

BREAKING THE SPELL

A HISTORY OF
ANARCHIST FILMMAKERS,
VIDEOTAPE GUERRILLAS,
AND DIGITAL NINJAS

CHRIS ROBÉ

Praise for *Breaking the Spell*

“Christopher Robé’s meticulously researched *Breaking the Spell* traces the roots of contemporary, anarchist-inflected video and Internet activism and clearly demonstrates the affinities between the anti-authoritarian ethos and aesthetic of collectives from the ’60s and ’70s—such as Newsreel and the Videofreex—and their contemporary descendants. Robé’s nuanced perspective enables him to both celebrate and critique anarchist forays into guerrilla media. *Breaking the Spell* is an invaluable guide to the contemporary anarchist media landscape that will prove useful for activists as well as scholars.”

—Richard Porton, author of *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*

“*Breaking the Spell* is a highly readable history of U.S. activism against neo-liberal capitalism from the perspective of ‘Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas,’ the subtitle of the book. Based on ninety interviews, careful readings of hundreds of videos, and his own participant observation, Robé links the development of better-known video makers such as Videofreex, Paper Tiger Television, ACT UP and Indymedia with activist media makers among key protest movements, such as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit, Oregon’s Cascadia Forest Defenders, the day workers of Voces Mobiles/Mobile Voices in Los Angeles, and the indigenous youth in Outta Your Backpack Media. Underscored by significant tensions of class, race/ethnicity, and gender among the groups and the videos discussed, Robé traces the continuing concerns with radical horizontalism in the making of media and of collective organizing against the state and capitalist institutions. Drawing on autonomist Marxist theory, the profiles clearly demonstrate how media-making has become integral to all forms of anti-capitalist mobilizing, as well as to the formation of new collective subjectivities and cultures.”

—Dorothy Kidd, professor and chair, Department of Media Studies,
University of San Francisco

“Christopher Robé’s *Breaking the Spell* takes off where John Downing’s *Radical Media* leaves us: continuing a history of North American

movement-based media to include today's internet, memes, and other forms of radically accessible digital media. In the process, he fills in many critical blanks through a unique method that incorporates ethnographic research with activist media makers, generous close readings of a range of videos, a writer's fine words detailing history, and a political theorist's command of anarchist and anarchist-inflected movements since the 1960s. Ever attentive to the contradictions within Left organizations, particularly those built within the network logics of neoliberalism, Robé carefully details both the repetitive exclusions of women, people of color, queers, working people, and people of the global South from many of these otherwise worthy activist traditions, while as carefully pointing to movement-inspired solutions. He demonstrates how messy media activism creates powerful video work where process rules over product, where subjectivity and collectivity are nurtured and developed, and where production and reception are themselves a form of prefigurative politics where video does not merely represent but is activism. A great read for scholars, activists, and media makers alike, *Breaking the Spell* attends closely to the hard questions of media activism: the role of violence, aesthetics, media literacy, and access within social justice movements and their media."

—Alexandra Juhasz, media activist and author of *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video*

Breaking the Spell

**A History of Anarchist Filmmakers,
Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas**

Chris Robé



*Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas,
and Digital Ninjas*
Chris Robé

ISBN: 978-1-62963-233-9
Library of Congress Control Number: 2016948158

© Chris Robé
This edition copyright ©2017 PM Press
All Rights Reserved

Cover by John Yates/stealworks.com
Layout by Jonathan Rowland

PM Press
PO Box 23912
Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed by the Employee Owners of Thomson-Shore in Dexter, Michigan.
www.thomsonshore.com

Contents

	Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction:	The Emergence of Video Activism	1
Chapter One:	Autonomous Rebellions: The Twilight of Leninism, Film, and Unions	21
Chapter Two:	Video Guerrillas, Eco-Media, and Exodus	67
Chapter Three:	Action=Life: AIDS Video Activism, the Gulf Crisis, and Satellite Distribution	121
Chapter Four:	From the Forests to the Streets: Eco-Video Activism and Indymedia	175
Chapter Five:	Forging into the Twenty-First Century: Meme Creation and Community-Based Organizations	261
Chapter Six:	Video Ninjas and the Work of Franklin López	337
Conclusion:	Future Occupations	397
	Select Bibliography	411
	Notes	427
	Index	463

Dedicated to:

Dana and Nora, who made this book possible in more ways than they will ever know

and

Alex D., who left this world all too soon but whose influence lives on in all of those he befriended and taught

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with any book, the production of this work was a collective endeavor. First of all, I would like to thank all of the activists who gave their time to speak with me to share their knowledge concerning the work they and others do and the world that they envision: Franklin López, Dawn Paley, Brandon Jourdan, Randy Rowland, Jeff Keating, Dru Oja Jay, Evan Henshaw-Plath, Steev Hise, Jason Jones, Beka Economopoulos, Tim Lewis, Patrick Reinsborough, Vlad Teichberg, Bryan Mercer, Rebekah Scotland, Shivaani Selvaraj, Tim Ream, Melissa Hill, Dan Feidt, Ronald Blount, Thomas Robinson, Scott Beiben, Lizzie Cole, Eric Galatas, Jay Sand, Kyle Harris, Rachel Rinaldo, Christopher Mitchell, Klee Benally, Liz Canner, BHT Brian Bailitz, Robert Wyrod, Andrew Lynn, Elizabeth Press, DeeDee Halleck, Flux Rostrum, Hilary Bain Lindsay, Megan Cotton-Kinch, Justin Saunders, Steve Pierce, Amanda Garcia, Tracy Glynn, Enid Godtree, Carla Bergman, Carlos Pareja, Belinda Rawlins, Antoine Haywood, Chris Burnett, Sascha Meinrath, Sasha Costanza-Chock, Kurt Jensen, Jeff Taylor, Kari Johnson, Chemo, Jim Flynn, Tim Groves, John Slade, Adriene Jenik, Rob Robinson, Dan Marcus, Jean Rice, Joseph Midgley, Sam Miller, Ann Dorsey, Josh Laughlin, Sue Salinger, Lauren Beaton, Jon Stout, Lauren Regan, John Zerzan, Robert West, Judith Helfand, Josh Wolf, Leeanne Siart, Randy Shadowwalker, Sean O'Siochru, Peter Gessner, Stewart Bird, René Lichtman, Luke Tripp, Cindy Noblitt, Dan Georgakas, Mike Hamlin, Peter Werbe, and Nick Medvecky. To all the others who spoke with me anonymously during fleeting moments while engaged in protest actions, in between panel sessions, or the like, your insights were equally invaluable. I would also like to thank all those at PM Press who supported this project and other radical endeavors.

Various archives played important roles in writing this book. I want to thank: Philip Heslip at the New York Public Library; Bruce Tabb at the University of Oregon Special Collections; Tom Colley at Video Data Bank,

Chicago; and Brent W. Philips, Lisa Darms, and Laura Newsome at the Fales Collection, New York University. Also, I would like to give a shout out to the librarians at Florida Atlantic University who work in the Interlibrary Loan Department and had to deal with my seemingly endless requests.

Many comrades in arms helped me talk through my ideas and read various drafts of the manuscripts. John F. Lennon, who I have known since graduate school, discussed the book on many a hike and in many barrooms across the United States. Chuck Kleinhans read drafts from many of the book's sections, offering his surly yet invaluable comments. Alexandra Juhasz generously copied the videos she made in Manhattan during the 1990s while offering kind words of encouragement. Todd Wolfson and Peter Funke have been vital writing partners and helped me conceptualize the material concerning Media Mobilizing Project in our coauthored pieces. Stephen Charbonneau, a valuable colleague, friend, and musical partner, was engaged in a project parallel to my own that allowed us to thoroughly explore our related approaches and research/writing difficulties. Gerald Sim, another colleague and friend, is a font of Marxist theory whose presence always improves one's intellectual rigor. Alex Doty, whose sudden death stunned many of us, provided much encouragement during this research and throughout my academic career. It is fitting that my final memory of Alex is of him regaling me over drinks with his involvement in ACT UP during our final conference together. Dan Marcus, Angela Aguayo, and Steve Macek continue to advance understandings of media activism at the various academic conferences they attend and helped me conceptualize the book through informal discussions.

Funding was in part provided by a Morrow Fund Grant, School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, Florida Atlantic University and a Faculty Research Support Award, the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, Florida Atlantic University. A year sabbatical during the 2014–2015 year allowed for the completion of the project whereby my wife, Dana Eades, also provided needed funding to make up for my reduced, already meager salary.

I would also like to thank my mom, Barbara Robé, who has always fostered my intellectual curiosity and love of the arts.

Most importantly, Dana and our daughter Nora provided an incredible amount of support for the work conducted here. Their compassion and intelligence have made me a better and more understanding person, which carries over into my teaching and scholarship. This book is for them. P.S. Dana indexed both this book and my earlier one, which needless to say is an incredible amount of tedious work at which she somehow excels.

INTRODUCTION

THE EMERGENCE OF VIDEO ACTIVISM

ROMNEYVILLE WAS JUST GETTING INTO ACTION. ITS SITE MARKED a makeshift encampment that served as a base for those who were protesting against the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida. A Christian-based Army-Navy surplus store donated the land for its use. Activists christened the grounds “Romneyville” in homage to the Hoovervilles that cropped up in the early 1930s around Depression-ravaged America, ramshackle testaments to the failed policies of an impotent and out-of-touch president. History, once again, seemed to be on the verge of repeating itself.

Around forty cramped tents clustered over the well-trodden ground and an eight-foot stage stood against the store’s left side where musical acts played at night and political agitation was incited during the day. A police helicopter circled overhead as a line of cops guarded the perimeter of a parking lot about twenty feet away from the camp. Overheated protesters sat before them underneath the shade of a patch of trees. Cops and activists mutually regarded one another with wary indifference.

On the north side of Romneyville sat a repurposed school bus with “Mobile Broadcast News” stenciled along its side. It was the brainchild of Flux Rostrum, an alternative video maker who had been called into action in response to the government misinformation and repression against dissenting views following the September 11 attacks. Flux recounts, “After 9/11 I felt that I had to do something about the corruption and lies coming at us from our government and mainstream media.”¹ The bus contained a few tables, an editing platform, internet access, and a general comfy atmosphere for someone who inhabited it for a good part of the year. Rostrum traveled across the country documenting various activist actions and other

events concerning everyday people enduring the trials and tribulations of twenty-first-century America. In Tampa, Flux worked as the video arm of Free Speech TV, a Boulder, Colorado-based alternative television network that had gone through some hard times due to the economic downturn and had to lay off much of its staff. The bus ran on used vegetable oil, with a grill on its side that cooked pancakes and other vegan items free of charge for the camp's participants. Anarchism in action, as Flux would relate.

Meanwhile, around eighty men and women, mostly in their twenties and largely white, boarded an idling bus on the camp's south side. Members of Earth First! and Occupy Wall Street (OWS) chartered it. A volatile cocktail of hemp and dreadlocks mixed with Converse and thick-framed glasses along its aisle as people nervously readied themselves for the protest: scrawling lawyers' numbers along their arms in black permanent marker; calling friends with updates; and inflating one's confidence with tales of past actions. Flux hobbled aboard fully loaded with video equipment, grumbling that it better be worth his time.

Although it was announced that the bus was taking us to "support a protest action," the destination remained unknown for the protection of the people participating in the "central action." But I had ferreted out earlier our general route by piecing together information from people I had spoken with from assorted protest camps and Café Hey, the only nearby restaurant that catered to a vegan diet, which by default became a de facto base for activists. We would be traveling to an Ikea store near Route 41 and park ominously in its lot, threatening to unleash a wave of protest into its showrooms. We served as a diversion from the real action occurring ten miles away at the TECO Big Bend Power Station, where six different protesters locked themselves down in two separate groups, sleeping dragon-style with PVC pipes covering their chained arms: a media stunt to draw attention to the stations' reliance on dirty coal and equally filthy fundraising connections with Republican presidential candidates. After they were locked down, we would depart Ikea to offer our support and hopefully deter police violence against them.

But as people gathered into their seats anticipating a quick departure while continuing their adrenaline-fueled banter, the bus remained idling. Bob, a key member of Occupy Wall Street, stood alongside the bus giving an interview to a local news crew.² In general, he possessed too off-putting a demeanor to be the spokesperson for anything. He always seemed shifty, rarely looking people in the eyes, and woodenly recited his lines as if from a script. Understandably, some of the Earth Firsters were upset by his actions. A woman in front of me shouted, "If I wasn't on the bus, we would leave.

Bob is not more important.” A bearded guy rhetorically questioned, “Why the fuck was he speaking to the media?” The woman emphasized, “No one should be talking to the media about this action.” Having whipped up the remaining Earth Firsters into a frenzy, a large contingent of the bus began chanting, “Media whore! Media whore! Media whore!” until Bob boarded.

This was a strange experience, since I assumed that Earth First! was one of the more savvy movements to use both alternative and commercial media for its direct actions. Kevin Michael DeLuca, for example, asserts that activist groups like it, along with Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, were some of the first and most sophisticated in using video to relate their message to a general public. The reasoning goes: in a highly mediated world, activists need to redeploy spectacle and imagery in concentrated forms to efficiently mass distribute their message among competing media outlets and platforms. DeLuca calls such uses “image events.” He explains, “Radical environmental groups practice image events not merely to call attention to particular problems but also to challenge the discourse of industrialism. . . . With such practices, they are attempting to create social movement.”³

But the consternation on the bus suggested otherwise. The fact that consensus hadn’t been reached between OWS and Earth First! about speaking to the press beforehand struck me as a significant oversight for two supposedly media-driven groups. Yet, as we will see throughout this book, activist media strategies are often much messier on the ground at the moment of their occurrence than when discussed from a distance and with the benefit of hindsight.

In particular, a vexed relationship surrounds media-driven activism’s relation to the commercial media. Although activists often speak about commercial media in critical terms and distinguish it from their own use of alternative media, whether it be print, video, blogs, or the like, during the heat of protest, most realize how commercial and alternative media bleed into and mutually shape one another. Both commercial and alternative media appropriate each other’s styles and footage. Many participants within alternative media had or still have day jobs in commercial media. The desire to better mass-distribute their works preoccupies many video activists. Furthermore, as Alexandra Juhasz notes, commercial and alternative media “can espouse conservative ideology; ‘alternative’ videos can have budgets larger than those of the ‘mainstream,’ and can make a lot more money.”⁴ This book will explore specific case studies to see how various groups negotiate this complex terrain of video and digital media activism.

Less in doubt, however, is the use of video by participants. Multiple screens periodically winked to life throughout the bus as Earth Firsters and OWS participants checked the reliability of their handheld video cameras or video capabilities of their smart phones. These devices would be used later to document the protest, as well as being held like digital talismans by protesters to ward off police violence or, in a worst-case scenario, document it.

This observation brings me to one of the central claims of the book, that anarchist-inflected practices have increasingly structured movement-based video activism. Earth First! and OWS, it should be stressed, are both organized around anarchist lines. Any group of individuals who claim an affinity with either organization can establish their own cell. Both groups espouse consensus decision-making, shun hierarchy, and promote direct action that supposedly empowers and engages participants while they attempt to carve out a better world in the present. Although their practices might often fall short of such ideals, their aspirations remain important.

Of course, informal structures have often guided activist media productions of the past. But throughout the 1960s and onward, accompanying the rise of digital technology, was a growing disillusionment by some on the Left with hierarchical organizational structures. This unease accelerated anarchist-inflected practices among much movement-based video activism and new social movements in general.⁵ The convergence of digital technology into cellphones and handheld devices allowed smaller groups to produce such works and transfer skills among its participants. Although serious socioeconomic limits still curtail equal access to video production for historically disenfranchised people, the technology's expanded availability and portability have nonetheless drastically enlarged its potential use by everyday people compared to previous use of 16mm and 8mm filmmaking.

Before proceeding, I would like to offer a few caveats about how I am defining anarchist-inflected practices. One, like any "ism," anarchism has many varying strains. *Anarcho-syndicalism* strongly allies itself with a socialist position whereas *anarcho-primitivism* tends to be critical of socialism and civilization as a whole. Writers like Hakim Bey and collectives like CrimethInc. subscribe to more romantic visions of anarchism that tend to overvalorize individual agency as leading to systemic resistance, as we will see in Chapters Four and Six. Others like the Turbulence Collective and the Free Association advocate more poststructuralist positions that highlight the theoretical links between such theorists like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Antonio Negri with anarchist practices and contexts.

Despite these differences, collectives and individuals who share anarchist affinities often uphold three tenets: consensus decision-making, nonhierarchical structures, and direct-action tactics.

Although in reality new power imbalances may form and consensus may not be reached, aspirations toward these more egalitarian structures and participants' direct involvement remain constant goals or at least as reminders of the egalitarian society desired. As Uri Gordon proposes, "Such an approach promotes anarchy as culture, as a lived reality that pops up everywhere in new guises, adapts to different cultural climates, and should be extended and developed experimentally for its own sake, whether or not we believe it can become, in some sense, the prevailing mode of society."⁶ Anarchist affinities, in other words, are prefigurative attempts to actualize the world we desire in the present and to reject the notion that the political ends are more important than the means. As we will see, even when certain groups have recognized the limits of such anarchist-inflected practices for organizing purposes (and there are many), their practices are overdetermined by their earlier anarchist-inflected experiences and always held in productive tension with them.

John Downing noted similar anarchist-based tendencies among activist media makers worldwide in his 1984 book *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication*. In it, he emphasizes four areas:

- the importance of cultural politics over reductive economic thinking;
- a critique of the centralized party and vanguard politics;
- the prioritization of social formations over rigid institutional structures; and
- the incorporation of prefigurative politics.⁷

This book updates Downing's original insights by exploring some of the central developments of anarchist-inflected video activist practices from the mid-twentieth century into the early twenty-first century as they became more integrated into newer digital technology and platforms.

Another caveat: I am emphasizing groups and individuals with anarchist affinities, not necessarily self-identified anarchists. As much as anarchism proper has blossomed during the past fifty years, anarchist affinities have even more significantly been adopted by activist groups and media makers who wouldn't primarily identify themselves as anarchists.

As Andrew Cornell has shown, the 1940s marked a transitional moment for U.S. anarchism as it moved away from labor organizing and

allied itself with radical pacifism and more cultural concerns of the middle-class. Much of its energy was gradually rerouted into practices of cultural transformation that revolve around the arts, sexuality, education, and lifestyle. This led to the flowering of anarchist ideas among mass movements of the 1960s, even though most did not self-identify as explicitly anarchist.⁸ New organizational structures proliferated that rejected explicitly hierarchical structures for direct action and participatory democracy, which often used consensus decision-making. For example, these principles were embodied in the early actions and rhetoric of New Left groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC's most successful direct-action campaign of occupying lunch counters led to its initial adherence to decentralization.⁹ Consensus decision-making provided for developmental power by training those who had been historically disenfranchised from decision-making into the governing process, thereby undercutting a sense of helplessness by making them active agents of social change.

Not coincidentally, this mid-decade resurgence of the “new anarchism,” a somewhat inaccurate descriptor, has a more decidedly middle-class and white background than its earlier working-class, immigrant variant. As a result, a series of different racial and class privileges haunt its practices that are predominantly adopted by the college educated and students who are cushioned by middle- and upper-class security and slotted for elite positions of power. Although the economic and employment opportunities afforded college students and the college educated have seriously diminished recently compared to their mid-twentieth-century precursors, those having attended college still maintain significant class privileges that the working poor and working class generally lack.

The anarchist-inflected practices that were ushered in by the new anarchism and integrated into many of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s were further bolstered through the restructuration of capitalism into neoliberal directions from the 1970s onward. Although historians like Thomas J. Sugrue have demonstrated how restructuration of the economy through downsizing, outsourcing, and automation began as early as the late 1940s, the full onslaught of withering state support for social services, the increasingly precarious employment defining middle-class existence, the evisceration and loss of job benefits, and the privatization of public goods became fully apparent during the 1970s and afterward.¹⁰

Many academics such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, and David Harvey have viewed the acceleration of neoliberal

practices in the 1970s as capitalism's response to the growing global revolts of the 1960s against the paternalism, colonialism, alienation, and authoritarianism generated by an industrialized economy and Eurocentric outlook.¹¹ The temporary agreement industrial capitalism struck with unions was torn asunder as a new generation of workers made demands that challenged both union and corporate structures alike. Anticolonial movements flared up in Cuba, Algeria, the Congo, and Vietnam. Students increasingly rejected the growing corporatization of university life that prepared them for bureaucratized futures.

Chiapello and Boltanski make a convincing case that capital reabsorbed these systemic critiques through neoliberal restructuring that neutralized their anticapitalist sentiments. They note how capitalism disarticulated a social critique of it that argued for its abolition or moderation through state involvement from an artistic critique that demanded flexibility, freedom, and pleasure: "It was by opposing a social capitalism planned and supervised by the state . . . and leaning on the artistic critique (autonomy and creativity) that the new spirit of capitalism gradually took shape at the end of the crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, and undertook to restore the prestige of capitalism."¹² They continue elsewhere, "By helping overthrow the conventions bound up with the old domestic world, and also to overcome the inflexibilities of the industrial order—bureaucratic hierarchies and standardized production—the artistic critique opened up an opportunity for capitalism to base itself on new forms of control and commodity new, more individualized and 'authentic' goods."¹³

David Harvey has defined the devastating effects of this paradigm shift toward neoliberalism or what he calls flexible accumulation: "Flexible accumulation appears to imply relatively high levels of 'structural' (as opposed to 'frictional') unemployment, rapid destruction and reconstruction of skills, modest (if any) gains in the real wage, and the rollback of trade union power—one of the political pillars of the Fordist regime."¹⁴ This has created a greater sense of uncertainty and dread among most employees and an almost pathological need by workers to constantly retrain and update skills in the hopes of anticipating future job trends. As Franco Berardi notes, "Precariousness is . . . the dark core of the capitalist production in the sphere of the global network where a flow of fragmented recombinant info-labor continuously circulates."¹⁵ For example, according to one survey, as of 2010, 62 percent of U.S. retail jobs are part-time and "two thirds of retail managers prefer to maintain a large workforce, to maximize scheduling flexibility, rather than increase hours for individual workers."¹⁶

A qualitative transformation had occurred leading various theorists to differentiate the new economy from the past by labeling it either postindustrial, service-based, information driven, or network oriented.¹⁷

Yet these economic transformations do not represent an entirely new form of exploitation that suddenly harnessed free labor and affect for profits and blurred work with leisure. As many Autonomist feminists have stressed, unpaid female labor within the familial home has bolstered capitalism for centuries. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James argued back in 1972, “Domestic work produces not merely use values, but is essential to the production of surplus value.”¹⁸ They emphasize “the enormous quantity of social services [like child-rearing, cooking, and laundry] which capitalist organization transforms into privatized activity, putting them on the backs of housewives.”¹⁹ Likewise, Leopoldina Fortunati writes, “The family is the labor market within which these labor-powers must circulate as a presupposition and condition for the existence of both the ‘free’ exchange between male worker and capital and the exchange, mediated by the male worker, between the female house worker and capital.”²⁰

Neoliberalism extends such informal, unpaid or underpaid practices into wider realms of labor that had previously seemed separate from domestic work. As Vicki Mayer writes, “These practices did not so much disappear as transform through social spheres, reemerging in diverse employment markets such as the burgeoning informal economies of the developing world after the 1970s and the service sectors of postindustrial urbanites after the 1980s.”²¹ Free labor has been more fully integrated into neoliberalism whether it be through the wide use of unpaid internships in the professional sector, various forms of wage theft occurring at blue collar workplaces, and the use of cell phones to place workers of all strata permanently on call during their leisure hours.

This type of labor still remains deeply gendered, of course, with the lowest paying jobs mainly occupied by women of color, as can be seen in the growth of maquiladoras in northern Mexico and Asia, and the highest paid jobs going predominantly to white, middle-class men, as can be seen operating in the high-tech sector. Similarly, the reliance on free labor within video and digital media activism, which is often idealized by participants as subverting capitalism, should give one room to pause. Instead one needs to explore how such practices might reinscribe problematic gender divisions of labor within them, which we will see occur throughout the book. Although women have unquestionably become central players in video and digital media activism, sexism still haunts it, whether it be

through a woman's lurking sense of insecurity of demonstrating her technological expertise, an almost complete absence of women from the techie community, a dependency on women to do the "housework" of an organization like maintaining the records and cleaning, and women being sexually preyed upon by men. This is not to discredit the video- and internet-related activism discussed in this book but to instead acknowledge how it must negotiate a difficult terrain where sexism and other inequities always risk getting unconsciously perpetuated by activists since such inequities are so deeply embedded within our very lifestyles and surrounding culture.

Also, the rise of a neoliberal, service-based economy in the West does not suggest the elimination of industrial production. One needs to only look to China to see a massive industrial project taking root on a scale never before witnessed.²² As Manuel Castells notes in *The Network Society*, a strengthening of industrial production within Asia and various Third World regions accompanies the growth of the West's service-based economy.²³ But Herbert Schiller stressed, "The information sector also has become indispensable to the rest of the industrial economy. It is the supplier of the computer-directed machinery and instrumentation that is being installed in plants across the country [and world] and thereby becoming the basis of most production."²⁴ In general, neoliberalism has reoriented the entire global economy, the way we conceptualize ourselves, and rerouted our practices. The industrial economy is directed by the currents of the service-based economy and not vice-versa.

Under such conditions, anarchist-inflected practices of video activism and the new social movements get buttressed by the network-like structures of neoliberalism. As Todd Wolfson asserts, activist formations act "as a facsimile of the networked society they exist within. In this sense, [activist] movements both challenge and integrate, sometimes unconsciously, different elements of their social environs."²⁵ One must have a much more dynamic sense of activism's relation to the context from which it emerges and the capitalist practices in which it is embedded.

Many homologies arose between certain strains of the new anarchism and neoliberalism. Both rejected older, industrial-based, vertical models of authority for more network-like structures. While the new anarchism often regards such structures as inherently antiauthoritarian, neoliberalism incorporates authority into new nodal forms. Both reject state authority as intrusive and oppressive upon individual agency. But whereas the new anarchism often views the individual in existentialist terms capable of re-inventing oneself freely if only external constraints were lifted, neoliberalism

promotes the individual as an entrepreneur marshaling personal resources for financial success. Both see lifestyle choices as increasingly important. For many anarchists, lifestyle choices verify one's anarchism by incorporating its politics and practices into everyday routines.²⁶ Neoliberalism, on the other hand, increasingly suffuses individuals' lives with a capitalist outlook that would have been unthinkable earlier, such as directly advertising to children, which was rejected as morally reprehensible and detrimental to children's wellbeing in an earlier era.²⁷ Individual choice, as a result, becomes overvalorized as corporations like Starbucks misleadingly suggest that buying a cup of coffee in a recycled cup is "environmentally friendly," effacing the exploitation of people, land, and animals that coffee production entails.²⁸ Although important differences remain among the varying strains of the new anarchism, and its practices often reveal a hybrid approach that problematizes a purist anarchist understanding, the failure to thoroughly explore the socioeconomic contexts where such anarchist affinities emerge and contest remains a prevalent blind spot within research concerning them.

With the growth of neoliberalism, subjectivity itself becomes a key terrain of struggle as capitalism increasingly infringes upon it. This was a central discovery made by Italian Autonomist Marxists like Franco Berardi, Mario Tronti, Silvia Federici, and Antonio Negri during the 1960s and 1970s as they assisted factory workers, students, and women to break from capital's regime. They saw capital's progression as an increasing encroachment into every aspect of one's life whereby the postindustrial economy moves beyond the point of production to harness people's subjectivities as grist for surplus value. Capital siphons off the labor, creativity, and affects produced by others to produce profit.

Capital's harnessing of profitability from subjectivity itself can be no better exemplified than by the rise of social media, where users become both content producers and consumers. Corporate entities provide platforms where users dedicate untold numbers of hours producing and consuming content, distributing information, and willfully disclosing critical personal data to third-party providers. Leisure and work conflate as production and consumption radically converge, while individuals dedicate untold hours of free labor to the maintenance of such sites, as well as creating detailed digital footprints that capitalism can mine to predict consumer trends, surveil people's whereabouts, and track individual behavior.²⁹ Identity and subjectivity mark a central site of battle since they traverse production and exhibition realms.

As a result, media production becomes a primary strategy where new collective forms of subjectivity might develop and challenge the practices of

neoliberalism, which we will see throughout this book. Media production, distribution, and exhibition and reception are where such critical subjectivities are nurtured and developed. As Franco Berardi, Marco Jacquemet, and Gianfranco Vitali stress in *Ethereal Shadows*: “Media activism seeks to contest domination of the social mind, to broaden spaces of cultural self-organization and to give life to social networks for the sharing of skills and knowledge.”³⁰ Not coincidentally, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the underground press, cinema, and radio globally flourished, as resistance movements increasingly recognized the importance of seizing alternative media as a part of its fight.

This is not to say that earlier fights against capitalism have not involved organizing outside the workplace. David Harvey makes a convincing case that the most successful resistances against capitalism always integrated workplace concerns with wider community issues.³¹ For example, one of the strongest unions in America, UAW Local 600 at the River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan, simultaneously fought against housing and workplace discrimination in the 1940s, thus linking campaigns occurring at the point of production with those outside of it.³²

But in a neoliberal world where workers are increasingly fragmented from any kind of collective identity through antiunion practices and the use of information and communications technology that no longer requires coworkers to share a physical space, where social space is progressively ambushed by advertisements and a commodified outlook, where production and consumption, labor and leisure endlessly seep into one another, new sites of unity must be established.

Media production takes on heightened importance in a neoliberal regime. As Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein write, the communication industries “are integral to the expanding centralizations of productive capital and its corollary, the extending technical divisions of labor. And they are even more integral to the expanding centralizations of financial capital and its corollary.”³³ These communications industries attempt to establish subjectivities that are compliant with the practices and ideologies of neoliberalism, as commercial film, television, radio, and internet platforms often promote commodified understandings of existence and limited predisposed ways of interaction. For example, I recall a commercial screening of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* in 2004 where a local “independent” theater in rural Pennsylvania disavowed the Left politics of the film by distributing a sheet of counterarguments to viewers of the film’s indictment of George W.

Bush's policies. The theater's owner was alarmed not only by the film's anti-Bush content but also by the way in which the film served as a mobilizing event for MoveOn.org to rally around and establish pro-Democrat phone banks and house parties. The film's content and MoveOn.org's mobilizing around the film were rather moderate compared to more radical critiques and countercinema practices of groups like the New York Film and Photo League in the 1930s, Newsreel in the 1960s and 1970s, and Media Mobilizing Project in the present. Yet they were unorthodox enough from the commodified ways in which the theater normally functioned to force its owner to engage in defensive maneuvers to disavow any implicit support the screening of the film might hold. Such a moment dramatically exposes the implicit ideological struggle that a seemingly innocuous film screening holds. It also reveals how heavily entrenched some supposedly "independent" theaters are in the commodified ways of film viewing and fearful of any content and viewing practices that veer too left of center.

Alternative media production therefore plays an important corrective role to combat such messaging and commodified practices on a grassroots and local level. Yet the risk of all radical media is that its current configurations are in part determined by a neoliberal context. Media activists' increasing access to and use of relatively inexpensive digital media technology like camcorders, editing software, and computers was made possible by multinational corporations making available in select markets cheap consumer technology. It is no coincidence that Samsung and Sony were strong supporters of video artists like Nam June Paik since his incorporation and popularization of their equipment through his artistic work was viewed as free advertising.³⁴ Since technology like the Porta Pak was first made widely available within the United States and Canada and its \$1,500–2,000 price tag largely ensured only those with the requisite cultural and financial capital could purchase it, its initial presence ended up reinscribing varying degrees of gender, racial, and class privileges and hierarchies into its activist uses. This does not make such video-based activism deterministically appropriated by capital and become nothing more than "Sunday tinkering on the periphery of the system," as Jean Baudrillard might charge.³⁵ But it does give one room to pause about how seeming binaries between capitalism and anarchist-inflected video activism blur as they become mutually dependent to an extent.

For example, we will see how the video-making practices introduced by the video guerrillas in the 1970s that relied upon free labor, blurred the realms of work and entertainment, and opposed unionization became the

new paradigm for present-day commercial film and media production that predominantly relies upon the casualization of labor and the exploitation of a vast horde of underpaid or unpaid interns hoping to break into the business.³⁶ As John Caldwell and Vicki Mayer have shown, outsourcing, the growth of nonunion productions, nomadic lifestyles in search of future employment, and spec work have become defining features of commercial production practices.³⁷ Because of the nebulous relations between video activism and capitalism, we need to recognize how neoliberalism is a much more dialectical terrain than some of its critics assert. It both forecloses and simultaneously opens up possibilities through its own practices, just as Marx claimed about capitalism in general.³⁸ It both allows for the burgeoning of video activism to challenge some elements of capitalist life, as well as appropriating elements of video activism back into commercial media forms and production practices.

Although this book primarily focuses on video production and some later developments of internet-related digital media production, I want to emphasize that their uses accompany a whole host of other more traditional media-making and communication practices such as creating newsletters, speaking on a one-to-one basis, and the use of body language. Video and digital media technology should not be seen as some kind of panacea for collective organizing and activist engagement. Instead, their uses accompany, accentuate, and at times repurpose more traditional forms of on the ground organizing through word-of-mouth, print publications, radio broadcasts, and simply using one's body to visibly signify one's resistance. As we will see through the various case studies in this book, video-making and digital media production intersect with a whole host of activist practices and uses of other media. Therefore, the book balances a more traditional film studies approach that closely analyzes the videos being produced with a more cultural studies/ethnographic methodology based upon interviews, participant observation, and archival work that explores the practices that make such videos possible.

An ethnographic approach is particularly well suited to study activist culture where many of its participants wouldn't primarily define themselves as video activists, but instead simply as politically engaged people who use video or any other type of media applicable to assist in collective mobilization, political education, and other activist activities. Oftentimes the video produced is not considered the most important part of the process. Instead its production, distribution, and reception practices are seen as vital means in mobilizing people, distributing information, and forming new resistant collective subjectivities. Rather than starting with media

texts and filling in the historical background around them as is often done in humanities-based media studies approaches, analysis must instead begin on a broader cultural level that first establishes the cultural politics and material practices of the activists under examination to see how media is embedded within their campaigns, actions, and self-identification.

This leads me to the second central claim of the book: activist video does not simply represent collective actions and events but also serves as a form of activist practice in and of itself, both at the moment of recording and during its later distribution and exhibition. We can see this in operation by returning back to the 2012 protests at the RNC in Tampa. After the protesters locked themselves down in front of the power plant, our bus arrived about a mile and a half outside the plant. The police cordoned off a dirt road leading to the plant. But we simply ignored the barricade, flooding around their bodies. Concerned that I might be walking into our own entrapment, I frequently phoned a friend located just outside the city limits who was watching various live feeds of the protest on the internet. He confirmed my worst fear: a massive battalion of cops was waiting for us where the action was taking place. Multiple times throughout the day, my friend relayed vital information that he gleaned from the live feeds but were not being related on the ground. For example, he heard that the police would release the six protesters who locked themselves down in front of the power plant if we all left, which was only related at the site of the protest twenty minutes later. This experience reveals how video and internet-based digital technology can provide protesters with vital information to inform their actions. By creating a relay between cell phones and live feeds, activists can better strategize their future actions and tactics. Video and digital media become a part of the protest action, as well as representing it.

Clearly, using media as a form of activist practice is not unique to video and has a long prehistory. Lenin, for example, in *What Is to Be Done?* extensively expounds upon newspaper production and distribution as crucial in galvanizing collective action and sustaining solidarity during political lulls and retrenchment.³⁹ Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein emphasized cinema's materialist dimensions when he described it as "a tractor plowing over the audience's psyche in a particular class context."⁴⁰

The flowering of the underground press, cinema, radio, video, and comics during the 1960s and 1970s also reveals how activists likewise saw media-making as a vital practice for collective organizing and agitation. David Armstrong writes about the synergy between activism and media-making of that time: "If activists supply alternative media with a

constituency, alternative media provide activists with a sense of identity and collective purpose. There is a symbiosis between alternative media and alternative culture—an exchange of vital energy that is critical to the health of both.”⁴¹ The rise of relatively affordable and more compact video technology, however, has increased its ability to be integrated into activist practices in ways that film and other media before it could not.

Video’s unique and early ascendance in the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s resulted from three primary developments. First, in 1964 all new television sets had to incorporate UHF and VHF capacity. This provided crucial spectrum space where micro-broadcasts and local and grassroots media could be viewed. Second was the introduction of the Sony Porta Pak in 1968. Although its \$2,000 purchase cost was prohibitive for most individuals, a collective pooling of money made its cutting-edge technology obtainable for those with some means who wanted to work together. Furthermore, despite the initial outlay for the equipment, costs were recouped on the backend as videotape didn’t require expensive processing like film and could be reused as needed. The year 1970 marks an important moment when the first Porta Paks were produced according to an industry-wide standard thus making them finally compatible with one another—something that sorely lacked during their initial appearance and made for difficulties in coordinating equipment. Finally, the fight over and expansion of cable television and public access requirements during the 1970s provided a vital distribution mechanism for videotapes, especially after 1973 when a time-based corrector was introduced to make the broadcast of consumer videotapes easier.

Because of these unique developments within the United States and different but related ones in Canada, the two countries served as the epicenter for the burgeoning guerrilla video movement and subsequent developments related to activist uses of video and digital media technology. As a result, this study primarily focuses on the United States with brief detours into Canada since both countries led many of the central transformations of integrating video into activist practices and newer digital technology. Their privileged global economic positions along with their vast consumer bases that had ready access to credit and higher wages than most other countries encouraged companies like Sony to initially introduce their consumer-based video and digital technology there. Western hegemony gets reinscribed both in the availability of such technology and its early adoption by activists.

The goal of the book is to chart for the first time the historical trajectory of emerging movement-based video activism and its pivotal transformations as it converged with newer technology. It attempts to fill in the historical gaps

by bringing to light unexplored video activist groups such as: the Cascadia Forest Defenders, eco-video activists from Eugene, Oregon; Mobile Voices, Latino day laborers harnessing cell phone technology to combat racism and police harassment in Los Angeles; and Outta Your Backpack Media, indigenous youths from the Southwest who use video to celebrate their culture and fight against marginalization. The book also aims to deepen understanding of more well-researched movements like AIDS video activism, Paper Tiger Television, and Indymedia by situating them within a longer history and wider context of anarchist-inflected video activism.

This is far from an exhaustive study, but instead homes in on in-depth case studies where key transformations take place regarding video and digital media activism. I want to balance historical breadth with deep analysis of the practices and conditions that these various forms of video activism emerged from. Also, as mentioned earlier, I want to relate a close analysis of representative videos from each period with an understanding of how they were produced, distributed, and exhibited. To do so, I not only viewed hundreds of activist videos and films but also conducted over ninety interviews with those involved in video activism, visited multiple archives where videos could be viewed and critical background information could be culled, and conducted numerous participant observations from 2010 to 2016 at the U.S. Social Forum, the Allied Media Conference, the World Social Forum in Montreal, and the protest camps of the 2012 Republican National Convention. By juxtaposing activist practices with the close analysis of media, one can better see the types of visions such practices make possible, as well as foreclose. Similarly, we can explore how material conditions inscribe themselves onto the videos produced. As David James stresses, “A given stylistic vocabulary is never merely itself; rather it is the trace of the social processes that constitute its practice.”⁴² This study is concerned with making the manifold processes of video activism visible by sketching the underlying practices behind the creation of the videos they produce.

The book proceeds chronologically, roughly ordered along the lines of technological developments from film to portable video cameras and cable television to satellite transmission to finally cell phones and the internet. Chapter One reveals the limits surrounding activist uses of film and the global challenges arising over more traditional Left structures occurring throughout the 1960s and 1970s. I assert that Third Cinema, an anti-colonial, politicized approach to filmmaking that emerged during that era within Latin America, the Caribbean, and north Africa, provided a powerful new activist model for politicizing filmmakers and film viewers that

has continuously inspired subsequent video activists. Yet the cumbersome nature of film production, as well as its costly equipment and development costs, made it less than ideal in delivering this vision. The first half of the chapter analyzes Patricio Guzman's *The Battle of Chile*. Its radicalized form not only envisions a collectivized radical viewer but also chronicles the tensions between Salvador Allende's problematic attempts to use the state apparatus for progressive social change with workers' more anarchist-inflected practices of factory and land takeovers. The struggle between Allende and his followers over different organizational tactics allegorizes the global conflicts occurring between an older generation that advocated for more traditional Left institutional structures and a younger generation that wanted to adopt more anarchist-inflected models. Also, the chapter shows how the fact that the film needed to be smuggled out of the country for editing and was not shown in Chile until 1997 reveals the limits of cinematic activism to reach the very constituency it was originally aimed for.

The second half of the first chapter moves to Detroit to focus on the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the making of *Finally Got the News (FGtN)*. Media production provided a central function for the League in mobilizing black workers in resisting both the automakers' and the United Auto Workers' racist practices. Similar to what we see occurring in Chile and in Italy through the formation of Autonomous Marxism, the League precariously balanced its traditional, hierarchical Left organizational form with more anarchist-inflected practices that were emerging on shop floors through a series of revolutionary union movements. The chapter also highlights the League's partnership with an all-white film team from New York Newsreel to create *FGtN*, which provides a unique opportunity to explore how such a partnership raises complex issues about the racial, class, and gendered privileges of radical filmmaking and the nebulous ideological terrain that existed between and among black and white activists within many New Left groups at the time. The desires to make *FGtN* are an extension of those found in Third Cinema: to create a collectively empowered audience. Yet various socioeconomic privileges that undergird radical filmmaking prevent many historically marginalized groups from participating in its creation and will similarly haunt much of the video activism to be explored throughout this book.

Chapter Two chronicles the rise of the video guerrillas and the fight over cable television. I primarily focus on two groups: the Videofreex and Top Value Television (T VTV). The Videofreex were deeply influenced by anarchist-inflected practices of the counterculture that were aimed at

escaping the alienating practices of capitalism. Their desire to conduct media outreach through producing low-powered television, to empower women through the use of video-making, and to live and work communally offers a good cross-section of how video guerrilla practices intersected with the growing ecology, women's liberation, and anarchist movements. TTVT, on the other hand, represents the height of contradictions between activist uses of the new video technology and its gradual absorption into commercial broadcast television. These two groups don't so much oppose one another as represent opposite ends of a spectrum where their practices and white, middle-class privileges merge near the middle.

Chapter Three analyzes a newer form of direct-action AIDS video activism based in New York City made possible by lightweight and less expensive cameras and explores its relationship to other alternative media institutions, like Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) and Deep Dish Television (DDTV), that were crucial in supporting, training, and distributing the work of the video activists of ACT UP/NY. Not coincidentally, anarchist-inflected practices dictated all their organizational structures in their desire to empower everyday people to represent their struggles on videotape and use video production and distribution to create coalitions across diverse constituencies. Furthermore, DDTV's use of satellite broadcast represents a breakthrough in nationally distributing a wide variety of activist tapes, including those created by AIDS activists, to larger audiences and providing a new model of collective video production practices that would be used again in the Seattle WTO protests of 1999. An analysis of the production of the *Gulf Crisis TV Project* will illustrate this new collective form of video-making and distribution. The chapter also chronicles the limits of mass-distributing AIDS activist and other tapes across broadcast television as cultural conservatives eviscerated public support for independent media and attacked any outlook that opposed their own. Finally, the chapter traces the limits of anarchist-inflected AIDS activist video-making in providing outreach to people of color and working-class constituencies who often did not feel comfortable working within such structures.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six address the rise of the internet in assisting the video activism of environmental groups, alter-globalization participants, and more recent independent video makers and community-based organizations that extend media production to historically disenfranchised populations like the working poor, African-Americans, Hispanics, and indigenous groups.

Chapter Four charts the rise of video-based eco-activism located primarily in Eugene, Oregon, and the founding of Indymedia during the

1999 WTO protests in Seattle since both formations share some similarities. Both groups relied upon spectacle-based, direct-action protests and anarchist-inflected media practices. But eco-video activists held a much more skeptical view toward technology and emphasized a place-based form of protest that accentuated the beauty of the old-growth forests they defended, as well as championing a working-class, Pacific Northwest identity. Indymedia, on the other hand, often held a techno-utopian outlook regarding their use of the internet as somehow escaping racial, gender, sexual, and class coordinates while making an abstract appeal to global solidarity. Although both groups fostered collective action, they nonetheless also both overvalorized individual initiative, free labor, and cliquish tendencies that allowed for racial and gender issues to fester and accelerate their downfall. But eco-video activism's creation of a weekly public access show to engage environmental and anarchist communities (along with radio shows and print publications) and Indymedia's collective video productions and use of the internet to distribute activist video and other materials signaled key developments in anarchist-inflected video activism.

Chapters Five and Six chronicle three emergent forms of recent North American video activism. Chapter Five explores the creation of meme organizations like Not an Alternative and SmartMeme that attempt to construct larger narratives that can go viral over the internet and be mass-distributed through commercial media in order to galvanize a wider public to collectively organize and engage in social justice activism. The chapter also charts the rise of community-based skills-sharing groups like Media Mobilizing Project, Outta Your Backpack Media, Mobile Voices, and the Canadian Media Co-op that attempt to empower those who have been historically disenfranchised from not only making media but also having their voices heard and desires and needs taken seriously. These various groups train working-class blacks, Hispanics, and indigenous groups in video and other forms of media production in order to assist them in asserting a sense of autonomy and challenging the racist and classist practices that circumscribe their lives. All these organizations engage in some anarchist-inflected practices. But those particularly concerned with outreach have tempered such practices in attempts to more successfully connect with constituencies that might find such practices alienating and further perpetuate their disenfranchisement.

Chapter Six focuses on the new generation of anarchist video makers like Flux Rostrum, Rick Rowley, and Brandon Jourdan, who are experimenting with form in ways that push activist media in engaging directions

that speak to the desires of younger generations and engage with new social media platforms. It also explores the ways in which the video-making practices intersect with neoliberal workflows that commercial media similarly follows. The bulk of the chapter, however, offers an extended analysis of Franklin López's work, as he is a media maker widely respected by his peers and his output offers a barometer of the innovations of anarchist video-making for the past decade. Additionally, hip-hop, the avant-garde, popular culture, and anarchist traditions all converge within López's work, yielding a compelling hybrid form that's fraught with tensions from its multiple sources. By offering close analysis of some of López's work the chapter addresses some larger issues that surround certain strains of North American anarchism and its relation to activist media-making.

I hope for this work to provide activists with a historical sketch that might assist them with their future actions. All too often during my interviews and discussions with those involved with video activism, I learned how they came to belatedly discover a prior moment of video activism that would have better assisted them during an action or improved their overall understanding of the medium and their relation to it. Many expressed interest in a historical study that offers a general orientation of the links between their work and those of the past and present.

I witnessed a missed opportunity occur firsthand during the 2012 RNC protests in Tampa. As I drove back to Fort Lauderdale with John, a former student of mine who had been a part of the Earth First! action, I asked him why he didn't invite Flux Rostrum to record the lockdown instead of traveling on the decoy bus.⁴³ After all, Flux was an experienced video maker who had many connections with the alternative media scene and could distribute Earth First!'s action over satellite broadcast via Free Speech TV. John had never heard of Flux or Mobile Broadcast News despite their prominent presence at Romneyville throughout the week. The fact that connections between Earth First! and Flux were not made before the protest took place speaks to the significant ways in which outreach between activist media makers and the social formations that rely on video activism still need to be forged. It represents a missed opportunity for all. This study is an initial foray to weave some of these historical connections together in the modest hopes of generating future possibilities for people like John who are deeply committed to creating a more equitable world and view video and digital media activism as an important method in getting there.

CHAPTER ONE

AUTONOMOUS REBELLIONS: THE TWILIGHT OF LENINISM, FILM, AND UNIONS

AS NAOMI KLEIN AND OTHERS HAVE DOCUMENTED WELL, CHILE became ground zero for the imposition of neoliberalism upon an entire country in the late 1950s. Starting in 1956, the U.S. government paid to send Chilean students to study at the University of Chicago's economic department that served as the crucible for the development of neoliberal economics.¹ Milton Friedman spearheaded this new brand of economic theory that preached a tripartite philosophy: "First, governments must remove all rules and regulations standing in the way of the accumulation of profits. Second, they should sell off any assets they own that corporations could be running at a profit. And third, they should dramatically cut back funding of social programs."² This philosophy had been imparted upon the roughly hundred Chilean students who had been trained in Chicago's program between 1956 and 1970. By 1963, twelve of the thirteen professors in the Economics Department in the Catholic University of Chile had studied at Chicago.³

But in spite of the infiltration of neoliberal economics into the elite sectors of the country, Chile continued to move toward the Left. In 1970 socialist presidential candidate Salvador Allende slimly won the election with 36 percent of the vote. He spearheaded a new type of socialist revolution not initiated through violent overthrow but instead through parliamentary processes in an attempt to move the bourgeois state apparatus in a socialist direction. During his "First Message to the Congress," Allende explicitly stated his intentions: "To create the political institutions which will lead to socialism, and to achieve this starting from our

present condition of a society oppressed by backwardness and poverty which are the result of dependence and underdevelopment; to break with factors which cause backwardness and, at the same time, to build a new socioeconomic structure capable of providing for collective prosperity.”⁴ He asserted that this could only be achieved through “a new model of the State, of the economy and of society which revolves around man’s needs and aspirations.”⁵ During his first few years, despite vigorous parliamentary opposition, Allende nationalized U.S. mines, the banks, numerous manufacturing enterprises and expropriated 2.5 million hectares of land.⁶

Needless to say, proponents of neoliberalism stood horrified at such developments. Not only were local elites fearful of becoming marginalized, but also North American political and business interests were concerned about losing a key political ally and economic market. Nixon worried that if Allende proved successful, Chile could provide an entry point for Soviet or Cuban activities.⁷ Various U.S. multinationals with commercial interests in Chilean mining, communications, and banking formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Chile to persuade Allende against such nationalizations. One of its members, International Telephone and Telegraph Company (ITT), gave over \$1 million to Chilean oppositional forces and, with CIA help, planned to covertly “manipulate the outcome of the Chilean presidential election.”⁸ When this failed to work, the CIA more directly funded Allende’s opposition. As is well known, on September 11, 1973, the opposition was successful: President Allende was bombed in his presidential palace, causing him to take his own life. With Allende safely neutralized and his supporters rounded-up, tortured, and often assassinated under the military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet, the economic restructuring of Chile along neoliberal lines could progress unimpeded.

