Revolt and Representation

A View from the Battle for Los Angeles

Mapaches Clandestinxs, Cuauhtli

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> *Nation-States become customs agents of capital. There are no governments, there is only one Border Patrol with different colors and different flags.*
>
> — El Capitán Marcos

> *Capital posits humanity only to abject it.*
>
> — decompositions

> *Because sometimes the whole structure cracks.*
>
> — Fredy Perlman

It's gonna be a *long* hot summer. The National Guard stood toe-to-toe with local LAPD in riot gear. Migra were caught escaping hurled bricks between Compton and Paramount. Thousands of people were marching and confronting pigs on the freeways, being met with tear gas and less-than-lethal bullets. Señoras were vending hotdogs between battles, on the freeway or the streets, with Palestinian flags waving alongside Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan flags. Black and brown, masked and evading capture, coming together in street skirmishes. Migrants getting down with chota. Cholos tagging up detention centers. Lime e-scooters dropped off a bridge onto police vehicles, scaring the pigs away. Youth attacking migra with rocks, burning vehicles, unleashing their rage for nothing less than their unrelentling audacity. A little something called spontaneity; lumpen and prole fury directing violence against state repression and private property.

The accumulating debris of these confrontations lay scattered in the streets like confetti, remnants of a dignified rage decorating the neighborhoods of a Los Angeles still in revolt. Regarding

the current landscape of struggle, Joshua Clover put it best: "Labor struggles have in the main been diminished to ragged defensive actions, while the riot features increasingly as the central figure of political antagonism, a specter leaping from insurrectionary debates to anxious governmental studies to glossy magazine covers."[1] In Los Angeles, no partisan in the communist and anarchist struggle has not been touched by riot, revolt, or localized rebellion. The tip of the spear here has been sharpening itself since the Watts Uprising of 1965, the 1992 LA Riots, and the George Floyd Rebellion of 2020, ready to strike. It is the "intransigent social centrality" Clover identified that guides our view here, where private property becomes the means and object of racialized prole rage. As the Berkeley pro-situationist group 1044 wrote back in 1970 (under the name Herbert Marcuse), "The commodity is the heart of the spectacle."[2] Now, as then, the relationship of racialized proles to capital was demonstrated in the very destruction of commodities and property. This revolt was not about expropriation alone. It sought to burn down this techno-hellscape, or at least its technologies. Its glimmers remain in our memory, caught on camera and livestreams for the big ole capitalists to see: "Let the capitalists grieve over the one million dollars in damage."[3]

It's no surprise ICE was on the run. They could not quell the revolt. For them, this was supposed to be a coordinated abduction across multiple geographies aimed at realizing mass deportations. In opposition to their operation were the forces of racialized prole antagonism. Migra found sanctuary under the benevolence of the state, with Donald J. Trump ordering the deployment of the California National Guard, an action not seen since 1965. Fucking chumps. They rolled out urban class war against workers, citizen and undocumented, not expecting a blowout of resistance from the barrio, the ghetto, the hood, and the slums surrounding Downtown. In Los Angeles, ICE raided the means of production, circulation, and hot spots where day workers endure the blistering sun. Garment factories, such as Ambiance Apparel. Day labor centers. Home Depot. High school graduations. The streets. Los Angeles proles responded with asymmetrical force: their hands, their bodies, their writing on the wall: "Death to Amerikkka." "Fuck ICE." "No One Is Illegal." We got a taste of a little bit of "brown anarchy" mixed in with the community self-defense patrols organized since Donald J. Trump's inauguration.[4] Escalation through prole revolt was the only response to this state terror. It was the spontaneous riot that kindled the soul of racialized proletarians, despite Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass claiming that "outsider agitators" caused the damage.

June 6th was the beginning. It started with the arrest of David Huerta, president of the Service Employees International Union and United Service Workers West, during a coordinated ICE raid in Downtown Los Angeles. Tased. Struck on the head face down on the curb. Hospitalized. Detained. Fifteen undocumented garment workers — Zapotec migrants — were abducted the same day and transported to a nearby detention center. And then the next day, and the day after that.

On June 8th, we heard from Cuauhtli, who was on the ground in Downtown Los Angeles that week and who reported the following:It's beautiful to see the destruction of this urban jungle. But just around the corner of our protest in Little Tokyo, life went on as usual: the consumerist

[1] Joshua Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot* (Verso, 2019), 3.

[2] Herbert Marcuse, "Riot and Representation: The Significance of the Chicano Riot" (1970), reproduced on *Bureau of Public Secrets*.

[3] Marcuse, "Riot and Representation."

