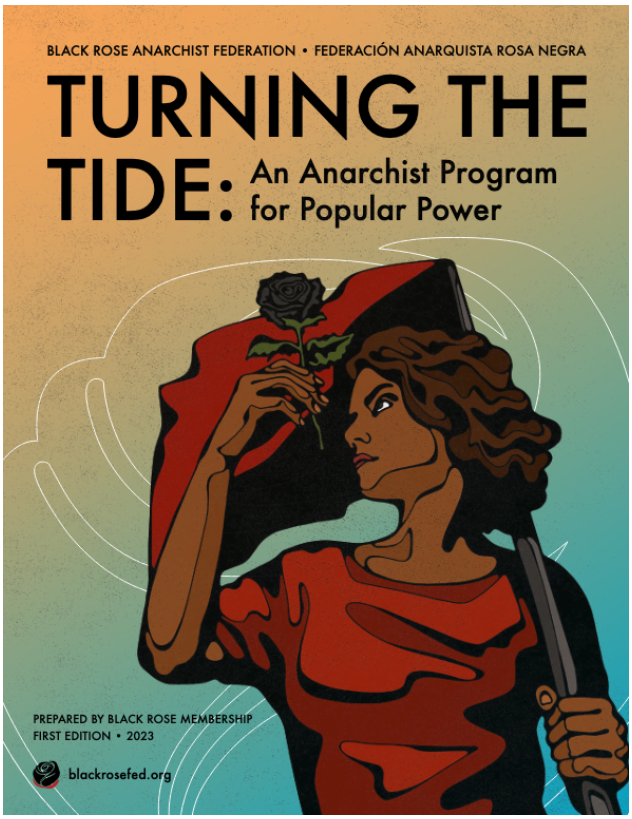
Turning the Tide

An Anarchist Program for Popular Power

Black Rose Anarchist Federation



May 1, 2023

Contents

General Introduction **3**

Structural Analysis **6**
- Introduction . . . 6
- Capitalism . . . 7
- Imperialism . . . 9
- The State . . . 11
- White Supremacy . . . 13
- Heteropatriarchy . . . 15
- Settler Colonialism . . . 17

Ultimate Objective **19**
- Introduction . . . 19
- Social Revolution & Libertarian Socialism . . . 19

General Strategy **23**

Conjunctural Analysis: Navigating a World of Constant Crisis **33**
- Compounding Crises . . . 33
  - The Balance of Forces . . . 33
  - Collapse of the Center . . . 34
  - Rising Fascist Threat . . . 35
  - Institutional and Electoral Dead Ends . . . 36
  - Recession Tightrope . . . 36
  - Decline of US Hegemony . . . 37
  - A Climate Crisis that the System Can't Solve . . . 38
  - Climate Crisis-Driven Mass Migration . . . 39
- Patterns of Resistance . . . 39
  - Insurgent Worker Militancy . . . 40
  - Mass Mobilization and Radicalization, but Low Organization . . . 41
- Conclusion . . . 42

Limited Term Strategy **43**
- Introduction . . . 43
- Political Level . . . 44
- Intermediate Level . . . 45
- Social / Mass Level . . . 46

General Introduction

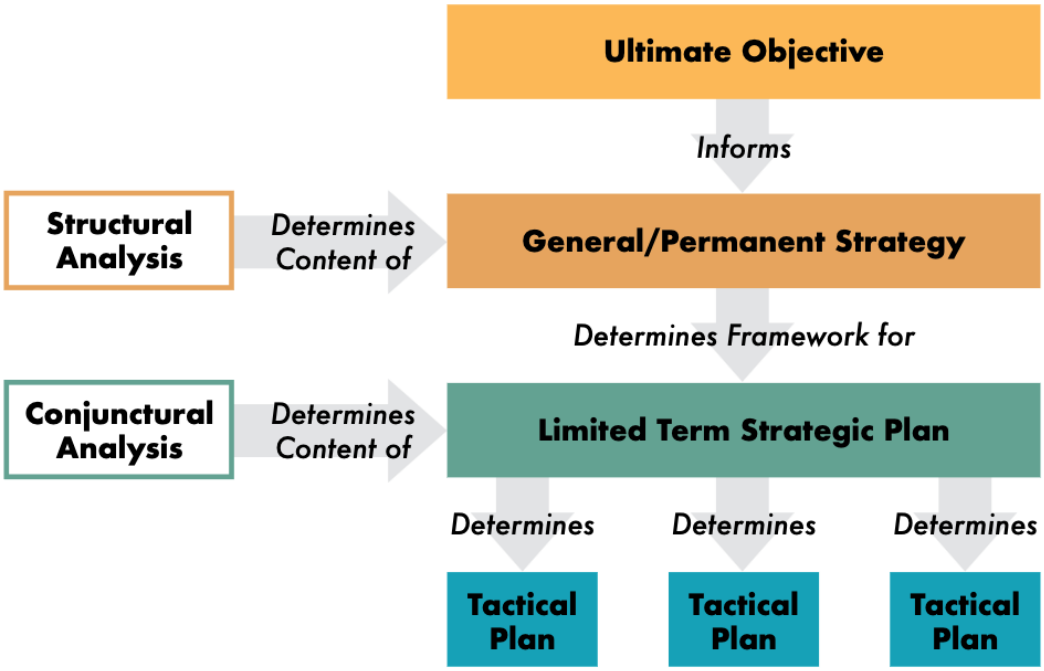
This is the political program of our organization, Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra (BRRN). The writings it contains are the result of nearly two years of collective analysis, discussion, and debate. The content of the program is divided into three parts: sections that detail our understanding of the social, political, and economic structures of domination that give shape to our society; a description of the world we are fighting to bring into existence; and sections that outline the strategic and tactical means by which we intend to achieve our aims.

Our world is convulsed by an incredibly complex set of interlocking crises both new and old: war, rising nationalism, nativism and white supremacy, patriarchal backlash, economic instability, hyperexploitation, and more. At least one of these crises, climate change, represents an impending existential threat to the future of humanity. In order to combat these issues, to attack and abolish the system of domination from which they originate and, most importantly, to assist in advancing a revolutionary social transformation, we believe that an organization like ours must have a shared analysis, a unified set of objectives, and a decisive plan of action.

We agree with Errico Malatesta who asserted in 1890 that "the foundation stone and chief bond of an anarchist organization should be the program understood and embraced by all."[1] We share this conviction not only because the program is a tool to facilitate greater political and theoretical coherence but also because it serves as a shared roadmap that aligns our day-to-day activity with a broader strategy for revolutionary transformation.

[1] Malatesta correspondence with La Révolte (Paris) 4, no. 4 (4–10 October 1890).

PROGRAM


Ultimate Objective
Informs
Structural Analysis
Determines Content of
General/Permanent Strategy
Determines Framework for
Conjunctural Analysis
Determines Content of
Limited Term Strategic Plan
Determines
Determines
Determines
Tactical Plan
Tactical Plan
Tactical Plan

As a revolutionary anarchist organization, we believe a program is essential. We hope that ours will encourage and advance the capacities of the anarchist movement in the United States. Like much of the revolutionary left in our country, the anarchist movement suffered enormously from state repression over the last hundred years, causing it to become isolated and leaving it disconnected from many of the ongoing fights waged by the dominated classes. Although some mass movements in the early twenty-first century embraced anarchist ideas, the connection between everyday social struggle and the anarchist movement is still weak. Our organization was founded ten years ago with the intention of not only strengthening that connection, but organizing and concentrating anarchist intervention in social conflicts. Much like the Anarchist Federation of Rio de Janeiro's (FARJ) stated aim to "recover the social vector of anarchism" in their own national context, we in Black Rose / Rosa Negra have labored to foster the anarchist principles of class independence, self-management, militancy, direct democracy, and direct action, among others, within social movements in the United States.[2] This program is an affirmation and deepening of that commitment.

We do not view our program as above reproach, however. We embrace it as a living document that reflects our ongoing collective work. Its contents are subject to change in response to the dynamic nature of the world we inhabit, and the experience we gain in social struggles.

In building our program we have drawn upon a wide range of resources both historical and contemporary. Our greatest asset in this process has been the advice and collaborative support we have enjoyed from our international sibling organizations. In particular, insights provided through discussion with current and former organizations within the Brazilian Anarchist Coordination (CAB) and our study of their 2017 article *For a Theory of Strategy* were instrumental to shaping our approach.[3]

This guidance allowed us to produce a cohesive document in which sections build upon and inform each other. For example, our general strategy directly corresponds to our ultimate objective and our analysis of the structures of domination that define our world; our limited-term strategy is directly informed by our analysis of the current conjuncture, and so on. While each section can stand independently, together they form a comprehensive whole.

The road ahead is full of difficulties and there are no guarantees. We are committed to the struggle towards social revolution and building a libertarian socialist society. To achieve these aims we must understand the terrain we stand on and have a decisive strategy to navigate it. This is what our program provides.

Build popular power!

For libertarian socialism!

Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra

May 1, 2023

[2] *Social Anarchism and Organisation.* 2008. Published by Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (FARJ) in the original Portuguese as *Anarquismo Social e Organização.* English translation by Jonathan Payne.

[3] Published in the original Portuguese on *Anarkismo.net* in 2017 under the title *Para uma Teoria da Estratégia.* English translation by S. Nicholas Nappalos.

Structural Analysis

Introduction

Our world is divided between the few who dominate and the many who are dominated. This deep-seated division is the product of the core structures that define our society: capitalism, the state, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy. Although we will analyze these structures individually, we see each as mutually reinforcing expressions of a broader **system of domination**. These structures have changed over time, but their fundamental features have remained resilient.

To understand the nature and resilience of these structures, we first have to look at how we understand **power**. Many anarchists, past and present, see power as synonymous with the state, as equivalent to exploitation and domination, as something that needs to be destroyed. Instead, we understand power as a relationship, shaped by the ongoing struggle between social forces in society, particularly between the *dominant* and *dominated* classes.[1,2] The balance of power between these conflicting classes varies by time and place depending on which side has the capacity to achieve its goals despite resistance from opposing forces.

We should also clarify how we define "class," which is key to our understanding of power, and which differs from narrower Marxist conceptions. Like power, we see class as a relationship. In this sense, class is defined in relation to ownership or control not only of the means of *production* (e.g. machinery, land, housing), which we share with Marxism, but also of the means of *coercion* (e.g. police, military, prisons) and *administration* (e.g. governmental bodies that create and administer the laws).[3,4] Those who own or control the means of production, coercion, and administration are part of the dominant classes (e.g. capitalists, political officials, military leadership, police, judges, governors), placing them in a structural position to exploit, oppress, and dominate those who do not, who are part of the dominated classes (e.g. waged, unwaged and precarious workers, the unemployed, and the incarcerated).

The dominated classes are not a monolith. While we are united by our lack of ownership or control over the means of production, coercion, and administration, we often experience or understand this shared status in different ways due to a number of factors: from how we are racialized and gendered, to our citizenship status. The dominated classes represent the vast majority of the population in all its diversity, but those of us at the sharpest edges of the system—Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ people, undocumented immigrants, and incarcerated people, etc.—are disproportionately represented in its ranks.

[1] Enrique Guerrero-López and Cameron Pádraig, "Tipping the Scales: Popular Power in an Age of Protest and Pandemic," *Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra*, 2022.

[2] Felipe Corrêa, "Creating a Strong People: Discussions on Popular Power," 2009.

[3] Felipe Corrêa, "Anarchism, Power, Class and Social Change," *Anarkismo.net*, 2022.

[4] Leroy Maisiri, "A Case for Anarchist Class Analysis: Why it Works Better than the Marxist Approach and What it Means for Struggles," *Zabalaza Books*, 2019.

Class is inseparable from other forms of domination. The same structures and relationships that define class, for example, also shape racialized and gendered domination, and vice versa. Race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, among other social categories, are mutually constructed elements that define the system of domination.

This system is deeply embedded. It is reinforced by mainstream culture, internal divisions within the dominated classes, and a complex mix of consent, coercion, and co-optation. But its relative stability depends on the intensity of class struggle and the power that either side is able to wield, keeping in mind: a) power is a fact of life, present in all social relationships and at all levels of society, from the institutional to the interpersonal; b) power is not inherently good or bad, but contingent on how it is mobilized and toward what end; and c) power can be changed, but not eliminated—our task is to shift the balance of power in favor of the dominated classes.

This document is BRRN's *structural analysis*. With it, we hope to expose the root causes of the many social, political, economic, and ecological challenges that shape the balance of power and the terrain of class struggle. Understanding how and why the following structures operate is a critical step toward dismantling the system of domination and laying the foundation for a free, socialist society.

Capitalism

From its origins in Western Europe in the eighteenth century, capitalism has spread unevenly around the globe, leaving inequality, poverty, and ecological devastation in its wake.

At its core, capitalism is a social, political, and economic system defined by private ownership or control of the means of production and reproduction (e.g. factories, apartment buildings, and land), waged and unwaged labor, and production and exchange for profit. These factors give shape to a brutal class society—protected and promoted by the state—that benefits the few at the expense of the vast majority of the population and the planet.

In capitalist societies, the bulk of the means of production are owned or controlled by a small fraction of the population—the capitalist class. Through direct control of society's essential resources and sources of wealth, the capitalist class occupies a structural position that enables it to wield enormous power over our lives, from deciding whether we get hired or fired to how much we pay for rent, food, clothing, and healthcare, not to mention the fact that these things are bought and sold in the first place.

Those who do not own or control the means of production—the working class—make up the vast majority of the population. Lacking ownership or control over the means of production, we are forced to sell our labor, our bodies, our time and our minds in exchange for a wage (or depend on others who do) in order to gain access to the resources we need to survive. By putting our brains and brawn to work for the capitalist class, we create value, we create wealth. Under capitalism, the capitalist class steals and hoards vast shares of this value and leaves the people who create it with little to nothing. We build houses, care for patients, teach, cook food, clean, deliver packages, and more. But the price tag on all these goods and services is well beyond what we are paid in wages. The difference between the value we create and the wages we are paid is how capitalists make their profits—that is, by exploiting our labor. Wages represent a small portion of the value that we create and are often barely enough to cover basic necessities. In this way, capitalism is rooted in a social relationship between the many that must work for a

wage—along with the unemployed and those who are too sick or elderly to work—and the few that employ and direct our labor. It is a relationship that is reproduced at every level of society by workers, managers, and bosses, within the workplace and beyond.

