

anchorage anarchy

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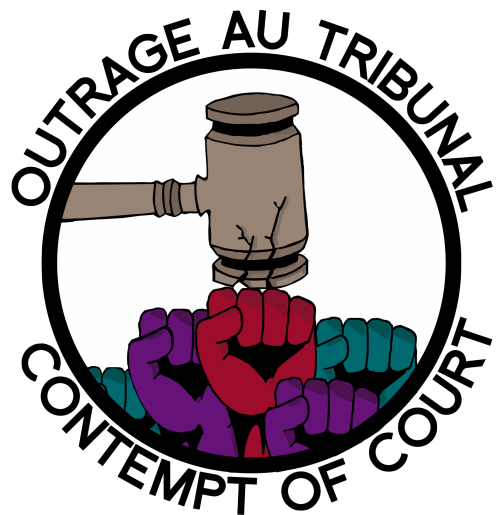
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A Tempest in an Anarchist Teapot

Back in 2015 accusations that author and activist Michael Schmidt was a racist white nationalist trying to infiltrate the libertarian movement turned into an international anarchist *cause célèbre*. The allegations against Schmidt were first brought forward by his publisher, AK Press, whose statements were quickly followed by a multipart on-line exposé of his supposed failings by Alexander Reid Ross and Joshua Stephens. This led to extensive internet back-and-forth accusations between Schmidt and his critics, as well as a lengthy debate on the issues by other anarchists on websites like anarkismo and libcom, which included a long critique of Reid-Ross and Stephens released by the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) about a year ago. The arguments continued well into 2016 but anarkismo shut down the discussion of the ZACF statement on its website in October 2016, and the controversy seemed to have died a natural death.

But then two months ago Michael Schmidt sent a letter of resignation to IATH/ITHA, a syndicalist research project and the internet heated up again. IATH/ITHA responded to the letter and described it as a confession, although there was little new information in it aside from the fact that Schmidt finally admitted he had found some appeal in white racial/national identity politics at some point in the past, even though he insists he is not white and that he never tried to promote white nationalism among anarchists. To add to the drama, while Schmidt initially writes that he is resigning immediately, later in the letter he asks for permission to do so, enabling IATH/ITHA to respond that he cannot resign because they have decided to expel him instead. Anarkismo then weighed in with a new statement condemning Schmidt and proclaiming its

plan to go forward with a Commission of Inquiry which will consider Schmidt's "confession" while it decides on a "verdict" (which sounds remarkably like a government court proceeding). Lucien van der Walt, Schmidt's *Black Flame* co-author, shortly thereafter issued a new statement in which he concludes that Schmidt acted in ways fundamentally at odds with "the emancipatory positions, history and tradition championed in 'Black Flame,'" and officially severs his ties to Schmidt. He goes on to express his support for the anarkismo commission which he believes will somehow "help develop libertarian ethics and justice," even as it replicates the methods of the state and other hierarchical organizations. So, while the anarchist "authorities" have all come to the same conclusion, that Schmidt is guilty as charged, they want to set up a kangaroo court to make this judgement official.



Looking back on the matter after all the heavy libertarian hitters have weighed in, it seems quite clear to me that all the furor about the activities and writings of Schmidt was (and is) really much ado about nothing. After all, what did Schmidt actually *do*? He attended conferences, blogged extensively, joined organizations, and wrote a lot of articles, but would be virtually unknown to most anarchists except for the fact that he wrote or co-authored a couple of books which AK Press published and marketed, and which were well-received in certain anarchist circles. If he was an infiltrator on a mission to segregate ZACF he failed. If he hoped to create a white nationalist anarchist movement in south africa, he failed. If he hoped to become an international star of the anarchist movement, he had at least partial success, thanks to the folks at AK—but in the end he failed at this as well, unless one counts his current pariah status as stardom. As Oscar Wilde pointed out, “There is only one thing

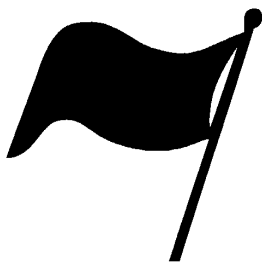
in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about,” so perhaps Schmidt is getting satisfaction even from his current notoriety.