[4] Much of this self-organized network has been facilitated by political organizations and militant socialist groups such as Unión del Barrio and Centro CSO, both of which are majority Latina/o/x organizations.

society. Tourists enjoyed themselves. Hipsters took nice photos. People were partying. This is life in the belly of empire. The *core* on one block. The *periphery* on the next. We have the numbers, the energy, the skills to demonstrate, occupy streets, protest, chant, march, and antagonize migra. But we are out-organized. I asked myself, who the fuck is *we*? Is it even possible to do anything other than the classic strategy of mass demonstration? Getting arrested by the end of the day or going home, to wake up to *the same thing* tomorrow? Are we prepared for what comes after? El día después? Hopefully we live to see nothing but earth again.

> It's beautiful to see the destruction of this urban jungle. But just around the corner of our protest in Little Tokyo, life went on as usual: the consumerist society. Tourists enjoyed themselves. Hipsters took nice photos. People were partying. This is life in the belly of empire. The *core* on one block. The *periphery* on the next. We have the numbers, the energy, the skills to demonstrate, occupy streets, protest, chant, march, and antagonize migra. But we are out-organized. I asked myself, who the fuck is *we*? Is it even possible to do anything other than the classic strategy of mass demonstration? Getting arrested by the end of the day or going home, to wake up to *the same thing* tomorrow? Are we prepared for what comes after? El día después? Hopefully we live to see nothing but earth again.

These raids are part of a larger attempt at reorganizing the activity of capital with a nationalist inflection, one that reveals fissures in its composition. ICE carries out their activity of mass deportation while The Geo Group profits from the capture of undocumented migrants. Though, recent reports of "no due process" demonstrates the sidestepping of processing centers altogether (i.e., detained migrants are being immediately sent to countries of origin or misplaced in foreign countries). In contrast, the unusual activity of bosses from many workplaces — from agricultural fields in Oxnard to factories in Ontario — their ambiguous relationship to the raids as well, where some decide to "protect" their workers by sending them home or alerting them to ICE presence — only to insist they work the next day. These bosses reveal their commitment to the exploitation of international workforce necessary to their business models, the previous status quo. In either case, we are confronted with that adage, this contradiction between state and capital: "We want Mexican labor, but we don't want Mexicans."

June 9th is when seven hundred Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines at Twentynine Palms, California were deployed. The battles for Los Angeles to defend migrant laborers and everyday working people continued to the next day. And the next. And the next…

At a time of white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon patriotic nationalism, of the obsession to "Make America Great Again," the attack on racialized migrant labor is an ideological and material spectacle. The precedent for these raids goes way back to the US deporting an estimated one million Mexicans during the Great Depression, something called repatriation.[5] In 1954, the US sanctioned Operation Wetback, an initiative that deported an estimated one million Mexicans, citizen or not.[6]

[5] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

[6] Juan Ramon García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954.* (Greenwood Press, 1980).

We might remember Governor Pete Wilson's California and what became Prop 187 in 1994, where undocumented migrants were striped from state welfare services. In 2006, waves of ICE raids and deportations were carried out after the largest mass demonstration for immigrant workers — La Gran Marcha — and the "Day Without Immigrants" on May Day, targeting Latina/o/x, Asian, and black undocumented workers throughout the US. The connective tissue between these historical processes and their racialized violence is the same: capital.

The frontier between the US and Mexico has been a racialized geography since its inception in 1848. It was a double land grab of Indigenous territory mediated through war, a continued dispossession for the expansion of capital, and the ascendency of white Anglo-American nationalism in a historical pursuit (i.e., Manifest Destiny) to complete the nation's desire for its "promised" land. Cristina Beltrán suggests the following, "As the frontier pushed ever farther west, American settlers were increasingly encountering Mexicans — citizens of a neighboring sovereign nation and a new racialized population to be feared, exploited, and subjugated."[7] She continues,

> Frontier freedom on the border was also a project invested in rescuing the region from both Indians and Mexicans. Serving a double function, conquest also saved the region from "Mexican misrule" — a failure of governance defined in part by Mexico's inability to eliminate the presence of indigeneity, turning the territory into a "howling wilderness, trod only by savages."[8]

Capitalist civilization comes to the rescue, to exterminate the barbarians at the gate who will trouble them for another two centuries, unsettling the American Dream. As Samuel Huntington argued in 2004, "There is no *Americano* dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English."[9] The jokes write themselves.

