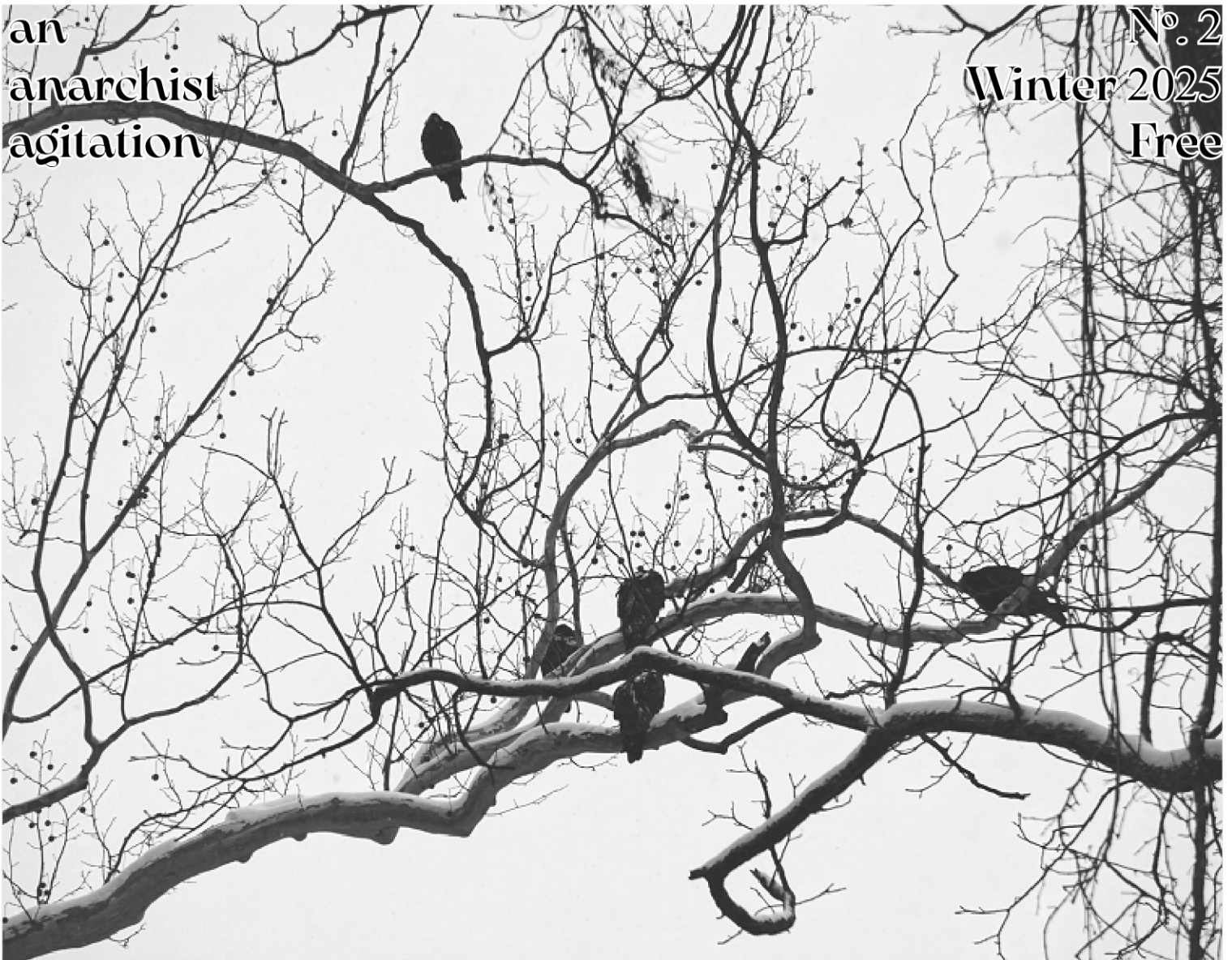

in TENSION

an
anarchist
agitation

Nº. 2
Winter 2025
Free



**Fight Night
Crane Naval Base
Transit and Access**

In Tension *is a journal acting as a place for anarchist analysis, dialogue, and reflection on activity that extends beyond single subcultures, issues, and social groups. Intended for people beginning to learn what anarchists are fighting and creating as well as people who have identified with anarchism for decades, In Tension is a way for us to talk to each other and report actions, issues, and initiatives that are otherwise under- or un-reported. We are interested in promoting the practice of doing things for ourselves and connecting our struggles locally, regionally, and internationally. In Tension also functions as an archive of sorts, a way to foster collective remembering.*

In Tension is published in so-called Bloomington, Indiana each season. We welcome submissions of actions, events, and analysis from different perspectives that hold true to an anti-authoritarian, anti-state, and liberatory lens.

Please keep submissions to a length of ~1500 words or fewer. See InTension.noblogs.org for instructions on how to submit anonymously and securely. For other correspondence, reach us at InTension@riseup.net.



To us, to live life as anarchists is not about accepting a hollow title or stagnant ideology, but is about an active, intentional, and eternal becoming. It is not just about the ideas we have but how we put them into the world, and the strength we must cultivate to weather what unfolds when living against the dominant order of this society. We live in tension with this world every day: its jobs, prisons, ideals, social roles, and identities. We notice the ways others do too, and we refuse to avoid conflict in pursuit of comfort or for an illusion of safety. We chose “In Tension” as our title as a way to embrace the difficult balance of this beautiful and painful path. We accept the discomforts and challenges of being against so much of this world, and understand it as a reality of creating lives true to our values and hearts. We embrace our hostility for this world, and learn where to channel our time and energy to see ideas come to fruition. We notice and embrace ruptures small and large, where we can see through the facade of this world. It is neither complacency, nor an ascetic militancy, but a fostering of joy through the creation of our lives and a living-against. Rejecting a finality of destination, it is choosing to stretch beyond what is familiar, comfortable, or known, in a continual pursuit of freedom.



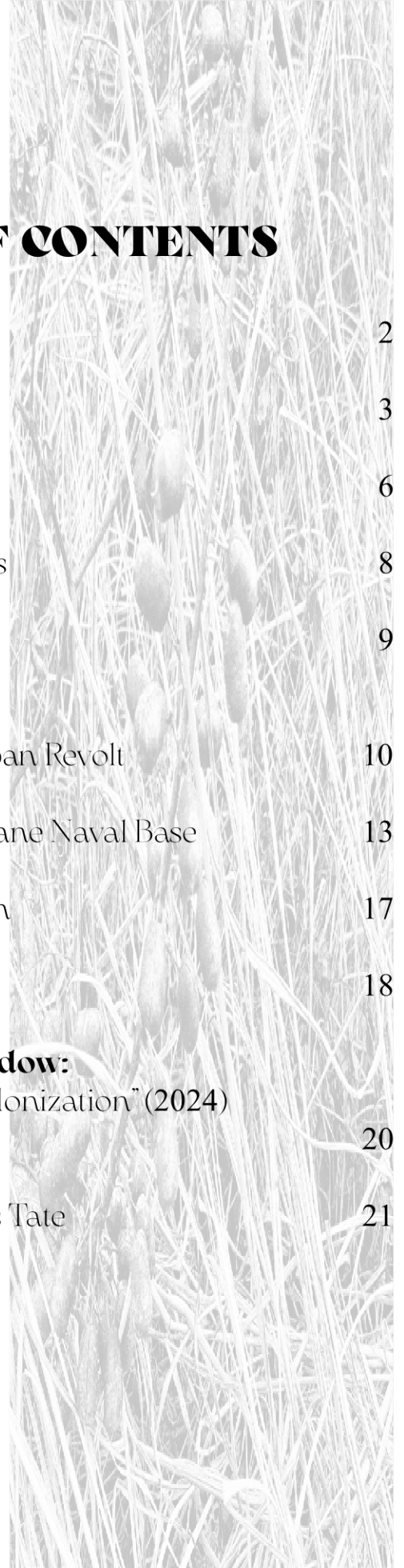


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Oath of Refusal

Since Trump was inaugurated, many people have been desperately asking questions like, “What do we do?” or “How do we fight this?” and considering things like “What does resistance look like?” I want to offer a starting point not of what needs to be done, but of what needs to not be done. I offer an oath of refusal. A refusal to play a part in the techno-fascist government carrying out its plans of displacement, criminalization, destruction, and death. I bristle at a lot of the “now more than ever” language in a nation such as this, founded on genocide and slavery. Yes, more of us should have already been doing a lot more refusing. But here we are. Better late than never.