Wage labor is a key component of capitalism, but our ability to get up and go to work is made possible by countless hours of mostly unwaged labor. This includes all labor that goes into making and remaking people—childbirth, cooking, cleaning, healthcare, child rearing and elder care, education, and more—also known as reproductive labor, which is overwhelmingly performed by, and expected of, women. Some aspects of reproductive labor have been commodified, converted into services that can be bought and sold, but it remains largely unpaid, undervalued, invisibilized, and subordinated to the process of making profit, which requires reproducing obedient workers and citizens. In capitalist societies, the division of reproductive labor has always been racialized. For instance, Black women, as slaves, provided the domestic labor to run plantation homes, provided similar labor after emancipation, and currently account for a large segment of the home healthcare occupation.

In the process of making and remaking a class that can only survive through selling its labor, capitalism has also locked others out of the workforce altogether. Many people, who are disproportionately Black, non-Black Latine, and Indigenous, are held in near permanent unemployment or swallowed up by the prison system. Alongside the regular economy, a gray economy of marginalized workers exists, where various drugs and other products are bought and sold outside the formal marketplace. This area of the economy is frequently subjected to state scrutiny and violence. Whole towns of the US exist with generations of permanently unemployed workers, discarded by capitalism's thirst for profit and domination.

The hierarchies of domination in our capitalist society emerged from and were shaped by prior systems of domination. Capitalism emerged as a fundamentally patriarchal institution with a male ruling class because it grew out of the patriarchal systems of domination in feudal Europe. Over the years, the dominant class's drive for profits have led them to shape and reshape the system of patriarchy. For example, during the antebellum period, when capitalism thrived on the extreme exploitation of chattel slavery, Black women were stereotyped as being tough and immune to pain, in comparison to fragile upper class white women, so plantation owners could force them to labor in the fields as well as in the home. In this way, capitalism depends on systems of oppression to prop up its ruling class, and those systems of oppression need the power of the capitalist ruling class in order to survive.

The driving force behind capitalism is the profit motive. Capitalists invest money to produce goods and services that can then be sold to make more money. This process of capital accumulation lies at the heart of how and why capitalism operates. In their insatiable hunger for profit, capitalists are pitted against one another through the market—the labor market, financial market, and the market for goods and services—where commodities are bought and sold in exchange for money. To gain ground in this ruthless competition, capitalists seek ways to cut the cost of production, which can include replacing workers with machines, relocating production to places where workers can be paid less, bypassing costly safety upgrades at the worksite, and ignoring environmental regulations, among other measures. More money is also made by turning ever more aspects of our lives into commodities that can be bought and sold, from the water we drink to the education system.

The malignant seeds of this process were planted by waves of settler colonialism during which land, labor, and resources were stolen from Indigenous communities for incorporation into the

global system of capitalist production. If this process continues unchallenged, it will irreparably devastate the life-sustaining capacity of the biosphere. This means that capitalism is unsustainable by its very nature and will continue to devastate our ecosystem if it is allowed to. Today nearly every corner of the earth has been turned into a node in the global network of investment, extraction, production, and commodity exchange, with widespread pollution, deforestation, record heat waves, and a global mass extinction event as its byproducts. The climate catastrophe that faces us is not caused by supposedly timeless, unchanging characteristics like greed or human nature, and much less so by our individual consumption patterns. Instead, it is caused by a system existentially driven to continuously expand throughout and plunder the Earth. In the pursuit of maximizing short-term profits, capitalism devalues and destroys ecological diversity, long-term planning for survival, and life itself.

Throughout its history, capitalism has coexisted with various types of states—from monarchies to social democracies—but in all its forms, the state's primary function has been to ensure that the right conditions are in place for capitalism to thrive. The state functions as a general manager of capitalism, passing laws that protect and preserve private property, sending the police or military to break up strikes and mass protests, regulating capital flows, incentivizing some businesses over others, and facilitating the capitalist class' pursuit of profit.

The capitalists' efforts to increase control over work and to expand the power of the state has led to the creation of layers of managers and elite professionals in corporations and the institutions of the state. Management is a tool of repression and policing in the workplace, speeding up our work and keeping the interests of the owners as the driving force on the job. Elite professionals who dominate social institutions are the agents of ruling class hegemony. The subordination of the working class to capitalists and bureaucrats denies us control over our lives and subordinates life to the meaningless drive for profit.

Not everyone is conscious of their class position in capitalism. People often have contradictory ideas about themselves, their work, and their class, leading individuals to misunderstand their position within the class system. Dominant class ideas that justify capitalism, like the American myth that almost everyone is middle class or that anyone who works hard enough can be successful, are deeply embedded in society. Workers are sold these myths through school curriculums, social media hashtags, and in countless television shows. Capitalism creates its own ideology, and in the US it has been so successful at eliminating any alternative thinking that many people accept capitalist ideas about class as common sense instead of being aware of their own class position and interests. At the same time, the experience of collective struggle can create ideas that break from dominant-class thinking. Class consciousness does not happen automatically. It develops through struggle and ideological battle.

Imperialism

Imperialism is a system in which the state and dominant classes of some countries use their superior economic and military power to dominate and exploit the people and resources of other countries. The imperialist powers drain wealth from less powerful countries through debt, corporate investment, unequal trade relations, and military intervention.

While colonialism—the direct and total rule of one nation by another—has been eroded by popular struggle over the last century, imperialist domination and exploitation remains. The US,

for example, maintains a colonial relationship to Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. For the most part however, instead of direct foreign rule, it is a nation's own domestic dominant classes who manage imperialist exploitation on behalf of foreign imperialist states and the global economy. While there is an appearance of independence and self-rule, in reality the same relations of power remain.

Imperialism is an inherent feature of global capitalism and competing states. The international capitalist system generates competition between states, which struggle over territory and geopolitical positioning, to jockey for influence and control. Similarly, in the system of global capitalism, members of each country's capitalist class pressure their home states to secure exclusive or semi-exclusive access to new markets and resources.

Based on their economic and military capacities, countries can be roughly categorized as **core**, **semi-peripheral**, or **peripheral**.[5] Within each of these categories exist further stratifications, with particular nation-states occupying either more dominant or more subordinate positions in relation to others in the same category. As well, it is important to note that the positions of and relationships between nation states are incredibly complex and not entirely static.

Core countries are exceedingly wealthy, highly industrialized, and militarily powerful, allowing them to secure access to the cheap labor, raw materials, export markets, and the goods of semi-peripheral and peripheral countries. The United States, Canada, much of Western and Northern Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and Japan, sit at the core of these global systems.

Countries on the periphery lack thoroughly industrialized economies and states with powerful militaries. These peripheral countries are targeted for exploitative access to cheap labor and resources mainly by countries at the core, and to a lesser degree, countries on the semi-periphery. The majority of countries on the African continent, in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, and in Central and South America are on the periphery.

Finally, semi-peripheral countries occupy a middle strata between the core and periphery. The semi-peripheral countries possess partially industrialized economies and relatively strong states with military capabilities. While still subject to the imperial domination of core countries, semi-peripheral countries are able to exert their own influence on peripheral countries through smaller-scale investment, access to export markets, and a degree of military power. In some cases, dominant core countries enlist states of the semi-periphery to act on their behalf as regional managers or enforcers. Countries like India, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, and Israel are considered semi-peripheral. While China is still typically understood to be on the semi-periphery, its rapid military and economic growth has allowed for it to project broad influence across the globe. As such, we may consider it an emerging core country.

Each country's geopolitical position emerged not by happenstance, but by historical processes and circumstances. For example, Western Europe's colonial domination in, exploitation of, and extraction from Africa and the Americas facilitated the former states' growth as contemporary economic and political powerhouses at the expense of the latter. These same processes of domination and extraction also gave rise to ideological justifications predicated on the pseudo-science of race. According to this line of reasoning, Africans, Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, those on the Indian subcontinent, and others were not only deserving of the domination and exploitation they endured, but were in fact 'beneficiaries' of the 'civilizing' project that colonial powers had

[5] Gabriel Kuhn, "Oppressor and Oppressed Nations: Sketching a Taxonomy of Imperialism," *Kersplebedeb*, 2017

undertaken. It was in this crucible that modern conceptions of race and white supremacy were formed.

The United States has been the most dominant global imperialist power since World War II. US state functionaries maintain and reproduce empire through hundreds of military bases around the world, military alliances like NATO, financial bodies like the IMF and World Bank, direct military intervention and occupation, the world's largest military budget, and covert operations to keep the global capitalist system running smoothly. The US also uses soft power to maintain its empire, like internationally distributed Hollywood films and other forms of mass entertainment, development aid, and liberal nonprofit institutions.

The systems of global capitalism and interstate competition benefit core countries, but they do so unevenly. While the working class in core imperialist countries are granted some access to benefits from the wealth extracted via dominated peripheral countries, these benefits pale in comparison to what the real beneficiaries—the capitalist class—reap. Moreover, these interconnected systems, through processes like globalization, also work to destabilize the lives of workers in core countries, as the capitalist class relocates jobs to peripheral and semi-peripheral countries in search of cheaper labor and higher profit margins.

Nationalism is one of the key ideological mechanisms that prevents dominated classes around the world from recognizing their shared position within the structure of global capitalism. Instead of identifying as members of the global dominated classes, we are taught to ignore social contradictions and instead identify with our home nation-state. This is typically achieved through the construction of a national founding myth that is consistently reinforced with symbols, songs, and rituals. Some revolutionary and popular progressive forces in colonized countries have used alternative nationalisms to mobilize the dominated classes against imperialist control. While many of these struggles successfully eliminated direct colonial exploitation, most simply replaced foreign rulers with local rulers who reconstructed their nation-states and, through global market pressure and for direct gain, integrated into the systems of global capitalism and interstate competition.

Some have argued that the world can easily be broken into two blocs: a broadly imperialist camp and a broadly anti-imperialist camp. We reject this notion on the grounds that national interests—directed as they are by a country's dominant classes—even if they contradict those of dominant imperialist countries, do not automatically constitute an anti-imperialist program. In fact, some semi-peripheral and peripheral countries simultaneously oppose the dominance of core countries while undertaking extreme measures to suppress or eradicate popular movements at home. A genuine anti-imperialism is internationalist at its core and must side with the global dominated classes, not with the states that rule over them.

The State

The modern state as we know it codeveloped with capitalism in Western Europe and has spread unevenly to nearly every part of the world. Since its inception, the state has taken on a range of forms, from liberal democracies to military dictatorships. Regardless of its size or shape, the state is a bureaucratic-military organization made up of all the lawmaking and law enforcing institutions within a given territory—where power is concentrated in the hands of a minority ruling over and above the majority.

All states are marked by the dubious distinction of having a monopoly on violence within their borders and claim the 'legitimate' use of force outside of them. Through its police, courts, jails, and prisons, the state maintains social stability at home, protecting and preserving the system of domination in the interest of the dominant classes. To secure its interests abroad—whether that entails access to raw materials or cheap labor for certain segments of the capitalist class or geopolitical positioning—the state has the authority to mobilize the military in addition to other violent means.

The US state, created through the violent displacement and genocide of Indigenous peoples across North America, is a settler-colonial state. This fact has fundamentally shaped the US state's trajectory from its birth to the present.

But the capacity of the state to exercise violence is, at least in part, dependent on its ability to maintain a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects. A purely repressive state is unsustainable. The state's coercive role is therefore complemented and concealed by both consent and co-optation. Through the education system, political parties, mass media and other ideological mechanisms, the state seeks to foster a national consensus in which the exploited and oppressed accept the state, along with the system of domination as a whole, as common sense, as natural. By internalizing the logic of authority, we fuel the reproduction of relations of domination on a daily basis. The legitimacy of the state is also sustained by providing essential services, such as education and healthcare, which are typically a reflection of class struggle, but give the appearance of state benevolence. In this way, the credibility of the state is kept intact by cultivating an image of neutrality in the class struggle. The state is often skilled at absorbing and co-opting challenges to its authority, adopting popular slogans from social movements (e.g. "Si se puede!," the 1 percent vs the 99 percent, Black Lives Matter), channeling mass discontent into the reformist realm of electoral politics, and hiring movement leaders to "change things from the inside," among other tactics

The ability of the state to carry out these and other functions relies on the health of the economy, from which it takes in revenue through taxation. One of the core functions of the state is therefore to develop, protect, and promote the capitalist system. Toward this end, the state uses its police and legal system to protect private property and suppress class conflict, provides tax incentives for corporations, negotiates international trade deals with other states, promotes capitalist ideology through its schools, and so on. Given that capitalists tend to act in ways that prioritize their short-term interests at the expense of workers, other capitalists, the environment, and the economy more broadly, the state intervenes to manage the long-term interest of capitalism as a whole. Today, the state itself is one of the largest actors in the economy. As a pillar of capitalist society, the state is the shield and shepherd of the exploitative relationship between labor and capital, with the capacity for coercion looming in the background, placing it firmly in the camp of the capitalist class at the expense of the majority of the population.

But the state is not simply an instrument of the capitalist class. Although capitalists, particularly through multinational corporations, exert enormous influence over the state relative to other actors, the state retains a degree of autonomy. Political elites, for example, often make decisions in their own interest or occasionally in response to pressures from below that are not always in line with the competing interests of capital.

While the state expresses the interests of those controlling it, that does not mean that the dominant classes are always unified. As various figures and groupings take the reins of the state, they can use it to develop and transform some sectors of the economy over others and use the

state as a vehicle to align and compete with other state actors. Struggles within the dominant classes, and the need for perpetual reformist co-optation to contain threats from below, make the state a shifting and contested site of power.

The state also plays a fundamental role in institutionalizing and enforcing systems of domination. Over time, the state has been central to shaping and reshaping social hierarchies, often in response to new conditions and popular movements that render tactics of control obsolete. In terms of white supremacy, this can be seen historically through the constitutional protection of slavery; the role of the US Army, courts, and congress in advancing settler colonialism; and the legalization of Jim Crow. While popular struggles damaged or eliminated many of these pillars of white supremacy, the state developed new forms to maintain racial domination, such as the ongoing militarization of the border, mass incarceration, police brutality, and imperial aggression abroad—all of which disproportionately affect people of color. As for its mutually reinforcing relationship with heteropatriarchy, for much of US history the state systematically denied basic political and economic rights to women, it has both extended and attacked access to abortion, prohibited and granted marriage equality, imposed nonsodomy laws and denied protections to trans workers and students, sided overwhelmingly with rapists in court, while the most powerful state institutions—the military, the police, congress, and the presidency—feature straight white men overwhelmingly at the top of the chain of command.