The renewed plan by anarkismo to form a tribunal—I mean commission—to which those without the courage to form an opinion themselves can look for direction from their betters, indicates that the saga will continue for at least a while more. However, I think that at this point it is worth looking back on all the buzz, because the initial acceptance and promotion, and the later rejection and demonization, of Schmidt by some anarchists says more about the parlous state of anarchist thought and organization than it does about Schmidt himself.

Calling Bullschmidt

The case against Schmidt is based on a few hard facts, but is supported primarily by lots of innuendo, assumptions, and testimony provided by anonymous sources. In 2008 he wrote an internal ZACF discussion document called *Politico-Cultural Dynamics of the South African Anarchist Movement* in which he advocated setting up an organizational structure within ZACF that would be segregated based on the color/ethnicity of members. This proposal was obviously racist, but not inconsistent with other proposals for segregated organizations in the anarchist movement, including some in the united states, and was similarly couched in the language of identity politics and vanguards and other leftist verbiage. After discussion within ZACF, however, Schmidt rejected this document and its proposals and the issue appeared closed.

In addition, Schmidt had racist and white nationalist on-line identities, under cover of which he posted some vile bigoted rants. He continues to claim that this was a journalistic endeavor through which he was trying to infiltrate the racist and/or national anarchist milieus in order to acquire information he would later turn into anti-racist writings. He also claims that a former editor, Brendan Seery, was aware of this project but Seery denies any knowledge of it. In his recent letter Schmidt concedes he “toyed” with racist ideas through his on-line personae, but blames that on



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PTSD and mental “illness” and argues that he cannot be a white supremacist since he is not white. While this activity on Schmidt’s part has particularly stirred up a portion of the anarchist movement, there is no evidence that Schmidt ever actually did anything racist to anyone or had any actual, real-world ties to racists or national anarchists. Schmidt was a part of the anarchist movement for many years and has apparently worked closely with other anarchists and social activists of various skin colors during that time. Schmidt’s defense of his non-racist credentials and his appeal to his accusers to actually talk to some of his associates who are black or of asian ancestry has fallen on deaf ears—they much prefer their nameless confidential sources, whoever they may be. While I am dubious about the wisdom or value of what Schmidt claims to have intended to accomplish with his racist on-line personae, I think his former editor Seery summarizes Schmidt’s motives best: “Schmidt lives in a fantasy world. I am irritated, rather than angry because, as someone who has more than 30 years of real experience in some of the most interesting places and times in recent history, I know Schmidt for what he is: a wannabe...”

Although his critics have accused him of infiltrating the anarchist movement to spread racism and nationalism (which clearly already exist there, independent of Schmidt), there is absolutely no evidence that he was successful in this supposed endeavor of his. His segregationist proposals were roundly rejected by ZACF and he subsequently continued to work with anarchists or various colors in this group and elsewhere. And, despite his contention that his racist personae were simply tools for him to infiltrate the racist/national-anarchist scenes, there is no reason to think he had any luck there either. If Schmidt was a racist ringer among the anarchists, he was remarkably bad at the job, and if one is to believe that the goal of his on-line racist antics was to ingratiate himself into the national-anarchist world, there is no evidence to show he was any better at that. So whichever version of Schmidt one believes, racist agent or

anarchist supersleuth, he actually accomplished nothing in either project, except to provide ammunition for his own destruction.



Books Make the Man

Schmidt would appear to be a nothing more than a hitherto very effective self-promotion machine. He can produce quite an impressive list of organizational memberships, various movements and events in which he has participated, and many articles and books which he has written, as he has done repeatedly in his responses to his critics. But outside of his small circle of friends, and now enemies, he would really be an unknown without the help of AK Press which published his books and thereby put him on the radar of american and other english-reading anarchists around the world. These books were apparently well thought-of for a number of years by anarchists of a leftist and/or syndicalist bent, but have now been put out-of-print by AK after their discovery of Schmidt’s supposedly nefarious conduct. AK has also cancelled its plans to publish another of his books.