Trump’s plans require much more than just his cronies and the little Eichmanns to come to fruition. Many people will be confronted at their job, in their neighborhood, or in public life and asked to cooperate, to go along with new policies and operations (or escalations of old ones). Most often they will not even be asked, they will just be expected to comply. We must be prepared in these moments to refuse. Maybe you work in a school or a hospital and ICE will demand to be let in. Or you work at a non-profit that is asked to turn over records. Or you're involved with youth sports and they ask you to enforce gender boundaries. Or you work for a company that is contracted to build a new detention facility or destroy ecosystems for resource extraction. Maybe you are part of a church that is threatened to give up the people to whom you have offered

asylum. Maybe you will be on public transport when law enforcement officers board, demanding to see people’s documents. Maybe you work as a low-level bureaucrat for a government agency. It is up to you to implement their rules. You already hate your boss and your agency, right? Would it take much to turn you against them? Maybe this looks like a loud refusal or a quiet looking-the-other-way.

Think about how the government’s expectations might manifest in your line of work, the places that you live, the ways in which you participate in public life. Think about the lines that you will not cross. Decide now that you will not comply. Imagine yourself saying no, what it might feel like. This certainly is not without risk, so consider that too. Make a plan with others about how you will respond. Talk with your co-workers, your neighbors. What will you do when state forces show up? Even better, can refusal be implemented in such a way as to make it not just individual, but institutional or collective? If refusal means risking your job, it’s a lot harder to fire a whole team than just one person. We have already seen school administrators in Chicago challenge agents they believed to be ICE and implement a protocol they had ready for such an event. Based on reporting from Erin Reed, we know that several school districts have already declared that they will protect their queer and trans students by defying federal orders to engage in gender-based discrimination.



I've been thinking a lot about a story from Kenya from 2015. A bus was going from the capital Nairobi to Mandera in the northeast. Along its route, it was stopped by armed Somali militants Al-Shabab, who demanded the passengers divide themselves into Christians and Muslims. From a previous massacre at a college and a similar attack on a bus, the passengers knew what was at stake: the militants would likely kill all the Christians. So they refused. They refused to divide themselves. They said, kill all of us or none. Two people were killed, but the rest were let go.

These stories of courage and principle are deeply important to remind us that it is possible to refuse. And that you will not necessarily be alone when you do so. What kind of person do you want to be? Refuse to let them take that away from you.

We Choose to Live

When you defer to a "higher power" for your ability or permission to access things, you will be denied from time to time – even when those things are necessary to life. We prefer not to ask permission to live. In this sense liberals, with their reliance on a system of imposed governance and compromise in order to maintain that oppressive system, are no better than any other political party.

All these recent executive orders, legislative bills, and law enforcements are not entirely new, but ongoing (if only intensified). They are in the interest of a certain kind of economic accumulation, and a certain kind of order. They could be unconstitutional, but it's worth remembering that the Constitution is not actually a liberatory document. Even before the United States was founded on patriarchy, genocide, and slavery, economies were founded in the interest of creating, accumulating, and hoarding wealth. There can't be wealthy without poor, either, so certain groups of people must be disenfranchised. The more physically identifiable the ostracized, the easier for their fellow dispossessed to be turned against those groups/each other rather than focusing on their common enemy: the wealthy elites. Race, gender, sexuality, and other constructs like citizenship therefore create useful scapegoats.

Some times it's useful to ingratiate those marginalized groups into the system of wealth and governance, suggesting equality/opportunity/progress and redirecting struggles against imposed power into struggles for some of that authority. Other times,

particularly in times of upheaval and revolt (or some other crisis that shows the uselessness of the status quo), it is useful to more deliberately centralize power so they don't lose it entirely. Sometimes those in charge of such decisions choose poorly, as no one is omniscient or free from pride (or the corrupting qualities of having power over others), and it's in these moments that we most commonly see a glimmer of freedom.

When the populace can't be wholly or even largely convinced of the righteousness of the powerful is when revolts see proliferation and even success. On the other hand, there is a risk of the powerful further centralizing their control, temporarily, should those revolts fail. Temporarily, because it's worth remembering that nothing lasts forever, and the desire to revolt will always return.

Five years ago, when the compounding crises of modern civilization came to a particularly pointed head, large masses of people exploded into the streets. The spark of a murdered black man focused the energy against police, and by extension the whole system of incarceration that serves as the promise of punishment for any of the disempowered who step out of line. The police henchmen and women have seen an increase in superficial accountability efforts as a result. They, in turn, yelped, retreated, licking their wounds, whining for their masters that they have faithfully served. They retreated so that they might better gang up, with the Fraternal Order of Police always going to bat for its officers, and usually sparing them the worst of the punishments. The conservative

response is to back that FOP spoiling of its curs. The liberal response is to train them better, so they only lash out when the "community" deems it appropriate. Even if those reform measures were to stay in place, the continued top-down violence by police (and the threat of violence imposed by their very existence) is maintained by liberal democracy.

We live in a town very interested in presenting its police, and even its jail, as a peaceable, humane, and friendly apparatus. Community policing, an attempt at integrating citizens into the policing apparatus, has been heralded by liberals as the reform we needed. Liberals and their politicians, in turn, strive to hold us in this fuzzy inertia with them, failing to acknowledge that the police do not protect us – but instead protect the institutions that govern (and all the elites or people otherwise not a threat to that status quo). Those institutions, their government, and the status quo they uphold, are inherently oppressive.

Police, for instance, protect an all Democrat city council which unanimously voted to increase pay for police officers in late October of 2024. "The Bloomington City Council voted 8-0 in a special session Wednesday to approve the higher police salaries" on Halloween of last year, reports the *B Square Bulletin*. The 2023 ordinance for police officer budgeting was passed with only one dissenting vote, from some guy named Volan, in a failed attempt to slightly reduce the number of cops budgeted for.

Monroe County council passed an income tax increase beginning this

year that includes .17% to fund the new jail. "The county council voted 5–1 to enact the tax, which is supposed to help fund a new county jail and related justice center with a construction budget of up to \$200 million or more," says *B Square* once more. One of the councilors who voted for the tax, Jennifer Crossley, said one reason she is comfortable with the 0.17-percent rate is that the wording in the state statute says that the revenue from the jail can also be spent on "rehabilitation facilities" in the county. Even if we ignore that incarceration excused as "medical treatment" is still the expansion of the prison project, we see that she did nothing from a position of relative power to oppose incarceration. Her empty plea for the council "think about how we think about incarceration" just furthers prison society.

I'm reminded of the abolitionist perspective criticized in Bonnano's *Locked Up* that turns incarceration into a medical internment, replacing the uniforms of the guards with white coats. I'm reminded of the riots where I watched in real time people change "Defund Police" graffiti to "Abolish Police," and then once more to "Destroy Police." Yes, we are those that actually seek to dissolve policing entirely, and in this moment of increasing repression and potential upheaval we ask the age old question: "which side are you on?" ...and we expect answers in the form of actions.

Democrats are the party of compromise, always for the preservation of the government (whether you define it as legal or illegal, functional or dysfunctional) and ultimately the economy. All co-governing parties compromise, but liberals make it their personality. Those compromises, too, further their opponents agendas, if only a bit slower. Communist and Fascist

parliamentarians co-governing in foreign governments show us what progressive electoral institutions provide, and all parties lay the ground work for fascism when it is deemed necessary to consolidate power for the preservation of economic interests.

Democrats are currently the party of the status quo – which is both still genocidal and failing. They are also the party of incarceration (after the '94 Crime Bill), instigators of drone bombings and militarization of the police (under Obama), and generally – at all levels – the continued funding of police and new jails. The Republicans are also variations of these things, sometimes even in a more honest way, but no one really trusts a politician.

"This year's theme, 'African Americans and Labor: From Slaves Ships to the White House,' honors labor's critical role in the Black American experience, from the agricultural work of enslaved Africans to the rise of Black Wall Street. It also highlights the contributions of Black Americans to industry, community development, and civil rights movements throughout history."

The above quote from the City of Bloomington's Black History Month celebrations showcases a decision to celebrate the "agricultural work of enslaved Africans" and their contributions to growing the American Empire. Obviously enslaved Africans were not given a choice in building this monstrosity, and this acknowledgment is in poor taste. Much like the land acknowledgments they stumbled through, and even inaccurately worded (i.e. these are not the "traditional lands of the Delaware[sic]," and neither is that the name of the Lenape people), it is making excuses to maintain an oppressive status quo. Their actions continue to

dispossess many indigenous nations of their ancestral lands and impose hierarchies on everyone – hierarchies disproportionately affecting black people, among others. Liberals are vomiting acknowledgments of history all over themselves while excusing the grotesque realities of maintaining empire, hoping for others to lap it up. Meanwhile, they highlight the wealthy or otherwise elite black people in town with this panel, who prove exceptional in this system of control and further the impoverishment of others by embracing the pursuit of wealth and power. Nevermind the all-too-common whitewashing of the breadth of struggle during the civil rights era that erases contributions outside certain types of nonviolence, and even the radical scope of criticism of this society.

