

Building 'Another Politics': The Contemporary Anti-Authoritarian Current in the US and Canada¹

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ABSTRACT

Recent decades have seen the convergence of a variety of anti-authoritarian politics and broader-based movements in the US and Canada. Coming out of this convergence, a growing set of activists and organisers are developing shared politics, practices, and sensibilities based in overlapping areas of work. Those creating these politics compose a political tendency, what I call the anti-authoritarian current, which cuts across a range of left social movements. Broadly conceived, what distinguishes this current is its commitment to combining anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics with grassroots organising among ordinary, non-activist people. I argue that the anti-authoritarian current, in effect, builds on the best features of the anarchist tradition while drawing on substantial contributions from other political formations and movement experiences. Based on in-depth interviews with organisers in six North American cities, this essay traces the strands that have led into the anti-authoritarian current and explores the defining principles of its politics.

Keywords: *anarchism, another politics, anti-authoritarian, organising, prefigurative politics, prison abolitionism, women of colour feminism*

INTRODUCTION

The period leading to the first United States Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia, during the summer of 2007 saw a flowering of enthusiastic discussions in and across movements in the US. Under the slogan 'another world is possible, another US is necessary', this historic gathering brought together more than 10,000 people for learning, sharing, and building movements.² One important contribution to these discussions was a perceptive

article featured in the activist magazine *Left Turn* by one of its editors, Max Uhlenbeck. An experienced organiser, Uhlenbeck is someone with his finger on the pulse of a lot of dynamic movement activity in North America. He observed:

Those of us who are not interested in starting a political party, and have even shied away from cadre organizing of any kind, have found it hard to articulate what exactly it is we would want to see on the local, regional, or even national level, much less how we might organize towards such a goal ... We know we are critical of the non-profit world – increasingly integrated into the corporate model – as a major vehicle for structural social change. We are critical of the centralized political party structure, whether it be the neoliberal Democrats or the small leftist ‘revolutionary sects’ that continue to operate in near anonymity around the country. On the other side of the spectrum, the frustrating anti-organizational and sectarian tendencies within many of the contemporary anarchist movements, coupled with the predominantly white subcultures surrounding them, have left much to be desired. The alternative for many of us has been to continue to identify with a broad-based, but still rather vague, political tendency – sometimes described as the ‘anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, non-sectarian left’.³

Uhlenbeck, in these precious few phrases, managed to put words to something that many have been discussing, but few have written about at any length.⁴ Building on his description, this article is about the ‘anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, non-sectarian left’ across the United States and Canada. This tendency pulls together a growing set of activists and organisers who are developing shared ideas and approaches based in overlapping areas of work. At the core, what distinguishes them is their commitment to combining anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics with grassroots organising among ordinary, non-activist people. In doing this, they use many labels to describe themselves – abolitionists, anarchists, anti-authoritarians, anti-capitalists, autonomists, and radicals, among others – and some choose to organise without political labels. Yet, together, they are a political current that cuts across a range of left social movements in North America. For shorthand, I call this the ‘anti-authoritarian current’, though I recognise this is not a self-description that everyone would choose.⁵ And for reasons I explain below, I call the emerging shared politics, practices, and sensibilities in this current ‘another politics’.

Those in the anti-authoritarian current collectively engage in a wide range of organising efforts across multiple movements. As part of these, they have been building networks, campaigns, and organisations that reflect their politics and sensibilities. Examples include the No One Is Illegal and No Border networks, the Mobilization for Climate Justice, the Peoples’ Global Action Bloc in Eastern Canada, national organisations such as Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and



Chris Dixon

34

networks around publications such as *Left Turn*, *Make/Shift*, and *Upping the Anti*. They are also involved in initiatives which perhaps less explicitly enunciate their politics but are no less important in developing and circulating them: grassroots reconstruction efforts on the US Gulf Coast; radical anti-poverty groups; women's centers and other feminist institutions; community-based racial justice organisations; Indigenous and international solidarity efforts; workers' centres and labour unions; radical queer networks; environmental justice groups; and student activist organisations.

Depending on your vantage point, the anti-authoritarian current is part of contemporary anarchism, an attempt to move beyond it, or a different political formation altogether. In my view, it is all of these things at once. There are many in this current who are anarchists or are sympathetic to anarchism, and this current takes much from the anarchist tradition. However, not all anarchists identify with the anti-authoritarian current, and some are sharply critical of it. Meanwhile, as I describe further below, there are many activists and organisers in this current who, though anti-capitalist and anti-statist, wouldn't call themselves anarchists and whose politics have developed through other traditions and trajectories of struggle.

In this essay, I foreground the complicated relationship between anarchism and another politics. I argue that the anti-authoritarian current, in effect, builds on the best features of anarchism while drawing on substantial contributions from other political formations and movement experiences. And in practice, I suggest, this current contends with the limitations of much North American anarchism as it is presently manifested. The most significant of these limitations include a sectarian orientation, a debilitating aversion to strategy and organisation, a largely subcultural character, and a profound disconnection from the lives and struggles of people who are not already part of self-identified activist milieus. While the anti-authoritarian current has not resolved these problems, it is fruitfully grappling with them and generating promising forms of theory and practice. In this way, it points to new directions for anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics in the US and Canada.

I have structured what follows as a genealogy of the anti-authoritarian current and an exploration of its central political features. I start by briefly discussing the recent convergence of politics and movements that has catalysed this current in North America. I argue that the anti-authoritarian current bears the imprint of a variety of political strands, and I trace some that are especially crucial. I then turn to another politics, unpacking what I see as its defining principles. In closing, I suggest that the anti-authoritarian current is setting a political pole in anarchism and the left more broadly, and I look at some of the crucial unresolved questions that anti-authoritarian activists and organisers still face.

A note on my research approach: I write as a participant in this current, not a disinterested outsider. Using a term from radical anthropologist Jeffrey Juris, I take an approach of 'militant ethnography' – researching from within and with the anti-authori-



tarian current in order to further collective reflection.⁶ The core of my research practice is identifying and engaging key movement discussions. Ranging from conversations about day-to-day organising to large-scale debates about strategic direction, these types of discussions constitute what I call 'movement-generated theory' – the self-reflective activity of people engaged in struggle.⁷ This analytical work is frequently collective and enormously generative. What I present and argue here is primarily based on in-depth interviews I conducted with nearly fifty organisers across Canada and the US who generously shared their ideas and experiences with me.⁸ I have also drawn on late night conversations, magazines, meetings, online exchanges, books, protests, political events, trainings, and many of the other ways that activists and organisers engage in reflection and discussion.⁹

THE CONVERGENCE

So, where did the anti-authoritarian current come from? It builds on many lineages of struggle and movement, stretching back to early fights against colonisation and slavery as well as the initial development of the libertarian wing of socialism. In this sense, the anti-authoritarian current is simply the latest upsurge of a longstanding set of ideas and traditions of resistance. Still, there is also something new here. Particularly over the last two decades, a variety of anti-authoritarian politics and broader-based movements have converged. This convergence has provided space for the mutual articulation and influence of anti-authoritarians and popular struggles in ways that have transformed both. Crucially, the specific historical strands leading into this convergence have shaped its character. Here I focus on four that are particularly important: anarchism, global resistance to neoliberalism, prison abolitionism, and women of colour feminism.

Anarchism

The first strand begins in the anarchism of the 1990s. The mostly young people involved in this anarchist politics and activism were connected through a series of predominantly white and middle-class subcultural scenes, often rooted in punk rock, across the US and Canada. They set up local Food Not Bombs groups,¹⁰ learned direct action skills through militant queer organising and radical environmentalist campaigns, supported US political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, worked to inject art and imagination into activism, organised anarchist convergences and conferences across North America, and developed a network of anarchist bookstores and political spaces known as infoshops.