The existential threat of a Mexican invasion, of "criminals" crossing the border, of Black Haitians or brown Venezuelans finding refuge in "the first world," and Chinese migrants finding their way across the Pacific Ocean; all these represent not the crisis of exodus, but the catastrophe of capital everywhere wrought by its concomitant ecological crisis. Between racialized antagonists and the class relation, the unfolding of revolt in Los Angeles presents to other metropolitan geographies the possibilities for a generalized revolt against not only ICE, local police and sheriff's departments, or a National Guard (and a deployed Marine force), but against production and circulation, the damage dealt to commodities and private property. This is a revolt not convinced by Silicon Valley innovation or the circulation circuits of a gig-based, service-based, and barely production-based racial geography. The revolt reveals its own desire for disalienation, its angry prole attacks against that which subdues us, dislocates us, and deprives us. Our dispossession and targeting by ICE and the CBP are what ignites the revolt.

Hidden beneath the rhetorical (and liberal) gestures of "Immigrant Rights" is the insurrectionary potential of the general strike, the spontaneous or organized attack of the general antagonism. For us, the general antagonism names those forces whose basis for surviving in this

[7] Cristina Beltrán, "A Desire for Land but Not People: *Herrenvolk* Democracy and the Violent Legacies of the Mexican-American War," in *Cruelty as Citizenship: How Migrant Suffering Sustains White Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

[8] Beltrán, "A Desire for Land but Not People."

[9] Samuel Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2004).

death-world is the refusal and hostility against the capital-relation, the state, and reactionary nationalism. The general antagonism is the opposition to the reproduction of everyday life based on what Marx calls the valorization process of capital.[10] As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten gesture, "Another word for this is communism."[11] And what are we to do or think about the representation of state flags in the revolt and the general antagonism? Of the signification rolling out in the form of an ambivalent national belonging or perhaps gestures to national liberation, as sought out by some groups?[12] The ubiquitousness of Mexican flags in Los Angeles is much more than an infantile nationalism, "stolen land" rhetorical gestures, or vulgar appeals to anti-imperialist Third Worldism, but rather, it is the antagonistic expression of racialized migrant prole positions: its spectacle confirms the character of the precarious form of its composition. So, what of this supposed representation, its mere appearance in terms of its extensive visibility? Re-Existir Media, a community info-project from the Inland Empire, put it straightforwardly in a recent communiqué,

> 1 in 5 "Americans" in the United States are "Hispanics." This country depends on millions of Latin Americans to maintain its social structure. We are the farmworkers: without us, most of the food in the country wouldn't exist. We are the ones in retail, service, and domestic work: no business or household would survive without our labor. We are the logistics workers: goods and commodities would not move without us. We are the builders and constructors: without us, infrastructure and facilities would fall apart much sooner.[13]

To be clear, we view "Hispanic" as a flattening term. Coined by the Richard Nixon administration, this abstraction of the "Spanish-speaking" population does little to think through the issues of racialized black and indigenous people or the class relations within said group. The national flags from Latin America being flown by all kinds of racialized Latin American descent proles, as symbolic gesture of representation, is juxtaposed to the self-defense against ICE and the National Guard, the burning Waymo vehicles, and the destruction of private property in general. Perhaps, and this is us risking the analysis here, the appearance of an overrepresentation of Mexican flags rather than US flags continues to show us all that the Mexican-American war has never ended. The structure of anti-Mexican racism, and by extension anti-Latina/o/x racism, reveals the troubled history of annexation, war, and the regime that has desired subservient Mexican labor since 1848 coupled with the elimination of Mexicans by way of displacement, lynching, and policing.

Yet, the sequence of mass protest, confrontations, and revolt are not without another reality: the police, the ICE agents, and National Guard are overwhelmingly also of Latin American

[10] "The general antagonism admits neither strategy nor strategic relations nor strategic agents. In fact, it points to the fundamental antagonism of all as difference: clashing, contrasting, emerging, and fading without agents or strategies. Agents with strategies, that is, individuals, mistake all this difference for something out of which they can fashion choices, or decisions, or relations, which is also to say out of which they could fashion themselves. But the general antagonism won't let you go, no matter how hard it propels you, 'cause it's us. Your efforts at recognizing yourself and being recognized will riot on you." Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Plantocracy and Communism," in *All Incomplete* (Minor Compositions), 124.

[11] Harney and Moten, "Plantocracy and Communism," 125.

[12] We are in complete disagreement with La Raza Unida Party and the strategy of "Aztlán" as the irredentist struggle for the "stolen and annexed territories of Mexico" as the basis for communist struggle in general but anarchist praxis in particular.