The Black Agenda Report just published a piece by Margaret Kimberley about the recent armed patrols and direct action against neo-Nazis by Black people in Cincinnati. For all the beauty in that moment, one paragraph stood out in particular:

"The people who are usually considered leaders are rarely of any help to Black people in distress. Congressional Black Caucus Member and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries is a case in point. While Donald Trump violates the constitution with executive orders announcing powers he does not have, Jeffries is flummoxed as to what the leader of an opposition party ought to do. 'I'm trying to figure out what leverage we actually have. What leverage do we have? They control the House and Senate and the presidency. It's their government. What leverage do we have?' The self-own would be funny if it were not so serious. Whether he realized it or not, Jeffries admitted that democrats were ready to cut deals with Trump but now that Trump has cut them out of decision making they have no idea what to do."

Any successful reforms to a system grounded in inequity perpetuate that system – and as we have seen, those reforms can also be quickly retracted whenever the ruling parties deem it so. Whether progressive or reactionary, the establishing of laws, rights, and even social norms are codified by the dominant culture through edicts. Some times these edicts are decided democratically (with representation and majority rule), occasionally through community consensus, other times through the declarations of absolute authority. None of that should grant them rule over our lives.

Politics of shame and guilt, too, are a dead end. They failed the liberals in their federal electoral politics and, moreover, we are not the Catholic Church. I'm reminded of the aboriginal quote: "If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. If you have come because your Liberation is bound together with mine, let us walk together." This does not mean overlooking the social conditions we find ourselves in and doing best by each other in that regard – but it does mean that service is a farce. Service is either a progressive hierarchy or a charity. Instead, I seek to collaborate in our collective liberation, and am

looking for others who want to do the same.

Nothing truly important should be left up to a vote. So, I'm interested in what others imagine when they think of liberation in our context. What does a world, or maybe even just parts of a town, look like without imposed authorities and mediations to you? What breaks and what new affinities will be found as we step into and out of different associations? What happens when we stop politicking and policing each other, and refuse the efforts of others to do so? What happens when we choose to live?



Moving Beyond Fares

At the start of November 2024 Bloomington Transit rolled out its new fare system. Including programs like daily and monthly fare caps. Some might hail the new system as more equitable, fair, or progressive than the previous system. But this ignores a very important reality: even before this new system, fares have made up less than 1% of BT's revenue in the past few years. If we are generous and exclude the recent capital expenditures on battery buses and other infrastructural improvements paid for by federal grants, fares still only account for less than 3% of revenue. So here lies the central question. If this new fare system will lower revenue even further, why even keep the fares at all?

Where does the money to run the bus system come from if fares make up such a small percentage of revenue? Just 3 sources; property tax, local income tax, and a state level public transit fund, together provide more than 60%. Other smaller taxes and contracts with IU and apartment complexes make up most of the remainder. If we're only concerned with money

the answer to a system without fares is easy, we basically already have one. So why keep fares around?

The Function of Transit

It is clear that BT operates two distinct services: one, de facto free for the "productive" student population of Bloomington, characterized by relatively frequent and reliable service; and another, fare restricted for the rest, defined largely by the opposite. While the buses for campus serve the obvious function of transporting tens of thousands of students, staff, and faculty to and from campus in the only obvious logistically feasible way, the buses for the town serve a different, less apparent purpose. Capitalism necessitates un- and under-employed "surplus" populations from which it can find more precarious laborers and into which it can force more stable ones to suppress wages and threaten organizers and insubordinate workers into submission. This simple fact means that there must always be some amount of people left behind which, in the eyes of the state and capital, don't contribute to "the economy" in any meaningful way. Though, if

there's one thing capitalism does well, it's find new markets and resources to exploit.

In healthcare the exploitation of surplus populations is obvious. The state collaborates with capital to manufacture a market in the form of medicare and medicaid. The healthcare system does not exist to improve the "health" of people, but rather, like a mechanic and a car, serves to maintain workers in a condition of usefulness to capital and extract value at every feasible point: insurance premiums, fees, fines, grants, etc. Understanding the surplus population's relationship to capitalism, a clearer picture of the role of public transit in Bloomington comes into focus. Transit allows for the unemployed to get new jobs and the underemployed to get better paying jobs. While this is often framed as a societal good, under capitalism socioeconomic mobility becomes a tool of localized labor arbitrage, used to find workers desperate enough to take lower wages than their peers, in turn undermining wages across the whole sector. Often these wages may be so low that workers may not be



able to afford a car, the only mode of transport our civilization is structured around, or depend on food stamps, a tool for transferring wealth from the state's taxes to often the very same companies underpaying their staff.

The Cruelty Is The Point

Just as the Divine Right of Kings justified the extravagance of the *Ancien Regime* so too must modern capitalists justify their own domination. Accepting myths of merit and morality used to justify the rule of capital also justifies the poverty created by their rule. This acceptance has become one of the foundations of our modern culture, exalting those who benefit most and demonizing the victims suffering the worst. This demonization works to produce a climate of fear and shame around unemployment and poverty, reinforcing the power capital wields over workers by making the threat of becoming surplus more effective and efforts to leave the surplus more desperate.

The bus system for those in town therefore serves two purposes, one to enable the exploitation of a surplus population, allowing movement into and out of the surplus population, and two as a means of cruelty enforcing social morals around merit, acting as a boogeyman to discipline workers, and humiliating riders in order to accept diminished working conditions as a means of escape.

Moving Beyond

Under capitalism, rather than a source of freedom, transit becomes just another tool of exploitation. Moving beyond capitalism must also include moving beyond our current understanding of transit; how it works, why we use it, and where it goes. This current civilization's system of transit exists in support of the existent exploitative economy. The goals of transit, how it works, and where it

goes all serve the interests of capital and the market rather than the humans aboard. Routes are selected, stops placed, and frequency allocated based on metrics in service of economic growth. Billions of people carry out a mass migration twice a day, traveling from where they live to the places capitalists allow them to sell their labor and back home, maybe followed by a trip to the store or the bar to spend what little fraction of the value they created that their employers have granted them in order to keep the cycle moving. Our entire built environment is about facilitating this movement of people and, more importantly, the goods they produce and consume as profit efficiently as possible according to the market.

Bringing an end to the fare is a necessary first step towards a human centered transit system. In doing so, we can bring to the front questions about the very foundations of our modern society and what the future could look like. All across the world fare strikes have both been the basis of broader social conflicts and a fight all their own. An easy tactic which undermines "social cohesion" they can both involve those with low risk thresholds and radicalize others. Riders and drivers have used fare strikes to gain ground in contract negotiations, fight fare hikes, service cuts, police presence, and sometimes all of the above. Fare strikes are capable of building solidarity between riders and drivers, and compassion in an otherwise cold machine.

On March 28, 2012 teams from Occupy Wall Street, and rank-and-file workers from New York's transit unions coordinated to chain open service gates and tape open turnstiles. For the workers, MTA was stalling contract negotiations, laying off workers, reducing staffing levels, and cutting back benefits. For riders, turnstiles were a site of racialized harassment

by law enforcement during the era of "Stop and Frisk," staffing reductions meant reduced services for seniors and disabled riders, stations were closing while fares were rising. ^[1]

On March 1, 1951 tram fares in Barcelona were set to rise 40%. In response, 97% of tram riders would participate in a boycott on the first day and most tram drivers went on strike. On March 12, 300,000 workers joined calls for a general strike that would end up lasting 14 days. While demands wouldn't be conceded to, most who had been arrested were released and the fascist government ordered employers to pay the wages of those who had struck in fear of further escalations. This strike and a series of others in the 50's opened the door for independent unions to organize semi-openly and would ultimately play a part in the collapse of the regime following the death of Franco. ^[2]

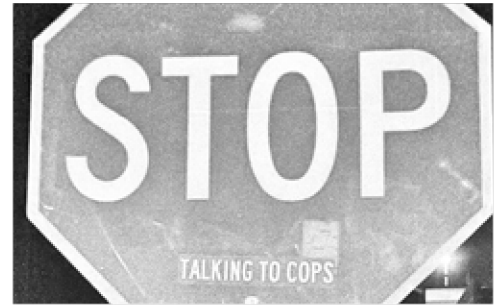
Conclusion

The fare continues to exist, not because it is necessary (any minimal amount of political will from our current rulers could abolish it quickly) but rather because it is a part of a regime of cruelty which serves to reinforce the power of capital over workers and surplus populations, enabling their ever increasing exploitation. Fare strikes have historically been a tool of rebellion against this cruelty and also a basis of revolutionary potential with which we can begin to build an alternative transit system based not on the interests of capital but on the needs of the humans who ride.