Chile became an experimental economic model for the First World to study. As David Harvey notes, “Not for the first time, a brutal experiment carried out in the periphery became a model for the formulation of policies in the centre.”⁹ Gradually, such reactionary economic tendencies spread to the First World and initiated our current state of affairs where many social programs are dismissed as cumbersome entitlements for an unworthy population of miscreants, where capitalism and individualism become synonymous with freedom and public resources are auctioned off to the highest bidder under the guise of improved efficiency. Ultimately, such policies restored class power to the rich. Contrasted against the decreasing wealth gap occurring between rich and poor from World War

II until the beginning of the 1970s, the implementation of neoliberalism had exacerbated it astronomically. In 1970, the median ratio of U.S. workers' salaries to that of CEOs' salaries was just over 30 to 1. By 2000 it was 500 to 1.¹⁰

Chile represents the economic primal scene for global restructuration that would impact much more than financial issues. For the purposes of this chapter, Chile exposes the nascent neoliberalism that would dramatically reshape the new forms of media activism taking root in the United States by restructuring businesses and activist practices into more network-based structures and blurring the lines of work and leisure. It would usher in a world where contingent employment becomes the norm, no longer confined to the working class, and public services are gutted for the gains of private profits. As a result, it would create a new generation of media activists whose subjectivities revolve around precariousness: uncertain jobs, erratic personal relationships, irregular economic gains, and dubious futures.

The political struggle within Chile also represents the limits of film and traditional Left organizations in challenging capitalism. This chapter begins with revealing the limits surrounding activist uses of film and the global challenges regarding more traditional Left structures. I chronicle the power of Third Cinema in restructuring viewers' relationship to cinema in making them more active participants not only in terms of film viewing but more importantly in their own lives. It also provided a forum for middle-class intellectuals and activists to reconsider their relationship to working-class and peasant struggles. The first section focuses on *The Battle of Chile* and its desire to create politically engaged spectators and allegorizing the battle between the Old and New Left occurring globally over organizational tactics and structures as Salvador Allende's socialist government comes into increasingly conflict with workers' grassroots-based, anarchist-inflected factory and field expropriations. Also, the chapter shows how the film had to be smuggled out of the country for editing and a long-standing ban prevented it from being shown in Chile until 1997, never reaching the very constituency for whom it was originally intended.

Yet events in Chile serve as an allegory of larger internal conflicts within the international Left about organizational structures that we can see occurring in France during May '68, in Italy with workers' autonomous struggles, and in the United States in places like Detroit, where workers and students challenged the racism and autocracy of the auto industry and its union, the United Auto Workers. The second part of the chapter turns

toward Detroit to explore the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the making of *Finally Got the News* (*FGtN*). Through the creation of newsletters, a local newspaper, and film the League used media-making as an integral activist practice in mobilizing workers, representing their struggles and demands, and generating protection from police harassment. Its media activism identifies an important moment when black workers attempted to seize the means of communication to organize for radical purposes. This takes on added significance in regards to filmmaking as its prohibitive costs made it an inaccessible medium for most politically disenfranchised, minority communities to use in their struggles.¹¹ The League's partnership with an all-white film team from New York Newsreel to create *FGtN* provides a unique opportunity to explore the racial, class, and gendered privileges that haunt U.S. white radical filmmaking, black activism, and alliances between black and white New Left groups. Furthermore, it reveals additional tensions within the League and radical politics in general as it precariously balanced a concern for local issues like job discrimination and union racism with a more utopian mission of establishing a national political model that challenged capitalism. It reveals the tensions that arose as white and black intellectuals attempted to forge relations with black working-class struggle in the United States. Such tensions were typical of much Third Cinema and anticolonial struggle at the time.

In many ways, the desires of making *FGtN* are an extension of those found in Third Cinema: to create engaged audiences that inspire them to act in more collectively empowering ways and for middle-class intellectuals to rethink their relationship to working-class struggles. Yet the various socioeconomic privileges that undergird radical filmmaking prevent many historically marginalized groups from participating in its creation and will similarly haunt much of the video activism to be explored later throughout the book.

Third Cinema and Its Limits

Much has already been written about Third Cinema.¹² As Paul Willemen notes, Third Cinema "fused a number of European, Soviet, and Latin American ideas about cultural practice into a new, more powerful . . . program for the political practice of cinema."¹³ Neorealism held a certain importance for many of its directors. Fernando Birri, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and Julio García Espinosa all studied at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, where they interacted with neorealist directors. Anna M. López

asserts that neorealism represented an epistemological break for Third Cinema directors regarding commercial filmmaking practices: “It explicitly rejected the Hollywood mode of production with its low budgets, non-actors and location shooting; demanded an awareness of the links between cinematic production and expression; and upheld, in Rossellini’s words, ‘a moral position from which to look at the world.’”¹⁴

Many practitioners of Third Cinema advocated for a materialist understanding of film in order to establish a more politically engaged audience. This is perhaps best articulated in Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino’s manifesto, “Towards a Third Cinema.” As they note, even just attending a screening in an authoritarian state proves a transformative moment for those attending:

This person was no longer a spectator; on the contrary, from the moment he [sic] decided to attend the showing, *from the moment he lined himself up on this side* by taking risks and contributing his living experience to the meeting, he became a new actor, a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the films. Such a person was seeking other committed people like himself, while he, in turn, became committed to them. *The spectator made way for the actor, who sought himself in others.*¹⁵

The authors emphasize the transformative power of cinema-going in recalibrating viewers into more politically engaged directions. Film, overall, serves less as an ends unto itself than as a means for collective action and political engagement. It is a “detonator or pretext,” according to Solanas and Getino.¹⁶ Third Cinema directors refashioned space and cinema-going “to transform time, energy, and work into freedom-giving energy.”¹⁷ Ultimately, it was to use cinema to create “a new kind of human being, for what each one of us has the possibility of becoming.”¹⁸

This sentiment was reinforced by many other Third Cinema directors. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea states that Third Cinema “should contribute in the most effective way possible to elevating the viewer’s revolutionary consciousness and to arming them for the ideological struggle which they have to wage against all kinds of reactionary tendencies and it should also contribute to their enjoyment of life.”¹⁹ Julio García Espinosa speculates that if the spectator fully participates in the film act “he will cease being a spectator altogether.”²⁰

As will be seen throughout the book, this aspiration to incorporate exhibition as a prime location to collectively mobilize diverse constituencies in their fight for social justice will become increasingly central as digital technology takes greater precedence. Many of the video activist groups studied here similarly view their videos as a mere means to greater political ends. They see media-making as a form of activist practice and not simply a mode to document their struggles. Regardless if they are aware of the Third Cinema inheritances in their practices, social movement-based video activism was indelibly linked to Third Cinema in its approaches and outlook.

Patricio Guzmán similarly shared a Third Cinema outlook when creating *The Battle of Chile*. He viewed the film as serving analytic purposes for victorious Left forces: “If the civil war were to result in a victory for the popular forces, we reasoned, our footage would be of great use to the workers, the peasantry, and the Chilean Left as a whole because in the first stage of constructing a new socialist state, it is very important to analyze what has gone before.”²¹

Unfortunately, with the coup d'état and the rise of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, the film footage had to be smuggled out of the country in bits and pieces, not to be viewed until 1997 in Chile long after the fall of the dictatorship. As a result, one of the most insightful films about the strife and struggle during the days of Allende would be lost to those most needing to see it due to its bulky nature and the impossibility to clandestinely screen it under the harsh conditions of Pinochet's dictatorship.

Yet this did not prevent Guzmán and his crew during production to further solidify their links with the workers they filmed. According to Guzmán, “We usually ate in the same factories where we were filming. Often we would sleep in the truck. There was a great sense of fraternity generated by this process, not just because we were all very fond of one another but also because we knew that what we were doing together was of crucial importance.”²² This desire to use media-making as a material practice toward collective organizing and creating a sense of solidarity anticipates a burgeoning practice that will develop within the video activism to be studied here to use video production itself as a form of community-building and political outreach.

It also spoke to how Third Cinema directors retheorized the intellectual's relation to class struggle and culture during the 1960s. As older forms of political militancy ossified into reactionary institutions that were ill-equipped to address emergent forms of political struggle, new methods

of intellectual engagement were required on both political and cultural fronts.

Mostly middle-class directors established a cinema that intersected with subaltern cultures—that of the peasants and laborers who have long held ambivalent attitudes toward traditional intellectuals. Antonio Gramsci elaborates upon this ambivalence within his prison notebooks by noting how the peasant “respects the social position of the intellectuals and in general that of state employees, but sometimes affects contempt for it, which means that his admiration is mingled with instinctive elements of envy and impassioned anger.”²³ The traditional intellectual both represents a secure socioeconomic position to be coveted by the less fortunate, as well as a bureaucratic mouthpiece for bourgeois, Western interests that have systematically exploited them.

Furthermore, Third Cinema directors had no choice but to retheorize the intellectual’s relation to the people since as middle-class cultural workers themselves they needed to distance themselves from the elitist practices of traditional intellectuals in order to assert their status as “organic” intellectuals who actively participate on behalf of subaltern interests.²⁴ As Paul Willemen has observed, Third Cinema was “made by intellectuals who, for political and artistic reasons at one and the same time, assume their responsibilities as socialist intellectuals and seek to achieve through their work the production of social intelligibility.”²⁵ Aware of their contradictory position as socialist intellectuals, its directors took pains to elaborate how their cultural and intellectual work differed from the more reactionary segments of their class. This can most clearly be seen in the manifestoes of Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, and Julio García Espinosa.

In “Towards a Third Cinema,” Solanas and Getino critique dead-end intellectual traditions that either relegate art to a mere functionary position within politics or argue for the separation of art and politics.²⁶ Instead, art and politics must be held in dialectical tension, neither descending into dogmatic, political platitudes nor ascending into empty formal experimentation. Both are complimentary elements of the revolutionary struggle: “The artist is beginning to feel the insufficiency of his non-conformism and individual rebellion. And the revolutionary organizations, in turn, are discovering the vacuums that the struggle for power creates in the cultural sphere.”²⁷

Julio García Espinosa attacks elite aesthetic tastes, emphasizing the ways in which they foreclose the democratization of art. He wants to recover “the true meaning of artistic activity.”²⁸ This can only be done through a complete disavowal of bourgeois aesthetic standards and

practices: “The truly revolutionary position, from now on, is to contribute to overcoming these elitist concepts and practices, rather than pursuing *ad eternum* the ‘artistic quality’ of the work. The new outlook for artistic culture is no longer that everyone must share the tastes of the few, but that all can be creators of that culture.”²⁹ Art will only become revolutionary when it is no longer consigned to the tastes and activities of the few but manifests into a mass practice.

Ultimately, the writers of both manifestoes emphasize art’s intimate interconnection with everyday activities to distinguish themselves from traditional intellectuals. Such intellectuals bifurcate art from life into discrete, atomized areas of specialization, thus fracturing the totalistic vision needed to comprehend the inherent social relevancy of art and the intimate processes of creativity that propel everyday life. As García Espinosa writes, “The revolution is the highest expression of culture because it will abolish artistic culture as a fragmentary human activity.”³⁰ This, according to Solanas and Getino, will create a cinema of life and action that rejects older forms of disempowerment “for [the creation of] a new kind of human being, for what each one of us has the possibility of becoming.”³¹

Therefore, Guzmán’s close interaction with workers during the production of *The Battle of Chile* served as one kind of example of creating a new kind of human being that crossed class lines in an effort to establish a new collective sense of resistance and solidarity. And, as we will see throughout this book, middle-class intellectuals and activists occupy a central position in much subsequent video activism—even that which forges links with working-class struggles, which reveal cross-class tensions, which we will see arise in Newsreel and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

The Battle of Chile

Although *The Battle of Chile* could not be screened for domestic audiences following the coup, the film nonetheless offers a remarkable testimony to the limits of Allende’s socialist policies in altering the state in socialist directions. Likewise, it reveals the ingenuity of workers spontaneously organizing themselves in anarchist-inflected directions in response to the reactionary tendencies of the bourgeoisie. Ultimately, the film delivers an allegory not just of the Chilean Left but of the global Left in general that was becoming increasingly tired of the ossified structures of communist and socialist parties, as well as of the unions, that were proving themselves

ineffective in relating to and mobilizing upon popular desires. Older and more regimented Left models were being overturned by the anarchist inspirations of students, workers, and other everyday people.

The opening of Part I of *The Battle of Chile* declares its populist spirit. Allende doesn't enter the frame until a half hour in. Instead we watch a series of testimonials concerning the 1970 presidential elections. The camera weaves itself through the crowd as random people are informally polled in the packed streets. We watch someone clap the microphone as an improvised clapperboard thus furthering a sense of spontaneity and immersion within the crowd. Some people simply wave off the roving camera and interviewer while others offer articulate explanations for their political support for or against Allende.



The Battle of Chile (1975) crew spontaneously interviews passerby about upcoming elections.

One pro-Allende woman states, "We'll continue to progress, but we must keep fighting. What can I say about Frei [past president and member of the Christian Democratic Party]? When he was in government, I lived in a shack that was falling down. It was damp all the time and my four children had bronchopneumonia. I asked everywhere for help, and nobody listened to me. But now wherever I go I'm seen, and thanks to President Allende, I have a lovely house." As film theorist Patricia Zimmermann notes, the testimonial serves an important function in asserting active agency on the part of the dispossessed. She claims that it "dismantles their victimization

by insisting on a dialogical process with both history and the viewer.”³² Here, the downtrodden of Chile assert their voice by demonstrating their analysis of how their standards of living relate to past and present governmental regimes. The woman is well-spoken and emphasizes her own agency by recounting her attempts to rise against poverty in spite of the shortsightedness of the previous government’s policies.

Furthermore, the sequence visually links the woman’s words with the community around her through a sequence shot, a long take using a moving, often handheld, camera to capture the rhythm of a filmed moment. The shot starts with an extreme close-up of her face, particularly focusing on her mouth. As she speaks, however, the shot moves out from her and pans to the left to nearby sitting children. Her discussion about her four children becomes grafted upon the other children we notice and the poverty they might be suffering. Her concerns stretch to others’ likeminded concerns for their own children. She stands in for all concerned parents, which organically arises from the moment being filmed. As Guzmán notes, “A sequence shot is irreplaceable: you can see things happening in front of you without breaking up the images.”³³ It visually unites and collectivizes people through panning, tracking, and depth-of-field shots. It links individuals to their sociohistorical context, as well as implying affinities between one person’s words and the collective desires of others.

The film also well documents the ways in which the Chilean people were erecting local anarchist-inflected, socialist institutions that outstripped the momentum of Allende’s government. Guzmán commented on how the reactionary tendencies of business leaders and the bourgeoisie members of government goaded the people into more energetic and inventive alternatives:

The intensification of the class struggle . . . aroused the great majority of the workers to seize an immediate (and active) initiative to strengthen their embryonic organizations, whether this was in the form of the workers’ illegal occupation of factories or industrial sectors which juristically were already under government control, or on the rural estates, whether they were affected by the agrarian reforms or not. Everywhere the workers established a kind of de facto socialist “state.”³⁴

But such popular organizing had an uneasy relation with Allende’s tactics.

Régis Debray, socialist provocateur and journalist, questions Allende during an interview whether workers and their allies “are going to be hemmed in by bourgeois institutions, and pacified with a few reforms here and there, or whether at a given moment the framework will be broken to create proletarian democracy?”³⁵ Allende somewhat dogmatically responds that the people are the Popular Unity party, so their will cannot be deterred. Yet he explains elsewhere: “But we are not going to hand over a company to the workers just so that they can produce what they want or to let them turn the fact that they control a company which is of vital importance to their country to their own personal advantage in order to demand higher earnings than other people.”³⁶ This is somewhat a disingenuous comment that assumes the workers are not thinking more structurally about their takeovers. It dismisses them as politically uniformed, which *The Battle of Chile* takes pains to show is decidedly not true.

These tensions between workers’ autonomy and the centralized planning of Allende’s party constantly arise throughout *The Battle of Chile*. Within Part III we watch the formation of Community Commandoes—an ad hoc alliances among workers, students, housewives, and other members of the community to address particular grievances or concerns. Workers and peasants align together to expropriate and occupy thirty-nine badly exploited farms. We see them standing guard, cooking meals, and working the land on their own—all done without the explicit consent of the Allende government.

When the Allende government sends functionaries to question the people about their actions, the occupiers hold an impromptu trial that explains the validity of their case and accuses the functionaries of being politically reactionary. One of the peasants asserts, “If we are asking for those twenty-six estates, it’s for a reason. If we are asking for twenty-eight, there is a reason. Then they’ll be some bit of bureaucratic trickery to try to delay things and undermine us. We’re not going to accept any of that.” He is framed in a handheld medium shot with other peasants and workers surrounding him in support. The camera pans around him to show others listening intently. Finally, it pans quickly to the functionary on the other end, listening awkwardly and realizing that he represents a faction that opposes the peasants’ initiative, which he later apologizes for. But the peasants respond that they don’t want his apologies. They instead want his help.

Worker frustration with the ways in which Allende’s Popular Unity government becomes enmeshed in and beholden to the reactionary

structures of the bourgeois state most dramatically manifests itself in Part II, as workers form spontaneous industrial belts that take over some factories. During a debate within the Trade Union Congress, a worker unleashes his frustration with a government functionary who claims that if workers don't obey central management, the opposition will accuse Allende's party of lacking discipline and authority. Unlike the functionary, who is framed by himself behind a table separating himself from the people, the worker is framed in close-up among other workers. His comments are worth quoting almost in full:

We can see everything clearly, too. They [the government] asked us, the workers, to get organized and to set up industrial belts and to get organized on all fronts. We organized ourselves in the neighborhood fronts, on the worker fronts, and in the trade unions. We organized ourselves in the industrial belts. And we're still hearing the same old story: it isn't the time; there's a legislative power and a judicial power. They asked us to organize from the people to the highest level and that's what we've done. But the President still keeps asking us to stay calm to keep acting this way and to keep organizing. Why? Why is there this fear that we, the workers and all the people, will call a general strike and ask the President, like any executive power, to decide once and for all what their battle plan is . . . ? The truth is: the people are getting tired. This is all bureaucracy! We're fighting bureaucracy amongst ourselves. Within our own defenses, within our own unions, within our own power like the TUC, we still have bureaucracy. Until when? What I want to know is if you have the confidence or not in Popular Power. . . . There's a reason that we're meeting here tonight. It's to ask the government to expropriate the greatest number of factories. And they [the Allende government] still ask us to stay calm. Until when? We are sick of all this.

When he finishes speaking, he receives rousing applause from his fellow workers. His torrent of words suggests the pent-up frustration of the workers in general. Furthermore, while he speaks, the camera slowly zooms out from a close-up on the worker to pull back on him being framed on each end from the stage by a government functionary. He is contained by

their bodies. The film's framing visualizes the ideological containment he and other workers feel by government bureaucracy and its lack of faith in Popular Power.



Patricio Guzmán visualizes the way in which workers are hemmed in by the bureaucracy of Allende's government. From *The Battle of Chile*.

As he continues to speak, the shot zooms back into a medium close-up of the man among the crowd, suggesting how his words expressing his frustrations want to be free of such a confined vision that Allende's government represents. The sequence brilliantly visualizes the tensions between the autonomy and anarchist spirit of popular power of the workers against that of the central planning and bureaucracy of Allende's government. This tension, as we will see, far exceeds that of Chile and consumes Left movements across the globe to explore new forms of workers' power that can outstrip the antiquated structures and notions of more traditional Left organizations.

Lessons from Chile and the Restructuring of the International Left

The Chilean coup of 1973 had massive ramifications for the international Left. It proved the inability of older socialist models to enforce progressive change. In Italy, it led to the Historical Compromise in 1973 where the Italian Communist Party formed an alliance with Christian Socialists for fear that it too could soon become obsolete. According to Italian Autonomist Marxists Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The

Chilean experience taught that old socialist modes of government were untenable. They were economically backward with respect to the international capitalist initiative, to which the Historical Compromise was an attempted response.”³⁷

This move incensed many Italian Marxists who were already frustrated with the restraints of the unions and the Italian Communist Party. As Franco Berardi recounts, “The consequence of the ‘about-face’ was the further exacerbation of the rupture between the official Workers’ Movement (PCI and Union) and the new groups in the factories and large cities, who were organizing at the ground level, consolidating themselves and working together for the social and political realization of Autonomy.”³⁸

The Autonomist or Workerist movement began during the early 1960s in Italy as dissidents within the Italian Communist and Socialist parties began to rethink Marxism’s application toward understanding industrial society. As Steve Wright notes, “They were motivated not by a philosophical concern to execute a more correct reading of Marx, but the political desire to unravel the fundamental power relationship of modern class society.”³⁹

Initially, Autonomist Marxism was closely tied with factory workers since they were in the lead of challenging their unions and calling into question traditional Left structures. For example, in 1963 FIAT workers held a series of wildcat strikes. The significance of these strikes were in “their refusal to play by the established rules of industrial relations; instead, they were unpredictable, they excluded the union from the direction of the struggle, and ‘they demanded nothing.’”⁴⁰ The last point deserves particular stress since autoworkers no longer found select elements of factory work objectionable. Instead, they objected to the industrial system altogether and the wage-relations that undergirded it. The strikes signaled a challenge to capitalist relations as a whole.

May ’68 in France served as further catalyst for Autonomism. Adriano Sofri, one of the founders of Lotta Continua, an Italian Autonomist extra-parliamentary group, comments, “France has given us an idea of what the masses are capable of doing, once liberated even briefly from the repressive yoke of their ‘representatives.’”⁴¹ Similar to the Italian Communist and Socialist parties and trade unions, the French Communist and Socialist parties and trade unions exposed themselves as upholders of the bourgeois state, as they not only failed to support the rebelling students and worker strikes but in many instances worked to actively suppress them. René Viénet, one of the May ’68 participants, condemned the trade unions and

parties as “mechanisms for the integration of the proletariat into the system of exploitation.”⁴² This was not unlike Autonomists’ similar condemnation of their own unions. As one Turin worker observed, “The unions are there to make sure that workers are kept inside the system, and have less possibility of beginning to challenge it.”⁴³

More importantly, as Kristin Ross has written, May ’68 represented an entirely new configuration of politics altogether that moved beyond party confines, institutional restrictions, and class lines to create a new collective political subjectivity:

The movement took the form of political experiments in declassification, in disrupting the natural “givenness” of places; it consisted of displacements that took students outside of the university, meetings that brought farmers and workers together, or students to the countryside—trajectories outside of the Latin Quarter, to workers’ housing and popular neighborhoods, a new kind of mass organizing . . . that involved physical dislocation. And in that physical dislocation lay a dislocation of the very idea of politics—moving it out of its place, its proper place, which was for the left at that time the Communist Party.⁴⁴

It was a political experiment in defamiliarization by rerouting habitual practices in unexpected directions.

The reconfigurations of May ’68 led to the experimentation of new organizational forms that inspired Italian Autonomists. They similarly rejected Marxist-Leninist organizing that emulated a capitalist logic with its hierarchy and self-selected vanguard of intellectuals leading the workers. If, as Marx suggests, the working class is created by capitalism’s siphoning off its living labor into surplus value, then workers must withhold their labor in the hopes of short-circuiting capitalism’s dependency. This led many Autonomists to conclude that one must refuse to engage in the capitalist logic of negotiating over wages, bargaining over contracts, and even accepting the hierarchical union structure.⁴⁵

A rethinking of Left political organizing followed. Marxist-Leninist organizations must be supplanted by less hierarchical forms. Adriano Sofri critiques “the ‘bureaucratic degeneration’ which is inherent in the Leninist conception of the relationship between the party and the masses.”⁴⁶ Instead, extraparliamentary groups need to form where “our task today is to build

within the mass struggle an organized political leadership, not to ‘win’ the masses to a pre-existing revolutionary leadership.”⁴⁷ Yet such organization cannot simply adopt an anarchist structure since it will be unable to successfully combat state repression. Sofri is trying conceptualize a new organizational form that is neither anarchist nor Marxist but a mixture of both, something that he refers to as a “mass vanguard.” It is precisely this tension between resistance toward hierarchical forms and the need for them that will also confront the League of Revolutionary Workers’ organizational structure.

Autonomy in the United States and the Motor City

Similar to Italy and France, workplace dissatisfaction festered throughout U.S. factories during the 1960s and 1970s. The title of a 1973 *Newsweek* article on dissatisfaction and boredom in the workplace asked: “Who Wants to Work?” Within it sociologists Neil Q. Herrick and Harold L. Sheppard spoke about the increasing discontent of the U.S. labor force: “Worker dissatisfaction metamorphosed from a hobby horse of the ‘tender minded’ to a fire-breathing dragon because workers began to translate their feelings of dissatisfaction into alienated behavior. Turnover rates are climbing. Absenteeism has increased as much as 100 per cent in the past ten years in the automobile industry. Workers talk back to their bosses. They no longer accept the authoritarian way of doing things.”⁴⁸

Similarly, a September 1973 *Life* article notes, “Job boredom has begun to affect labor union leadership and policy in the auto industry. It plays a growing part in such problems as poor workmanship and absenteeism.”⁴⁹ “Strikes,” it continues, “were once called mainly on grounds of pay and job security; increasingly, discontent with the job itself has become a gut issue.”⁵⁰

U.S. autoworkers symbolized the vanguard fighting against these alienating conditions of work. Younger workers reignited the militancy that had long remained dormant within the unions. Stanley Aronowitz notes how the generational conflict among autoworkers represents differences “between the old goals of decent income and job security, which have lost their force but are by no means dead, and the new needs voiced by young people for more than mindless labor.”⁵¹

Younger autoworkers challenged apathetic union structures that remained unresponsive to their more militant demands. Barbara Garson, a reporter for *Harper’s*, noted such tensions in 1972:

The UAW is not a particularly undemocratic union. Still, it is as hard for the majority of its members to influence their international as it is for the majority of Americans to end the war in Vietnam. The desire to reduce alienation is hard to express as a union demand, and it's hard to get union leaders to insist upon this demand. Harder still will be the actual struggle to take more control over production away from corporate management. It is a fight that questions the right to private ownership of the means of production.⁵²

This dual challenge to the UAW's unresponsiveness to militant demands and to the corporate control of the means of production reached a crescendo in Detroit with the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which saw labor struggle as inextricably linked to the creation of alternative media like newsletters, newspapers, and ultimately a film, *Finally Got the News*.

For the remainder of this chapter, I would like to explore the emergence of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and its complicated relationship with the white New Left. The League's use of media marks an important intervention where black workers attempted to use one of the most popular forms of communication, film, to collectively organize and challenge the institutionalized racism of business, unions, and the police, as well as wider governmental policies. This takes on added significance in regards to filmmaking as its prohibitive costs made it a largely inaccessible medium for most politically disenfranchised and economically marginal communities to use in their struggles.⁵³ But the League's media activism also reveals the subsequent difficulties in doing so because of the ideological divisions within black radicalism and the gender and racial privileges that haunted white radical U.S. filmmaking throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It provides a specific case study to illustrate the significant challenges that arise in building alternative political institutions and attempting to seize control of filmmaking for black workers' rights. Many of the racial, class, and gender privileges that infest the League's practices will similarly arise in later video activist struggles. The League's vision to democratize media and use it as a form of activism speaks to similar ambitions found in various social formations' activist use of video. The League's and Detroit Newsreel's desire to use cinema as a means of liberation spoke to a larger Third Cinema desire whereby middle-class intellectuals similarly used cinema to mediate their relations with working-class struggles. The

subsequent class, gender, and racial tensions that arose within the League and Newsreel speak to symptomatic issues that similarly arose in various Third Cinema endeavors.

Militant Detroit

Detroit was ripe for black militancy during the late 1960s. Black radicalism had been central in some UAW locals like those at River Rouge and Chrysler Hamtramck for decades as they fought against job and housing discrimination within the city.⁵⁴ Various Black Nationalist groups provided an important political presence within the city where African-American history was read and discussed.⁵⁵

Third World struggles deeply influenced future League leaders as it did with the New Left in general, as Cynthia Young has shown in her book *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*.⁵⁶ While still students at Wayne State University, Luke Tripp, General Baker, John Watson, and Ken Cockrel formed a student group named Uhuru that read texts by Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, and other Third World revolutionaries. Mike Hamlin notes how many of the revolutionary leaders throughout the Third World “published ideas that we would embrace.”⁵⁷ As Cynthia A. Young observes, many U.S. Left activists gradually identified their own struggles as allied with the fights against imperialism, racism, and class exploitation in the Third World.⁵⁸ Similarly, the League would see black autoworkers’ struggles as linked to an international anticolonial context.

The Cuban revolution held a particularly venerated position for black radicals by outlawing segregation and discrimination within its first two months in power.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Castro’s refusal to stay at the elite Shelbourne Hotel when visiting the United Nations in 1960 to instead board at Harlem’s Hotel Theresa proved a powerful gesture. This led Luke Tripp and other radicalized students to visit Cuba in 1964 in spite of the travel ban. “After our inspirational visit to Cuba we intensified our struggle against U.S. imperialism and racism,” Tripp recalls. “In the Black community, we led a militant anti-draft campaign against the Vietnam War, and we organized and led numerous demonstrations against police brutality and businesses that did not employ Black people or restricted them to low-level jobs.”⁶⁰

The civil rights movement and Third World resistance were uniquely intertwined in Detroit. Many future leaders of the League had read *The*

Crusader, a newsletter published out of Cuba by Robert Williams, a U.S. citizen in exile for an alleged kidnapping charge, but his real crime was advocating for black armed self-defense in the South while supporting racial desegregation and the Freedom Riders. They also listened to his shortwave broadcast from Havana, *Radio Free Dixie*.⁶¹

Police repression and violence against black communities was rampant, which further galvanized black resistance.⁶² The 1967 Detroit Uprising symbolized the release of working-class black frustrations with the daily racism and oppression visited upon them for decades and the loss of steady work as automation and plant closings increased.⁶³ Black oppression and colonial violence converged as National Guard troops descended into the streets aiming machine guns and tanks at U.S. citizens. As Eldridge Cleaver observed, blacks “all over America could now see the Viet Cong’s point: both were on the receiving end of what the armed forces were dishing out.”⁶⁴

On May 2, 1969, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) formed. It engaged in a wildcat strike at the Hamtramck Assembly Plant to protest the speeding up of the line. Subsequently, a series of other revolutionary union movements (RUM) sprouted at other plants⁶⁵ Additional RUMs also formed among health care, newspaper, and United Parcel workers.⁶⁶

The factory-based RUMs attacked two main fronts: oppressive, racist factory conditions and the bureaucratic racism of the UAW. They questioned compulsory overtime, the speeding up of the assembly line, and dangerous working conditions. According to one report, there were on average sixty-five deaths per day totaling some sixteen thousand yearly and over half a million injuries per year.⁶⁷

Black autoworkers typically experienced more dangerous working conditions than whites, while better-paid and safer management positions were consistently occupied by whites.⁶⁸ The United Auto Workers union, however, consistently failed to act on black workers’ behalf to combat such racism within the factory and within its own leadership.⁶⁹

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers served as an umbrella organization to unite the RUMs together and sustain their activities. It was incorporated in June 1969 and established its headquarters at 179 Cortland Street in September. But this is where organizational difficulties began, because unlike the spontaneous, factory-based RUMs that were mainly focused on local issues, the League held a Marxist-Leninist structure with a seven person Executive Committee (EC) that addressed more theoretical

concerns. Tellingly, only two members of its EC were in-plant-based organizers: General Baker and Chuck Wooten. None were women. This under-representation of working-class and women's interests would come to increasingly plague the League.

The League's experimentation with hybrid organizational forms speaks to a general movement of the international Left that was experimenting with new organizational structures that could be more responsive to grassroots movements and concerns, as seen in Autonomist Marxism in Italy and during worker and student struggles in France during May '68. The League experimented with mobilizing people outside the factory like high school and college students to bolster the RUMs by providing needed labor in producing and distributing leaflets and newsletters and supplying bodies at demonstrations.⁷⁰ It also facilitated outreach with other Left organizations within the city in order to build a network of alliances with progressive organizations that would provide for protection and support against police and state repression.⁷¹

The most serious limit of the League, however, was its Marxist-Leninist structure that distanced it from its members. Most of the League's leaders held college degrees whereas its members were mostly working-class high school graduates. An intellectual/worker divide developed between them. For example, the League only held membership meetings during its demise in 1971.⁷² Many RUM members remained unaware that they even belonged to the League during its founding.⁷³ This spoke to a general class tension that often arose as middle-class intellectuals participated in working-class struggles globally.

With these limits in mind, however, the League provided organization in a sea of political chaos and a vision that extended beyond immediate concerns. Its ultimate goal of the socialist overthrow of capitalism at the point of production connected workers with international anticolonial struggles erupting around them and generated a sense of global solidarity. According to Mike Hamlin, "We especially identified with those engaged in armed struggle including the Cubans and all the liberation movements of the Third World."⁷⁴

The League attempted to square the circle of being both a Leninist vanguard party and a mass organization, just as Adriano Sofri of Lotta Continua attempted to balance both tendencies in establishing a "mass vanguard."⁷⁵ Although the RUMs represented grassroots, less hierarchical organizing where workers were directly involved in daily struggles, the League's Executive Committee established a hierarchy that in many

ways unintentionally replicated the disconnection and autocracy that they critiqued operating within the UAW. As the leadership engaged in more ambitious cultural and media-based work, it became further removed from its members. Activities like film production and the establishment of book clubs, for example, were never successfully integrated with in-plant organizing; therefore, these endeavors seemed superfluous to many workers rather than an extension of the media production already occurring with leaflets and newsletters at the plant level.

Media-Making as Organizing

The League attempted to overcome internal ideological divides by unifying its members through print media-making. John Watson was inspired by Lenin, who saw the use of creating a revolutionary newspaper; as “the focus of a permanent organization, it could provide a bridge between the peaks of activity. It creates an organization and organizes the division of labor among revolutionaries.⁷⁶

As a result, Watson produced the *Inner City Voice*, a newsletter that ran about ten thousand copies per issue each month. *ICV* provided both vital coverage of black workers’ struggles in Detroit and Third World liberation fights globally. James Boggs, a brilliant Detroit autoworker and intellectual, had a regular column concerning issues in the plants and problems with the UAW. Speeches by Che Guevara, Mao, Castro, and other anti-colonial revolutionaries were regularly reprinted.⁷⁷ Also, *ICV* was used to establish a support infrastructure through its offices where political education classes took place and workers were organized.⁷⁸

A series of newsletters proliferated with the formation of the RUMs, and the League produced its own newsletter, *Spear*. Most of these were distributed at the gates of the various factory plants thereby connecting the activism at the plants with the paper and fostering new connections through its distribution. The use of the press as an organizing tool by the League is not surprising, as 1967 to 1973 marks the explosion of the underground press within the United States. The invention of offset printing allowed for easy and cheap printing. Hundreds of publications inspired by the New Left and the counterculture appeared.

One of the central challenges for the League was having factory workers contribute articles. The effort to solve the problem both pointed to and created additional challenges related to gender dynamics. When *ICV* and the newsletters began, women like Edna Ewell Watson, Helen Jones,

Marian Kramer, Cassandra Smith, Yvette Baker, and Mabel Turner were crucial in their production.⁷⁹ Mike Hamlin recalls, “They would do most of the writing at the beginning, gradually getting the workers contributing.”⁸⁰ To relate workers’ viewpoints staff would transcribe workers’ observations about what was occurring inside the plants. For those few workers who wanted to contribute, the women were mainly responsible in training them to edit and publish their stories, which led to burgeoning resentment among some of the League’s women at having to do all the work but receiving little credit and holding no leadership positions.⁸¹

In order to involve more black workers the League held training sessions in journalism to provide them with the skills to contribute articles. But most workers were just too tired after their shifts to participate. Writing articles did not hold a high priority for exhausted workers and speaks to the inherent privileges that such cultural production entails. John Watson refers to this in *Finally Got the News* as “the political economy of poverty.” He explains:

If you keep people poor enough, not only are you starving them but you’re stopping them from having some power. As wages increase, the power of the workers to resist increases. That is they’re able to save a little money. If they’re able to save a little money, they’re able to develop a strike fund. . . . They might be able to organize themselves better. They might be able to afford to pay some dues and have paid staff, which can do all the things necessary to the creation of a revolutionary organization.

But unspoken within the film is how the intellectual and class divide that arose between some League leaders and its members inhibited many workers from contributing to the newsletters. Many of the workers held a Black Nationalist perspective that dismissed such training as indoctrination into the ways of white journalism because the out-of-plant leaders had difficulties in relating their Marxist theories to black workers’ reality and interacting with workers as equals.⁸² Although General Baker and Chuck Wooten had good relations with the workers, the failure of much of the rest of the League leadership to successfully interact with workers led to a growing distance between them. Such a divide, however, was not unique to the League but consumed the Left in general, as we will soon see in the discussion of New York Newsreel.

Regardless of this divide, John Watson wanted to extend the League's reach into bigger media endeavors like radio, film, and television production. This concerned some League members like General Baker and Luke Tripp since it threatened to siphon critical energy away from organizing within the plants and building the League's infrastructure. But Watson asserted, "It is through the control of knowledge that the ruling class maintains its power. The struggle over the control of knowledge is a political struggle."⁸³ So when a group of white filmmakers from NY Newsreel showed up in the spring of 1969 wanting to make a film about the League, Watson, Cockrel, and Hamlin were game.

Newsreel and the New Left

New York Newsreel formed in 1967 after various East Coast filmmakers pooled resources to produce a collective film about a protest march on the Pentagon. By the late spring of 1968, Newsreel chapters sprouted from Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Michael Renov, Bill Nichols, John Hess, and David James have emphasized New York Newsreel's underground cinema and New Left roots, which in part produced tensions "between the individualism of the artists and the need for group discipline expressed by the political activists (and this tension often took place within the same person)."⁸⁴ But Cynthia A. Young also stresses Third Cinema's influence on New York Newsreel, particularly the way its "techniques and anticolonial sensibility" deeply influenced them.⁸⁵ For example, NY Newsreel's focus on cinema as a tool to engage spectators and develop movements well matches the tactics and outlook of Third Cinema. In a January 1968 memo, the group explains that through exhibition "the films become tools that they [organizers] use in the course of their work, and like any other tools, they help the group in organizing work, and serve to bring the group into contact with more people."⁸⁶

Similarly, Argentinean filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino refer to film "as a detonator or pretext" to initiate discussion and radicalize viewers into participants.⁸⁷ Hence, their film *Hour of the Furnaces* proceeds by chapters so that the film can be stopped or presented out of order based upon the goals of the screening and participants' interests. Similarly, early Newsreel films had short screening times to allow for discussion and create interesting combinations of films screened depending upon the specific audience. Marilyn Buck and Karen Ross recall street projections where "we take the films into the street, we stop people on the

street, and confront them with our films. . . . We have the opportunity to talk with them about their reactions, between films. To those inquisitive, we explain more. To those objecting, we can try to break their arguments.”⁸⁸

Furthermore, the rough aesthetic quality that Newsreel adopted in their films was linked to the “imperfect cinema” advocated by Julio García Espinosa and by Solanas and Getino and seen as a necessary stylistic choice to engage spectators. As García Espinosa claims, “The truly revolutionary position, from now on, is to contribute to overcoming these elitist concepts and practices, rather than pursuing *ad eternum* the ‘artistic quality’ of the work. The new outlook for artistic culture is no longer that everyone must share the tastes of the few, but that all can be creators of that culture.”⁸⁹ Newsreel would attempt to extend such an attitude by having John Watson establish the central ideas of what would constitute *FGtN*.

Also, a commercial format and aesthetic was seen as inherently ideologically compromised by both Third Cinema directors and Newsreel personnel. Solanas and Getino note that commercial cinema satisfies “the cultural and surplus value needs of *a specific ideology, of a specific world-view: that of U.S. financial capital*” with the viewer “accepted only as a passive and consuming object.”⁹⁰

Robert Kramer, a member of Newsreel, explains in similar terms: “To all film-makers who accept the limited, socially determined rules of clarity, of exposition, who think that films must use the accepted vocabulary to ‘convince,’ we say essentially: you only work, whatever your reasons, whatever your presumed ‘content,’ to support and bolster this society; you are a part of the mechanisms which maintain stability through re-integration; your films are helping to hold it all together.”⁹¹

Instead of such assimilation, Kramer argues for cinema “that polarizes, angers, excites, for the purpose of discussion—a way of getting at people, not by making concessions where they are, but by showing them where you are and then forcing them to deal with that, bringing out all their assumptions, their prejudices, their imperfect perceptions.”⁹² This is done not just by addressing controversial content, but equally by presenting it in imaginative and new ways through jarring montage and a crude aesthetic.

Polarize, anger, and excite—many Newsreel films indeed did that, such as when the screening of *Columbia Revolt* at SUNY Buffalo caused five hundred students to burn down the campus ROTC building. Another screening of it at University of California, Santa Cruz strengthened student resolve to protest against the Board of Regents the following day.⁹³

Yet the rough aesthetic style adopted by Newsreel, in part due to the necessity of having access to only limited resources, risked at times of fetishizing a Third Cinema aesthetic, originally dictated by colonial conditions, by uncritically appropriating it into a First World context. The style at times became a formalist substitute for actually forging relations between the middle-class members of Newsreel and the working-class struggles they documented. As Cynthia Young notes, “Newsreel’s choice of style betrayed its stereotypical view of working-class tastes. A supposedly crude style was meant to signify Newsreel’s solidarity with the working classes and demonstrate for its largely middle-class viewers how one might talk to and about the working classes.”⁹⁴ Although Young overlooks how some participants in Newsreel were working-class, the organization nonetheless largely adopted a middle-class outlook as those with more working-class roots tended to be less vocal during meetings.⁹⁵

Also, NY Newsreel served as the primary distributor of Third World anticolonial films throughout the late 1960s. They distributed Cuban filmmaker Santiago Álvarez’s films, as well as films on Venezuela’s national liberation army and the armed struggle in Guinea and Cape Verde to end Portuguese oppression.⁹⁶

Third Cinema practices were therefore very much in mind when in the summer of 1969 three NY Newsreel members, René Lichtman, Stewart Bird, and Peter Gessner, traveled to Detroit to meet with John Watson, Ken Cockrel, and other League leaders to further learn about their activities. When they returned, they asked NY Newsreel to fund a film about the League. The funding was denied for a series of interrelated reasons.

First of all, fundraising in Newsreel was completely opaque and uneven. People like Robert Kramer and Robert Machover could rely on family resources while Norm Fruchter’s upper-class background made him appealing to rich donors.⁹⁷ Other less privileged members had to rely on random donations and at times resort to drug dealing. The initial funds for *FGtN* were supposed to be raised from marijuana sales, but the arrest of one of its members prevented it from happening.⁹⁸ Tellingly, eleven of their first thirteen films addressed Vietnam, not simply because of NY Newsreel’s Third World sensibilities but also because wealthy donors would much rather see films critiquing the U.S. military’s actions abroad than look at domestic inequities fostered by their own investments and ownership.⁹⁹ A film on the League was unlikely to receive outside funding.

Secondarily, NY Newsreel was undergoing an ideological transformation at the time. Unlike its earlier incarnation that closely aligned

itself with movement struggles, it now became increasingly aware that the movement consisted of many variants often ideologically opposed to one another. In an April 1968 memo, NY Newsreel reflected:

When we first started we deluded ourselves into thinking that . . . there exists a monolithic movement called . . . the ‘new Left’ with hundreds of dedicated organizers . . . starving to death because they don’t have films to organize with. Not only doesn’t this group of organizers exist but the movement is hardly monolithic. . . . We should no longer be working under the impression that we are servicing any one group or organization.¹⁰⁰

During the filming of *Columbia Revolt* (1968), one of its most popular films, its members witnessed firsthand the splits occurring among the black and white student organizers at Columbia University. Although the film is routinely praised for its “spirit of utopian communalism” as students establish counterinstitutions and practices within occupied buildings, the racial divide that predicates such communalism is often glossed over.¹⁰¹ The film obliquely addresses this divide early on as a white student’s voice recounts, “The blacks saw that we were split among ourselves, that we weren’t disciplined, and that we really didn’t understand what the correct militant tactic was. So they asked us to leave [Hamilton Hall].” Notably absent are black voices discussing the split.¹⁰²

This racial divide remains unmentioned for the film’s remaining fifty minutes, where police repression and administrative incompetence is juxtaposed against student ingenuity and collective existence. A panoply of voices idealize the white students’ communal experience as we watch them share water and food, play music, and hold a wedding. One student states: “The hangups that are usually present in any kind of collective enterprise were absolutely not there.” By detaching the voices from any particular speaker, the film suggests a new communal vision emerging from their collective resistance. But such a vision is predicated upon the exclusion of black students from its space. Cynthia Young notes, “*Columbia Revolt* appears to be a spontaneous record of events as they unfold, but a narrow focus on the white student movement obscures the complex race and class dynamics that culminated in the student strike, unintentionally mystifying the complicated steps that led to organized protest.”¹⁰³ Newsreel’s technique of intertwining disembodied voices together within the film projects

a united community that didn't exist in practice and that entails the exclusion of black voices that problematizes such a utopian vision, which we will see arise again within *FGtN*.

Despite *Columbia Revolt*'s idealized portrayal of the student occupation, some NY Newsreel members began to question who constituted the revolutionary masses. One faction within NY Newsreel viewed college students as a part of the "new working class" as the U.S. economy shifted from industrial production to postindustrial, knowledge-based production. This position was championed by people like David Gilbert, Herbert Marcuse, and James Boggs.¹⁰⁴ Boggs, for example, notes that the new automated means of production "excludes more and more people from playing any productive role in society."¹⁰⁵ Although he viewed blacks as central to revolt, he also observed how "the student movement has been tearing it [American society] apart in its middle and upper echelons, attacking and undermining its most cherished values."¹⁰⁶

Columbia Revolt, as a result, was viewed by some as not simply a document of student revolt but, as Tom Hayden wrote at the time, a testimony to "a new tactical stage in the resistance movement."¹⁰⁷ The Columbia uprising "marked the first major implementation of the 'new working-class' theories that had emerged in the two previous years."¹⁰⁸ In the light of such an outlook, an appeal to make a film on black autoworkers was regarded as outdated and nostalgic.

Concerns also arose regarding the white filmmaker's relation to the League. White adventurism reached a new apex in 1969 as whites allied themselves with black and Third World struggles. Hordes of white students invaded Detroit in 1969 seeing it as "a center of the movement for Black liberation."¹⁰⁹ Sheila Murphy, a local Detroit activist, reflects, "Detroit was Petrograd, these idiots were in town for it to become Leningrad."¹¹⁰

So when a group of white filmmakers wanted to travel to Detroit to film an all-black revolutionary movement, some Newsreel members worried that such actions might be considered adventurist. Furthermore, Newsreel already had its problems as its San Francisco branch made films in support of the Black Panthers where final cut was yielded to the Panthers. According to one NY Newsreel member, the Detroit filmmakers were also going to cede editorial control to the League, an extremely problematic position for the Newsreel members who wanted to shift from an advocacy-based position to a more analytic one regarding the New Left groups they covered.¹¹¹

For all these reasons, New York Newsreel refused to fund the project. The three filmmakers nonetheless decided to return to Detroit to form

their own chapter of Newsreel, christened Detroit Newsreel, and make *Finally Got the News*.

The Making of *Finally Got the News*

John Watson became very involved in production with the filmmakers' arrival.¹¹² He provided the film's overall direction. But because Watson was a thinker and not a filmmaker, the Newsreel folk had to translate his ideas cinematographically. "John had never worked around film," recalls Peter Gessner. "He was a very brilliant thinker and good speaker, but my issue with him was for him to see that this was going to be a film; it had to have a visual element."

Watson insisted that *Finally Got the News* serve as a teaching tool for current members of the League and a recruiting tool for future members.¹¹³ This desire to use film as a tool for workers' struggles speaks to a larger global effort spurred on by Third Cinema efforts. For example, in France between 1967 and 1971, Chris Marker and the SLON cooperative teamed-up with workers at the Rhodiaceta textile factory in Besancon to train workers in filmmaking to assist in chronicling their struggles and empowering them.¹¹⁴ Similarly, in Chile Patricio Guzmán integrated his filmmaking practices into the workers' lives he chronicled who take over various factories under Salvador Allende's rule.¹¹⁵ In general, many 1960s and 1970s radical filmmakers took the position of "identifying with the working class or some subjection of it, either by assisting disenfranchised groups to develop cinemas of their own or by integrating themselves within the group they attempted to serve."¹¹⁶

Yet many League members were deeply skeptical of an all-white film crew coming to record their actions, particularly when they weren't adequately informed by League leaders about the film crew's purpose. Mike Hamlin remembers, "Most of the people in the League were against it because the filmmakers were white."¹¹⁷ These tensions manifested themselves in the sporadic nature of filming. René Lichtman recounts, "There were incidents when we were not informed about stuff that we should have been informed about: events occurring or rallies. They didn't want these whites hanging around certain activities around the plants."¹¹⁸ Many of the RUMs never appeared in the film and some skeptical workers chased away Newsreel personnel.¹¹⁹ Although racial tensions eased as workers became more familiar with the crew, they were never eliminated.