These anarchist scenes and networks were animated not only by a shared counter-culture, but also by shared politics and practices. The politics, drawn from classical anarchism and more recent forms of radicalism, included a commitment to egalitarianism, mutual aid, and freedom as well as a far-reaching critique of domination. The



Chris Dixon

36

practices, especially influenced by the North American nonviolent direct action movement and European autonomous movements, included engaging in confrontational direct action, organising through collectives and affinity groups, and making decisions using consensus process. Significantly, both the politics and the practices were framed by what is sometimes known as ‘prefigurative politics’: a focus on creating, in the process of struggle, liberatory social forms and relations that ‘prefigure’ a new society.¹¹

This period also saw important attempts to break out of the anarchist subcultural milieu, formulate strategic approaches, and orient toward building broad movements. Anarchist publications such as *The Blast!* in Minneapolis intentionally tried to move beyond the punk scene and connect with community-based struggles. The US-based Love and Rage anarchist network, which started in 1989 and solidified into a formal membership organisation in 1993, began to identify strategic priorities and areas of common political work, wrestled with key political questions around white supremacy, and attempted to construct a continental revolutionary anarchist federation. And anarchists organised two groundbreaking ‘Active Resistance’ conferences – in Chicago in 1996 and Toronto in 1998 – that explicitly centered themes such as community organising and movement-building. All of these efforts, in different but overlapping ways, tried to develop and push anarchism in the US and Canada into a more intentional orientation toward popular struggles and movements. Although largely forgotten now, this work in the 1990s pulled together many of the features that are now central to the anti-authoritarian current.¹²

Global Resistance to Neoliberalism

A second strand has its origins in the international revolt against neoliberalism, especially growing from the global South. Building on legacies of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, this started in the 1980s with widespread popular mobilisations against austerity measures mandated by the International Monetary Fund. By the early 1990s, meetings of neoliberal institutions like the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) faced massive protests from Bangalore to Berlin.¹³ And then, on 1 January 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation stepped onto the world stage by seizing seven cities in Chiapas. ‘*Ya Basta!*’ (‘Enough!’), they said in opposition to the Mexican government and neoliberalism. Bringing together aspects of Marxism, anarchism, and Indigenous traditions, the Zapatistas offered an autonomous politics and practice based on listening and dialogue, building democratic power from below, and creating self-governing communities. And instead of ideological certainties, the Chiapas-based rebels offered an approach of collectively asking questions, of exploring and experimenting together.¹⁴

The Zapatistas also facilitated important transnational connections among move-



ments. In 1996 and 1998, they sponsored face-to-face global *Encuentros* (Encounters) that served as key meeting points for what was to become the global justice movement. The second of these led to the formation of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA) network. The PGA brought together massive movements in the global South, like the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil and the Karnataka State Farmer's Movement in India, along with generally smaller organisations and collectives in the North, to develop horizontal links in the struggle against neoliberalism. This network was a key node through which an emerging anti-capitalist current in the global justice movement was able to engage in discussion and planning, and relate with liberal and social democratic currents.¹⁵ The PGA Hallmarks, developed and amended through early conferences, came to define this anti-capitalism in anti-authoritarian terms. They included a rejection of 'all forms and systems of domination and discrimination', 'a confrontational attitude', 'a call to direct action', and 'an organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy'.¹⁶

Anarchism in the Global Justice Movement

By the late 1990s, these two strands – anarchism in the North and autonomous movements in the South – were increasingly connected. In the US and Canada, anarchist and anarchist-influenced activists were deeply inspired by the Zapatistas and some of the first to work with the PGA. Following the example of their European counterparts, many began organising around the PGA's calls for 'global days of action' involving coordinated international protests against institutions leading and legitimating neoliberalism. And though there were previous summit protests, it was the week of successful demonstrations and direct actions against the 1999 WTO ministerial in Seattle that grabbed significant attention in North America. Anarchists played leading roles in planning and coordinating the mass blockades and street battles in Seattle, blending direct action tactics, consensus decision-making, and affinity groups with the anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics circulating through the PGA.¹⁷

In the wake of the successful disruption of the ministerial in Seattle, this blend of practices and politics came to characterise an anti-capitalist current in North America. Bringing together veterans of 1990s anarchism and those who were much newer to radical politics, this current rapidly moved to carry the movement coalitions and momentum into other demonstrations against major summits and meetings. The next few years saw showdowns between protestors and police from Washington, DC, to Windsor, Miami to Quebec City, and North American activists also traveled to mobilisations at major summits around the world.¹⁸

Through the global justice movement, thousands of people participated in anti-authoritarian approaches and politics. At the same time, this cycle of struggle provided opportunities for anarchist and anarchist-influenced activists to wrestle with their own



Chris Dixon

38

limitations in the context of a growing movement. Longtime radical and writer Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez raised some of these with her widely circulated essay 'Where was the color in Seattle?'¹⁹ This critical intervention and subsequent ones fostered widespread discussion. While the conversations were most visible around the racial composition of summit mobilisations, they opened up a range of crucial issues: the relation between global justice mobilising and community-based organising; the question of building strategic and effective broad-based radical movements in Canada and the US linked to other movements across the globe; and how to confront hierarchies of race, gender, class, age, and experience as they were being reproduced in movement spaces.²⁰

As activists influenced by anarchism grappled with these issues, some began to develop deeper, more complex political analyses and approaches. These combined anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics with an orientation toward organising to build popular power and broad-based movements.²¹ By the early 2000s, the global justice movement was waning in North America due to both its inability to fully resolve the challenging questions it faced and the profound shift in political climate after the events of 11 September 2001. However, many activists have taken these increasingly sophisticated politics with them into other campaigns, struggles, and movements. In doing so, they have continued to look to autonomous movements, particularly in Latin America, that are exploring revolutionary alternatives to seizing state power.²² And in the Canadian context especially, many have also been powerfully impacted by Indigenous struggles for self-determination that refuse colonial models of government and call the state into question.²³

The convergence of anarchism and global struggles against neoliberalism thus fostered a vital space for the development of the contemporary anti-authoritarian current. Indeed, many anti-authoritarian projects and formations have come from this convergence. For instance, the US-based *Left Turn* magazine and the Canada-based journal *Upping the Anti* each grew out of the anti-capitalist current in the global justice movement. Both have become key sites for discussion within and around the anti-authoritarian current as activists and organisers reflect on their work and refine shared politics.²⁴ Another crucial example is the network of No One Is Illegal collectives across Canada. Developing out of anarchist-influenced organising against neoliberalism, No One Is Illegal groups work to challenge borders by directly supporting and organising with migrant communities in their struggles with the Canadian state. No One Is Illegal collectives ground their efforts in an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial politics, emphasising the connections between migrants from the global South and Indigenous peoples in North America.²⁵ In these and many other cases, the roots of initiatives and organisations in the anti-authoritarian current lie in anarchist experiences in the global justice movement.