[1] <https://libcom.org/article/successful-fare-strike-new-york-subways>

[2] <https://libcom.org/article/1951-barcelona-general-strike>

Same Shit, Different Cops



In June 2021, the Bloomington Parks & Recreation department signed a contract with private security company Marshall Security, establishing unarmed patrols of Switchyard Park every night from 11pm-7am. Within a month, the contract was extended to include patrols from 7am-11pm in seven more parks as well as the entirety of the B-Line. In the past, the department had directly employed people to patrol all of the parks. With the addition of the new park and the uptick in vandalism and overnight camping in its first spring season, and the “shortage” of cops, the parks department opted instead to use \$113k from the CARES Act in 2021 and \$279k from the American Rescue Plan Act in 2022 to pay non-city employees. Essentially, they circumvented the city budget and cuts to the police department and used hundreds of thousands of dollars meant for COVID relief to hire a bunch of mall cops to patrol our public spaces. The department of public works has also hired Marshall periodically over the last five years, and they’re currently working as security for the new Hopewell development construction site through March 2025.

Marshall is the company hired as security for the August 2020 Back the Blue rally on the square where a mem-

ber of the Scallywags, a 3%er gang from Bedford, easily walked away after cracking a man’s head open with a collapsible baton. *I’m sure it’s fine.*

Their presence in the parks was intended to be a temporary measure but these patrols have continued into their fourth year. Unlike parks employees, the private security teams from Marshall wear bodycams, and part of their patrol duties are taking photographs at each park to prove that they are doing their rounds. This is a small, almost unnoticeable addition to ambient surveillance—but exactly these types of small, unnoticeable additions are what normalize the unprecedented levels of surveillance in our everyday lives.

CCTV in and outside every business, the new public transit fare system using barcode scanners, everyone carrying a high-quality camera with them everywhere they go, Ring cameras at our neighbors’ doors. These mechanisms go beyond the actions of state or capitalist actors, reaching into our communities to deputize neighbors into the surveillance state, convincing people to enthusiastically participate in the dirty work of policing.

These things pile up and wear on us, having totally obliterated any notion that we’re not constantly being watched. It’s stifling. This is not a plea to the city for less surveillance—the wear on our psyches and the stifling of spontaneous action is after all the goal of a surveillance state. Rather, this is an invitation to reject the quiet encroachment of surveillance into our lives and to refuse to offer up information about our communities to the state via an endless stream of photo, video, and audio recordings. An invitation to disrupt the information-gathering mechanisms that are currently in place—and whatever might be implemented and integrated into our daily lives next—and to adjust our habits in ways that will make room for spontaneous action (for ourselves and others) in spite of these overbearing mechanisms.

(1) <https://bsquarebulletin.com/2021/06/25/bloomingtons-switchyard-park-to-get-night-patrols-by-private-security-firm/>

(2) <https://bsquarebulletin.com/2021/07/27/bloomington-expands-private-security-to-7-more-parks-across-city-including-b-line-trail/>

(3) <https://bsquarebulletin.com/2022/01/25/279k-for-private-security-patrols-in-public-parks-okd-by-bloomington/>

(4) <https://bsquarebulletin.com/2024/09/03/bloomington-poised-for-public-offering-of-hopewell-south-land-security-extended-fences-reconfigured/>

Wheatpaste

How to



to bubble, whisking often to keep it from burning or getting lumpy. Keep cooking and whisking until it thickens to the right consistency—it should be a little thin, like elmer's glue, and it'll continue to thicken some more as it cools. Let it sit until it's cool enough to touch and then pour it into a container with a reliable lid. Depending on your plan, you can use a jar large enough to dip your brush into, or you can put it into a clean squeeze bottle, like for ketchup, and squeeze the wheatpaste directly onto your paper and brush.

Once your paste is ready, gather the rest of your tools in a tote bag you don't mind getting messy. You don't need much: your posters, a big paintbrush, and nitrile or similar gloves. A second set of hands is helpful but not required.

The surface you're pasting onto should be pretty solid and free of debris—a crumbly or peeling surface will make it easier to tear your poster down. Brush a generous amount of wheatpaste onto the back of your poster and onto the wall where you're going to stick it. You want a thin layer, but not so much that it's drippy or really sloppy. Place the poster on the wall, brush some more wheatpaste onto the front, and firmly press all over, being sure to get into any crevices. Pay extra attention to the edges and corners. Wipe off any extra wheatpaste—the more paste you use, the longer it will take to dry. Then move on to the next spot.

Wheatpaste offers a lot of room for experimentation and customization, as far as changing the flour:water ratio to get a consistency that you



like to work with, the material you're pasting up (printer paper, newsprint, cardstock...), and the surfaces you're pasting it onto. Another variable to consider is the weather. You need everything to dry for it to get a solid hold. High humidity will slow the drying process, and freezing temperatures might stop it all together—your work will freeze instead of drying, and then it will thaw later and still need to dry. There has been some success with adding rubbing alcohol to cooked paste to lower the freezing temperature, but you'll have to experiment (with your windows open).

It's best to use your wheatpaste the same day you make it, but it can be stored in a sealed container and refrigerated—just don't wait too long to use it, because it will rot and expand, and might burst out of its container.

What are you waiting for, anyway?



Wheatpaste is exactly what it sounds like: paste, like from elementary school art class, made from wheat flour and water. It's been used for ages as a cheap, simple, and effective way to adhere posters to most any outdoor surface. Anything can be stuck up on a wall with wheatpaste. Agitprop, photos, flyers, drawings, poems, maps, love letters, manifestos, tutorials, communiqués. Quarter-sheets or massive pieces made with many sheets of paper laid out next to each other. Wheatpasting gives you the opportunity to quickly put up more detailed graffiti than a spray can or a stencil, and it's much harder to remove.

It's also less identifiably illegal than other methods; that is, if someone catches you in the act, they likely won't realize they've caught you in the act. That said, it is technically illegal in Bloomington, but in the same way that writing on the sidewalk with chalk is illegal. Stay calm, play dumb.

To make wheatpaste, mix one part flour with four parts water in a pot and whisk til there's no lumps. Cook the mixture over medium heat til it starts

To the Barricade:



< A film adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. It is a fictional depiction of the real June Rebellion of 1832 in Paris.

> In Port-au-Prince during an uprising in Haiti in 2022, sparked by fuel prices but developed into calls for the resignation of then-president Jovenel Moïse.



A barrel full of dirt. Furniture thrown out of windows into the street below. Broken vehicles, from horse-drawn carts to tractors to e-scooters. Burning tires. Overturned dumpsters. Old pallets. Fallen logs. Debris of any kind, really, will do. Haphazardly, yet strategically, piled up to keep someone out, to slow them down, or just be in the way. The word barricade is traced back to 16th century France. It derives from the word for the humble barrel which, when filled with dirt, were deployed into the streets of Paris countless times over the next couple hundred years by members of the underclasses and political dissidents of all stripes. They were such a problem, that Paris was reconstructed with larger streets to make barricading them less feasible. This is where the official history of the barricade begins, but surely we have always been building them. Through the last few centuries up to the present

day, they have become a powerful symbol of revolt and insurrection and remain a valid and effective tactic for challenging the state and capital. The photographs included here illustrate how widespread, adaptable, and perennial the barricade is.

Why a barricade?

The most quintessential image of a barricade is a large pile of furniture blocking a street. Their purpose, historically and contemporarily, is often to keep police, soldiers, and other agents of the state from going to a certain location or reaching the people behind the barricade. It serves to impede the movement of law enforcement and capital. The barricade can be deployed in any situation in which that impediment is desirable. We see barricades in urban neighborhoods, but also rural roads, on avenues leading to halls of power or a factory, in commercial districts or in slums. Moving barricades can accompany the route of a march,

protest, or riot. In times and places where travel is primarily along waterways instead of roads, people have even barricaded ports and rivers!

“It’s clear that in order for this crisis to develop further, student occupations should take buildings whenever possible... they showed that we can wield the most power by occupying the spaces where classes are held and administrators have offices. In addition, buildings on campus are filled with everything you might need to construct barricades and protect an occupation.”¹

A light version of a barricade can be a newspaper box or dumpster dragged into the street to prevent police or homicidal drivers from following a march, allowing people to do vandalism un-surveilled to get away safely. Roads into a factory or other workplace can be barricaded



< From the University of Manchester, also part of the movement for Palestine.