When the League disbanded in 1971, a common charge against its leadership was that media production, cultural events, and outreach had made some of the leadership distant from the membership.¹²⁰ Muhammad Ahmad recalls, “The out-of-plant intellectuals Cockrel, Hamlin and Watson—began to project themselves as leaders or spokesmen for the League and eventually lost touch with the workers in the organization.”¹²¹

The distance between some League leaders and the membership as they increasingly became more embroiled within spectacle-based activism and cultural production was a fairly common problem in many New Left organizations at the time. Todd Gitlin shows how various New Left leaders like Mark Rudd, Huey Newton, Abbie Hoffman, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver lost connection with the movement as they engaged in media-related actions and publicity. He writes, “The celebrities lost much of whatever active, reciprocal relations they had sustained with their constituency; this loss hurled them back into the world of the spectacle. But it is those densely lived back-and-forth relations which keep political strategy alive to actual social possibilities.”¹²²

The same dynamics also plagued some of the League leaders. But they were caught in a Catch-22 position. If they didn’t engage in outreach and publicity, they felt that they and the RUMs would have been increasingly vulnerable to police violence and political repression as their radicalism fell beneath public awareness. But by pursuing such ends, they lost focus on mobilizing and sustaining their current membership.

The rifts over spectacle-based activism already appeared during the April 1969 Black Economic Development Conference. Watson was asked to support the *Black Manifesto* that would demand \$500 million of reparations from white religious institutions. In turn, the League would receive some of the money. General Baker, however, objected since “he was suspicious of the political line of those who tried to con the system through a spectacular media campaign rather than by sticking to the arduous task of organizing workers” and withdrew himself from participation.¹²³ Grace Lee Boggs similarly recalls that the manifesto “put blacks back into the posture of supplicants playing on the guilt of white liberals to extract reparations” rather than organizing blacks to mobilize on their own.¹²⁴

Although the full \$500 million was never obtained, some money was had and in part distributed to the League. Through this money, the League established a printing press, bookstore, and support for *FGtN*. But the problem with increased revenues, according to Ernie Allen, is that it led League activities into cultural endeavors that “followed no coherent overall

plan.”¹²⁵ So by the time of the arrival of Newsreel, the League had already been feeling its growing pains with the development of its cultural front.

Newsreel members also made halfhearted attempts to train a League member, John Lewis Junior. But it was largely unsuccessful. Peter Gessner recalls, “He went out on a couple of shoots. It wasn’t systematic and not much follow-through resulted on either of our parts.” Stewart Bird continues, “I remember him there twice or three times. We never really saw the guy. I don’t know why we put the credit on there.”

But the end credit serves multiple purposes. First, it speaks to the aspiration of radical filmmaking in training disenfranchised people. It aspires toward a utopian goal even though material conditions foreclosed such training. Also, one wonders if crediting a lower-level League member further legitimized the film as being representative of all ranks of the League rather than the outlook of only select leaders.

Finally Got the News

The film’s opening montage visualizes the League’s complex understanding of labor relations and is a typical aesthetic device employed within various Newsreel films to present a visual argument. A warlike beat plays, reminiscent of the opening of San Francisco Newsreel’s *Off the Pig* (1968) that also uses syncopated drums as we witness multiple bullet holes peppering Black Panther headquarters, placing viewers in a siege mentality. In *FGtN*, images of slavery appear onscreen: an auction notice announcing “Negroes for Sale,” illustrations of slaves being auctioned by whites, slaves tending to the fields and to white children. A shot of a black woman holding a white baby implies the affective, as well as physical, labor she invests in raising her oppressor’s child. The image reveals how all aspects of white existence have been infused by slave labor.

An illustration of slaves picking cotton appears. Interestingly, a photo then follows of blacks tilling fields who occupy the same graphic positions as the earlier illustration and wearing the same minimalist clothing. It could be slavery. Yet because they are photographs, they question the viewer’s ability to identify the exact historical period. Past and present dramatically converge in the labor of black folk where contemporary labor, in spite of being paid, becomes an extension of slavery’s regime and ideology.¹²⁶ Luke Tripp notes how black workers regularly employed slavery as common metaphor for factory work since the “harsh conditions in the plant reminded Black workers of their legacy of centuries of oppression under slavery.”¹²⁷

This emphasis upon slavery gets further explained about ten minutes into the film where John Watson, speaking in a static shot in his living room, establishes how slave labor provided a crucial dimension in the economic development of the United States:

Black workers have historically been the foundation stone upon which the American industrial empire has been built and sustained. It began with slavery over four hundred years ago when black people were captured on the West Coast of Africa, shipped to the colonies, and used to produce surplus value. Under slavery the amount of surplus value extracted from black people was enormous in the fact that the only thing they got back for it was food, a minimum of shelter, and a minimum amount of clothing—just enough to procreate another generation of slaves. Thus the capital that was used to build industry in Europe and America essentially came out of the cotton trade, out of the textile industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And from the basis of that industry, railroads developed, steel developed, and all the various other elements that went into the development of the modern economy. The process of the extraction of surplus value has continued in this country, and it has been especially hard on black people, just as it was in the beginning of the development of capitalism not only in America but throughout the world black people provided the foundation stone . . . and that is true today. You don't find too many black people as white-collar workers. You don't find too many black people who are skilled tradesmen.

As Watson speaks, the camera slowly zooms out from a close-up to a medium shot exposing a series of posters of Che Guevara, Malcolm X, Mao Zedong, and the Angola revolution. Although Watson speaks explicitly of black struggle in this instance, the sequence's visuals link it to Third World anticolonial struggles and a pan-Africanist vision that people like Malcolm X and Fidel Castro endorsed. So even when the League does not explicitly reference Third World struggles, the sequence's visuals relate how such anticolonial fights and thinking undergird their analysis concerning black workers' struggles within the United States.

Furthermore, as Watson speaks about the development of steel and industry, handheld imagery follows of Detroit and black workers exiting

factory gates and working in a construction yard. The last image is interesting in that it suggests how similar conditions pervade other industries for black workers outside of the factory walls. We then see black workers on the factory line. As Watson states, “It is the transformation of sweat and blood into finished products,” we see a pair of black hands hammering on a piece of steel. The insistent movement of black folk working suggests a regime of labor that doesn’t end, where repetitive movement follows repetitive movement until the last bit of surplus value can be extracted from these laboring bodies until their demise.

Returning to the film’s opening montage, images of white men bent over their factory stations follow the plantation imagery. The scene cuts to two white men dressed in suits and hats overseeing them. The imagery cuts back-and-forth between both black and white groups. The League’s Marxist analysis manifests itself here. Although the conditions of exploitation at the factories between black and white workers are not equal, the film suggests that they are related. Wage labor, like slavery, still amounts to extracting maximum surplus-labor from all workers.

These related conditions of exploitation unite both black and white workers as Marx illustrated in *Capital*. Inhumane factory conditions unintentionally collectivize workers. As Marx observes, “When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species” as well as developing resistance to capital.¹²⁸

As still images of interracial protest continue, the banner “Victory Is Ours” twists upside-down followed by a shot of a close-up of two white men, presumably union leader and boss, shaking hands. It cuts back to the word “Ours” to white hands shaking to a question mark. This section indicates how shared white privilege trumps class identification as the unions integrate themselves into a racist, capitalist mindset, a point radical intellectuals like C.L.R. James, Martin Glaberman, and James Boggs had also made. James writes, “What has happened is that the unions which were created by the workers . . . have now become instruments of the management for the purpose of maintaining production.”¹²⁹ Instead of helping workers, the union confronts them as “an immense bureaucracy in which the state bureaucracy and union bureaucracy are closely allied.”¹³⁰ Similarly, James Boggs states how workers needed to “*bypass existing organizations and form new ones uncorrupted by past habits and customs.*”¹³¹ This is precisely the position occupied by the RUMs that challenged UAW bureaucracy by instead implementing more radical critiques and actions that the unions

have long since abandoned. But Boggs completely dismisses the unions as reactionary, even during their incipient days: *"From the very beginning the union did not take absolute control away from the capitalists.* There was no revolution, no destruction of state power. The union itself has therefore become incorporated into all the contradictions of the capitalist system."¹³²



The montage opening of *Finally Got the News* (1970) visualizes union recognition by the auto companies to be an upside-down victory in that it re-inscribes white privilege between union leadership and company bosses.



The white privilege that guides union and company relations. From *Finally Got the News*.

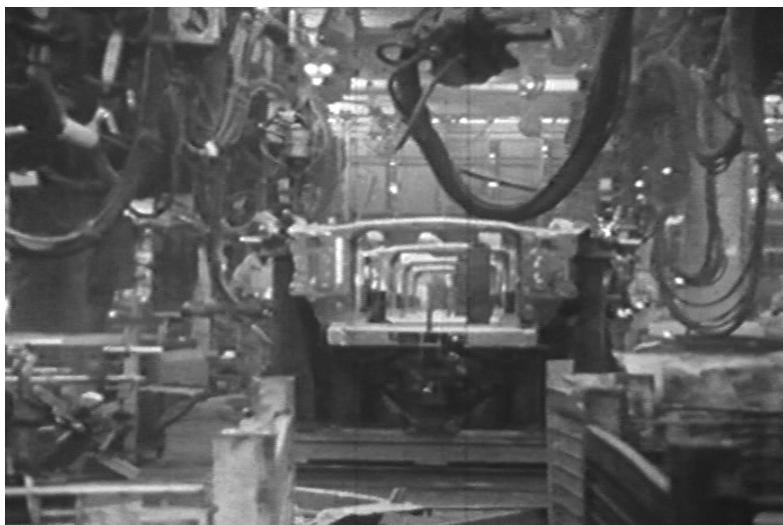
Unlike the League, Boggs holds little hope in the industrial proletariat leading the revolution since he recognizes that U.S. industrial society is being supplanted by a postindustrial one. He critiques Marxists who “still assume that the majority of the population will be needed to produce material goods and that the production of such goods will still remain the heart of society.”¹³³ This is exactly the problem that haunted the League of Revolutionary Black Workers’ position. Although they offered a sophisticated Marxist analysis of the centrality of the black proletariat’s position in industrial America, they could not fully identify the changing nature of work within the United States, Boggs asserts, almost as if in anticipation of the League, “even if the workers took over the plants they would also be faced with the problem of what to do with themselves that [industrial] work is becoming socially unnecessary.”¹³⁴

Yet the suggestion of postindustrial concerns were being hinted at by the women of the League. For example, Marian Kramer, directly challenged the League’s sole focus on organizing in the plants and dismissing community organizing as a secondary concern. As Kramer notes, “One faction said that the focus should be in the plants, at the point of production. I said, ‘Yes, but all those men got to come back into the community; they live somewhere. We’ve got to be organizing both places.’”¹³⁵ But it was precisely men’s inability to see unwaged labor as work that led them to largely dismiss the women’s concerns and exclude them from the executive committee.

Yet, as Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James observe, at roughly the same time, “The community is the other half of capitalist organization, the other area of hidden capitalist exploitation, *the other hidden, source of surplus labor*.”¹³⁶ Not only did the League men fail to recognize this, but their very existence was dependent upon the extraction of free labor from women in producing newsletters, assisting meetings, bookkeeping, and other activities. Their very dependency and nonrecognition of unpaid female labor disturbingly mirrored that of capitalism itself.

At its best moments, the film envisions a utopian, collective, postracial subject emerging from the alienating conditions of the factory floor. In one section we hear a deluge of criticisms of working conditions by workers who recount ceaseless injuries, plant and union racism, and a dead-end existence. Underneath these disembodied voices we witness workers operating pressing machines with no guards, sparks flying wildly around them, and endless parts flooding the assembly line in a slow torrent. Human figures are engulfed by machines, sparks, and grease, their bodies

mere appendages of the plant. The sequence epitomizes Marxist alienation where the workers' labor confronts them not only in the partial objects they create but also through the dangerous working conditions that always threaten sudden dismemberment for any wrong move.¹³⁷



The representation of the alienation workers as they are engulfed visually by the cars they assemble. From *Finally Got the News*.

Yet by yoking these voices to such alienating working conditions without identifying the specific race of each speaker, the sequence reveals how they produce a new, collectivized subject, not unlike what we saw in *Columbia Revolt* in regards to white students. But now the factory has supplanted the university as the site of struggle with black and white workers joining forces. Dangerous plant conditions unsettle racialized social divisions into a unified, cross-racial subject. Although black workers are often placed in more risky situations, this does not minimize the related dangers posed to white workers. This sequence documents and stresses through innovative cinematic techniques Marx's observation how a powerful, new, and radicalized collective subjectivity emerges from the hellish conditions of factory work. It speaks to a utopian dimension that transcends race through the disembodied voice-overs that proliferate throughout the sequence.

The film dramatically contrasts dangerous shop floor conditions against the humane and clean atmosphere that surrounds management in the next sequence: a white executive walks along a well-lit hallway with

ample space; a shot overlooks the city from another executive's office before panning over to reveal him smoking a cigarette and talking on the phone. Management is cocooned away from the immiserating daily working conditions of the shop floor. We see a metaphorical division between the white First World of management and the interracial Third World of assembly line workers.

This latter sequence is accompanied by one of the film's most well-known monologues provided by Ken Cockrel. Stewart Bird goes so far as to call it "the heart of the film."¹³⁸ It is worth quoting at length.

They give you little bullshit amounts of money—wages and so forth—and then they steal all that shit back from you in terms of . . . consumer credit. They are motherfucking, non-producing, nonexistent bastards dealing with paper . . .

It is these motherfuckers who deal with intangibles who are rewarded by this society. The more abstract and intangible your service, the bigger the reward. . . . This man is fucking with shit in Bolivia. He is fucking with shit in Chile. He is Kennecott. He is Anaconda. He is United Fruit. He is in mining. He's in what? He ain't never produced anything his whole life. Investment banker. Stockbroker. Insurance man. He don't do nothing.

The sheer torrent of words reveals Cockrel's frustration. First of all, Cockrel's emphasis upon the company's Third World linkages with Bolivia and Chile reveals how the forces of capitalism that plague the plant spread internationally to undermine the sovereignty of other countries and the autonomy of their people. Also, Third World-like working conditions dominate the shop floor. Capitalism's imperialistic practices oppress workers both abroad and at home.

Most importantly, Cockrel identifies the vampiric nature of capital that doesn't produce anything on its own, but instead extracts surplus value from the living labor of workers and reroutes it against them to produce alienating conditions. He also suggests how credit further entraps workers into capitalist social relations by making them into debtors. His monologue provides a glimpse into the neoliberal future that is beginning to emerge. As Morgan Adamson notes, "It is the shock of the future nestled within the present crisis of the 1970s" where the financialization of capital reigns supreme as surplus value comes primarily to those who possess the

codes and information to predict and redirect the flows of capital itself.¹³⁹ By mentioning stockbrokers, insurance people, and investment bankers, Cockrel identifies some of the core actors of the newly emerging neoliberal economy.

Yet this very critique against “nonproducing” forms of labor would leave the League’s men equally blind to the women’s affective and unpaid labor in bolstering the League’s activities and capitalism overall. In other words, the film shows how the men of the League were only able to see part of the problem of an emerging regime of financialization. But they failed to take fully into account how capitalism has always depended upon unpaid domestic labor for its existence. Although the beginning of the film shows the League’s careful analysis regarding how the free labor of slavery undergirded U.S. wealth and still haunted the current conditions of black labor, the entire aspect of capitalism’s continuing reliance upon unpaid domestic labor remained unaddressed by the League and the film even while the women were pushing for its visibility behind the scenes.

This sequence uniquely sticks out from the rest of the film. Morgan Adamson rightfully suggests that the Cockrel’s verbal tirade has no mooring with the film’s other discussions.¹⁴⁰ By simply having his disembodied voice play over this sequence, the film attempts to unite it with the panoply of workers voices preceding it. But its torrent of words and abstract analysis differentiate it from the other voices. This moment symptomatically reveals the distance between the League leadership’s systemic analysis of capitalism and the workers’ everyday grievances and observations. Never within the film do we see Cockrel or Watson interacting with workers. For example, we only see John Watson standing by himself in his apartment and Ken Cockrel alone in his office throughout the film. Their visual isolation speaks to a general disconnection and distance they had in actuality with auto plant workers. As René Lichtman observes, “John and Kenny were not respected by the workers, let’s say, like the plant people [Baker and Wooten].”

Although the film links the League’s leadership with the workers in terms of a shared vision through editing, their disconnection spatially and verbally exposes symptomatic class barriers that were never overcome and speaks to a wider difficulty that middle-class activists and filmmakers had in general connecting with working-class struggles. For example, in France after making *Be Seeing You* with workers at the Rhodiaceta textile factory in 1967 and 1968, workers became upset at Chris Marker’s romantic portrayal of them during a screening by failing to focus on the grueling work

entailed in the daily operations of labor organizing.¹⁴¹ This led to a second film, *Class of Struggle*, created more directly by the workers.

Cockrel's observation, though, does resonate with the film's brief discussion of female labor near its end. This topic was only included because of female pressure within the League. Peter Gessner recalls that the League "wanted that scene—a scene dealing with black women—because they were getting a lot of pressure from their own group. They were being criticized of not having more women involved and talking about oppression of black women workers."

This section appears out of nowhere. Without transition a female voice-over states how a majority of black women have to work. We watch black women waiting for buses, working behind grocery counters, and looking after children. The voice-over states, "We are by and large relegated to positions of low-paying, temporary jobs. Nearly half are service workers, chambermaids, janitresses, floor and wall washers." Images of women shopping at the supermarket follow. The voice-over continues, "We more than anyone else in the workforce know what it means to be laid-off. We more than anyone else in the workforce know what it means to be always looking for work. We have the highest unemployment rate and the lowest wage scales."

Although tangential, this section gestures toward the postindustrial society that James Boggs and Cockrel foresaw. But instead of emphasizing the new working class or financialization, this brief moment offers a glimpse of the highly exploitative working conditions of the new service economy. Contrary to the film's and the League's emphasis upon black factory workers, the newly emerging service sector represented by black female workers reveals the new terrain for workers' battles within the United States. Their descriptions of low-paid, highly precarious work would become defining characteristics of the emerging postindustrial workforce. Yet the League completely misses how the black, female service sector it sketches will increasingly become a model for most workers, where low-wages and high unemployment predominate. This sequence compliments Cockrel's earlier speech as the flipside of the same coin: the earlier sequence represents the capitalist's interest and the latter the worker's. Yet the film as a whole keeps the issue of unpaid labor conveniently offscreen.

Behind the scenes, gender issues began to consume the League. As it grew, women's duties increased without any accompanying leadership positions. Marian Kramer states, "We asked, 'Why is it that we always get the work and get shit upon in the process?' We thought that women

should have been on the executive board of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.”¹⁴² Edna Ewell Watson explains, “The role of women in the League was traditionalist in terms of black patriarchal ideology and political priorities. Women were positioned and constructed to be supportive of the male leadership.”¹⁴³

Male chauvinism pervaded the League and many of its RUMs. For example, the rhetoric of black manhood among some rank-and-file men led to paternalistic attitudes toward black women.¹⁴⁴ Appeals to “our Black brotherhood” and “to be a man” dominated the DRUM newsletter, marginalizing women’s voices and roles in the process.¹⁴⁵

Such attitudes escalated into a deeply hostile environment for women at the Cortland Street office where many DRUM members hung out, leading to the rape of two women and the impregnation of a minor. Mike Hamlin recalls, “They were out of control. General [Baker] wasn’t around. There was no one to control them.”¹⁴⁶ Such events in part motivated Hamlin to extend the League’s outreach with other Left groups for fear of the resulting fallout.

The sexism exhibited within the League, however, stemmed from deeper issues within the black, working-class community as a whole. As Mike Hamlin recounts, “In the black working class of Detroit, sexism and male chauvinism were rampant.”¹⁴⁷ Michele Gibbs, an organizer with the League, adds, “The family as a conceptual unit in the black community has outstripped any other form of identification as something you’re willing to fight and die for. We’re strapped culturally with a fundamentally patriarchal model, despite the variations of extended family structures that continue to sustain us.”¹⁴⁸ James Boggs saw such chauvinism as overcompensating “for the emasculation black men have suffered in white America.”¹⁴⁹ Because a wide constituency of black workers belonged to the League such issues were bound to arise as they did for other minority groups like the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, as well as for the white male Left, which had its own specific historical coordinates leading to its sexism and chauvinism.

The League’s sexism most likely led a contingent of NY Newsreel people to drive out to Detroit and confront the filmmakers. Here the story becomes unclear since many past Newsreel members are reluctant to speak about it and those who will speak still seem to be engulfed by the trauma that it produced. It is not even clear who comprised the New York contingent. But one unnamed Newsreel member states, “If women were underrepresented in an organization’s leadership, we would have needed a lot of convincing that women wanted it that way.” Although this

member quickly qualifies that Newsreel would have intervened “only if, when, and how black women themselves wanted us to,” one wonders if the stories of rape and harassment of black women would have forced an intervention.

Equally important, the filmmakers’ gender and race might have come under scrutiny again as NY Newsreel members began to question the sexism within the organization, such as its all-male leadership and a male member who slept with many women of the collective under the banner of “free sexuality,” a typical alibi for sexism at the time.¹⁵⁰ A particularly decisive meeting occurred where the Newsreel men told all of the women but one that they should speak up more. The remaining woman, who was vocal and assertive, was told to speak less. A number of women later spoke about how “it changed their understanding of how sexism operated in the group, because, clearly, you were damned up or down. . . . For several women it was the pivotal revelation that there was sexism in the group and that it was systemic, not personal.”¹⁵¹

Some of the men’s mixed attitudes toward women manifested themselves in Robert Kramer’s 1969 film *Ice*, which he made while still a Newsreel member. As David James notes, “The debates it depicts are those that divided the Movement at the end of the sixties.”¹⁵² *Ice* is a fictional film that takes place in some undisclosed fascist future where Latin America plays a leading role in anticolonial struggle. The film remarkably identifies many of the unconscious sexist issues that plagued Newsreel. Tellingly, a fear of castration suffuses the film. In an early sequence, we see a white radical castrated by government goons. In a later scene when a male revolutionary is unable to get an erection with his female partner, he explains to her, “You know what they do when they get you? It’s all sexual. . . . They tear our sex away.”

Although *Ice* ostensibly portrays castration as an external threat perpetuated by unfeeling government agents on well-intentioned revolutionaries, the film formally links it to the threat of empowered revolutionary women. For example, the sequence immediately preceding the castration scene is that of a white male revolutionary teaching a woman how to thread a film projector. The film’s editing suggests how female empowerment leads to feelings of male castration. In a later sequence, a female revolutionary scolds an overly aggressive radical male, “Just because you have a malfunctioning prick, you don’t have to take it out on me,” once again revealing underlying gender tensions between revolutionaries. The guise of fiction seemed to allow *Ice* to more directly address the unconscious fear many of

the Newsreel men felt toward its female members' growing empowerment and desire to be more involved in filmmaking.

Such fears eventually directly manifested themselves within NY Newsreel. Christine Choy, NY Newsreel's first nonwhite female member, recounts: "Only one or two [former members] were sincere enough to teach us [women] how to use the camera. The rest wouldn't have anything to do with us."¹⁵³ Also, when Robert Kramer and the other men left the group after being confronted about its sexism, they took all the equipment, leaving the remaining women in dire straits.

The gender confrontation occurring within NY Newsreel, however, was only a small incident in a larger context of women's liberation challenging the male New Left. When Marilyn Webb addressed women's oppression during a January 1969 SDS meeting, she was heckled off the stage by its male members and led some of the women to ultimately form a separatist organization.¹⁵⁴ Feminist collectives and underground papers like *It Ain't Me Babe*, *The Furies*, *Tooth and Nail*, *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, and *off our backs* bloomed. Closer to home, Columbia University's student newspaper *Rat* was overtaken in January 1970 by women who were tired of the boys' masculine posturing and sexism. During its first issue under the female collective, Robin Morgan strongly attacked the sexism of the male New Left. She writes, "A genuine Left doesn't consider anyone's suffering irrelevant or titillating; nor does it function as a microcosm of capitalist economy with men competing for power and status at the top, and women doing all the work at the bottom," an identical problem we saw also operating in the League.¹⁵⁵ The article ends with an appeal to "free" specific women from male-dominated Left organizations. At least one NY Newsreel female member is named.

So when a contingent confronted the filmmakers in Detroit during June 1970, it was a part of a much larger feminist movement. The Detroit filmmakers, though, mainly saw the intervention as an unprovoked assault on them. Stewart Bird recalls, "They came out to Detroit to purge us, to straighten us out. . . . They thought Detroit Newsreel was the chauvinist capital of the world, and we had to be reeducated. They wanted to close the chapter down when we wouldn't listen to them." René Lichtman concurs, "The main thing was male chauvinism: the fact that we didn't train any women. The women came in and disbanded the chapter because of male chauvinism and some charges of racism."

Regardless of the exact reasons, the dire situation caused General Baker to seize the film from Newsreel for fear that it would be confiscated

by NY Newsreel. Lichtman remembers, “Word got back to General Baker. They came down to the basement, where I happened to be on the editing machine. They just unplugged the editing machine and took everything. They just took over the means of production. They didn’t want the film to leave Detroit.”

This event pushed to the forefront the racial power dynamic of white radical filmmaking during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although many white Left filmmakers attempted to ally themselves with historically disenfranchised communities, Detroit Newsreel’s confrontation with the NY contingent reveals how an internal battle within the white Left could quickly derail the filmmakers’ support of any marginalized group at a moment’s notice. In spite of all the talk about solidarity between the white Left and oppressed groups, the cultural mode of production still remained firmly entrenched with whites unless it is forcibly taken away from them. Luckily, the League seized the final print, thus allowing them to screen the film for workers, the wider Detroit community, and even in Italy for various factory workers.¹⁵⁶

The problematic racial divide also manifests itself during the end of *FGtN* as it addresses a certain limit point in creating a new collective subjectivity between black workers and white Appalachian workers. The sequence begins with guitar playing of upbeat country music. A series of images of whites relaxing on their porches follows—a woman smiling and smoking a cigarette, two old men shaking hands, and people talking. Like the earlier aforementioned utopian sequence, a proliferation of voices discuss the alienating conditions of the job: the line moving too fast and various dismemberments resulting from dangerous working conditions. A majority of the voices are disembodied, suggesting a collective subjectivity united by their shared oppression.

Yet, unlike the earlier sequence where we can’t tell the race of the speaker, as the factory floor draws together both races, we remain confident that all the voices in this section are white due to the racially segregated spaces of the workers’ leisure time. The racism that implicitly occupies such spatial segregation manifests itself as the final disembodied white voice states: “I think we’re entitled toward more money. We should get it just the same as everybody else is getting their share of the loot. Certain groups are. There is no question about that: colored for one.” Before continuing, the film interjects John Watson’s voice as a corrective: “There’s a lot of confusion amongst white workers as to who the enemy is. . . . Because of the immense resources of propaganda, publicity, radio, television, journals,

magazines, and so on and so forth . . . people tend to get confused about who the enemy is."

Interestingly, as Watson's voice intervenes, factory footage follows of white and black workers leaving work. The imagery anchors Watson's observations to the material conditions of factory life that exploits both races. Unlike the Appalachian moment of the film that speaks about specific white problems, Watson's observations encompass both races. He states, "If you take a look at you know white workers in Flint, for instance, in the automobile industry. They are pretty hard-pressed because the Buick plant up there is whipping their ass. And it is whipping their ass twice as hard today as it was five years ago. But who they think the enemy is? You know, the nigger on the street."

He then articulates that the black worker movement in spite of appearances is a class movement. He voices its utopian aspirations as "calling for a total change in the relationship between workers and owners all together. . . . We are not calling for the replacement of the black proletariat with white workers who happen to be on a higher stage on the ladder. We're not calling for a situation where white oppressors will be replaced by black oppressors. We're calling for the end of oppression altogether." As he speaks, his voice grows more excited, while we see footage of black workers protesting the plants with picket signs. The material struggle of black bodies on the ground link to the higher aspiration of the elimination of class relations altogether.

The editing of this sequence also suggests how the League's goals are manifesting themselves in a younger generation of white workers. One young white Appalachian youth observes, "White people should respect the black struggle in the factory because the blacks struggling in the factory will benefit both people." As he speaks, we watch footage of black members of DRUM protesting before factory gates. By connecting black visuals and white voice-over, the film asserts the need for a new cross-racial collective subjectivity that does not yet exist in practice. It also suggests the theorization needed to understand the struggles of DRUM and the League. Though, as I have indicated earlier, this outlook was far from clear for many members, even within DRUM, who held a Black Nationalist position that jarred against The League's socialist vision. *Finally Got the News* was in part created to not only help articulate this vision, but to also imagine the incipient new cross-racial subjectivities that the alienating conditions of factory work could produce if workers organized themselves effectively and viewed their struggles as related.



The white Appalachian boy's words regarding racial struggle play over images of black workers' resistance, suggesting the links between the two and how a new interracial critical and collective subject might be forged. From *Finally Got the News*.

Neoliberal Recuperation

The Battle of Chile and *Finally Got the News* serve as unique documents that reveal the tensions found within older Marxist models of revolution and the limits of celluloid in assisting such fights. The critical limit of the League's and Allende's socialist outlook is that their models of revolution were premised upon countering a Fordist form of capitalism that was in the process of morphing into neoliberal directions. Yet within each movement, the RUMs in Detroit and the worker-led Popular Unity organizations in Chile were elements that resonated with the need for new anarchist-inflamed organizational structures that we saw operating in Italy and France.

The League's focus on media production as a form of organizing and its involvement with Newsreel in creating *FGtN* provides a unique example where many of the gender, racial, and class issues that wove themselves through the white and black Left at the time condensed dramatically. Its reliance upon unpaid female labor in its production and distribution of newsletters and other forms of support haunted most Left organizations where women were relegated to unglamorous work while men occupied more desirable and visible positions. Robin Morgan notes that, before

the women's takeover, *Rat* "employed men as editors and feature writers, women as (usually volunteer) secretaries and bottle-washers who were sometimes permitted to write a short article."¹⁵⁷ Similarly, in NY Newsreel, since a small group of white men held "the economic and cultural capital to control Newsreel's agenda, the women and few people of color involved were left to undertake the daily administrative tasks that kept the organization afloat."¹⁵⁸

The League recognized the importance of media-making as a central practice to establish wider Left coalitions, grow membership, and provide defensive protection against police harassment and political repression. By establishing its own printing press, the League understood the importance of owning the cultural mode of production in radically altering social relations. But the expenses in creating *FGtN* required an outside group to work in concert with the League. Although they ultimately created an educational film, the League could not surmount the racial, class, and gender privileges that accompany radical filmmaking to make it become a sustainable medium in their organizing arsenal.

Furthermore, the League's inability to anticipate a postindustrial society made its Marxist analysis seem like the wishful thinking of a bygone industrial age, something that radical intellectuals like James Boggs and others cautioned against. Part of this limit resulted from their location in Detroit, where industrial production held a predominant position that blinded them from noticing the restructuration of the U.S. workforce in new directions. Yet another limit was their own sexism that failed to recognize the importance of the waged and unwaged labor that many black working-class women produced. Although the film gestures toward the financialization of capital and the rise of a service-based economy, the League's blindness to how such work was gendered proved intractable and led to a growing rift between its men and women.

The contradictions inherent within the League and Newsreel (and made visible within *FGtN*) should not be read as central dysfunctions of these groups. Instead, they need to be understood symptomatically as the contradictions that encumbered all Left organizations, to one degree or another, at the time due to the inequities perpetuated by capitalism, which can partially be seen in *The Battle of Chile*. Third Cinema aspirations to link middle-class cultural workers with working-class struggles must negotiate a complex and contradictory ideological terrain that often threatens to undermine their liberatory potential by becoming ensnared by unconscious racial, class, and gender privileges; such issues continue to haunt

many current Left organizations employing media activism, as we will see, regardless of all the marketing rhetoric suggesting the democratization of digital technology.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, although the emergence of cheaper video technology by the late 1960s will allow for greater access to production, it still replicates many of the gender, racial, and class inequities that we saw arise within Newsreel and the New Left in general. The countercultural politics of the video guerrillas embody the contradictions of a movement that both wants to challenge capitalism's hegemony while still being deeply indebted to its inequities and emerging neoliberal practices. Digital technology might allow for newfound possibilities for media production and distribution, and the rise of cable television provided new platforms for public access that will serve as vital lifelines for underrepresented communities. But this accessibility and access are predicated in part upon a neoliberal logic where race, gender, and class privilege still infect emerging forms of video activism.

CHAPTER TWO

VIDEO GUERRILLAS, Eco-MEDIA, AND EXODUS

AS SOME OF THE VIBRANCY OF THE NEW LEFT OSSIFIED INTO Marxist-Leninist structures and platitudes, Paul Goodman, one of the New Left's adopted intellectuals, bemoaned its movement away from more anarchist-inflected leanings. He notes in *New Reformation*, "The original impulse of the New Left among the young was toward the anarchist rather than the Marxist concept of revolution. . . . The New Left wanted to diminish authority, establishment, processing. It conceived of itself as a movement rather than a monolithic party, and it did not speak of cadres."¹ Goodman observed, "They believe in local power, community development, rural reconstruction, decentralist organization, town-meeting decision-making. They prefer a simpler standard of living and try to free themselves from the complex network of present economic relations."² A bit idealistically, he summarizes that "all this adds up to the community of anarchism of Kropotkin, the resistance anarchism of Malatesta, the agitational anarchism of Bakunin, the anarchist progressive education of Ferrer, the guild socialism of William Morris, the personalist politics of Thoreau."³

Although Goodman somewhat overexaggerates the differences between the New Left's initial anarchist impulses and its descent into more authoritarian politics, he was one of many people at the time who noted anarchist practices being developed within the New Left, what was referred to as "the new anarchism" at the time. In the Fall 1966 issue of *Partisan Review* Martin B. Duberman observes, "The New Left stands in direct descent from the Anarchists, who always stressed, and not only rhetorically, the value of spontaneity, experimentation, 'primitivism,'

individual style and free expression.”⁴ The New Left’s tendency “towards local control and the repossession of decision making through direct action and cooperative alternatives,” asserts Nigel Young, “can be viewed as a continuing aspect of historic Anarchism’s opposition to the centralized state.”⁵ Regardless of whether the New Left was aware of these as anarchist practices, their actions suggested an affinity with them as Andrew Cornell has documented in *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the 20th Century*.

By the late 1960s, as some sectors of the New Left drifted toward Marxism-Leninism, and New Left goals of Third World revolution or stopping the Vietnam War seemed more unobtainable than ever, many of its members entered into countercultural or direct-action formations that were more hospitable to their anarchist tendencies. It entailed a move away from attacking state power directly and instead establishing cultural alternatives to an industrial-based, hierarchical society. As Barbara Epstein notes, “The counterculture’s use of guerrilla theater and other forms of creative expression, its lack of interest in the conventional political arena . . . suggested that revolution had more to do with thinking and living differently, and convincing others to make similar changes, than with seizing power.”⁶

This interest in culture did not necessarily mean the abandonment of politics altogether, but the formation of a new type of politics that Julie Stephens has labeled as “anti-disciplinary.” She defines it as “a language of protest which rejected hierarchy and leadership, strategy and planning, bureaucratic organization and political parties and was distinguished from the New Left by its ridiculing of political commitment, sacrifice, seriousness and coherence.”⁷

Theodore Roszak emphasized the implicit politics behind the seemingly apolitical counterculture: “They seek to invent a cultural base for New Left politics, to discover new types of community, new family patterns, new sexual mores, new kinds of livelihood, new esthetic forms, new personal identities on the far side of power politics, the bourgeois home, and the consumer society.”⁸

The counterculture performed what Italian Autonomist theorist Paolo Virno has referred to as “exodus,” which he defines as “an *engaged withdrawal*.”⁹ It acts in the hopes that “the ‘exit’ modifies the conditions within which the conflict takes place, rather than presupposes it as an irremovable horizon; it changes the context within which a problem arises, rather than deals with the problem by choosing one or another of the alternative solutions already on offer.”¹⁰ Although Virno specifically refers to Italian youth who preferred temporary factory work than full-time

employment, it equally applies to the impulses of much of the U.S. counterculture. Roszak identifies the counterculture's movement as "much more a flight *from* than *toward*."¹¹ Similarly, an anonymous writer in *Berkeley Barb* notes that the counterculture is "a concept, an act of rejection, a militant vanguard, a hope for the future."¹² The countercultural rejection of the present state of an industrialized and alienating society for the hope of a future, more intimate grassroots community was later precisely where the video guerrillas of the late 1960s and early 1970s would pin their hopes.

In many ways, the video guerrillas are in part the outgrowth of the commune movement, which perhaps best encapsulates the notion of exodus in the United States. Between 1967 and 1975 thousands of communes were founded.¹³ The movement took place in both rural and urban communities and had varying structures—the more extreme shared money, housing, and sexual partners, while the more sedate simply shared land while maintaining conventional bourgeois family structures and relationships.¹⁴ Similarly, as we will see, the video guerrillas organized themselves in collectives with the Videofreex being the most radical in structure, whereas Global Village represented the most traditional.

The commune movement was largely premised on young people's alienation from everyday life, particularly from their work experiences. A 1972 government report on "work in America" notes that "young workers place more importance on the value of interesting work and their ability to grow on the job than do their elders."¹⁵ Yet it qualifies, "The young worker is in revolt not against work but against the authoritarian system developed by industrial engineers who felt that 'the worker was stupid, overly emotional . . . insecure and afraid of responsibility'."¹⁶ Judson Jerome, who moved to a commune in the early 1970s, explains his motivation in remarkably similar terms: "At a time of unprecedented disenchantment with work extending from the assembly lines to the highest levels of management, the rediscovery of meaning and fulfillment in daily life may well become a priority as compelling as the civil rights which were demanded in recent decades."¹⁷

Jerome poses the communal movement as a form of exodus as he cites at length a quote from Lewis Mumford's *The Myth of the Machine*:

There is . . . little prospect of overcoming the defects of the power system by any attack that employs mass organizations and mass efforts at persuasion; for these mass methods support the very system they attack. The changes that have so far been effective, and that give promise of further success, are

those that have been initiated by animated individual minds, small groups, and local communities nibbling at the edges of the power structure by breaking routines and defying regulations. Such an attack seeks, not to capture the citadel of power, but to withdraw from it and quietly paralyze it. Once such initiatives become widespread, as they at last show signs of becoming, it will restore power and confident authority to its proper source: the human personality and the small face-to-face community.¹⁸

Communes represent a form of prefigurative politics where one creates the type of world they desire in the present. As Jerome states, “It was a political act—a demonstration of the possibility of some degree of personal and communal liberation from the grip of the system’s specialists.”¹⁹ Max Finstein, founder of the New Buffalo commune, explained, “Then somehow your living this way would show the rest of the world and the rest of the country that there is an alternative, that you don’t have to go out and cheat each other and rob each other. It would show them that you can work together and love each other.”²⁰ As we will see, this is exactly what video guerrilla groups like the Videofreex also hoped to achieve: by modeling new social relations and ways to employ portable digital technology, they encouraged others to follow suit.

This new form of lifestyle politics became predominant among anarchists and the counterculture, many of whom were one and the same. As Murray Bookchin, perhaps the leading U.S. anarchist thinker at the time, observes, “‘Dropping out’ becomes a mode of dropping in—into the tentative, experimental, and as yet highly ambiguous, social relations of utopia. Taken as an end in itself, this lifestyle is not utopia; indeed, it may be woefully incomplete. Taken as a means, however, this lifestyle and the processes leading to it are indispensable in remaking the revolutionary, in awakening his [sic] sensibilities to how much must be changed if the revolution is to be complete.”²¹

Yet as much as the communalists’ actions might be perceived as an exodus by its participants, they incorporated many of the trappings of the white, middle-class existence that they were attempting to escape. Timothy Miller notes how one study suggests that less than 1 percent of communes during their heights were occupied by nonwhites.²² Most of their participants came from the middle-class and were largely young—in their twenties and early thirties. This is not surprising since the resurgence of U.S. anarchism in the

1960s and 1970s has been well-identified as a middle-class, youth phenomenon.²³ As a result, the video guerrillas were likewise a middle-class phenomenon, as we will see, with many of their interests in lifestyle, alternative media, and ecology replicating the concerns of a well-anointed leisure class.

Furthermore, the communal movement also modeled a new form of labor being ushered in by neoliberalism: free, contingent, and where play and labor blurred. The work involved in maintaining a commune is often intense and grueling. But the amount of work was supposed to be tempered by its fusion with play. As Judson Jerome notes, “Distinctions between work and play break down as children run through an office, issues are argued as people paint a wall, or a visitor is invited to help prepare and eat a meal.”²⁴ This notion of *playbor*, where work and leisure seamlessly intertwine, has become a predominant form of labor in Western countries during the twenty-first century. The very existence of social media is dependent upon it and online work transforms individuals’ homes into private offices where maintenance costs like lighting, heating, air conditioning, and cleaning are displaced onto employees. As Andrew Ross warns, when work gets humanized, “we are likely to do far too much of it, and it usurps an unacceptable portion of our lives.”²⁵

But, most importantly, the commune movement disconnected labor from pay in its idealization that free labor was unalienated and regarded as somehow superior to a well-paid nine-to-five job. Little did they realize, however, that free labor would become a defining attribute of neoliberal work patterns, particularly in regards to cultural production, where hundreds of thousands of people would produce free content on the internet in the hopes of a future paid gig and spec work would dominate much television and film production.²⁶ (This is not to mention the ways in which unpaid domestic labor undergirded the capitalist system for centuries.) Neoliberal work practices both capitalize upon such desires for nonalienated work found within the commune movement and the counterculture as a whole, and they also pervert them by creating new forms of oppression where leisure time erodes into endless consumption and production practices for the perpetuation of capitalism.

This should give one pause to see how the notion of exodus is mired in dialectical tensions that not only want to escape older forms of industrial capitalism but can also reinstitute racial, gender, class, and sexual privileges while ushering in and complementing new capitalist practices of a service-based, postindustrial economy. This does not mean that exodus is some hopelessly compromised action, but it does suggest that it is

much more contradictory and ambivalent of a move than some Italian Autonomist theory suggests.

One must view the video guerrilla groups as at the forefront of this exodus and locus of contradictions as they redeployed the newest digital technology in the forms of Porta Paks and attempted to seize the newest communication system—that of cable TV—in an attempt to subvert the institutional structures of commercial media, state bureaucracy, and the nuclear family.

This chapter predominantly explores two groups: the Videofreex and Top Value Television. The first group represents the most communal and countercultural of all the video groups. Their multiple practices of outreach through low-power television, training women in video technology, and communal living/lifestyle politics that incorporated video into daily life offers a good cross-section of how video guerrilla practices intersected with wider concerns of the ecology, anarchist, and women's lib movements, as well as with emergent neoliberal practices. Top Value Television, on the other hand, represents the height of contradictions between activist uses of the new video technology and its incorporation into commercial broadcast television. These two groups don't so much oppose one another as represent opposite ends of a spectrum where their middle-class assumptions merged near the middle.

The Context of the Guerrillas

As mentioned in the introduction, capitalism underwent a dramatic restructuring into a postindustrial, service-based form during the 1970s and onward. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have deemed this “the new spirit of capitalism” that siphons off the critical energies of Left protest during the 1960s and 1970s against alienation and exploitation and remolded them into a new perverse form of neoliberal practices that emphasize network-based structures, precarity, low wages, increased productivity, outsourcing, and the casualization of work.²⁷ It does not mean the elimination of manual labor or industrial production but instead a reshuffling of their geographical centrality globally, as well as their assimilation into a postindustrial paradigm whether it be through the use of computer-based technology, the casualization of work, free-trade zones, and other labor-saving devices and tactics. Clearly, workers in the postindustrial economy still represent a minority of the global workforce. But post-industrial practices represent a paradigm shift that serves to “transform the other forms of labor and indeed society as a whole.”²⁸

Through such postindustrial restructuring, capitalism increasingly infiltrates all aspects of life to harness it for profits. In such a context, the struggle over the means of communication becomes central in the battle over subjectivities, in making them either more compliant to neoliberal tendencies or more resistant. Media activism plays a pronounced role in this fight by moving beyond the realm of representation to creating new forms of activist practices. Video guerrillas' fight over public access, training newcomers in video production, and promoting choices where production and consumption practices merge can be viewed as an opening salvo of this fight and redefinition of media activism. Additionally, by exploring case studies of groups like the Videofreex and TTVT we can temper some of the idealized rhetoric surrounding such activism by exploring the concrete contradictions that inhabit it.

One such contradiction was how their anticommercial stance was dependent upon cheap digital technology produced by one of the leading multinational corporations, Sony. The Sony Porta Pak's relative cheapness and early availability within the United States replicated the global power imbalances that the video guerrillas ostensibly rejected. Their early adoption of this digital technology was predicated on U.S. hegemony over the world market, so as much as the guerrillas espoused an egalitarian rhetoric their practices were dependent upon unequal international power relations. Furthermore, their white, middle-class background placed them at an advantage to purchase such equipment, as they possessed not only the collective funds to obtain it but more importantly the cultural capital to believe that they had the right to tape themselves and others and distribute their tapes at will. It must be kept in mind that contrary to the rhetoric of digital video becoming a more affordable technology, its presence in the 1960s and 1970s didn't lead to any significant inroads into disadvantaged communities or people of color in adopting it for their own purposes. Early video reinforced the prohibitive costs and cultural capital that surrounded the prior use of film.²⁹

Similarly, in spite of video guerrillas' rhetoric championing decentralization and a nonhierarchical outlook, their sustained existence was dependent upon state sponsorship. New York City became a sustained hub of video guerrilla work due to the growing funds made available for it through the New York State Council on the Arts. The budget rapidly increased to \$20,208,570 during its 1970–1971 year when grants were first made available to video collectives. It grew to \$34,000,000 by 1974–1975.³⁰ Roughly seven to ten grants were made available to various video groups

like Raindance, People's Video Theatre, the Videofreex, and Global Village. Although the groups formed collective structures before the initiation of grants, such grants were initially only made available to video groups, therefore encouraging their collective structures to remain in place.

Furthermore, grant money supported vital infrastructure for video groups. The Artist's Television Workshop at WNET enabled video guerrillas to experiment with its equipment, and the creation of Television Lab became crucial in providing postproduction facilities for many video groups and artists, as well as to the distribution of their work over broadcast television.³¹ This critical infrastructure allowed New York City to become a hub of video experimentation due to the state's relatively generous support, which would carry over into the 1980s to allow for the flourishing of AIDS video activism, as we will see in the next chapter.

Eco-Vision

Much has been made of the direct connections between the video guerrillas' ecological vision and the thinking of such intellectuals as Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, and Gregory Bateson. But their practices and outlook emerge from even broader social currents occurring at the time of ecology, anarchism, and women's liberation. Regardless if they were aware of such links—though many were—many of the video guerrilla groups shared similar impulses with these three social formations toward radical decentralization, a holistic outlook, antihierarchical practices, and the establishment of small communities. This is understandable since these movements were in ascendance during the video groups' emergence.

Murray Bookchin shares very close links with the video guerrillas' outlook in that he most directly emphasized the links between ecology, anarchism, and technology throughout the 1960s. In his 1962 book *Our Synthetic Environment*, he identified the underlying alienation that accompanied mass culture and industrial bureaucracy that most ecological outlooks shared.

Video guerrilla groups like the Videofreex, Global Village, and Ant Farm similarly rejected this alienation by establishing communes in the hope of escaping such bureaucratic institutions and outlooks. They fled from the increasing competition of the video and art scenes within cities like Manhattan and San Francisco. Furthermore, they wanted to distinguish their media practices and lifestyles from those found within corporate media that bureaucratized and compartmentalized media production into

a series of discrete jobs that made it difficult for a more holistic approach regarding media to take hold.

In his 1965 essay “Toward a Liberatory Technology,” Bookchin outlines a use of technology that uncannily anticipates the video guerrillas’ own outlook. Within it, he asserts that technology “can help *humanize* society” if it is incorporated into small-scale communities.³² He asserts that such a community “may well want to assimilate the machine to artistic craftsmanship.” Incorporating such a practice is exactly what the video guerrillas did by using portable video technology in their daily lives and revealing how technological vision can be wielded to a humane outlook.

Overall, Bookchin emphasizes, “a technology for life must be *based* on the community.”³³ He suggests an ecological understanding of media that the video guerrillas will also adopt in their own use of technology as they attempt to harmonize their use of technology with that of the natural world. As Bookchin notes elsewhere, “Ecology deals with the dynamic balance of nature, with the interdependence of living and nonliving things.”³⁴ Similarly, in an early issue of *Radical Software*, its editors write, “Our species will survive neither by totally rejecting nor unconditionally embracing technology—but by humanizing it; by allowing people access to the informational tools they need to shape and reassert control over their lives.”³⁵

An ecological outlook defined much of the video guerrillas’ vision as they redesigned living spaces to merge with their emphasis upon collective video production and consumption, which can be witnessed in part through the numerous weekly video shows they held in their reconfigured downtown lofts, as I will soon demonstrate.

This outlook can also be seen in the minimalist and rough aesthetics of their videos, where they minimized editing since it was not only a labor-intensive process at the time, but also they wanted to allow the moment to unfold before the camera without unduly manipulating its natural process through editing. Clearly, the very presence of the camera influenced the recorded moment, which most video guerrillas were well aware of. But they attempted to minimize the camera’s presence by often hanging out with groups for some duration before taping and by taping less obtrusively, often sacrificing a well-framed composition for a more natural but badly framed moment.