Prison Abolitionism

A third crucial strand leading into the anti-authoritarian current has its origins in popular struggles against policing and prisons, especially in communities of colour. The 1990s saw the emergence of a movement that named its enemy as the prison industrial complex (PIC), the interlocking set of institutions and social relations based on surveillance, policing, and imprisonment. Significantly emanating from the Black freedom struggle, the movement against the PIC developed out of prisoner organizing, dating back to the 1960s, efforts to end the death penalty in the US, organising against police brutality in communities of colour, and longstanding networks of support for political prisoners, among other streams of struggle and resistance. It was crucially catalysed by skyrocketing rates of incarceration, which disproportionately affect racialised communities, poor people, and those who don't fit within dominant gender norms.²⁶

In 1998, the radical edge of this movement came together at an ambitious conference in Berkeley, California called Critical Resistance (CR), out of which developed an organisation of the same name. Since then, individuals and groups affiliated with and inspired by CR have played a vital role in the movement against the PIC, whether through CR chapters in places such as Oakland or New Orleans or organisations such as the Prisoners Justice Action Committee in Toronto.²⁷

Building on ideas first developed in the 1970s, organisers inspired by CR have advanced a unique set of politics and practices aimed at the complete elimination of the PIC. They call this prison abolitionism, self-consciously drawing on the struggle against slavery. Highlighting that the PIC is crucial for maintaining existing systems of exploitation and oppression, prison abolitionists argue that safe and healthy communities are only possible in a world without cages and cops.²⁸ Anti-prison organisers thus pursue strategies based not on reforming institutions of incarceration, but getting rid of them altogether. These include fighting construction of prisons and other detention facilities and helping incarcerated people get out and stay out. Many abolitionists also have begun to explore alternatives to state-based strategies for dealing with violence in communities and interpersonal relationships. This approach has opened small but significant spaces for organisations and communities to experiment with ways of reducing harm and resolving conflict.²⁹

In calling for a world without prisons, the abolitionist politics developing through CR and allied groups fundamentally challenges the legitimacy of the state to regulate, police, and punish people. In this way, it has opened into a critique of all forms of state violence and their deep interconnections with gender, race, and class relations.³⁰ At the same time, this politics has provoked activists and organisers across North America to imagine and build organisations, institutions, and ways of relating that aren't oriented around the state.³¹ Abolitionist organisers and organisations have thus played a crucial role in the anti-authoritarian current as they have begun to construct a generally anti-



Chris Dixon

40

statist politics with anti-capitalist undertones grounded in community-based racial justice struggles and, increasingly, feminist and queer organising.³²

Women of Colour Feminism

Both the anti-capitalist current in the global justice movement and prison abolitionism draw upon and connect with a fourth strand, which is usually known as anti-racist feminism or women of colour feminism. This sort of feminist politics has roots in earlier struggles, but it bloomed in the liberation movements of the 1960s and came into its own more fully in the 1970s and 1980s. And although this politics took many routes, they all started in a similar place: radical women of colour, many of them lesbians, criticising the limitations of existing movements to account for their experiences of oppression. Coming together in groups, conferences, publishing collectives, and social scenes, these activists began creating shared politics grounded in their lives and struggles. Through these collaborations, they also constructed the category 'women of colour' as a new radical political identity.³³

The Combahee River Collective, a germinal Black feminist group in Boston, offered one of the most significant articulations of these emerging women of colour feminist ideas in a 1977 statement. 'The most general statement of our politics at the present time', they wrote, 'would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking'.³⁴ This 'integrated analysis', which subsequent efforts have developed further, suggests that the ways that women of colour simultaneously experience systems of oppression illuminate the interconnections among these power relations in everyone's lives. In other words, social relations of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and heterosexism operate with and through each other – they are 'interlocking'. Following from this, truly revolutionary politics is necessarily a multilayered fight against oppression.³⁵

This form of analysis has circulated widely over the last few decades. Partly, this is thanks to a cohort of women of colour feminist scholars and others who have struggled to make space for these ideas in frequently hostile academic contexts. Drawing on early movement conceptions, these scholars' writing, teaching, and organising efforts have elaborated what has come to be called an 'intersectional' analysis.³⁶ This analysis has permeated many activist contexts too. One particularly crucial route has been through INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, which grew out of a 2000 conference at the University of California at Santa Cruz called 'The Color of Violence: Violence Against Women of Color'. Initially intended as an intervention in the movement against intimate violence, INCITE! has since blossomed into a vital space for further developing integrated analysis and practice.³⁷



Through conferences, publications, collaborative organising efforts, and a network of local groups, INCITE! has importantly connected more university-based thinking around intersectionality with community-based work of all sorts. Groups connected to INCITE!, as part of this process, have introduced important new modes of struggle against oppression. For example, the Brooklyn-based INCITE! affiliate Sista II Sista has pioneered vibrant community organising methods focused on young working-class women of colour, including collective forms of leadership development, political education through story-telling, and public interventions in interpersonal and state violence.³⁸ Meanwhile, INCITE! has also articulated an influential critique of what they call the 'non-profit industrial complex' – the circuit of state funding, foundations, and nonprofit organisations – as containing and undermining radical movements. As part of this, individuals and organisations involved with INCITE! have begun to explore alternatives to these forms of funding and organisation.³⁹

In these and many other ways, the work of INCITE! has elaborated a set of politics and practices based on an intersectional analysis that includes an oppositional stance toward capitalism and the state, especially state violence against women of colour.⁴⁰ These politics and practices have influenced reproductive justice organising, the immigrant rights movement, and radical queer activism, among others.⁴¹ As well, INCITE!'s work has significantly shaped how many others in the anti-authoritarian current think about power relations, organising, and struggle.⁴²

These four strands converge and increasingly intertwine in the anti-authoritarian current. It is important not to exaggerate their connections or coherence, as they are distinct and at times in tension with one another. Indeed, these strands have different, if overlapping, political vocabularies and approaches, and as a result, there are crucial unsettled questions among them. However, it is just as important to understand that most anti-authoritarians come out of one or more of these strands, braiding them together as they work and build relationships across politics, struggles, and movements. This ongoing development of the anti-authoritarian current operates in two directions. On the one hand, deep political affinities across these strands enable connections and relations among them. On the other hand, these connections and relations create the basis for a shared set of politics, practices, and sensibilities. I turn to these now.

ANOTHER POLITICS

A significant part of what defines the anti-authoritarian current is what it is *not*. As Max Uhlenbeck indicated at the beginning of this essay, this current is attempting to create a political space that is not bound up in the parties or party-building of liberals, Leninists, or social democrats; the non-profit and social agency sectors, all too often constrained by foundations, state funders, and grant cycles; or the insularity, composition, and aversion to strategy and organisation of many forms of contemporary anarchism. Anti-



Chris Dixon

42

authoritarian activists and organisers, in short, are working to make something *other* – ‘another politics’.

This is the term I use to describe shared politics, practices, and sensibilities in the anti-authoritarian current. It came into somewhat wider use in the US based on the ‘Another Politics is Possible’ delegation and workshop track at the US Social Forum in 2007. The delegation brought more than 100 New York-based grassroots organisers to Atlanta, and the workshop track pulled together fifteen organisations from across the US around shared political principles.⁴³ In choosing the name ‘another politics’, the organisers were explicitly acknowledging the influential role of the Zapatistas and their *Otra Campaña* (the Other Campaign).⁴⁴ Like ‘anti-authoritarian’, the term ‘another politics’ is not something that all or even many activists and organisers in this current would necessarily choose. In the Canadian and US contexts, though, I think it is useful because it gestures, poetically, to something in process and unfinished, something that consciously pushes beyond currently available political categories, and yet something that can be shared, held in common.

Another politics has no party line. Indeed, it is in many ways a politics suspicious of ‘correct lines’ offered by identifiable leaders and centralised organisations. Still, it does have key features. Based on my interviews with anti-authoritarian organisers and drawing on other attempts at self-definition, I see four core principles to the politics, practices, and sensibilities of this current: refusing exploitation and oppression, developing new social relations, linking struggles and visions, and grassroots nonhierarchical organising.⁴⁵ While building from anarchism, these features also move in new directions.