> Yangon, Myanmar, 2021, a barricade constructed in resistance to the military junta.



Symbol & Tactic of Urban Revolt



< Iquique, Chile, 2015
a barricade deployed
for, among other things,
imprisoned comrade
Camila de Pompeya.

> From the building
occupation at Cal Poly
Humboldt, part of the
campus uprisings against the
genocide of Palestine.



during a strike to prevent management and scabs from getting to work. They can be set up to simply get in the way of flows of capital. Barricades can also be constructed inside or at entrances to buildings as part of building occupation. Sometimes barricades are constructed and left, but often people remain. They can be a place from behind which street militants go on the offensive, perhaps throwing stones or bottles. Or people stay in order to defend it from being deconstructed. Two or more barricades can be constructed, temporarily trapping people or vehicles within their boundaries. Indigenous people especially use barricades as a roadblock to stop instruments of environmental destruction and resource extraction or troops and resources of colonizers from entering their territory. They can be used as part of larger campaigns along with many other tactics to get the state or capital to negotiate and meet demands.

Perhaps what is less obvious about the role of barricades is what they help to create behind them, within their zone of influence. If they are successful in keeping out one's enemies, a temporary autonomy can be achieved, a little pocket of a different world, an opportunity to experiment with new ways of living. Scaled up, barricades can be part of a process of re-territorialization. As explored more below, barricades are never alone. They often come in groups over distance and time, from dozens to even thousands deployed in coordination. When there are enough barricades, they are successful enough, and they are matched with the right mix of other tactics, they can create or protect an autonomous region. For some colonized people, this may be in the form of re-territorialization, physically keeping out colonizers and reclaiming their land.

The Barricade is Never Alone

In addition to often occurring in groups, the barricade has many other companions. The barricade itself is an assemblage, a collection of many different things. In turn, it is also just one part of a larger assemblage. As seen in the photographs, they are often adorned with flags, banners, and graffiti. These spread a message, claim territory, signal to others what is being created or impeded, and are an inevitable expression of the passion and creativity of the builders. They provide a forum for other types of communication and expression as well. Songs can be sung at the barricades to keep up spirits and bolster the resolve of those present.

▼ Spalding County, GA, 2021. Prisoners barricade themselves inside housing unit. Unfortunately we do not have an understanding of the motivations here because of the domination of the state's narrative over that of captive people, but we can assume some build up and indignities and deprivation were at play.



< September 1, 1990. Mohawk warriors at a roadblock during the Oka Crisis, a 78-day stand off between the Kanien'kehà:ka (Mohawk) community of Kanesatake and Canadian law enforcement over contested land. In solidarity, the Kanien'kehà:ka community of Kahnawake blocked a bridge to the island of Montreal.



Communication can occur between barricades at different locations to coordinate and understand enemy movements. Masks and fire, images of the urban insurgent in their own right, are commonly deployed alongside the barricade. In addition to the building of the barricade itself, many other activities take place behind and around them. They can be a point of an attack from which people fight an enemy, or a point behind which sabotage can be carried out. And of course, retributive violence from the state or capital is not an uncommon scene at a barricade, if insurgents stay and fight.

Building a Barricade

The beautiful thing about a barricade is that it's just a pile of junk. Virtually anyone can build one, virtually anywhere – a true tool of the people. They can, of course, become more sophisticated, more specialized, or set on fire, but there are no special skills required to make one.

“Barricades are born not only from spontaneity but are also a common mechanism in establishing and maintaining counter-power.”²

Barricades can be constructed spontaneously in a moment of need, or hatched as a meticulous plan. When planning, the first consideration is what is its purpose. This will guide the timing, the location, the materials, and what other activities will accompany it. The second consideration is the location. Depending on what you're trying to do, maybe it's obvious: the entrances to a building or the single

road leading to a proposed logging site. Or maybe scouting is required to figure out where choke points are, what are the strategic and feasible options, how many need to be set up in coordination. Scouting³ will also include looking at surveillance in the area and what else is around, including things that could be transformed into barricade material. Another consideration is its openness, if it is “soft” or “hard” - will people be coming and going or will it be locked down? Is it meant to last as long as possible or be a fleeting moment of rupture? The answers will inform the physical construction, as well as location, materials, and what else the action needs. As for materials, the possibilities are endless, but priority might be given to what is already nearby and what is most easily transported to the site. Lastly, consider what else is needed. Additional supplies, media strategies, methods of communication, and delegation of different roles to the people behind and around the barricade are just a few suggestions.

Now that you have a new appreciation for the barricade, let this subtly change how you see the world. When you're out, do you notice locations that are important for the flow of traffic? How many entrances are there to your neighborhood? To your work place? What objects do you see that could be dragged into the street? Are there places that are especially narrow and vulnerable?

The Insurrectionary Imagination

The barricade's reputation over the centuries has blossomed into

something much more powerful than just a blocked street. They are used in popular media such as songs, poetry, and film, to represent taking a stand, resisting, and protecting oneself from outside harm. The image of the barricade instantly creates the impression of the urban insurgent, disorder and destruction, the weak fighting the powerful, of those choosing justice over peace. There is both risk and reward in the metaphorization of the barricade.

“The myth of the barricade is a body of images capable of invoking instinctively, all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of social rebellion.”²

The risk is that the barricade loses its power, its literal stopping force, its essence as a physical manifestation of the insurgents' will. It can become a photo op or, worse, a figure of speech. The reward is that the barricade carries with it the symbolism of much more than one roadblock, one obstructed entrance. They are a warning, a threat to state and capital. They are a symbol to other militants around the region or around the world that we are here. And they carry with them their history. Each barricade is connected to each one that came before, created by our predecessors in the fight for liberation.

(1) *"Report from within the Cal Poly Humboldt building occupation" from Crimethinc.com*

(2) *Elements of a Barricade from SproutDistro.com*

(3) *Please consult other materials for guidance in responsible scouting practices.*

See also: A History of the Barricade by Eric Hazan from Verso Books 2023



Enemy Territories

Crane Naval Base

“Deter. Defend. Defeat.”

The slogan of Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Crane’s Strategic Missions. It’s funnily reminiscent of the “Deny, Defend, Depose,” allegedly popularized by Luigi Mangione, or maybe even the very contrary slogan tagged locally on walls and billboards: “Demilitarize, Deindustrialize, Decolonize.” So what the fuck’s up with the world’s third largest naval installation, strangely located in the middle of landlocked southern Indiana?

Crane is a small town about 25 miles southwest of Bloomington, abutting the NSWC base to the east. The 110 square mile naval base is surrounded by forest and encompasses the entirety of Greenwood Lake. It bears repeating that this is the third largest naval base in the world. Originally a mid-century ammo depot, it has expanded to consume the proposed state park in the area in the interest of advanced technologies, while still housing one third of the nation’s conventional ammunition (since delegated to the authority of the Crane Army Ammunition Activity). Located away from the coasts in order to prevent foreign attacks, it is also essential to such weapons of war as ballistic missile submarines – two-football-fields-long submersible ships carrying nuclear explosives.

Employees at NSWC Crane develop and deploy sensors and communications technologies

that enable advanced intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities for ground, surface, and air weaponry. NSWC Crane is a naval laboratory and a field activity of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) with mission areas in “Expeditionary Warfare, Strategic Missions and Electronic Warfare.” NSWC Crane essentially supports “the Warfighter” through technical capabilities – that is they intend to fight wars, with all the damage that incurs, and outfit the people thrust into those positions.

In their own words, when you think NSWC Crane, think: submarine guidance systems, electronic warfare systems, desert/beach/jungle incursions, the weapons and ammo, navy jets, hypersonic missile capability, and outer space.

NSWC Crane continues to build internally, starting a “new energy prototyping field activity to advance technology development and validation” construction project last December – combining government, industry, and academic forces in some sort of jargon-defined pursuit related to nuclear power. A USACE collaborative project for the co-located Strategic Systems Engineering Facility also began last year, and both are expected to be completed this year.

NSWC Crane generates over \$3 billion in economic activity for the US empire: some of that through contracts awarded to the Navy itself (more than \$2 Billion since the year

2000); smaller, but lucrative contracts with local construction services, like the Brown & Root Services Corporation; and much bigger technology contracts to other groups with offices just outside the base, like Science Applications International Corp. NSWC Crane’s customer base includes the entirety of US Armed Forces, many foreign militaries, and “civilian organizations.” The standardization of arming local police with surplus military gear, and several federal funding programs enabling cops to purchase the same sort of thing new, suggests some of what that civilian customer base might look.