In the on-line discussions of the accusations against Schmidt, there have been comments made about possible hints of Schmidt’s racist tendencies to be found in *Black Flame*. One writer even stated that, “This shall be [our] future task: to discover what within all of the work we once admired and debated was always already fascist without us detecting it. And why it was that we did not detect it sooner.” So, to at least some of Schmidt’s new

critics, *Black Flame* and *Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism* went from being great anarchist texts to potentially cryptofascist treatises from one day to the next. But even those who have not gone down the rabbit hole of seeking out racist code in these books have failed to discern the real problem with Schmidt's writings: their fundamental authoritarianism.

In both of these books, Schmidt advocates a view of anarchist thought and history that excommunicates a significant segment of the anarchist movement, and then ordains marxist syndicalists as part of his "broad anarchist tradition." He believes with the authors of the *Platform* that "disciplined" hierarchical organizations are essential to making revolution and looks back to the authoritarian societies created by the likes of Makhno and the CNT as the model for a future syndicalist paradise. He uses the marxist jargon of proletarians, popular classes, *déclassé* intellectuals, the lumpenproletariat, comrades, cadres, etc. He writes sympathetically of Bakunin's secret societies which were to serve as a "revolutionary general staff." He even conjures up the spook of the "tyranny of structurelessness" to use against those who reject his preferred style of organization.

All his writings about mandated delegates and federations and bottom-up decision-making and democratic planning and non-coercive centralization are nothing new. He draws his inspiration from Bakunin and Kropotkin and Rocker who promoted similar ideas long ago. But more concerning is that his proposals are hardly different from those of De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party, and even at times sound remarkably like those of Lenin in *State and Revolution*. Promises that delegates can be recalled, processes will be democratic, and centralization can allow for individual freedom of action have always proven false in the past, and there is no reason to believe they will be fulfilled just because those who utter them call themselves anarchists.

Schmidt proclaims that "There is only one anarchist tradition, and it is rooted in the work of Bakunin and the Alliance." Being against the state doesn't count. Opposing authority doesn't matter. If one is not a socialist, if one doesn't accept the discipline of an organization, if one does not believe in "communal obligations" then one cannot be a libertarian. Schmidt has taken the most authoritarian current within anarchist thought and has enshrined it as the only libertarian perspective worthy of the name. That is the flaw with his writings, not some hidden racist theme which some of his erstwhile fans will now apparently waste their time trying to ferret out.

Party Animals

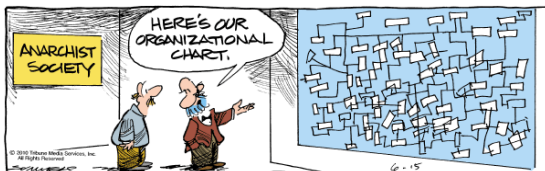
The paranoia expressed by Schmidt's critics about his attempts to infiltrate their movement is a byproduct of the hyperorganizationalism and authoritarianism endorsed by Schmidt and practiced by those who share his views. The kinds of organizations described and advocated in *Black Flame*, *Cartography*, and the *Platform* are exactly the sorts of groups that need to worry about such things. Structured hierarchical organizations, like the unions of which syndicalists are so enamored, strive for consensus and agreement, not diversity of opinion and freedom of action. Platformist groups have official memberships, constitutions, and



agreed positions on strategies and tactics—a party line, as it were.

Groups like these, despite their protests to the contrary always have leaders and followers—one cannot have discipline without disciplinarians. In organizations where the members are used to being part of a herd, internal factions and external infiltration or entryism are always a threat. Power-seekers organize *sub rosa* to make their opinions the dominant ones since open dissent is unwelcome in such settings.

One cannot “infiltrate” a group that doesn’t have rules, bylaws, and discipline, one that is free of hierarchy. An open organization, a voluntary collection of individuals who come together, without a program, to accomplish some end cannot be infiltrated. The goal of an infiltrator is to change the direction of an organization, not simply to change the mind of an individual or individuals. But *ad hoc* libertarian groups, formed to address an issue or work on a project, have no illusions of permanence, no structure to control, no means for someone to take the organization over or turn its course in some untoward direction.