Refusing Exploitation and Oppression

The first key principle of another politics is a rejection of all forms of exploitation and oppression. The foundational ‘no’ of the anti-authoritarian current, this principle is frequently the feature that comes across most immediately. In Montreal, for instance, the No One Is Illegal collective states that they act ‘to expose and educate against injustice from an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal, anti-authoritarian and a queer positive perspective, while asserting a vision for open borders and social and economic justice.’⁴⁶ In New Orleans, Jennifer Whitney, a white health care worker originally from Louisiana and a veteran global justice organiser, shared similar sentiments. ‘I don’t like always defining myself as “anti”,’ she said, ‘but my politics are anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anarchist, and internationalist.’⁴⁷ These ‘antis’, in fact, are widespread among those working to develop another politics. Building on long lineages of struggle and resistance, they name a commitment to transforming intersecting relations of hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and the state, among others.⁴⁸

While these ‘antis’ stake out a politics, they also indicate a twofold approach to struggle. On the one hand, this approach means confronting the ways that people repli-



cate power relations in their movements and day-to-day lives. This comes from an understanding that, even as activists fight social hierarchies, they have been shaped by such hierarchies and participate in reproducing them. New York Critical Resistance organiser Pilar Maschi, a Latina and mother who was politicised through her own incarceration, summed up this perspective: 'We're trying to break down the system, and it lies in all of us.'⁴⁹ With this understanding, the challenge is to deal with these power relations as they infiltrate even intentionally liberatory spaces. This entails what Sarita Ahojja, a Montreal-based migrant justice organiser from a South Asian background, called 'reorganising ourselves socially'.⁵⁰ As organisers increasingly point out, this is not principally about changing individual behaviours. Rather, it means consciously working, through political education and intentional structures, to shift relations of power as they play out in organisations and communities.

On the other hand, this approach means making visible and transforming systems of oppression and exploitation in broader society. White queer anti-war organiser Clare Bayard, who works with the Catalyst Project in San Francisco, put this as a question: 'How do we shift the fundamental power relationships that our society is built on?'⁵¹ While many anti-authoritarians understand the strategic value of struggles aimed at inclusion and representation in existing systems, another politics is primarily oriented toward social transformation. In practice, this orientation means centering the struggles of those who are exploited and oppressed – working-class people, people of colour, women, and queers, among others – in movements, organisations, and campaigns. As many anti-authoritarians see it, these struggles, particularly when they combine, have the potential to rupture power relations and open new ways of relating and organising themselves. This orientation thus crucially directs the kinds of organisational cultures, strategic approaches, coalition-building efforts, and tactical choices that anti-authoritarians are crafting.⁵²

While this principle clearly builds on the critique of domination within the anarchist tradition, it has developed more fully through the influence of women of colour feminism. We can see this both in the focus on multiple, intersecting forms of oppression and exploitation, and in the concern with relations of power and privilege at every level of social organisation. In these and other ways, the analysis and approaches bound up in this principle are quite sophisticated. But how to translate them, with both effectiveness and integrity, into campaigns, organising structures, and strategies continues to be a crucial site of discussion for activists and organisers.

Developing New Social Relations

The second key principle of another politics is what many organisers call 'developing new social relations' or 'prefigurative politics'. These terms name activist efforts to manifest and build, to the greatest extent possible, the world they would like to see



Chris Dixon

44

through their means of fighting in this one. As the foundational ‘yes’ of the anti-authoritarian current, developing new social relations takes many forms in organising.

One of the most frequently discussed is nonhierarchical decision-making process. Anti-authoritarian activists and organisers try to create and use methods of making decisions in which all involved have a direct say, are accountable to the broader group, and have a sense of collectivity. San Francisco-based organiser Rahula Janowski, a mother from a white working-class background who was part of the now-defunct Heads Up collective, expressed the widely shared goals behind these practices: ‘The world I want to live in is people collectively making decisions about the day-to-day operations of our lives; everybody is able to participate, and “able” meaning both that they’re allowed to and that they have the capacity – the skills, the time, the access. That’s the world I want to live in, so the ways I want to struggle for that world is by trying, as much as possible, to do that now in the spaces where I can.’⁵³

Another prefigurative dimension in another politics is creating new ways of living, loving, and working together based on relationships of trust and care. Developing another politics, for many activists and organisers, means developing another way of *doing* politics – one with neither the masculinised ‘hardness’ that so often dominates the left nor the self-engrossed individualism that too frequently infuses discussions of how people treat one another. Part of this is recognising and valuing an often overlooked activity in movements: the labour of care. Paula Ximena Rojas-Urrutia, originally from a rural working-class family in Chile and a founding member of Sista II Sista, called this the ‘other kind of work that makes society run,’ which involves ‘caring for others – not just parenting, but taking care of each other, taking care of our elders, our children, or anyone who needs it.’ Usually associated with women, she argued, ‘that invisible labour isn’t accounted for in these models [that dominate left political work].’⁵⁴ And yet this labour – whether in the form of preparing food, mediating conflicts, or nurturing burnt-out activists – is absolutely crucial for building and sustaining movements. In the anti-authoritarian current, activists and organisers are attempting to be more intentional and explicit about this kind of work.⁵⁵

One other important form of prefigurative politics in the anti-authoritarian current is building alternative institutions through which people can self-organise to meet popular needs. James Tracy, a white community organiser and writer from a working-class background, highlighted this in relation to his work with the San Francisco Community Land Trust, which creates inexpensive, resident-controlled housing for poor and working-class people on community-owned land.⁵⁶ As he put it, ‘I really want to embody feasible solutions in the here and now because, if you’re able to unlearn capitalist social relations, that’s great. When people actually learn how to share a social, vital resource like housing, they can learn to share a city and they can learn to share a world eventually.’⁵⁷ Whether providing housing, health care, or food, such institutions can help develop social relations based on cooperation, self-management, and



equality. For many anti-authoritarian organisers, building these sorts of alternatives is a major priority.

This second principle grows, in many ways, from the anarchist tradition historically. Prefigurative politics also builds from the constellation of practices and priorities with which anarchism became connected during the second part of the twentieth century, particularly through the radical wing of the Civil Rights Movement, the New Left, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the nonviolent direct action movement. Meanwhile, the notion of 'developing new social relations' comes out of the recent experiences of autonomous movements in Latin America, which have prioritised building new kinds of relationships among people in struggle as well as institutions apart from the state and capitalism. Women of colour feminism has also crucially affected this principle through its emphasis on a politics to which people can bring all parts of themselves. Emerging out of these influences, activists and organisers in the anti-authoritarian current are working to practice prefigurative politics while struggling with some of the consistent problems of this approach, such as fetishising particular prefigurative forms (consensus decision-making, for instance) and disconnecting prefigurative activities from fights for tangible gains within the currently existing system.

Linking Struggles and Visions

The third key principle of another politics is linking struggles for improvements in the lives of ordinary people to long-term radical visions. The way I understand this is through a formulation from Ashanti Alston, a former Black Panther and political prisoner who is now a widely respected movement elder and organiser in New York. In talking about vision and strategy, Alston said, 'it's like the biblical thing: we can be in this world, but not necessarily of it. So, we're here. The concrete is that we're here. But we don't have to live as if we're trapped in it.'⁵⁸ This notion – 'in the world but not of it' – is a powerful one. It emphasises both the circumstances in which people struggle and their capacity to collectively imagine and push beyond them. We see here a core approach to strategy in another politics: building movements in the world as it is while cultivating strategies based on visions of a transformed world.

The first part of this approach – 'in the world' – means engaging with where and how people are struggling, including around reforms. Harjap Grewal, an organiser with No One Is Illegal-Vancouver who comes from an immigrant background, called this 'being grounded in the struggle of people'. Like No One Is Illegal collectives across Canada, the Vancouver group offers direct support to migrants resisting deportations while building community-based campaigns to destroy the Canadian border regime altogether.⁵⁹ Building on fights around particular cases, these sorts of struggles, Grewal argued, are not 'just ideological' but rather about 'people's day-to-day lives'. He continued, 'That's actually what the struggle's about. That's where movements get their



Chris Dixon

46

capacity ... People are being affected by something in their day-to-day lives and they're going to struggle against it. And most of those people may not consider themselves to be political or activists.⁶⁰ In various ways, anti-authoritarian organisers across North America are attempting to put this engagement into practice through organising with oppressed and exploited people, including migrants, low-wage workers, prisoners, racialized communities, and many others.

