California Racists Claim They're Anarchists

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A California group claims it espouses a new, more vital form of anarchism. But it's really just another white nationalist project.

San Francisco — At this year's Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair, held in Golden Gate Park in mid-March, there was plenty of discord among the 6,000 or so anarchists in attendance. The militant vegans of the Animal Liberation Front, for instance, sold books advocating violence in defense of animal rights while a nearby "anarcho-steampunk" (a survivalist with a fetish for Victorian-era steam-powered contraptions) casually skinned a roadkill raccoon. "It's good protein," he offered.

Unifying anarchists has been likened to herding cats. But if there is one theme that most anarchists will rally around, it is that of stamping out racism, especially organized racism driven by white nationalist ideology. Many younger anarchists are members of Anti-Racist Action, a national coalition of direct-action "antifa" (short for "anti-fascist") groups that confront neo-Nazis and racist skinheads in the street, often resulting in violence. At the Golden Gate book fair, one antifa crew handed out stickers with a telephone hotline number that called out the racist skinhead groups Volksfront and the Hammerskins and encouraged fellow anarchists to report in with "Information on Racist/Fascist activity in your area."

But also lurking at the book fair was a handful of little-noticed anarchists of a different sort — so-called "national anarchists," who advocate racial separatism and white racial purity. They're also fiercely anti-gay and anti-Israel. Calling themselves the Bay Area National Anarchists (BANA), they envision a future race war leading to neo-tribal, whites-only enclaves to be called "National Autonomous Zones."

"We are racial separatists for a number of reasons, such as our desire to maintain our cultural continuity, the principle of voluntary association, and as a self-defensive measure to protect each other from being victimized by crime from other races," BANA co-founder Andrew Yeoman told the *Intelligence Report*.

Members of BANA and other likeminded national anarchists cloak their bigotry in the language of radical environmentalism and mystical tribalism, pulling recruits from both the extreme right and the far left.

"It's an extremely diverse group," said Yeoman, with no hint of irony. "We have ex-liberals, ex-neo-cons, we have Ron Paul supporters, we have ex-skinheads, we have apolitical people that have been turned on to our causes."

Although national anarchism in the U.S. remains a relatively obscure movement, made up of probably fewer than 200 individuals in BANA and a couple of other groups in northern California and Idaho, organizations based on national anarchist ideology have gained a foothold in Russia and sown turmoil in the environmental movement in Germany. There are enthusiasts in Britain, Spain and Australia, among other overseas nations. Now, national anarchists in the U.S. are carefully studying the successes and failures of their more prominent international counterparts as they attempt to similarly win converts from the radical environmentalist and white nationalist movements in this country.

"The danger National Anarchists represent is not in their marginal political strength, but in their potential to show an innovative way that fascist groups can re-brand themselves and reset their project on a new footing," said a report issued last December by Political Research Associates, a Massachusetts-based progressive think tank. "They have abandoned many traditional fascist practices — including the use of overt neo-Nazi references. In [their] place they offer a more toned down, sophisticated approach … often claiming not to be 'fascist' at all."

‘Entryism’ and the Left

Indeed, one of national anarchists’ principal tactics is called “entryism,” defined in one of the movement’s how-to guides as “the name given to the process of entering or infiltrating bona fide organizations, institutions and political parties with the intention of gaining control of them for our own ends.”

In *The Case for National-Anarchist Entryism*, leading national anarchist ideologue Troy Southgate, a Briton, called for national anarchists to join political groups and then “misdirect or disrupt them for our own purposes or convert sections of their memberships to our cause.”

Anti-racist anarchists on the West Coast have been aware of national anarchists attempting to infiltrate and exploit their scene since at least 2005, when the Oregon eco-anarchist magazine *Green Anarchy* issued a warning: “If you encounter these people, don’t be fooled by the surface similarities; treat them as if they were Klan members or Nazis.”