This ecological outlook manifests itself throughout the innumerable tapes produced by video guerrilla groups. For example, their preoccupation with inflatables most succinctly crystallizes some of their ecological concerns. Ant Farm’s *Inflatables Illustrated* (1971) is filmed in a handheld

style with minimal editing. The sparse filming style reveals an economy of vision where process and direct connection with its content trumps the aesthetic slickness and high production values of commercial television. The aesthetic vision suggests an antimaterialistic outlook in its rough framing and editing. The sequence juxtaposes the making of a small inflatable with everyday kitchen supplies within Ant Farm's communal kitchen with that of the creation of a large outdoor inflatable that people enter and children can play inside. The "how-to" nature of the video suggests not only that anyone can make an inflatable with ordinary supplies but also that videotaping such content is easily within one's reach. Occasionally, super-8 color footage inside the inflatable appears where we hear ethereal music and a bluish tint washes over the image blurring human forms with the inflatable's structure.



The world of the inflatable represents an ecological view where the human and the environment mutually shape one another in holistic ways. From *Inflatables Illustrated* (1971).

Someone runs with the inner wall of the inflatable, morphing its structure and making it undulate around its human figures like a sea. Similarly, during the video's end we watch kids playing on the inflatable, laughing, jumping, and looking directly into the camera, suggesting how such structures can metaphorically unlock our inner curiosity and childhood wonder and joy. Human and structure seamlessly interpenetrate one another.

The inflatable, like the geodesic dome, became a spatial allegory of human's new ecological relationships. Fred Turner notes, "If white-collar

man was a ‘square,’ domes and their users were well rounded. If the ministrations of hierarchically organized governments and corporations had thrown the earth’s energies out of balance, the dome’s ferociously efficient management of surface tension modeled a world restored to energetic homeostasis.”³⁶ The same philosophy underlies that of the inflatables. As Warren Brodey warns in an issue of *Radical Software*: “The house you live in programs you . . . it is a command language . . . you are forced to make body decisions that do not optimize your energy . . . you are faced by soul murder where concrete and steel deny your body access to the energy flow of other plant and animal and living spaces.”³⁷ Therefore, the inflatable allows one to reprogram one’s environment with one’s own bodily movement. The living space becomes a hypersensitive location to the energy flows around and within it. The human form and space become indistinguishable to a degree, constantly reconfiguring spatial relations dependent upon atmospheric changes and the intimate gestures of one’s body.

The inflatable’s presence became nothing less than the manifestation of the video guerrillas’ vision about how technology and human ingenuity could reprogram everyday existence into non-alienated relations, how small-scale technology like video cameras could interconnect with one’s existence to reveal subtleties and insights, as well as connecting people together through the production of such videos. This ecological vision would manifest itself in the very filming style of the Videofreex, whereby videographers interpenetrate the environment they are recording rather than invading it as an outside entity. Parry Teasdale, one of the founders of the Videofreex, recalls that one of the group’s earlier errors was its aggressive filming style at Big Sur: “It was counter to everything we’re trying to do because we were invaders and the cameras were intrusive.”³⁸ This was counter to their philosophy of “let’s try to break down the barrier of the people who are behind the camera versus the people who are in front of it.”³⁹ As Teasdale notes, “If you look at these tapes, you’ll see over and over the evolution of that—the camera as a participant, not just an observer.”

An ecological vision also manifested itself in altered viewing spaces that the guerrilla video groups established in their lofts. Groups like Raindance, Global Village, and the Videofreex held weekly screenings, usually on weekends, where they showed each other’s tapes and intermixed them with other footage, while switching audio tracks and sometimes submerging them underneath live music. The shows might be free with suggested donations or cost up to two dollars per head. Seating would be in tiers or in various group configurations with multiple monitors set up throughout the space.



Date	Gate	Ad	Total Expenses	Net Each
12/19	\$199	\$36	\$73	42
12/26	135	36	42	31
1/2	130	24	36	31
1/9	82	18	19	21
1/16	80	18	43	12
1/23	170	18	19	44
1/30	62	18	20	14
2/6	64	18	23	14
2/13	72	19	25	16
2/20	84	19	24	20

figures rounded to nearest dollar

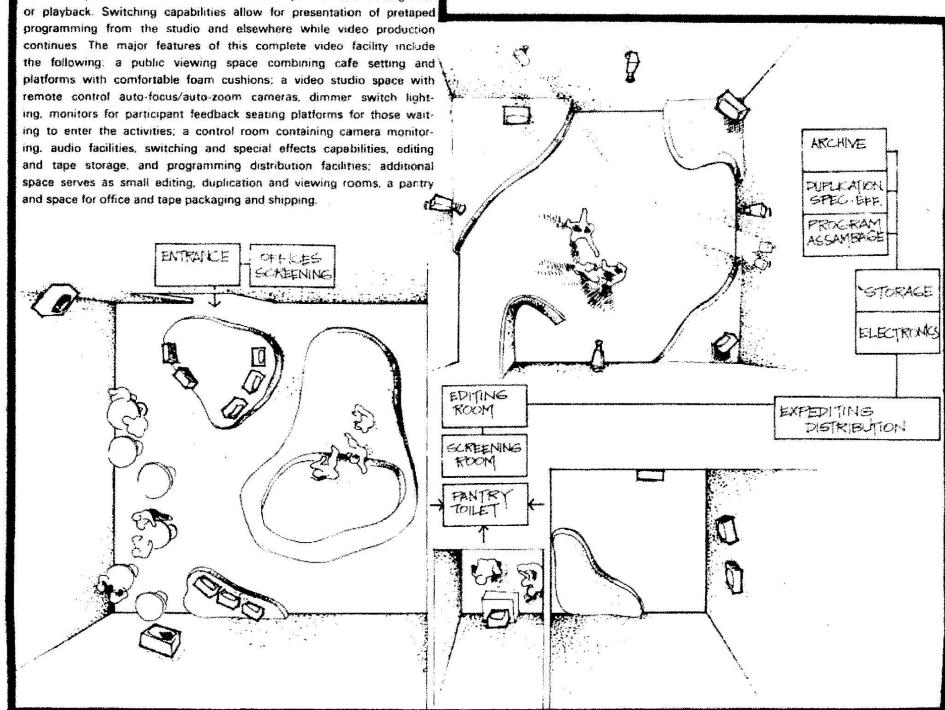
PEOPLE'S VIDEO
THEATRE
RAINDANCE
and
VIDEOFREEX
present

VIDEO EXPRESS
and
yippie takeover of
Frost show
satnites Dec 26
8:30 Jan 2
24 E 22nd 2 flr
982 5566 \$2.00

PROGRAM
women's lib
street real
hands
raindance and
RDC ivory soap TVX
dominick london
VFX
buzzy
money
frog



The following design offers the possibility for audience participation on a voluntary basis in on going multi-camera video productions which are presented live to the audience or taped for later editing and/or playback. Switching capabilities allow for presentation of pre-taped programming from the studio and elsewhere while video production continues. The major features of this complete video facility include the following: a public viewing space combining cafe setting and platforms with comfortable foam cushions; a video studio space with remote control auto-focus/auto-zoom cameras, dimmer switch lighting, monitors for participant feedback seating platforms for those waiting to enter the activities; a control room containing camera monitoring, audio facilities, switching and special effects capabilities, editing and tape storage, and programming distribution facilities; additional space serves as small editing, duplication and viewing rooms; a pantry and space for office and tape packaging and shipping.



Designs by Schneider

Drafted by Uri Shiran

A typical layout for a video loft show common among video guerrillas in Manhattan during the early 1970s. From *Radical Software* 11, no. 5 (1973): 15.

Gene Youngblood's reporting of a loft show at Global Village in 1970 is fairly representative of most shows:

[It] begins with the audience seated on thirty black cushions scattered around the floor of an old loft in Lower Manhattan's shabby manufacturing district. Through a complex master control board designed by John Reilly, videotapes and live camera signals are switched among a bank of eleven monitors. . . . In addition there are multiple projection movies and slides, multiple-channel stereo rock music intermixed with audio tracts [*sic*] from the videotapes, live video projections, and Rudi Stern's "kinetic light" compositions. . . . A tape of a young couple fucking joyously in a meadow is alternated with an interview with Abbie Hoffman about the Chicago Seven Trial. Soundtracks are intermixed so that President Nixon, on another monitor, seems to be speaking Abbie Hoffman's words. There are films and videotape of the Woodstock Festival; video documentaries of police and construction workers attacking longhairs in New York; Spiro Agnew alternates with The Beatles and the British Royal Family."⁴⁰

The discreteness of image and sound is disrupted, bleeding into one another as commercial footage and music intermixes with the rough footage of street tapes. Public and private realms disrupt one another. A light show competes with and compliments the video work and music. The entire loft becomes a jumble of images and sounds as its mostly stoned inhabitants become awash within their environment. Bodies mingle in this cacophony of light and sound where group seating encourages physical intimacy. The loft becomes temporarily transformed into an alternative environment as the power of video, music, alternative spatial relations, and drugs reconfigure reality into a brief euphoric moment.

The reconfiguration of space for video viewing also held serious feminist implications at the time. Television, as Lynn Spigel has well-documented, has a particularly pernicious historical relationship with women. It served as a disciplinary mechanism to incessantly remind women that the upkeep of a well-kept home was their responsibility alone while also constantly bombarding them with their own self-commodification.⁴¹ Women's involvement in video-making throughout the 1960s and 1970s became a reclamation of a technology that they had been on the receiving end of for decades.

The presence of video art within museums proved a strangely alienating experience for many women. As Susan Milano, one of the founders of the Women's Video Festival in NYC, notes, "Since most people watch television in the privacy and comfort of their own homes it always seemed so unnatural to seat them in an austere room with hardback chairs and a table holding 'the device."⁴² As a result, Milano introduced three new spaces into the 1975 Women's Video Festival: the Then and Now Room, the Pillow Room, and the Glitter Room. The last space was the most popular. Viewers were "encouraged to lie down to watch tapes, this time on a foam floor covered with leopard-print fabric in a room bathed in red light, where the TVs were suspended from the ceiling and a sculpture featuring dozens of spiked-heel shoes hung on one wall."⁴³ Such a configuration, according to Melinda Barlow, "reclaimed leisurely television viewing for a generation of women whose mothers had been encouraged to watch while they worked."⁴⁴

Victoria Costello, a writer for *TeleVISIONS*, reports her thrill with the new spatial configurations and the interactive video monitors at the 1975 Festival. She recounts, "Communication within and between the three circular areas was enhanced by cameras and monitors connecting us with the playback of our images."⁴⁵ As she played with an interactive monitor elsewhere, she reflected that "things like its visual intimacy and spontaneity can be experienced directly using oneself as subject and object."⁴⁶ To have the two halves come together as subject and object signifies the importance of video technology for women who had ceaselessly been confronted with their own objectification on the screen. As we will see, this access to video technology will have profound effects on the women of the Videofreex who held prominent positions both before and behind the camera.

Racial Limits

In spite of much of the ecological talk espoused by video guerrillas regarding decentralization, white and middle-class privileges seriously impeded their work with historically disenfranchised groups. By all accounts, People's Video Theatre was the most concerned with outreach. It ran from 1970 to 1972, led by Howie Gutstadt, Elliot Glass, Ken Marsh, and Ben Levine, and focused on lending video equipment and services to historically disenfranchised peoples. One way in which they did this was by mediating conflicts among various ethnic and racial groups.

For example, because of construction occurring in downtown Manhattan, younger African-Americans and older Jews were being pushed

together residentially, resulting in culture clash. According to Ben Levine, “They did this interview back and forth, mediating showing each side what the other was saying about them. They would play it back, but because the Porta Pak didn’t play back, they would hand-out flyers for people to come to this loft at 14th Street and Sixth Avenue.”⁴⁷ The screening would bring both groups together. Because playback would force the other group to listen, a better understanding was had.

People’s Video Theatre became so well known locally for resolving conflict through videotape that the mayor of South Orange, New Jersey, hired them to mediate racial tension between blacks and whites. Levine recalls the tape: “This was a dramatic, heart-wrenching tape of people who felt lost in their own town and at odds with everybody else. It really showed the town.”

But People’s Video Theatre’s involvement with the Puerto Rican-based Young Lords was more problematic. Although they gave the Lords a Porta Pak, this did not facilitate any closer relationship between them. In fact, as Levine remembers, “They were using us like we were using them. It was probably the most business-like thing we had ever done. . . . We had legitimate interests working with them, and it was somewhat of a disappointment that they were insular and weren’t about to involve a group of people in their activities.”

Unmentioned, however, were also the limits of PVT in creating structural support and outreach with minority communities like the Lords. The “gift” of video equipment—in spite of good intentions—replicates a colonial relation of white benefactors bestowing goods upon the colonized receiver to ingratiate themselves into the “tribe.” The Lords, a highly politicized group, most likely saw this interaction along such lines, thus placing PVT at an even greater distance.

In a People’s Video Theatre compilation tape, one can see the increasing distance manifesting itself between the video makers and the more marginalized groups they filmed. During the tape’s earlier sequences about a women’s liberation march and gay pride march, the camera moves fluidly between participants and observers, and its interviewers interject their own opinions by engaging off-camera with their subjects. They weave in and out of the march to get a variety of point of views. During the gay pride march, for example, the video makers document a debate between a lesbian and an older, white homophobic man. It is a remarkable encounter where neither yell at one another but engage in sustained dialogue. The camera shifts back and forth from one to another as they exchange points of view. The woman asks him, “Why don’t you have some of our gay activists come

on your show and get this out? It would be wonderful copy for you, and I'm sure we'd be happy to go on the air and talk about it."

Although the man remains reluctant to do so, this meta-moment of filming reveals the power of showing an actual reasoned discussion between opposing points that validates the parade not only for drawing those together with a similar point of view but also for creating occasional moments of interchange among those with differing outlooks.

When it comes to the Young Lords tape, however, the interchange is much more regimented between the video makers and a Puerto Rican female speaker. She is the only person who speaks during the tape, although we see shots of others milling about the occupied church that the Lords seized. She speaks in a stilted manner about how one of their members was killed in jail: "These are our people. We want to protect those people. We want to defend them, and we want to start it here."

Instead of allowing spontaneous interactions to unfold before the camera, as occurred during the women's lib and gay pride marches, the sequence operates in a more programmatic and functional way to deliver the Young Lords' propaganda. The interviewer doesn't intervene; no one questions the woman's statements; and the video lacks other points of view that might challenge the single one that's expressed. The tape exposes a distance between the video makers and their subjects, seen in the lack of fluid camera movements and interchange between makers and those filmed.



A tape from People's Video Theatre reveals the group's more distant relations to indigenous communities by filming in a more restrained and distanced way.

During the final sequence of the compilation tape that addresses a Native American occupation of Plymouth Rock, the camera is the most removed. While Native Americans occupy a ship, the camera remains onshore observing the action from a distance with mostly white bystanders. Although various Native Americans are interviewed, a standard interview format once again ensues as in the Young Lords' tape.

The various sequences' differing aesthetics suggest an increasing distance between the groups being filmed and the video makers. The more rigid and distanced stylistic vocabulary of the later tapes exposes strained or formal relations between subjects and those behind the camera. This is not unique in that it harks back to the problematic racial and class relations that various white New Left groups and activists experienced between themselves and radical groups such as the Black Panthers and SNCC during the mid-1960s.

At its most uncritical, a fetishization by the white New Left arose regarding the struggles of people of color. That is, uncritical adulation supplanted discussion and critique regarding black groups' actions and philosophies. As Todd Gitlin relates, in the heated days of the late 1960s, where revolutionary rhetoric and insurrectionary fantasies ignited across the nation, "the black underclass, rioting in the streets, were the plausible cadres."⁴⁸ White New Left groups grafted upon and at times attempted to trump people of color's actions and resistances. For instance, Weatherman, a splinter group from SDS composed mostly of the sons and daughters of wealthy, white parents, perhaps most egregiously illustrates such white adventurism in their advocacy for violence. They infuriated black and Latino groups during their rampage of property destruction in Chicago during their 1969 Days of Rage. Despite early warnings from the Black Panthers and the Young Lords that their actions would cause people of color to unduly suffer police repression unleashed by such tactics, Weatherman nonetheless engaged in such destruction regardless that they lacked any support from the working-class communities that such actions were supposed to incite.

Although the video guerrilla groups did not share the revolutionary vision of the more militant sects of the white New Left, they nonetheless remained deferential to the radical minority groups they videotaped, as exhibited in their more stolid filming style and lack of interaction and questioning them during interviews. The Videofreex, for example, became most famous for their 1969 taped interview with Black Panther Fred Hampton, made only a few weeks before his murder by the police. Although they

made numerous tapes with the Black Panthers, the Videofreex never seriously questioned the racial privileges that dictated their video-making practices. The same can be said for most of the other video guerrilla groups that were predominantly white and middle-class. Although they all clearly sympathized with various disenfranchised people's struggles, they routinely failed to analyze how such oppressive conditions might relate to their own socioeconomic status and privileges that allowed them the opportunities to videotape in the first place.

If anything, the mere presence of having Native Americans filmed speaks highly of a certain level of trust that People's Video Theatre garnered—as opposed to most of the other video guerrilla groups. For example, when the Videofreex attempted to film Native Americans occupying Alcatraz in 1969, they were denied access. Nancy Cain recalls, “A lot of the Native Americans who were sitting-in didn’t trust him [Bart Friedman] and it would be tough for Bart to get any intimate footage.”⁴⁹

Instead, all that appears in the final footage of the Videofreex pilot episode *Subject to Change* is the mention of the Alcatraz occupation over the radio news—“the Indians are demanding that the island be turned over to them for an educational and cultural center”—as the Freex filmed within an independent radio station. For all its trappings of spontaneous, experimental video with its freeform style and countercultural content concerning an alternative school and the Chicago Seven Trial, *Subject to Change* exposes that the Freex relationship with Native Americans is no better than that of commercial media. Access is denied to commercial and alternative media forms alike since the wages of whiteness unite them in ways that Native American activist groups find equally troubling. This happens despite all the populist banter regarding decentralization and indigenous media from the video guerrillas. By not addressing their own relations to and benefits from structural inequities, the video guerrillas often played into them as they naively thought their anarchist-inflected video-making practices and open filming style could somehow jettison historical oppression and their privileges.

The Formation of the Videofreex

Despite their ecological and anarchist-inflected vision, however, the video guerrillas were riddled with their own contradictions. For example, despite some of the Videofreex's oppositional attitude toward commercial media, their very existence in part was dependent upon it. David Cort, Curtis

Ratcliff, and Parry Teasdale—its original three members—met Nancy Cain, Carol Vontobel, and Skip Blumberg, who eventually became central members, at CBS. The latter three were hired by CBS to help assist the Videofreex to produce a show that would replace *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*. As the latter three engaged with the Freex and struck up friendships with them, their allegiances gradually shifted to the Freex. They joined them after the ill-fated Freex show, *Subject to Change*, flopped with network executives.⁵⁰ The rest of the Freex, like Chuck Kennedy, Davidson Gigliotti, Bart Friedman, and Ann Woodward, were picked up along the way.

Both Cort's and Teasdale's oppositional attitudes toward commercial television made their collaboration with CBS a doomed endeavor to begin with. Teasdale reflects, "Video technology neatly fit with the revolutionary ethic of the time in that it didn't matter so much what you produced so long as you didn't do what they—the broadcasters—did."⁵¹ During his interactions with CBS, Teasdale recalls, "I remember speaking to these perfectly nice guys from CBS who were techies who had helped us out and accusing them at one point of being Good Germans or something. Because they were the enemy. We were right. They were wrong."⁵² As Carol Vontobel recalls, "Self-righteousness was all over the place."⁵³

David Cort similarly romanticizes the Freex opposition to CBS. "We were just so anarchistic then that we weren't ready for it," recalls Cort.⁵⁴ "CBS was an intrusion," Cort continues, "but it gave money. It was and wasn't an intrusion. It was an intrusion in a lot of ways because we rejected it as it was happening. It was built-in failure. For two reasons: we weren't ready to go on broadcast. We felt broadcast was not free—increased inside formats that did not permit any kind of real communication. So there was rejection."

Yet as Cort notes, CBS provided them with needed money that allowed them to pay for utilities and rent their Prince Street loft where they held their weekly video shows. Also, CBS provided the Freex with the most advanced digital equipment at the time, particularly an editing deck. Although this equipment was only a loan, the Freex kept it after having their contract with CBS terminated. Finally, Cain, Vontobel, and Blumberg became central players in producing their weekly low-power television show *Lanesville TV* when they moved upstate. So despite some of the Freex oppositional attitude toward CBS, the network provided key equipment, personnel, and money to continue the Freex existence.

Once the group fully formed itself after its fracas with CBS, they began holding weekly shows at their Prince Street loft in an anarchistic

manner by teaching each other what they knew about video technology and performance. Carol Vontobel waxes nostalgic, “We didn’t have any rules. We didn’t have any hierarchy. We didn’t have any bosses.”⁵⁵ She continues, “There was a sense of camaraderie in a certain way because everyone was excited about it.”

Their tapes from this time—along with many of the other groups—reflect an antihierarchical and antibureaucratic outlook. They critique rigid structures no matter where they might be found. In *CBS: Lily and Cleaver Tapes* (1971), Skip Blumberg of the Videofreex enters the halls of CBS with his Porta Pak. The camera is not just used as a recording device but also as a means of intervention as he questions guards and low-level personnel to gain entrance and access to the executives he wants to negotiate with in regards to distributing the Freex Black Panther tapes. Since he is both filming and interacting with those before him, the footage is very rough and shaky. He is affronted by personnel that insist: “We have a union. I suggest that you do that [filming] outside.” Although he explains, “I am making a tape about those tapes” and “this is not television as you know it,” they insist that union rules prevent him from filming. Rather than stopping, though, he shoots from the hip as we hear him negotiate with executives over the terms and conditions in giving them the tapes while watching the footage bounce over the torsos of those before him.



In *CBS: Lily and Cleaver Tapes* (1971) the videographer has to shoot from the hip to capture footage of CBS’s policy of not allowing non-union personnel to record.

Process Video Revolution (1971), on the other hand, takes aim at PBS that disturbingly operates very much in the same manner as CBS. Skip Blumberg helms the camera again and is again confronted with union rules attempting to stop him from filming as he is told: “This is a union shop. They will throw you out.” Skip jokes, “They will beat me up? I’m tough. I don’t think there will be any trouble. I really don’t,” as he continues overtly filming a show about the use of portable video technology.

He films both in the studio and within the control room exposing viewers to the various aspects of public television infrastructure at work. In the control room, we hear directions to switch cameras as we listen to filmed participants speak about their experiences and how video allows one to relate to an “enormous variety of points of view that you don’t get when you just look at regular central [TV] stations in New York.” Yet such statements about the liberatory potential of portable digital technology can’t help but sound ironic after we have just witnessed PBS trying prevent Skip from filming in its studio. This moment draws attention to the disconnection between the type of democratic rhetoric that PBS celebrates on air, while behind the scene their bureaucracy impedes the very free-form filming processes it advocates. The political economy of broadcast television clashes with the practices of portable video technology and the populist rhetoric it fosters. Although not as nearly as confrontational as the personnel of CBS, PBS is similarly hampered by union bureaucracy that is threatened by the unprofessional and direct access that the Porta Pak provides.

Even the counterculture is not immune from exposure. *Chicago Travelogue: Hoffman, Rubin, and Yippies* (1969) presents its self-immolation as the spectacle consumes its very existence. Within an apartment we watch Abbie Hoffman surrounded by his media shock troop. Notable, first of all, is its lack of diversity. One white woman and a young black male sit relatively quietly among a sea of white, male bodies. Hoffman plans for a political event wondering about “sales and distribution” and debating if holding it on Halloween might draw more media attention. No consideration is given to the logistics of other participants’ availability on that day or what the goals of the event might be other than serving as a media spectacle.

The video shows Hoffman’s self-awareness he is a part of the media spectacle, but he attempts to ward it off with ironic comments like “No fun. No profit. What the fuck else is there?” and “Pay. Pay. Capitalism. Pay, and they do it right.” But as Slavoj Žižek notes, this cynical detachment provides a central function in perpetuating twentieth-century capitalist ideology

and practices. Ironists like Hoffman are most fully inscribed within in its practices precisely because they think that their hip awareness of how it operates excludes them from its orbit. "What they overlook, what they misrecognize," asserts Žižek, "is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality."⁵⁶ The videotape reveals the truth of this observation as we listen to Hoffman plan for a political event no differently than an apolitical event planner.



Chicago Travelogue (1969) exposes Abbie Hoffman as deeply incorporated into the spectacle and distanced from any social movement.

The Videofreex contrast this type of aimless spectacle enamored with its own image against their own eco-vision that emphasizes process, the long take, and intimate interactions. Process over product reigned supreme. Two main elements defined such an approach. One: events are allowed to unfold before the camera in real time. Don West, an executive as CBS who worked with the Freex, described their early techniques as "a free form process of going out and finding out what was going on in America."⁵⁷ Parry Teasdale reflects, "We constantly wrestled with our ambivalence toward production values, each of us pursuing a style of his or her own that wouldn't cross the line into slickness, God forbid, of commercial TV."⁵⁸

Such an outlook meshed well with the Freex's anarchist tendencies. As Teasdale notes, "We liked video precisely because we could do it as an undisciplined team effort predicated on anarchy."⁵⁹ Elsewhere he comments, "The way we applied technology reinforced our aversion to hierarchy."⁶⁰ This leads into the second element of process where the final product was not the most important element. Instead media-making was seen as fostering collaboration, interaction, mutual learning, and excitement. As Nancy Cain reflects, "The product I couldn't exactly conceive in my mind what it would be. The process seemed to be everything at the time."⁶¹ As a result, to truly speak about many of the video guerrillas' tapes one has to understand the practices that undergirded them. Although traces of such practices might materialize themselves in the final tape, the tape itself was of secondary concern to the community and collaboration that such media-making instigated.

We can see the first type of process at work within the Videofreex tape *Interviews in the Streets* (1976), which takes place during the 1976 Democratic National Convention. Reminiscent of *The Battle of Chile*, we watch the interviewer approach random passersby—some of whom will talk and others who won't. This sense of randomness and spontaneity emphasizes the immediacy of the medium whereby interactions happen off-the-cuff and develop from the moment we start viewing them. One middle-aged, white guy, for example, who initially waves off the camera ends up giving a rather perceptive analysis of the commercial media after being assured, "This is underground video. It is not going to networks or anything." When asked about the reports he read in the media regarding the demonstrations, he responds, "Obviously, they usually give one side, and they always do. I disregard most of the stuff unless I see it firsthand today."

In many ways, such interview tapes reinforce Gramsci's notion of the importance of common sense, which is polysemic and full of contradictory outlooks, yet it cannot be rejected outright since it provides incipient toeholds where critical analysis can take root, such as the aforementioned man's skepticism regarding commercial media. Common sense provides the basis for good sense, which Gramsci defines as an effort to "order in a systematic, coherent and critical fashion one's own intuitions of life and the world, and to determine exactly what is to be understood by the word 'systematic,' so that it is not taken in the pedantic and academic sense."⁶²

Clearly, video guerrillas like the Videofreex are not outright socialists, though some of their practices like sharing property, money, and chores suggest affinities with a socialist outlook. But street tapes like *Interviews in the Streets* unconsciously embody such socialist insights like Gramsci's as

they plunge into the moment to exhume the good sense lurking within the common sense of everyday observers.

We see this most clearly at the end of the video, where an African-American man claims he has nothing to say about the protests but then offers a critique of the cops—“They did some dog stuff. They come into the park and run people off. People sitting around doing nothing. They just run them off”—and a salient critique of commercial media: “The stuff you see on TV ain’t nothing like you see here. They show you what they want to on TV. . . . The tear gas thing. They show it high up. But they don’t really get down and show what is going on.” His insightful comments reveal his self-knowledge about how the camera’s position marks a specific ideological point of view. By not being embedded with protesters one can only witness the police’s assault on them from a neutered distance. The man’s common sense of not wanting to get involved with the situation and make himself vulnerable shows how his feelings of impotence war with his more perceptive observations that clearly are engaged, well-founded, and insightful. We witness the contradictions embedded within him through his discussion with the Videofreex. His physical disengagement from the moment by sitting on a park bench does not suggest his perceptual and mental disengagement with events surrounding him. It reveals a critical citizenry even though the physical manifestation of it might wrongly suggest otherwise.

May Day Realtime (1971), on the other hand, where protesters and police clash as activists block all major roads into Washington, DC, on the one-year anniversary of the Kent State killings, notably represents the two types of aforementioned processes at work: immersing oneself into the situation and using media-making as a form of collective activity and activism unto itself, since the video was produced by the May Day Collective, an assortment of video groups that gathered together for the action.

The video opens driving over the Key Bridge into Washington, DC. The driving sequence lasts for over half of the one-hour tape, exposing the Freex’s lack of preparation on where to start filming. The radio plays news reports regarding the demonstrations and other matters, and provides an interesting contrast between its highly parceled, decontextualized accounts of the news with the spontaneity of the video footage of protesters blocking streets, a motorcycle cop looking menacingly into their car, and a ubiquitous police presence. A form of vertical montage between sound and image suddenly seizes the moment when we hear updates about the war in Vietnam and witness National Guard troops fully armed, dressed in fatigues and helmets lining the streets.⁶³ Such moments literalize the New

Left's demand to "bring the war home" by showing how our army treats its citizenry as enemy combatants in the streets in the very cradle of our democratic republic.



In *May Day Realtime* (1971) footage reveals how the United States has become occupied territory.

The sense of having the camera intervene in the moment most dramatically manifests itself as the crew and protesters are attacked by the cops. We watch a protester get hit by a car. As he limps toward the camera, the police descend upon the group, hitting at individuals' legs with their truncheons. The camera backs up until someone who looks like a secret service goon actually grabs it and states, "I'm going to throw that camera down your throat if you aren't careful." The camera jolts dramatically as the cops confront it. As Carol Vontobel recalls, "[Cort] gets hit at one point and you hear the clunk of the club against his knee, and you feel it. Your knee goes—ooh. You really are there. You're not just watching what's going on. Your knee's being hit."⁶⁴

Such a moment dramatically illustrates Patricia Zimmerman's observation of how the activist camera operates as a permeable membrane where "relations between and alongside maker and subject pass and commingle."⁶⁵ She notes that "this tactic moves from images *of* to maneuvers *into*, a significant epistemological difference" where the filmic space and political confrontation jostle into each other's registers.⁶⁶ Although such confrontational filmmaking has a historical precedent found in the work

of the New York Film and Photo League during the 1930s, it becomes an increasingly important tactic during the development of video activism that will be used by gay activists, eco-activists, alter-globalization protesters, and many others to finally earn its own distinct category of “riot porn” during the early 2000s. But unlike *May Day Realtime*, where the camera unintentionally gets swept up into confrontation and allying itself with protesters as it tapes police violence and intimidation, later uses will more intentionally confront the police and the powers-that-be.



Carol Vontobel recalls: “[Cort] gets hit at one point and you hear the clunk of the club against his knee, and you feel it.” From *May Day Realtime*.

May Day Realtime was the most explicitly activist tape that the Freex participated within, but the collective process regarding its production was considered a complete failure on every level due to its rushed nature. The collective assembled only a few short weeks before the event. While filming in DC, the Freex wanted to establish a live feedback system at the protesters’ encampment at West Potomac Park. As a May Day Collective document recounts, “Through this system we would attempt to focus attention on the political objectives of the People’s Coalition for Peace and Justice and the May Day Tribe. We understood our major task was to connect people to the strategies of these two organizations and thus to help bring form and unity to an essentially amorphous gathering of people.”⁶⁷ But technical difficulties and a lack of discipline and planning prevented it from taking place.⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Collective had not worked out its relationship to the commercial news. Initially, they accepted \$500 from NBC in giving first viewing rights to the footage they shot, but the Collective soon reneged on the deal, self-righteously claiming: “We want to develop an alternate information system that will work toward fundamental change. If the networks wish to relate to us let it be to broadcast the existence of this alternate video system to the people.”⁶⁹ This system never arose.

Finally, the collective editing and distribution of the material proved to be a nightmare of conflicting ideas among various political groups.⁷⁰ The Collective statement notes, “During this discussion the group revealed only a superficial understanding of collectivity as the term was bandied about in a power struggle in which men repeatedly shouted down women they disagreed with. In this context, the word Collective became jargon and, in a strange way, a verbal talisman to dangle about our meeting to prove the purity and correctness of both sides of the conflict.”⁷¹

A fundamental rift had opened between those who conceptualized video at the service of the people and those who saw it as an artistic process simply serving themselves. One group “decided to give their tapes only for an edit to be distributed within the as yet unborn ‘alternative network,’ which if it does exist in fact, as some insist, does so on the level of \$2.00/ticket elitist Video Theatres, catering to the urban cognoscenti.”⁷² The other group supposedly “agreed to give their tapes to the people who needed to use them, whether for legal defense, or for informational purposes in any context they could be used.”⁷³

Interestingly enough, the day that the Videofreeex signed the lease for Maple Tree Farm was the very day that they finished collective editing of the May Day tape.⁷⁴ Many reasons led the guerrillas to leave the city for the country. A central one was that grant money could be more easily obtained if the group worked outside the city since a certain allotment was designated to non-urban groups.

Another reason was the communal ethos of the time. David Cort recalls, “It was like a dream, a fantasy, a romance that a lot of the hippies had at the time. That’s what they were dreaming about. They went out on farms, they’d never been on farms.”⁷⁵ Carol Vontobel asserts, “During the late 60s the commune movement was hot and that’s what you were supposed to do. . . . It was what was happening. It seemed to be what we were supposed to be learning at that time: how to live with other people; how to share. And we did it with a vengeance.”⁷⁶ At Maple Tree Farm, they shared space, money, and dinners. Although various members still had their

middle-class hang-ups, as we will see, the Freex were the most communal of the video groups.

But rather than peace and love or drugs or a specific political ideology drawing them together, it was the power of video. Parry Teasdale recalls, “The idea was to continue working with video, and the only way we could was to work collectively.”⁷⁷ Vontobel also asserts, “Making video was the most important thing.” Like many other communes at the time, their work ethic was strong. As Vontobel recalls, “It was an expectation that everyone would work, and we did work.” In many ways, this unstructured but intense work ethic encapsulated by the Videofreex well matched the emerging form of neoliberal labor that was often free, contingent, and blurred the lines between work and play. It allowed people like Michael Shamberg to capitalize upon some of the Freex energy to tape for TTV as he gradually coaxed the guerrilla form into a more broadcast-friendly aesthetic. This temporary assembly of video crews to record an event would later become a predominant practice for reality television below-the-line workers.⁷⁸ So as oppositional as the Freex viewed themselves, they were also ushering in a new form of postindustrial work and lifestyle unbeknownst to themselves.

Yet another reason for the move was due to their frustrations with the New Left factionalism exhibited during the creation of the May Day video. Teasdale reflects about the New Left: “Leaders and followers alike seemed exhausted and confused.”⁷⁹ Similarly, Cort notes how he quickly burnt out working with others outside the group.⁸⁰ The Freex, with its more relaxed structure and implicit anarchist practices, became an antidote to the individualism and political infighting that seemed to dominate the New York art scene and the New Left at the time. Maple Tree Farm became as much a psychic withdrawal as a physical one from the confrontations that plagued city life and Left politics.

Maple Tree Farm and Feminism

Lanesville sits 125 miles north of New York City, snuggled into a valley between Hunter and Phoenicia, NY. Around a hundred houses dotted its landscape back in 1971, with twenty-five of them occupied only seasonally over the summer. The central population is working class and rural. The Videofreex were based out of Maple Tree Farm, a seventeen-bedroom house surrounded by large swaths of forest. The Freex planted a large garden in its backyard and now renamed themselves Media Bus so as to not alarm the locals and more easily obtain grant money. They ate communally,

pooled their money, assisted each other in their projects, and eventually ran a low-powered television station from the house.

Although a communal atmosphere surrounded Maple Tree Farm, the Freex nonetheless imported some of their middle-class conventions. For example, the second floor mostly held the rooms of the monogamous couples: Parry Teasdale and Carol Vontobel, Chuck Kennedy and Ann Woodward, Nancy Cain and Bart Friedman. David Cort and his parrot also lived on the floor. The rest of the Freex lived on the third floor and practiced a less monogamous lifestyle.

Women like Carol Vontobel and Nancy Cain would play central roles in the functioning of Lanesville TV. But sexism still manifested itself in more overt forms at times. In some ways, it is difficult for the women to identify sexist practices since according to Vontobel, “You were so used to it, you hardly knew what it was.”⁸¹ She continues in describing the Freex men: “They were regular stupid guys. You know what guys were like in 1969; they were assholes. Nancy and I decided we didn’t care. It didn’t make any difference; we were going to do what we were going to do. It wasn’t easy.”

Curtis Ratcliff recalls being ignored in the NYC loft when she was still the only woman in the group: “All the guys showed up and me. We sat in a circle and we all talked. And I said something. And I was totally ignored. And I said it again . . . the guys probably don’t remember it, but I certainly do. And I was totally ignored. And I looked around and said I am really over this. I can’t be a part of a group where no one can give me any type of dialogue, any respect. That is when I started walking out the door.”⁸² This isolation eventually led her to leave the group.⁸³

Frances Wyatt, another brief member of the Freex, wrote the two issues of *Maple Tree Farm Report*. Within it, she drew a cartoon of Velvet Vidicon, a feminist video-making superhero who emerges after being admonished by a long-haired male holding a Porta Pak who asserts media-making is men’s work. Deanne Pytlinski suggests that Wyatt’s feminist outlook might have led to her outs with the group rather quickly.⁸⁴

Many of the household duties would get dumped on the women. Ann Woodward recalls, “We would give lectures about cleaning up the sink and doing your own dishes.”⁸⁵ Carol Vontobel similarly asserts, “Nancy and I worried about cleaning because we cared. Although I don’t remember cleaning that much, but we must have because it was a big house and no one else did it.”⁸⁶ Cain also recalls, “I remember having a changing the sheets burnout at some moment.”⁸⁷

As we saw with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, women routinely did the less glorious housekeeping and maintenance work. They provided the skills that kept such groups functioning on a day-to-day basis. Carol Vontobel pretended that she couldn't type, "because I knew if it was known I could type, I'd end up typing men's work."⁸⁸ Raindance operated similarly, with men like Michael Shamborg, Ira Schneider, and Frank Gillette occupying center stage, promoting their work while Beryl Korot and Phyllis Gershuny worked behind the scenes in producing their journal, *Radical Software*, which further featured the men's ideas and work. This dependency and marginalization of women's labor will remain a recurring issue throughout many of the groups throughout this book.

Even Cain's and Vontobel's video savvy proved double-edged since it provoked constant anxiety about their abilities. Vontobel recalls, "We were constantly having to prove ourselves. I learned to never ask any man to carry anything for me. I carried as heavy stuff as anyone else. . . . We learned how to patch the editing system ourselves."⁸⁹

Such observations provide an important qualifier about the implicit feminist implications that women's work in early video provided. As conceptual artist Ilene Segalove observes, because of women's historic exclusion from the means of mass communication for decades, "just to put our hands on the equipment was a feminist act."⁹⁰ Furthermore, the act of video-making could provide a temporary sanctuary as a seemingly gender neutral environment. As Pytlinski observes, "If the tools at times acted as masks behind which they could pass in an illusory gender-neutral, humanist environment of mainstream video communities, those same tools were also, in a sense, prostheses, playfully wielded to free the artists from the sometimes constraining limits of social constructions of gender."⁹¹ Yet Vontobel's statement reveals the tentative nature of such masks where self-surveillance and gender anxiety nonetheless still crept through. Although video-making might have freed women in unexpected ways, it still couldn't fully escape the gravitational weight of gender roles and sexism.

Nonetheless, the ecological approach to technology that the Freex championed held implicit feminist practices. Shulamith Firestone observes in *The Dialectic of Sex*: "Thus in terms of modern technology, a revolutionary ecological movement would have the same aim as the feminist movement: control of the new technology for humane purposes, the establishment of a beneficial 'human' equilibrium between man and the new artificial environment he is creating, to replace the destroyed 'natural' balance."⁹² This was precisely the goal of the Freex even though none of them

self-identified as radical feminists. Such an outlook provided the more assertive women of the group like Vontobel and Cain with opportunities that the other video guerrilla groups could not provide, like running a live television show and coordinating productions.

Throughout many of the Freex tapes, we witness the women experimenting with their newfound freedom in wielding video technology and producing tapes. In *Women's Lib Rally* (1970) we watch Nancy and another woman familiarize themselves with the filmic terms and shooting techniques. Nancy says from behind the camera, "I'll do a pan. I'll do a pan." The camera jerkily moves from the left to the right of the demonstration, holding briefly on another woman who is holding a Porta Pak across from her and doing her own pan. The women's self-empowerment through video gets literalized at this moment by both being the subject and object of the shot. Furthermore, having this occur during a women's lib rally further suggests the larger feminist context in which female empowerment through video takes place.

Furthermore, the same tape shows how video technology allows women to become more assertive. Not only does Cain question various male and female participants, but at one point she directs a long-haired man to turn toward the sun, aestheticizing him within the shot and hinting at what a heterosexual female gaze might look like. Clearly enamored with him, she asks more prying questions like, "Do you wash the dishes and all the stuff that women are supposed to do?" He replies, "I even sew. These dungarees are all mine." She offers her approval.



In *Women's Lib Rally* (1970) the female videographer positions a man to aestheticize him, revealing a heterosexual female gaze at work.

This represents a rare moment in the Videofreex library when a decidedly female ecological point of view manifests itself, reminding viewers that all the other tapes discussed so far come from an implicitly male point of view, and often a more confrontational one. Although Cain interacts with participants, it is usually with a less aggressive manner than we see operating when Skip Blumberg or David Cort thrust the camera at CBS executives or the police. This is not to essentialize a fundamental difference between male and female filming behaviors, but to suggest the gendered conditions and privileges that allow male videographers to hold more confrontational stances than the women who have had less historical access to communications technologies.

Vontobel recalls how the men of the Videofreex also sometimes exhibited an ambivalent attitude toward the women's growing video skills. For example, although Cain and Vontobel were encouraged to go and film the women's lib march, Teasdale gave Vontobel, who was new to filming at the time, the most difficult lens to use. She wonders "why he chose me the most difficult piece of equipment. . . . I thought he really wanted me to have the best piece of equipment or he wanted it to be so difficult for me that I couldn't do it. A wide angle lens I could just shoot everything. This lens was this long and it was very heavy."⁹³ Interestingly, she never questioned Teasdale about his motivations, but his actions speak to the double-edged nature of women's video experience that could both be empowering and intimidating, feminist and sexist simultaneously.

A particularly interesting moment arises during *Women's Lib Discussion* (1970) where the newly female-run *Rat* collective, mentioned in Chapter One, discusses their takeover of the magazine. Many of the issues that arise must have resonated with the women of the Videofreex. For example, women debate whether the collective should come from a specifically feminist outlook or simply offer a woman's perspective regarding New Left issues. One woman states, "I think it is very important for a publication that expresses Leftist ideas or movement ideas from a woman's point of view. . . . *Rat's* the first chance we had about interpreting movement ideas for women." But another woman counters, "I know I cannot give anything I have written to a group in which a man is sitting. I know there are women who are going to learn skills if they can work with their sisters. They do not have the intimidation of brothers around. I do believe that men have a role in the revolution obviously, but I think there are very practical and political reasons for a separatist movement."

The entire sequence is shot from one camera with no cuts, immersing the viewer into the process, showing the texture of the debates and cross-discussion as the camera glides over the speakers as the *Rat* collective stands in the middle of a circle of women. Answers are much less important than showing the discussion unfold. In many ways, it encapsulates a Third Cinema approach that is more concerned with process than solutions. As Julio García Espinosa writes: “We maintain that imperfect cinema must above all show the process which generates problems. It is thus the opposite of a cinema principally dedicated to celebrating results, the opposite of a self-sufficient and contemplative cinema, which we already possess.”⁹⁴

One can see the relevance of such a statement in this sequence where there is no correct answer as to how *Rat* should be run. The women questioning their relationship to the New Left, men, and cultural production instead takes central importance since such conversations had been largely absent until now for most of them.

Especially noteworthy is how the *Rat* takeover forced men to address feminism in ways that simple dialogue could not achieve. One *Rat* member states: “A couple of women on the *Rat* constantly tried to educate the men on the question of, of how it was being so bad in its attitude toward women and sexism. And they didn’t listen, so we finally taken it over. But what’s happened in the last month, slowly a consciousness developed and continues to develop of what this means and how to develop.”

Furthermore, the women’s takeover provides them with skills that they would have never encountered before. One woman reflects, “The women working on the *RAT* collective are going to have some very exciting experiences. They’re going to learn how to handle distribution, advertising, and all the other shit work which we were leaving to men.” Another woman corrects her that women have done plenty of other shit work in the past, but that these new skills are important. Once again, this must have struck a chord with Vontobel and Cain, who were in the process of learning such new skills by taping this very conference. The fact that this discussion accounts for nearly half of the tape suggests their interests in such concerns.

The most feminist tape to come out of Media Bus was *Harriet* (1973), a video produced by Nancy Cain. It chronicles a day in the life of Harriet Benjamin, one of the local Lanesville women who lived in a trailer with her husband and five kids. According to Cain, she visited Harriet daily since her trailer was by the post office that Cain would visit. After watching

Harriet perform her innumerable chores week after week, Cain suggested that they film her, which Harriet agreed to do.

First of all, the intimate relationship between filmmaker and subject speaks to wider feminist filming practices of the time. Many female film and video makers saw media-making as a way to establish antiauthoritarian relationships between crew and subjects. Dora Kaplan, in a 1972 issue of *Women & Film*, refers to this as “making political films politically.” An unalienated relationship among the crew and subject is “carried over to the process of filmmaking itself: a film crew working collectively without hierarchy and specialization; a film crew working on an equal basis with the ‘subject’ in decision-making and production; and a film crew recognizing distribution of the product to be integral to the process.”⁹⁵ Along similar lines, *Harriet* was initially distributed over Lanesville TV, where locals who knew Harriet first saw the material. As Martha Geever observes, “To a Lanesville audience, Harriet is likely to appear as a less abstract character, and, therefore, the feminist questions raised in the tape will be more pointed precisely because the people and situations depicted are closer to home.”⁹⁶ Additionally, Harriet either called in or appeared live on the shows, when the tape was broadcast to relate her experiences with Nancy, further cementing the relationship and equal authorship of the piece between the two.

Harriet chronicles the relentlessness of housework as we watch Harriet prepare the kids for school, wash laundry, prepare meals, clean the table, and wash dishes. Many of the shots provide close-ups of her hands, emphasizing the dehumanizing labor she provides, where her identity is submerged under a deluge of housework. Quick montage sequences of her work further punctuate the repetitiveness and monotony of her labor. Also, the tight spaces and frequent uses of “wide-angle views and skewed camera angles accentuate the crowded, claustrophobic space of the Benjamin’s trailer home.”⁹⁷ This home becomes a never-ending purgatory where endless tasks proliferate causing days and weeks to stretch into monotonous drudgery.

But these sequences are periodically interspersed by Harriet’s fantasy sequence of packing her car with a suitcase and driving away from Lanesville forever. Harriet hollers while packing her car, “I’m sick of Lanesville, and I’m fed up with it. I want something different. I had seventeen years and that’s enough.” At the end of the tape we watch Harriet drive off into the mountains. Cain recalls that Harriet laughed for fifteen minutes as they drove off “out of this exhilaration . . . and I wondered how

long are we going to keep driving?"⁹⁸ During one Lanesville TV show, Cain announced that she wanted to do a sequel. When asked what it would address, Harriet chimed in: "Find out where her destination is." Tellingly, in Harriet's fictionalized portrayal of herself, she never returns back to Lanesville. Unfortunately, they never shot a second tape.

Harriet shares many themes of other feminist films and documentaries of the time. The notion of the home as prison is also explored within *Ama L'Uomo Tuo (Always Love Your Man)* (1975), though in a more graphic and documentary account in which the filmmaker's grandmother recounts the physical abuse she suffered from her husband. The relentlessness of housework speaks to Chantal Akerman's brilliant *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), which meticulously immerses viewers in such repetitive yet hypnotic drudgery for three hours.

Harriet played at various festivals, most notably the 1975 Women's Video Festival, which both Harriet and Cain attended. Victoria Costello, reporting on the festival for *TeleVISIONS*, observed how all the videos screened "lacked the heavy rhetoric which has plagued feminist documentary video in the past. Instead, feminist themes were woven into more personal portraits and stories."⁹⁹ Such linkages show that regardless if Cain and the other women of Media Bus considered their work feminist or not, it fit into a wider context of feminist video and film production that couldn't help but influence their work and the ways in which it was read.

Yet beyond the video-making practices that the women engaged in, Media Bus's desire to establish a low-powered television station within their home also held certain feminist implications. As we saw earlier, just as women were recreating spaces within women's video festivals at the time, one can see the incorporation of broadcast capabilities into the home as a way to reclaim a domestic technology that had historically been used as a disciplinary device on women by treating them solely as consumers and homemakers. The home no longer serves just as a site of consumption but also one of production where the confines of the nuclear family were shattered by collective living and production. Incorporating low-power television into the home was done in part in the hope of demystifying television production—revealing it as yet another domestic tool like a vacuum cleaner or stove. The domestic no longer represented a privatized space quarantined from public concerns but instead became intimately intertwined with it.

Television production blurred gendered spheres where the domestic was typically associated with the feminine realm and the public with the

masculine. As Shulamith Firestone notes, “By changing man’s relationship to work and wages, by transforming activity from ‘work’ to ‘play’ (activity done for its own sake), would allow for a total redefinition of the economy, including the family unit in its economic capacity.”¹⁰⁰ The incorporation of a television studio into the home does this in part, just as it also institutes new postindustrial forms of work, as mentioned earlier. Although Media Bus most likely did not hold an explicit feminist intent in doing so, their decentralized structures, conflation of work and play, the public and private, and masculine and feminine spheres nonetheless held deeply feminist implications, as well as being harbingers of new forms of labor exploitation ushered in by neoliberalism.