The state is ultimately an institution of minority class rule reproduced as a social relationship throughout society, where relations of domination thrive in our homes, workplaces, schools, and every other core institution in our lives.

Because it is a pillar of the system of domination, the state is not a neutral instrument that can be wielded for good or bad depending on who is at the helm. There is no hope for a free, socialist society through the capture of the state or through the creation of new states—whether by ballot or bullet—regardless of the insignia or color on the flag.

White Supremacy

White supremacy is a system of racial domination that emerged from the process of rationalizing, institutionalizing, and protecting the extractive and exploitative practices of European colonialism in the 15th and 16th centuries. The concept of "race" itself is a product of this process. It developed both as a mechanism of social control and as part of an effort to "scientifically" categorize people into a social hierarchy, attributing certain essential characteristics, traits, and behaviors to each category based on physical appearance. While these categories continue to shape our social, political, and economic life, they have no basis in biology. In other words, race is a biological fiction. Born out of a colonial context marked by the enslavement of Africans and Indigenous genocide, race and racial categories have evolved over time. But, regardless of time and place, race has been the glue of a cross-class alliance, binding the dominant classes to a segment of the dominated classes through shared identity—particularly a "white" identity—as a way to suppress class conflict.

This cross-class alliance can be traced back to the origins of race and white supremacy in the United States. In the late 1600s, elites in the British colony of Virginia invented and institutionalized the so-called white race in response to real and perceived threats to the settler-colonial order. Fearing the potential power of indentured servants—the majority of the population—uniting with

free and enslaved Africans against the ruling minority of wealthy planters, colonial elites initiated a divide-and-conquer strategy. Through a series of laws and other measures, colonial elites created a range of exclusive rights and benefits for poor Europeans that were denied to Africans and Indigenous peoples. Out of this process, the social, political, and economic distinctions between "white" and nonwhite people took form, with continuities and changes over time.

While "white" people were placed in a dominant position, whiteness is not a stable category. Whiteness in particular, and the entire concept of race more generally, is socially constructed rather than based on biology. This means that whether someone gets classified as white is not defined by the quantity of their melanin or some genetic marker, but instead by complex social arrangements. This is made clear by tracing changes in who is included or excluded from these categories over time. For example, the large numbers of Irish immigrants who arrived in the US throughout the nineteenth century were not, at the time, considered white. Nativist Anglo-Americans closely guarded their white identity and the benefits it afforded them via the exploitation and domination of racialized "others."

Over time, Irish, Italian, and other European immigrant workers were included in the cross-class alliance. Given its social and material benefits, these groups actively sought inclusion in the category of whiteness. For white elites, expanding the definition of whiteness served to head off or destabilize any possibility of multiracial solidarity among workers against the common forces of domination and exploitation that they faced in the fields and factories of a growing capitalist economy.

While the boundaries of whiteness have expanded or contracted depending on historical circumstances, membership in the cross-class alliance has always come with a wide range of benefits. The overall sense of superiority and entitlement among those within the dominant group has been nurtured by the fact that, relative to working-class people of color, those considered "white" have had lower unemployment rates, more wealth, better access to quality healthcare, housing and schools, lower incarceration rates, and safer neighborhoods. Though these benefits are not accessible to all "white" people equally, the elite few have tried to tether the interests of the "white race's" working-class majority to a racial capitalist project at the expense of class solidarity from below. This can be seen in the past and present—in the defense of slavery, Indigenous genocide, and Jim Crow; in the recurring nativist assaults on immigrants; and in support for US imperialism. Meanwhile, the few at the top of the cross-class alliance, who own and control nearly every major institution in our society, continue to reap the benefits of a divided working class.

The shape of race and white supremacy at home has always been fueled by imperial conquest abroad. Beginning with the colonization of North America to the more recent invasions and occupations of the Middle East, US imperialism has always been rooted in the construction of a foreign "other," labeling mostly nonwhite peoples and nations as both inferior and a threat to the empire. The consequences of this "othering" can be seen in the boarding schools for Indigenous peoples, the mass internment of Japanese citizens during World War II, and the racial profiling and attacks against Arabs, South Asians, and anyone perceived to be Muslim in the US during the so-called "war on terror."

The persistence of white supremacy is propped up by both the state and capitalism. Through the labor market, capitalists have disproportionately relegated working-class people of color—particularly Black people—to the lowest paying jobs with the least amount of benefits and security, leaving many chronically underemployed and subject to rampant state violence and in-

carceration. To prop up racialized class oppression, US politicians and state administrators have constructed the largest and most elaborate carceral system in human history, serving to permanently warehouse more people per capita than any other nation-state. As well, nativist and white supremacist ideology and forces militarize internal and external borders against the specter of immigrants, while simultaneously enabling the economy to thrive on their hyperexploitation.

While white supremacy endures, today's dominant classes are increasingly diverse. The racial and gender composition of the dominant classes reflect decades of struggle against white supremacy. Despite this representation, the majority of people remain trapped in a highly racialized class system, as evidenced by racial income stratification, prison demographics, and other markers of an ongoing white supremacist reality. These facts should caution us from relying on any reductive analysis that focuses wholly on identity or wholly on class as the locus of domination. Instead, we assert that race, class, and other forms of domination in the United States are intrinsically connected with each other, affecting different groups of people differently depending on time and place.

Heteropatriarchy

Heteropatriachy is a system in which gender and sexuality are shaped by structures, relationships, and ideologies of domination in ways that place men in general, and straight cisgender men in particular, in a position to exploit, oppress, and dominate women and LGBTQ people.

From birth onward, gender socialization occurs in our homes, schools, workplaces, and every other social institution we interact with throughout our lives. These institutions inscribe heteronormative beliefs, values, norms, practices, and expectations around sex and gender. This includes dominant understandings of what it means to be a "man," "woman," "straight," or "gay," as well as narrow definitions of what is considered "masculine" and "feminine." These and other categories related to sex, gender, and sexuality are not natural, timeless, objective facts. Both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. They are defined differently depending on time, place, context, and social struggle, and can have life-affirming or life-threatening connotations or consequences depending on the circumstances.

The social structure of heteropatriarchy situates heterosexual cis men in a position of dominance. Under heteropatriarchy, heterosexuality is viewed as the normative sexual orientation, the man-woman-child structure is understood as the standard family form, and male and female are seen as two mutually exclusive, binary, and unchanging genders that are determined at birth by physical "sex" characteristics.

Heteropatriarchy has a symbiotic relationship with other forms of domination. As part of the legacy of slavery and settler colonialism, for example, white men continue to dominate the highest paying occupations in the US, while Black and Indigenous women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs with little if any benefits. The state and capital have played a central role in creating and sustaining this racialized and gendered segregation of the labor market to maintain a cheap source of labor. In relation to the coercive function of the state, Queer and trans people, particularly those of color, are disproportionately policed, arrested, and imprisoned. Meanwhile, imperial ventures, such as the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, are often justified by political elites on the grounds of "liberating" women in the service of empire building

One of the pillars of heteropatriarchy is the gendered division of socially reproductive labor. In capitalist societies, men are more often encouraged to do "productive" manual and intellectual labor. Women, on the other hand, are pushed to serve the needs of social reproduction, the process of making, caring for, and socializing the working class to develop its willingness, capacity, and disposition to continue selling its labor for a wage. Within heterosexual households, women still do the large majority of unwaged housework, usually working a "double shift" where they go to work to generate profit for capitalists and then go home to cook, clean, and take care of children, the elderly, and even their spouses—all of which is needed for workers to be able to go back to work the next day and for the next generation to enter the ranks of the working class. In the workforce, women are often tracked into positions of care and service to others—including teaching, healthcare, and other service occupations, which are overall less valued and less secure than traditionally male occupations. Social reproductive labor is not only essential for facilitating waged labor, but is also a key part of the process of instilling the gender norms and roles that underpin heteropatriarchy.

Heteropatriarchy expresses its clearest and most brutal form through the rampant violence inflicted upon women and LGBTQ people. Gender violence comes in various forms, from intimate partner violence at home, to sexual harassment at work, to femicide in the streets and rape as a weapon of war in combat zones. Gender violence is enabled by hierarchical power relationships. In our workplaces, families, schools, and other social institutions, cis men overwhelmingly occupy the position of boss, landlord, policemen, prison guard, and others with the structural power to prey on those who depend on them for work, housing, safety, and other necessities. Cultural norms, managers of capitalist enterprises, and the state's alleged justice system protect and perpetuate the cis men who perpetrate this violence, using shame, rejection, disbelief, and other insidious tactics to ignore and silence the victims and survivors of gender violence. In times of crisis or in reaction to advances in feminist struggle, gender violence is often amplified, weaponized by men who fear that their masculinity and dominance is being threatened. However, gender violence is not exclusively carried out by cis men. People of various gender identities use violence and other forms of domination to enforce the norms and roles proscribed by heteropatriarchy. Ultimately, gender violence is an extension of the broader violence inherent to the system of domination.

Heteropatriarchy is also profoundly harmful to men. Throughout their life, men are socialized to suppress their emotions and defer support in order to appear strong—behaviors that contribute to higher rates of depression, drug abuse, violence, and suicide. Boys and men are under constant pressure to uphold narrow notions of manhood and masculinity. Homophobia and misogyny are regularly weaponized to keep boys and men in line. They are told: "man up," "don't be a bitch," "no homo," or that "men don't cry." While these norms and behaviors are either unattainable or undesirable, men who are perceived to be defying them, especially gay and trans men, are often subject to violence. Though heteropatriarchy provides benefits to men by placing them in a dominant position within the social structure, it ultimately prevents them from realizing their full potential as human beings.

The shape of heteropatriarchy is not fixed. The dominant classes today, while still overwhelmingly composed of heterosexual cis men, are increasingly made up of women and queer people. Through the advance of liberal assimilationist politics and identity-based struggles, the hard social borders of heteropatriarchy have become more porous. Some sections of oppressed groups have become members or junior partners of the dominant classes. This fact requires us to deepen

our analysis beyond liberal identity politics, while also continuing to recognize the particular social positions that women and queer people occupy.

Although the dominant classes play a crucial role in maintaining the basic structures of heteropatriarchy, they are reproduced and reinforced on a daily basis by all of us who have grown up surrounded by this inescapable, poisonous, and dominant ideology. Thus sexism, transphobia, and homophobia are things that are very much present within working-class organizations and within our own political organizations. They threaten to undermine working-class power if they are not consistently recognized and challenged.

Settler Colonialism

The United States was built on the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, European royal houses sought to enrich themselves by funding and encouraging traders, soldiers, and missionaries to violently clear the Indigenous populations of what we now know of as the Americas, take and occupy the land, and construct permanent settler societies on Indigenous territories.

This ongoing process of settler colonialism differs from other forms of colonialism, which are predicated primarily on the extraction of raw materials and the exploitation of Indigenous populations in the interest of direct material gain or market expansion. Under classic forms of colonialism, these activities are carried out by an impermanent population circulating between the metropole (the home country) and the colony. In settler colonialism, these functions still play an important role, but are subordinated to the more fundamental project of introducing a permanent population whose aim is to uproot the lifeways of Indigenous peoples so as to replace them with new social, political, juridical, economic, and religious structures. Ultimately, the settler colony aims to supplant existing Indigenous populations through a combination of genocidal elimination and assimilation.

Land theft is necessary for the establishment of a settler-colonial society. Recognizing the moral contradiction present in violently dispossessing people from their land, European and US settlers relied on a number of justifications to reach their intended ends. These included the familiar practice of casting Indigenous peoples as racially or culturally inferior, but also weaponizing the legal-political notion of *terra nullius*, which viewed "empty" lands as free to those who would put them to "legitimate use." Settlers carved these lands into discrete parcels to be owned solely by individuals or groups of individuals, thereby introducing a regime of private property.

It was precisely this rapacious drive to acquire ever more territory that sparked the revolt of settler colonists in North America against the British Crown. After securing its independence, the newly sovereign United States acted to remove all previous restrictions on internal territorial expansion. The rapid westward advance that followed the war placed major demands on the fledgling federal government, requiring it to quickly expand its military and policing capabilities. It's in these dual crucibles—the war of independence and the rapid expansion of territories—that an early version of the modern US settler-colonial state would be forged.

The nineteenth century saw the United States continue to expand its territory through annexations, wars, and transactions with other nation-states. Throughout this period the federal government and vigilante settlers alike sought to liquidate Indigenous populations using a variety of means. Violent incursions into Indigenous territories remained a key method, but new

practices also emerged. The dual introductions of the Indian Removal Act and the Indian Appropriations Act resulted in a systematization of forced removal and the creation of the modern reservation system. The latter part of the century also saw a ratcheting up of efforts to fully assimilate Indigenous peoples into settler society by stripping them of their relationships to land, language, spirituality, cultural practices, and one another. Among other measures, this involved the creation of hundreds of private and state-funded "boarding schools" into which Indigenous children were enrolled after having been separated from their families and communities. These schools aimed, according to one of their chief architects, to "kill the Indian…and save the man." The practices of state-backed coerced assimilation continued well into the twentieth century, during which the federal government produced new and more complex schemes aimed at fully dissolving the identity and culture of Indigenous peoples.

While Indigenous peoples have struggled mightily to retain their lifeways and very existence, from the Powhatan Uprising of 1622 to more recent struggles around the Dakota Access Pipeline, settler-colonial domination continues to this day. In our moment, as in moments of the past, it manifests in ongoing conflicts over Indigenous lands, waterways, treaties, and autonomy; denigration, misrepresentation, and the near absence of Indigenous people in popular media; state attempts to withhold recognition of certain Indigenous tribes and their rights; and the systematic degradation of life for those living in the reservation system through the denial and mismanagement of state resources.

Ultimate Objective

Introduction

So far, we have analyzed the general structures, relationships, and mechanisms of domination that give shape to the society in which we live. Now we will establish our prescription for uprooting these structures—*social revolution*—and describe in broad terms the form of social organization that we are struggling to bring into existence—*libertarian socialism*.

Social Revolution & Libertarian Socialism

The urgent need for a radical transformation of the world we live in is obvious to anyone who examines it with clear eyes. From pandemics and ecological devastation to endless war and rampant social, political, and economic inequality—the weight of overlapping crises is impossible to ignore. These conditions are the products of a deeply entrenched system of domination, a complex system with many faces: capitalism, the state, white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and imperialism.

