

Applied Anarchy

Organizing & Movement-Building for Liberation

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Moving from ideas to action has always been central to the anarchist project. Our work has long been inspired by visions of a transformed world, one in which prevailing institutions and relationships are overturned to create more liberatory ways of living and relating to each other.

Yet powerful forces stand in our way. Not only the entrenched ruling order with its vast resources including its repressive apparatus and cultural spectacle, but perhaps even more of a bulwark against change, a deeply ingrained mass culture of submission to authority which generates a fear of living liberated lives.

Overcoming these substantial obstacles requires inspiring hope and spurring people to action. On a grand scale this means demonstrations, strikes, and mass actions involving millions of people as a prelude to dismantling the current ruling racket.

Getting to a place where this is even imaginable requires a lot of groundwork: building effective grassroots self-organization in our workplaces and communities, creating networks of people to support struggles through sharing knowledge, experiences, and skills, and winning small victories that open the way for larger ones. All that will develop the necessary infrastructure to make radical change a reality.

The nuts-and-bolts of this is organizing and movement-building, a strategic way to getting things done. At its heart, organizing is built upon personal relationships. It involves working with our friends, neighbors, and co-workers to solve common problems by taking action in ways that confront structures of power and oppression.

The stakes are high for anarchists right now. Not only are we confronting the traditional establishment forces in their various guises, but the turmoil of our current times has led to an environment where fascists, social democrats, and authoritarian socialists are also on the rise.

We need to provide a powerful and effective alternative to prevent people from falling into the quagmires of right-wing nationalism, dead-end liberal reformism, or totalitarian communist delusions.

The organizing process depends on bringing in new people, getting them involved as equals and comrades, building up their skills and confidence as we increase ours. New people who can in turn bring others into the fold themselves allow a campaign to expand exponentially, paving the way for victories that would otherwise be unattainable.

Organizing and movement-building are crucial tools for advancing anarchist ideas and tactics within broader campaigns, creating an influence beyond our numbers and bringing in new comrades.

To that end, we've put together a series of articles on organizing and movement-building for publication in this issue and future editions.

We spoke with a variety of activists with the goal of sparking a broader anarchist dialogue about strategies for building a revolutionary movement. We hope you find them useful.

Phil Bailey and Carl Hughes are Detroit anarchists who have been involved in a variety of organizing efforts, including labor, anti-war, anti-police brutality and media activism.

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