The majority of people that work at Crane, some 3,000 to 5,000, are civilian employees, with only 50 or so on-site military personal. Employing a high number of people, and with their extensive geographic sprawl, Crane is also very high-functioning thanks to its ongoing collaboration with private companies, development corporations, and university systems within Indiana. While the concept of an ‘ecosystem’ generally inspires more positive connotations, this is a useful way to conceive of Crane and its expansion, despite all the misery and destruction it creates. The blending of public, private, and government resources can all get a bit confusing and in many ways the minutiae of it all isn’t that important. The aim, though, seems to be an entire state geared towards the project of national security, and the technology and human resources necessary to fulfill this goal.

Crane and Higher Education

Purdue University has a strong relationship with the defense-sector and NSCW Crane in particular. The Purdue Applied Research Institute (PARI) is a network of labs that focus on the development of technologies for the defense industry, and supplies both the development and a large workforce for Crane here in Indiana. PARI's current labs include a Microelectronics Lab, Hypersonics Lab, and Energetics Lab. All three are technologies that are vital to the defense industry. But what are they?

Microelectronics refers to the development of things like semiconductors. Basically the very small technology integral to the running of things like smartphones and computers. Microelectronics require a great deal of technical skill, expensive equipment and pristine working environments, as well as a lot of time to improve and develop. Because so much of our world is computerized, the logistics and flow of modern life is deeply dependent on the smooth operation of these systems, and the realm of national security and warfare is no exception.

Hypersonics refers to the study and technological development of missiles. Hypersonic missiles are highly maneuverable in-flight, which means their direction and target can be changed while in route and can more easily bypass missile detection systems.

Energetics refers to military technologies like propellants, pyrotechnics and explosives. Development focuses on increased range, smaller size and increased lethality.

While Purdue boasts a strong relationship with Crane, they're not the only university working in accordance

with Crane's aims. In June of 2024, Notre Dame and Indiana University joined Purdue to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to initiate the creation of what they have dubbed the Indiana Research Consortium (IRC). The IRC is "a regional research engine that aims to drive innovations and advancements in areas critical to U.S. national security while positioning Indiana as a hub for defense research" ⁽¹⁾. IU and Crane have been collaborating for twenty years, engaging in what an IDS article dubs "a symbiotic relationship" ⁽²⁾. In 2023, IU made "what is one of the largest commitments made by a college or university to high-tech industry and national defense", securing and pledging to invest "at least \$111 million over the next several years to advance its national leadership in microelectronics and nanotechnology" ⁽³⁾. The MOU even included an appreciation for teachers that are opting to take part in an initiative called SCALE K-12, which is a program to prepare students for work in defense-related microelectronics. While this author has long understood the school system to be an institution based on preparing students for either a lifetime of work and obedience, or to be pipelined towards prison, there is something that hits especially macabre about preparing children as young as five for a lifetime pursuing careers in the technology of death and destruction. If SCALE K-12 grows, we then have a pathway of microelectronics and defense-sector technology that extends from kindergarten through college.

Notre Dame has come to a similar dynamic as both Purdue and IU, signing an "Education Partnership Agreement (EPA)", committing to collaborate with Crane on engineering and science disciplines. Their collaboration "is expected to advance STEM education, support

Department of Defense workforce development, and inspire a new generation of students to pursue careers in science and engineering, contributing to both national security and technological progress" ⁽⁴⁾.

Crane has partnered with Ivy Tech's Gayle & Bill Cook Center for Entrepreneurship to make technology developed at Crane available for commercial use. Local Bloomington businesses can take an online course through Ivy Tech to learn how to buy or lease patented government technologies to grow their businesses ⁽⁵⁾.

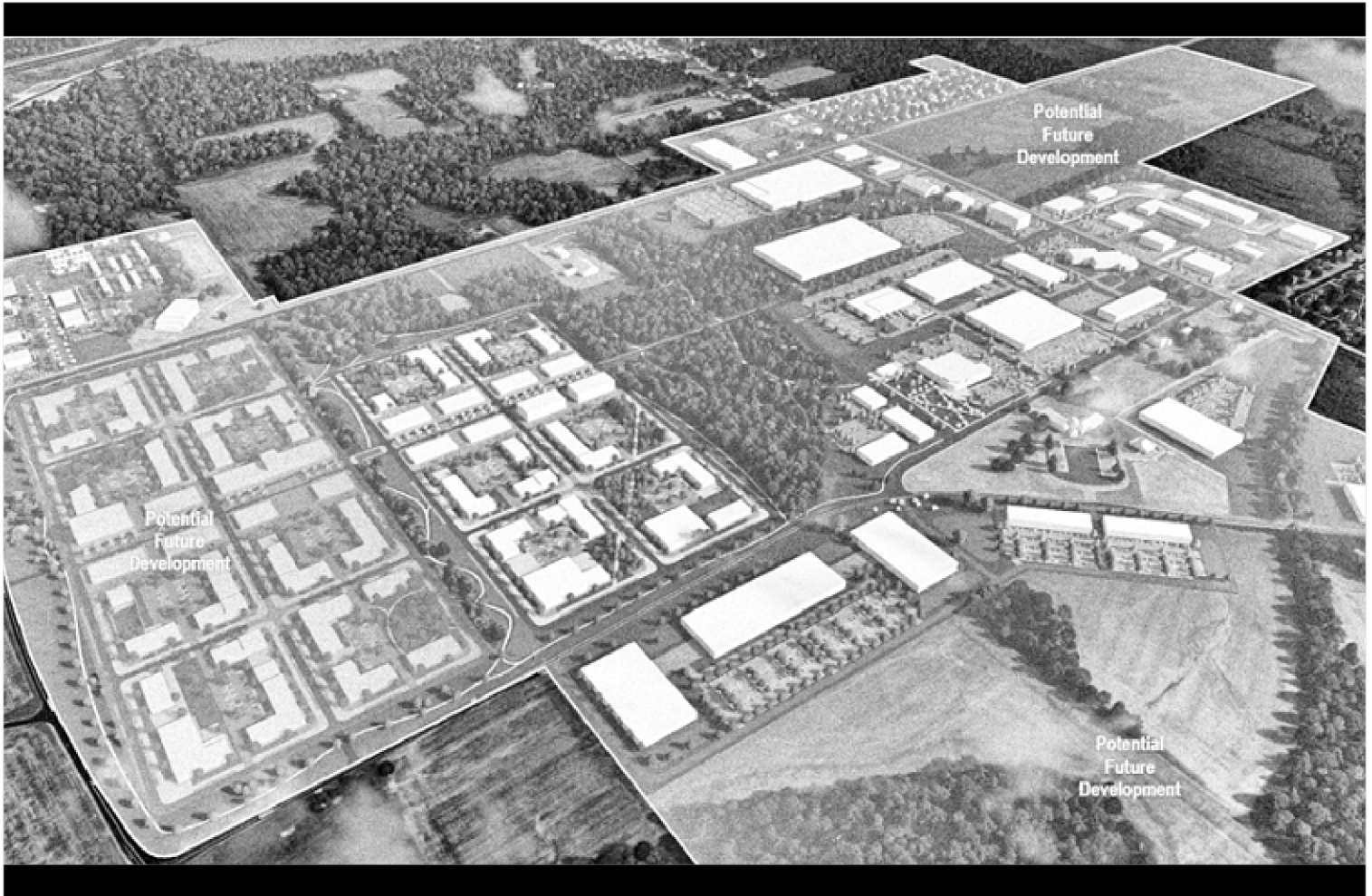
WestGate@Crane

A second part of this "ecosystem" is the development of areas of Indiana that can continue to foster Crane's aims and reach. Sitting at Crane's entrance, in Odon Indiana, is WestGate@Crane, a combination tech park and recreational area that was first established in 2005, and is basically a large hub that houses defense-sector companies, a \$2 million Purdue semiconductor lab and IU node, as well as offers housing and recreational opportunities for these companies' employees ⁽⁶⁾. In 2020, the park began a plan to expand its offerings and include more "commercial services and civic amenities", endeavoring towards "large-scale, transformational development for the next 10-15 years". The park currently includes a health clinic, Goodwill, and hotel, but their master plan uses lots of buzzwords around sustainability when laying out a picture of bike-paths, nature areas, restaurants and bars, all with a very "distinct sense of place [and] authentic sense of community" ⁽⁷⁾. It begs the question, can the military and the natural world actually coexist? Or has their PR team simply learned that the modern world's cultivated bubble must contain a tree or two?