Lanesville TV

Because Lanesville sits in a valley, it received relatively no television reception. Its small population also prevented cable companies from laying cable since the costs involved far exceed any profits that might be made from subscriber fees. The Freex/Media Bus established a low-power television station and broadcast its first episode of Lanesville TV on March 18, 1972, on the unused VHF space of channel three. The show ran until February 1977 and broadcast 258 programs. Of the 426 tapes produced and aired, the Freex produced 74 percent of them. The total body of tapes produced at Maple Tree Farm comprised the following categories and percentages: 42 percent news/local events; 21 percent Media Bus tapes not made for broadcast; 11 percent comedy and drama specials; 18 percent visiting independent artists; 5 percent commercially available films; and 3 percent repeated segments.¹⁰¹

Broadcasts would be picked-up on household television sets and were shown at the local bar. TV production also provided for group cohesion at Maple Tree Farm. According to Teasdale, “Afterwards we’d all have dinner and people would drink or smoke and we’d watch tapes and talk way into the night about video. It was a think-tank if you will, or a mecca of people who came from all over the world to be in Lanesville and to find out what we were doing and to exchange tapes with us.”¹⁰²

Visiting artists who used Maple Tree Farm’s postproduction equipment or were taking a creative sabbatical there often assisted with the show. Robert Sklar chronicles how visiting video makers Bill and Esti Marpet and filmmakers Maxi Cohen and Joel Gold provided help. Maxi and Esti operated the cameras. Joel played piano. Bill assisted at the controls.¹⁰³

The shows intercut live and recorded footage. They were often shot in the control room revealing the broadcasting process at work. By doing so, Parry Teasdale claimed: “We thought this demystified the process of television, a political goal of ours. To produce a show without the hierarchy amounted to a revolutionary act directed at the oppressive mediocrity of conventional TV. More important, it would point the way to a new form of television.”¹⁰⁴

One can see this low-fi aesthetic as an extension of an imperfect cinema advocated by Third Cinema directors. As Julio García Espinosa writes, “Nowadays perfect cinema—technically and artistically masterful—is almost always reactionary cinema” as its production is deeply dependent upon imperialist, hierarchical, capitalist, and classist practices.¹⁰⁵ A countercinema must use alternative practices and aesthetics that anyone can learn but will seem “imperfect” to the official tastemakers of the old guard. Low-power television produced by the FreeX similarly emphasizes an imperfect aesthetic that reveals its own production methods in the hopes of encouraging those who have been historically excluded from television production to participate.

Various episodes show the hosts often performing technical tasks. Cain learns from Teasdale how to cue tape during *Lanesville Overview*. In *Lanesville Retrospective* Skip Blumberg has difficulties cuing tape and asks, “How do I turn this mic down?” By intertwining performance and production, Lanesville TV showed viewers that the means of communication were literally within their grasp right down the road from them run by amateurs like themselves.

Like the VideofreeX tapes, Lanesville TV emphasized process by both exposing the practices at work in making a television show and spontaneously adapting the show’s structure around unfolding events. For example, during its May 18, 1974, episode, the police stopped someone driving drunk on a motorcycle before the house. Skip Blumberg announces that he is “getting our camera ready to see if we can get out front.” A cardboard insert of the house’s phone number appears as we overhear personnel shuffling cables and other background activity. The insert gets partially dislodged. Viewers call in as members of Media Bus attempts to shoot outside.

An outside shot follows from a shaky telephoto lens looking through the surrounding shrubbery in front of the house and documenting the police placing the motorcycle into the trunk of their car. Skip Blumberg runs down to speak with the cops as Bart Friedman takes the mic and broadcasts in front of their house. Skip returns out of breath speaking

about a man being charged with reckless driving and driving without a license. Bart asks him more provocative questions: “Did they [the police] give you any explanation of why they had to pummel the fellow?” But Skip evades it saying he didn’t see this.

When they return inside, the incident garners a couple of call-ins. One man wonders if the police presence is “to incite fear into the hearts of citizens.” Sam, their landlord, then calls in complaining that motorcyclists “drive by too fast” and that this guy had been harassing neighbors with his bike for the past week. Skip says, “I think it is good to have a good police force just like it’s important to have good schools and good city health. But of course the police are different in that they carry guns, so it’s important to have a good police department.” This comment causes another man to call in: “If you don’t do nothing wrong and you’re law abiding, I don’t care what uniform you have on.”

This show exemplifies how its spontaneity created a sense of community among neighbors. It provided the needed space and civil dialogue that connected Lanesville TV with their local viewers. Notably absent from the shows, however, are more critical outlooks by Media Bus. Tellingly, Bart Friedman, who had a more acerbic and explicitly antiauthoritarian personality, didn’t host the show all that much. We can briefly gain a sense of his critical view when he asks about the police’s treatment of the man. Skip’s deflection of this issue also shows how his more pedestrian outlook better facilitated dialogue between Media Bus and their neighbors.

The call-in sequence of the show, which became the community’s main point of interaction, was only supposed to be an aspect of a more ambitious plan to have the community make its own shows. Efforts at outreach were attempted. In *Lanesville Overview* we see Vontobel and Cain speak to a man and woman at the local bar about participating on the show. Vontobel explains, “It’s for everybody. It’s not just for us.” She tries to interest the guy in doing a live show from his house, stating how the show could provide a service function: “People could call in, sort of like radio, of anything they wanted to sell, or anything they wanted to swap, or anything they wanted to announce.” The woman chimes in: “Or anything that they need.”

Also, on February 1, 1973, Media Bus sent out a questionnaire along with a letter. They stated up front: “Our first response from the people we knew was very positive and we thought that people would become more involved. As the Community became more isolated from us, we became less able to provide good programming and less in touch with what was

happening in Lanesville.”¹⁰⁶ The questionnaire asks questions such as, “Do you have any ideas for future programs?” and “Would you like to learn how to make a TV show?”



Lanesville TV attempted to engage locals with video production, with people like Carol Vontobel, a member of Media Bus, speaking with people at the local bar. From *Lanesville Overview* (1972).

A particularly revealing question—“Would you like to be a Lanesville TV volunteer with us working for example in such fields as: Administration; Researching films and other programming; fundraising; telephone canvassing; news reporting; other”—exposes the class divide between Media Bus’s middle-class utopian vision and the working-class nature of Lanesville. Overlooking the fact that most working-class people would not have the time to volunteer for such cultural production, the positions that the Freex advertised would mostly remain an enigma for people not already involved in media production and nonprofit work. Although the questionnaire held good intentions, its wording was unlikely to generate interest and explains the rather low response rate they received.

Teasdale eventually admitted defeat: “Despite strong and continued encouragements to do so, few local people became involved in producing programs. The taciturn nature of the local people, their pressing economic conditions and the disquieting sense they felt toward the communal arrangements at Maple Tree Farm prevented a strong bond from developing between Media Bus and the community. The station always remained

in the hand of the ‘city people.’”¹⁰⁷ By 1974 the viewing audience diminished rapidly as houses in the county were wired for cable, cutting them off from the station’s signal.

Teasdale’s reflection regarding the inability to truly engage residents highlights how he and other Media Bus members highlighted the limits of the “local people” without adequately questioning their own practices. It only hints at a class divide by referring to the people’s “pressing economic conditions” and the alienating alternate practices of Media Bus with their “communal arrangements.” No effort was made to interrogate the deeper issues that stem from them. Certainly, no effort was made on Media Bus’s part to alter some of their lifestyle choices or production practices to further engage substantive community involvement.

The audacity of Media Bus’s utopian mission of placing video in the hands of the people speaks to an enormous sense of entitlement that sees oneself as a prime mover of history. Rick Feldman, a New Left organizer, succinctly identifies the paradoxical sense of entitlement that structured much of the white New Left and similarly guides Media Bus’s mission: “The arrogant confidence of our nation in the ’50s and ’60s, being the world’s only economic and military force, was also part of our confidence in believing that we could change the world.”¹⁰⁸ National arrogance intersects with individual assertiveness. The very idea that a group could simply move to Lanesville and engage a community with video production without any type of background research upon its inhabitants or self-reflection regarding one’s practices is not unlike a similar arrogant logic that justified the invasion of Vietnam by U.S. elites who felt they were doing it for Vietnam’s own good and would bring them around to see the light. A paternalist, imperial outlook courses underneath both outlooks regardless if it is cloaked in a populist or hawkish language.

Media Bus certainly wanted to help others, but not enough to disturb their own politics of enjoyment. Teasdale admits that they overemphasized this aspect: “Enjoyment was, in and of itself, a good thing and that joy would change the world. It was a particularly, perhaps myopic, view of people who were extraordinarily privileged to be able to think that way.”¹⁰⁹ It reveals the limits of their form of communal lifestyle politics that took pleasure and their own self-interests of paramount importance.

Although one doesn’t want to argue for older, more puritanical notions of Left politics that groups like Media Bus and others were rightfully frustrated with, the centrality of Media Bus’s own privilege with prioritizing their lifestyle choices and sense of pleasure clearly derailed some

of their more noble intentions to create cross-class linkages through video production. This becomes most apparent in Lanesville, where they finally have no choice but to deal with working-class people and their realities. This is not to say that Media Bus didn't have any positive impact upon the people of Lanesville, but it raises serious questions as to priorities as their sense of privilege and enjoyment never yielded even in spite of their gradual realization that the community television they envisioned increasingly slipped from their grasp.

Furthermore, this type of lifestyle activism still pervades much anarchist-inflected media-making and social formations, as we will see throughout this book, that overvalorizes individual initiatives and small collective work by not taking into proper account more systemic structures of oppression, which remain undeterred by micro-actions. White, middle-class people overgeneralize their own specific class, racial, and gender coordinates as somehow applicable to all, not fully grasping the unequal socioeconomic terrain that other communities inhabit thus rendering this vision problematic, if not outright impossible to fully realize.

Media Bus, Cable TV, and Outreach

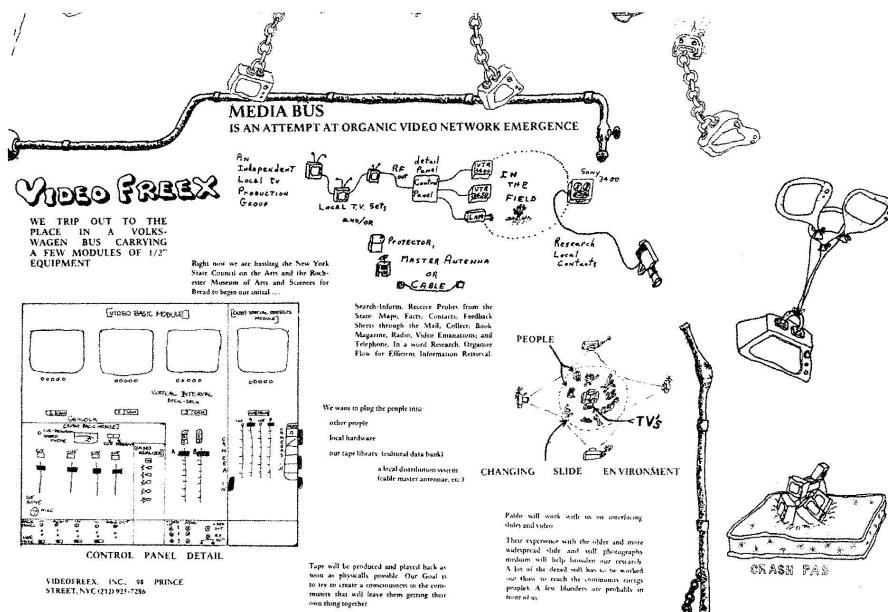
Media Bus, however, had decidedly more success doing outreach with middle-class communities of museum personnel, college students, faculty, and the like. When the Freex renamed themselves Media Bus in 1971, they partially did so in the hopes of receiving grant money to create a technologically rigged bus that could travel across the country. They wanted to modify it with the latest technology like video cameras, a tape trap unit, and a special effects deck.¹¹⁰ They contrasted the type of personalized media infrastructure they fostered against that of the conditions of mass communication, where "personal intimacy is non-existent even on the levels of small groups relating to each other." Instead, "we want to plug the people into: other people, local hardware, our tape library (cultural data bank)."¹¹¹

The guerrillas conceptualized the bus as a thread weaving throughout the country and stitching people together through their mutual interest in video:

Once our mobile video bus is on the road, we will move to establish contact with local groups, throughout our travels, and work with them to set up video theaters where we can show the tapes we have made as well as tapes of other artists

working in the video field. Universities, museums, churches, and community organizations will serve as initial inroads to the community, but as interest increases, the opportunities are limitless.¹¹²

It is an anarchist vision where video galvanizes spontaneous assemblies of people that extend their reach until ultimately creating a continental network of alternative media centers that could challenge the predominance of the current mass communication network. Like much technological utopianism, it assumes that video can idealistically strip individuals from the weight of class, racial, gender, and sexual restrictions to become self-empowered individuals relating to each other on equals plains. This marks the emergence of what eventually will become a hacker ethic that predominates throughout the 1990s and receives its most commercial and popular form within the pages of *Wired*, founded by Louis Rossetto, a libertarian anarchist from the 1960s.¹¹³



A diagram for the media bus the Videofreex wanted to create to travel across country and proselytize about the wonders of video. From *Radical Software* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 4.

The vision of the video bus was never realized, since Media Bus never received a grant for it. Yet the group nonetheless traveled mostly up and

down the East Coast in their media van to provide outreach with other communities.

One must understand Media Bus's actions as a small part of a much bigger fight regarding media outreach and public access occurring at the time. To put it in Autonomist terms, their actions belonged to a new, global form of media activism that employed radio, print, cable television, and the like to establish alternative collective subjectivities that opposed the regimented ways of industrial capitalism.¹¹⁴ This activism was ignited by Third Cinema and continued to burn throughout the West in forms of underground and political filmmaking, the underground press, guerrilla video collectives, public access television, and autonomous radio stations.

Many other video guerrilla groups, like Ant Farm and Global Village, had their own media vans and engaged in similar outreach operations. They all imagined themselves as technological nomads and evangelists for portable video and public access. They embodied the contradictions of rejecting ostensible middle-class lifestyles while at the same time living off the bounty and privilege that their own middle-class backgrounds yielded. Even if fully implemented, their visions were delusional, fueled by youthful naivety and middle-class hubris that wrongly assumed that their entitled outlook would infect others.

Similar fights were occurring within the realm of cable television over public access.¹¹⁵ Due to Nixon's hatred of broadcast television for its perceived Eastern, elitist biases, cable television received undue support from his administration.¹¹⁶ In order to persuade skeptical city governments and the general public about their good intentions, many cable franchises offered nominal access provisions for public access whereby ordinary people could broadcast their own material.

The Canadian Challenge for Change program served as an important model for the fight over public access within the United States. It both trained community members in portable video technology and established one of the first public access shows. By versing the inhabitants of Fog Island in video-making, Challenge for Change assisted them in articulating their resistance against being forced off the island to government officials. "By scheduling group showings of the films in various locations on the island," according to Laura Linder, "the films were used to create community and foster dialogue among the different groups on the island as well as helping them present their case to government officials."¹¹⁷ Yet such accounts often overlook how such technology built upon locations where a high level of community organizing already existed.¹¹⁸

In 1970, a prototype for public access was established in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where inhabitants broadcast four hours of local community programming a day. Although this experiment lasted for less than a year, it showed the potential public access held and was closely followed by the video guerrillas as they reprinted a number of Challenge for Change articles within *Radical Software*.

George Stoney served as executive director of Challenge for Change from 1968 to 1970, when he then moved to New York City and initiated the fight over public access within the States. He and Red Burns established the Alternative Media Center in 1970 in collaboration with New York University. As Ralph Engelman notes, in 1971, the Center “immediately became involved in the struggle over the cable franchising process and the introduction of community channels in New York City—which many considered the bellwether of the future of cable television in the United States.”¹¹⁹ For five years, it was the focal point of the public access movement.

For example, Stoney and Burns created the Video Access Center (VAC) over Bleecker Street Cinema on September 15, 1972. VAC teamed up with Sterling Manhattan cable, which held franchise rights over downtown Manhattan. Sterling provided \$15,000 worth of equipment: four Porta Paks, two Sony editing decks, and a special effects generator. Fifteen volunteers ran the Center. By the end of three months, close to three hundred people were trained on the equipment.

VAC produced a weekly one-hour public access show, Village Neighborhood Television, on public access channels C and D. But within a year of its partnership, Sterling already protested that it couldn’t afford the facilities and equipment it provided.¹²⁰ Yet regardless of Sterling’s misgivings, VAC soon had over five hundred people wanting to use its four Porta Paks. It intended on reducing this number to one hundred if it wanted to equally share equipment among its members since Sterling refused to invest in more equipment.¹²¹

In 1974, the Alternative Media Center (AMC) established its intern program. Interns were sent to cable operators interested in establishing public access. The operators paid half the intern’s salary, provided equipment and a studio to produce programs, and shared a commitment to public access.¹²² Interns had a two-week training period at AMC before being sent to the cable operator with a Porta Pak. By mid-year, they were brought back to AMC for a week and then returned for two weeks at the end of their stint to train a new group of interns. A series of public access

centers were created throughout the country, with AMC providing advice to interns regarding problems arising during their internship.

Inflated hopes sometimes guided the fight over public access. Ralph Lee Smith's *Wired Nation*, according to one video guerrilla, served "as the definitive handbook on CATV."¹²³ Within it, Smith articulated the liberating potential cable television held, emphasizing its two-way communication potential in establishing home library services, electronic shopping, and the delivery of electronic mail.¹²⁴ Yet he cautions that this can only become a reality if cable television is regarded as a public utility and receives common carrier status.¹²⁵

Cable companies fought tooth and nail against designating cable television as common-carrier status that would allow for government regulation over its pricing, but the FCC gradually moved along in such a direction during the early 1970s. By 1972 the FCC implemented PEG rules that made systems with over 3,500 subscribers offer one access channel, and systems in the top one hundred markets provide at least three channels for public, government, and educational access, as well as a fourth for commercially leased access.¹²⁶ In 1975, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the FCC can indeed regulate cable as a common carrier. Unfortunately, this was reversed in a 1979 decision where the court struck down the FCC's access and channel capacity rules, relegating such decisions to local governments. But from 1970 until 1979 cable television seemed to be transforming into an amenable environment for public access and the distribution of guerrilla videos.

In spite of this ambitious vision, however, most video guerrilla groups were highly aware of the limits in implementing it. In its cable issue *Radical Software* enumerated some of the problems: inadequate facilities, lack of support funds, and no publicity regarding airdates of the shows.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the variance of the Porta Pak tape speed made it difficult to rebroadcast, since home-receivers could not lock on the signal with too high fluctuations. It wouldn't be until 1973 with the introduction of the time-based corrector that such tapes could easily be broadcast over television.

Media Bus's traveling media van assisted in the fight for public access. As Nancy Cain recalls, during the workshops "we showed them [participants] how to run the cameras and we sent them out on the streets to record events. Then we went over to the cable company with them and their videotapes and explained to cable executives about the access provision in their license agreement for the cable franchise with the town which

mandated a free access channel for the community. Usually the cable companies didn't like the idea and we had to make a big fuss before they handed over the channel to the people.”¹²⁸

Their trip to Cooperstown shows this process at work, as well as documenting some of the difficulties in establishing public access. Media Bus asserted that “the interdisciplinary workshop was designed to introduce museum personnel, teachers, and other historical workers to the problems and possibilities of applying half-inch videotape technology to their work.”¹²⁹ The workshop ran from November 1 to 4, 1972 from 9:45 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. The Freex installed wiring within the space to broadcast its proceedings live over cable access on Saturday afternoon.

An interesting moment in the workshop has participants recall the difficulties of establishing public access in Cape May, NJ—a wealthy seaside resort in south Jersey. First of all, because the cable station was established before FCC rules required public access, the station manager needed to be persuaded to initiate such access. Furthermore, the station manager’s racism caused him to ban the appearance of African-Americans speaking on air. This led to public protest and his firing. The new station manager was amenable to local coverage but not having it produced by nonprofessionals. As one public access activist recalls, “His whole thing was that it wasn’t good enough quality and it had to be color and that he was going to do it right, and that we should wait until we had enough 1” color equipment for everybody to play around with.”¹³⁰ Finally, Teleprompter, the parent organization of the cable franchise, provided the community with a grant to buy equipment and guaranteed time to show their programming.

Yet other operators like one in Reading, PA, traveled to the Alternative Media Center since they had a devoted interest in public access. One of the workshop participants notes that the Reading operator “claims that the Reading subscriber rate increased about 50 percent since he started doing local community programming.” Somewhere in between the resistance of the first example and excitement of the latter fell most interactions with cable franchises in initiating public access.

Certain groups, however, like Top Value Television, grew tired of the small viewing base, the bureaucratic red tape, and less than ideal airtimes provided by cable television. Instead they turned toward broadcast television, the very thing that they excoriated earlier.

TVTV and the Commercialization of Guerrilla Television

As mentioned before, TVTV, and particularly Michael Shamberg's role within it, most dramatically illustrates the liminal zone that guerrilla video occupied between grassroots and commercial interests, activism and opportunism. Much of the hostility from other guerrillas toward Shamberg seems less based on his "impure" motives than that he dramatically symbolized the return of the repressed of their own mixed ambitions and middle-class roots that they desperately tried to jettison. Although Shamberg entered the belly of the commercial beast—Hollywood—many other guerrillas also entered into the very professions that they had earlier shunned during the 1970s, like university professor and corporate media consultant. TVTV's progression and Shamberg's career trajectory throughout the 1970s exposes how the guerrilla's exodus away from Fordist capitalism and suburbia also provided an entrance into a newly emerging postindustrial, commercial media system taking shape around them, one which they in part helped shape.

On the surface, TVTV's early tapes, like *World's Largest TV Studio* (1972) and *Four More Years* (1972), embody the same type of antihierarchical, antibureaucratic eco-vision that similarly directed other guerrilla video tapes. For example, members of the TVTV team were directly instructed to adopt a countertelevision aesthetic. A sheet of instructions handed out to them stressed "whatever the Porta-Paks do that TV doesn't is what we want to do."¹³¹ It instructed videographers to inject themselves into situations to gain intimate access and get beyond the media packaging of the event. "The subjectivity and honest feel of real occurrences comes from shooting real things," it advises. "Things that include the media floating around the city and the convention hall; the real interactions between delegates and the powers that be on a personal level in the hall and particularly around the hotels and such during the day."¹³²

The sheet equally instructs TVTV members to hold a healthy skepticism against countercultural media events. "Yippies, for example" it notes, "will stage media events. Instead of taking them at face value we need to shoot behind-the-scenes and debunk them as we would the straight media or straight culture."¹³³ We see such a stance at work during TVTV's encounter with quickly fading Yippie star Jerry Rubin in *World's Largest TV Studio*. In a sequence entitled "What Ever Happened to Jerry Rubin," we watch some hippies camped outside the 1972 Democratic National Convention. A spacey girl recounts in a jumbled, stoned way

about unsuccessfully looking for Jerry Rubin. The footage then cuts to Rubin sitting inside the convention center with the California delegates. Rubin's visual appropriation by sitting among the delegates suggests his political distance from the counterculture he once dramatically championed. Washed up on the shoals of egomania and hunger for media attention, Rubin desperately mugs before the camera, pathetically reminding the interviewers: "I ran for vice president four years ago with Eldridge Cleaver, right." When asked what he would do as vice president, he trots out the cliché: "Free dope for everyone." He then silences the crew to hear the announcement of his own nomination as presidential candidate from the stage, which he then claps for.

The sequence dramatically illustrates the trajectory of where the spectacle-based activism of the Yippies leads to: enmeshed in the very system that one supposedly originally challenged. Attention and fame outstrip politics and community. Todd Gitlin notes, "It was precisely the isolated leader-celebrities, attached indirectly to unorganized constituencies reached only through mass media, unaccountable to rooted working groups, who were drawn to extravagant, 'incidental' expressive actions."¹³⁴ As the countercultural wave ebbed during the 1970s Rubin opportunistically shifted allegiance to party politics, and ultimately to Wall Street during the 1980s by becoming a stock broker. As *Chicago Travelogue* reveals Abbie Hoffman's disinterest in the politics and the people he was organizing, *World's Largest* exposes another Yippie leader's indifference to grassroots movements as he jumps ship from the counterculture while desperately hanging onto the coattails of the Democratic Party machine for a few lackluster applause and the mention of his name ringing over a PA system.

The 1972 Republican National Convention provides an even easier target within *Four More Years* since hierarchy and bureaucracy pervade its entire structure. More noticeable elements consist of the political packaging of the event. Julie Eisenhower Nixon, for example, speaks about the over 250,000 young people organizing for Nixon as opposed to the 100,000 young people for George McGovern, "who is supposed to be the candidate of young people." While she speaks, TTVT superimposes a campaign button stating "One of 250,000" for Nixon youth to wear, emphasizing the prepackaging of her statement. She becomes nothing more than a walking campaign button, a tool in her father's arsenal to wield against voters.

Yet the production background of the convention tapes show that TTVT was not as freewheeling as it might first seem. TTVT only

temporarily assembled people from various video collectives like Ant Farm and the Videofreex for each of its projects, which prevented any real sense of camaraderie from developing.¹³⁵

Also, the collective editing of *World's Largest* began to divulge the more conservative aesthetic vision that Shamberg held for the tapes and his less than decentralized approach to media-making. Teasdale, who helped edit the tape, recalls that some participants viewed Shamberg "as a budding autocrat, taking over a process they intended to be cooperative. They had no alternative ground rules for collective decision-making, and many of them turned to me at one time or another to ask how Videofreex did it."¹³⁶ Carol Vontobel similarly remembers having arguments with Shamberg over his hierarchical approach to media-making: "It was never experimental for Shamberg. What he did was find new and more interesting subjects and he used artists—he hired us—to do his shooting. He's a producer; he's been a producer from the very beginning."¹³⁷ By the time of *Four More Years*, Shamberg saw the tape as mainly his.

One of the main points of disagreement concerned the aesthetic direction of the convention tapes. "Michael and I had a clash of visions," asserts Teasdale. "His for taking the best of what we did and adapting it for a mass medium, and mine, which regarded Lanesville TV's unpackaged, community-responsive, seat-of-the-pants production approach as inherently superior to and incompatible with the media establishment."¹³⁸ It became a question of process on both levels regarding the lack of collective practices regarding the editing of the first tape and the overall aesthetic of the tapes. Were they about a full-frontal assault on television standards like the Freex's *Subject to Change* or were they attempting to make gradual inroads into broadcast television?

Although to a contemporary observer versed in high quality, low-priced video cameras *World's Largest* and *Four More Years* seem rather raw documents of the convention, one need only contrast the style and content of *Four More Years* to Videofreex's *Trashing and Gassing* (1972), the tape they produced while filming for TTVT at the Republican National Convention. Shot by Skip Blumberg, the footage is much rougher with longer takes, reminiscent of the Freex style found within *Process Video Revolution* and *May Day Realtime*. His presence behind the camera takes a more central and confrontational role than what we see in *Four More Years*. At one moment, the police confront him, stating, "You get back there with the rest of those people." He replies back, "I am just covering the convention." As their confrontation escalates and Skip lowers the camera,

we watch their torsos bounce before us as debate ensues. When finally forced to leave, Skip then asks a few cameramen on the top of a network video truck if he could shoot up there with them. He is denied access.



Unlike *Four More Years* (1972), *Trashing and Gassing* (1972) emphasizes the police presence and violence used against protesters.

The extremely rough footage, going out of focus and at times badly framed, immerses the viewer much more into the immediacy of the moment as the situation overwhelms Skip. But this represented to Shamborg nothing more than simply badly shot film. He states within the guidelines for TTVT participants: "In toto, what we're about is producing quality tape that will stand on its own to communicate that there is another and a viable way to present the feel of an event and a social space that has been neglected, rejected and missing from media coverage to date."¹³⁹ This raises the question of what constitutes "quality tape."

One verboten area of coverage concerned confrontation. The guidelines warn: "Our feeling is that confrontation tape is a cliché of Porta Pak video and we're tired of it. One reason for TTVT is to give viewers an idea of the range of alternate video, because too often they mistake the possibilities of the equipment with the fact that it's always used in the service of the same content."¹⁴⁰ Therefore, neither TTVT convention tape shows police violence against protesters. Although Shamborg might be correct that such confrontational video has become cliché—particularly for contemporary audiences who can catch endless footage of riot porn

on various social media websites such as Reddit,¹⁴¹ it fails to acknowledge that by eliminating such material it airbrushes history and leads to a more one-sided approach for the side of authority. For example, in *Four More Years* we hear convention delegates complain about being roughed-up by protesters, a dubious claim that we never see. But we also never see the actual violence used against the protesters by the cops that *Trashing and Gassing* powerfully documents. In essence, Shamborg's aesthetic approach to avoid clichés leads to disturbing political implications of having guerrilla media whitewash the violence from the screen perpetuated by the state. Sometimes the cliché might be needed—particularly when it means documenting police abuse and the curtailment of First Amendment rights.

Trashing and Gassing, on the other hand, fully immerses us into the tear gas lobbed against protesters as Skip gets caught in a swirl of it. As the camera unsteadily tries to escape from its vapors, it films police cheering and raising their fists as they drive off protesters, causing Skip to reply, "Look at those pigs." His comments also reveal how the Videofreex footage is more overtly partisan for the protesters and against the cops as opposed to TTVT footage that gives the aura of objectivity. Although the Republican participants might rightfully doubt the neutrality of the TTVT crew, we never hear critical comments from the crew about any of the participants being observed. In *Trashing and Gassing*, Skip provides a running commentary over his footage, at one point questioning the entire endeavor when asking, "What am I doing this for, Michael Shamborg?" Only the seemingly more neutral elements of Skip's footage make it into the TTVT tape: the nonviolent sit-in and the Vietnam veterans' protest on the convention floor.

Small foundations and individual donors mainly funded the two convention tapes. TTVT also presold distribution rights to four Manhattan cable systems. As Deirdre Boyle documents, Westinghouse Broadcasting offered to broadcast the tapes in Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and San Francisco if they were cut together into a ninety-minute version, which TTVT did. It was also shown on public television within San Francisco.¹⁴² The broadcasting universe started to open to TTVT, leading them out of the cable ghetto into larger viewing markets.

By the time of their fourth tape, *Lord of the Universe*, TTVT had fully drunk from the broadcasting Kool Aid. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting chipped in \$5,000 for the tape's production.¹⁴³ More importantly, they worked with Television Lab of New York's public broadcast

channel WNET. The lab provided them with topnotch editing equipment and the expertise of John Godfrey, the Lab's head engineer.

After this collaboration, TTVT secured \$250,000 from Television Lab to produce five more tapes.¹⁴⁴ This was nothing less than a steal. Most documentaries cost around \$75,000 to \$150,000 at the time. This deal brought production costs at the cut-rate prices of \$50,000 per video.¹⁴⁵ TTVT therefore provided highly original and cheap content for public television that always suffered from inadequate funding.

TTVT produced *The Prime Time Survey* in 1974 to appeal to "investors, funders, and television sponsors."¹⁴⁶ It completely recants Shamberg's earlier and more well-known stance found within *Guerrilla Television*.¹⁴⁷ It admits: "Originally, we planned our work for cable-TV under the assumption that the managers of broadcast systems were too resistant to change and the context of broadcast TV would grind up and spit out our style as just another commodity. But since then, cable has not emerged as a viable marketplace and we've made contact with individuals within the broadcast system who are genuinely open to innovation."¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, it advocates for a more centralized, hierarchical approach after undergoing a series of problems like equipment malfunction and sloppy footage while making *Lord of the Universe*. The sloppy footage, it asserts, stemmed "from a lack of craftsmanship—decisive camera movement, building a texture of detail, and the video disease of thinking that if you're not asking questions then there's no story unfolding."¹⁴⁹ In order to rectify this, the next production will have "an editing crew whose job will be to screen tape nightly and give feedback for the next day's shooting."¹⁵⁰ But really this oversight would fall more and more to Shamberg himself.

By 1976, TTVT moved to Los Angeles completely having removed itself from the counterculture it once belonged to. *TTVT Looks at the Academy Awards* (1976) documents their movement away from the concerns of everyday participants into a star-fucking orgy. We follow the ridiculous controversy of Michael Douglas, producer of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, for not thanking Ken Kesey, the book's author, when the film won best picture. Instead of offering a critical stance, TTVT's cameras simply have Douglas and Kesey offer their own sides of the events. The tape dedicates only a short amount of time to the fans. Instead of learning about their lives, we instead hear them slobbering over stars. Any depth and oppositional stance has now been eliminated as the TTVT crew became coterminous with the spectacle itself.

It should come as no surprise that TTVT's final endeavor was an attempt to create a network television show for NBC, *The TTVT Show*. By all accounts, the pilot was unimaginative and humorless.¹⁵¹ The centralized and hierarchical production practices of TTVT hit their apex. Skip Blumberg recalls that TTVT "essentially cut themselves loose from any obligation to work in a collaborative, organic, democratized production process."¹⁵² The limits that manifested themselves over the editing of *World's Largest* now fully reared themselves as TTVT became just another piece of fodder for broadcast television.

Shamberg moved into movie production by 1978. *The Big Chill* became his breakout hit in 1983. The trajectory of TTVT reveals the gradual incorporation of certain aspects of the video guerrillas' style into corporate vision and how what at first seemed countercultural could become the harbinger of a new aesthetic for commercial media.

The Passing Moment

The moment that had produced the video guerrillas had passed by the late 1970s. The Videofreex/Media Bus had drifted apart by 1978. Nancy Cain worked on community television in Woodstock. Carol Vontobel and Parry Teasdale moved elsewhere and had kids. While working on community newspapers, Teasdale served as a corporate media consultant for clients like J.P. Morgan. Skip Blumberg and David Cort taught video production at universities. Mary Curtis Ratcliff became a successful visual artist. The others faded into more mundane lives.

The video guerrillas' early critique of broadcast television extended into more systemic directions like UNESCO's creation of the MacBride Commission to explore global inequities in mass communication. Its 1980 report observed that "the one-way flow in communication is basically a reflection of the world's dominant political and economic structures, which tend to maintain or reinforce the dependence of poorer countries on the richer."¹⁵³ The report challenged the U.S. notion that free-market dissemination of information promoted true freedom of information. Instead regulation and intervention was needed to create a more level playing field.

Such suggestions caused a furor in the United States, causing it to drop its UNESCO membership in 1981. Certain members of the alternative video scene protested such actions and wrote "The Willow Declaration" in reply. In it, they stated, "We support that technology which enhances human power and which is designed and controlled by the communities which use it. We

support the participation of workers and nonprofessionals in media production and the use of media for trade union and community organizing.”¹⁵⁴ Their statement simply reiterated many of the same tenets that the video guerrillas and public access advocates championed throughout the 1970s.

Despite such protests, the Reagan administration attempted to systematically dismantle the alternative video movement within the United States, along with the rest of the arts. As Patricia Zimmerman chronicles, the Reagan administration began in 1981 “to eliminate public support for culture by defunding endowments by 50 percent and decentralizing all federal funding to the states.”¹⁵⁵ Many media access centers that provided vital services for independent video makers folded. WNET’s Television Lab collapsed in 1984 due to the lack of funding by CPB.

A new regime had emerged that wanted to privatize communication, seeing it more as a commodity than as a public good. Zimmerman notes the drastic effects this had on independent video: “The cutting off of public funding created a form of ideological and financial quarantine for independent documentary work such that speaking from any racialized, sexualized, ethnicized, or engendered location risked endangerment and annihilation.”¹⁵⁶ The lack of federal funding made video remain a distant practice for historically disenfranchised communities in the United States. Where access to expensive equipment and training had been further provided by government investment, it now was curtailed. Only a few select places throughout the country maintained such services.

But many activists and members of the video movement continued to persevere in spite of a massive conservative backlash. They laid crucial infrastructure, tactics, and techniques that would eventually culminate in the explosive growth of media activism over AIDS in the 1980s and the development of satellite transmission for activist video in New York City. AIDS video activists along with Paper Tiger Television and Deep Dish Television extended some of the anarchist media practices already exhibited by the video guerrillas by making them more confrontational and central to their activism. AIDS activism, by default, had to be lifestyle activism since the disease and responses to it affected people’s ability to live. But unlike the video guerrillas where lifestyle trumped overt political activism, politics was at the forefront of AIDS activism because people’s lives were on the line. The negligence of hierarchical federal and state bureaucracy resulted in the deaths of untold numbers of people, leading AIDS activists and others to prioritize anarchist-inflected media activism that could force the government’s hand to take action.

CHAPTER THREE

ACTION=LIFE: AIDS VIDEO ACTIVISM, THE GULF CRISIS, AND SATELLITE DISTRIBUTION

(FOR ALEX)

ACTION=LIFE SERVED AS AN IMPORTANT COUNTER-MEME FOR ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) in contrast to their more famous expression Silence=Death. ACT UP's arrival on the scene in 1987 in New York City further radicalized AIDS activism that had begun earlier with groups like Gay Men's Health Crisis and the People with AIDS self-empowerment movement.¹ Action=Life well encapsulates ACT UP's direct-action mentality that used its members' bodies to seize the streets, airwaves, and government buildings to draw attention to the negligence, if not downright hostility, exhibited by the federal and local governments and much of the commercial press against people living with AIDS.

Much has already been written regarding ACT UP's formation and impact.² More recently a spate of films produced by former and current ACT UP activists like *United in Anger* (2012), *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), and *Sex in an Epidemic* (2011) chronicle many of the actions ACT UP engaged in throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Although academics like Roger Hallas and Alexandra Juhasz have offered in-depth analyses of the videos produced by and around ACT UP, no one as of yet has connected ACT UP's video activist practices within a longer historical trajectory of video activism within the United States, as well as its relationship with other forms of media activism occurring at the time. If Action=Life, ACT UP was very well aware of the need for coalition-building among AIDS activists and media activists to get a full hearing for their demands of

getting drugs into bodies, as well as popularizing their more systemic analysis of why poor Hispanics and black men and women were being disproportionately impacted by AIDS-related illnesses.

This chapter focuses primarily on the video activism of ACT UP/NY to explore its relationship to other alternative media institutions in New York City like Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) and Deep Dish Television (DDTV), which were crucial in supporting, training, and distributing the work of the video activists of ACT UP. New York City provided a unique environment as a media hub where these coalitions could most fully develop. Also, the state provided critical funding of alternative video through the New York State Council on the Arts as we have already seen in the previous chapter. Because of these valuable resources and its highly concentrated area that brought together extremely talented and savvy media activists, Manhattan served as a hotbed of video activism that reshaped itself into a much more aggressive direct-action, spectacle-based form.

As we saw in the previous chapter, a series of video guerrilla groups had already been integrating video production and distribution into their daily lives. Collectives like the Videofreex and People's Video Theatre explicitly saw such appropriation of video into everyday practices in explicitly political terms. Yet they shied away from aggressively using video to intervene into national debates and almost unanimously rejected more commercial forms of video production. Although TTV attempted to recast guerrilla video in more commercial-friendly forms, they were an outlier from the general outlook of most groups at the time.

The direct-action video activism associated with ACT UP, however, not only saw videotaping as a direct form of intervention during street actions but also employed quick, clever editing, the use of music, and other popular culture devices to make their videos appeal to a younger generation of activists that had rejected the dour attitudes that had plagued some branches of the older New Left. Although spectacle-based video was already being used by activist groups like Greenpeace a decade earlier, the sudden availability of relatively inexpensive consumer-grade video cameras during the 1980s provided an unprecedented level of access for many people. Therefore, market conditions in part allowed for the blossoming of a new form of popular direct-action video activism to arise in Manhattan that already held a disproportionate share of media talent and expertise within its reach.

Furthermore, the development of activist satellite broadcasting by Deep Dish Television provided an important development for all video

activism in relating local issues nationally and fostering national connections among video activists, cable access providers, and activist groups that were not necessarily media savvy. Not only did DDTV allow for AIDS video activism to achieve national distribution, but satellite broadcasting provided a new model of distribution and video activist organizing that would culminate in the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, as we will see in the next chapter. Therefore, I will briefly explore how the creation of the *Gulf Crisis TV Project* by PTTV and DDTV in 1990 to protest the first Iraq war became an important precedent in this new form of production and distribution.

This chapter is also concerned with connecting AIDS video activism with wider activist media practices that weren't simply about distributing their messages, but more importantly about empowering those living with AIDS to take control over their own lives and the meanings associated with them. I explore how video activism tied into other aspects of ACT UP/NY's media relations in organizing actions, engaging activists, and addressing and challenging the inaccuracies of the commercial news.

The first half of the chapter will focus on direct-action AIDS video activism's relation to other organizations like PTTV to explore their mutual relations and influences. It will also focus on how AIDS video activism was integrated into other forms of media activism in order to address and challenge multiple commercial news forms and further mobilize AIDS activists. The second half of the chapter will focus on the development of satellite distribution of activist video by DDTV, like the *Gulf Crisis TV Project*, and how AIDS video activism benefited from such a new infrastructure. The 1980s and 1990s in the United States marks a moment where a more widely accessible, spectacle-based video activism will become a new paradigm for many future forms of direct-action video. Also, the initial desire to distribute video nationally during these decades serves as a harbinger for the eventual global distribution of video made possible by the internet during the late 1990s and 2000s.

A Battle over Bodies and Communication

If we accept Autonomist Marxism's belief that subjectivity itself became a key terrain of struggle as capitalism increasingly infringed upon it, AIDS video activism dramatically highlights the centrality of where bodies converge with the means of communication over such fights. Although earlier forms of struggles like that regarding civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s

and even the 1930s Popular Front in Hollywood understood the importance of using the means of communication in mobilizing activists and relating their message, the nature of the fight qualitatively changed as cheaper video technology and more accessible distribution systems like cable television and video cassette recorders flourished within the United States during the 1970s and 1980s and extended video production to previously unprecedented numbers of people.³ Although one does not want to overidealize such accessibility by overlooking the class, racial, and gender inequities that still plague it, AIDS video activism reveals a new stage of video activism where the fight over new collective forms of subjectivity takes place.

The battle over video production takes on heightened importance as people's lives hang in the balance depending upon if they are viewed as either "deserving victims" of AIDS or as engaged, informed, fully human beings who deserve respect and assistance. Who controls the media message holds very direct implications for people living with AIDS regarding their survival. AIDS video activism grounds the importance of how new forms of collective subjectivities can arise through media production and spectacle-based events that challenge the hegemony of the state and its homophobic outlook that initially disregarded thousands of gay men's deaths as nothing more than inevitable casualties.

The emergence of ACT UP and AIDS media activism in 1987 highlights a historic moment where bodies and signification intimately intertwined. As Simon Watney wrote at the time, "Fighting AIDS is not just a medical struggle, it involves our understanding of the words and images which load the virus down with such a dismal cargo of appalling connotations."⁴ Such connotations included "othering" gays by initially associating AIDS solely with them, attributing guilt to gays and minorities who contracted AIDS, and treating those living with AIDS as passive victims and assuming their deaths as inevitable.

The war of signification that AIDS activists engaged in was not just some abstract enterprise, but in part determined the life or death of those living with AIDS. It draws to the forefront the importance of the struggle over new collective subjectivities that Autonomist Marxists stress. For many AIDS activists, addressing the delays of a cure led to systemic critiques of racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic practices that underlie the lack of access to health care, the failure of schools to adequately teach safe sex, and the disproportionate numbers of African-Americans and Hispanics who contracted AIDS.

This resistance identifies an important moment where alternative video thrived while other independent forms of communication were being gutted within the United States during the Reagan-Bush era. As Autonomist Marxists have noted, communication industries provide a crucial role in establishing subjectivities that are compliant with the practices and ideologies of neoliberalism and a heteronormative, white, middle-class existence.

Reagan's assault upon the arts during the 1980s provides one of the most blatant examples of the way in which the state attempted to silence alternative viewpoints that challenged its hegemony. As Patricia Zimmerman notes, Reagan began in 1981 "to eliminate public support for culture by defunding [arts] endowments by 50 percent and decentralizing all federal funding to the states."⁵ She emphasizes the political implications underlying such cuts that were there to bolster "the fantasies of the white nation composed entirely of obedient white families."⁶ Conservatives mustered accusations of cultural elitism and "arts welfare" for any federal and state support of the arts that diverged from a straight, white, middle-class outlook.

While the arts were being eviscerated, corporate media consolidation took place on an unprecedented level. Antitrust enforcement lightened, making laws already on the books, like the Paramount Decrees, which limited vertical integration of the film industry, all but ineffectual. Deregulation continued at a rapid pace allowing for a series of multinational mergers to occur in rapid succession: General Electric-NBC in 1985, Time-Warner in 1989, Paramount-Viacom in 1993, and ABC-Disney in 1996. This frenzy toward corporate consolidation became enshrined in the 1996 Telecom Act that finally allowed cable and broadcasting companies to merge, eliminated limitations on corporations owning more than twelve broadcasting stations, and encouraged the integration of cable and telecom industries while extending the length of station license renewals from three years to eight, therefore making community oversight more difficult.⁷

Also accompanying the conservative backlash against progressive cultural content was an increase of censorship. David Loxton, founder of TV Lab, was already having to deal with the threat of censorship at WNET in the late 1970s. When attempting to broadcast *Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang* (1980), Loxton had to placate several senior members at WNET that the show's passionate critique of nuclear testing was a benefit instead of a hindrance.⁸

During the 1980s, a growing chorus of conservatives would lob the accusation of a lack of objectivity at various PBS documentaries throughout the decade culminating, as we will see, in controversies revolving around gay and AIDS videos *Tongues Untied* (1989) and *Stop the Church* (1991) and the congressional defunding of queer artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz in 1989.

The 1980s in the United States dramatically revealed the war of signification that Autonomist Marxists highlight, by highlighting how federal and state institutions became engrossed in the fights over arts funding, media consolidation, and federal oversight over the communications industries. AIDS video activism, as a result, had immense challenges in getting its views distributed to counter condescending and often homophobic accounts of those living with AIDS as access to the public airwaves tightened. Yet their location within New York City assisted them greatly in providing institutional support, personal connections, and media savvy in gaining access to commercial media, while also establishing a strong independent media presence through the alternative press, video scene, and public access.

Institutional Support in New York City

Many of those who would become central in AIDS video activism and belonged to video collectives like Testing the Limits (TTL) and DIVA TV were first a part of the Whitney Independent Study Program. The program began in 1968 and had space for fifteen participants each year. It trained its participants in cultural theory, often Marxist and/or poststructural in approach, as well as provided studio space for its practicing artists. The program served as a magnet to the city for many people who came from out of town like Jason Smith or out of the country like Canadians Sandra Elgear and Robyn Hutt. Other participants were Alexandra Juhasz, Greg Bordowitz, Catherine Saalfeld, Tom Kalin, and David Meieran, all of whom would become important AIDS video activists.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, its participants were all either middle- or upper-class. The program provided a unique opportunity where advanced theory and praxis was fostered and became an incubator for later AIDS-related work. For example, many of the future members who would form the AIDS video group Testing the Limit started collaborating a year beforehand on other projects. David Meieran enlisted the help of Sandra Elgear and Robyn Hutt with one of his projects while at the Whitney. Through

Meieran, Elgear and Hutt were introduced to Greg Bordowitz, eventually a central figure of the AIDS video activist scene as well as a highly respected member of ACT UP/NY. Elgear assisted both Bordowitz and Meieran to apply for grants.⁹

Additionally, video activists Alexandra Juhasz, Greg Bordowitz, Jean Carlomusto, and Robyn Hutt had all been students at New York University and had been influenced by Faye Ginsburg, a professor of anthropology who was interested in the use of media by indigenous groups. Ginsburg became an important figure for many of them in exploring ethical and collaborative ways of using video in their own AIDS-related activist work.

Such connections and training provided incredible resources for those who would engage in AIDS video activism and further bolstered the cultural and economic privileges that they had already possessed. Video-making, however, was not central at the Whitney Program, so its participants who possessed no training had to turn elsewhere. Paper Tiger Television became an incredibly important training ground.

Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) was launched in 1981 as *Communications Update*. It supplied an important model in quick and economical media production that centered on critical analysis of commercial media, countering it with underrepresented, alternative viewpoints. Its format consisted of weekly “reading” series where a professor, activist, or likeminded host interrogated the imagery and words of a specific commercial media item. Such an approach was central for AIDS activists who similarly unpacked and critiqued the commercial news discourse surrounding the AIDS crisis. As DeeDee Halleck, one of the founders of PTTV, writes, “A good critical reading can invert the media so that they work against themselves.”¹⁰

PTTV’s rough aesthetic also encouraged other AIDS activists to engage in their own video production. This, in fact, was one of the intended purposes of PTTV. As Halleck writes, “If there is a specific look for the series, it is handmade, a comfortable nontechnocratic look that says friendly and low budget. The seams show: we often use overview wide-angle shots to give the viewers a sense of the people who are making the show and the types of consumer-grade equipment we use.”¹¹ Elsewhere she continues, “By showing the seams and the price tags, we hope to demystify the process of live television and to prove that making programs isn’t all that prohibitively expensive.”¹²

For example, PTTV’s “reading” series was shot on only two cameras. One followed the host whereas as second camera either covered a related

activity or shot in a wide frame to reveal the mechanics of behind-the-scenes activity like giving guests cues and cameras framing shots. In *Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times* (1981) one camera steadily focuses on Schiller critiquing each section of the Sunday *New York Times* point by point. The second camera either follows the activities of a woman reading the *Times* against a cardboard backdrop of a subway car or reveals the other studio camera filming Schiller.

The handmade set and title cards further accent the do-it-yourself ethos that PTTV advocated. The show provided direct media analysis in ordinary language within an intimate and “homey” environment that contrasted against the slick productions of network television that often obscured and misinformed the general public about whatever issues were being discussed. In *Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times*, PTTV’s economic and straightforward style opposed the “712 pages of waste” of the Sunday *Times* that Schiller critiqued.