The second part of this approach – 'not of it' – means developing strategies based on radical vision, not on what seems 'possible' or even necessarily 'winnable'. Prison abolitionists have made particularly important contributions to this aspect as they've aimed not for 'better' or more 'humane' prisons, but for something seemingly unimaginable: the complete elimination of the prison system. Rachel Herzing, an African American organiser with Critical Resistance and a former editor of *Left Turn*, offered some very useful reflections on this kind of visionary organising. 'For me,' she said,

what that looks like in practice is acknowledging that we need to be engaged with the world around us today. We spend a lot of time [in abolitionist organising] trying to convince people that we're not utopians, that we're not living in some fantasy world, but that what we want is good for people *today* ... So, we're always struggling to figure out which battles to fight, like any other organisation is. The main thing for us, though, is: Is this going to create some obstacle that we're just gonna have to tear down later?⁶¹

Herzing's comments point to the importance, in this approach, of demanding and building the desired society while staying carefully vigilant of the ways that reforms can co-opt struggles or create obstacles to achieving visions. Many anti-authoritarian organisers echo this, particularly as they combine direct support work and broader campaigns.⁶²

This third principle has been deeply influenced, as I have mentioned, by prison abolitionism and also by the experiences of activists in the global justice movement as they came up against their own limitations and began orienting toward organising and movement-building. In this way, the approach of linking everyday struggles and visions pushes at the aversion to strategy so common in North American anarchism. More importantly, it opens up crucial questions about how radical movements might actually achieve a fundamentally transformed society. In the anti-authoritarian current, many of these questions do not have adequate answers yet, but it is a significant step forward that activists and organizers are wrestling with them.

Grassroots Nonhierarchical Organizing

The fourth key principle of another politics is a commitment to organising approaches that are both grassroots and nonhierarchical. While those in the anti-authoritarian



current engage in many forms of organising in many different circumstances, this commitment is quite consistent.

Grassroots organising names an orientation toward building power strategically rather than merely expressing periodic outrage. This orientation draws on a distinction that many make between 'activism' and 'organising'.⁶³ Activism is based on mobilising individuals around particular issues and events, and frequently involves demonstrating opposition to specific policies and institutions. Organising has a more sustained and constructive focus. Rosana Cruz, a queer Cuban-American deeply involved in work against the criminal justice system in New Orleans, defined it as 'bringing people together in ways that link them in a long-term struggle and build their power'.⁶⁴ For anti-authoritarian organisers, this generally means developing relationships and working with people in order to confront and transform the institutions (families, schools, workplaces, prisons, and more) and social relations that affect their lives. This involves work in communities of various kinds and is usually ongoing, multi-layered, and built through sustained personal connections. And in this organising work, anti-authoritarians put a particular emphasis on supporting and building the power of those who are directly affected by systems of exploitation and oppression. In basic terms, the underlying idea is that when people come together through struggle, they can develop their collective capacity to challenge dominant power relations and reorganise society.

Nonhierarchical organising, meanwhile, names a set of practices and forms of organisation based on directly democratic decision-making, collective leadership, and intentional structure. LA COIL (formerly known as the LA Crew), a collective of organisers in Los Angeles, is usefully explicit about this dimension of their organising, which involves work in the garment industry, public education, and the health care sector. As they explain,

we try to build a day-to-day practice and example of participatory democracy. Essential to this is undoing current realities and ideas of power and building new ideas that emphasise what we call 'throwing power back', a different culture of leadership and consciousness that has the development of political analytical skills, technical skills, and leadership skills and the sharing of power at its core.⁶⁵

In the anti-authoritarian current, this kind of organising includes practices such as consensus decision-making, training focusing on building people's abilities to organise and take initiative, and participatory political education often using interactive, group-centered models of history-telling and critical analysis. It takes forms such as democratic membership organisations, popular or community assemblies, and collectives linked to broader movements.

In combining these aspects, grassroots nonhierarchical approaches tend to involve what I call 'non-instrumental organising'. This means building relationships with people



Chris Dixon

48

as collaborators in struggle rather than as instruments to achieve already determined political ends. Non-instrumental organising, for many anti-authoritarian organisers, is a reaction against an organising model that often dominates in labour and community organising sectors. In the latter model, organising is about building relationships with people mostly to get them to do something. Michelle O'Brien, a white transwoman and veteran organiser around gender, poverty, housing, and HIV/AIDS struggles, was blunt in her criticisms of this model: 'when it comes right down to it, it relates to people in profoundly manipulative ways. It relates to people as these chips on a board'. Against this, non-instrumental organising prioritises things such as sharing stories, listening, and long-term trust-building. It focuses on the analysis, strategies, and actions that people can create when they come together collaboratively. In O'Brien's words, the consistent question here is 'what do *you* think? And that's not really about getting everyone to a fixed point. That's about opening up the imagination.'⁶⁶ Fundamentally, organising approaches in another politics grow from this way of relating to ordinary people as creators, as catalysts.⁶⁷

This fourth principle connects, in significant ways, with an historic organising tradition within anarchism that has been mostly marginalised since the first part of the twentieth century. This was the class struggle, mass movement approach associated, perhaps most famously, with the Industrial Workers of the World.⁶⁸ More directly, this principle is inspired by the kinds of horizontal community-based organising approaches that have emerged in the global South, especially in the context of struggles against neoliberalism. Prison abolitionism, meanwhile, has demonstrated the importance and possibility of grassroots organising with people experiencing the immediate effects of oppression and exploitation. Still, this kind of organising needs much more practical experimentation and elaboration. A particularly pressing issue is how to develop non-hierarchical organising models adequate to the vast range of communities, sectors, and struggles across North America. The anti-authoritarian current is only beginning to grapple with this.

SETTING A POLE

The anti-authoritarian current is forging shared politics, practices, and sensibilities that are increasingly shaping social movements in the US and Canada. In doing this, the current grows from and draws upon four main strands. Anarchism supplies nonhierarchical practices, prefigurative values, and a confrontational orientation. Autonomous struggles in the global South offer living examples of movements developing large-scale alternatives to state and capitalist relations, along with fresh approaches to horizontal organising. Prison abolitionism puts forward an analysis connecting state violence and dominant social relations (particularly racial oppression), a non-reformist approach to strategy, and experiments aimed at reducing harm and resolving conflict without



resorting to the state. And women of colour feminism provides a set of politics and practices for understanding interrelated systems of oppression and exploitation, linking interpersonal and systemic forms of domination and violence, and developing intersectional strategies for social transformation. Another politics bears the imprints of all of these strands, as well as others.

One useful way to understand another politics, it seems to me, is as an emerging political pole within anarchism and the left more broadly. A growing set of anti-authoritarians are staking out this pole through work significantly based in the four principles I laid out above. With these politics and related practices, this pole draws many activists and organisers who are fed up with the problems and limitations of much contemporary anarchism in North America and yet remain committed to the best of the anarchist tradition: a far-reaching critique of domination, a dedication to prefigurative politics, a commitment to building popular power, and an unbending belief in people's capacity to create a world where we can all live with dignity, joy, and justice.