The problem with groups like ZACF and other platformist organizations is their very structure, their *raison d'être*. They see themselves as a vanguard or leading echelon in the libertarian movement. They seek to guide the less enlightened masses (their word, not mine) in the revolutionary struggle. And they inevitably form internal vanguards of their own, an in-group that dominates the discussion and the direction of the group while the rest just go along. They fear those in their group who may bring in heretical ideas, whether from the left or the right, since the very nature of their structures allows leaders undue influence in formulating policy and practice, and thus the ability to alter the course of their organizations.



Questioning Authority?

Given their infatuation with structure and unions, it is no surprise that Schmidt and his fellow platformists are so enamored of Makhno and the Spanish anarchists of the thirties. In both civil war Ukraine and civil war Spain, those who passed for anarchists created authoritarian societies with secret police, executions, forced labor, conscription, and “requisitioning” of supplies from farmers. Spanish and Ukrainian anarchists exercised power and created authoritarian structures and institutions, and, in Spain, even joined the official state as ministers. Yet they are key representatives of the “broad” anarchist tradition documented in *Black Flame*.

I have found no mention of Schmidt’s authoritarianism in all the criticism by those who turned on him in the last couple of years, despite his inclusion in his tradition of authoritarian communists such as Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and state socialists like James Connolly and Daniel De Leon. In *Cartography*, he provides a laundry list of syndicalist groups, movements and acronyms from around the world but provides little detail on what most of these folks actually thought and did and fails to provide convincing evidence for the libertarian character of many of these groups. Give the statist sympathies and hierarchical structures of most non-anarchist labor organizations, it is likely that many of the groups that Schmidt refers to as revolutionary (as opposed to anarchist) syndicalist organizations were and are even more authoritarian than the explicitly libertarian platformist groups.

The silence about Schmidt's embrace of decidedly top-down and vanguardist approaches to organization speaks volumes about the approach of much of the contemporary anarchist movement. While there was some critique among libertarian reviewers of *Black Flame*, largely for defining the anarchist tradition so narrowly, he was not called out for his authoritarian approach. This is not surprising in light of the widespread libertarian sympathy for the anarchists of Spain and Ukraine, and the not infrequent anarchist support of militaristic and hierarchical rebel movements like the *sandinistas*, *zapatistas* and the uniformed militarists of Rojava, the latest darlings of some of the anarchist left.

The excuse commonly made for the "mistakes" of these anarchists and leftists is that they were at war at the time of their attempts to create a free (or at least freer) society. But that was the same excuse used by the bolsheviks and their erstwhile libertarian supporters to justify their murderous actions. Authority and hierarchy are never justified, and accepting them as "temporary" accommodations to a war-time situation has always proven foolhardy.

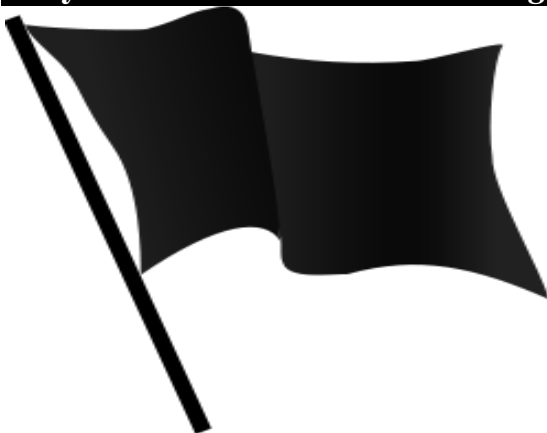


Such sympathy for leftist authoritarianism is not new. Many anarchists, including Emma Goldman, supported the bolsheviks in the early days of the Russian revolution, even as they were killing and imprisoning Russian anarchists. They apparently believed that some revolution was better than no revolution, despite the ample evidence from the very beginning that the bolsheviks had no interest in individual freedom and would use any

means necessary to eliminate their opponents. Some anarchists went on to join the communist party but the majority wised up at some point. However, the insight they gained that authoritarian leftists in power are at least as brutal as those they replace, was not retained either by the individuals involved or the libertarian movement as a whole.