Some of the central figures in ACT UP video activism, such as Jean Carlomusto, Greg Bordowitz, Catherine Saalfeld, Adriene Jenik, and Ray Navarro, had known Halleck earlier, either as their professor or from the NYC activist media scene. PTTV evidenced its anarchist affinities through its nonhierarchical structure and consensus decision-making. Such a nonhierarchical working situation became attractive to ACT UP media activists like Catherine Saalfeld, Ellen Spiro, and others who worked with PTTV. During the 1980s, anyone attending their first-time taping of a PTTV show might be asked to contribute by working a camera, the switcher, lights, or making props. The collective would meet for a half-hour at a coffee shop to plan and then run to the studio to set up for taping.

The importance of a consensus-based structure was explicitly referenced in Paper Tiger working documents. An introductory document for new members begins with the rather lengthy explanation of collectivism and consensus decision-making:

What does it mean for PTTV to be a “collective?” A collective is a group of people operating within a loosely-defined structure to achieve a common goal. The advantage of minimal structure is that it is easier for members to participate in all aspects of the organization. In the case of Paper Tiger, this means that responsibilities within the group change from show to show and from project to project; the director of

one show may be the editor on another and the coordinator of one project may be an assistant on another. Likewise, all members can participate in the decision-making process of the group and suggest new projects and initiatives. The lack of rigid organization, however, necessitates that all members have an understanding of the organization's goals and that the organization itself constantly engage in an evaluation of its purpose and practice. A collective may not always function as efficiently as an organization with strict hierarchical structures, but what it lacks in efficiency it makes up for by valuing the opinions and ideas of all of its members.¹³

Elsewhere new members are cautioned, "The best possible scenario is a dynamic and creative group that is constantly informing and critiquing itself evolving as its members push it to new levels of production and reflection."¹⁴

Although involvement from PTTV members ebbed and flowed, sometimes creating a vibrant and engaged collective and at others relying on a skeletal staff of volunteers that were barely keeping the collective afloat, all the participants interviewed for this study have generally positive accounts regarding its collective structure. Adriene Jenik recalls that once members performed their own tasks, such as camera setup, they assisted others in their tasks, since they only had a half hour for preparation before broadcast. "The skills-sharing," she emphasizes, "was very important and an organic and key part of Paper Tiger training generations of people who wouldn't have had video training. I learned lighting, switching with real professionals, not in class."¹⁵ Dan Marcus, who would eventually become office coordinator at Paper Tiger, recalls having very little technical skill at first. He began by holding cue cards, then worked sound, and eventually produced a few shows.¹⁶

PTTV's quick production process and accessible style resonated with the needs of AIDS activism for an urgent form of direct-action, spectacle-based events to protest government policy and counter negative public perceptions of those living with AIDS in order to find an expedient cure. Furthermore, it complimented ACT UP's own mission of challenging experts' ill-informed opinions and news anchors' problematic homophobic framing of the AIDS crisis by insisting that people living with AIDS could make their own media, tell their own stories, and provide their own analysis regarding the crisis.

Outreach was an explicit goal of Paper Tiger that is highlighted in one of its working documents:

Paper Tiger's commitment to democratizing the media extends to more than just the production of shows. Outreach activities such as supporting other organizations and groups with similar political interests, conducting workshops with community groups on the production of low-budget television, participating in conferences and panels on communications issues, and lobbying for better Public Access facilities in the New York area are major concerns of the collective.¹⁷

This attitude translated into material support when AIDS video activist groups like TTL and DIVA TV formed respectively in 1987 and 1989. PTTV provided cameras, personnel, editing facilities, and the like for AIDS media activists. Adriene Jenik, a member of both DIVA TV and PTTV, confirms the cross-pollination between the two groups: "Several people who had been in the PTTV collective overlapped with us [DIVA TV]. Ellen Spiro was one of the main people. . . . A bunch of PTTV people were on call for Testing the Limits for shooting ACT UP actions. Catherine Saalfeld and myself were trained on cameras at PTTV and would then teach people in ACT UP how to use the cameras."¹⁸ Dan Marcus also notes that "if they [DIVA] needed extra camera people, we would help out. We would often run into each other. We were going to ACT UP demonstrations."¹⁹

DeeDee Halleck, one of the founders of PTTV, recalls how Jean Carlomusto had been one of her students at Long Island University. Through Halleck's encouragement, Carlomusto founded the public access show *The Living with AIDS Show* for Gay Men's Health Crisis.²⁰ Additionally, Catherine Saalfeld, Greg Bordowitz, and Ray Navarro had all worked at PTTV productions at one time or another. Halleck notes, "A lot of the people at Paper Tiger were in ACT UP and went to meetings regularly . . . and there certainly was a lot of exchange and equipment sharing and editing sharing [going on between both groups]."²¹ Many of the nonhierarchical practices learned at PTTV and ACT UP would prove influential in the structuring of the early AIDS activists video collectives.

Consensus Decision-Making in ACT UP/NY

Early AIDS activist video groups like Testing the Limits and DIVA TV adopted anarchist-inflected practices learned from both Paper Tiger and ACT UP. Particularly important was the civil disobedience training provided by ACT UP for the October 11, 1987, Gay and Lesbian Second March on Washington, DC. The War Resisters League held a six-hour training session that covered the history of civil disobedience, nonviolence actions, media relations, legal support, and the like. Max Frisch, a Quaker, helped organize some of these trainings.²²

Much of the training included literature explaining consensus decision-making. It stressed that such decision-making did not mean that everyone always had to agree about the issues, but instead “to assure others of their right to speak and be heard. Coercion and trade-offs are replaced with creative alternatives and compromise with synthesis.”²³

The training also modeled consensus decision-making during an action, which sometimes occurred among ACT UP affinity groups. Although the training cautioned that consensus is a time-consuming process and most decisions should be made prior to an action, if the need arises during an action for consensus, a facilitator should have been selected ahead of time.²⁴

Every ACT UP meeting opened with the statement “ACT UP is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis.” Although it might not have often lived-up to its nonpartisan aspirations or have been as welcoming to diverse peoples as possible, its intent to do so signaled an important goal. Internal debates regarding the immediate need to get drugs into white, male, middle-class bodies and a more systemic understanding of how a disproportionate number of the poor and people of color contracted AIDS and lacked basic medical and financial support often arose during ACT UP Monday night meetings. Prioritizing goals always suggests an implicit hierarchy. One can rightfully critique the inability of those who refused to adequately self-critique such practices and explore their limitations. But the nonpartisan aspiration remains important for those who had grown tired with the undemocratic processes of some other Left organizations that they belonged to in the past or still currently attended.

As Ann Cvetkovich observes, many ACT UP members held ties to civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements. ACT UP, therefore, “provided an important respite from fractures within [those] political communities.”²⁵

As one past member emphasizes, “It was not a top-down group, it was a bottom-up group, even though there were hierarchies within ACT UP about who was cool and who got to cruise who and who go to do what. It was still a very democratic group.”²⁶ Perhaps most notably, AIDS activism and ACT UP in particular fostered alliances between lesbians and gay men that had fractured during the 1970s.²⁷ In spite of certain inequities and privileges remaining among its members, which will be addressed more fully later, ACT UP nonetheless offered a more open political space than some of its members had experienced elsewhere.

The video groups’ adoption of anarchist tendencies also spoke to their rejection of a commercial news model that demonized people living with AIDS, promoted homophobia, and reinforced a hierarchy of professionals in the media industry who routinely dismissed the insights of those living with AIDS. Greg Bordowitz observes, “Both collectives [Testing the Limits and DIVA TV] use democratic forms, such as consensus decision-making. The goals of both collectives are to quickly produce tapes that can be used by AIDS-activist direct-action groups as organizing tools.”²⁸ DIVA member Peter Bowen states, “Rather than having a fixed membership, a bank account, a solid identity, DIVA floats freely, making tapes with the money, technical resources and labor that is available at any one meeting.”²⁹ Anyone with either the skills or simple hunger to videotape could contribute to the collectives. Furthermore, this open structure not only provided for an influx of immediate assistance in creating and distributing ACT UP videos at the beginning, but it also gave meaning to people’s lives when the gay and lesbian community was being decimated with no end in sight.

Nonhierarchical decision-making and direct action took on particular importance for those living with AIDS and the gay and lesbian community as a whole, which was initially being ignored by commercial media and then demonized by them. Affinity groups became a central structure for ACT UP/NY. Although the entire group met on Monday nights, various affinity groups like the Media Committee, the Treatment and Data Committee, the Women’s Caucus, and DIVA TV met weekly on other nights. The number of participants in the groups was normally small, with anywhere from five to fifteen people in attendance. The affinity groups allowed its members to not only hone their focus on specific issues/concerns, but provided intimate connections among members who shared similar interests. They allowed for personal bonds to develop and prevented people from becoming lost in an organization as large as ACT

UP, which could have one to two hundred people in attendance during a Monday night meeting.

Also, the affinity groups allowed for semi-autonomy from the general body of ACT UP. Although final approval for affinity group decisions had to be vetted during Monday night meetings, the initial impetus began mostly during the affinity group meetings. As Greg Bordowitz notes, the affinity groups allowed “people with AIDS to be in control of all decisions concerning our health. It was very significant and it’s very consistent with the history of civil rights movements. Primarily, the core principle is self-determination.”³⁰

The importance of consensus and affinity groups became particularly stressed during the early 1990s when ACT UP/NY began to fray under the demands of its rather large and unwieldy membership. One participant writes to the group, “ACT UP’s greatest strength is the way it has transformed many of us from powerless victims fearing, awaiting or watching our own and our loved ones’ deaths into powerful activists who together have changed and continue to change the course of the AIDS epidemic.”³¹ Although he admits that “the consensus process can easily be fucked up by just a single ego-tripping individual,” more proper facilitation and the rotation of coordinating committee members might allow for more free and easy discussion to occur.

The Formation of Testing the Limits and DIVA TV

The formation of AIDS activist video groups emerged spontaneously from the need to tape demonstrations. Testing the Limits (TTL) formed as Greg Bordowitz and David Meieran met while taping a 1987 ACT UP demonstration on Wall Street. Sandra Elgear, Robyn Hutt, Hilery Joy Kipnis, and Jean Carlomusto soon joined. According to Hutt, the collective wasn’t formalized until it started to produce its first thirty-minute video, *Testing the Limits* (1987).³² Also, although it assisted ACT UP and all of its members belonged to ACT UP, TTL always remained independent from it.

DIVA TV, on the other hand, was inspired by TTL’s work and emerged as a video affinity group within ACT UP. Its initial task was to produce countersurveillance footage for ACT UP to be used to deter police violence against demonstrators during an action or to be marshaled as evidence during trials to expose police misconduct or inaccuracies. Only as an afterthought did the collective begin compiling their footage into larger video projects.

Such anarchist-inflected production practices manifested themselves in the aesthetics of both groups' direct-action videos.³³ Roger Hallas has most succinctly written about the direct-action aesthetic in *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. In it, he notes, "Embodying the radical democratic and anarchist ethos of ACT UP and its organization, direct-action video resisted the hierarchical structures of broadcast news and television documentary, which use anchors, presenters, reporters, and omniscient off-screen narrators to structure and frame the speech and events recorded by the camera."³⁴

We see the intimacy between the videographer and interviewee in a number of TTL and DIVA TV tapes. John Greyson notes how *Testing the Limits: NYC* foregrounds the collective's "active participation in the movement, both through their intimate camera angles and their rapport with their subjects."³⁵ The space of the political and that of the video makers converge, unlike many professional productions that maintain a distance from their subjects. Many AIDS direct-action videos reveal more intimate relations between video makers and interviewees since they often shared protest training and belonged to the same group.

Roger Hallas refers to this style as "embodied immediacy." It not only unsettles the hierarchies of commercial news media, whereby the anchor mediates interviewees' observations and experts' insights trump those of everyday people, but also challenges the physical distance the commercial media holds toward such activism by instead situating viewers immediately within the event.³⁶ Lack of voice-over defines such tapes. This style is in part intentional in order to unsettle any singular authority in explaining events to viewers. But it is also a result of necessity, due to limited resources and need for a quick production turnaround.

Not coincidentally, many of the AIDS activist direct-action tapes document anarchist-inflected processes. We see this occur in DIVA TV's *Target City Hall* (1989). At one moment a camera stands with a group of encircled protesters debating if they should block traffic in a street before City Hall. The camera circles around a friendly, white male facilitator who asks: "If we want to do it in the street now . . . or wait. These are the options." Activists around him offer their support as the camera attempts to frame them as they speak out. The events happen quicker than the camera's frame can capture them, which relates the spontaneity and excitement of the moment. The facilitator, however, cautions, "If you won't want to go, say no. Don't feel frightened about it." This encouragement finally elicits one man to voice his concern that more cameras should be filming them to protect them against police brutality.



Anarchism in action during a protest.
From *Target City Hall* (1989).

This moment emphasizes the countersurveillance function that direct-action footage offered. DIVA TV meetings dedicated part of their agenda to this goal in determining what actions they should cover. As Catherine Saalfeld notes, “Originally, DIVA TV came together because the cops who patrol our protests and arrest us like to do it with a heavy dose of gratuitous force.”³⁷ Also, the tapes were later used as evidence in court to expose police brutality and lies. Therefore, videotaping served a dual countersurveillance function as both deterrent and evidence.

The facilitator carefully relates this man’s concern to the group, where people calmly address it in spite of the anxiety of the moment. One man says that they should protest because the media will follow them once they engage in their action. After a series of people affirm their support for the action and the camera captures the nervous excitement of the participants as many comment that it will be their first time getting arrested, the facilitator nonetheless requests that someone get more media so that the man objecting to the action “feels more comfortable.” After slightly more discussion, they all agree to enter the street and start their action. The facilitator advises, “Lock arms like this and [he smiles] then walk out into the street.” They do so, blocking traffic, and start chanting, “Health Care Is a Right.”

It is quite simply an amazing moment of solidarity suffused with open discussion, debate, and nervous energy. It shows anarchism in action

as it draws participants together through their discussion and shows how a skilled facilitator can advance the discussion toward a quick, harmonious decision. Contrasted against the regimented lines of police around them, the protesters' enclosed circle engaging in anarchist practices reveals the alternative world that the protesters want to enact: respectful, antihierarchical, and full of solidarity and humor.

This affective dimension of the video serves a vital purpose. Numerous direct-action activists emphasize the affective solidarity that such actions yield. Jeffrey Juris argues that "these affective dynamics are not incidental; they are central to processes of movement-building and activist networking . . . They constitute platforms where alternative subjectivities are expressed through distinct body and spatial techniques, and emotions are generated through ritual conflict."³⁸ Direct-action video, as a result, attempts to approximate these affective dynamics to its viewers in order to mobilize them.

Media Committee and Addressing Commercial Media

Direct-action video activism, however, was tied to wider media practices and analysis provided by ACT UP and its affinity groups. Many members of ACT UP had contacts with commercial media. Ann Northrop, one of the central people who trained activists in media relations, had a long history working at commercial news bureaus. Bob Rafsky of ACT UP's Media Committee had contacts with the *New York Times*. Similarly, David Corkery, who joined ACT UP's Media Committee, came from ABC. This should not be surprising since Manhattan served as a commercial media hub and drew many talented producers, directors, writers, cinematographers, and reporters into its orbit. Not coincidentally, many of these people were closeted at their workplaces for fear of negative reprisals for their sexual orientation. With the onslaught of AIDS, however, many of these people were outed by contracting the virus and forced to explicitly deal with the contradictions between their personal lives and the commercial media establishment's practices.

ACT UP's Media Committee conducted several important tasks. Michelangelo Signorile recalls that one of their main strategies was to publicize the demonstrations while also working on editors and reporters to relate more accurate information.³⁹ Media Committee minutes reveal their incessant work on influencing reporters from the *New York Times*, *Time*, the *Village Voice*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago*

Tribune by organizing meetings with their staff and discussing issues about articles written by them or the general coverage provided by their paper.⁴⁰

For example, the Media Committee announced the formation of a *New York Times* “truth squad” “to respond with calls and letters to obvious errors and omissions in *Times* articles,” in late February 1988.⁴¹ By August of the same year, the Media Committee received approval from the Coordinating Committee to send out its “buzzwords” sheet that would list and correct all the biased words that reporters were using at the time in addressing AIDS. For example, instead of using “AIDS victim,” which suggested the inevitability of death and the passivity of the person, the buzzwords poster replaced it with “person living with AIDS.” According to Michelangelo Signorile, “We created this poster, and we mailed it to, I think, over 200 journalists around the country, and it was on the wall in newsrooms.”⁴²

In addition, the Media Committee would assist other groups in countering negative portrayals of people living with AIDS. The Committee helped an addictions anonymous recovery project craft a letter to the *New York Times* in 1987 to counter an article that had negatively represented poor women of color living with AIDS. The article paints those addicted to drugs as behaving irresponsibly by not telling partners about their HIV-positive status and failing to practice safe sex. It represents a general population “powerless to change their lives.”⁴³

Their letter responds: “This article is neither accurate nor responsible in our opinion. Nor does it provide a probing or thoughtful evaluation of what the problems of women and AIDS really are and what can be done about them. It only adds to the fear and confusion about AIDS that already exists.”⁴⁴ The letter stresses that it is written by the very women that the article demonizes, suggesting a counter to the article’s nihilism. They write, “We are the women who have been affected by this disease and are working toward understanding it and helping to effect a real and lasting cure for not only the disease but its root causes.” Such causes include the poverty and systemic negligence that poor communities of color had to suffer and endure and led to the use of hard drugs. Furthermore, the refusal of such communities to listen to social workers does not simply come from ignorance but also resistance to the very institutions that have lied repeatedly to them throughout history. They write:

Poor and minority people who are already accustomed to being blamed for the results of society’s prejudice against

them and neglect of them no longer trust society's messages about what this AIDS disease is, where it comes from, and what is being done about it for the poor and minorities. As a consequence, they have no reason to trust the information that the system is putting forth about AIDS.

Although ACT UP is not mentioned at all within the letter, it was vetted through its Media Committee and reveals some of the more furtive ways in which ACT UP/NY conducted outreach to communities that were largely underrepresented within it.

Also, the Media Committee used the publicizing of ACT UP's actions for the creation of a national network of AIDS activists. Almost 42 percent of ACT UP/NY's budget was dedicated to protest actions, much of which was spent on publicity.⁴⁵ Almost \$3,000 was spent on creating 250 press kits for its 1988 shutdown of the FDA in protest against its lengthy and inadequate drug trials.⁴⁶ These kits were sent out nationwide to select broadcast producers and editors. ACT UP activists in each locale would call up the recipients to make sure they received the materials, field any questions, generate further interest in the upcoming action, and provide potential activists as guests to be interviewed. Signorile comments, "And what we were doing, in the process, was empowering local activists in all of those communities to do media, because we were doing it from New York, but we had people from Media Committees in every one of those cities who would actually then—you know, we would hand it off. We'd do the booking, and then we'd hand it off."⁴⁷

A separate affinity group would organize on the ground media liaisons during an action and establish a media center. For the ACT UP 1989 Stop the Church action against St. Patrick's Cathedral and Cardinal John O'Connor's homophobic stance and general rejection of safe sex practices, ACT UP and WHAM! (Women's Health Action Mobilization) established a media center in one of its member's apartments where they would receive updates from onsite people and notify the press by phone and fax. Furthermore, the center faxed and phoned final press releases after the action had ended that included concerns over "the number of people arrested and other developments."⁴⁸ Additionally, onsite press coordinators would interact with the commercial press by giving updates of protesters' actions and fielding questions. Runners would be responsible for assisting coordinators and linking them to the media center—an important task before the advent of cell phones. One can see the positive impact of such

intervention with the coverage of their 1988 Target City Hall action that not only garnered positive press coverage but also prominently displayed activists lying in the streets holding a placard with a bloody hand that had written on it, "The government has blood on its hands / one AIDS death every half hour." Even if the coverage was lukewarm or negative, ACT UP still got its message out through its visuals that could encapsulate within one image a central issue regarding government negligence toward the AIDS epidemic.

AIDS MARCH ON CITY HALL

By CHRIS OLIVER and MARK MOONEY

Thousands of AIDS activists snarled morning rush-hour traffic and effectively closed the Brooklyn Bridge yesterday in a march on City Hall to demand more support for victims of the devastating disease.

"If people are dying now today, that's a small price to pay because AIDS is more than an inconvenience to thousands," said Karl Soehnlein, spokesman for the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

At least 200 of the 2,500 protesters were arrested during the protest, which began at 7 a.m. and lasted for more than three hours.

Protesters chanted, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Mayor Koch has got to go!" and, "We'll never be silent again."

They called for improved and expanded health care, more staff and beds for AIDS patients, housing for homeless people with AIDS, free treatment on demand for all drug-users, and AIDS education that "teaches protection, not morality."

"We're here because we're angry, because we're dying and we can't do what he has to do," said Ann Northrop, an AIDS counselor.

Michael Nesline, a registered nurse at Bellevue Hospital, said the city's medical system "is in a state of crisis" because of the AIDS problem.

"It's a recipe for disaster."

"Thousands of people will be dying in the streets in a couple of years unless something is done," Ed Koch is making political decisions, making decisions for a few rich people."

The mayor avoided the demonstration by entering his office from the Broadway side of City Hall.

The protesters were concentrated on the Park Row and Centre Street sides.

"Koch is not the object of the signs and slogans; I bear them no grudge," Koch said.

"They have a right to express their views and air their grievances."

Koch said New York "does more than any other city or state to serve the needs of those with AIDS and to prevent its spread to others."

He blamed the federal government for not doing more about the AIDS crisis.

Later, Koch told an afternoon press conference, "Who can fault them for being distressed, anguished, near-crazed in a sense — in

200 jailed in big protest over lack of help for victims



CITY HALL SIEGE: More than 2,500 AIDS activists demonstrate outside City Hall for more help for victims. Paul Kern.

Gov't snags \$1.5M for homeless with virus

By LUCETTE LA GRACIO

The city's welfare agency is settling on \$1.5 million intended for temporary apartments to house homeless AIDS victims. The Post has learned.

A plan to provide 100 apartments for homeless people with AIDS has been taken off the ground because officials at the Human Resources Administration bickered, bungled and dragged their feet. City Council President Charles Stein charged

The welfare chief has been under fire since mass protests by gay activists rocked City Hall yesterday.

HRA officials wasted several months arguing the first point of contention: proposed with budget cutbacks and writing a separate draft for the department. Stein told The Post:

"It's outrageous and shameful," Stein said. "Up to 1,000 people with AIDS are now homeless in New York. Many of them live in seclusion in our shelters and on our streets."

Funds to provide nearly 100 special housing units for AIDS patients were first inserted into the budget last June by Mayor Koch.

Stein quickly arranged for an additional \$500,000.

Nine months later, the proposed is bogged down in bureaucratic snafus and fights between HRA



ACT UP worked the commercial media well, such as having a protestor photographed with the placard "The government has blood on its hands: one AIDS death every half hour."

Regardless of how the story is framed, the picture relates a central issue for ACT UP.

Direct-Action Tapes, The Use of Spectacle, and Media Analysis

The Testing the Limits collective was originally composed of Greg Bordowitz, Sandra Elgear, Robyn Hutt, David Meieran, Jean Carlomusto, Amber Hollibaugh, Alisa Lebow, and Katy Taylor. They did not regard videotaping as recording for posterity but instead providing an educational function. Robyn Hutt comments, “It would be something that could be used now, within the next few weeks, within that community, with people to either bring information, or also, which we didn’t really realize so much at the time, how we could actually affect images that were on the air.”⁴⁹ Similarly, Sandra Elgear comments, “We wanted it to be used as an activist tool. That was absolutely what it was for. It’s a tape to show, to get people thinking and get people out there and get people angry.”⁵⁰

Testing the Limits saw video-making and distribution as a form of internal mobilizing and coalition-building. They envisioned TTL as like a “Soviet-style collective” with decisions made by consensus. Bordowitz comments, “At a certain point, we came up with the policy that everyone had to tape and everyone had to do an equal amount of the same kinds of labor.”⁵¹ They all collectively edited *Testing the Limits* (1987), organizing it around the three categories found in Simon Watney’s book *Policing Desire*: civil rights, education, and treatment/activism. They wrote all the main ideas on index cards with the time codes of where they appeared on their tapes. After about a week, they finally had a large piece of paper with all the time codes arranged.⁵²

Although the process was time consuming, inefficient, and fraught with disagreements, the collective project established a sense of solidarity that had not been felt among group members until then. Robyn Hutt reflects about the sense of cohesion provided by the collective editing of the first tape: “It’s not just something that we’re doing every Tuesday or Thursday night, or whatever. It’s actually a larger thing.”⁵³

More importantly, however, the tape was used for coalition-building among various AIDS networks through both its production and distribution/exhibition. Bordowitz notes, “The idea was to create a tape that showed or made the connections between these disparate activities going on all over New York. And the idea was then to bring the people in who were involved with these efforts and show how they were all connected, and they would see themselves in the space of an edit connected with each other.”⁵⁴ The collective saw the making of the tape as related to

and an extension of ACT UP's Outreach Committee. They documented an AIDS teach-in hosted by the *Village Voice* that drew together many community representatives who they would tape more in-depth later and who represented major voices in the video: Suki Ports of the Minority Task Force on AIDS, Mitchell Karp of the Human Rights Commission's IDS Discrimination Unit, and Yolanda Serrano of Association for Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment. Furthermore, the material collected was also repurposed for Jean Carlomusto's public access show *Living with AIDS*.⁵⁵

Testing the Limits, as a result, provided for a broad perspective of views from community groups addressing the AIDS epidemic, including many working-class and people of color who might not have felt comfortable attending ACT UP's Monday night meetings. For example, we see Yolanda Serrano standing outside before a long foldout table in front of a dilapidated building and a vacant lot covered in trash. A wavering handheld camera roughly focuses on her. She states: "This is what we call our street outreach, where we use a mobile strategy to reach the community that hasn't been reached" about educational materials regarding safe sex and drug use. It then cuts to Yolanda standing at the table speaking to a black woman seeking drug treatment. A black man before them asks, "What are these little kits?" She responds, "It's alcohol and bleach," before returning to speak with the woman. But we hear also an offscreen voice explain to the man: "If you're still putting a spike in your arm, right, bleach cleans the tip properly so you don't get AIDS." The mic also catches snippets of Yolanda's talk, as well as atmospheric noises like the wind blowing.

The rough nature of the footage suggests the lack of preparation and need to quickly tape this action. Furthermore, its aesthetic rawness and focus on public space dramatically contrasts against the broadcast news style that has an anchor mediate our understanding of events at a distance from within the confines of the studio rather than placing us into the community and having local people narrate their meaning. Such tape quality would also normally be deemed too unprofessional for broadcast television, revealing the implicit classism that guides such decisions. It exposes how supposedly aesthetic concerns lead to the erasure and censorship of everyday people documenting their struggles with AIDS from appearing on network television. The ability of blacks and Hispanics to offer their own solutions to the AIDS epidemic takes on increased importance when one keeps in mind how most commercial media either refused to acknowledge the way in which people of color had been disproportionately impacted by AIDS or had often been portrayed as deserving, irresponsible victims, as

the aforementioned *New York Times* article regarding black and Hispanic women with AIDS had done.



The lo-fi aesthetic of local community groups who do not have the funds and time to invest in high-quality video productions like ACT UP. From *Testing the Limits*.

The tape also emphasizes how blacks and Latinos are disproportionately affected by the AIDS epidemic. One pie graphs shows that a majority of AIDS cases in New York City concern working-class blacks and Latinos: 30 percent of blacks and 24 percent of Hispanics constitute its AIDS cases. Of the remaining cases, 45 percent are white, with 1 percent affecting Native American and “other” people of color. None of this had been addressed by the commercial news at this time, or it was only presented in the most superficial manner.

Yet, in addition to its rough footage, *Testing the Limits* also employs more “professional” quality camera work, editing, and audio throughout it. Unlike earlier video guerrilla groups that fetishized lo-fi aesthetics and lack of editing as inherently resistant to commercial media’s mandates, *Testing the Limits* reappropriated commercial imagery and aesthetics to serve their cause. For example, the tape incorporates music over its imagery to assist narrating its meaning. The lyrics of the song “Living in Wartime” by Michael Callen state: “This is the time for doubting / To stop and wonder why / This is the time for shouting / I don’t believe the lies.” While the song plays, we watch ACT UP’s Wall Street action, with protesters chanting,

locking down on the street, being carted off by the police, and holding a candlelight vigil. Larry Kramer, a founder of ACT UP, speaks during the vigil, where the music lowers so we can hear him state: "This is a desperate population here. This is the first time in history where the afflicted population is actually taking control of the epidemic." He is then followed by a montage sequence of speakers: Eric Perez of the Gay and Lesbian Solidarity Committee, Phil Reed of the Minority Task Force on AIDS, and Vivian Shapiro of Human Rights Campaign Fund. Shapiro states: "We are at war. We are absolutely at war," which compliments the song's chorus of: "We are living / We are living in wartime."

The music and diversity of voices are sutured together creating a sense of solidarity between the two. Sophisticated editing that draws together actions and speakers seamlessly punctuates this moment in the tape as well as sophisticated sound editing that alternates the level of music with that of the speakers' words with precision. As Greg Bordowitz notes, "This tape is an attempt to use the music television form—a commodity form—as a form of truly popular culture. We appropriated some of the tropes of MTV to deploy them as agit-prop."⁵⁶ This use of popular culture was noted and appreciated by others. For example, Timothy Landers from *The Independent* commented: "*Testing the Limits* uses the style of commercial media—skillful camerawork and editing, a catchy soundtrack—with-out becoming reductive or reinforcing the ideological assumptions that this style can mask."⁵⁷

The video, in other words, at moments, reenacts ACT UP's own tactic of deploying spectacle-based activism to draw attention to itself and interest a younger generation of activists who had been raised on these commercial forms. Tellingly, other sections of the tape that are not centered on ACT UP do not employ such spectacle-based and professional video aesthetics, due to a lack of resources on their groups' parts that must prioritize the urgency and immediacy of outreach over that of planning for more spectacle-based and symbolic actions. The tape reveals both the connections and differences between its taped groups. Through its use of editing, the tape insists upon a new collective subjectivity among various AIDS community groups that might have been hinted at during teach-ins and protests, but not asserted as forcefully as the tape does when it blends their voices and actions into one seemingly collective movement to dramatically highlight their links.

Yet at the same time the differing quality of the taped segments speaks to the unequal material resources at each group's disposal. Not

surprisingly, the predominantly white and middle-class ACT UP possesses the most resources whereas disenfranchised people of color have the least. Also, the different aesthetics of the tape speaks to philosophical and tactical differences among groups, where some viewed videotaping more mechanistically as simply distributing information so their primary efforts could be mainly focused on outreach, whereas ACT UP and its affinity groups had the resources to arrange events that would film well and the time to engage in meticulous postproduction.

Coalition-building, however, was not simply done formally within the production and editing of the tape but also through its screenings by drawing participants together to discuss its content and their relation to it. The tape was shown in diverse venues: community centers, museums, over public access, and schools and universities. It further solidified some connections between the groups filmed. Also, it extended the debate and coalitions internationally. John Greyson mentions a screening at the Toronto AIDS forum: "It became clear that for much of the audience, the tape constituted the same direct authority as the live speakers, addressing issues that would otherwise not have been raised."⁵⁸ Therefore, the tape extended the growing AIDS coalition abroad to Canada by integrating the video's issues with that of the Canadian audience's and establishing future links among diverse constituencies.

DIVA TV, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier, was an affinity group of ACT UP so its tapes were less concerned with coalition-building than documenting its own actions to deter police harassment and be used as evidence in later court dates. Its central members in the beginning were Catherine Saalfield, Ray Navarro, Jocelyn Taylor, Zoe Leonard, and Miing Ma. It was more loosely structured than *Testing the Limits*, since its initial goal was never to make a lengthy video. As Saalfield recalls, "What we talked about was that we might just sort of make these quick films that not everybody had to agree on. It was very anti-authority, anti-hierarchy."⁵⁹

It was only during the City Hall action that they began to conceptualize a longer work. But even so, their production and editing processes were much more informal and independently done than *Testing the Limits*. For *Target City Hall*, they assigned segments to various groups in the collective. Saalfield recalls, "We said, everyone just make your little piece. We're going to make a deadline, because we don't want it to go on forever, we don't want to have meetings forever. We'll just pick a deadline. And we'll say, okay, by the 21st of whatever, whatever we have, we'll just string 'em

together, and that'll be our piece, from City Hall. And that's exactly what we did.”⁶⁰

Therefore, DIVA TV held less of a collective process than Testing the Limits where all the members came to collective decisions regarding editing and instead took more of an aggregated attitude that let subunits edit their own sections and then place them generally together under group consensus. This leads to a much more unstructured feel to DIVA tapes. But some of the sections are extremely well focused like the one on *Target City Hall* that addresses the commercial media’s sensationalizing of the women arrestees being illegally strip searched after the action.

This sequence represents an extremely concentrated critique through the use of montage of many of the problems ACT UP had with the commercial media. Furthermore, it exemplifies how DIVA TV appropriated the critical reading strategies learned through Paper Tiger TV and redeployed them in a more spectacular fashion that used clever editing to stress their points. It begins with some of the ACT UP women recounting their harassment. Saalfield states how the female guards made the women shake out their bras. She wryly adds: “All the guns fell out.” Another woman relates her resistance to the guard’s commands. She notes, “I was kind of trying to cooperate, but I was also trying to distance myself from the experience so I kept questioning it.” These interview sequences are shot intimately, framed on the same level regardless if the women are sitting or standing. The women remain close to one another either in circles or pairs. It suggests the intimacy between interviewer and interviewee that allowed such honest and comfortable interviews to take place. As Sandra Elgear explains, “Knowing all the people, it definitely felt less exploitative because you have a relationship with somebody, whereas if you’re just a person from a network coming in and shooting somebody who’s been arrested and being humiliated or whatever, there’s a certain voyeurism involved in that, whereas when it’s your friend and you’re there and you’re wanting to help them and you’re shooting it, there’s a different connection.”⁶¹ As a result, there is a level of informality and comfort from the women in recounting their experiences as they share the same politics and often friendships with the women taping them.

This sequence dramatically contrasts against the next one where some of the women strip searched appear on the sensationalistic Richard Bey talk show. Three of the women sit awkwardly in chairs before a studio audience as Bey pries them for details. Saalfield uncomfortably explains: “There’s been a lot of this written about in the papers. I feel like we don’t

have to go through exactly how the strip search was." But Bey interrupts her and states in passive-aggressive terms: "It may be necessary to do. It is a humiliating procedure and one that is unnecessary. I think people hear it, you just stand naked. So what? But there were certain aspects of the strip search that are humiliating. You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to, and I don't want to force you to do that, but there were aspects of it that were humiliating." He keeps pressuring the women despite their visible discomfort. Although he poses his curiosity as educational, their explanation clearly also serves as titillation for the studio and viewing audiences by making the women relive their humiliation before them.



Target City Hall (1989) juxtaposes the antiseptic and
exploitative stage of *The Richard Bey Show* . . .

The tape then contrasts the sterile, awkward, and overly formal environment of the Bey show with that of an ACT UP talent show and fund-raising event for the women arrested. From the stage in leather jacket and shorts, the MC states, "And those motherfuckers down at the precinct strip searched eighteen of them to try and intimidate them." The audience shouts its disapproval of the police actions. He continues, "I want all the men out here to show the women how much we love them and how much support we have for them." The camera, located among the audience, shakily circles to watch the crowd applaud. The men then engage in a brief song and striptease, undercutting the sense of shame with that of anger and

amusement. Unlike the Bey show, the camera is allied with the activists, and the talent show is clearly marshaled in their support. The faux concern of Bey is replaced by actual anger on the men's part and the desire to transform such anger into enjoyment and action. The neutral and manipulative language of Bey is jettisoned by their passionate and profane language in support of the women.



. . . against that of the lively, colorful, and supportive environment of the drag show in support of the women who were strip searched.

This sequence is then contrasted against a news sequence where a male voice-over discredits Saalfeld's account of the strip search. We see the outside of a police precinct and some cop cars surrounding it. Footage follows Saalfeld speaking as the reporter sits before her with his legs crossed and looking skeptically. Tellingly, although we see Saalfeld speaking, we do not hear her words. Instead, the reporter's voice-over dictates the sequence's meaning by stating: "Saalfeld says although the matrons wore surgical gloves, they never touched the prisoners. In fact, she said they made no effort to touch her clothes. All Saalfeld had to do was strip." The condescension of the reporter's words—"never touched," "No effort to touch," "all Saalfeld had to do"—implicitly blames the victim in suggesting that her protest against the police is hysterical, if not completely unfounded. The male voice-over erases Saalfeld's voice as her body is used as proof that an interview took place and that the reporter is faithfully relating it. But just as the matrons violated Saalfeld during the strip search,

the commercial news violates her once again by discrediting her words by framing her within a heterosexist, male point of view.

The final sequence returns back to the talent show and later to a group of women in a circle singing about safe sex outside. They embrace each other while helping one another recall the lyrics to the song. Their laughter and relaxation contrasts dramatically against the hostile news footage and sterile environment of the Richard Bey show. If anything, it reveals how activist video shoots from the actual location of where the action takes place and creates a sense of camaraderie between participants and video makers. Commercial television, on the other hand, interviews participants far from the action in antiseptic environments that decontextualize their actions and spectacularize their image as something to gawk at but not understand. Visible discomfort trumps any form of genuine communication as the women's accounts are manipulated to reinforce a sexist, homophobic, male worldview that adheres to a format that exploits women as fodder for the viewing pleasure of others. Yet with that said, this sequence from *Target City Hall* engages its own media savvy style by employing skillful editing to draw out the contrast between activist video and commercial television. Although it rejects the dominant framing of commercial television, AIDS video activism is not beyond appropriating its slick editing techniques to redeploy them for its own purposes.

After her appearance on television, Saalfeld came to regret it. She considers it "a big mistake, in my opinion. Because you just have no control. I have zero faith, trust, belief, or anything in the mainstream media."⁶² Yet, because of her and the other women's appearance on broadcast television, an internal affairs investigation was initiated within the police department, discovering that unauthorized strip searches had been occurring "for an unknown period of time."⁶³ Although it is unclear if any serious ramifications resulted from the investigation, ACT UP drew attention to longer-term illegal practices used by police that would have remained under the radar and most likely continued.

The use of spectacle-based actions became a central tactic for many ACT UP protests and culminated in its 1989 Stop the Church action that invaded Sunday mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral to protest Cardinal O'Connor's reactionary statements in support of Operation Rescue, a Christian fundamentalist group that harassed and bombed abortion clinics, his refusal to acknowledge safe sex practices, and his condemnation of gays and lesbians. Additionally, because of cutbacks, the city depended upon Catholic hospital clinics due to the overcrowding of beds in state-supported

hospitals. But these Catholic institutions refused to counsel patients on a number of matters relating to safe sex, using clean needles if an addict, and abortion options if the prenatal child had contracted AIDS.

The Stop the Church action had protesters secretly enter the church as parishioners and then stage a die-in to interrupt mass. Ray Navarro dressed himself as Jesus outside the church and broadcast the action before activist cameras, imagining how Jesus would be much more sympathetic to those living with AIDS than the Catholic Church. Furthermore, affinity groups staged related actions before the church, such as a group of protesters dressed as clowns and calling themselves Operation Ridiculous in mockery of Operation Rescue. They stated, "Our mission is to diffuse the energy of the flag-waving, fetus-loving, bible-thumping bigots; we go where no clown has gone before." The action employed a series carnivalesque tactics to protest against the Church's somber rejection of the AIDS crisis and the humanity of gays and lesbians.

Not coincidentally, Robert Hiltferty's *Stop the Church* (1991) represents one of the most spectacularized of the direct-action AIDS activist videos by incorporating the irreverent and carnivalesque attitude of the protest action into its very form. Montage plays a central role in the tape's exposure of the absurdity of the Catholic Church and O'Connor as it celebrates the valor of the protester's actions. Three minutes in it displays a montage sequence over Tom Lehrer's "The Vatican Rag," which is a piano-based ragtime song. Lehrer sings: "Do whatever step you want, if / you have cleared them with the Pontiff / Everybody says his own / Kyrie eleison / Doin' the Vatican Rag." A series of images of O'Connor wildly gesticulating behind the pulpit and making contorted faces follows. The low angle of the shot inflates his image and makes him seem drunk on his own authority—more of a clown than a cardinal—and exposes the carnivalesque elements embedded within Catholic mass.

A shot of a man walking with a collection plate follows as we watch parishioners deposit envelopes of money onto it. Although cloaked in Catholic dogma, O'Connor's performance is revealed through the video's music and editing as nothing more than a sideshow act to bilk people of their money, no different than a carnival barker getting suckers to pay up to see the bearded lady. The moment's chicanery is highlighted by a close-up of the collection man's hand where two gaudy gold bracelets and gold rings adorn it, suggesting that donations primarily make their way more into the pockets of Church goons and clergymen, rather than into any charitable missions the Church advertises.



Stop the Church (1991) exposes Cardinal O'Connor as a clown holding a bigoted homophobic outlook.

A series of interviews follow with parishioners exiting the church who state increasingly homophobic observations. One woman comments, “Blasphemous is the word” regarding protester’s actions. Another woman comments, “I think if they behaved themselves they wouldn’t get into this mess.” A man finally comments, in many ways unwittingly encapsulating the very dogma that the protesters object to: “That this Church continues to teach what it’s taught for two-thousand years and that’s sodomy and abortion are evil.” Indifferent to contemporary reality and the existence of the AIDS crisis, the Catholic Church continues practices that disregard present-day suffering for callous dogma.

The pettiness of parishioners contrasts against the protesters’ actions. Although the protest footage is relatively short, it dramatically casts the protesters in a brave light against the cops. Handel’s “Messiah” plays over protest footage, in a sense appropriating this religious music to the protester’s cause that can’t help but glorify their actions. Quick cutting predominates of protest footage shot by video cameras within the crowd. The camera tussles as protesters push and shove their way past the police. Cops attempt to reestablish barricades as protesters’ bodies flow past them. As the confrontation escalates, the editing quickens. One shot shows cops lifting a steel barricade to block protesters’ path. But because the footage is shot from among the crowd, it makes the police look as if they are caging themselves in, less blocking the protesters’ actions than protecting themselves from the protesters.



The framing of *Stop the Church* makes the cops seem imprisoned by the protesters.

The sequence dramatically reveals the “embodied immediacy” that Roger Hallas notes predominates in AIDS activist direct-action videos. But the skillful editing and employment of music within *Stop the Church* harnesses rough direct-action footage into an impressive and inspiring montage ensemble that lacks in most other tapes. The final shots show protesters taking over the street by stretching a large black-and-white banner across it stating: “O’Connor Public Health Menace.” It suggests that police containment has failed. The protesters have seized public space and gotten their word out.

The importance of taking over public space should not be underrated. The streets are the place where theory and action converge as video-making and activism mutually support one another. The streets also hold a strong symbolic value. As Murray Bookchin notes, “it is in the streets that power must be dissolved: for the streets, where daily life is endured, suffered and eroded, and where power is confronted and fought, must be turned into the domain where daily life is enjoyed, created and nourished. The rebellious crowd marked the beginning not only of a spontaneous transmutation of private into social revolt but also of a return from the abstractions of social revolt to the issues of everyday life.”⁶⁴ This takes on heightened importance for AIDS activists, where the bodies of those living with AIDS have been pathologized and rendered impotent by the commercial media. The defiant attitude of taking the streets not only yields power

in the immediate moment but also counters the mediated stereotypes with their own counterimages of strong and assertive people, many of whom are living with AIDS.

Yet the Stop the Church action proved divisive among ACT UP participants, since many saw the action as a waste of time that didn't lead to any tangible results of accelerating drug availability. The action was debated for nearly a year on the floor before it occurred. Furthermore, the amount of preparation for the action diverted time and other limited resources from other, equally needed services like community outreach.

There was a fear that ACT UP was falling in love with its own spectacularized image. As Greg Bordowitz notes, "I was always leery of politics that led to doing everything possible to get two minutes on the local news."⁶⁵ Instead he felt that energies should be dedicated to alternative media that could build coalitions and empower those living with AIDS more directly.

Yet others saw Stop the Church as extending ACT UP's analysis in more systemic ways. Ann Northrop states at the end of the *Stop the Church* tape, revealing how even the production of the tape needed its own self-justification in light of the criticism against the action: "What it did was get the issues into the public conversation, and that's our aim. Not to change people's minds in the hierarchy of the Church, not to make people think something in particular, but to start the conversation, to get these issues talked about." Alexandra Juhasz also stresses how the action broadened the debates occurring on the floor within ACT UP: "You have this moment— incredible discussions going on, on the floor about that for months and months about what it meant to link that to other, you know, histories of oppression and fighting oppression in the United States, really."⁶⁶

But what was seen as a more systemic discussion by some was seen as a needless distraction for others. This had come up earlier in ACT UP. Various letters among ACT UP supporters expressed this. In one, its anonymous author writes, "ACT UP frequently becomes unfocused on issues unrelated to AIDS—women's rights, sexism, racism, nuclear war, etc., etc. ACT UP has very limited resources and to spend it on anything but getting drugs into dying PWA's is counter to the original purpose of this organization."⁶⁷ In another letter, someone writes, "Let the people with non-AIDS related issues bring them to our general meeting where I trust the rest of us would have the common sense to vote against including them in ACT UP's demands, no matter how worthy."⁶⁸

Although such dismissals of the ways in which AIDS tied into issues of racism, sexism, and classism might seem callous now, one must

remember the sense of fear and desperation of those living with AIDS at the time. Many of the white, middle-class, male PWAs who constituted the core of ACT UP might have been sympathetic to such links and causes. But it becomes a different story when such commitment might translate into delaying the development of drugs that would assist in saving your own life. Regardless, the Stop the Church action seemed deeply problematic to those who wanted to focus on pressuring the federal, state, and city governments to work on immediate remedies for AIDS.

To make matters worse, the overall coverage of the Stop the Church action was not successful. According to an internal report from ACT UP's Media Committee, press coverage mainly focused on one participant defiantly dropping a communion wafer to the ground, rather than addressing the issues of the action. Television coverage underreported the number of protesters by three thousand. Members of Operation Rescue and Catholic supporters went unidentified when being interviewed by commercial television, whereas demonstrators were labeled as "gay activists," thus undercutting the AIDS and pro-choice focus of the action.⁶⁹ A sympathetic local radio station provided live coverage and DIVA TV managed to get some clips from their tape distributed for broadcast, but in general the committee concluded: "The Archdiocese unleashed a powerful, sophisticated PR blitz Monday [the day after the action]. The second day coverage was virtually all the Church's side of the story—no opportunity for demonstrators to rebut or discuss the issues."

The press not only highlighted the wafer dropping but also the tensions the action produced between gay and lesbian groups. The *New York Post* dedicated a story to Andy Humm, leader of the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights, who called the action "stupid and wrongheaded."⁷⁰ He even suggested returning the next Sunday to hand out letters of apology to parishioners. The next day the *Post* led with an article titled "No Apology for St. Pat's Protest," which highlighted ACT UP's recalcitrant attitude. It quotes Tim Powers as saying, "We are going to make every effort, and if that means going back to St. Pat's again, we will got [*sic*] back this Sunday if we need to."⁷¹ Although the *Post* is the most reactionary of all Manhattan papers, seen as a mouthpiece for its archconservative owner Rupert Murdoch, it nonetheless encapsulated the general coverage of the action that minimized the reasons behind it by instead exaggerating its shock tactics, intra-gay community debates, and unrepentant attitude of ACT UP.

The final blow came when PBS WNET announced that it would not show *Stop the Church* seventeen days before its broadcast over P.O.V. David

Davis, president and CEO of American Documentary, which produces *P.O.V.*, claimed that the video's "pervasive tone of ridicule" of the Catholic Church prevented its airing.⁷² This came in the wake of WNET refusing to air Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* due to its graphic language and explicit sexual content. But in the case of Riggs' piece, WNET allowed its affiliates to choose if they wanted to air the show, and 104 of the 212 affiliates broadcast it. *Stop the Church*, on the other hand, was refused not just broadcast by WNET but also distribution to its affiliates. This naturally angered ACT UP, which urged its members to call a number of WNET personnel and PBS's president Bruce Christianson in protest.

The censoring of *Stop the Church* should be seen in light of a wider conservative assault against gay and lesbian artists in particular and the Left in general occurring during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The National Endowment for the Arts under conservative pressure in 1989 defunded queer artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz claiming that their work was "obscene." Congress actually drafted new legislation that prevented the NEA from funding materials which "may be considered obscene, including but not limited to depictions of sado-masochism, homo-eroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts; and when taken as a whole do not have serious literary, artistic . . . value."⁷³ A year later, in 1990, four queer performance artists were denied funding for the sexual suggestiveness of their material.

According to Ioannis Mookas, the *Congressional Quarterly* cited *Tongues Untied* and *Stop the Church* "as prime examples of the works which have the Senate lawmakers 'irked'."⁷⁴ As Patricia Zimmerman notes, "The discourse on arts funding in the United States was attempting to erect a symbolic Berlin Wall between art and politics to fend off gays, women, and ethnic minorities who had entered the once white male elite venues of art and destroyed the border between high and low."⁷⁵ It was about ridding the racial and sexual "other" from public discourse altogether.

In spite of the increasing hostility from Congress and the reluctance on public broadcasting's part to air any material that might threaten their federal funding by offending petty politicians, Testing the Limits professionalized itself even more in its desire to broadcast its next feature-length video, *Voices from the Front*, on PBS. They established an office and became a formal group of three producers led by Hutt, Meieran, and Elgear. This professionalization caused Carluomusto and Bordowitz to depart as they wanted to do more quick and economical type video production through alternative distribution/exhibition channels.