Another politics, as pole, is thus both outside and inside anarchism. Some organisers in the anti-authoritarian current, including several quoted in this article, do not understand their work and politics in relation to anarchist politics; indeed, for some, anarchism is at best irrelevant. Many, however, see themselves as working within or from the anarchist tradition. All, I would argue, have something vital to contribute to anarchism specifically and anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics more generally. Perhaps the most significant of these contributions is a desire for forms of politics and struggle that *matter* – that have real roots and relevance in the lives of a majority of people and that have real effects on the prospects for peace, justice, and sustainability in the world. This contagious desire, I suspect, will continue to make another politics an attractive political pole in the coming period.

But even as it is emerging as a pole of attraction, another politics faces significant unresolved questions. I believe there are some resources within the anarchist tradition to address these, but they remain sites for ongoing work and require fresh, non-dogmatic thinking and practice. Here, I offer six such areas that particularly stand out to me:

1. How can anti-authoritarians both recognise the interconnections among multiple forms of oppression and, at the same time, make strategic choices about what fights they take up?⁶⁹ If resisting a hierarchy of oppressions is central to an intersectional analysis, how should another politics develop priorities in on-the-ground struggle?
2. How can prefigurative politics be intentional and yet avoid reinforcing insular activist communities? In what ways can organisers root the development of new social relations organically in the world as it is and cultivate already-existing prefigurative dimensions in popular struggles?
3. How should the anti-authoritarian current relate to electoral politics? Is a



Chris Dixon

50

- complete disengagement from the voting booth viable when millions of people are being inspired and energised through such campaigns, and when a denial of the vote has been a key means to sustain oppression and marginalisation, particularly of people of colour, women, Indigenous people, prisoners, and immigrants?
4. How can another politics help foster visionary and non-instrumental organising approaches that are relevant and meaningful to ordinary, non-activist people? And how can such approaches build from everyday lives and popular struggles into revolutionary movements?
 5. What kinds of organisations and institutions should this current build to further movements, consolidate gains, and develop infrastructure for a new society? How can these organisations be resilient, self-managed, and self-funding?
 6. How should anti-authoritarians relate to liberal, social democratic, Leninist, and other left political currents? In what ways can another politics contribute to creating a lively, multi-tendency North American left that has a broad appeal and real power?

Part of what distinguishes the anti-authoritarian current from some contemporary forms of anarchism is its commitment to winning. Not content to be righteous but perpetually marginal resisters, organisers in this current are increasingly contemplating what it will take to turn back a tide of reaction and achieve real gains on a scale that will affect the lives of millions. This is positive. A commitment to winning forces activists and organisers to wrestle with hard questions, to continually attempt to address them even when no easy answers or easy victories are within reach, to look beyond comfortable and customary political frameworks, and to not sit with self-satisfied answers. Any prospects for viable revolutionary politics in the US and Canada will require just this sort of relentless, open-ended reflection and experimentation. There are, of course, no guarantees. But to the extent that the anti-authoritarian current continues to wrestle with unresolved questions and chart new directions, it offers this hope.

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ENDNOTES

1. This article would not have been possible without the generosity, shared reflections, and ongoing work of all of the organisers I had the pleasure of interviewing. As well, I want to specifically acknowledge clarifying conversations I had with comrades from the Catalyst Project, the Institute for Anarchist Studies, *Left Turn*, Team Colors, and *Upping the Anti*, all of whom helped me sharpen the analysis here. I also wish to thank the individuals who offered feedback on material in this article: Dan Berger, Andy Cornell, Chris Crass, Angela Davis, Barbara Epstein, Craig Hughes, Scott Neigh, Paul Ortiz, Maia Ramnath, James Rowe, Andy Sernatinger, Alexis Shotwell, Kevin Van Meter, and two anonymous readers. I presented the first version of this argument at the 2008 Great Lakes Political Economy Conference at York University in Toronto. I thank the conference organisers for that opportunity and the attendees for their feedback.
2. For analyses of the first USSF, see Stephanie Guilloud and the Executive Leadership Team of Project South, *The First U.S. Social Forum: Report from the Anchor Organization* (Atlanta, Georgia: Project South, 2009); Jeffrey Juris, 'Spaces of Intentionality: Race, Class, and Horizontality at the United States Social Forum', *Mobilization* 13, no. 4 (2008): 353-371; The USSF Book Committee, ed., *The United States Social Forum: Perspectives of a Movement* (Chicago: Changemaker Publications, 2010).
3. Max Uhlenbeck, 'A Light Within', *Left Turn*, no. 25 (2007): 10.
4. One important exception to this is Daniel Lang/Levitsky's recent description of this current in relation to Jewish anti-Zionist organising: Daniel Lang/Levitsky, 'Jews Confront Zionism', *Monthly Review* 61, no. 2 (2009): 51.
5. To be clear, 'anti-authoritarian' is a term that is used widely and quite loosely on the radical left in North America. I specifically use it as an abbreviation for the 'anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, non-sectarian left' to which Uhlenbeck refers and which I describe in more detail in what follows. As a result, there are individuals and groups that self-identify as 'anti-authoritarian' who fall outside of the current that I discuss in this article.
6. Jeffrey S. Juris, 'Practicing Militant Ethnography with the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona', in *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations // Collective Theorization*, eds Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 171-174.



7. For a more developed account of 'movement-generated theory', see Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, 'Movement-Relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism', *Social Movement Studies* 4, no. 3 (2005): 185-208.
8. As part of the research for my doctoral dissertation, I conducted interviews with organizers in Atlanta, New Orleans, New York City, Montreal, Toronto, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Vancouver during 2006 and 2007.
9. My approach particularly draws on Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor, eds, *Learning From the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Caelie Frampton et al, eds, *Sociology for Changing the World: Social Movements/Social Research* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006); Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle, eds, *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization* (Oakland: AK Press, 2007).
10. Food Not Bombs is an international network of autonomous local groups that collect and prepare discarded food to feed people for free while advocating against militarism and for social justice. See <http://www.foodnotbombs.net> and C.T. Lawrence Butler and Keith McHenry, *Food Not Bombs: How to Feed the Hungry and Build Community* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992).
11. My brief account here makes use of Barbara Epstein and Chris Dixon, 'A Politics and a Sensibility: the Anarchist Current on the U.S. Left', in *Toward a New Socialism*, eds Anatole Anton and Richard Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 452-453. See also Abby Scher, 'Anarchism Faces the '90s', *Dollars and Sense*, no. 222 (1999): 30-34. On the nonviolent direct action movement, see Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose! Lessons from Movement for a New Society* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011); Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). On European autonomous movements, see George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997).
12. There is unfortunately very little written about these publications, formations, and events. On Love and Rage, see the developing online archive at <http://www.loveandrage.org> as well as Roy San Filippo, ed., *A New World in Our Hearts: Eight Years of Writings from the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation* (Oakland: AK Press, 2003).
13. On the emergence of this global revolt against neoliberalism, see George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, 'A Brief History of Resistance to Structural Adjustment', in *Democratizing the Global Economy: The Battle Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund*, ed. Kevin Danaher (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2001), 139-144.
14. For an historical account of the Zapatistas, see Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire and*