Westgate intends to be an all-encompassing community, and their “newcomer guide” outlines opportunities to rent or buy apartments and homes within the complex. They also reference nearby prospects, including the Hopewell complex that is currently under-construction in Bloomington. WestGate does boast a dedicated water tower, electrical substation and wastewater treatment plant as well as dedicated internet

its road to completion, specifically around resident concerns about access to water and waste-facility resources. Its not clear if there has been push-back around the development of WestGate. However, the number of county development coalitions and initiatives that are actively supporting the plans of WestGate, Crane, and the larger push to make Indiana a hub of new technology manufacturing makes opposition seem less likely.

Economic revitalization is what many people long for, especially if you lack the social and financial resources to relocate, and are struggling to survive. However, these industries are highly skilled and specialized, making them inaccessible to many rural inhabitants. The SCALE k-12 initiative makes all the more sense in a project of making Southern Indiana, and this state as a whole, a well-oiled machine of labor for the U.S. military apparatus. While



service from Smithville Fiber. It is curious to think about a similar project, the LEAP Technology Park, which was written about in Issue 1 of In Tension. Although not directly defense-related, LEAP is focused on the research and development of microelectronics, which the U.S. government is prioritizing to lessen the nation’s reliance on foreign countries for microelectronics development. The LEAP project is encountering stumbling blocks on

The LEAP park posed a threat to agricultural industry in that area, whereas the areas of Southern Indiana have long been immersed in the jobs and economic investment of Crane. A lack of push-back might be the combination of Crane’s long-term presence in the area, the existence of park-dedicated services and perhaps their explicit role in national security, or some other factors entirely.

growth and economic revitalization are touted as necessary steps in improving quality of life, the specialized nature of these fields illustrates that it is about attracting new, ‘desirable’ residents to this state, more than concern for the well being of residents already viewed as disposable. Further, moving beyond survival into ways of living that reshape life as we know it is ultimately a more appealing path to me, and certainly not one that all wish to pursue.

Extensions of Development

The Dimension Mill is a co-working space next to city hall in downtown Bloomington. The Mill is currently responsible for the development of the so called “Trades District,” a project to gentrify the near west side which seeks to become a startup incubator and center of tech investment.

The Mill is a member of the Crane regional defense group. CRDG’s about us section on their website states “the Crane Regional Defense Group, a subcommittee of the White River Military Coordination Alliance, was established in 2020 as a grassroots effort to expand community support and advocate for Crane at the local and federal level”. The Mill partners with Crane to offer their “Propel Accelerator Program” in order to “offer an unparalleled opportunity to commercialize advanced technology developed at NSWC Crane, the Third-largest naval installation in the world.” The Mill’s board is made up of current and former mayors of Bloomington, high-ranking IU officials, and others from various organizations around town.

Similar co-working spaces are popping up around Indiana. There is Launch in Terre Haute, Cowork in Evansville, and the Root in New Albany, which exists in collaboration with the Novaparke Tech Park. While not explicitly in relationship with Crane, like the Mill, these all exist as a part of the project the entirety of Indiana as technology development hub.

The Uplands Region

Crane and WestGate@Crane exist as a part of the “Indiana Uplands”, which is a newly-adopted branding of the Southern Indiana region and encompasses Brown, Crawford, Davies, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, and

Washington counties. An appropriate reference to the hilly sandstone and limestone features of the region, notably the “Crawford” and “Norman” Uplands, this reference is where the positive attributes of the branding end. Town economic development corporations such as the Greene County Development Corporation, or Southern Indiana’s Radius Development Corp are helping to facilitate growth and development in partnership with Crane and the state of Indiana’s aims. What seems to be underway is a sort of modern-day company town, where all life revolves around one particular industry. Your time at work builds them up, and any free time or monetary resources inevitably end back up in their hands. While spending my free time in a business-district adjacent to work sounds like an absolute nightmare, some people do long for the programmed safety (surveillance) of their life, in entirety. And while this might amount to a bit of economic stability for a handful of people, many more will continue to be ushered towards greater precarity, prison, and death. Ultimately what is unfolding is merely capitalism’s preoccupation with never-ending growth, regardless of the disaster this creates. The aim, in my mind, is not a steady income or stable economy, but the destruction of those impediments to freedom, entirely.

In Bloomington proper, one company, Warrant Technologies, was awarded a \$21 Million dollar contract with Crane ⁽⁸⁾. Warrant is an IT company and they will provide product support and logistics for Crane. They are just another piece in a vast puzzle of state-wide industry that are vital to the continuation of the military industrial complex. To reiterate, the long-term goal appears to be solidifying Indiana as vital to the functioning of the Military Industrial Complex.

The intricate web of schooling, businesses and housing that seek to foster Crane’s growth and their hold on and influence of this place, and in turn benefit from their technological progress to increase surveillance and order. This has been unfolding for years, and at this point long-term goals might come to fruition sooner than one might think. When considering something as vast as the U.S. Military, any sort of meaningful resistance seems absolutely incomprehensible. But when we understand these large institutions are actually made-up of myriad small to large businesses, businesses run by individuals, maybe the task of struggling against them seems and is less baffling. An egregious amount of money goes into obscuring just how vulnerable certain people, companies, and institutions are, and part of the task is daring to envision what forms their undoing might take.

(1) <https://www.wbiw.com/2024/06/05/purdue-iu-notre-dame-join-to-create-a-statewide-consortium-for-national-defense-research>

(2) <https://www.idsnews.com/article/2023/11/iu-nwsc-crane-partnership-microelectronics-growth>

(3) <https://news.iu.edu/live/news/31928-iu-to-invest-111m-to-boost-us-microelectronics>

(4) <https://research.nd.edu/news-and-events/news/notre-dame-and-nwsc-crane-announce-new-educational-partnership/>

(5) <https://www.ivytech.edu/about-ivy-tech/news/bloomington/2014/ivy-tech-center-s-pact-with-nwsc-crane-good-for-both/>

(6) <https://www.mywabashvalley.com/news/local-news/purduecrane-permanent-partnership-announced/>

(7) <https://westgatecrane.org/images/uploads/01-WestGateMasterPlan.pdf>

(8) <https://southernindianabusinessreport.com/2023/10/02/warrant-technologies-awarded-21m-contract-from-nwsc-crane/>

A Lexicon **Direct Action**

*Inspired by the belief that how we understand a word shapes what we do in its name, **A Lexicon** is a series introducing keywords in anarchism. To suggest a keyword for a future issue, email InTension@riseup.net*

In direct action, the cooperation of politicians, administrators, or other oppressors is neither required nor requested. Because those engaged in direct action refuse to ask such authorities to respond to the will of a group, the action reduces the authorities' ability to credibly claim responsiveness to people over whom they hold power. Moreover, direct action illuminates people's capacity to effectively confront a problem without involving oppressors. In David Graeber's book *Direct Action*, the anthropologist offers this definition: "In its essence direct action is the insistence, when faced with structures of unjust authority, on acting as if one is already free. One does not solicit the state. One does not even necessarily make a grand gesture of defiance. Insofar as one is capable, one proceeds as if the state does not exist."

Direct action is often practiced through the body. It aligns with a teaching from Muhammad recently amplified by Zul-Qarnain Nantambu, who protested the suffering of Muslims and others during the halftime show of Super Bowl LIX by holding up a joint Sudanese and Palestinian flag. Nantambu's brave protest wasn't a direct action, as direct action seeks to accomplish more than raised awareness of an issue. However, in a subsequent interview with Al Jazeera, Nantambu shared the Muslim teaching that

could be interpreted to support direct action: "Our prophet Muhammad teaches us if you see a wrongdoing, or you're aware of a wrongdoing, you must stop it with your hands."

In June of 2000, members of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) used their hands to defend trees in the Bloomington area. They reported on their direct action in a communiqué: "We have placed hundreds of spikes in trees in the timber sales that are about to be cut on Crooked Creek Road in Brown County and Buskirk Road in Monroe County. These spikes have been placed both high and low in the trees to prevent the cutting of the trees. The trees are now worthless to the mill and dangerous to be cut down." The ELF encouraged the publicization of their tree spikings with the intention that timber workers would be spared injury. Given the scale of deforestation in Bloomington, the ELF's choice of direct action continues to merit attention. According to CanopyBloomington, between 1998 and 2019, 56% of the trees within Bloomington city limits died, with many trees lost to "development." In their communiqué, the Earth Liberation Front expressed a commitment "to protecting every last square inch of our forests that remain." 25 years later, tree spiking remains a valid, illegal method for practicing this honorable commitment.