The idea that leftist movements and states are a lesser evil than those of the right is still prevalent among anarchists. One seldom hears communist used as a pejorative by anarchists, but its mirror image, fascist, is used quite liberally, and often inaccurately, to describe those with whom the speaker or writer disagrees. But fascism and state socialism/communism are ideological and political siblings, equally brutal and equally contemptuous of dissent and individual freedom of action. It is of particular interest to me that non-anarchist left communist Otto Rühle had far more of a clue about the true nature of authoritarian leftists than so many libertarians, either then or now. He wrote that the Soviet Union "has served as the model for other capitalistic dictatorships. Ideological divergences do not really differentiate socioeconomic systems."

Too often libertarians appear to reject this insight. Whether it was Makhno allying with the Red Army when it suited his purposes or anarchist ministers serving alongside CP ministers in the Spanish government, authoritarian leftists are regarded differently from those on the right. Just as it was the bolsheviks who finally destroyed the *makhnovshchina*, a victory by the CP and its allies in Spain would have been at least as disastrous for libertarians as was the fascist defeat of the republicans and anarchists. This has not prevented anarchists from supporting leftists like the *sandinistas* who killed Miskito people who did not rally to their cause, or the fatigue-clad *zapatistas* who have a clear hierarchy and military order exemplified by their *subcommandantes*. It is happening again with anarchist praise of the authoritarians in Rojava, who have parties, courts, legislators, officers, sex-segregated militias, etc. I guess it's hard to resist a guy or a gal in uniform, though.

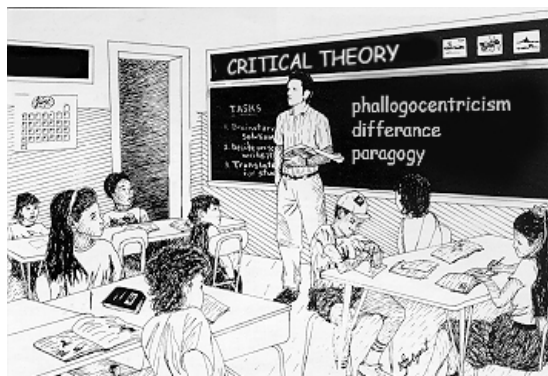


It is also interesting to note that one of his most verbose critics, Alexander Reid Ross, criticizes Schmidt for referring to Robert Mugabe, Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales as fascists. So someone who has written extensively about the fascist creep takes offense at referring to authoritarian statist as fascist? Huh? Like so many other anarchists who view themselves as part of the left, he is seemingly unconcerned about the leftist/communist creep which has infused much of the libertarian movement with an authoritarian spirit. I am curious what exactly libertarian antifascists see as the moral, ethical, or political difference between authoritarians of the right and of the left. Why is it OK for anarchists to wear a Che t-shirt and give moral support to leftist military rebels, but it is not alright for right-wing cranks like Milo Yiannopolis and Ann Coulter to speak at Berkeley. Statists such as Chavez and Morales have actually injured other people by their actions and have done nothing to increase or protect the freedom of those they rule, but an anarchist takes offense when they are referred to as fascists? The corporatist and statist agendas and actions of Castro, Guevara, Peron, and Chavez were all equally reprehensible, regardless of whether they were labelled as right or left, fascist or communist. And syndicalist unions have historically supported both communist and fascist movements. Communists who left or were thrown out of the comintern used to speak—quite accurately—of state communism as red fascism.

Rühle wrote that “Russia was the example for fascism...state order and rule in Russia are indistinguishable from those in Italy and Germany. Essentially they are alike. One may speak of a red, black, or brown ‘soviet state’, as well as of red, black or brown fascism.” The millions killed by the communist movement are just as dead as the countless victims of fascism.

National(ist) Anarchists

In addition to a tolerance for leftist authoritarianism and hierarchy among a segment of the movement, the Schmidt affair has once again thrown a light on the malign influence of identity politics among libertarians. Racist is as common an epithet employed by anarchists against those with whom they disagree as is the much-overused fascist. But the application and use of this word is not consistent, in that some forms of discrimination, labeling, and segregation are acceptable, and others not. Perhaps that is why the expressions white supremacist and white privilege are so much in vogue—if one talks of racism one can argue that animus can be expressed by or against someone of any ethnic group, while white supremacy gives white people a monopoly on bigotry.