- the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2008). On their significance for the global justice movement, see Notes from Nowhere, 'Emergence: An Irresistible Global Uprising', in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*, ed. Notes from Nowhere (London: Verso, 2003), 19-29. And on the importance of the Zapatista politics and approach for movements in North America, see Alex Khasnabish, *Zapatismo Beyond Borders: New Imaginations of Political Possibility* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); RJ Maccani, 'Enter the Intergalactic: The Zapatistas' Sixth Declaration in the US and the World', *Upping the Anti*, no. 3 (2006): 105-21.
15. In the U.S. and Canada, liberal and social democratic currents in the global justice movement included labour unions and federations such as the American Federation of Labor and the Canadian Labour Congress, mainstream environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club, and citizen and consumer advocacy groups such as the Council of Canadians and Public Citizen.
 16. Peoples' Global Action, 'Hallmarks of Peoples' Global Action', n.d., <http://nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/pgs/hallm.htm>. For more on the PGA, see Olivier de Marcellus, 'Peoples' Global Action: the grassroots go global', in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*, ed. Notes from Nowhere (London: Verso, 2003), 97-101.
 17. For grounded accounts of the blending of politics and practices around the Seattle protests, see Stephanie Guilloud, 'Spark, Fire, and Burning Coals: An Organizer's History of Seattle', in *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, eds Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton Rose (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2001); Starhawk, *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising* (Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 2002), 16-20.
 18. For some collections that document this history, see Dissent Editorial Collective, *Days of Dissent: Reflections on Summit Mobilisations* (London: Dissent! Network, 2004); Notes from Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism* (London: Verso, 2003); Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton Rose, eds, *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004).
 19. Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez, 'Where was the Color in Seattle? Looking for reasons why the Great Battle was so white', *ColorLines* 3, no. 1 (2000):11-12.
 20. These discussions generated many articles and interviews. Some especially influential contributions include Chris Crass, *Collective Liberation on My Mind: Essays by Chris Crass* (Montreal, QC: Kersplebdeb, 2001); Pauline Sok Yin Hwang, 'Anti-Racist Organizing: Reflecting On Lessons from Quebec City', in *Under the Lens of the People: Our Account of the Peoples' Resistance to the FTAA, Quebec City, April 2001*, ed., The Peoples Lenses Collective (Toronto, ON: The Peoples Lenses Collective, 2003), 48-52; Helen Luu, 'Discovering a Different Space of Resistance: Personal Reflections



- on Anti-Racist Organizing', in *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*, ed., David Solnit (San Francisco: City Lights, 2004), 411-426. For a critical response, see Amory Starr, 'How Can Anti-Imperialism Not Be Anti-Racist? The North American Anti-Globalization Movement', *Journal of World Systems Research* x, no. 1 (2004): 119-151.
21. For an excellent statement and synthesis of this developing direction, see Kim Fyke and Gabriel Sayegh, 'Anarchism and the Struggle to Move Forward', *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2001), <http://flag.blackened.net/ias/10fyke&sayegh.htm>.
 22. These have included not only the Zapatistas but also movements in Argentina, Bolivia, and other countries. For discussions of some of these movements, see Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006); Raúl Zibechi, *Dispersing Power: Social Movements as Anti-State Forces*, trans. Ramor Ryan (Oakland: AK Press, 2010). For a more general analysis of autonomous movements in Latin America, see Raúl Zibechi, 'Social Change and Building the Ties That Bind', *North American Congress on Latin America*, 15 May 2007, <http://nacla.org/node/1473>.
 23. For accounts of some of these struggles, see Tom Keefer, 'Declaring the Exception: Direct Action, Six Nations, and the Struggle in Brantford', *Upping the Anti*, no. 7 (2008): 111-128; Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993); Shiri Pasternak, "'They're Clear-Cutting Our Way of Life": Algonquins Defend the Forest', *Upping the Anti*, no. 8 (2009): 125-141. On affinities between anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics and Indigenous struggles for self-determination, see Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005); Ward Churchill, 'Indigenism, Anarchism, and the State', *Upping the Anti* 1, no. 1 (2005): 30-40.
 24. Online, see *Left Turn* at <http://www.leftturn.org> and *Upping the Anti* at <http://uppingtheanti.org>.
 25. On NOII analyses and organising approaches, see Macdonald Scott et al, 'Fighting Borders: A Roundtable on Non-Status (Im)migrant Justice in Canada', *Upping the Anti*, no. 2 (2005): 151-159; Harsha Walia, 'No One is Illegal: Confronting the Apartheid System of Migration in Canada', *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, no. 5 (2006): 56-65.
 26. To get a sense of the histories and politics that converged in this movement in the 1990s, see Elihu Rosenblatt, ed., *Criminal Injustice: Confronting the Prison Crisis* (Boston: South End Press, 1996).
 27. For more on CR, see <http://www.criticalresistance.org> as well as CR-10 Publications Collective, ed., *Abolition Now! Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland: AK Press, 2008). On abolitionist organising in the



- Canadian context, see Caitlin Hewitt-White et al, 'Prison Abolition in Canada,' *Upping the Anti*, no. 4 (2007): 125-146.
28. Critical Resistance, 'Our Vision,' n.d., <http://www.criticalresistance.org/article.php?id=51>. For an excellent introduction to the abolitionist critique of prisons, see Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003). On the origins of these politics in the 1970s, see Liz Samuels, 'Improvising on Reality: The Roots of Prison Abolition,' in *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, ed. Dan Berger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 21-38.
 29. Much of this work has been sparked through collaboration with primarily radical women of colour in the movement against intimate violence. For the statement that created a basis for collaboration, see Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 'Gender Violence and the Prison-Industrial Complex,' in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006), 223-226. Other contributions to that collection offer instructive accounts of community-based approaches to dealing with violence.
 30. For influential elaborations of this critique, see Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).
 31. For a good example of some of this visionary thinking and work, see Alexis Pauline Gumbs, 'Freedom Seeds: Growing Abolition in Durham, North Carolina,' in *Abolition Now! Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex*, ed. CR-10 Publications Collective (Oakland: AK Press, 2008), 145-155.
 32. On the growing queer and feminist dimensions of this work, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and FIERCE!, 'Re-Thinking "The Norm" In Police/Prison Violence & Gender Violence: Critical Lessons from the New Jersey 7,' *Left Turn*, no. 30 (2008): 26-31; Beth Richie, 'Standing with Duanna Johnson Against Police Brutality: A Challenge for the Gay and Civil Rights Movements,' *Left Turn*, no. 32 (2009): 57-60.
 33. On the construction of this category, see Angela Davis and Elizabeth Martinez, 'Coalition Building Among People of Color,' in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 297-306. For accounts of the development of women of colour feminism, see Enakshi Dua, 'Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought: Scratching the Surface of Racism,' in *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought*, eds Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson (Toronto: Women's Press, 1999), 7-31; Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin, 2005), chap. 9-11 and 19; Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kimberly



- Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
34. Combahee River Collective, 'The Combahee River Collective Statement', in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 272.
 35. There are many important publications that have helped to develop women of colour feminist politics. Germinal works include Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1995); Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1996); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).
 36. Although the concept of intersectionality has roots in earlier women of colour feminist work, it was first introduced in Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-1299.
 37. For more on INCITE!, see <http://www.incite-national.org> as well as the INCITE! collections cited in notes 29 and 39.
 38. See Sista II Sista, 'Sistas Makin' Moves: Collective Leadership for Personal Transformation and Social Justice', in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006), 196-207.
 39. On this critique and these alternatives, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007).
 40. As INCITE! collective members write, 'The challenge women of color face in combatting personal *and* state violence is to develop strategies for ending violence that *do* assure safety for survivors of sexual/domestic violence and *do not* strengthen our oppressive criminal justice apparatus. Our approaches must always challenge the violence perpetrated through multinational capitalism and the state.' Andrea Smith et al, 'The Color of Violence: Introduction', in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006), 2.
 41. For indications of the influence of women of colour feminist politics on other movements, see Jael Miriam Silliman et al, *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004); Matt Bernstein Sycamore, *That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2004).