Furthermore, in creating this ninety-minute documentary, Testing the Limits could not work as collaboratively as before. Members of the group would make edits on their own that would then go through group discussion on Saturday nights. Additionally, they hired a professional editor who made a rough cut with various examples and alternate takes for each section that could be decided on collectively.⁷⁶ But this process and ambition of the project proved cumbersome, causing the production to take three years to complete.

Although the video aspired toward broadcast standards of production, it was caught in contrasting ambitions “to document the history of AIDS activism and its achievements and to articulate the urgency of the present situation and the subsequent need for action.”⁷⁷ Despite its assertion of “professionalism,” the Testing the Limits collective was still too close to the material to create an “objective” tape that simply documented AIDS struggles. Robyn Hutt acknowledges that they were “very influenced, actually, by how emotionally connected we were to the material,” adding that “none of us ever actually had that objectivity.”⁷⁸

We can see these split tendencies as *Voices* relates ACT UP/NY’s 1987 Wall Street protest by mixing amateur direct-action video with more broadcast quality aesthetics. The sequence attempts to tame the protest footage by embedding it within contextualizing voice-overs. We begin with an ACT UP/NY member commenting: “Our health care in this country is being controlled by Wall Street.” Even though the tripod camera shot emulates the “disinterested” expert, talking head style typically found on network television, the background wall behind the speaker is covered with ACT UP protest posters. The speaker is also wearing an ACT UP T-shirt, making his allegiances known.

His comments lead into a montage of stock footage of Wall Street brokers gesticulating wildly from the floor of the stock exchange. Electronic music plays over it before the footage cuts to the September 15, 1989 ACT UP protest before the New York Stock Exchange. A woman in a medium shot holding a placard, “AIDS, it’s big business,” explains how they are protesting the high costs of AZT and “those profiteering off the lives of people with AIDS who need these drugs.” A distant establishing shot follows of the columns of the stock exchange and tilts down to the mass of protesters before the building.

Tellingly, the moment that the camera moves more closely among the protesters, we hear a voice-over of Peter Staley, which distances us from the action by leading us into the next segment. He explains how some

members of ACT UP met with the corporation manufacturing AZT to discuss its exorbitant price. The immediacy of the protest footage and its high emotions are tempered by Staley's calm voice and discussion about a "rational" meeting with the drug company. Confrontational moments are absent from the protest footage in this sequence. We don't see protesters and cops clash nor hear any of the usual profanity that accompanied an ACT UP protest.

The juxtaposition between the footage of protesters picketing and Staley's voice also highlights a dialectical approach that runs throughout the entire video that juxtaposes individual observations with collective action. The video carefully situates its speakers within a wider movement whether it be by editing their observations against protest footage or having them provide testimonies before backdrops with ACT UP paraphernalia. When we finally see Staley speak, a huge pink triangle marks the wall behind him. Also, his account of some ACT UP members "civil" discussion with the drug company that refused to budge on its price is also later revealed by him as a scouting mission for a future action against the company. He recounts, "It was a great opportunity to check out the security of the headquarters, what their walls and doors were made out of."

A few days later, the video announces, four ACT UP activists barricaded themselves inside one of the building's offices. A series of newspaper headlines and articles follows and are juxtaposed against more protest footage and talking heads of ACT UP. The talking head moments further contextualize the demands for cheaper drugs and the positive effects of the action. The calm and collective voices of those speaking contrast against the more excitable speech of the protesters. This is most dramatically made apparent where we see a black man picketing in the street holding a placard for "Free AZT" and excitedly explaining how "people cannot afford this drug. It is too expensive." His voice fluctuates with agitation. Immediately following is the same man in the studio with a Keith Haring image behind him. He more calmly explains how the government invested in AZT, but the drug companies are profiteering off this. This seems a conscientious moment in the video to undercut any racist understandings of African Americans as out-of-control victims of their emotions by having the same man speak in a different context in a much calmer voice. It reveals that the type of speech is dictated by circumstance, not by any innate traits of the speaker.

The sequence is interesting in that it insistently links the talking heads with a specific political affiliation. Although it employs the broadcast

standard of the talking head interview, it refuses to imply that such interviews are contextless and “objective.” At the same time, the sequence attempts to recognize the importance of protest but also visually and audibly minimizes its presence. Unlike the direct-action videos where we are immersed within the action the whole time and very seldom have studio-based talking head shots to orient us, *Voices* dollops the protest footage out in small doses in the effort to not overwhelm the non-ACT UP viewer. It constantly buffers the immediacy of the protest footage with talking head shots, stock footage, news clippings, and music.

Yet despite Testing the Limits’ desire to moderate *Voices* for a general audience, its political alliances remained clear and too much for public television. It was never aired on PBS. But it did receive broadcast on HBO and had a successful theatrical run in independent theaters.⁷⁹ The video’s politics were too pronounced, which it announces from its start, where a man standing behind a podium states: “My name is Max Navar, and I am a person with AIDS. I am not an AIDS victim. I’m not an AIDS sufferer. I’m not an AIDS patient, . . . I have a condition that undermines my health, but it doesn’t undermine my personhood.” The video insistently pushes for the full humanity of people living with AIDS and the need for direct-action tactics to make any meaningful impact in speeding up drug trials and lowering the drugs’ costs. Also, the video’s disregard for a typical liberal documentary approach that often presents those being discussed as willing but helpless victims by instead representing PWA as engaged, informed, and angry in their fight might have offended middle-class aesthetic sensibilities.⁸⁰ Ultimately the video’s inability to remain “objective” in the heat of the moment when conservative politicians increasingly shut down the means of communication to anyone outside a white, heterosexual, middle-class framework made it doomed to not reach a wider public that an airing on WNET would have provided.

As a result, all AIDS activist videos produced at the time had to follow a hybrid distribution model that would allow them to play across multiple venues such as public access, museum shows and artist spaces, schools and universities, homes and rented spaces. Narrowcasting was their modus operandi to reach marginalized communities that were either being largely ignored or misrepresented by commercial media. Alexandra Juhasz highlights the political importance of such an approach that allows members of “marginal” communities “to extract and distinguish themselves from the ‘general public’ by making and seeing diversified, individualized media images” of themselves.⁸¹ Such screenings provide a sense of community

among those living with AIDS, as well as distributing vital lifesaving information and establishing larger coalitions among groups to mobilize for more direct political action.

Yet one promise outside of traditional broadcast television was that of satellite distribution. New York City, the media hub of the United States, not surprisingly advanced the use of activist satellite transmission through the creation of Deep Dish Television.

Deep Dish Television

Interest in satellite broadcast of activist video began in 1985 when some members of Paper Tiger (PTTV) met with members of Public Interest Video Network, which had already been renting satellite time to distribute programming of national organizations like the Union of Concerned Scientists and the National Resource Defense Council. In summer of 1985, PTTV members received grants from the Massachusetts Council for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts to produce national satellite broadcasting. Deep Dish TV was founded with three people being paid part-time as coordinators in creating its first ten-part series in 1986.⁸² A new national public access network was born, which took on increasing importance as independent views were shut out from public broadcasting during the brewing culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The first ten-part series commissioned by DDTV had each show running approximately for an hour. DDTV chose each show's topics and sent out requests to cable access facilities and independent producers for potential materials. Those who sent in workable proposals would receive modest funding and guidance from Deep Dish staff in the creation of the shows. Regional coordinators affiliated with DDTV would take the finished materials and edit the raw footage into a program, which they then sent to New York for final approval.⁸³

The first series was downlinked to over 186 stations. Furthermore, a booklet accompanied the tapes that included contact information for hundreds of participating video activists and cable access providers across the country. This marked the first concerted effort to establish national connections among the U.S. video activist community.⁸⁴

DDTV was not just conceptualized as a national distribution network but also as a new form of activist practice. An internal DDTV memo named "Using media as an organizing tool" explicitly stated their mission. The series did not just allow for organizers to feel they are a part of a larger

movement but also should be “used by organizers to help draw people to an event at which it further functions to create an environment receptive to organizing (i.e. educational and inspirational).”⁸⁵ Also the participation in creating segments for the series becomes “an organizing tool in itself. We should not undervalue the importance of grassroots activists speaking for themselves and producing their own television for a national audience. Deep Dish is the only national outlet of this type.” Mostly, DDTV programming is best used “when it is *conceived as part of an organizing effort with activists.*” For example, their 1988 production *Free Trade: A National Disaster* was produced by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union as a part of their campaign to pass the “Textile and Apparel Trade Act.” According to DDTV, “The union used the national telecast of the show to inform and energize union locals around the country in their local lobbying and education efforts.”⁸⁶

As the epidemic worsened and AIDS activism escalated, it took on increasing visibility on DDTV. In 1988, DDTV encouraged filmmaker and gay activist John Greyson to create an hour-long program, which would eventually be called *Angry Initiatives/Defiant Strategies*, assembled from activist tapes across the United States and Canada. The initial call-out stated, “priority will be given to issues the mainstream media usually ignores: AIDS in the black and Latino communities; AIDS and women; AIDS and media hysteria; artists [sic] responses to AIDS; the experience of PWAs in their own words; access to new drugs and treatments; the fight for adequate research and care funding; the experiences of IV drug users; AIDS in the prisons.”⁸⁷ A total of around 150 tapes were submitted that varied widely in terms of quality and style.

Angry Initiatives incorporated a range of aesthetic styles and outlooks. It varied from the experimental work of Barbara Hammer to excerpts of the rough DIY aesthetics of the *Living with AIDS* show produced by Jean Carlomusto for Gay Men’s Health Crisis. Although the broadcast provided uneven material, many in the gay and lesbian community were appreciative of it. Stephanie Poggi from *Gay Community News* wrote, “While sometimes just a bit too artsy, sometimes too fast (you wonder if the reasons for *not* taking the HIV antibody test are clear) and sometimes just a tad flat, *Angry Initiatives* drives home a clear message: AIDS is about tragedy and AIDS has to be about determined outrage, about changing things.”⁸⁸

Yet DDTV’s most important satellite project, which would serve as a model for future shows, was *The Gulf Crisis TV Project (GCTV)* in 1990. It, more than any other broadcast, attempted to harness the most involvement

among independent video producers and activists and in part successfully broke through into public television and the international market. The next section deals in-depth with the project since its practices and problems will later guide the five-day satellite production of *Showdown in Seattle* that broadcast daily during the 1999 World Trade Organization Protests in Seattle.

The Gulf Crisis TV Project

The project started informally with antiwar tapes occasionally being sent to PTTV. Additionally, PTTV was covering antiwar teach-ins at Woodstock, NY and Cooper Union, which resulted in the production of the first two tapes of the series. Also, in the early Fall, DeeDee Halleck received a call from Margaret Brenman Gibson, an associate of Daniel Ellsberg, the former U.S. military analyst who leaked the Pentagon Papers. Gibson was upset about Bush's desire to go to war and donated \$300 for satellite air-time for antiwar programming. Although this sum was far short of the costs involved in production, editing, tape stock, staff, and other costs, these related events caused PTTV to discuss if they wanted to create an antiwar series. Some Tigers considered it ill-advised to dedicate most of their limited resources to creating such programming, but eventually consensus dictated the creation of *The Gulf War TV Crisis*.⁸⁹

Deep Dish was in a good financial position to distribute the series since they recently came across a windfall of grants, the most notable being a \$50,000 MacArthur grant that allowed them to hire an office manager and part-time program coordinator in addition to the existing director position.⁹⁰ Therefore they had the personnel to assist PTTV to help guide the program to completion, field questions from participants, and offer additional support.

The series was originally conceived of as consisting of two hours of nationwide programming of antiwar teach-ins, but access producers said that four half-hour tapes would be easier to program.⁹¹ A particularly important voice in restructuring the shows was John Vernile, who ran a UHF PBS affiliate in Philadelphia, WYBE, since his station agreed to sponsor the series. Sponsorship allows shows to gain more visibility from PBS affiliates when broadcast over their satellite system, which DDTV was going to do in addition to renting time on a public access satellite.⁹²

A call for tapes went out in mid-November, giving roughly a month deadline for submissions. The entire process was accelerated since the

producers wanted to distribute the show before the war began in the naive hopes that its appearance might assist in galvanizing antiwar support that could actually stop it. The call-out asked for “tapes of any style, length, format, or genre. We are especially interested in opinions and voices that are absent from the mainstream media—tapes by women, people of color, students, veterans, peace and environmental activists and labor organizations—anyone with an urge to speak out.”⁹³

The rush in creating the original four tapes, however, produced a series of issues. The producers in charge of the series didn’t “consult with other groups regarding the final selection and content of the series.”⁹⁴ So rather than a collaborative process among various independent video makers and producers, it became more hierarchical, with main decisions being made in the New York office without adequate outside input. Additionally, most of the material shot for the first four shows was produced by insiders, those groups already connected with PTTV and DDTV. Although this constituted quite a good number of participants since the two collectives had made tremendous inroads in outreach, it nonetheless failed to establish a more decentralized mode of production where new contributors could be a part of the series. Finally, its rushed production allowed for some sloppy video-making with much repetition of material between its four tapes. For example, identical beginnings initiate both *War, Oil, and Power* and *Getting Out of the Sand Trap*.

Regardless of all these limits, the show presented an alternative take on the escalating war that was completely absent from broadcast television. The series’ partisan approach was needed to counter the pro-war propaganda that was falsely presented as “objective” news over the major networks. The opening show emphasizes the series’ desire to produce a new collectivized antiwar subject. A montage of protest footage starts it off with titles listing its diversity of locations: Fort Wayne, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Madison, Washington, DC, Chicago, and New York City, among others. This sequence, like many DDTV series, “widens from an interaction that speaks to an individuated, psychically formed spectator into a series of social relations with communities.”⁹⁵ Footage follows of different constituencies critiquing the war from multiple perspectives: African-American, Palestinian, women, Hispanic, conscientious objectors, parents, media critics, etc.

The series illustrates the Autonomist Marxist belief that the means of communication becomes crucial in countering commercial media’s stranglehold that creates a compliant, neoliberal subject. Just as AIDS

video activism established alternative identities and modes of resistance for those living with AIDS, *GCTV* produced a similar oppositional, collective subject that remained absent or was marginalized on commercial television.

Additionally, the series demonstrates how everyday spaces could be reappropriated for antiwar activity. For example, one sequence of *Bring the Troops Home* shows a semi-high angle shot of a middle-aged woman in Virginia sitting on her couch. It is all done in one shot and badly lit. Clearly those making the tape have little understanding of more professional aesthetics of video production. Yet this sequence's problematic quality in many ways highlights its urgency and affect as this woman speaks eloquently from the heart without needing to use editing to make her point. She states matter-of-factly, "All the young people and the people going to war, it will be the working-class people and the people with no jobs. It won't be the rich people's sons. They never get near a war."



The Gulf Crisis TV Project (1990–1991) highlighted everyday people, using video to foster activism.

The sequence suggests how seemingly depoliticized domestic space can be harnessed to voice a critique against the war. It is not just a site of television consumption but also a site of production of critical attitudes and collective action that network television ignored. In many ways, it is an extension of the logic that Media Bus initiated back in the early 1970s of transforming Maple Tree Farm into a low-power television studio. In this

case, cheap video technology now allows many individuals to transform their domestic space into that of a mini-studio. DDTV then provides the needed distribution system to view their tapes.

The woman appears again in the last sequence of the tape. In it, she looks to the camera and implores, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living, and that’s what we’re going to do against this war in the Middle East.” After finishing, she stands and walks off-camera as if about to become engaged. Her image encapsulates DDTV’s desire for viewers to use the series to get mobilized and eventually leave the comfort of their couches to step outside the frame and collectively organize with others. Not coincidentally, as the credits roll, we see a series of images from protests. Through editing, the sequence connects the woman’s action and words inside her home with that of the protests occurring in public space. It links the two realms together and shows how they can be complimentary rather than arbitrarily disconnected, as if belonging to two separate realms.

Also, the series continues PTTV’s tradition of critically reading mass media by applying it to the networks’ coverage of the conflict in the Middle East. *Operation Dissidence* dedicates itself to media analysis. It lists “five questions the media failed to ask,” such as: “If Hussein is a ‘Hitler’ why was Bush funding him prior to the invasion?” and “Why was the Iraqi invasion illegal if the [U.S.’s] invasion of Panama was not?” The series employs a longer history and wider geopolitical understanding to situate the conflict. Furthermore, it implicates U.S. interests and hypocrisies in supporting the very dictator we now wanted to overthrow as well as our own imperialist excursions into the sovereignty of other countries.

Because of the general media blackout regarding critical perspectives of the Middle East crisis, public television and many public access stations were receptive to broadcasting the first four shows of the series. Around three hundred access stations broadcast it, although the numbers are difficult to verify.⁹⁶ Forty public television stations programmed the series, thus, allowing it to reach 40 percent of U.S. households. WNET, the largest PBS station in the country, showed the series three times during key viewing hours.⁹⁷ The *90s Channel* located in Boulder, Colorado, broadcast it twenty-four hours a day for more than a week, which led to a storm of complaints about its partisan programming.⁹⁸ Channel 4 in Britain picked-up the series, also.

DDTV encouraged those broadcasting the series to integrate it with local antiwar activism. They sent a letter to many activist groups where the series was showing that advocated for “wraparounds”: televised events that

could either precede or follow each episode. They write: "You could choose to host a panel of speakers, sponsor a debate, or show home video footage of one of your groups." For those without nearby or sympathetic public access centers, DDTV encouraged activists to call them: "THE GULF CRISIS TV PROJECT has a national network of community TV producers, media and arts centers, so we can probably hook you up with a media maker in your area to produce the show for (or with) you."⁹⁹

This appeal successfully drew a series of groups to participate. In Chicago, an hour-long panel discussion over the Middle East conflict preceded the series. It included Vietnam Veterans, local television reporters, and magazine editors. People in Doylestown, PA, coordinated local interviews and discussions with Vietnam veterans and an open mic with community members with the broadcasts. Austin, Texas provided local commentary on the series by Dorothy Turner of the Black Citizens Task Force and University of Texas professor Harry Cleaver. A live call-in segment preceded the show in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and a panel discussion with various members from the local NAACP and community groups followed afterward.¹⁰⁰ As a result, through its production and distribution, the series formed new antiwar coalitions that had not previously worked together. Although the involvement of groups assisting production was limited, the distribution of the first series engaged a diverse amount of antiwar activist groups.

Because Channel 4 in Britain bought foreign distribution rights for the series that totaled around \$35,000, PTTV decided to reinvest the money to create a second six-part series. Additional foundation funding of \$20,000 further assisted. But this time the series would more actively attempt to diversify contributions by adding nine additional producers and two people doing outreach. The problem, however, was that many of the new producers were young and did not have much experience making a collaborative series. The nonhierarchical structure proved problematic in the ways it accentuated the unequal privileges among the producers so those who didn't have to work, attend families, go to school, or the like could contribute more than those who held other responsibilities.¹⁰¹

Also, there was never adequate preparation for the overall vision of the show. The producers, for example, never created "a framework for collective discussion of the editorial content or the direction of the shows. The combination of deadline pressure and the distance between producers' expectations and the reality of resources created real problems."¹⁰² More diverse materials were integrated into the series, but none of those who

collaborated on it maintained much contact afterward. It failed to establish a stronger coalition among activist video makers and might have instead weakened a few relations through the process.

These problems related to informal video-making structures will arise again, as we will see in the next chapter, during the creation of *Showdown in Seattle*, where most of the video footage of the series was provided by a small clique of video groups that had already known one another prior to broadcast. This also led a certain amount of animosity to develop among the groups that were either left out or whose views were ignored.

Additionally, because of the rushed nature of distributing the second series, most television producers were only given two weeks' notice about its appearance. This is problematic in that most producers have programmed shows months in advance.¹⁰³ The series was largely ignored by most PBS affiliates since WYBE dropped its sponsorship of the series only a few days before broadcast since it was concerned that its broadcasting of controversial material might negatively impact renewing its license.¹⁰⁴ Because of the hectic nature of the productions, the GCTV producers failed to contact or lobby specific public television stations. For example, WNET, the local New York PBS station that held the largest national audience, remained completely unaware of the existence of the second series.¹⁰⁵

Finally, the context had changed. The war had now begun, which made it more difficult to air antiwar footage. Station manager Peter Belcastro from Ashland Cable Access in Oregon, for example, commented: "It will be very difficult for access channels now to only show anti-war programs without the accompanying other side. It is obvious that a majority of people support the President's decision as well as strong support for the U.S. military."¹⁰⁶ He reminds the producers that the show must be "perceived as fair, open and non-censured, we must have an honest report of both sides of this issue on the next series of reports."

It was this appeal toward "objectivity" that also plagued the appearance of AIDS-related tapes like *Stop the Church* and *Voices from the Front* from appearing on public television. Here it manifests itself again but this time for public access. "Objectivity" served as a convenient alibi to censor any criticism. Even more disturbing was that such a stance was being employed by someone who was supposedly sympathetic to the series.

The series made no bones about its partisan appeal. The *News World Order* tape ends with a playful sequence titled "Make Video, Not War" by Ellen Spiro, a PTTV member. We watch a series of street shots of diverse

participants videotaping events. One man states, "There's really been a blackout on media coverage of war protest. So I'm against the war and thought I would come out here and shoot my own video for my own historical library." This focus on antiwar video coverage widens as the sequence continues. We then listen to a Latina explain while filming: "When there's a camera around watching and able to take that information back later on to prosecute police brutality, police tend to be less aggressive." A bleached shot of a placard, "VIDEO IS A WITNESS," follows.



In its "News World Order" episode, *The Gulf Crisis TV Project* encouraged viewers to get involved in video activism and suggested the inherent links between diverse video activist projects.

Footage from various ACT UP protests and *Target City Hall* follows. A man comments afterward, "Public access television is the most powerful and peaceful means by which we can make ourselves heard. . . . I encourage others to dub their own VHS tapes, pass them on, give to friends who may not be swayed one way or another." This extension from antiwar footage to video's surveillance role and use as evidence to AIDS video activism and then a general appeal toward public access speaks to how the sequence visually sutures these diverse struggles into a coalition of video activists who might not focus on the same material but often share similar attitudes toward video's use. It suggests a new collective identity through its editing that does not yet exist on the ground and gestures toward the utopian aspirations that series like the *GCTV* hold in attempting to assemble a new

collective identity of video activists and non-video activists through the production, distribution, and exhibition of its programs.

Regardless of its limits, the satellite distribution of material provided a new important model to broadcast local issues nationally and to create a wider coalition of video activists than had been done before. For AIDS activism, satellite became an important distribution mechanism. DIVA TV bought \$2,500 worth of satellite time to distribute *Like a Prayer* (1991) and its compilation program *Be a DIVA* (1990).¹⁰⁷ DDTV also distributed Gay Men's Health Crisis's *Living with AIDS* show.

When Free Speech TV (FSTV) was founded in 1995, it further distributed gay and lesbian and AIDS-related shows both produced within Manhattan and elsewhere. FSTV was an outgrowth of the public access channel The 90s Channel. According to cofounder Jon Stout, they followed DDTV's model and talked to community access cable stations around the country. This allowed them to regularly schedule four hours of programming every week. The first two hours consisted of regular serial content where material like DYKE TV and AIDS Community TV appeared. The second two hours played independent documentaries, often curated and co-presented with allies in the independent media field. By 2000, FSTV started distributing over satellite.¹⁰⁸

The Waning of Direct-Action AIDS Activist Video and Outreach

Yet accompanying greater distribution of gay and lesbian material was the burnout of the direct-action AIDS activist video scene in Manhattan and elsewhere. Anarchist-inflected, direct-action video-making makes consistent video work difficult to sustain. Catherine Saalfield explains how "our last tape wallowed a year in postproduction" due to an ever-changing group of people working on it.¹⁰⁹ This forced DIVA to finally institute a policy that only the same group that begins a tape can work on it until completion. But this made no difference as it was the last full-length tape the group would produce. Some of the reasons for the stalling out of DIVA TV was the death of one of its core members, Ray Navarro, and the general melancholy that followed the host of other deaths its members personally witnessed, as well as the gradual fracturing of ACT UP that occurred during the early 1990s. But more general reasons for its dissolution, not unique to AIDS media activists but affecting many informal media collectives throughout time, were: some of its members wanted to do their own

independent work as artists; others grew tired of the collective structure and its cumbersome processes; factions developed over the changing mission of the group; and lack of sustained financial support placed strains upon many of its members.

Testing the Limits produced one more project, a four-part television series, *The Question of Equality* (1995), which chronicled various lesbian and gay civil rights issues in the United States. It was broadcast over PBS and Channel 4 in Britain. For many of the same reasons mentioned above, the collective then dissolved.

Furthermore, despite the idealization of anarchist-inflected practices seen in a tape like *Target City Hall*, they often proved alienating to more historically disenfranchised people who neither had the time nor other resources to dedicate to long meetings and the possibility of arrest. Many members of ACT UP recognized these racial and class limits and tried to ameliorate them. As we saw earlier, Testing the Limits back in 1987 attempted outreach and coalition-building with diverse constituencies that were not adequately represented by ACT UP alone through the production and distribution of its first video. Along similar lines, Alexandra Juhasz, an ACT UP/NY member, established video groups outside of ACT UP to better provide media access to working-class women of color. Juhasz reflected, “I found that the structure of making media left me in an uncomfortable position. I was *taking* and *having others’* images to use again and again, to edit to my liking, to use in making my videos, which, in turn, would further my career, even if this was all primarily in the service of getting the word out about AIDS.”¹¹⁰ But to create the infrastructure needed to level the playing field and make participatory videos with historically disenfranchised communities proved difficult in large part to the biases of large granting organizations like the National Endowment of the Arts that did not recognize the validity of low-fidelity video work since they only funded work in a “professional format.”¹¹¹

Juhasz nonetheless received grant money from the New York State Council on the Arts for \$19,500 and small grants from smaller institutions like Women Make Movies and ArtMatters.¹¹² This allowed her to meet for six months with six black and Latina working-class women who were care providers for those living with AIDS. The name of the project was WAVE (Women’s AIDS Video Enterprise). The grant money was used in part to assist with childcare services, transportation costs, and meals. Because of adequate preproduction time and space, Juhasz had the time to unpack and question her relationship to the participants and explore the power

dynamics of the group.¹¹³ It allowed members to voice their general distrust of the media and the white-person-as-outsider that they had experienced throughout their lives in regards to social workers, government officials, and the police.

Due to this level of honesty, trust, and mutual support, the collective produced the video *We Care* (1990). We witness this comfort in the participants' interaction with each other and the ability of each member to clearly articulate her outlook due to prolonged discussions that they held beforehand. Much of the tape presents interviews with its participants and others they interviewed, such as health care workers, in offering advice on care giving and dispelling myths related to AIDS, such as transmission through shaking hands or bad hygiene.

The tape's most compelling moment occurs when we go on an eight-minute apartment tour of a black woman named Marie who has AIDS. The sequence is composed in one fluid shot, revealing Marie's warm personality and intelligent and relaxed way of relating her situation. Much of the comfort derives from Marie's lover being offscreen who she speaks to while presenting her home to viewers.¹¹⁴



We Care (1990) remains a rare AIDS activist video where working-class people of color are central participants.

This is a unique and intimate moment that is usually absent in most direct-action AIDS activist tapes. It not only shows a person negotiating being HIV-positive in her daily life but also connects the implicit

politics that dictate her seemingly apolitical actions within domestic space. Although Marie probably would not consider herself a political person, her living and struggling with AIDS and poverty reveal the implicit politics of her daily practices. Her apartment is cramped and difficult to walk freely around within. Her entire family—a son, granddaughter, and partner—must share one bed. Despite these difficulties, however, Marie explains how living with AIDS is mostly an extension of the already good grooming habits she already possesses. She states, “I tend not to let anyone use my glass because I’ve always been that way. My glass is my glass.” Elsewhere she shows how she keeps her toothbrush separate from others’ toothbrushes and she washes out the tub fully and bleaches it after she is done using it.

The sequence creates a compassionate view of one living with AIDS. Marie’s calm and warm demeanor undercuts stereotypes of those living with AIDS as being unclean, inarticulate, even animalistic victims of their sexual emotions or irresponsible intravenous drug users. Her modesty and sense of self-respect, such as commenting, “if you can excuse the mess,” when showing her cramped kitchen quarters, adds to a sense of Marie being a responsible person who anyone would welcome as a friend. Also, its focus on a woman of color with AIDS is unique in comparison to the commercial news’s singular focus on gay white men.

The level of identification that Marie and others within the video establish should not be underrated. As Alexandra Juhasz notes, what makes such video identification so powerful is that “it enacts through its form an effect we strive for in the real world”: a sense of community with others that can mutually empower one another and lead to self and political transformation.¹¹⁵ Due to the level of stigmatization of those living with AIDS, particularly within economically and racially disenfranchised communities, there is a dire need to create a sense of community among its members and link their oppression to systemic causes.

Once again, this sense of community does not simply arise through the making of the videos but also through their distribution and exhibition. Half of the budget for WAVE was dedicated to this, allowing the video to play on cable, broadcast television, in film festivals, church basements, and hospital waiting rooms.¹¹⁶ More importantly, WAVE participants were paid fifty dollars to attend a screening and guide it afterward. As Juhasz notes, “The self-empowerment found in media production is matched by the tremendous power and pride felt by the members of the group as we take our work to our churches, schools, jobs, and families.”¹¹⁷

Juhasz also engaged in a second WAVE project, but this time it received no funding and limited support, such as a tiny service room in a hospital that proved inadequate to filming. The question arose: Should one indefinitely wait for adequate funding to properly support the project or start with inadequate resources realizing that funding might never come? The lack of time, money, and infrastructure ended up reinforcing more traditional power relations between Juhasz and the three men and one woman she met with. To make matters worse, all the participants were in much more dire conditions: HIV-positive, mostly unemployed, and current or prior drug users. As a result, more infrastructure and support rather than less was needed to successfully negotiate this project than was required for the first WAVE project.

The haphazard nature of the production manifests itself on their final tape *HIV TV*, where participants often trip over their lines and seem visibly uncomfortable before the camera. Sometimes a hospital PA interrupts their dialogue since they had to tape in the halls. As Juhasz notes, this doesn't prevent moments of insight like the role play between two Latino men who are awaiting HIV test results. Although they discover they are both HIV-positive, it does not represent a death sentence but leads to an empowering moment as they mutually support one another and discover their similar backgrounds. They do this while flirting, which further counters the notion that anyone must turn off their sexuality simply because they have contracted HIV.

Such video work reveals the need for vital infrastructures such as time, money, and adequate working space to truly engage and include historically disenfranchised communities. This inability to develop sustained links with more diverse communities exposes the limits of anarchist-inflected practices that fail to address the uneven socioeconomic conditions that limit people's engagement, as we saw operating earlier within the video guerrillas. It is not simply the lack of access to equipment, but deeper structural constraints that prevent disadvantaged people's participation who often regard their voice as irrelevant in the first place.

In the end, the anarchist-inflected, direct-action video production of ACT UP declined by the mid-1990s. The causes of the decline were resulting from the trauma of experiencing multiple deaths, activist burnout, and the rising conflicts among ACT UP members and the video groups.¹¹⁸ But ACT UP and its direct-action video activism represented a sea change in creating a new form of video activism that would influence latter generations.

A New Beginning

As Benjamin Shepard has chronicled, a series of groups emerged out of ACT UP throughout the 1990s, such as the ACT UP Housing Committee, the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, and Housing Works.¹¹⁹ Similarly, queer studies arising from AIDS activism began to enter into the university as many AIDS activists had received their PhDs and were hired into academia. The critical reading strategies that were being applied in the streets were now entering the classroom and became a major theoretical influence upon film and media studies. Also, the early 1990s witnessed the emergence of New Queer Cinema, as directors like Tom Kalin, who had been very involved with ACT UP/NY, and others like Todd Haynes, Cheryl Dunye, and Gregg Araki began to receive major screenings at film festivals.

Also, in addition to a new generation of activists getting mobilized through AIDS activism, the punk rock scene also proved a vibrant environment for a younger generation's politicization. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, U.S. punk rock became more intertwined with activism, particularly that concerning animal rights and the environment. Bands like Insted and Earth Crisis endorsed an explicitly vegan outlook. The direct-action practices of groups like EarthFirst!, the Animal Liberation Front, and the Cascadia Forest Defenders appealed to many punks' do-it-yourself ethos and antiauthoritarian attitudes. EarthFirst!, for example, placed recruiting ads in the punk zine *Profane Existence*. As Craig O'Hara notes, "Punks are primarily anarchists. . . . That is not to say that all Punks are well read in the history and theory of anarchism, but most do share a belief formed around the anarchist principles of having no official government or rulers, and valuing individual freedom and responsibility."¹²⁰

Such antiauthoritarian, anarchist tendencies can often lead to problematic, nihilistic, and libertarian outlooks, where individuals' rights trump any notion of social justice. David DeLeon addresses the libertarian impulses found within U.S. anarchism's resurgence during the 1960s and 1970s. SDS and the libertarian Young Americans for Freedom, for example, shared many antibureaucratic and antihierarchical stances, but held very different goals.¹²¹ This political convergence of radical and conservative outlooks most likely stems in part from New Anarchism's middle-class roots and lack of connection to older anarchist practices and history due to their political suppression by the U.S. government through the Red Scare in the 1920s and McCarthyism throughout the 1940s onward.¹²²

Yet some punk collectives explicitly advocated for the politicization of punk in the early 1990s. In “A New Punk Manifesto,” the Profane Existence collective asserts that “punks do an excellent job, for the most part, in developing their own community. It’s time to take that experience into the larger community and infuse our spirit and creativity with mass-based revolutionary potential.”¹²³

This desire to be more politically engaged led to punks’ growing involvement in antiwar activities against the first Gulf War, as well as increasing participation in the emerging alter-globalization movement. As one anarchist zine observes, “So-called ‘summit-hopping’ offered many of the same inducements as punk—risk, excitement, togetherness, opportunities to be creative and oppose injustice—along with the additional attraction of feeling that you were on the front lines of history.”¹²⁴ Thus, zines like *Punk Planet* dedicated entire issues to alter-globalization resistances, as well as to key Left figures.¹²⁵

Some punks problematically viewed protest politics as a mere extension of another “scene,” a new underground to tap into but not truly engage with. The inheritances of such a narcissistic and juvenile outlook can still be witnessed today. While attending the 2012 protests against the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida, I encountered three black-clad Caucasian punk men sitting in sweltering ninety-degree heat who refused to offer any information about an upcoming protest action. As one stated, “You need to stick around for three or four hours and see when people are getting their water bottles and back packs.” His friend chimed in, “People are working on it, but no one is going to tell you.”

Although I partially understood their implicit message—if I want to participate in an action, I need to fully experience the context it emerges from—it was completely impractical in a city where protest camps were spread miles away from one another. The sheer skepticism and hostility from these three made it clear why many explicit forms of U.S. anarchism in general are so insular, white, and dogmatic. The lack of outreach and general desire to connect with others pushes such anarchism into a clique where adolescent tendencies inherited from the punk scene infect and undermine its politics. These men’s silence and oppositional attitude boiled down to one central smug stance: we know something you don’t—regardless if it concerns a new band or a protest action. We are hip, and you haven’t proven yourself to deserve this information. This might be an acceptable attitude for the punk scene, but it’s suicidal in terms of fostering a political movement.

Yet other punks did become more significantly politically involved. Mark Andersen founded Positive Force, a collective to assist people in need in the Washington, DC, area, in 1985. He has been a constant critic of the more adventurist tendencies and politically irresponsible attitudes exhibited by those who came from the punk scene. He insists that “our movement needs more community organizers; fewer street-fighting men and monkey wrenchers” that marginally, if at all, assist historically disenfranchised communities.¹²⁶

This politically engaged, anarchist-inflected new generation of activists from the punk rock scene bolstered the growing alter-globalization movement within the United States. It also became an important part in contributing to video-based eco-activism and in forming Indymedia during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and extending it into other cities and countries, as we will see in the next chapter. Indymedia became the first web-based, open access journalism platform years before the advent of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook made immediate postings commonplace. It particularly endorsed a DIY ethic in its mantra—“Be the Media”—as it encouraged politically active people to blog, videotape, and photograph protest events and other activities by providing immediate distribution through its open-source web platform. Similarly, eco-video activists in the Pacific Northwest also held a DIY outlook in producing their anarchist-based media and conducting their spectacle-based actions.

The type of direct-action video-making initiated by AIDS activist video collectives would make its ways to the forests of the Pacific Northwest and into the streets of Seattle. Although many participants were not necessarily aware of the inheritance of this new form of spectacle-based, direct-action video activism developed by ACT UP, it represents a central moment where cheaper digital technology and a more anarchist-inflected generation of activists merged to produce a more aggressive yet still somewhat problematic and entitled new form of struggle.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM THE FORESTS TO THE STREETS: Eco-VIDEO ACTIVISM AND INDYMEDIA

As AIDS DIRECT-ACTION VIDEO ACTIVISM WANED IN NEW YORK City, a new wave of eco-activism was developing in the Pacific Northwest where video and cable television played important roles along with an emerging form of internet-based activism that would culminate in the formation of Indymedia in 1999 at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. This chapter charts the rise of both video-based eco-activism located primarily in Eugene, Oregon and Indymedia, since both formations share some similarities and converged in Seattle at the WTO protests.

The chapter explores the background of both groups, as well as the convergence and conflicts between video-based eco-activism and Indymedia as they met on the streets of Seattle. Although both shared an anarchist-inflected media activist approach, they strongly disagreed in terms of some protest tactics and overall political philosophies. To oversimplify to some degree, Eugene-based eco-video activists held a much more skeptical stance toward technology in general and industrial society as a whole. Furthermore, they advocated for much more confrontational and aggressive tactics like property destruction. Indymedia, on the other hand, a more college-based and middle-class activist formation, viewed technology as an important means to transcend political gridlock and the limits of more sectarian Left organizing. As we will explore later, both stances held their own distinct advantages and drawbacks.

Each group compliments one another since they both represent different but related constituencies. Indymedia yokes together people from earlier, more established and traditional Left media groups like Paper Tiger

Television, Deep Dish Television, and Free Speech TV with a new generation of middle-class, college-educated, and predominantly white activists. A strong hacker presence and philosophy guides much of Indymedia's processes and attitudes. A global, internationalist vision often defines its outlook.

Eugene eco-activists, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of the specificity of a particular place: that of old-growth forests. Rather than focusing on a more global and abstract form of resistance as Indymedia asserts, these eco-activists highlighted their ability to leverage a clearly defined location to transmit their biocentric values through their words, actions, and use of video technology. An added strength comes from being a local inhabitant, which lends authority to and intimacy behind activists' defense of place.

These eco-activists possess a strong working-class self-identity and usually share some romantic anarchist traditions, as we will see when analyzing Green Anarchism later. As a result, they hold significant disdain for activists operating within the traditional Left and those associated with it, like Indymedia, as careerist, overly intellectual, and elitist, locked into a reformist outlook that is more concerned with self-interest than for the overall good of ecosystems.

This is not to say that both groups don't overlap to a certain extent nor hold varying stances within them. These broad generalizations about each formation cannot adequately account for the diversity of outlooks within each group, as I will show when analyzing the specific trajectories of each. Most notably, both groups are largely Caucasian with near equal gender representation. Similarly, digital media in the form of internet and video technology will hold a privileged role in each's spectacle-based, direct-action activism.

Juxtaposing these groups against one another allows for a fuller understanding of each. Eugene eco-media activism has not typically been acknowledged as important to the developments of digital media activism. By focusing on it, one can better identify eco-activism's contribution to video activism and many of the activist tactics that would eventually be imported and used in Seattle in 1999. Furthermore, by addressing eco-activism one tempers the somewhat hyperbolic way in which Indymedia is celebrated as reinventing media activism single-handedly during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The tensions between Indymedia people and the Eugene eco-activists during the Seattle WTO protests also helps illuminate some of the more exclusionary practices that undergirded Indymedia's supposed democratization of media. Furthermore, both groups reveal the difficulty of sustaining organizational activity and a sense of community

when overly dependent upon free labor and an informal infrastructure that often reinforced gender, racial, and class privileges. The increasing popularity of each group made such limits more readily apparent as they could not adequately address the demands that outreach to more diverse constituencies placed upon them.

Equally importantly, both groups employ spectacle-based, direct action to establish new collective, resistant subjectivities that Autonomous Marxism identified as central to the media activism emerging during the mid-twentieth century. People's bodies become central in eco-activism in not only blocking chainsaws and bulldozers but also in drawing attention to the biosphere and asserting its importance as equivalent to that of human life. Likewise, Indymedia videos, articles, and photos stress activist bodies blocking intersections and resisting the police. Bodies are used not only to stop the flow of capital by blocking intersections but also in stressing the violence and police repression that neoliberal practices rely upon. The exposure of such violence renders neoliberalism's appeal as being synonymous with democracy hollow.

Furthermore, both groups' focus on bodies emphasizes the new subjectivities being born in the process of protest. Eco-activists assert a biocentric worldview that sees all aspects of human and non-human life holding its own intrinsic worth as activists jeopardize their lives while chaining themselves to trees. Human domination of nature is rendered incoherent as human and nonhuman life become intimately bound together through direct action. The metaphorical survival of humans through the preservation of nature manifests itself literally as the logging of a tree potentially can end the human life attached to it.

Indymedia activists, on the other hand, championed the coalitions that counter-summit protesting drew together. The mantra of "teamsters and turtles together at last" that punctuated the WTO protests in Seattle well encapsulates alter-globalization activists' concern for challenging older ways of progressive thinking through the new coalitions being formed through protests—even though they ultimately did not sustain themselves. But in order to understand the emergence of Indymedia, one must first turn toward the Zapatista movement to fully account for its influence and limits.

The Zapatista Legacy and Its Discontents

Undoubtedly, the Zapatista movement proved inspiring to many on the Left when it fully manifested itself globally in 1994. Furthermore, it

revitalized new protest tactics and strategies and revealed the importance of new digital technologies in fostering progressive movements—although this emphasis often simplifies the actual practices the Zapatistas engaged in.¹ Yet the sole focus on the Zapatista influence in rejuvenating the Left overlooks more domestic and less exotic ways in which video and cable technologies were being incorporated into anarchist-inflected, direct-action, spectacle-based activism of the Pacific Northwest. This vital strain of eco-activism not only persisted but grew in strength and intelligence throughout the 1980s and 1990s. While the progressive Left foundered in the wake of the Gulf War, eco-activism would proliferate and establish its bastion within the old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. Eugene, Oregon, would become its stronghold and video technology would become crucial for its activism. But the Zapatista uprising of 1994 nonetheless emphasizes how new collective subjectivities need to be fostered in order to challenge neoliberal practices and influenced many who would eventually form Indymedia.

The Zapatistas' origins are fairly well-known. Four Zapatistas entered the Lacandon Jungle in 1982 as a traditional Maoist organization building its base among indigenous communities. On January 1, 1994, when the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, the Zapatistas announced their rejection of it by declaring war against the Mexican government. As they marched toward Mexico City to take state power, they came against the reality of the Mexican Army's superior firepower and the general public's rejection of armed warfare. As Major Infantry Insurgent Moisés notes, "After that the Mexican people obliged us to seek ways other than arms. . . . We didn't know the people and the people didn't know us and then we got to recognize each other. It was a stage in which we needed to get to know each other."²

As Subcomandante Marcos relayed Zapatista progress over the web, international nongovernmental organizations descended upon Chiapas and reported the conflict as well as translated Zapatista communiqués into multiple languages. The image of a traditional guerrilla unit quickly faded underneath the hype of the Zapatistas as postmodern, anarchist-inspired fighters. Graham Miekle, for example, described the Zapatistas as "the first culture jamming guerrilla movement."³ Although Naomi Klein initially warned readers against fetishizing the Zapatista practices, she nonetheless wrote that "Marcos believes that what he had learned in Chiapas about non-hierarchical decision-making, decentralized organizing, and deep community democracy holds answers for the non-indigenous world as well—if only it

is willing to listen.”⁴ Similarly, David Graeber states that the Zapatistas “new tactics are perfectly in accord with the general anarchist inspiration of the [alter-globalization] movement, which is less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning even larger spaces of autonomy from it.”⁵

Western progressive communities highlighted the use of lateral networks within Zapatista communiqués. At the end of January and the beginning of February in 1997, Paper Tiger TV, Learning Alliance, and FAIR organized the Freeing the Media Teach-In in New York City. The conference used a Zapatista *encuentro*-style structure where various working groups congregated.⁶ Marcos sent a videotaped message that highlighted the network communication structure addressed in the aforementioned Second Declaration: “In August 1996, we called for the creation of a network of independent media, a network of information. We mean a network to resist the power of the lie that sells us this [neoliberal] war that we call the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives: this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity which has a right to critical and truthful information.”⁷

This was followed up a few months later by the Second Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in Spain where concerns with alternative media dominated discussions. According to Andrew Flood, participants discussed critiquing mainstream media and developing a network of alternative media, which became crucial points for those who were soon to develop the first Independent Media Center (IMC) in Seattle in 1999.⁸

Meanwhile activists within the United States worked intensely to develop an infrastructure that could support an international activist communications network and website. During the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, activists founded a People’s Newsroom in a space located in Teamster City. Within that space, they established Countermedia, an internet-based news source. According to Tish Stringer, “Virtually anyone could become a Countermedia reporter by showing up to the office and offering content to the editorial team, but posts from afar were not possible.”⁹ As Jeff Perlstein, one of the founders of the Seattle IMC, observes, “It was kind of the kernel of the idea for the IMC.”¹⁰

But convention coverage was plagued with technical and strategic difficulties and police repression. Evan Henshaw-Plath observes, “They didn’t have the level of software to make the thing work. It kept crashing. You also didn’t have a massively successful protest that gave name to the movement.”¹¹ Additionally, the police started actively targeting independent journalists.

Jay Sand observes, “Rather than arrest demonstrators the police seemed to be focusing on the media makers. That surprised us, but in retrospect we realized what that said about both our novelty (kids running around with video cameras making sure the police stayed in line?!) and their appreciation of our effect.”¹² This police strategy would be emulated to a certain degree in Seattle and escalated during the 2003 FTAA protests in Miami.

Z Media Institute, organized by Michael Albert, also provided a central hub in drawing together media activists. It held ten days of lectures and workshops led by leading Left intellectuals and journalists like Noam Chomsky and Amy Goodman to train a new generation of media activists.¹³ According to Jay Sand, “Z Media Institute had a sense of setting up your media institution as part of the fix, not part of the problem. It emphasized setting up a nonhierarchical organizing structure.”¹⁴ Evan Henshaw-Plath concurs: “They really laid out a lot of the philosophical basis of a distributed use of online social media network. But they hadn’t been very successful in jumpstarting people in starting. They wanted to do it, but it didn’t take off.”¹⁵

Out of Countermedia and Z Media Institute emerged Direct Action Media Network! It provided a newswire where stories regarding U.S. and global activism could be posted. According to Rachel Rinaldo, one of its founders: “A lot of interesting activism was occurring across North America and the world, but it wasn’t being covered. We tried to get other people who were involved or witnessing the protest to write an actual article about it.”¹⁶

DAMN!’s mission statement spoke to the desire for a nonhierarchical, loosely affiliated alternative media model based on social justice organizing. It states: “The group operates as a non-hierarchical democratic institution to ensure that its operations reflect and augment the values of the projects and actions it reports. DAMN! accepts as an affiliate any media outlet, social justice organization, or individual reporter who agrees to provide or distribute news for the service.”¹⁷ Yet unlike Indymedia, which emphasized open publishing where anyone could post a news story, photo, or video, DAMN! “reserves the right to determine its own original content.”

Finally, in 1999 the second annual Grassroots Media Conference was held in Austin, Texas. Specific planning and outreach was being organized to create an independent media center in the upcoming Seattle protests against the WTO. Participants stated their mission as creating a website that “would allow media activists on the ground in Seattle to upload their particular offerings through a web-based interface, and also allow

any community or media group outside of Seattle to download whatever they would like to pass on.”¹⁸ Although they still did not fully possess the web platform to make their vision a reality, media activists emphasized the global nature of Indymedia, as well as the open publishing format that would become a staple of all subsequent Indymedia websites.

Yet by only focusing on the Zapatistas as precursors to Indymedia and other forms of digital media activism equally important histories are effaced regarding the development of video activism. Therefore, we must turn toward the Pacific Northwest and in particular Eugene, Oregon, to explore how eco-activism built support long before the arrival of the Zapatistas and developed its own media-driven, direct-action strategies outside the orbit of Indymedia.

Deep Ecology and Eco-Activism

Most eco-activism located in the Pacific Northwest is motivated by a deep ecology philosophy. The term “deep ecology” was first coined in 1972 by Arne Naess. It opposes “shallow ecology,” which is normally reformist in outlook by attempting to work within the existent corporate infrastructure and an anthropocentric worldview by placing human needs above all other nonhuman needs. Deep ecology, on the other hand, upholds a biocentric stance that sees inherent value in both human and nonhuman worlds, challenges the premises of industrial progress and capitalist growth by exposing their unsustainable practices, and encourages a fundamental reorientation in lifestyle. Increasingly frustrated with mainstream environmentalism, groups like Earth First!, Greenpeace, and the Animal Liberation Front adopted deep ecology principles during their inception.¹⁹

Perhaps most relevant to the Pacific Northwest and Eugene was the linkage between deep ecology and anarchism. The writings of Murray Bookchin became central in theorizing such connections. Although most well-known for *The Ecology of Freedom*, published in 1982, Bookchin had been theorizing ecology through an anarchist perspective since the mid-1960s, as demonstrated in Chapter Two. In “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought” (1965), Bookchin suggests that ecological destruction accompanies the dissolution of “organic” community relations as a market-based economy proliferates with the development of capitalism. He states, “Owing to its inherently competitive nature, bourgeois society not only pits humans against each other, it also pits the mass of humanity against the natural world.”²⁰

In order to counteract such tendencies, Bookchin asserts the necessity of “anarchist concepts of a balanced community, a face-to-face democracy, a humanistic technology and a decentralized society.”²¹ Anarchism ultimately constitutes “a harmonized society which exposes man [*sic*] to the stimuli provided by both agrarian and urban life, to physical activity and mental activity, to unrepressed sexuality and self-directed spirituality.”²² As we will see, this desire to return toward organic and intimate relations between people and nature becomes increasingly important for eco-activists as they redefine their relations and notions of self within a biocentric outlook.