This system will not be petitioned, voted, lobbied, or peacefully swept out of existence. The dominating classes, its primary beneficiaries, seek to ensure its stability, expansion, and reproduction. They have used and will continue to use all means at their disposal, including violence, to defend their interests. As such, no dramatic reorganization of society will be permitted to advance so long as those who benefit from the current social order stand in the way. A violent confrontation between the dominating and dominated classes must take place in order to destroy the system of domination and clear the way for a new world. That is, we need a **social revolution**.

Unlike a political revolution, which seeks to capture state power and transform society from the top down, a social revolution involves completely transforming society from the bottom up. This wholesale transformation entails both destruction and creation. When the organized forces of exploited and oppressed people overcome the forces of reaction in a violent rupture with the status quo, this is the destructive dimension of social revolution—the collective uprooting of all the social, political, and economic structures as well as the relationships and mechanisms of domination that maintain them.

In particular, social revolution includes the immediate abolition of the state, with all its law-making and law-enforcing institutions (the police, courts, military, prisons, government, etc.); the expropriation of all wealth hoarded by the capitalist class; the abolition of private property; a radical change in cultural norms and values; and ultimately the elimination of social classes and all forms of domination, from white supremacy and colonialism to patriarchy and transphobia.

The transformation of the old world of capitalist domination to the new world of libertarian socialism will feature a period of fast-paced **revolutionary rupture** where masses of people

move into action and break the chains that have held us in stasis. However, common romantic notions of revolutionary upheaval aside, history teaches us that this will not be a single, neatly contained event following an easily predictable sequence.

Still, a revolutionary rupture will be qualitatively different from the limited open conflict—riots, strikes, and uprisings—that are continuously produced by the fundamental antagonisms at the heart of our society. These small explosions in class struggle are extremely valuable for their ability to expose structures of domination and exploitation, to help us develop our strategy and tactics, and to sometimes produce short-term gains. However, without patient preparation, organization, and a well-devised strategy, these conflicts tend to generate only limited and uneven outcomes, falling short of a total break with the status quo.

A true revolutionary rupture becomes viable when the dominated classes have built up the capacity for force necessary to destroy the total system of domination. The accumulation of this capacity for force—what we call **popular power**—hinges on a long-term process of building and uniting independent social movements from below, together with anarchist political organizations, into a broad front aimed at upending current social relations.

In the chaotic midst of a revolutionary rupture, there are likely to be various political parties and organizations that attempt to co-opt the struggle under the guise of acting "on behalf of" the masses. For this reason, anarchists must have a strong presence within the social movements leading the struggle, both to spread our values, principles, and practices, and to prevent opportunist and reformist forces from manipulating a revolution to their own narrow ends.

Though the specific events of a future revolutionary rupture are impossible to predict, we can say with great certainty that the dominating classes will not hesitate to violently suppress any revolutionary movement that poses an existential threat to the system of domination. To defend the social revolution, popular self-defense groups will need to be formed. These must be democratically organized and accountable to, controlled by, and drawn from federated mass organizations such as worker's councils and community assemblies.

Examples of these types of defensive formations can be seen in revolutionary situations throughout history: the radicalized National Guard sections that defended the Paris Commune, the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine, the worker militias of the Spanish CNT-FAI, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, the People's and Women's Defense Units of Rojava, and so on. While the defense of our struggle will necessitate violence, any application of force must seek to end systems and manifestations of domination, not reproduce them with a different set of rulers.

While we've established the general means by which we intend to uproot the whole system of domination, this alone is not sufficient. As Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta once noted, "in order to abolish the 'gendarme' and all the harmful social institutions, we must know what to put in their place, not in a more or less distant future but immediately, the very day we start demolishing." Thus, in parallel with the destruction of the old order, we must build a new one in its place.

In place of the current system of domination, we believe that a system of **libertarian socialism** is needed to allow human society to reach its fullest potential and to ensure a sustainable future for our planet.

A libertarian socialist society is one that has eliminated the state, social classes, and the need for markets and money. Though we cannot predict its every facet, we expect a libertarian socialist society to include:

- **Collective democratic ownership** of the land, machinery, and tools used to produce everything society requires to sustain and reproduce itself. This would replace the current regime of private property.
- An economy where the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services are rooted in **ecological sustainability** and on the principle "from each according to ability, to each according to need."
- **Self-management** of workplaces and communities, where we would have a say over the decisions that affect our lives in proportion to the degree that we are affected. Workplace and community assemblies would be linked together from the bottom up through a system of federations on the local, regional, and continental levels, replacing the top-down governing structures of the state with **direct democracy**.
- **Collective economic planning** to replace the cut-throat competition of wasteful, profit-driven markets with a directly democratic and cooperative system of producer and consumer councils that will decide what goods and services to produce, how to produce them, how much of them to produce, and how to distribute them.
- **Global solidarity** and cooperation between regional federations to replace the system of imperial domination, nationalism, and interstate competition that currently governs the globe
- **Sexual and gender liberation**, where complete freedom of expression in gender and sexuality, along with an equitable distribution of social reproductive labor, become the norms replacing the current system of heteropatriarchy.
- **Liberation for Black people and all people of color** through the abolition of white supremacy, so that race can no longer be used as a tool to create social hierarchies.
- **Decolonization**, including the recovery of all indigenous territory and resources to ensure their full cultural, spiritual, and material well-being and the reconstitution of Indigenous communities, practices, languages, and knowledge systems.
- **A system for the redress of social conflict and harm** that is rooted in restoration, transformation, and need rather than punitive 'justice' and incarceration.

With the elimination of many jobs that contribute nothing useful to society (like marketing, banking, large layers of management, etc.), the automation of many other tasks by putting technology at the service of human need rather than profit, the stability of guaranteed socialized housing instead of precarity enforced by landlords, and a reduction in stress from no longer having to contend with the daily pressures of rigid gender roles and racism, life in a libertarian socialist society will feel incredibly different from our current experience. We will have more control over our lives, more free time to pursue our passions, the freedom to perform labor that benefits our community, and the liberty to individually express ourselves in ways that we might not even know are possible now.

It is impossible to know the specifics of how, if, or when the dominated classes will bring libertarian socialism into being—whether it will be created in one area and spread, emerge unevenly across a network of regions, or through a large-scale collapse of the established order. The creation of a libertarian socialist society is a necessity given the crises we face, but it is not inevitable. The likelihood of its success and survival is tied to the combined strength and determination of militant mass social movements and anarchist political organizations committed to achieving this objective through worldwide social revolution.

General Strategy

To guide us through the highs and lows of struggle along the path toward our **ultimate objective**—social revolution and libertarian socialism—we need a compass to keep us aligned with our North Star. In other words, we need a **general strategy**, a durable revolutionary orientation aimed at both dismantling the **system of domination** and laying the groundwork for a new society.

In broad terms, strategy is the *means* that we adopt to achieve our *ends*. It can be framed in short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans. To put our strategy into practice, we need to develop a set of tactics—concrete steps that create a coherent link between our means and ends.

Whereas short-term strategy is defined by current conditions within a particular location and period of time, general strategy is not limited by time and place. Instead, it is informed by a structural analysis of society, the future society we aim to build, and how we plan to get from the old world to the new. General strategy is the overarching framework that guides our political organization and its militants. It is the bridge between the short and long term, the glue that binds our means and ends.

According to the *Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro* (FARJ) in Brazil, "it is essential that the specific anarchist organization works with a strategy"[1] to ensure that its militants are "rowing the boat in the same direction."[2] A general strategy, developed through collective discussion and decision-making, allows the organization to mobilize its limited resources in a common, cohesive direction to enhance its effectiveness.

Adopting a general strategy also limits the confusion, conflict, and inefficiency that crops up when individuals or groups within the organization operate at cross-purposes. As the FARJ notes, "it is not possible to work in an organization in which each militant or group does what they think best, or simply that which they like to do, believing themselves to be contributing to a common whole."[3]

For these reasons, a general strategy is necessary.

Our general strategy is rooted in the anarchist tradition of building **popular power**, which can be traced back to the *Federación Anarquista Uruguaya* (FAU) and the historic social and political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s in South America. The FAU's articulation of a specifically anarchist strategy for building popular power, crystallized in the call for creating "a strong people," has inspired sister organizations in and outside the Southern Cone.[4] At the heart this strategy lies the leading role of **social movements** , which can be understood as "an association of people and/or of entities that have common interests in the defense or promotion of determined

[1] Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, "The Need for Strategy, Tactics, and Programme" in *Social Anarchism and Organisation*, 2008.

[2] Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, "Especifismo: Anarchist Organisation, Historical Perspectives, and Influence" in *Social Anarchism and Organisation*, 2008.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Felipe Corrêa, "Create a Strong People," Anarkismo.net, 2010.

objectives…These movements can be in the most different places in society and have the most different banners of struggle that show the needs of those around the movement, a common cause."[5]

Throughout its history, the United States has seen a wide range of inspiring social movements carrying various "banners of struggle," from the movement for abolition to the labor, tenants, farmer's, feminist, LGBTQ, indigenous, student, immigrant rights, Chicano/a, environmental, anti-war, Civil Rights, and Black Power movements. It is through these movements that we have seen some of the most dramatic changes in our society, from the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation to the end of child labor.

Our general strategy stems from the recognition that only social movements have the potential for revolutionary transformation, for sowing the seeds of a new society. We can see glimpses of this revolutionary potential in the past and present internationally: in the self-governing territories of the Korean People's Association in Manchuria during the late 1920s and early 1930s, in the thousands of socialized fields and factories of Spain during the Spanish Revolution, in the liberated territory of Morales and elsewhere during the Mexican Revolution, in the mass movements of Uruguay in the 1960s and 1970s, in the soviets and communes of Ukraine and Russia during the initial years of the Russian Revolution, and in the liberatory struggle in Rojava today.

But the revolutionary potential of social movements is not a given. Many, if not most, movements are drawn toward reformism, seeking to change the "excesses" of the system of domination, not the system itself. These movements, or at least the leadership shaping their direction, see reforms as ends in themselves.

Movement organizations oriented toward reformism tend to reflect many of the values, beliefs, and practices of the system, including but not limited to: hierarchical management structures with top-down models of decision-making and a thick bureaucracy, an emphasis on electing and collaborating with reform politicians to carry out change through the state on the movement's behalf, and promoting individualism and competition by boosting the public profile and salaries of movement leaders.

The tactics and strategies of reformist politics often mirror the needs and interests of the social forces at its core, including union bureaucrats, non-profit executive directors, and progressive politicians. For these forces, the organization itself—the union, nonprofit, or political party—is the source of their livelihood and way of life, from their generally generous salaries to their social and political networks. Therefore they are unlikely to pursue tactics or strategies that may put the organization in jeopardy, such as illegal strikes or other forms of mass disruption that could elicit repression from the state. Instead, reformist currents within movements are more likely to promote change through official channels. Lobbying, advocacy, election campaigns, symbolic demonstrations, and press conferences are some of the typical tools of reformism.

Although we reject reformism, struggling for reforms is essential—when they are won from below instead of granted from on high by landlords, bosses, or politicians. Winning reforms through independent collective action, for better living and working conditions, builds our capacity, solidarity, initiative, and will to fight. The struggle for reforms is critical for building popular power.

[5] Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, "Social Movements and the Popular Organisation" in *Social Anarchism and Organisation*, 2008.

Inspired by a libertarian socialist horizon, our general strategy calls for building popular power through independent, durable social movements that can not only wrest reforms from the dominant classes but lay the basis for a new society. These movements are characterized by a distinct set of organizational forms and modes of struggle:

1. **Organized around shared needs** : As opposed to activism, in which individuals engage in cycles of moral outrage, bouncing from one issue to the next without building a social base, we call for movements that struggle around our shared material needs and interests. Organizations grounded in the common needs of exploited and oppressed peoples—such as higher wages, rent control, childcare, cop-free schools, etc.—have more potential for building a broad social base with the capacity to not only improve our living and working conditions, but to become levers of revolutionary change

2. **Non-ideological** : Instead of building movements aligned with a particular political party or marked by an explicit political ideology—whether it be anarchist, Marxist or social democratic—we call for movements that are mobilized around common material needs and interests. We recognize that mass movements have a variety of ideological currents within them and that attempts to impose a singular political affiliation tends to narrow their social base.

3. **Class struggle & independence** : In opposition to class collaboration with the forces of domination, we advocate movements that maintain independence from the state, political parties, nonprofits, and other impediments to waging class struggle. This avoids the pitfalls of co-optation, demobilization, and domestication.

4. **Direct action**: Rather than delegate the resolution of our struggles to others—whether they be politicians, union bureaucrats, or nonprofit staff—we call for mass collective direct action as the most potent mode of struggle for movements. When masses of dominated peoples refuse to work, withhold their rent, or take over and start running social institutions themselves, we bypass intermediaries and take the reins over the problems that we face and the solutions we propose. This develops the self-confidence, skills, and autonomy of the dominated classes.

5. **Direct democracy** : As opposed to top-down organizations or representative democracy, where decision-making power is concentrated among a handful of people at the top, movements seeking to build popular power practice direct democracy. This ensures meaningful, broad-based participation and democratic control by the rank-and-file, where everyone involved has an equitable say in a collective decision-making process, whether decisions are made through voting, consensus, or modified consensus.

6. **Self-management & federalism**: Instead of organizations with a rigid chain-of-command and divisions between leaders and led, we advocate self-managed movements, democratically organized and controlled by the rank-and-file, where members have a say over decisions to the extent that they are affected and movements are scaled up and linked together through a bottom-up, federalist structure.

7. **Militancy**: Rather than limit ourselves to the official channels for change, which are designed to keep us passive and reproduce the system, we need militant movements that place

an emphasis on direct action, a willingness to engage in mass civil disobedience, including illegal strikes, sit-ins, occupations, and other disruptive tactics that pose a meaningful threat to business and politics as usual.

8. **Solidarity & mutual aid**: As opposed to movements that are confined to a particular site of struggle, we need social movements rooted in solidarity and mutual aid. We need to stand with all exploited and oppressed peoples in our common struggle against the entire system of domination. We need to support, defend, love, and protect one another.