42. INCITE! co-founder Andrea Smith has been particularly important in developing these politics within the anti-authoritarian current. See, for instance, Andrea Smith, 'Beyond Inclusion: Recentring Feminism', *Left Turn*, no. 20 (2006): 66-69.
43. For descriptions of the Another Politics is Possible delegation and workshop track, see Juris, 'Spaces of Intentionality', 367-368; RJ Maccani, 'Another Politics is Possible!', *Zapagringo*, 25 June 2007, <http://zapagringo.blogspot.com/2007/06/another-politics-is-possible.html>. The delegation and workshop track were also connected to a study group in New York City, which is ongoing. On this, see Dan Berger et al, 'Navigating the Crisis: A Study Groups Roundtable', *Upping the Anti*, no. 8 (2009): 159-177.
44. For more on the Other Campaign, see El Kilombo Intergaláctico, *Beyond Resistance: Everything* (Durham, NC: Paperboat Press, 2007); Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire and the Word*, 317-334.
45. To be clear, I did not develop these themes on my own. Rather, they come out of broad, ongoing discussions within the anti-authoritarian current. Some of the inspiration for this set of four features also specifically comes from the Another Politics is Possible study group in New York City.
46. No One Is Illegal-Montreal, 'No One Is Illegal-Montreal's Basis of Unity', 27 December 2006, <http://nooneisillegal-montreal.blogspot.com/2006/12/no-one-is-illegal-montreals-basis-of.html>.
47. Jennifer Whitney, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, 7 December 2007. Whitney was a coordinator and health care provider for the Latino Health Outreach Project (LHOP), which provides free bilingual health care to for Latinos, including both residents and the growing population of migrant workers involved in clean-up activities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. For more on LHOP, see <http://www.cghc.org/lhop.html> as well as Catherine Jones and Jennifer Whitney, 'Dissolving Barriers: New Orleans' Latino Health Outreach Project', *Left Turn*, no. 21 (2006): 50-52.
48. *Upping the Anti* was explicitly founded on the intention to explore and critically examine three of these 'anti's': anti-capitalism, anti-oppression, and anti-imperialism. See Upping the Anti Editorial Committee, 'Editorial', *Upping the Anti*, no. 1 (2005): 7-14.
49. Pilar Maschi, interview by author, New York, New York, 14 March 2007.
50. Sarita Ahojja, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, 31 January 2007. Ahojja is active with No One Is Illegal and Solidarity Across Borders (SAB), a Montreal-based network of migrant justice groups and migrant communities. For more on SAB, see <http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org>.
51. Clare Bayard, interview by author, San Francisco, California, 11 June 2007. With roots in the global justice movement, the Catalyst Project offers training and support for left organizations with a particular focus on developing anti-racist analysis and



- practice among white activists and organizers. For more on Catalyst, see <http://www.collectiveliberation.org>.
52. For some provocative discussion about integrating these commitments into movement practices, see Sharmeen Khan et al, 'Roundtable on Anti-Oppression Politics in Anti-Capitalist Movements', *Upping the Anti*, no. 1 (2005): 76-88; Upping the Anti Editorial Committee, 'Breaking the Impasse', *Upping the Anti*, no. 2 (2006): 14-21.
 53. Rahula Janowsk, interview by author, San Francisco, California, 8 June 2007. The Heads Up Collective was a group of white anti-racist and anti-imperialist activists and organisers in the San Francisco Bay Area. The group grew out of the global justice movement and came together in the context of anti-war mobilizations. In addition to working in the direct action wing of the anti-war movement, Heads Up was involved in fundraising and support work for a number of radical community of colour-led and -based organisations, as well as Palestine solidarity and migrant justice organising. For more on Heads Up, see http://collectiveliberation.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=79&Itemid=100.
 54. Paula Ximena Rojas-Urrutia, interview by author, New York, New York, 12 March 2007. Although not always acknowledged by organisers, this notion of 'invisible labour' grows especially from feminist interventions in Marxism, and the left more broadly, during the 1970s. These interventions crucially highlighted women's unpaid caring work, often called 'reproductive labour', as foundational for capitalism. Germinal texts include Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975); Ellen Malos, ed., *The Politics of Housework* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980).
 55. For a suggestive discussion of care in contemporary organising, see Conor Cash et al, 'To Show the Fire and the Tenderness', *Independent Reader*, Spring/Summer 2009, <http://indyreader.org/content/to-show-fire-and-tenderness-by-teams-colors-collective-conor-cash-craig-hughes-stevie-peace>
 56. For more on the San Francisco Community Land Trust, see <http://www.sfclt.org> as well as James Tracy, 'Victory in Chinatown: The San Francisco Community Land Trust', *Left Turn*, no. 24 (2007): 61-62.
 57. James Tracy, interview by author, San Francisco, California, 8 June 2007.
 58. Ashanti Alston, interview by author, New York, New York, 8 March 2007. Alston became an anarchist while serving prison time for alleged activities with the Black Liberation Army in the 1970s. Among many other activities, he has worked as an organiser with Critical Resistance and he was a member of the now-defunct Estación Libre, a formation of U.S.-based radical people of colour in support of the Zapatistas.
 59. For more on No One Is Illegal Vancouver, see <http://noii-van.resist.ca>.
 60. Harjap Grewal, interview by author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 25 October 2006.
 61. Rachel Herzing, interview by author, Oakland, California, 13 June 2007. Herzing also



- works with Creative Interventions, an organisation that develop community-based strategies to end interpersonal violence. For more on Creative Interventions, see <http://www.creative-interventions.org>.
62. This principle of linking struggles and visions has some broad resonances with the strategy advocated by the New Left thinker André Gorz, which was based on what he called 'non-reformist' or 'structural' reforms. For the original presentation of this approach, see André Gorz, *A Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967). Gorz's ideas have had an influence on some prison abolitionist work. For an early example, see Thomas Mathiesen, *The Politics of Abolition* (New York: Wiley, 1974). For a more recent example, see Julia Sudbury, 'Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the U.S. and Canada', *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 9, no. 1 (2009): 1-29.
 63. James Mumm, a U.S.-based community organiser and an anarchist, played an influential role in refining and popularising this distinction in the late 1990s among anti-authoritarians. See James Mumm, 'Active Revolution: New Directions in Revolutionary Social Change', 1998, <http://www.nefac.net/node/120>. In my view, this distinction is important analytically, but it often gets messier as radicals relate to these concepts in ways that erase the complexities and uncertainties necessarily bound up in them.
 64. Rosana Cruz, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, 13 December 2007. Cruz is the associate director of V.O.T.E., a grassroots membership based organisation of formerly incarcerated persons that builds political and economic power for individuals families and communities most impacted by the criminal justice system in New Orleans, Louisiana. For more on V.O.T.E., see <http://vote-nola.org>.
 65. LA Crew, 'Ideas in Action: An LA Story', *Left Turn*, no. 31 (2009): 53.
 66. Michelle O'Brien, interview by author, New York, New York, 13 March 2007.
 67. For some further elaboration of grassroots nonhierarchical organising, see Another Politics is Possible and Communities Organizing Liberation, *So That We May Soar: Horizontalism, Intersectionality, and Prefigurative Politics* (New York & Los Angeles: Self-Published, 2010); Coalition of Immokalee Workers, 'Consciousness + Commitment = Change', in *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*, ed. David Solnit (San Francisco: City Lights, 2004), 347-60; Chris Crass, 'But We Don't Have Leaders: Leadership Development and Anti Authoritarian Organizing', *Infoshop.org*, n.d., <http://www.infoshop.org/page/But-We-Dont-Have-Leaders>; Madeline Gardner and Joshua Kahn Russell, 'Praxis Makes Perfect: The New Youth Organizing', in *Real Utopia: Participatory Society for the 21st Century*, ed. Chris Spannos (Oakland: AK Press, 2008), 338-346.
 68. Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt usefully characterise this approach as 'mass anarchism.' See Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The*



Chris Dixon

60

Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), chap. 4.

69. This question comes out of the important discussion in Joel Olson, 'The problem with infoshops and insurrection: US anarchism, movement building, and the racial order', in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed. Randal Amster et al (New York: Routledge, 2009), 35-45.