Nevertheless, the doctrines of national anarchism seem to be making inroads into what Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, a longtime researcher of esoteric Aryan racial cults, has called “a folkish or tribal revival among white youth who are beset by an acute sense of disenfranchisement.”

National anarchists appeal to these youths in part by avoiding the trappings of skinhead culture — flight jackets, shaved heads and combat boots — in favor of hooded sweatshirts and bandanas. They act the part of stereotypical anarchists, as envisioned by most Americans outside of far-left circles: black-clad protesters wreaking havoc at political conventions and anti-globalization rallies.

In reality, although militant street action has been a favored and much-noticed tactic of some anarchist groups, most anarchists are less interested in smashing the state than in learning to live outside it. They scavenge surplus groceries for their meals, squat in abandoned buildings and construct pirate radio stations.

Yeoman said it was this do-it-yourself ethos that inspired him to become involved with the anarchist movement not long after the sometimes-violent 1999 anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle drew international notice. But it didn’t take him long to move towards white separatism. In 2003, “the Anarchist People of Color had a well-known meeting in Detroit in which they prohibited white people from entering,” Yeoman recounted. “It was seen as this progressive thing not to allow white people into their meeting so they could pursue their black agenda or whatever. I really saw that as a huge contradiction between behavior that was allowable for certain kinds of people but not people of my descent.”

Coming Out

BANA first began appearing in public in San Francisco only in late 2007. Since then, BANA members with “Keep Our Children Safe” signs have protested alongside Christian Right demonstrators outside a gay leather subculture festival in San Francisco and organized a cleanup of San Francisco Bay shores. “Just because you’re proud to be white doesn’t mean you have to let everything go to waste,” one BANA member stated in a YouTube video documenting the beach cleanup.

The group also recently formed at least a fleeting alliance with the American Front, a skinhead group based in Sacramento, Calif. American Front leader David Lynch credits BANA online with helping raise funds on behalf of a member of the domestic extreme-right terrorist group The Order who's due to be released from prison early next year.

Last Dec. 28, BANA members donned their national anarchist hoodies —emblazoned with "Smash All Dogmas" on the back and "New Right" on both sleeves — tied bandanas over their faces, unfurled a banner reading "Yes We Can, Bay Area National Anarchists" and joined a protest of several thousand against Israel's bombing of the Gaza Strip. Practicing full-blown entryism, they marched between groups carrying the Palestinian flag and the gay-pride flag, while shouting, "F—, F—, F— Zionism!"

More recently, BANA members have started carrying a black flag with the letter Q in one corner. That's a reference to Yeoman's claim that his ancestors rode with Quantrill's Raiders, a notoriously violent pro-Confederate guerrilla outfit that battled for control of the border state of Missouri during the Civil War.

Like their late hero Julius Evola, an esoteric Italian writer and "spiritual racist" lionized by modern-day fascists, BANA members believe themselves to be in revolt against the modern world. The group's website carries notes of high praise for neo-Confederate secessionist groups like the League of the South and the Republic of South Carolina. Some of the site's content is unintentionally comical. For example, BANA exalts the lily-white town of Mayberry in the 1960s TV sitcom "The Andy Griffith Show" as "a realized anarchist society."

Yearning for Eden

The bulk of the BANA website, in fact, consists of long-winded blog posts predicting the imminent collapse of multicultural liberalism. Most illustrative of BANA's worldview — and its hopes for the future — is a short piece of urban apocalyptic fiction that Yeoman penned for BANA and cross-posted at the white nationalist website Stormfront.org. It's titled, "The Clock Strikes High Noon."

The story begins on a San Francisco morning with a young white woman on a bicycle. She witnesses a fight break out between a black man and a Latino. An anti-fascist street punk steps in to break up the fight, only to be beaten down. The bicyclist turns away and pulls out her laptop to discover the country is collapsing: the president has been assassinated, the stock market is in free fall, and the Constitution has been suspended.

