

# Pushing on What's Falling

## Uprisings in a Crumbling Empire

Bryan Tucker

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Before the global pandemic and waves of insurrection, gaps in the empire's dominion were already widening. The culture wars were escalating, tensions between older and younger generations mounting, the health care system showing its serious inadequacies, psychiatric problems becoming ubiquitous, and environmental devastation rapidly accelerating.

However, during the Covid-induced lockdown, collective interdependencies were acknowledged and initiated as neighbors helped and depended upon each other, as people volunteered to deliver necessities to the elderly and others unable to obtain things on their own, solidarities were established in shared refusals to pay rent as a slower and simpler way took hold. Local businesses disappeared, unable to get funding to stay afloat while megacorporations received billions in aid. And, who the rulers deem expendable or maximally exploitable became even more unmistakable. Overall, many basics came into focus for many people in a short period of time.

In the initial waves of the spring insurrections, the National Guard was utilized as never before. Military equipment, and not just the type typically used by the police, was brought to Washington DC and other places. A bunker was retreated to, curfews implemented, and extra fences built around the White House.

The extent of police brutality—the flash-banging, beating, groping, tear gassing, pepper spraying, shooting, blinding—in response to the uprisings, evidenced a desperation within the U.S. political and capitalist classes not present in nearly a century. The irony and impotence of utilizing repressive force attempting to quell immense revolts that were sparked by the use of repressive force, speaks for itself.

The State, much to its chagrin, was overpowered and ultimately forced to back off to prevent being even more fully overrun. It was quite a sight to observe terrified cops traveling only in large groups when the uprisings were hitting at full force. It is also quite a sight to witness police flip-outs when their scripts get flipped, when their tantrums, sucker punches, and various riotous behaviors are recorded and circulated, not dissimilar to the flip-outs by the elite when their scripts get flipped about who is looting who.

With the uprisings helping to shine a light on the disciplining, encaging, murdering security state that we live under, it is hard to miss that the once monolithic myth of freedom has been deflated. The formerly coterminous myth of prosperity has suffered from deflation, prodded by the experiences of most people's day to day lives. What the capitalist state mainly offers is readily apparent: austerity, repression, incarceration, and extinction.

De-colonization philosopher Frantz Fanon wrote that "We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe." And, for many, a line was drawn recently, drawn at the disallowance of breath. At a sadistic, public lynching in the street, at the mushrooming of a pneumonia causing virus without adequate breathing supports, at the lengthening list of people murdered as if their lives did not matter.

It is possible, as time goes by, that fewer and fewer people will be less and less willing to act as the pawns we commonly refer to as cops, just as American military personnel have become decreasingly disposed to go out on suicide missions in the Middle East. As of late, police have quit in protest, out of fear, and due to changes in laws.

They have been striking, no-showing for shifts, and refusing to patrol. Others have been fired or charged with crimes.

The trajectories and objectives of many of the movements, such as restricting the scope of policing activities and redirecting funding into health care, housing, and other socially stabilizing services, are solid and pertinent. Getting the state's enforcers to back off is a necessary, basic aspect of the struggle for liberation.

It seems that time will tell if cultural revolutions, enlarged interstitial spaces and autonomous zones, increases in radical organizing, backlashes of repression, or some combination of them will result from these movements.

Perhaps the future will continue to be a battle between mutual assistance of the police employing the merging of forces from differing jurisdictions to intensify and extend repression. Or of traditional anarchist mutual aid: care for the sick, food for the hungry, and enough for everyone.

At the moment, the momentum is favoring the latter.

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