9. **Internationalism**: Instead of limiting our struggles to the country we happen to be living in, we reject nationalism and call for internationalist movements that stand in solidarity with all exploited and oppressed peoples at home and abroad to combat global capitalism, imperialism, and the nation-state.

10. **Revolutionary culture** : We must oppose the values and practices of the dominant culture—individualism, competition, heteronormativity, racism, etc. Instead, we need to foster a revolutionary culture in our movements and organizations that cultivates cooperation, solidarity, internationalism, anti-racism, feminism, and similar practices, both in the way we structure our organizations and relate to one another as well as through art, education, and other forms of communication.

Many of these elements will likely be missing from the movements we encounter, assuming there are movements to be found in the first place. However, whether we get involved in existing struggles or build new ones from the ground up, our role as anarchist revolutionaries, as a political organization, is to practice, propose, and defend these elements through active participation in the daily struggles of the dominated classes. The more these characteristics are present in social movements, the more we are advancing the strategy of building popular power.

This brings us to the question of **dual organization**, a pillar of our general strategy. Since its origins in the late 19th century, anarchism has always had a dual organization current, which advocates the need for two separate but symbiotic types of organization as key ingredients for revolutionary transformation—one **social/mass** (social movements and mass organizations) and the other **political** (anarchist political organizations).

The theory and practice of dual organization—associated primarily with political organizations in the mold of **platformism**[6] and **especifismo**[7]—not only highlight the need for both social and political organization, but also the unique role played by each, and the relationship between the two.

As part of our general strategy, anarchist militants must build, strengthen, and participate in both types of organizations. Let us explore some of the core characteristics of each.

Mass organizations bring together particular actors of the dominated classes—workers, tenants, students, immigrants, indigenous peoples, etc.—on the basis of defending or improving their immediate conditions. As we have described above, these organizations exist in many forms, from labor unions in the workplace to indigenous organizations in defense of their lands. Since mass

[6] North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists, "The Global Influence of Platformism Today," *Zabalaza Books*, 2003.

[7] Adam Weaver, "Especifismo: The Anarchist Praxis of Building Popular Movements and Revolutionary Organization," *The Northeastern Anarchist*, Issue 11, 2006.

organizations strive to unite as many people as possible to address their material needs, they tend to emphasize reforms, not revolution. As the *Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front* in South Africa explains: "(t)he mass organisation does not require a complete vision of the broader class struggle, only a practical capacity and a desire to fight capital. In non-revolutionary times it is concerned with the immediate day-to-day struggles and concerns of the working class, and is not necessarily revolutionary."[8]

Bringing together large numbers of people based on common needs, not ideology, mass organizations can hold a wide range of perspectives among their members. These perspectives can sometimes overlap or be in conflict, contradiction, or competition with one another. Participants in mass organizations can include those who support the Democratic or Republican Party, conspiracy theorists, people without a clearly defined political identity, various strands of Marxists, misogynists, religious reactionaries, liberals, and everything in between. The ideological diversity among the rank-and-file of mass organizations means we must engage in the "battle of ideas."

Anarchists must be prepared to intervene among the different forces at play within mass organizations, winning as many people over to our ideas and methods as possible. To intervene most effectively, however, we need to be organized politically.

Unlike mass organizations, which are generally open to all those who share certain needs, **anarchist political organizations** are composed of an "active minority" of revolutionaries who share a common ideology, set of principles, and program. Political organizations demand a higher degree of theoretical and practical unity from their members and play a distinct role in the course of struggle.

The most critical role of an anarchist political organization is sustained activity within social movements. Militants are expected to commit to organizing within one of several "sectors" where social movements are grounded. **Sectors** are specific sites of struggle where the battle between contending classes tends to take concrete form, such as workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. According to Chilean anarchist José Antonio Gutierrez, class conflict within these sectors is expressed through particular "actors of struggle"—workers, students, tenants, incarcerated, etc.—who are defined by:

1. **Problems that affect them immediately and their immediate interests**, including police brutality, unsafe working conditions, dilapidated housing, incarceration, and more.

2. **Traditions of struggle and organization sprouted from this set of problems and interests** , such as labor unions, tenant unions, indigenous organizations, immigrant rights organizations, among others.

3. **A common place or activity in society**, including workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, prisons, reservations and more.[9]

Sectors are not understood in isolation. Each one is shaped by and also shapes the system of domination. They are all interconnected. Our ability to pay rent, for example, is tied to how much we are paid at work, which is often related to our level of formal education, but also questions

[8] Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front, "Social and Political Levels of Organisation" in *Modules for the Anarchist Political School*, 2019.

[9] José Antonio Gutiérrez Danton, "The Problems Posed by the Concrete Class Struggle and Popular Organization," 2005.

of race, gender, nationality, and sexuality. Historically, social movements are at their strongest when they are able to weave together and mobilize multiple sectors. The Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s are a case in point. These movements included mass organizations in workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and prisons as part of a broad-based struggle. Thus, our task is not simply to build power in one sector alone but to find ways to unite multiple sectors into a mass movement from below against the system of domination.

We identify which sectors to commit to as a political organization not based on personal preference but on a collective analysis of current conditions, an assessment of which sites of struggle have the most potential for building popular power, and our capacity as a political organization.

Through long-term engagement, relationship-building, and principled organizing, anarchist militants can not only participate in mass organizations within these sectors but influence their everyday practice and orientation in an anarchist direction—a process known as **social insertion**.

This process seeks to infuse movements with anarchist values, principles and practices, but we are not out to impose our program on others. As we note in our founding document, *Role of the Revolutionary Organization*, the revolutionary organization "participates in mass movements as equals in struggle… It never seeks to dominate, impose upon, manipulate, command or control mass movements in recognition of the need for revolutionary pluralism, and that those movements, not the revolutionary organization itself, are the revolutionary agent of social transformation."[10]

Anarchist militants should act as a bulwark within social movements against, among other forces, the following: authoritarian revolutionaries, who may seek to seize leadership positions for their own ends, convert struggles into recruitment funnels for their own political organizations or into front groups that they direct behind the scenes; reformists, who often restrain movements, keeping them within the bounds of the system; and reactionaries, who pose a physical danger to our movements.

Anarchist political organizations also serve as a key source of **historical memory**. Through articles, books, pamphlets, presentations, public events, and more, they highlight the successes, failures, contradictions, and insights of social and political organizations, key historical figures and events, past and present. They share crucial lessons with comrades in struggle.

Fostering historical memory is part of the broader task of **political education** and **propaganda**. To challenge the ideological underpinnings and toxic culture of the system of domination, the anarchist political organization "strives to build a visible presence for its ideas, methods, and tactics in order to popularize a revolutionary culture…one of popular combativity, creativity, solidarity, mutual aid, anti-racist, internationalism, anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalist, and anti-state."[11]

Aiming to appeal to a large, diverse audience, the anarchist political organization uses a variety of popular education methods and communications tools. These include accessible, visually appealing multimedia content on and offline—audio, video, texts, posters, stickers, buttons, etc.—as well as social, political, and cultural events; study groups; and workshops open to the public. To this end, we need to stay abreast of the most advanced communications technologies and strategies to ensure we are reaching as many people as possible.

[10] Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra, "Role of the Revolutionary Organization," 2014.

[11] Ibid.

Beyond propaganda and social insertion in mass movements, an anarchist political organization also works to develop the knowledge, skills, and capacity of its members. This is done through **internal political education and training** in revolutionary history, theory, and practice.

Anarchist political organizations also provide a **political home** for members to share experiences, support one another, discuss and debate the critical issues of our times, and develop a program for collective intervention in current struggles.

To accomplish the various tasks outlined above, anarchist political organizations are built around a clear set of fundamental principles:

- **Theoretical unity:** Anarchist political organizations are made up of militants who share general agreement on core theoretical questions regarding the nature of the system of domination, what kind of society we want to put in its place, and the most effective means for getting us from here to there. This does not imply a rigid form of political uniformity. There will always be debate. But the organization is dedicated to striving toward unity and translating that unity into collective action.

- **Strategic and tactical unity:** Based on a collective analysis of current conditions, the activity of the anarchist political organization is guided by a common set of tactics and strategy, expressed in a program. While the program provides a clear direction for the organization, it is understood to be a living document, updated as conditions change.

- **Collective responsibility and accountability** : Membership in the organization requires a great deal of discipline and responsibility—to each other, to carrying out the collective agreements of the organization, and to holding ourselves accountable to the values, principles, and practices we are striving to enact in the world.

- **Self-management and federalism:** Given that the anarchist political organization has its sights set on a self-managed socialist society organized from the bottom up, the organization itself embodies these principles. Decisions are made collectively through direct democracy and responsibility for carrying out these decisions are entrusted to members or committees through delegation. Structurally, the organization is made up of local, regional, or national bodies, federated on the basis of shared theory and practice.

- **Principled behavior:** Members of the anarchist political organization strive toward embodying our theory in our everyday practice. This includes fostering a comradely culture of mutual respect, cooperation, care, and accountability in our shared struggle against all forms of domination. Disagreements and conflicts are inevitable, but we aim to mitigate and manage them collectively and constructively

These characteristics, both internal and external, allow anarchist political organizations to sustain a revolutionary perspective and practice during the inevitable ebbs and flows of struggle. Fighting without a political organization "means relying on the winds of chance when organizing efforts emerge, to bring together militants under various banners and projects, cobbling together resources for each fight, and then scattering to the wind again once the fight subsides, often leaving behind little analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the fight that occurred. Further, the

relationships and politicization that arise out of fights are often not furthered and maintained in order to continue to build future fights."[12]

Social conditions and movements will not wait for us to be ready before escalating the fight against the system of domination. Periods of upheaval will periodically flare up as a reaction to state violence, oppressive policies, abrupt changes in economic conditions, or other factors that are impossible to predict. Anarchist political organizations must be flexible enough in our strategy to account for moments of mass rebellion, mobilizing our resources and the energies of our militants to expand the radical potential of such moments, strengthen the position of the dominated classes, weaken the position of the dominating classes to the greatest extent possible, and emerge from the struggle with a more favorable balance of forces.

During these periods of widespread radicalization, having a significant local presence for our political organization—in as many cities, towns, and regions of the country as possible—will enhance our ability to influence events as they unfold. Militants involved in the social struggles of these historic moments at a local level provide a critical perspective that should inform the strategy and tactics of the anarchist political organization. This will allow the organization to adapt to rapidly changing social, political, and economic situations, and to coordinate our resources effectively to back the efforts of our militants on the ground, including those who may need legal support or other forms of aid.

If we have no militants on the ground, we must form alliances with like-minded participants and organizations, and learn as much as we can about the situation to determine the best ways to support the rebellion.

Ultimately, the long and patient work of building popular power—at work, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, on the reservation, in our apartment buildings, etc.—will better position our militants to seize these moments from a position of strength, allowing us to intervene with a social base rather than as isolated individuals.

Our ability to intervene in mass organizations and periods of upsurge can also be facilitated by **intermediate organizations**.[13] Situated at the intersection between the social and political, intermediate organizations—also known as "tendency groups"[14]—bring together actors in a common site of struggle who share a similar strategic, political, or programmatic orientation. In the US, for example, intermediate organizations have taken the form of rank-and-file caucuses within unions, which often bring together left-leaning members to push for certain demands or modes of struggle through the union. Intermediate organizations are often needed under circumstances where there are few if any mass organizations and where existing organizations are in a weakened state or driven by reformism.

In our general strategy, there is a complementary relationship between all three levels of organization: without participating in intermediate or mass organizations, the anarchist political organization is powerless to shape the new world it envisions; without the vision, strategy, and tactics of the anarchist political organization, mass movements and intermediate organizations will likely find themselves reproducing the system of domination in one form or another.

---

[12] Adam Weaver and S. Nicholas Nappalos, "Fighting for the Future: The Necessity and Possibility of National Political Organization for Our Time," 2013

[13] Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, "The Specific Anarchist Organisation: The Anarchist Organisation" in *Social Anarchism and Organisation*, 2008.

[14] Felipe Corrêa, "Tendency Groups," *Passa Palavra*, 2010.

For our general strategy to be successful, we need to forge links and alliances at each level of organization to amplify our power and effectiveness.

At the political level, this entails developing relationships and alliances with individuals, organizations and institutions that are broadly in line with our general strategy. This includes formal alliances with other anarchist political organizations at the local, national, and international level, as well as adjacent organizations from other socialist or communist tendencies on the basis of strategic or tactical unity. It can also include informal relationships with public intellectuals, publishing houses, social and cultural spaces, and institutions that share considerable common ground with our politics.

Intermediate level groupings can develop relationships and alliances with other mass and intermediate organizations in and outside of their particular area of struggle. For example, a Black student organization on a university campus can join forces with an Indigenous student organization in a joint campaign to increase funding for ethnic studies.

Although mass-level organizations are often built around a particular set of needs and interests, there are many points of intersection between different movements. At these junctions, anarchist political organizations must assist in bringing movements together—in coalitions, campaign alliances, or gathering forces into new formations—to build popular power exponentially through a common front of the different formations of the dominated classes.

This **Front of Dominated Classes** seeks to unite the broad base of the dominated classes in all their diversity, in all their organizational expressions and demands.[15] While the organized working class remains a critical component of this front, our fundamental task is to build bridges between the full range of organized social forces fighting against the system of domination—from undocumented immigrants struggling against deportation, detention, and discrimination, to fights over housing, healthcare, gendered violence, war, policing, ecology, and more. Isolated from each other, there are concrete limits to what these movements can achieve. Only through a Front of Dominated Classes will we be able to bring about a revolutionary rupture with the system of domination and replace it with libertarian socialism.

Once again, we turn to the general strategy of dual organization. Mass movements play an essential role in creating a rupture with the status quo, but political organization is key to ensuring that the movement does not fall short of its target, that our sights are set on social revolution and a socialist horizon, and that the forces of domination are not simply kept at bay, but eliminated. As the *Dielo Truda* group wrote in the *Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists* , "the labouring masses have inherent creative and constructive possibilities which are enormous, and anarchists aspire to suppress the obstacles impeding the manifestation of these possibilities."[16]

In the process of removing the obstacles to our "creative and constructive possibilities," the institutions and organizations of popular power—built from below over the course of decades—must be converted into permanent bodies of collective self-management, federated from the bottom up across all liberated territories, filling the power vacuum left in the wake of rupture. In the words of the late Juan Carlos Mechoso: "Popular power is concretised in the control of the means of production of goods (factories, fields, mines, etc.), the mass media (newspapers, radios, televi-

[15] Juan Carlos Mechoso and Felipe Corrêa (English Translation by Jonathan Payn), "The Strategy of Especifismo," Anarkismo.net, 2009.

