes. One of the people there said he thought I was a high school teacher and not just a student. The guy who seemed to look after me a lot was addicted to Coca Cola.

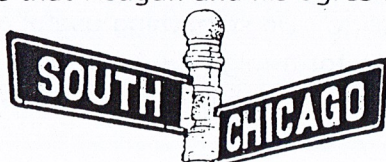
Early in the morning, a guy came around banging on a gong, saying "Praise the Lord! Christ has risen. Praise the Lord! Christ has risen." Well, I guess it's time to get up, eh?

We went to several workshops all day and the next. One had a big picture of Pablo Picasso's classic, "Guernica." We discussed its meaning for hours. Another workshop featured the work of the White Rose and Bonhoeffer, who were murdered during Hitler's reign for opposing Nazism.

At one point, I wandered into the nearby black ghetto and was treated kindly. They warned us not to go there, which seemed like an invitation to me.

I met Kathy Kelly maybe twenty or so years ago at some function and became friendly with her, ever since. She's a tiny woman - a true dynamo! She's affiliated with Catholic Worker and has spent a lot of time in Iraq and Afghanistan supporting the suffering and dying there.

And, of course, I read extensively about the Liberation Theologians in El Salvador and elsewhere down there so often menaced, tortured and murdered by the U.S.-trained Death Squad monsters that Reagan and his ogres loved so much.



13. Are there any special messages you would like to convey of any nature as a record for the future? be it from you or from others who've passed and no one knows about?

Answer: Well, I have a huge archive of dynamite material that anyone can access by simply emailing me at: anthonyrayson@hotmail.com or you can write to my P.O. Box at: South Chicago ABC Zine Distro / P.O. Box 721 / Homewood, IL 60430. As well, my entire collection is housed at the DePaul Special Collections Library, here in Chicago. There are many brilliant anarchist writers and artists found in this treasure trove. As well, the Anarchist Library has many thousands of anarchist texts available to anyone with a computer or smartphone. More and more information is being made available and downloadable in zine form. One must only look for these important sources of succinct analysis.

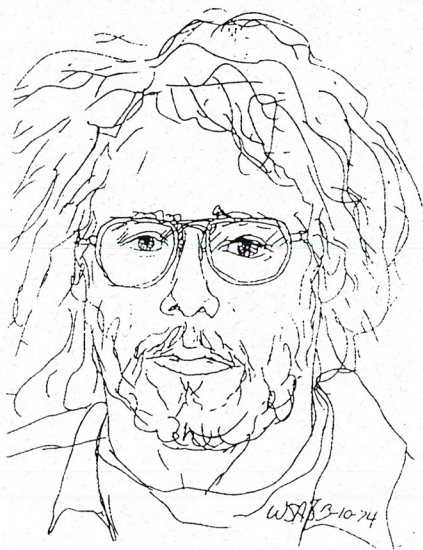
Early on, like 2000, I met (through the mails) a dynamic Irish anarchist prisoner, named Harold Thompson. Some bastard murdered his wife, so he got his revenge. He was a wonderful soul and I've a couple of his zines. He always ended his letters with "They will never get us all!" He was assaulted in the law library at his prison by some stupid thug sent by the authorities and died because of it.

We must realize that the hourglass is dwindling down on all the creatures of Earth. Time is of the essence. It's going to take a tsunami of anarchist understanding and actual work to have even a glimmer of a chance to stop this death spiral. Know that we can stand on the shoulders of giants, but it'll take genuine effort to overcome our fear and lethargy to find these brilliant foremothers and fathers so we can adapt their teachings to the ever changing reality of the present times.

As Van Morrison sang, "It is in the doing that we find." Hey! No one knows when death occurs, unless they are intent upon suicide. Do something useful and important every single day, for it might be your last. I was a day-to-day do nothing schmoe for too long, until I was able to resolve

that, "I'll be! I'm an ANARCHIST!" To this day, my personal family can't dig or really accept this, but they still like me. But, many, many other people appreciate my efforts and have used my efforts to provide such work to do as I have earlier suggested - use your talents and interests in the service of humanity. It makes for an extraordinarily thrilling life - even amidst this degenerative fascist reality. And this mess of a society is nothing new. It's always been a racist, genocidal abomination, regardless of the lies told to us, since hour one.

WE can still create anarchy and enthuse others into being able to do it, their own way. Life and love beat in our hearts. Death, coercion, lies and violence... they have no argument.



Anthony at age twenty



He's now sixty-nine

2/14/2023

Anthony at age fifty

14. Do you have first or second-hand paranormal stories?

Answer: One night me and a few friends were driving around out in the sticks smokin' pot and talkin'. We stopped somewhere. I don't even know where the hell it was. Anyway, some sort of "UFO" appeared maybe a mile above us and stuck around for perhaps, ten minutes. Then, it just shot away, basically straight up and disappeared. We all saw it, so I know it was for real? Aliens? Perhaps. U.S. government snooping? Possibly? Whatever.

I was a child of the sixties and we lived to experiment. Acid, mescaline, magic mushrooms - these substances definitely changed our outlook and many strange things happened, mostly in our minds. Also, dreams sometimes seem to present significant epiphanies if we are lucky enough to remember significant parts of them. I remember two dreams in particular. One was I was flying by myself and it was so vivid that you could actually feel it happening.

Another time, I was specifically visited by aliens, who advised me about what the future would hold and my particular involvement in it would be. It was like I was the reason they embarked upon Earth from their distant land. It was kind of scary, but also affirming to me. Wow! They must have seen something important in me! Such is the vast reach of ego, eh?

Now, it comes to pass that marijuana is not the "devil's weed" at all but rather, highly medicinal. Psychedelics are coming to be recognized as medicinal as well. It's the same old story "All governments lie!" We must trust ourselves and our own innate humanity to live a for real life. To me, that means being responsible anarchists. Thanks, folks! Let's go!

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