“Today we discuss how your identities are the effect of restrictive power relations, and the importance to resist and deconstruct all attempts at naturalizing these identities. Unless you are from a culture that isn’t western, of course, in which case your identity is a beautiful, natural thing and I will defend the right of the restrictive power relations that shape it to the death.”

Schmidt has been criticized for advocating segregation by color in ZACF, but proposals to segregate the libertarian movement on the same basis by other writers have not met opposition from many anarchists. Articles like *Beyond Nationalism, But Not Without It* and *Senzala or Quilombo* have advocated a specifically black anarchism and organizations based on the skin color or ethnicity of participants. Anarchist people of color organizations are accepted readily into the anarchist fold. Libertarians also welcome without question other groups based on sex, sexuality or “gender.” Apparently, what’s sauce for the goose is not always sauce for the gander.

Racist sentiment has existed among anarchists since the beginnings of the movement. Bakunin and Proudhon wrote things critical of Jewish people. And here’s something Emma Goldman wrote about a train porter in *Living my Life*, illustrating how she viewed black people: “Benny...captured our darky’s heart...The sly Negro proved to be a philosopher and artist.” Although our non-anarchist opponents claim that libertarians are all individualists at heart, it is obvious that seeing people as representatives of groups, not as unique individuals, has plagued the movement from the beginning. Once one sees categories instead of people it is then easy to judge and interact with others based on their group identity.

**NO NATION,
NO BORDER,
JUST
PEOPLE.**

Many anarchists have long tolerated some flavors of nationalism, which is by its very nature separatist if not explicitly racist. It is notable that

both ZACF and Reid Ross use the term “ultranationalism” and IATH/ITHA uses “reactionary nationalism” to identify the kind of tribal politics of which they disapprove, implying that regular garden variety nationalism is somehow OK. Van der Walt wrote last month that his “political commitment remains to the complete national liberation of the black working class in South Africa.” Libertarian supporters of nationalism take no offense when some anarchists write of “my people” or “my community” but don’t mean all people or the global community by these expressions. Nationalists who use such terms mean people who share the skin color, ethnicity, or national origin of the writers, people they value over others simply because of the way they look or where they come from, or the language that they speak. There has been much specific criticism of national anarchism in the hubbub over Schmidt, but it is clear to me that one cannot consider oneself part of any nation or national group and remain a free, independent individual at the same time, however one describes oneself in terms of skin color or nationality. But when anarchist writers advocate ethnic or racial community-based organizations other libertarians are strangely silent, as long as the separatists are not white.

So It Goes

And what is the end result of all this? Schmidt is a pariah. AK Press can claim the moral high ground by discontinuing Schmidt’s anarchist books while it publishes hateful crap like *SCUM Manifesto* and gladly sells the works of Marxists, nationalists, feminists, and all flavors of identity politician. And Reid Ross got tons of free pre-release publicity for his book on what he perceives as the fascist threat. But otherwise life goes on among the anarchists as it did before, with far too many worrying about lurking racists, right-wingers and fascists while they look to authoritarian leftist leaders from Bakunin to Makhno to Durruti to Öcalan for inspiration.

It has been interesting to read how shocked, shocked, so many anarchists appear to be when they

are told that an anarchist could countenance an organization where black and white people are separated organizationally. Or that an anarchist could consider nationalism anything less than anathema. But then one discovers that these same critics seem undisturbed by the increasing influence of platformism, separatist and nationalist identity politics of various sorts, and other leftist crap in the anarchist movement in general, and especially its more organizationally-inclined segments. But Schmidt has been accused of racism/white nationalism and that is unforgivable.