[16] G.P. Maximoff, "Constructive Anarchism: The Debate on the Platform," Maximoff Memorial Publication Committee, 1952.

sion channels, information in general), services (transport, energy, sanitation works, communications, etc.), decision-making mechanisms (research, scientific work) and of the corresponding means at the political level, of collectively established 'legal' instruments, ideological structures, education plans, different cultural manifestations. This control is of the people-collective, established by organs and institutions that have been developed during the process and at the moment of assuming power."[17]

In this sense, our general strategy of building popular power is designed to match our means with our ends. To achieve a self-managed socialist society free from all forms of domination, we need to build autonomous, self-managed mass movements as organs of popular power that both reflect this future social order and act as a vehicle for its realization.

The consolidation of popular power in the post-revolutionary period is the ultimate expression of our general strategy. The accumulation of popular power in the pre-revolutionary period is aimed at placing all areas of social, political, and economic life under collective, democratic control. This long-term process entails building, strengthening, and uniting independent social movements through combative struggles around the immediate needs of the dominated classes. These movements are born out of the oppressive conditions and contradictions of the system of domination, but this does not necessarily put them on a revolutionary path. For this, anarchist political organizations, with the aid of intermediate groups, are needed to help catalyze mass movements toward a rupture with the current order, toward social revolution, toward a stateless, classless, self-managed society built on the ashes of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, settler-colonialism and imperialism. Toward libertarian socialism!

[17] Juan Carlos Mechoso and Felipe Corrêa (English Translation by Jonathan Payn), "The Strategy of Especifismo," *Anarkismo.net*, 2009.

Conjunctural Analysis: Navigating a World of Constant Crisis

The compounding crises of capitalism are accelerating events, and pushing class struggle into uncharted territory

Compounding Crises

We are in an era of **compounding crises** . Crises are not coming one by one. In the past three years, multiple systemic crises have been hitting at the same time, creating unexpected interactions and magnifying effects: Pandemic compounding with supply chain breakdowns, compounding with racist police murders, compounding with global climate disaster, compounding with war and imperial rivalry, compounding with out-of-control inflation. The political system is failing to solve any one of these crises, as the major parties drift farther to the right, the Supreme Court is captured by far-right reaction, paralysis is the daily operating standard of government, and the far right grows in institutional and international power.

The effect of compounding crises makes it increasingly difficult to predict where current trends will lead, and more likely that unexpected events can tip things in wildly different directions. In any of these arenas there could be even further disastrous outcomes; at the same time, this fluidity and unpredictability means that social movements of the dominated classes could experience dramatic advances very quickly. It is therefore critical to adopt a flexible and open posture for this period, building an organization that responds to new crises or opportunities quickly, while following our long-term goals and strategy.

The Balance of Forces

In order to act more effectively to win a libertarian socialist world, members of Black Rose / Rosa Negra have been collectively analyzing the current moment, the forces at work, and the contradictions that are now emerging. We see this moment marked by an ongoing crisis of legitimacy for political elites at the center, even as they cling on to power in the absence of a realistic alternative. This has led to political polarization, which is fueling the rise of far-right forces even as they suffer some short-term setbacks. Meanwhile, the left, especially the revolutionary left, appears to be in a general state of weakness, largely demobilized, disoriented, and fragmented. Although tentative, we see new possibilities and opportunities if the organized forces of the dominated classes can deepen and expand their power. It is clear that we are entering a new era where the previous rules of economics, politics, and even the natural world around us are breaking down under the weight of multiplying crises. While scary, this kind of systemic breakdown and failure opens opportunities for us to make major advances very quickly, and turn the tide of history toward freedom.

Collapse of the Center

The political crisis of the US ruling class continues, as the Democratic and Republican parties are unable to meaningfully address these overlapping crises. Their lack of consensus and governmental paralysis are producing both a collapse of political centrism and feeding into rapid political polarization at the base.[1] Although Biden's supporters would point to signature legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act to show that the government is taking bold action, when we compare the content of what is in these bills (mostly industry subsidies) to the original failed proposals (universal preschool, paid family leave, labor law reform, etc.), and then compare that to the scale of the crises we are facing, it becomes clear why so many correctly see this as a government of paralysis.

One of several sources of this paralysis is the gradual decline of the neoliberal economic consensus over the past 15 years, but without a new ruling class consensus to replace it. The government's use of stimulus checks and eviction moratoriums to respond to the pandemic shows that neoliberalism is in crisis, but rising inflation has given proponents of neoliberalism a chance to push back.

Political gridlock has given us a dramatic crisis of legitimacy for core state institutions. This crisis also stems from political actors, mostly Trump-aligned, acting with increasing criminality and disregard for the traditional norms of political practice. This has been most obviously illustrated recently with the abrupt removal of the constitutional protections for abortion by a Supreme Court stacked with unelected and unaccountable right-wing extremists. Following this, in July 2022, the Gallup polling organization reported that public confidence in major US institutions had reached historic lows.[2]

At the same time, while more people are correctly seeing the hollowness of core governing institutions, liberals are going all out to defend and preserve them. By positioning themselves as saviors of a fundamentally flawed and moribund American democracy, the Democratic Party and those parts of the left that follow them risk being revealed as equally illegitimate.

As the legitimacy and coherence of the center cracks, polarization between right and left is growing. This is reflected in the long-term widening ideological distance between the Democratic and Republican delegations to Congress (almost entirely due to the Republican shift to the right).[3] It can also be seen with the shift of Americans away from the political center toward the left and right, and even with the growing number of people on dating apps who refuse to date someone from the opposite side of the political spectrum.[4,5] This polarization is becoming deeply physically rooted, with left and liberal people more and more concentrated in urban centers, while conservatives are in exurban and rural areas.

While the center's credibility is on the wane and polarization is growing, the center is by no means dead. Although the main trend is toward polarization and a decline in the legitimacy of political institutions, there is also a smaller reaction against these developments as fear and

[1] Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra, "Below and Beyond Trump: Power and Counter Power," 2017.

[2] Jeffrey M. Jones, "Confidence in U.S. Institutions Down; Average at New Low," Gallup, 2022.

[3] Drew Desilver, "The Polarization in Today's Congress has Roots that Go Back Decades," Pew Research Center, 2022.

[4] Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization in the American Public," 2022.

[5] Belinda Luscombe, "Would You Date Someone With Different Political Beliefs? Here's What a Survey of 5,000 Single People Revealed," *Time Magazine*, 2020.

uncertainty of the new period creates desire for a sense of stability and the comforting familiarity of an imagined past. This can contribute to short term victories for the political center, such as Biden and the Democrats' election wins in 2020 and 2022, but in the long term the center risks total collapse in the face of the underlying unresolved contradictions.

Rising Fascist Threat

Overall, political polarization has so far largely benefited the right. This is being driven by white resentment and reaction, which has radicalized the Republican Party and produced openings for opportunists like Trump. Key issues underlying their radicalization include questions of bodily autonomy, struggles around Black liberation, the rising visibility of trans people, the exaggerated threat of the left, declining US hegemony, hostility to immigrant and minority ethnic groups, and the global right-wing populist reaction against the neoliberal order. Right-wing violence likely will increase in this period, and acts of destabilization like mass rightist riots, attacks on electrical grids, and even assassination attempts could provide the pretext for further authoritarian and police state measures. Right-wing militias like the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters and street gangs like the Proud Boys are increasingly willing to confront progressive protest movements and to threaten their perceived enemies on the left. This compares to the last big era of militia movements in the 1990s, though is not yet at the level of the 1970s events like the Greensboro Massacre. Although these specific groups may be weakened or dissolving under legal and political pressure, the conditions remain for them to quickly rebuild or sprout successor groups. While far right and explicitly fascist groups like Patriot Front remain small and disorganized, these factors add to the likelihood of stochastic terrorism, in the form of "lone wolf " style violent attacks like those seen recently in El Paso, Texas and Buffalo, New York.[6,7]

A more significant element contributing to the spread of these relatively small, organized forces is the institutional elite's collaboration with them. For example, members of the Oregon GOP extended their hand to Oath Keepers and Proud Boys in a protest at the state capitol; Proud Boys have gained power in the Miami Republican Party; recent Oath Keeper leaks revealed close connections with local politicians across the country; and Trump even cozied up to these forces for his own ends. This bridging of on-the-ground social movement forces with elite actors is key in the growth of a viable fascist movement.

As with every right-wing reaction, reinforcing patriarchal gender roles is core to their program and their recruitment. Since the religious right achieved their decades-long goal of repealing *Roe v. Wade*, they have been carrying out a wave of attacks on bodily autonomy. Failing to stop the advance of gay rights and mostly giving up on trying to preserve the "sanctity of marriage," their current focus of attack is on trans and nonbinary people, especially trans youth. Dozens of laws have been passed in order to deny trans youth the right to exist. The right has stoked the anxieties of suburban parents to wage war against trans youth and supposed "gender ideology" in schools, along with racist campaigns against "critical race theory." Misogynistic social media gurus are the latest smiling face of a long-term epidemic of violence against women,

[6] Morgan Lee and Paul J. Weber, "Texas Man Pleads Guilty in Racist 2019 Walmart Attack," *AP News*, 2023

[7] Carolyn Thompson and Jennifer Peltz, "White Supremacist Gets Life in Prison for Buffalo Massacre," *AP News*, 2023.

trans, and gender-nonconforming people. Femicide is a largely unreported phenomenon within the US, despite staggering statistics.[8]

Institutional and Electoral Dead Ends

While the base for the far right increases, liberals and centrists like those in the Biden administration are not in a position to address the root causes of fascism: economic insecurity combined with patriarchy and white supremacy. While they may make some rhetorical gestures, like Biden naming MAGA Republicans as a force of fascism, in the interest of staying in power they are unwilling to dismantle the fascism-spawning world order they built in the first place. Their failure to act exacerbates the threat of fascism

The mixed results of the midterm elections, along with the turn toward the spectacle of the 2024 presidential election, will likely draw resources and attention away from struggles on the ground, such as those in our workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. The midterms demonstrated the resilience of the center in the Democratic Party, despite its declining credibility, and left a divided government with a discredited Biden White House, a Republican controlled House of Representatives, and the reactionary governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, eyeing a 2024 presidential run. These elections also signaled the potential for continued struggles over bodily autonomy, given that many voters were motivated by the defeat of *Roe v. Wade* to vote for the Democrats. All of this points toward more gridlock and conflicts within and between both parties nationally. This means less room for social democratic electoral efforts to succeed, and more possible openings for independent social movements.

Recession Tightrope

Corporate owners and large investors raked in unprecedented profits from government stimulus and speculative bubbles during the COVID crisis. Many are now using inflation to raise prices as high as they can to keep their profits up at our expense. On the other hand, the economy has now entered an extremely anxious period, with daily speculation about possible global recessions and the accompanying signs of corporate and government cuts. With tech firms, this is already the case, as tens of thousands of workers are being laid off by Silicon Valley companies. As with previous turbulent periods, though, we expect—and are already seeing—the government to put the profits of "too big to fail" business above the well-being of the rest of us.

Meanwhile, the dominant class's economic decisions are wreaking havoc on working people's lives. Rising prices for food, gas, and other basic necessities are the latest blows in the series of crises exacerbated since the onset of the pandemic. In 2022, inflation rose dramatically higher than wages, meaning workers are less well off than they were a year ago.[9] While capitalists want us to believe that this is all a result of forces outside of their control, like the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there are also conscious economic decisions made by the capitalist class that are inflaming inflation and the likelihood of a recession. One is price gouging, particularly by major energy companies, which governments are unwilling or unable to rein in. Another is the choices that led to reliance on the vulnerable systems of just-in-time logistics networks

[8] Rose Hackman, "Femicides in the US: the silent epidemic few dare to name," *The Guardian*, 2021.

[9] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Consumer prices up 9.1 percent over the year ended June 2022, largest increase in 40 years," TED: The Economics Daily, 2022.

and globalized fossil fuels. A third key decision is the strategy of the Federal Reserve and other central banks to increase federal interest rates, which makes credit and money more expensive, encouraging businesses to restrict their spending and lay off workers.

An intended outcome of this strategy is to increase the unemployment rate, decrease the economic leverage of the working class, and keep wages low while protecting corporate profits. This means that even as inflation slows, most workers will continue to see a decline in their real purchasing power, despite the rises in wages that many have seen since 2020.

Moreover, large investors' market speculation and asset valuation are driving the cost of housing through the roof in every major US city, including in previously spared areas like the Rust Belt. This is contributing to a crisis of houselessness that has exploded during the pandemic, despite hard-won mitigation measures like eviction protections and rent caps. It remains to be seen to what extent the Fed's interest rate hikes and shifting economic winds will stall or deflate the housing market. Regardless, the truly massive scale of single-family home purchases by real estate speculators, and their subsequent conversion to rental properties, will not be reversed anytime soon. In 2021, nearly a quarter of all homes sold were purchased by investors.[10]

As with the rest of the US economy, these dynamics are deeply racialized and gendered. Black workers face unemployment rates twice as high as whites, and many women were pressured to leave the labor market during the pandemic as the need for unpaid care labor increased.[11] With every shock to the economic system, Black, immigrant, women, and trans workers will again face the harshest effects. So too for segregated housing markets, where housing for working class Black and immigrant communities are scarcer, more expensive, in worse condition, and facing the ethnic cleansing of gentrification.

Although it has been overhyped for years, major advances in AI and automation are beginning to dramatically reshape our working lives. Although these technologies are not a major factor in the current conjuncture, now is a critical tipping point that will determine how they will affect the lives of working people in the years to come. The more workers are able to assert our rights to a dignified livelihood now, the less likely that self-driving trucks or automated warehouses will cause massive harm to workers in those industries five or ten years from now.

Decline of US Hegemony

In the current moment, much of this economic instability is coming from the global implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Ukraine war is notable for another reason—it is a major war in which Russia, not the United States, is the aggressor. This continues recent trends that break from the post-cold war era in which only the US was allowed to act criminally on such a large scale (Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.). Now in this new era, the global political order is much more unstable and much more likely to veer into new crises. Russia is threatening to use nuclear weapons, and the impacts of the war are creating global instability both economically and politically. This extends to the US posture toward China, which US state planners see as a bigger threat than Russia and which they are targeting in propaganda, in policy, and in trade wars.