Anarchist Fight Night

I had little interest in training martial arts. But I had a pesky friend who kept nagging me about it. They were obsessed and wanted to share it with people. Wary of certain dynamics, I offered them a deal: they could teach me Muay Thai and I would teach them something. (What that thing was, and a few other details in this story, are redacted so that I remain somewhat less identifiable.) Predictably, their role as student did not last long. Now here I am a few years into fight training. Last fall, I decided to take my first Muay Thai fight. Not so much because I wanted to fight, but because I wanted to be someone who had fought. I wanted to stop waiting to see if the time felt right, and instead commit to doing it regardless; I would make myself ready instead of waiting to be. The opportunity was appealing: participating in an anarchist fight weekend hosted in North Carolina as a fundraiser for imprisoned comrade Michael Kimble. You can read a reportback from the organizers on Its Going Down, "Combat Sports and Revolution."

So many other aspects of the experience were just as gratifying as the fight itself. My two month "fight camp" (used quite generously compared to pro fighters' regimens) required extra days at the gym, more cardio sessions, a slightly stricter diet, and traveling farther away to get a better variety of sparring partners. I'm very careful to not prioritize martial arts and, especially, personal fitness goals over other projects, commitments, activities, friendships, etc. There were times during fight camp that I did sacrifice other things

for training and I still feel guilty about it. There were times of frustration, thinking I wasn't good enough, and fear of embarrassing myself. But overall, the temporary focus was almost a relief, a couple months where my purpose was more clear. What made it even more rewarding, though certainly not always smooth, easy, or flattering, was sharing it with others who were preparing for their own fights and those who supported us in other ways.

I drove down with a small crew from the gym. The highlight was seeing a black bear in Kentucky. The places we were given to stay were so beautiful and welcoming. Fight weekend was just a couple weeks after Hurricane Helene ravaged western North Carolina and a lot of mutual aid

efforts were being headquartered out of the Durham/Raleigh area. People were still so generous. We and other people coming from out of town gathered donations and brought as many supplies as we could fit in the car. A mutual aid group also donated covid tests for all the fighters. The intertwining of disaster relief with fight weekend was a heartening example of resilience and cross-project support. Traveling always reminds me to prioritize reciprocating the hospitality I receive. The first night was a cookout where fighters from different places met each other and had playful face-offs and old and new friends mingled. The next day was filled with nervous energy, last minute training, and a group/self defense training with MMA fighter D'juan Owens.



smokers is a much better chance that your opponent is somebody you respect. That was true for me and I feel very lucky with my match up.

Just as exciting as my own fight was watching my friends', from my own gym and from other places. It was such an exciting night with about a dozen fights: boxing, Muay Thai, and submission grappling. There was no ropes or cage, so the audience got to participate too, keep people from falling over and pushing them back in like you would at the edge of a mosh pit.

The focus on Michael Kimble made this experience even more sweet. Michael is a gay, Black, anarchist who is incarcerated in Alabama for defending himself against a racist, homophobic attacker. He is currently trying to get his sentence modified and reduced. Fight weekend was created as a novel, spicier way of raising money for his legal fees and maybe some money for re-entry when he finally gets out. To fight in front of a Michael Kimble banner was such an honor. We got to hear his voice in a recorded interview played during intermission. He talked about his story, organizing with queer community inside, and what it meant for him to be included in this way. And when he happened to call in live, the entire room got to yelled "Fuck 12" in revolutionary greeting. This is what prisoner support should look like, integrating people who have been physically taken from us into our political, cultural, and social lives as much as we can. The event raised over \$3000.

This example of prisoner solidarity is part of my motivation for sharing this experience. Another part is to share some of things it got me thinking about

in terms of how we do anarchism and how we do our projects. The day after the fights there was an open mat where people drilled, sparred, and compared bruises and pain from the night before. The final aspect was a discussion among people from various fight training projects. The organizers said that they specifically did not include any other talks/workshops/etc during the weekend because anarchists tend to do a lot of talking. This was an opportunity to practice an embodied anarchism. Many people expressed feeling much more energized by this sort of gathering and activity done together compared to the more common conference or book fair. Don't get me wrong, I love a conference, but they have a point. Another common theme was how creating our own

“It is an ongoing and sometimes difficult task to bring our revolutionary ancestors, elders, and prisoners into the political spaces we create, but Michael felt present, and his words set a really beautiful tone for the rest of the night.”

training spaces (whether that's having a strong influence on a commercial gym, getting together with friends under a bridge, or anything in between) allows more people to train martial arts, which can be a scary, uncomfortable, or triggering experience. Many commercial gyms are full of cops and other enemies, are not welcoming to gender-diverse people, and perpetuate a toxic culture that does not allow for the accommodations and modifications that many people need.

There was one thing in particular that I realized from reflecting on the weekend that can be extended to other types of projects as well. It's the importance of having two

opposing aspects: the consistent, quiet, sometimes lonely work and the occasional exciting, louder, more social and celebratory activity. Here, that looks like committing to go to the gym every week, when it's cold, when it's hot, when you don't feel like it, when you're frustrated, when you're navigating social dynamics among your collective. And then once in a while, we all get together for a rowdy smoker where we see our work pay off. We can't have the latter without the former. To imagine it in other areas: We couldn't have integrated Michael into this event if it weren't for years of people writing letters, putting money on books, responding to emergencies, and building that relationship. The mutual aid infrastructure that not only hosted the fights, but scaled up so impressively to respond to Hurricane

Helene wouldn't exist without years of many people's unseen, tedious work keeping spreadsheets, maintaining a space, transporting supplies, and building networks. You can't share your book with the world without many, many hours of research and writing.

I want to name both of these aspects as necessary parts of many deep and meaningful projects. If all the work is tedious and isolated, most people will burn out and it will not spread or be invigorated. If it's only the showy, demonstrative activity, we are so much more limited in what we learn from and offer to each other and consistency is lost. We need revolutionary activity in our daily lives and moments of big action, celebration, or publicity. This is an invitation to consider the balance of these two aspects in your existing projects or those of which you are still dreaming. What could a sustainable regular practice look like? What could it look like to be invigorated and bolstered by sharing or showing off the fruits of our work?

Substance for the Shadow:

A Column of Art and Culture

“Non-Metaphorical Decolonization” (2024)

by Mount Eerie

The title alludes to an article by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” that argues against representing decolonization as anything other than the return of land to the care of Native people. Tuck and Yang opt not to answer questions about how decolonization will affect settlers, instead assuring readers that “we will find out the answers as we get there.” Decolonization is scriptless; it will be unfamiliar. Apt, then, for art about it to split from long-established structures.

Like the rest of the tracks on *Night Palace*, “Non-Metaphorical Decolonization” doesn’t proceed from verse to chorus. The song crescendos into a wordless bout of indie rock, the drums in danceable 4/4, pleasant honking fuzz from the chord organ Phil Elverum calls the horseblaster, and it’s unclear for how long the fun will last — until Elverum begins singing softly of buried history, present racism, avoidance of discomfort. Noise bursts forth as he offers a blessing: “Let this old world shatter.” From there the rhythm eludes the predictability of 4/4, rightly so. In the final line Elverum, a white father, picks up the inquiry Tuck and



NIGHT
PALACE

Yang choose not to pursue, about the sacrifices decolonization will require of settlers. “I show the kid how to give up everything,” he sings, his voice rising such that by the end of the line he sounds more vulnerable — but also lighter, freed.





“Right Conduct”

James Tate

A boy and a girl were playing together when they spotted a woodchuck and started chasing it. The woodchuck's burrow was at the edge of the forest and it safely disappeared into it, but the children did not see this and kept running into the forest. In no time at all they realized that they were lost and they sat down and began to cry. After a while, a man appeared and this frightened them all the more. They had been warned a thousand times never to talk to strangers. He assured them that he would not hurt them and that, in fact, he would lead them back to their home. They agreed to walk with him, but when he tried to make conversation they would not reply. "You act like you're prisoners of war," he said. "Not much fun for me, but I guess that's good. When I was a kid my mother also told me never to talk to strangers. But I did anyway, because that's how you learn stuff. I always thought the stuff my ma and pa tried to teach me was boring. But from strangers you could learn the secret stuff, like how to break into a locked door or how to tame a wild stallion, stuff you could use in life." It made sense what he was saying, but the kids were sworn to silence, a brain-washed silence in a shrunken world from which they could already faintly hear their mother scolding them.



*In Tension aspires to be a place-based project, and as such, we must state that “Bloomington” and “Indiana” should not exist. At the deepest fulfillment of our liberatory project, these entities would be dissolved. The devastating impact of European colonization, settlement, and industrialization on the land, its human and nonhuman inhabitants, and the way in which we relate to it cannot be overstated. This land is unceded territory of the Myaamia, Kaskaskia, Kiikaapoi, šaawanwaki, Neshnabek, Wandat, Waayaahatanwa, Peeyankihšiki, Peewaareewa, Lenape, and others.
Toward the end of the U.S. and every empire.*