The real issue should not be Schmidt's personal ethnic or national identity or sympathies, whatever they are or may have been. Any impact Schmidt had or will have is a result of his anarchist writings and activities, not his erstwhile foray into online racist circles. What is most problematic for anyone who truly values individual freedom and autonomy of action is his embrace of the authoritarian and organizationalist school of anarchist thought that values class consciousness, organizational loyalty, and economic levelling over individual liberty and voluntary cooperation. But his is an approach shared by far too many libertarians, including his most vociferous critics, who use the same tired leftist rhetoric he does—Reid Ross even stated “He is not our comrade,” an expression which could easily have come out of the mouth of some commissar. An anarchist milieu riddled with hierarchies, boards, delegates, councils, comrades and commissions, a libertarian movement that promotes Makhno, the CNT and syndicalist unions as examples to follow will never create a world of liberty for all people, which is what anarchy means, at least to this anarchist. The end result, in the unlikely event such a movement was successful, would be just another authority-ridden society masquerading as a free one, something we have already seen far too often for my taste.



ANARCHISM



No person may rule over another

Anarchy means "without rulers."

Anarchists oppose the domination of any individual or group of individuals by another. We favor a consensual order based on voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, and the maximization of individual liberty.

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Not My Presidents

It has been entertaining to watch all the demonstrations and actions by anarchists and leftists since the election of Donald Trump. These have largely been prophylactic interventions since Trump had not yet actually done much but talk and insult people, having failed to implement very many real changes. It was unclear what the point of some of these marches was other than support for all good things and opposition to bad ones, presumably all of which were caused by Trump. A recurring image has been a sign that reads "Not My President." Anarchists, one would hope, have never had a president but some of them seem to feel it is more important to point this out at present than it was under the regime of Obama.

If it's humiliating to be ruled, how much more degrading is it to choose our masters?

There is a widespread belief on the left that Trump is uniquely evil and is more deserving of contempt than were at least some of his predecessors. While there have often been protests at the inaugurations of republican presidents, anarchists largely gave Clinton and Obama a pass and the small actions surrounding Obama's second coronation focused on government policies in general rather than Obama's role in them. It certainly looks as if at least some anarchists have been swept up by the lesser-of-two-evils sentiment, looking back affectionately on the days of the last president. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that the inauguration protests and women's marches would have happened at all if his protégé Clinton had been elected instead. Prior to the election, "libertarian" socialist Noam Chomsky co-wrote something called *An Eight Point Brief for LEV (Lesser Evil Voting)* which encouraged skeptics to hold their

noses and vote for Clinton, just as he supported Obama both times he ran for president.

The "Lesser" of Two Evils Is Still Evil

It is difficult to see where these fond memories of Obama come from. What did Obama do during his eight long years as president? His military bombed hospitals and massacred non-combatants, including children, in Iraq and Afghanistan. He sent killer drones into Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen and supported and supplied the Saudi government in its war against regular people in Yemen. He criticized the tyrants in Iran but cozied up to the equally reprehensible rulers of Saudi Arabia who arrest women for driving and kill people for engaging in consensual sex and selling recreational drugs to willing customers. He and his buddies watched live streaming of the killing of bin-Laden as if it were a sports game. He extended the Patriot Act, and supported roaming wiretaps and government surveillance both of Americans and of others, including politicians in other countries whom he officially considered allies.



While Obama criticized unfair sentences for the use and sale of drugs that the government has made illegal, he waited until his term was nearly over, thus eliminating any personal risk, to actually free the vast majority of those to whom he granted pardons or commutations for drug "offenses," while he did nothing to decriminalize sale and use of marijuana and other drugs. Similarly, he

commuted Chelsea Manning's sentence on his way out the door, but he refused to consider forgiving Edward Snowden for airing the government's dirty laundry, even as Obama nurtured and grew the surveillance state. Meanwhile, he declined to release Leonard Peltier who has been imprisoned for almost 40 years for killing two FBI agents in self-defense in 1975. And the concentration camp the united states runs in Guantanamo remains open despite Obama's promises to close it. All this is entirely consistent with his support for drug laws, cops, spies, prisons, and government secrecy, which he shares with his predecessors and successor.



Those who believe that same-sex marriage is actually a good thing thank Obama for making this happen nationally. But once again, he was way too calculating to allow such a change in his first term, since, like any other politician, a second term in power was more important than principles—if he had any, that is. He (as did Clinton) lied and claimed that he had simply changed his mind on such things over time, but anyone who actually believes such nonsense is a fool.