The decline of US hegemony is not a smooth and linear process. And by no means has US hegemony been unseated yet—the ability of the US to sink Chinese smartphone company Huawei and

[10] Tim Henderson, "Investors Bought Up a Quarter of Homes Sold Last Year, Driving Up Rents," The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2022.

[11] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2021," BLS Reports, 2023.

carry out economic blockades of Russia, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela is strong evidence of US global domination. As other countries attempt to challenge US power and create a "multipolar world," the US will put more effort into maintaining its hegemony. Therefore, the US will likely attempt to reassert its imperialist domination through increased attention to military alliances like NATO, higher defense spending, and more aggressive international posturing. Russia invaded Ukraine with the judgment that, post-Afghanistan, the US and NATO were not in a position to respond aggressively. However, the invasion prompted an increase in the strength and aggressiveness of NATO while collapsing long-standing popular skepticism of the alliance in places like Scandinavia. Over time, though, the conditions for the long-term decline in US hegemony will remain in place: a nation under the strain of a permanent world-wide military occupation and rising independent economic powers.

Part of that strain is illustrated in the worsening recruitment crisis facing all branches of the US military. In 2022, the Army fell short of its already reduced recruitment goals for the year by 25 percent, or 15,000 soldiers.[12] And now at 64 percent, the approval rating of the military as a whole is the lowest it's been in more than twenty years, weighed down in particular by those aged 18–34.[13]

A Climate Crisis that the System Can't Solve

Perhaps most frightening of all, global climate change is accelerating and is already past the tipping points that will radically disrupt ecosystem survival for the next century. Oppressed and colonized people across the globe have been hit the hardest, and will continue to face worsening dangers. Across the US, we are suffering from regular "smoke seasons" on the West Coast that kill scores of people whose lungs are already choked by toxic pollution, stronger and deadlier hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, historic droughts that are threatening to wipe out regional agricultural economies, and massive infernos that are tearing across more and more of the country's landscape. As climate change intensifies, it will trigger ever more social, economic, and political crises, exacerbating this period of overlapping crises.

As the climate crisis unfolds around us, politicians here at home and around the globe refuse to take meaningful action. The biggest successes that come out of international summits like the recent COP 27 meeting in Egypt are nothing more than empty promises. Even with the passage of the most significant environmental bill in decades in the US, the "Inflation Reduction Act" of 2022, the planned changes are far too insignificant and too vulnerable to sabotage by future politicians, to address the scale of the ecological catastrophe that is already upon us.[14] It is clear that revolutionary change is needed, but the political and economic system is not delivering even the most basic reforms.

Significant reforms within the capitalist system are technically possible—we could transition to mostly renewable energy and electric cars within a few years, for example. But unlike the 1990s-era coordinated global halt of the use of CFCs, which at the time were damaging the planet's ozone layer, carbon emissions are part of the bedrock of the world capitalist economy. The past decade has shown that the scientific consensus is no match for the sheer magnitude of profits rooted in fossil fuels, from production to distribution to use. The rapid transition required,

[12] Lolita C. Baldor, "Army Misses Recruiting Goal By 15,000 Soldiers," Army Times, 2022.
[13] Jeffrey M. Jones, Gallup, "Confidence in U.S. Institutions Down; Average at New Low," 2022.
[14] U.S. Government Publishing Office, "H.R.5376 Inflation Reduction Act of 2022," 2022.

and the trillions of dollars it would cost, is institutionally impossible for either the private sector or governments to carry out, even if they truly wanted to.

This has led some to act out in desperation, like Wynn Bruce, who staged a fatal self-immolation in the spring of 2022 on the steps of the Supreme Court.[15] Meanwhile, the climate movement itself is splintered between three main groupings: the NGO-led policy segment; "direct action" oriented activist groups like Extinction Rebellion and the Sunrise Movement, who engage in spectacular protests; and groups from directly-impacted territories—most importantly Indigenous resistance groups but also others like urban environmental justice groups and rural Appalachian towns, blocking fossil fuel projects. With the exception of the latter's territorial campaigns, the other segments of the climate movement are not focused on mass organizing as part of their climate work, relying instead on spectacular photo-op protests to spread their message or inside the beltway negotiations to strike climate deals that are "possible" and "realistic."

Climate Crisis-Driven Mass Migration

In the coming years, millions will be forced from their homes both internationally and increasingly within the US as part of an ongoing refugee crisis. Already in 2022, 3.3 million people in the US were displaced by natural disasters.[16] In the past decade climate-driven crises around the globe, like the conflict in Syria, have already led to mass waves of refugees that have reshaped regional politics. The growing number of refugees from both war and climate change has been one of key factors fueling the rise of far-right nationalist parties and movements, particularly in Europe, which manufacture xenophobic and racist tensions for their own benefit. As the climate becomes more unstable, this trend is likely to grow.

What will become a more novel factor is the growth of domestic climate refugees migrating within the US. As fires, floods and storms destroy towns, then as drought, heat and exhausted aquifers eliminate agricultural land, and finally as rising sea levels inundate coastal cities, the millions of international refugees will be matched by millions of internal refugees moving across the US.

This trend adds to the unpredictability of the moment, but also highlights the need for internationalism and the urgency of our struggles.

Patterns of Resistance

As the US faces multiplying crises, the left is in its own decades-long crisis of disorganization. However, there is always fightback and new forms of struggle, and we can always find hope for the future within the patterns of resistance today.

[15] Ellie Silverman and Ian Shapira, "Why Wynn Bruce, Climate Activist, Set Himself on Fire at Supreme Court," *Washington Post*, 2022.

[16] Lucas Thompson, "Natural Disasters, Boosted by Climate Change, Displaces Millions of People in U.S. in 2022," NBC News, 2023

Insurgent Worker Militancy

The pressures of the pandemic, the historically low unemployment rate, and now rapid inflation have led to a sharp rise in labor struggle, particularly through grassroots campaigns in the private sector. Starbucks workers led a largely self-organized campaign to unionize 270 stores, while workplaces at Amazon, Trader Joe's, REI, Chipotle, and Apple voted to unionize in 2022. Notable gains also happened in education, healthcare, and manufacturing. Altogether, workers filed 2,510 petitions for union elections, up 53 percent from 2021.[17] This has been helped by public approval of unions reaching a record high in 2022.[18]

Workers in established unions are showing the confidence to go further as well. Workers across multiple rail unions rejected several deals to push the industry closer to striking than it has been in decades, and won significant gains before eventually being stifled by anti-worker legislation passed by Biden. The massive University of California strike was made possible by the earlier wildcat strike by union members, and the willingness of workers to stay on the line and reject bad deals got the union a better contract than what the leadership was prepared to settle for.

Progressive union caucuses have played an important role in some of the recent labor struggles. Railroad Workers United, which is a cross-union, rank-and-file network, is playing a critical role in the fight on the rails. Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), the reform caucus in the UAW, has won more internal democracy for the union. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) is preparing for a UPS strike in the next round of contract negotiations, after ousting the previous union leadership that had forced through a contract the membership had rejected. These are positive signs of more worker organizing and more progressive politics within labor. Based on US labor history and the structural challenges of running the massive legalistic bureaucracies, we expect union reform caucuses that win leadership to struggle at maintaining rank-and-file organization, militancy, and democracy, and, in many cases, eventually become an obstacle to those things.

While most organizing continues to happen in mainstream unions and through the traditional legal route, the rank-and-file organization Amazonians United has been one important new example from the past few years of workers struggle happening beyond those limits.

Despite these signs of insurgent worker militancy, union membership and strike rates remain near historic lows, and the re-emergence of a widely shared sense of class consciousness and solidarity still seems far away. Despite the wave of Starbucks organizing, only about 3 percent of Starbucks stores have organized—important, but a sign of how far we have to go. And after the Staten Island Amazon warehouse workers' daring and successful campaign to unionize with the independent Amazon Labor Union, Amazon workers have lost every other unionization vote. While of course part of this persistent low level of worker organization is because of anti-union laws, it is also the result of failed strategy from the unions and long-term social trends that have eroded collective action by the dominated classes in all spheres of struggle. While we see favorable conditions for worker organizing in some of these recent trends, there is unlikely to be a real qualitative breakthrough until there are deeper changes that give millions of workers the class consciousness, sense of collective agency, and organizational tools needed to elevate their struggle—changes that revolutionaries can catalyze.

[17] National Labor Relations Board, "Election Petitions Up 53%," News Release, 2022.

[18] Justin McCarthy, "U.S. Approval Ratings of Labor Unions at Highest Point Since 1965," *Gallup*, 2022

Mass Mobilization and Radicalization, but Low Organization

Despite the compounding crises and the low level of struggle, we are hopeful about the possibility of radical change in the near future. Social movements often burst onto the scene with explosive power in unpredictable and unexpected ways. The 2020 George Floyd rebellion was such an explosion, and it saw the most widespread social uprising in the nation's history combined with property damage, popular support for rioters, and widespread discrediting of the police. In Minneapolis and Seattle, these dynamics took on nascent revolutionary characteristics as swells of protestors destroyed a police precinct and other government buildings and forced cops out of entire neighborhoods. This uprising changed the consciousness of millions, sparked numerous organizing campaigns across all sectors, put killer cops in jail, and put clear anti-police demands in the hands of organizers everywhere.

Since the uprising, though, the demands to defund and abolish the police have been met with increases to police budgets, and, in 2022, police murders hit a record high. The classic one-two punch of liberal democracy against its internal opponents—reform-minded politicians co-opt and defuse popular energy while the repressive apparatus harasses, jails, and murders movement participants—remains in full effect. This dynamic could be seen most clearly at the epicenter of the 2020 uprising, when Minneapolis City Council voted to disband its police department, only to reverse course, buffeted by an intransigent local capitalist class, hostile courts, and ultimately the voters. Thus, while changes did happen as a result of the uprising, the basic conditions that sparked it remain the same, if not worse. The government abolishing the police would be sawing off the branch it's sitting on and that's something it will never do, regardless of how many bodies pile up below it.

The explosion of rebellion in 2020, followed by the deep lull, demobilization, and ongoing racist reaction, shows one of the most important contradictions for the left at this moment. On the one hand, the readiness for mass mobilization and confrontation is obviously present. We have seen this not just in the 2020 George Floyd uprising, but also going back to the Occupy protests in 2011, and looking forward to ongoing regional eruptions of anger against attacks on abortion rights. On the other hand, the dominated classes in the US are not seeing models for lasting organization that guide us beyond mobilizing in the street as individuals and toward connecting with each other collectively for sustained struggle. In most fights, we do not have a vision for how to step up from defensive campaigns to make offensive demands. This results in cycles of protest and exhaustion, where we are not able to build on the victories of the previous wave of struggle. Instead, marches and mobilization continue until everyone is tired, and then the ground is ceded to the counterattack of the always organized forces of the dominant classes.

Several trends have led us to this core feature of this moment. One is the lack of social memory of collective struggle, which is now almost complete in the US with the exception of some immigrant communities. Forty years of neoliberalism have erased the muscle memory of how to use our own power, how to debate together, how to make decisions and move together. The deep entrenchment of the nonprofit industrial complex and union staff hierarchies, both serve to disempower the dominated classes and create the sense that some professional is going to tell us the plan and fix things for us. And whenever we try to self-organize our struggles, some well-funded organization with a professional staff is there to either co-opt our budding movements or just shut them down. Criminalization and persecution of radical groups by police and the far right has been a permanent feature in the US, contributing to an amnesia suffered by each gener-

ation of militants. Meanwhile, individualization and atomization in the US, deepening over the past half-century, has reached new levels since the pandemic began. This trend acts against the social relationships with those around us that are the basic glue of any social movement. Social media exacerbates these trends as users can act on their own to "raise their (individual) voices" without building long-term campaigns where they learn the skills needed to make movements successful.

Meanwhile, what remains of the North American left is in a general state of weakness. Although the organized left has grown in size and influence in the past decade, internal and external pressures have badly splintered, demobilized and in some cases eliminated left organizations, particularly revolutionary formations such as the International Socialist Organization and Marxist Center. External pressures include the pandemic, the George Floyd uprising, the 2020 elections, and the absence of Trump as a motivating opponent. Internal pressures include conflicting or absent strategic directions, oppressive organizational cultures without tools to address them, and a lack of rootedness in base-building work. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) remains the US's largest left organization. Despite its attempts to function as a "big tent" left clearinghouse, and the presence of smaller initiatives focused on tenant and labor organizing, the vast majority of DSA activity revolves around being a pressure group on progressive Democrats. This strategy, in a time of reaction when the institutions of governance are being openly violated by the far right, is failing to address the current moment. As a result, the DSA reached its height of membership, just shy of 100,000, during the last presidential election cycle and has been in decline since.[19] As with many organizations with very low bars of admittance, DSA faces perennial difficulties in transforming "paper" members into actual participants. They struggle to find footing without a campaign like Sanders' presidential run to anchor their political interventions. Nonetheless, the ongoing political polarization, which has helped make "socialism" a popular word for millions of Americans for the first time in generations, provides fertile ground for future growth of the left.

This is not to say that there is no organization in the dominated classes now. For example, the birth and success of the Autonomous Tenants Union Network (ATUN) is a complete repudiation of the professionalized, nonprofit, activist model of social change, and an example of the kind of structures that need to be built so that we can learn to struggle together in new ways.

Conclusion

We have outlined a few of the trends and contradictions that we believe are shaping our moment in important ways, and looked for the places where revolutionaries can intervene to push things in the direction of rupture with the status quo. This is not just an academic exercise or a collection of interesting factoids. With our understanding of the long-term structures of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, colonialism, and the other elements that create the foundation of modern capitalist society, we use this map of the shifting terrain of the present to decide how to apply our general strategy of building popular power in the most concrete and effective ways possible. We hope that the short-term strategy for action in this current conjuncture that we create from this analysis will be helpful for supporting the growth of independent social movements and moving us closer to libertarian socialism.

[19] Connor Wright, "This Year DSA Has a Chance to Rebuild—We Should Take It," *The Call*, 2023.