[13] Re-Existir Media, *We Are All Illegal: An Intro to Brown Anarchy* (Inland Empire, 2025), 3.

descent, or Latina/o/x. The enemy looks like us. They are the levas who made their decision: join them. Border Patrol is no longer a white Anglo-American majority. It is also Mexican, con nopal en la frente. Despite this fact of enemy demographic, its multicultural white supremacy, Re-Existir Media continues,

> With the exponential of U.S. white nationalism, all Latin Americans will only continue to be marked as stateless, as potential "illegal aliens," as people without rights. Our people have always inhabited a proximity to life outside of government. Now, it is on us to build upon this anarchistic life, by weaponizing our everyday fugitivity and undoing the chains that bind us to the system. Not through proclamations of war, but through silent subversion and quiet sabotage that render inoperable all that which subjugates us. Chip away at the foundations, till it all falls.[14]

An ungovernable revolt means doing away with representation. To become unrepresentable. It means being swallowed up with the general antagonism, with the dignified rage of the racialized proles, the nothing-to-lose lumpens, and the looters who redistribute the wealth of what was stolen from us: time. The specter of the Sleeping Giant must transcend itself into the general antagonism — alongside the multiplicity of racial forms, in the barricades with compañeras/os/xs who share a common dispossession.

The imaginary crisis of the border must stumble into the crisis of capital everywhere. We find the following instructive: 1. The destruction of Waymo "autonomous" and self-driving vehicles is the dignified rage of Los Angeles prole desire, 2. The chokepoints of intersections and freeways present the unfolding of tactical escalation to the transportation of abductees, 3. The national flags waved from Latin America by everyday lumpen and proletarian Mexicans and Central Americans remind us of the dispossessed and hyper-exploited migrant labor in the cracks and fissures of the formal economy, and 4. The effectiveness of Lime e-bikes and e-scooters as obstructions, weapons, and barricades to interrupt or destabilize ICE, police, and National Guard activity reveals the insight of today's riot. The direct measures against ICE patrol were those congealing themselves in the riot, enabling the lines of attack against capital. It's the faceless swarm striking state forces with illegal and commercial-grade fireworks, blockades made of trash containers, and molotovs shattering on migra patrol vehicles inspiring others to act. The lessons here are manifold, and the cities across the US suffering the same forms of capture — enduring ICE raids — and confronting the state and capital are spreading. And we'll say it loud and clear for President Donald J. Trump: We *are* the brown and migrant invasion. Fuck your migra. Welcome are the rioters, troublemakers, and LA foos tirando barrio.

What we might practice as communist measures peak their head in the barricades, where the faceless whose hands throw bricks and bottles are the same that take to task the realization of anarchy as confrontation with the state. Hoped for are those "communist measures […] that repair metabolic continuity through expropriation."[15] Though, all we witness here in this sequence of struggle is the protracted desire to end the capitalist organization and reproduction of everyday

[14] Re-Existir Media, *We Are All Illegal*, 7.

[15] Decompositions, "The Cacophony of Communism," *The Fate of Composition* (Decompositions, 2024), 39.

life as it is tied to migrant labor, one brick at a time. The lesson here is to turn passive protest (resistance) into a generalized revolt (attack); to construct lines of antagonism whose rage *might* erupt into communist measures. As 1044 puts it, "An exciting life is what remains to be constructed by the revolutionary proletariat. Where authentic revolt does not recognize itself for what it is, the routine of daily life reasserts itself and revolt fails to continue." The burning of Waymo cars is only the beginning. As was seen on a poster circulated by haters cafe, "ataquen sin vergüenza." The battle for Los Angeles remains unfinished. *Heatwave* puts the issue of struggle clearly, "Cycles of struggle have the habit of reshuffling the deck, suspending time and space and providing practical truth to the communist hypothesis: the real death of capital is not a given, but a matter of force."[16] This matter of force must continue, proliferate, and spread. And it is in our correspondence with each other where we might see our inquiry and analysis blossom into practice.

We are left with this burning question: what are *we* doing for the long run? For some, it's continuing to show up for precarious undocumented migrant workers, confronting state forces with everything they've got, a la chingada. For others, it's brushing up on a materialist theory of riot, expanding the practice of expropriation. For the anarchist, it's testing the limit of anarchy, asking how we foment long-term praxis in a burning city. For the communist, it's developing rigorous inquiry into the present and continued study of the logistics of one's geography, locating tactical chokepoints — orienting a struggle to the path of communism. We find each other on the streets, or not. But we find each other. For now, perhaps that is the task at hand in the rubble of revolt, donde la vida vale.[17] C/S

— Mapaches Clandestinxs / Cuauhtli[18]

[16] Editors, "The Case for Letting the World Burn," *Heatwave*, 1 (2025), 8.

[17] See E14 Distro, "Donde La Vida No Vale Nada: Scattered Thoughts on Organized Abandonment and Ideological Retrenchment in Oakland," *Heatwave*, 1 (2025), 56.

[18] mapaches clandestinxs is a brown anarchist collective based out of the urban jungle of Los Angeles, Califas, rabble-rousing and writing from the undercommons. cuauhtli is an LA-based urban anti-capitalist struggling to build networks of organized militant self-defense from below.

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