He talked about the dreamers and very publicly let in some young migrants, but meanwhile the thugs he oversaw deported 2,700,000 other people. He made deals with the brutes running cuba, and, thankfully, reduced some of the travel and trade barriers imposed on people living there. However, he did not have the courage to eliminate

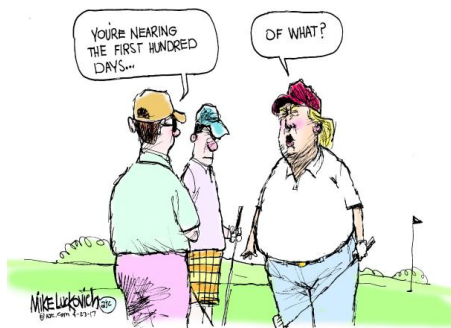
all the restrictions created and maintained by his predecessors. As a parting shot he even eliminated the “wet foot, dry foot” policy which eased the way for some cuban migrants to enter the united states legally, and thereby kissed the arse of those who rule cuba. This policy was obviously unfair, offering special rules for people from cuba but denying such access to people from places like haiti who were just as deserving of refuge from the nasty thugs who run their country as were the cuban migrants. But Obama showed his true colors once again by eliminating it instead of expanding this limited access to include others seeking to escape from authoritarian governments elsewhere.

Those who label Trump a fascist seem to forget about the killer cops who ran amok under Obama, how he gave lip service to those who campaigned against police violence but curried favor with cops as well. How he consorted with authoritarian rulers of countries from saudi arabia to china to iraq to ethiopia. How he displayed his corporatist approach to the economy by taking over GM and transferring millions of dollars extorted from working people to bankers and corporate executives, while workers lost jobs and regular people lost their homes. How he consistently favored the wealthy and well-connected over working and poor people whether it was in banking, industry, health care, or the mammoth government bureaucracy he oversaw. How he and his supporters promoted what bordered on a personality cult starting with that inane image on the “hope” poster.



Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss

And what has Trump actually done since the election? He has tried, unsuccessfully, to block travelers and immigrants from other countries but was blocked by the courts. He has attempted to switch out one burdensome, expensive, inefficient government health insurance scheme for another, but has so far been unsuccessful here as well. He continues to prattle on about a border wall which may well never come to be. He drops bombs on the people of other countries. He pals around with authoritarian rulers of other countries. In other words, he is turning out to be very much like Obama and those who came before him.



All presidents, all politicians, all leaders are contemptible by their very nature. As Proudhon concisely put it “Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and tyrant, and I declare him my enemy.” This insight has apparently been lost on much of the left, including some anarchists, who seem to believe that there really is an important difference between Trump and Obama/Clinton. While the antifa street warriors are taking this opportunity to feel really good about themselves, the day-to-day workings of the state plod along much the same as they always have. And focusing on the supposed fascist tendencies of Trump (or whoever else) does not encourage a critical look at the very institution of the state and government, without which there can be no fascism.

Instead of challenging a specific president, we must challenge the presidency. We must contest the very idea that it is OK for some people to rule and others to be ruled, some to tax and others to be

taxed, some to kill and others to be killed. Focusing one’s protests and actions on the particular, egregious actions of a particular president is fair game, but portraying that person as an aberration from the usual type gives the institution a pass and focuses on the failings of one person, with the implication that if only someone else had been elected, things would be qualitatively different. And if that were true, then voting would seem a reasonable approach to social change.

The electoral circus is a sewer which anarchists would do well to avoid, but which seems irresistible to so many. Call out Trump for his racist and sexist attitudes, oppose his attempts to restrict migration, demand an end to the killings around the world by the American military. But don’t promote the idea that he is not “my” president without pointing out that no free person, no anarchist has ever had a president. Singling him out for special contempt makes *him* the main villain, not the state, not the bureaucracy, not the military without which he and Obama and all the rest would not have been able to do the damage they have all caused. Whoever the president is, the state will continue its work of theft and murder, whoever is in the white house the wealthy will have a friend there, whoever is in the white house regular people will remain unfree.

**WHOEVER YOU VOTE FOR,
THE GOVERNMENT ALWAYS WINS.**

**VOTE
NOBODY**



***Voting is not an expression
of power, but an admission
of powerlessness.***