Limited Term Strategy

Public Version

Introduction

The current conjuncture contains a wide range of obstacles for anarchists aiming at a libertarian-socialist horizon. The cascading crises that mark this moment, from the ecological to the economic, can be both daunting and disorienting. Without any meaningful solutions from political elites, the process of polarization and politicization continues. While the far-right has grown in size and strength in and outside the United States, the organized left remains frail and fractured, with a marginal revolutionary faction largely overshadowed by the politics of democratic socialism. We have witnessed inspiring waves of mass mobilization in recent years, but decades of neoliberal capitalism have eroded many of the social and political organizations needed to expand the radical potential of street protests.

But all is not lost. The labor movement is showing significant signs of strength. Tenants are getting organized at the local and national level. Organized anarchism is growing internationally. More people are open to socialist politics than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The 2020 George Floyd uprising radicalized large swaths of the population—bringing the question of police abolition from the margins to the mainstream—and we have yet to fully witness the downstream effects of the rebellion. Indigenous-led movements of land and water defense tenaciously persist on Native homelands across the continent. There are flashes of a feminist fightback against attacks on bodily autonomy and LGBTQ people. And declining confidence in many of the major political and economic institutions in the US suggests less interest in politics-as-usual and a hunger for independent modes of struggle and organization.

To address this mix of obstacles and openings, we must adapt our General Strategy to current conditions. This raises a number of questions: What are our strengths and weaknesses as a political organization? What should our strategic priorities be in the short-to-long-term? Which sectors currently appear to have the most potential for building popular power and how do we relate to them? What role should intermediate-level organizations play in this conjuncture? How do we contend with the growth of the far-right? Which organizations should we form alliances with at the political level, both at home and abroad? Which movements, if any, have the potential to unite multiple sectors into a Front of Dominated Classes that can replace the system of domination with a new society founded on human needs, ecology, freedom, equality, self-management, and solidarity?

The following framework for our Limited Term Strategy is drawn from our General Strategy. But the former is different from the latter. Unlike a General Strategy, a Limited Term Strategy is time-bound and shaped by immediate conditions. It is framed in short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategic objectives and tactical plans. These plans are informed by the current conjuncture and its relationship to the system of domination without losing sight of our ultimate

objective—social revolution and libertarian socialism. This ensures that our means and ends remain aligned. Our Limited Term Strategy is broken down by political, intermediate, and social/mass-organization levels, outlining some of our strategic objectives and tactics for each.

Political Level

Like many political organizations on the revolutionary left, Black Rose / Rosa Negra is facing the challenge of limited capacity. Following a period of sustained growth since our founding, a combination of internal conflict and external pressures led to a significant decline in membership. However, after a prolonged process of internal discussion, debate, and restructuring—during which we put a pause on new membership—BRRN has emerged as a smaller, diverse but more unified and cohesive political project. We have since reopened integration of new members and new locals, and are now rebuilding the organization on a stronger foundation. Taking our strengths and weaknesses into account, along with the current conjuncture, BRRN's strategic objectives at the political level are to:

- **Grow and strengthen relationships with allied political organizations in the U.S.** In the past, BRRN has both formally and informally collaborated with allied political organizations. This demonstrates our capacity for a positive nonsectarian orientation toward working with similar groups in order to accomplish shared strategic objectives. Today, some members of BRRN are in close proximity to, or directly collaborate with, members of organizations that share a similar outlook and orientation to the vexing tactical and strategic questions of our moment. Given the weak state of the revolutionary socialist movement in the U.S., we should, where possible, continue to develop our relationships and joint work with these groups/organizations.
- **Grow and strengthen international relationships, alliances, and solidarity.** One of BRRN's strengths since its founding has been its emphasis on internationalism. This has taken a variety of forms, from solidarity campaigns to sending delegations to international gatherings. But one of the main expressions of our internationalism has been through our ongoing relationships with anarchist political organizations around the globe, particularly in South America. These relationships have developed over the course of a decade, during which the size and scope of the organized anarchist current has grown worldwide, including new formations in Argentina, Australia, Chile, Spain, France, Turkey, and Germany, to name a few. As the forces of far-right nationalism gain ground around the globe; as climate change accelerates, threatening the planet as a whole; and as the decline of US global hegemony signals an uncertain and unstable world order; the need for internationalism is clear.
- **Establish organized anarchism as an influential force on the US left and in social movements.** From the mid-1990s through Occupy Wall Street, anarchist organizing methods and perspectives shaped the common sense of much of the US left, including those who may have never identified with anarchism. This was not by accident, but hard won through decades of frontline organizing by committed anarchists. Since the Occupy movement, anarchism has lost much of its previous influence on the left and social movements.

Despite its clear imprint on recent struggles—from antifascist and abolitionist efforts to the explosion of mutual aid projects during the peak of the pandemic—anarchism, and the revolutionary left in general, has been mostly eclipsed by the forces of democratic socialism. In the wake of Bernie Sanders's failed 2016 presidential campaign, membership in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) surged, feeding off the enthusiasm of a self-proclaimed democratic socialist aiming for the White House. The DSA's dramatic growth and influence has pulled much of the left into the pacifying orbit of electoral politics and revived a social democratic current within US politics. However, since Sanders' second botched bid for the Presidency in 2020, the DSA has been in decline. In light of flagging confidence in U.S. institutions, the DSA's overwhelming emphasis on electoral politics and social democratic reform calls out for an anti-state, revolutionary alternative. To reclaim the political force that anarchism once wielded and put it on a firmer footing, we need to recover the tradition of dual organization. Although we are still small, BRRN is the only anarchist political organization in the dual organization tradition that spans the country. We have experienced militants and locals from coast to coast, a small but growing presence in labor and tenant movements, strong international relationships, and a robust communications infrastructure. BRRN is therefore poised to spread the growing influence of organized anarchism in the United States.

Intermediate Level

Our General Strategy for social transformation is rooted in the leading role of mass movements. But in most parts of the country there are few, if any, movements to be found. Over the last forty years, many of the mass organizations and institutions in the United States have been steadily hollowed out by the forces of neoliberalism. This protracted process has fostered widespread alienation, individualism, and fragmentation. How to rebuild mass movements in this context is one of the central questions facing organized anarchists and other revolutionaries: it is only within and through mass organizations that social revolution is possible. Meanwhile, the few mass movements that do exist are often dominated by the faithful forces of reformism: nonprofits and union bureaucrats. Under these circumstances, intermediate-level organizations can help bridge the gap between the cycles of mobilization and demobilization we see today and the kind of militant, mass organizations we need to advance the struggle toward social revolution. In this conjuncture, BRRN's strategic orientation at the intermediate level will be to:

- **Build intermediate feminist organizations rooted in the needs of working-class parents.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought the many longstanding needs of working-class parents into sharp focus. When schools went remote and childcare centers closed their doors, many parents strained to juggle waged work with the unwaged labor of raising their children. Against the backdrop of rising inflation, parents are also facing a spike in childcare costs. In schools, parents are grappling with a reactionary backlash against the bogeymen of Critical Race Theory and so-called "gender ideology." The latter is part of a broader patriarchal assault waged by far-right forces in state institutions and on the streets against bodily autonomy and trans people in particular. These attacks call for a fierce feminist fightback. But the feminist movement in the United States is not yet up to the task. Its restraining relationship to the Democratic Party and the overwhelming presence of

nonprofits at the center of feminist struggle continues to undermine the movement's capacity to achieve and sustain more substantive changes to the status quo. As an alternative, BRRN has long stood for a feminism from below, grounded in class struggle, antiracism, and internationalism. Moreover, BRRN has had a significant number of parents in its membership since its founding, and many of us have grappled with the ongoing challenges laid out above. These issues tend to cut across various sectors where BRRN militants are active—including schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces—and therefore have potential for building a Front of Dominated Classes.

- **Create, expand, and promote intermediate rank-and-file worker organizations independent of union bureaucracies and political parties.** The recent uptick in workplace organizing has inspired renewed interest and activity in the labor movement. This is a net positive development. But one of the barriers impeding the revolutionary potential of the labor movement remains the power and influence of an entrenched union bureaucracy and its abusive relationship with the Democratic Party. To develop the self-confidence, skills, capacity, and participation of the rank-and-file, we need independent worker-controlled organizations on and off the shopfloor. Rooted in direct democracy, direct action, and solidarity, these formations play a critical role not only in securing better working conditions, but also in laying the groundwork for worker self-management, and for posing a meaningful challenge to the system of domination. By scaling up over time, independent rank-and-file organizations—including workplace committees, union caucuses, and local/regional worker assemblies—can develop the relationships and capacity to take on broader fights within and across industries. We can see examples of this type of organization in Railroad Workers United, Amazonians United, and some of the rank-and-file caucuses within the K–12 educators network, United Caucuses of Rank-and-File Educators. By building a broad base from the bottom up, these organizations have the potential to pave the way toward replacing the service-oriented, bureaucratic form of unionism that predominates the labor movement today with a more militant class-struggle unionism capable of advancing the struggle against capital and the broader system of domination. In addition, rank-and-file organizations will consolidate the strength of workers in industries and regions from below, empowering them to share resources and coordinate efforts.

Social / Mass Level

Despite low levels of mass organization, there are still sites of struggle that carry the promise of building popular power in the current moment. According to our General Strategy, building popular power entails the protagonism of mass movements and the various struggles for reform around the shared needs of their base. But how these reforms are achieved and what characteristics define the mass organizations behind them are also crucial elements in our strategy. These methods and organizational forms include: *direct action*, *direct democracy*, *solidarity*, *militancy*, *class struggle* and *class independence*, *self-management*, *internationalism*, and a *revolutionary culture* . It is through these practices that movements develop popular power. Taking a critical look at the current conjuncture and our own capacity, we see **workplaces**, **neighborhoods**, **schools**, and **sites of incarceration** as key sectors for building popular power in the coming period. In the

short-term, we will be prioritizing workplaces and neighborhoods (particularly tenant unions) and expanding into other sectors over time.

- **Develop and expand a militant minority of anarchists committed to organizing at a rank-and-file level within strategic industries.** One of the missing ingredients in the ongoing effort to revive the labor movement is the militant minority, that segment of the working class with the experience, dedication, and vision that has helped fuel previous periods of large-scale labor unrest. In the US, the militant minority has always been politically diverse, including the broad range of the radical left, from anarchists to Trotskysts and beyond. But the influence of one or another political current in the labor movement is often tied to their level of political organization, as in the case of the Communist Party in the 1930s. Anarchists and syndicalists have played a significant role as part of the broad militant minority in the US since the late nineteenth century, particularly through the IWW. But our lack of political organization has limited our ability to exert a greater influence. The recent growth of the DSA will likely lead to a more reformist militant minority within the labor movement. In this context, BRRN must facilitate the development of an anarchist militant minority.

- **Organize currently unorganized workers, prioritizing independent unions.** Although there has been an uptick in union organizing in recent years, roughly 90 percent of the workforce remains unorganized. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half of all union members live in just seven states. New York and California are home to the largest number of union members, while Hawaii has the highest union density in the country. Meanwhile, workers in southern states remain woefully unorganized, with this region accounting for twelve out of the twenty least union-dense states in the country. This leaves a broad field of potential struggle open to more independent, militant forms of worker organization inside and outside of existing unions, especially in the South. Locally and across the country, there are few if any real options for joining an independent, class-struggle-oriented union. Only the IWW and UE are unions that still hold to the principles of class struggle nationally, while the ILWU maintains similar principles and activity on the West Coast. Prioritizing any one of these unions or others in the process of organizing the unorganized should be based on an assessment of the conditions in the workplace being organized as well as a critical evaluation of these unions at a local, regional, and national level.

- **Develop libertarian socialist theory for, history of, and inroads into tenant organizing**: As in all sectors, different tendencies vie for influence over and control of its movements' organizations and struggles. The tenant movement is no different, with Marxist-Leninist organizations making a concerted effort to control the Autonomous Tenant Union Network (see more on the network below). Although anarchists broke new ground in this sector with the advent of solidarity networks amid the last crisis in landlordship, our tendency has not demonstrated the same level of innovation and initiative during the most recent one.

- **Grow and strengthen the** Autonomous Tenant Union Network **(ATUN)** : The combined pressures of increasing costs of living and deteriorating housing conditions have sparked

a growing tenants movement across the country. Although this renewed movement began before COVID-19, the pandemic catapulted the need for shelter—and protections against negligent landlords and rapacious development companies—to the center of public conversations and political life. Leading this charge is the Autonomous Tenant Union Network (ATUN), which now brings together more than thirty tenant unions across two countries to share lessons, strategies, tactics, and resources that can sustain and expand organized tenants' struggles. Even more, this independent mass organization foregrounds their action with an anticapitalist vision of struggle that aims to replace the tenant-landlord relationship with radically democratic control over tenants' neighborhoods and cities. In short, ATUN's strategy to organize housed, squatting, and unhoused tenants from below with a horizon for social transformation illustrates the potential for building popular power today.

- **Initiate struggles around transversal issues and cross-sector campaigns in mass organizations:** In the US, the primary model for social change revolves around single-issue, nonprofit campaigns for narrow reformist demands. In order to rebuild fighting social movements, we need to break through the stranglehold of this siloed, NGO-driven activism. This means shifting the agent of change in struggles around sexism, racism, ecology, etc., from small professionalized activist groups to open base-building organizations that fight to address the multifaceted material needs of their members. It also means building bonds of solidarity between various struggles as part of a broad socialist political project. Although we are focused on organizing in certain sectors, we recognize that every site of struggle is linked and shaped by the whole system of domination. Relationships, structures, and mechanisms of domination—along the lines of race, class, gender,and nationality, for example—cut across society and are expressed in various ways in our workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, and every other area of our lives. This entails the need for a multisectoral, transversal approach to organizing that understands sectors in relationship to each other and to the broader system of domination. Seeking to unify sectors into a broader mass movement, this approach takes up shared demands that link sites of struggle. For example, unions, student groups, and neighborhood assemblies coming together in defense of bodily autonomy. While the issue of bodily autonomy may impact people more or less across these groups, there is a shared recognition of a common struggle. Because racism, sexism, homophobia, and ecology cut across all sectors, they have significant potential for building a Front of Dominated Classes.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Black Rose Anarchist Federation
Turning the Tide
An Anarchist Program for Popular Power
May 1, 2023

Retrieved on 2023-05-23 from
blackrosefed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/brrn-program-2023.pdf
Written and approved by the membership of Black Rose / Rosa Negra. First edition released May 1, 2023, available at blackrosefed.org. Cover illustration by Dinelli: dinelliarte.com.

theanarchistlibrary.org