Horrified, she speeds home on her bike into the gentrified section of the predominantly Latino Mission district, or "what she likes to call the 'whiter and brighter' side of the Mission." Inside the house, tuning into dire radio and police dispatches, she decides it's a "better time then [sic] ever to activate the network," apparently a fictional surrogate for BANA. The "network" has caches of food stashed throughout the Bay Area, which members collect and bring together at a "National Autonomous Zone, where people can be trusted to keep the zombies away."

The "zombies" are non-whites, who "emerge from the confines of the projects and barrios where the city likes to keep their surplus labor contained." The story ends with the woman on her way out the door to a safe house, chambering a round into her .45 pistol, and proclaiming, "It's time to get out of Dodge."

White nationalists taken with this kind of scenario have long proposed creating white homelands or what have been called "Pioneer Little Europes." The "PLE" movement encourages white nationalists to consolidate their presence in white neighborhoods, creating a communal atmosphere whose insularity will repel ethnic minorities. H. Michael Barrett, the originator of the Pioneer Little Europe idea, has engaged in discussions with national anarchists about the shape of his plan. For his part, Yeoman conceded that BANA's National Autonomous Zones are similar to PLEs, but he claims BANA's enclaves will be superior because residents will be selected far more carefully.

"A PLE has all the problems inherent with an open-door hippie commune in the 1970s, with the free-love mentality," Yeoman said. "We're what a PLE would be if it had higher standards."

Strait is the Gate

The reality is that BANA's philosophy is such that it has thus far drawn few followers and many enemies. Hard-liners on both the far left and the far right have expressed their disdain for national anarchism in no uncertain terms.

"I am totally dedicated to finding an equitable solution to the Jewish question. But I will be damned if I will bust my ass and sacrifice my individual desires so that a bunch of social leftists can co-opt the struggle," said one poster at Stormfront.org, the world's largest racist Web forum. "You want the flash of calling yourselves 'anarchists' without any of the philosophical baggage that accompanies such a claim. The name 'anarchist' has a pseudo revolutionary flair. You want that, but do not want to be linked with 19th century Jewish bomb tossers."

"Our role with the white nationalist movement is a transformative one rather than symbiotic one," Yeoman responded in an interview. "We have friends in the white nationalist movement but we have just as many enemies."

Even some who are ideological BANA allies do not agree with its recruiting aims. One of the few other national anarchist groups in the United States, Idaho Falls, Idaho-based Folk and Faith, has no interest in recruiting "left-wing scum," in the words of its leader, a former skinhead who uses the name "Joe Hadenuff." (BANA's magazine *Hadenuff* was named in his honor.)

In a forum post, Hadenuff made clear who he thinks potential recruits to the movement should be. "Try ex-skinheads that have all grown up and are raising families, try ex-reactionary racialists now moving on to folk-centered idealism, try ex-NS'ers [National Socialists] that just got worn out on '88' [neo-Nazi code for "Heil Hitler"] and Sieg Heiling cameras as a purported answer to our folk's problems," he wrote. (Last year, Hadenuff, a former soldier whose real name is Jeremy T. Wilcox, had part of an Army court martial verdict against him — for attending a Klan rally and posting racist material in 2000 — set aside.)

On most of the far left, BANA is even more despised.

One of the few non-BANA anarchists to express support for the philosophy is Keith Preston, who runs attackthesytem.com, an online gathering place for anarchists critical of far-left anarchism — a philosophy that Preston has sneeringly suggested is held by "throwaways from exurbia who think they are doing their part to bring down the System by renouncing deodorant, gorging themselves with tofu and calling their bourgeois parents Nazis for voting Republican." Preston seeks to build tactical alliances with separatists of every stripe, including Christian theocrats, white nationalists and black separatists.

That attitude — the willingness to seek out recruits from other political sectors, many of them non-racist — is what has many observers worried about the potential for national anarchists and their small but growing movement.

"The National Anarchist idea has spread around the world over the Internet," is how the Political Research Associates report puts it. "The United States has only a few websites, but the trend so far has been toward a steady increase."

The movement, PRA concluded, could become the new face of the radical right.

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