Another important development for the eco-activism emerging out of Eugene is the gradual adoption by newly formed deep ecology groups of spectacle-based direct action. Greenpeace, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Earth First!, and the Animal Liberation Front all emerged during the 1970s in rejection of reformist environmental groups like the Sierra Club that integrated themselves into an industrial economy and traditional politics. Frustrated with the inability to produce significant change through regular channels of power, these newly formed groups adopted direct-action campaigns that immediately halted anti-environmental practices by catching corporations and governments off-guard with the introduction of new and more radical tactics and strategies. But more importantly, direct action was also used to publicize and shame the companies and governments associated with such practices through popular pressure. As Bob Hunter, founding member of Greenpeace, notes, “It is not whether they immediately stop the evil—they seldom do. Success comes in reducing the complex set of issues to symbols that break people’s comfortable equilibrium, get them asking whether there are better ways to do things.”²³

Communication scholar Kevin Michael DeLuca designates such direct-action tactics engaged in by groups like Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd as image events. He claims that image events become a necessity for communication within conventional electoral politics and activist grassroots politics “in an era dominated by a commercial televisual electronic public sphere.”²⁴ These image events are concerned with deconstructing and articulating “identities, ideologies, consciousnesses, communities, publics, and cultures in our modern industrial civilization.”²⁵ Put in more Autonomist Marxist terms, image events help constitute new collective subjectivities that challenge an anthropocentric, environmentally destructive, industrial logic and capitalist outlook that guides much of our behavior and thought. It is not simply about publicizing a message but also

redefining the participants' relation to each other and nature as they take part in such image-based direct actions. The videos and photos produced are as much a testimony to the new forms of collective subjectivity that take hold during such direct actions as they are about the specific campaigns being documented. They are also implicitly about how these forms of industrial technology can be repurposed to serve the interests of the environment rather than those of capitalism.

Overlooked by DeLuca, however, are the mixed attitudes that some eco-activists hold toward such spectacle-based direct actions. Documentation of an event, for example, can potentially lead to incriminating evidence and a court conviction of those participating. Documentation can also be manipulated later during postproduction to situate eco-activists within a belittling framework. As we will see, it took some warming-up by eco-activists during the Warner Creek campaign to allow for video and photographic documentation of their encampment.

Earth First! and the Cascadia Free State

The year 1992 was pivotal for eco-activism within Eugene, Oregon. The *Earth First! Journal* relocated to Eugene that year after the editors from its base in Missoula, Montana, received significant criticism for their editorial policy that satirically invoked violence for forest defense.²⁶ Soon after the journal's move, Tim Ingalsbee and Catia Juliana had formed Cascadia Earth First! to investigate the 9,200 acres of burnt forest in Willamette National Forest that had fallen victim to arson the year before. In October 1992 Willamette Forest Service decided to "salvage log" forty million square feet of timber from the burn. Josh Laughlin, a Eugene environmental activist, notes, "The area was designated a spotted owl conservation area in 1991. The first timber sale was a clear-cutting proposal in the Warner Creek Area; that fueled a lot of opposition. 'Light it, fight it, log it' was the mantra at the time."²⁷ After a series of protests from Earth Firsters and the local community, logging was temporarily halted.

But in 1995 Congress passed the Salvage Rider Act that exempted timber sales from public challenges under environmental law. "It was a sneaky piece of legislation that essentially nullified environmental laws with federal funding," according to Laughlin. He continues, "It created a new surge of clear-cutting, which was a gift to the timber industry. But it really galvanized the greater public in the fate of the old-growth forests out here." On September 6, 1995, as Warner Creek became vulnerable to logging again,

Cascadia Earth Firsters ascended into the old-growth forests of Warner Creek and created an encampment on Forest Service Road 2408. They dug a ten-foot-wide and fifteen-foot-deep trench to prevent forest and lumber vehicles from entering or exiting the forest. The only way across was by a drawbridge from the fortress they erected. They christened their encampment “Cascadia Free State” and themselves “Cascadia Forest Defenders.”

By not going under the banner of Earth First!, the activists broadened their appeal to the general public, as well as distancing themselves from more controversial aspects of Earth First! history. Jim Flynn notes how the Defenders had “problems with Edward Abbey [one of the people who inspired Earth First!] making racist statements and the machismo. They didn’t want to be associated directly with the movement baggage. They wanted to do their own thing. They wanted to work on Warner Creek.” Laughlin continues, “There was a sense of bioregionalism with the efforts of the Forest Defenders. Cascadia really resonated with the local region. That was really why the name arose.”

Even before the encampment the Defenders hosted an annual two-to-three-day hike into Warner Creek in order to popularize the cause to outsiders. Randy Shadowwalker, who would become instrumental in the blockade, notes how during his walk “the cause really appealed to me. I did trail work out there. I gave up landscaping at the time and got involved with the cause about two or three months before the blockade started up.”²⁸ Tim Lewis, who eventually served as the movement’s videographer, states, “This hike enlightened me about what was going on in the forest. It really started to suck me in. The people involved were articulate, a lot of fun, and impassioned. I didn’t know the issues yet, but I didn’t like that they were creating fires that weren’t natural. What was being set up as a real conflict was intriguing to me as a filmmaker, as well as the characters involved.”²⁹

The Forest Defenders intentionally engaged in multiple forms of legal and illegal activism in order to draw public support. According to Lauren Regan, a Eugene-based lawyer who often defended local eco-activists, “What worked with Warner Creek was getting mom and pop involved with those campaigns. They not only worked with the Forest Service at a more eye-level sort of way by taking each other seriously, but also worked with the media, scientists, and mainstream community members.”³⁰ Photographer Kurt Jensen similarly notes, “They were approaching it from all different sides: legally, blocking the road itself, taking it to the courts. Tim Ream [an instrumental organizer] was connected with a lot of people: the Forest Service, with congressmen, with people working in the forest for

generations.”³¹ The Defenders also refused to support actions like the use of violence against people that might diminish popular appeal.

Ultimately, the activists remained in Warner Creek for almost a year until finally halting logging in there. The duration and intensity of the campaign differentiated it from earlier ones. As Jim Flynn observes, “Whereas most Earth First! actions had been about ‘you block the road until they kick your ass, and then you leave,’ here people went up to the woods and declared that Cascadia is our land, and we’re not going home because this is our home.”³² The Forest Service thought it could simply allow the harsh winter conditions to rid the forests of activists. But they had underestimated the Forest Defenders’ resolve.

Word quickly spread about the Warner Creek campaign. The tactics employed there became known as “Warnerization” among environmental activist communities and started to be applied elsewhere throughout the Pacific Northwest as other Free States established themselves in the defense of forests. The victory also galvanized those within the Eugene community.

One could argue that the Warner Creek campaign’s popularity was dependent upon its refusal to dogmatically adhere to any particular political ideology other than that of forest defense. This loose approach and determination to save the old-growth forest provided the Cascadia Forest Defenders a broad base of support among the community. Furthermore, it allowed them to provide for media outreach in ways that have seldom been employed as successfully in other environmental campaigns.

Cascadia Alive!, Pickaxe, and Eco-Media Activism

Simply allowing people to photograph and video the direct action at Warner Creek initially proved challenging. Josh Laughlin recalls, “Generally speaking, people were spooked out about documentation whether it be video camera, still camera, or a tape recorder. There were laws presumably being broken like blockading and digging up a logging road. People didn’t want that documented.”

Both Tim Lewis and Kurt Jensen who would respectively become the unofficial videographer and photographer of the movement noted the initial hesitancy of activists toward them. “You got this guy [like myself] looking clean-cut, maybe looking like a cop. That is really the art form for me: to really get them comfortable with me in order to shoot and interact,” Lewis observes. “The more I stayed up there, the more I became one of them. I

lost that notion of being an objective reporter. I even got in the road and started fucking shit up [pickaxing]. Who am I to be this arrogant fucker who isn't going to get his hands dirty?"³³ Jensen, who always maintained a sense of objective distance from the protesters as he took pictures for the local magazine, the *Eugene Weekly*, similarly notes, "They did worry early on about me photographing. But after they got to know me, they would let me know when the events were taking place."

It helped that Tim Ream, a charismatic participant at Warner Creek, adamantly advocated for video documentation. "A lot of people were sort of shy or reluctant. But for me the way to protect Warner Creek was to get as many people invested, and video is a key way to do that," asserts Ream.³⁴ He continuously gave interviews regarding the campaign for various media outlets, as well as staging a hunger strike at the Federal Building in Eugene. Since Warner Creek lies about one-and-a-half hours outside of Eugene, it remained important to maintain publicity and support in the city.

Additionally, Ream and Lewis saw video as playing a central role in protecting activists. According to Lewis, "If people were locked-down and the loggers showed up and were ready to kick their ass, if you see me on a ridge filming you, you might think twice about what you are about to do. This is using media as a defensive piece of hardware in the field."³⁵ Ream similarly notes, "The video camera is the number one safety tool and communication school. It is how we can protect activists within the courts [by exposing police and industry misbehavior]." Such use of video served as a form of deterrent and evidence earlier during AIDS video activism. Although unaware of their predecessors, Ream and Lewis also understood how video could supply this vital role.

Ream also understood the importance of using media as a form of outreach. Midway through the 1995 campaign, he toured the country with a slide projector and some videos. "There were beautiful photos of the old-growth forest, of my hunger strike, and the destruction of the forest," he recalls. "I also had some videos—one made by Lewis and another by Green Fire Productions. I would talk a little, show the slide show, talk a little, and then show more of the slide show."

Ultimately, Tim Lewis and Kurt Jensen were allowed to film the actions related to the Warner Creek campaign. Lewis also managed to leave an additional video camera at the base camp so activists could shoot themselves when he was not present. The increasing importance of video coverage and outreach for the campaign ultimately led to establishing their own public access show, *Cascadia Alive!*, which ran from 1996 until 2005.

The initial idea arose from Ann Dorsey, who had read an ad in the *Eugene Weekly* requesting funds for the Cascadia Forest Defenders. She contacted them and “suggested that those people working in that circle to use public access for a TV show. I was the first person to go to public access and take the needed steps to bring information back to the group.”³⁶ The idea was well-received since many participants defending Warner Creek felt that the commercial news provided inadequate coverage. Cindy Noblitt, who would become the initial producer for *Cascadia Alive!*, observed that there “was a recognition that activists needed to do more to get their message out and educate people about the issues.”³⁷ Randy Shadowwalker, who would work as one of the show’s first crew members, recalls, “The way activists were portrayed in the media was always disturbing. The news was always slanted toward industry. The media would show some insignificant thing that would make people look as stupid as possible. So starting our new media outlet was appealing to me.” As a result, the show could offer a more nuanced understanding of the varieties of activism that the defense of Warner Creek produced, as well as exposing how such activism established other forest defense campaigns and significantly impacted and redefined the wider activist community found within Eugene and its surrounding areas.

The show played once a week for an hour over community television. The first episode aired on August 6, 1996 and set the general tone for the show during its initial few years. A basic white graphic over a black screen announces, “*Cascadia Alive!*” White noise hisses in the background, before the image of Tim Ream in medium shot suddenly pops onto the screen speaking to the camera: “This is *Cascadia Alive!* alive from Cascadia. It’s a one-hour live program, brand new. Tonight’s the premiere episode. As a means of explaining what *Cascadia Alive!* is all about we’re going to go now to a song recorded ten days ago by a Cascadia musician Peter Wild.” It takes a few seconds too long to switch to the recorded footage as we watch Ream sit there. A low-angle single shot follows of Wild playing before the Federal courthouse singing about taking a stand in the forest with “a pick-axe on my shoulder / and a lockbox around my hand.”

Already some of the key styles and themes have been established. The direct address to the viewer serves as the show’s signature style, making viewers feel as if they are in the studio. A minimal camera setup also structures the in-studio production. Two cameras on opposite sides of the room switch back and forth with a floating handheld camera to give the show a more edgy visual look. This third floating camera also minimizes boredom

that often accompanies watching static speechifying and discussion that organizes many of its segments.



The opening episode of *Cascadia Alive!* The show incorporates music as a way of developing an ecological and collective subjectivity.

Having the show's mission defined by a song also reveals how *Cascadia Alive!* views art and politics as intimately intertwined. Wild sings an acoustic song à la Woody Guthrie style. His lyrics advocate direct-action tactics. Midway into the song, he vamps spoken word lyrics that emphasize human's alienation from nature: "What's a happening and screwing over rural America is the fact that we've become disassociated from the land that they live in and depend on. I bet if the town of Oakridge [where Warner Creek is located] was dependent upon that area and was living off that area that it would be in a lot better shape than it is." Music plays a crucial function in much of the activism of Warner Creek. It not only provides a vehicle to narrate in a more poetic and appealing form the activism taking place in the forests but also suggests a connection between the people listening to it, as well as a historical linkage through its form that connects the protest music of the past from the labor movement and civil rights, with its singers like Guthrie, Phil Ochs, Odetta, and Bob Dylan, with the present. The music, in other words, serves a vital function in fostering connections between people, nature, and their collective histories in order to overcome the fragmented processes of an alienated world.

The footage cuts back to Ream about to host an interview with Tim Ingalsbee and Catia Juliana, who sit to his right, with Catia holding her baby daughter. Before doing so, Ream announces, “This is live television, and it’s our first attempt at it, and we’re all wound up like tight springs right now. But hopefully in the next hour we’ll relax into this. Hopefully we’ll figure out how to run live television out of Eugene, and we’re going to bring you a little piece of Cascadia and the emerging notion of Cascadia to your homes right now in Lane County.” The highlighting of its amateur nature as a work in progress accentuates the point made by the Paper Tiger Television collective and Lanesville TV of “allowing the seams to show.” The rough aesthetic encouraged viewers to engage in their own media productions by not intimidating them with professional quality and a slick allure.

If anything, *Cascadia Alive!* heightens this process even more since even less of its participants had professional experience with video and television technology than the PTTV collective and Media Bus. Most participants started out as eco-activists and belatedly became interested in media production. The existence of the television show serves as a testament to the ways in which cheaper video technology was making its ways into the hands of nonprofessionals. Unlike PTTV, which distinctly established itself for media literacy purposes, *Cascadia Alive!* primarily began with supporting forest activism. Media literacy developed along the way both in terms of the content being discussed and the show’s aesthetic form, which increasingly gained a slightly smoother structure as the crew behind the cameras, switcher, lighting, and audio became more proficient in their usage.

The show’s rough form was an articulation of the amateur conditions of production that established it. Minimal to no training was necessary to assist with the show. Numerous participants recalled being welcomed to participate their first time. Kari Johnson recounts the improvisational nature of production:

I just wanted to see what it is like working in a TV studio. I worked the controller. I did some camerawork and put the image together. You pretty much learned right there. It was crazy. Half an hour before the show we would figure out what people had to present [either prerecorded material or a talk]. “I have five minutes of this.” “I want to interview in this order.” Then we would set up the order. Maybe we got there about an hour beforehand to setup the cameras, the lights, the sound. “Oops. The sound doesn’t work.” They did this every week. It was fun.³⁸

Kurt Jensen recalls, “I did a little bit of everything; cameras, lighting, and learned some character generation on the side. People showed up five minutes before or after the show started. There was largely no rehearsal. Sometimes a guest would show up early, and they would talk about what they wanted to talk about.” Lauren Beaton notes, “You could flip back and forth between positions. I was involved in a lot of different levels [of the show].”³⁹

As one can see, the show enabled a wide variety of participation from interested individuals. Perhaps most tellingly, equal amounts of women and men participated in the technical side of things as well as content production. Although the use of technology has been historically associated with and dominated by men, *Cascadia Alive!* provided a gender parity rarely seen in commercial television and even within many media activist communities. One might hypothesize that women’s strong presence during the forest campaigns fed into the studio with their high participation, that what was being learned in the trees was in part being translated and related in their television production within the city.

The show’s open structure, rough aesthetic, and use as a training ground for future media activists identifies some of its most innovative activity. Not only did *Cascadia Alive!* explore radical ideas and direct-action tactics and introduce audiences to unknown artists, musicians, and everyday people, but it also restructured the nature of television production itself. In other words, it intimately interrelated its rough aesthetic with an open production process that provided amateurs and activists with needed media skills that they would have never encountered elsewhere. Unlike many of the earlier video collectives that already held connections with the media industries, the *Cascadia Alive!* collective largely lacked such connections due to geographical limitations and to some extent philosophical differences.

In the show’s opening episode Ream mentions it is day 335 of the blockade at Warner Creek and introduces Tim and Catia who are leading the fourth annual walk for Warner Creek. As Catia speaks about Warner Creek’s wildlife and foliage, we watch low-quality handheld video footage play. It shows people hiking through the forest. One man wearing a backpack stands looking out through the trees to the mountain peaks in the distance. He stands frame right as the camera pans from him through the intensity of the forest until finally landing on the remaining group of hikers resting and preparing to continue their trip. The panning movement not only connects the hikers with nature but also links the individual’s contemplation and communion with nature to the collective organization of the

hikers in mobilizing for the preservation of Warner Creek. Similar to the impulse behind *Cascadia Alive!*, which connects aesthetics with politics by fostering a rough form that invites the training of diverse individuals in video technology, the Warner Creek hike also fuses aesthetics and politics by highlighting the beauty of the old-growth forest with the ultimate political goals of the hike to establish a wider support base that can be used to mobilize forest defense.



The nature walk vicariously places the viewer among the beauty of the forest and actively encourages viewer participation by listing events they can attend. From *Cascadia Alive!*

Ream further connects the content of the hike with the viewers watching the show by announcing the phone number to call if people want to participate in the upcoming hike. He says, "During *Cascadia Alive!* you should always have a paper and pencil ready to write down all of the phone numbers and addresses. We want this show to be a vehicle for involvement and activism. A lot of us began working together from the walk a year ago." As mentioned earlier, the show explicitly announces its activism and appeal to establish a much more radical collective subjectivity. Ream doesn't state how he alone was influenced by the walk a year ago, but instead how "a lot of us began working together" because of it, therefore placing emphasis upon the walk's ability to unify individuals into a collective outlook that is not solely contained at Warner Creek but also makes shows like *Cascadia Alive!* possible.

Not surprisingly, later episodes contain short video pieces made for recruiting purposes. For example, the November 20, 1996, episode presents *Cascadia Rising*, a recruiting video to join the direct-action protests against timber sales. The video shows a protest occurring on April 27, 1996. Tim Ream and others speak before an audience of two hundred who are mobilizing to block the road and stop the sale. We hear a Native American man chant at the microphone as we watch citizens march down the road toward the police barricade. By doing so, the video connects the indigenous concerns with those of forest protection by identifying how the same imperialist and industrial logic that leads to clear-cutting forests also led to the expropriation of Native American land. As protesters break through police lines and start getting arrested, a song by Rage against the Machine plays along the soundtrack with footage occasionally cutting back to the Native American chant. Rock and indigenous music become intertwined through their jointly related protests. Eco-activism is not simply related to the preservation of trees, but as an alliance with the human rights of indigenous people—albeit on a superficial level. Music serves as a unifier among diverse peoples and historical periods.

While Ream is being arrested, he speaks to the camera: “We have a legal right to be here. And until America wants to stand up and save this place, they’re going to keep on cutting.” His steady tone while being handcuffed reveals a calmness, certainty, and intelligence that somehow prevails over the moment when one should be terrified and incoherent. We watch others being arrested as the video camera at times loses the image altogether as it gets jostled in the frenzy. It is not only what we are seeing but how we are seeing it that immerses viewers into the moment where the footage itself teeters on the verge of dissolution. Through protest a new vision is forming where intensity and clarity of purpose tame fear and passivity, where individual bodies blur into a collective image that intimately links itself with the forest.

While footage of clear-cutting appears, one activist notes, “This is just a rape and pillage.” The lyrics from the Rage song state, “If we don’t take action now, we’ll settle for nothing later.” This is followed by the intertitle: “Since Clear-Cut Clinton signed the ‘salvage’ rider act into law on July 27, 1995, there have been over 900 arrests in the Cascadia region.” A long tracking shot documents the immense expanse of fallen trees, collateral damage from clear-cutting and what will result if people don’t take action against it. The video ends with numbers to call in order to get involved.⁴⁰ The collective efforts taking place on the screen extend into viewers’ households as they are encouraged to learn more over the phone.

Although many who created the show held anarchist affinities, the show was open to varying political outlooks, most clearly seen during its uncensored ten-minute call-in sequence that ended most shows. The call-in stresses community engagement and provided a platform for oppositional points of view. It marks two important points regarding the show's philosophy. First of all, it reveals how *Cascadia Alive!* democratized television's format by not making it solely a one-way channel from its producers to viewers. Here it provides vital feedback—the very appeal of video-based technology since the 1970s, as groups like Videofreex and People's Video Theatre demonstrated—for viewers to express their concerns and reactions to the show's content. Second, it addresses a critique that Ron Burnett lobs against much writing on video activism that fails to explore its linkages to wider communities. According to Burnett, the analysis of "the production of community or political videos don't often concern themselves with questions of *how* or whether images communicate meaning, or to what degree analytical tools are in place for explaining the various relationships between different forms of cultural production and their reception and use by viewers."⁴¹ The call-in sequence allows us to assess at least some of the ways in which the immediate community interpreted and engaged the show's content.

Perhaps most surprisingly, the show would at times have loggers and ex-loggers call in who were sympathetic to the activists' outlook. During the episode that aired October 6, 1996, after one caller insults the guests as losers and tells them that they are "full of shit," an ex-logger calls in. He states, "I would like to respond to the last caller. He's actually full of fucking shit. Actually, I am an ex-logger. . . . I've seen too much devastation. The loggers out there don't care. The Forest Service tries to take advantage of everything. I don't know where this guy is coming from, but we've got to save what we got left out there." The host asks what changes the caller has seen since his time working as a logger. He responds: "I've flown over thousands and thousands of acres of timber that's been fallen. If this guy who had just called and went up in a fixed wing aircraft, he might take a look and see what the hell is out there."

Needless to say, most loggers who called in were not sympathetic to the activists. But this didn't preclude actual discussions taking place. On the episode of July 16, 1997, a logger calls in to say: "I have got a question for that lady that was on that tripod [defending a tree]. Does she know that people like me were raised by that mill out there, and you guys are all trying to shut that stuff down?" She responds: "It really sucks that people's jobs are employed destroying an endangered ecosystem, but it is an endangered

ecosystem and we have to work together as a community to find ways to employ you all other ways." He comments: "What are you going to do when you don't have any of these products anymore like the paper you use?" People yell from offscreen, "Hemp. Hemp." Tim Ream chimes in: "We've got a bill hopefully introduced before Congress soon—the National Forest Protection/Restoration Act. It's going to take all the money that's been going for the welfare of federal logging jobs—\$25,000 per logging job—taxpayer money to support that—most of it going into the mill owners' pocket—but that money's going to be taken—half of its going back to the taxpayers. The other half is going to be split equally between ecological restoration jobs and retraining of millworkers who are put out of business by ending commercial logging on public lands." The caller asks: "Are those jobs going to be able to pay what the jobs loggers are being paid for?" Ream has no answer, but he notes how a lot of jobs are going to be lost due to automation.

The tone of the logger and guests on the show remains civil with genuine concern both for the ecosystem and a living wage. The logger's phone call tempers the self-righteousness of the activists by reminding them that local, well-paying, but admittedly dangerous jobs will be lost in part due to their actions. It reminds all of us that direct actions for eco-defense do not simply jeopardize the activists' lives participating in them but also jeopardize the livelihood of locals who are dependent upon such jobs in a geography where good-paying employment is hard to find. Yet, at the same time, the activists remind the logger that much of his pay is negatively being siphoned off into the mill owners' profits and that his job already holds a precarious existence due to the automation of logging and the general depletion of the old-growth forest. The call-in opens the terms of debate much more than either side alone could have offered. Although one does not want to idealize the call-in as totally equitable since the host still controls the duration of the call and whether to amplify the caller's voice, it tempers some of the self-righteous rhetoric and stances that some of the show's participants might hold.

Quite often, however, hostile callers attacked the host and guests. In the episode from June 30, 1999, a woman asserts, "You guys really piss me off." But Tim Ream somewhat diffuses the hostility by asking, "Why do you think you are so angry?" There is a brief pause, but she continues on: "You guys say we shouldn't hurt the trees and then you play your guitars." This seeming hypocrisy of the activists' philosophy with their lifestyles was frequently cited by hostile callers. Of course, this was not lost on the participants who fully understood how their defense of the earth was always

compromised to a certain extent by being situated within an industrialized, capitalist economy. To not be a part of this infrastructure at all would lead to self-marginalization and escapism, an implicit resignation to the current conditions of the world as one withdrew into a private sanctuary. But to continue to fight and engage public support required hybrid approaches, some of which used the very technology and hierarchical mindsets and structures that led to deforestation in the first place. But rather than running from such contradictions and complexities, *Cascadia Alive!* allowed them to come to the forefront through their call-in segments.

Furthermore, the show stressed community engagement by tying forest eco-defense with community issues. During the episode that aired November 27, 1996, Tim Ream reads the names of four people who died during the Hubbard Creek mudslide that occurred a week before the show's airing. The mudslide resulted from the loosening of the soil due to clear-cutting. Ream reads the diary of one of the men who assessed the effects of clear-cutting upon the area back in 1986. The entry asserts that it would ruin the forest foundation and its writer is "not a person against logging but against harming people."

Video shot the day before the show's airing follows. We watch Ream visit the families of Hubbard Creek who had lost family members due to the mudslide. One woman, a twenty-five-year resident, recalls a similar mudslide occurring in Roseburg in 1981, where an out-of-court settlement resulted in her payment for the property she lost. Another woman asserts, "It's one thing to live with a slide with the natural elements. But to triple the chances through logging is unconscionable." Handheld footage follows of people salvaging items from the mud, hugging and crying. A low-angle shot of the steep slope and the potential danger for future slides follows. The image cuts to kids playing on swings to enlist more melodramatic fears of children's lives being endangered. Ream comments, "These are not forest activists, folks. They aren't anti-logging. They are regular old citizens."

This outreach gets visualized at the beginning of the episode from June 18, 1997. Tim Ream stands in front of the City Council Chambers, asserting, "I urge you to turn off your television sets and come on down and join us in show of support for public access television." He speaks about \$10,000 being taken out of the public access budget that would prevent original content shows like *Cascadia Alive!* from being aired.

He then interviews people from folding chairs both about public access cable and forest actions. A grind core band named SSI plays on the council steps while burning a miniature American flag. Near the end of the

show County Commissioner Peter Sorenson, dressed in suit and tie, speaks to Ream, who is dressed in polo shirt and shorts, concerning public access: "What was really good as far as I was concerned was how much expression and support there was by the other board members. Several people piped up right away." Despite his staid appearance, Sorenson advocates for public resistance and action: "It's worth it to keep the public pressure up on these issues, to keep public officials informed about public views, to come to public meetings, to testify, and let the elected officials know how you feel about these things." The diversity of outlooks appears in the wardrobe of those standing around watching the live broadcast: punk rock leather, the earth tones of the forest activists, suits and ties of those from city government. The episode highlights the hybridity and openness through its guests and surrounding participants. At the end of the episode, Ream asks, "Anybody else have a community meeting they want to talk about?" People chime in speaking about various upcoming events. The sequence stresses the porous boundary between participants and observers as the microphone gets passed between people emphasizing not only the show's accessibility to the public but also the diverse constituencies involved in public access television that would never be given voice in any other venue.

The show emphasizes its porous nature between the crew and the wider community once again on July 16, 1997. Tim Ream sits outside and announces, "Just a few minutes ago we were setting up to do the show outside and a crowd of about eight to a dozen people walked by here on their way to the police station to talk about a little drum stealing by a police officer. We went and followed them to the police station. This is video shot here at the Eugene Police Department about a half hour ago."

Rough handheld footage follows as one white male with long hair reads the Eugene police oath: "My fundamental duty is to serve mankind, to safeguard life and property, to protect the innocent against deception and the weak against oppression or intimidation." As he reads, the show's title appears: "*Cascadia Alive!* It's not just entertainment; it's evidence." Already the show highlights its documentary nature in not only promoting marginalized voices but also providing evidence that can be used in a court against police abuse.

The kids describe how they were being harassed by the cops until one cop finally took their drum that they weren't even playing, accusing them of breaking a noise violation. We watch an indifferent female clerk standing behind the counter claiming the officer who took their drum is now off-duty. One guy asks, "Is there any way to find out if that drum was turned

into evidence or not?" In spite of his appearance with long hair, beard, and slovenly dress, he remains self-possessed and articulate before the wall of bureaucracy that meets him.

After getting nowhere with the clerk, the kids stand outside the station until the cops intervene. The single handheld camera moves back and forth between the kids and cops as they converse. The cop reiterates: "So what you're saying: the drum was taken. You didn't get a receipt. No citation." Tim Lewis who is holding the camera walks back away, the framing widening as two groups continue their discussion. He states: "Got to get back to the show and get this on the air."

The show cuts back to Ream outside and the kids whose drum was taken by the police sitting beside him to give their side of the story. They complain that the police "expected to ride off with the drum and have nothing else happen. But I for one am through letting nothing happen, because our human rights and civil rights are being abused." The episode shows the politicization of youth through the Eugene police's abuse of power. Although the situation only concerns that of a stolen drum, it emphasizes the dynamics between unaccountable authority and a citizenry simply trying to enjoy its rights. As one of the kids states, "They are not just violating our rights, but they are also violating your rights. I am a citizen here."

This is a mild form of what Tim Lewis refers to as the Copwatch segment of the show. Not only did Lewis film encounters of police abuse, but the show also encouraged those arrested by the police to plead not guilty in order to obtain the police's video footage of the event. Lewis notes, "What was cool about the cops using video was that during discovery you get to use the footage the cops shot on the show. The only way you can get it is by pleading not guilty. You get all their video tapes, police reports, and make a story about it on *Cascadia Alive!*"⁴²

The surveillance of the police placed pressure on the city council to change the show's viewing slot to a less popular time and move its channel slot to a more obscure range. Lewis recalls, "Since we had this show and were challenging them big time, more pressure was placed upon us. The city council and the police chief realized how many people were watching the show. People in town would talk to us about the show. Therefore, they changed our airtime. Then they put us on Channel 97. Our original Channel 11 was close to the local networks. They did all they could to censor us in indirect ways."⁴³ They were also forced to leave their original studio, which was connected to the City Council Chamber, for a studio in Sheldon High School.

Local activists watched the show at Tiny's Tavern, a radical hotspot located in the center of the Whiteaker neighborhood of Eugene, where most activists lived. "Tiny's Tavern was where local forest advocates would drink cheap beer and watch the show," notes Josh Laughlin. "It was a hub for people working on the issues." Jim Flynn similarly recounts, "We would go to Tiny's Tavern religiously every week to drink beer and hang out. I knew most of the people who made it, who were on it." Kari Johnson notes, "It was pretty inspirational: affirming to see what you were working on on TV. It put a lot of different things together to make sense of them. People on the show went to Tiny's afterwards and got the hero's welcome. It was pretty unifying."

By 1996, as the activists won the Warner Creek campaign and now controlled their own public access show among other media outlets like the *Earth First! Journal*, various zines, and an anarchy radio show from the University of Oregon, their movement grew and the tactics became more radical. Two months after the end of the Warner campaign, two of its participants, Jake Ferguson and Josephine Overaker, would torch a forest service truck in Detroit, Oregon, and burn down a ranger station in Oakridge, Oregon. The more moderate tactics of the Cascadia Forest Defenders were giving way to more aggressive tactics of the Earth Liberation Front.

This new brand of activism ended up dividing people who had mutually participated in the Warner Creek campaign. According to Josh Laughlin, "Some felt Earth First! should promote ELF actions. Others felt that ELF should remain underground and do its own thing. Other pacifist types wanted to do sit-ins and road blockades." Kurt Jensen, who advocated more moderate tactics, similarly observes, "When a lot of arsons began, that really divided the movement. The people who wanted to do the legal stuff and trying to stop clear-cutting by playing by the rules were now thrown into this category of radical arsonists. A lot of people got turned off by that whole scene." But also a lot of people got turned on by it.

In the spring of 1998, a more radical forest campaign took place in Fall Creek, just outside of Eugene. It called itself Red Cloud Thunder and rejected the nonviolent tactics of the earlier campaign. Lauren Regan notes, "Fall Creek was much more confrontational because the people involved knew that the Forest Service wasn't going to let them repeat Warner Creek actions." Yet some activists still engaged in some traditional tactics such as conducting a survey for the endangered red tree vole while tree sitting, which helped preserve some forest areas. But these tactics became dwarfed by more aggressive ones.

Also, Fall Creek engaged a new generation of younger activists that explicitly self-identified as anarchist. Jeff “Free” Luers, one of the organizers of Fall Creek, would later go to prison for torching three SUVs at a Chevrolet dealership in 2000. Anarchism started uniting forest and city activism together at this time. John Zerzan notes that at Fall Creek, “You get both forms of activism starting to meet. Luers had a foot in both camps.”⁴⁴

Both Luers’ and Jake Ferguson’s presence at Fall Creek conjured an outlaw imagery. “They took things to a whole new level by making the forest service employees afraid to come out there,” according to Jim Flynn. “They lived out there and attracted outlaws and undesirables.” Lauren Beaton recalls that most participants at Fall Creek were between nineteen and twenty-five years of age. “We would see all kinds of people up there: inexperienced well-intentioned young persons. You get them out there and realize that they are crazy. You have to cope with it. You can’t call social services.” Josh Laughlin similarly asserts, “You have homeless kids pissed at the government jumping on the bandwagon, people from broken families, people with addiction issues. You have PhDs and well-educated people. It held a diversity of individuals, creating a real interesting recipe for actions, as well as a recipe for dysfunction.”

In addition to some suicides, Fall Creek also had two rapes. Beaton notes, “You had cases where you have to ban people in such extreme situations. After a process and discussion and our own court system in a way, the group decided that the men who did so were no longer welcome. There was never any real force behind it. Every person said, ‘You’re not welcome.’ But that then drove divisions by separating the group as they started their own tree sit separate from us.” This marks the beginning of explicit gender issues manifesting themselves that became increasingly toxic to the movement as it grew and became more aggressive and dogmatic, which will be discussed later.

In the meantime, with the beginning of Fall Creek, Tim Lewis and Tim Ream began arranging the footage they and others shot at Warner Creek into a full-length movie, which would become *Pickaxe* and be released in 2001. I would like to spend some time discussing the origins of the film and its formal techniques and themes in order explore how its more professional formal quality and closed production process led to problems with some of the women in the community. The film possesses a much more well-edited and professional quality than any of the episodes of *Cascadia Alive!* since Ream and Lewis had more time to work on it. The film’s more contradictory outlook and exclusive production by two men would lead to a critique of it by many women in the community. Unlike *Cascadia Alive!*’s open access rough

aesthetic form, which might not have held a clear point of view at times but collectively engaged a number of people in its production, *Pickaxe*'s reliance on a more traditional hierarchical and exclusive filmic production process enabled a stronger but more politically compromised aesthetic vision.

A series of difficulties plagued converting all the diverse footage shot during forest actions into a more unified format for *Pickaxe*. Since footage was shot on digital, 16 mm film, super 8, and Hi8 mm film, Ream and Lewis needed to convert it all over to Beta. This required a lot of time and more money than they originally anticipated. According to Ream, "We had to buy a Beta deck. We had to buy a computer. We had to buy this Media 100 [editing] system. It took us about a year and a half from when we said we were going to get started to when we did. It then took almost two years before we had a print."

Also, since Tim Lewis only shot around half of the material in *Pickaxe*, they needed to locate other footage in order to complete the story structure. For example, Ream recalls, "Lewis shot with this guy Andy something or other. But we eventually had to buy the footage off of him. Other people would occasionally take up other video cameras [to Warner Creek] but not regularly. We had to locate some of that footage, which was a real chore."

The raw footage was stored at Ann Dorsey's for fear that the feds would try to confiscate it as evidence. Dorsey remembers, "I was such a background person in the movement that I was beyond suspicion. I became the safe-keeper of some things."⁴⁵ Lewis verifies this fear: "We were thinking about going to Europe to put this thing together. We were concerned with the feds coming in and taking these tapes."⁴⁶

By the time of the first cut in 2000, Lewis and Ream screened it before a group of women to get their feedback since concerns over gender inequities started to dominate the scene. According to Kari Johnson, "The first take of *Pickaxe* was really good. It was fantastic. It had a woman as a spokesperson. It also featured a lot of women in it." Similarly, Lauren Beaton remembers how "the short action-oriented version of the film got a good reception" since it held a diversity of voices with particular focus on the importance of the women during the Warner Creek campaign.

Yet the final version of the film changed significantly. "The idea was to beef up the film a little bit and it became the Tim Ream show," Beaton continues. "I have much love for him. He has a very strong personality, but that final version rubbed a lot of people the wrong way." Johnson continues, "The second version was nowhere near as good as the first one. People are used to this central white male figure. But it was also pretty boring."

Unknown to the women, however, was Ream's and Lewis's desire to submit the film to major film festivals and air it on PBS's *POV* series. According to Lewis and Ream, PBS was both interested in *Pickaxe* and *The Legacy of Luna*, the documentary on Julia Butterfly Hill's tree sit-in in the California Redwoods. But before being fully considered by PBS, *Pickaxe* needed to undergo some structural changes to supposedly make it more viewer friendly. According to Ream, "We showed an early cut of the film to this woman who had done programming on PBS. She said, 'Here's the deal. You need characters. Your idea of diversity of voices isn't as important as getting to know a few people well!'"

This gets at a core issue concerning media activism: how the structures of mass distribution foreclose more egalitarian visions from appearing on commercial outlets. Supposedly audiences desire characters over a diversity of voices. But such a structure tends to privilege certain people over others thus enacting a hierarchy that the Warner Creek campaign explicitly attempted to undermine. The film's form, as a result, clashes at times with its content of biocentrism, where all living things should be treated equally, by prioritizing a few individuals for the sake of others.

Also, Ream serves as the film's official narrator. He is not only one character among many but the person who narrates events, traveling from the past to the present to comment upon the actions taking place. No one else in the film occupies such a privileged position. This becomes a matter of contention on the April 15, 2000, episode of *Cascadia Alive!* The show's female host shows a sequence from the film that has Ream leaning against a tree in a lush forest speaking in close-up to the camera:

A lot of the women were looking at the way in which men and women were raised different in society. . . . We live in a patriarchal society. Men were the ones cutting down the forest, and men were the ones profiting from it. . . . It was also within our own campaign. Positions of men and women were often different, and women didn't like it and had to fight against it. Men were mostly the ones holding the video cameras, and men were most of the ones who stood in front of them and talked.

While speaking, Ream is filmed from a low-angle shot, accenting his authority. His brown shirt matches the tree he leans against, further

suggesting his unity with nature, speaking both for the Warner Creek campaign and the forest's interests.



Tim Ream becomes the spokesman of *Pickaxe* (1999). His central presence in the film resulted from PBS recommending a less collective framing of events. As a result, Ream's centrality resulted in upsetting some of the community who felt that the film became more patriarchal in its structure.

The sequence cuts back to the host who states, "So after that segment, the film goes merrily on as it did before. It doesn't really touch on this issue again." She notes how the film also focuses on many female activists, particularly emphasizing its ending: "The four women at the end of the film who lockdown even when the guys who were up there have taken off, the women stay up and are tortured and harassed by the Forest Service. It's a pretty powerful film in its own right and there's a lot of powerful women in the film."

The host correctly hints at the pandering feminism of *Pickaxe* as opposed to its sequences of feminism in action. Ream's critique about men standing before and behind the video cameras seems ironic as we watch him stand before the video camera that Tim Lewis holds. The very sexism he critiques nonetheless guides this very sequence where a man explains sexism to us while being filmed by another man. The sequence thus reveals a certain disjunction between theory and practice, an ability to identify sexist paradigms but an inability to alter filming practices and aesthetic forms that rely on them.

This contrasts an earlier sequence where a young woman states, “There are a lot of women in the environmental movement. Maybe part of it is balancing out what’s been happening in our society for so long with a patriarchal society ruling our planet, and I think the women are coming back and standing-up for the earth.” As she speaks, we watch women in rugged gear sawing and building the fortress and teepees. This seems more organic than the earlier sequence since it shows a woman from the encampment speaking about women’s empowerment through forest action as we see it put into practice, with other women building the infrastructure that will house them.

In response to the *Pickaxe* footage, the *Cascadia Alive!* host shows her own. After a set of exterior shots of the encampment, it cuts into the kitchen inside of the structures—something we never see in *Pickaxe*. Women gather, speaking and preparing food and eating. The shot pans over the space, focusing on the pots hanging on the wall, an old potbellied stove, a piece of bread on the fire. The frame captures a sense of the texture and details of the kitchen.



Rare footage of women in the kitchen during the Warner Creek blockade. Such footage remained absent from *Pickaxe*. The footage also suggests how some traditional gendered divisions of labor reasserted themselves during the protest. From *Cascadia Alive!*

Interestingly, men are mostly absent throughout this ten-minute segment. Furthermore, it never shows any confrontation between the activists and the forest service. Instead it emphasizes the community of women

created around the kitchen, perhaps suggesting the ways in which the encampment is not that different from the gender norms of mainstream society. One wonders where the men are: giving interviews, conducting dramatic lockdowns? The sequence implicitly shows the gendered division of labor: how women maintain the camp while the men are off making a spectacle of themselves. The sequence compliments the earlier moment in *Pickaxe* that shows the women building the camp's structures. Once again, maintenance seems to largely fall on women's shoulders.

Female community is further stressed through the multiple shots of the forest as a female-led band sings over the imagery. Similar to the earlier sequences found on other *Cascadia Alive!* episodes, music suggests a non-alienated relationship between the women and the land, between the activists and the forest's interests and sustainability. By underplaying confrontation, the sequence highlights the real reason for the encampment: to protect the beautiful land the footage pans over. Although part of forest action might be due to the adrenaline-inducing direct actions against the cops and the Forest Service, this sequence underplays such testosterone-infused action for communal shots and a contemplative rhythm.

Pickaxe, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of protest in establishing a new, collective, biocentric subjectivity. For example, it reworks the April 17, 1996, protest footage we saw earlier in *Cascadia Rising*. Much of the footage remains the same. But this time as the protesters walk up the dirt road, we hear them singing "This Land Is Your Land." The handheld camera follows them, panning as they disobey the Forest Service's demand that they stop. We hear Tim Lewis say off-camera as he films, "Watch my back." A punk version of "This Land Is Your Land" now plays over the footage of activists disobeying, sitting down, and protesting. One man yells, "There's more of us than them." Quick footage cuts of activists running from the Forest Service being apprehended and dragged off.

The change of music provides a significant reinfection of the moment. By replacing the somewhat clichéd Rage against the Machine soundtrack with Woody Guthrie, the moment reappropriates Guthrie's song to its radical origins and suggests the forest protesters' connection to this tradition. Their actions mimic Guthrie's lyrics: "As I went walking I saw a sign there / And on the sign it said 'No Trespassing' / But on the other side it didn't say nothing, / That side was made for you and me." The song's anti-private property attitude mimics the activist's refusal to acknowledge and heed the Forest Service's demand that they stop. The music playing

over the quick-cutting, shaky imagery of people confronting the Forest Service not only unites their actions but connects them with a radical past.

To vamp on a phrase from Richard Slotkin, this is a regeneration through protest where the conflation of bodies, imagery, and sounds starts hinting at the collective power and new relations produced through adversity.⁴⁷ We see this most clearly at the film's end, when activists attempt to enter a courtroom in support of the four women who had been arrested for locking themselves down at Warner Creek. The police deny entry. In the meantime, some of the protesters form a dance circle and start chanting "Cascadia Free State!" as they jump around. All the protesters start chanting as the camera begins to get jostled from the gradual dancing of the crowd. The editing quickens so that bodies, arms, hands, and legs start to become indistinguishable, suggesting the merging of the bodies occurring through the chanting, dancing, and joyous protesting. The police react by pushing against protesters as the camera gets immersed within a sea of bodies and outreaching arms. Perspective gets lost as the camera wildly swings around trying to focus, subsuming the viewer within the action. The sequence visually relates the power of the collective as it falls into its movements, reactions, and general frenzy.⁴⁸

Yet this collective, biocentric subjectivity is not simply related through protest but also through a visual connection to the land. As Kevin Michael DeLuca relates, place occupies a privileged role in eco-activism in not only relating the beauty of what is attempting to be saved but also in challenging an industrialized, capitalist logic. Activists risking their lives by locking themselves down or living in trees contest "the possibility of property and the definition of the land as a resource, and instead suggest that biodiversity has a value in itself."⁴⁹

Pickaxe constantly emphasizes the specifics of place in creating a new subjectivity that challenges anthropocentric notions of progress, as well as relating the non-alienated connections between human and non-human forms of life. For instance, we see a shot of a newspaper cover that has a picture of a protester locked-down in the logging road to Warner Creek. The headline reads: "Warner Creek protesters keep road blocked." This already suggests the success of the tactic in generating press coverage. The footage cuts to the man locked-down as the press asks how long he is going to be out there. He responds, "I'm stuck. I'm not going to be out of here until someone gets me out." Such an answer flips the reporter's question on its head: rather than the person determining his own length of protest, he, like the woods, has become an object whose longevity will be determined

by other's actions. It equalizes his body with that of nature around him. If one is not willing to harm human life for logging, then why is one willing to harm non-human life to do so?



A protestor locked-down into the ground to emphasize a biocentric world view where animals and minerals are equal. From *Pickaxe* (1999).

Percussive syncopated music plays as footage pans from an enormous tree trunk over a sea of lush forest. The camera moves up and down along its forest line, suggesting a sensuous visual caress. A female voice sings, “Earth, Fire, Water, and Air / We are everywhere.” Footage follows of the forest as a woman’s voice comments over it: “When I came out and did the walk and after seeing all the life and the trees and all the animals and realized the scam the government is pulling on us, I couldn’t leave.” The camera is the viewer’s stand-in for that walk by displaying us the forest’s natural splendor. The sequence unites genders, bodies, voices, music, and nature altogether into an intimate connection. It attempts to relate the non-alienated relationship that the forest provides for all forms of life as voices, bodies, and actions flow into one another. No voice becomes more privileged than another as they provide testimony for the importance of the forest. Furthermore, the calm tone of all the voices, including the man locked down in the road, relays the soothing calmness and balance that nature provides for those who inhabit it.

This contrasts against a later sequence when the Forest Service removes the four women in lockdown from the encampment. Footage cuts

between a backhoe knocking down the camp's wooden structures to the Forest Service forcibly removing the women, manhandling their bodies, and handcuffing them. The arm of the backhoe resembles that of the Forest Service personnel dismantling teepees and dragging the women off. The sequence occasionally intercuts a shot of an owl looking on, suggesting that Mother Nature watches on helpless as its defenders are apprehended.



The wrecking of the Warner Creek encampment. The image of a backhoe knocking down the wood gate emphasizes industry versus forest protection. From *Pickaxe*.



The violence seen in knocking down the encampment is juxtaposed against the violence used against protesters. From *Pickaxe*.

The plain unquestioning stupidity of the Forest Service being simply an extension of a bureaucratic logic completely alienated from natural life gets emphasized as Tim Lewis questions one of its employees about the encampment they destroyed. He asks, "What did that represent to a lot of people in the Forest Service?" Blankly staring at the wreckage, she responds, "I never really thought what it represents to me. Didn't give it much thought." A long pause follows as Tim responds to himself in disbelief, "Okay." The fact the protesters could be occupying the encampment for almost a year without anyone in the Forest Service giving it much thought suggests the mechanistic way in which the Forest Service acts. Even if they have given it much thought but refuse to say so on camera, it once again emphasizes the Forest Service's bureaucratic outlook, which silences individual interpretation and understanding for the larger goal of just following orders.

Such a moment contrasts against the romanticizing of forest defense we witness in other sections. For example, at one moment we hear pan flutes play over a somewhat Western-sounding guitar rhythm. We watch the forests bathed under the golden light of the magic hour. A man dressed in olive green shorts, hat, and shirt that blends into the forest's setting walks toward a peak. In a long shot, he stands on one of its rocks, but a few tree branches create a web over his image. The framing visually relates his interconnection with nature by not having the human form dominate it. While we watch this, he comments in voice-over: "We're going up against the government with truth. It's a truth issue. There's no way around it. They can't confront us on anything. There's no truth on their side."



Pickaxe visually assimilates human forms with the forest. Tellingly, the trees on the left side of the frame are balanced by the human figure on the right side, suggesting a harmony between the two.

This linkage between truth, nature, and the activists' actions relate the activists' idealistic stance, which is a common position that runs strongly through much anarchist-inflected eco-activism that links a non-alienated life with nature. It assumes as if nature itself frees one from society's ideological shackles, as if the forest provides for an unmediated and pure relationship between human and nature. For example, an unnamed anarchist belonging to the CrimethInc. collective asserts, "When I was staying in the mountains, it was different. . . . I would see trees and flowers and things have an existence beyond any framework of human meaning and values."⁵⁰ Another CrimethInc. work states: "People who draw conclusions from news articles rather than the world they see and hear and smell are bound to destroy everything they touch. That alienation is the root of the problem; the devastation of the environment simply follows from it."⁵¹ The purity of nature is contrasted against the artificiality of the news. Furthermore, it stresses how alienation leads to a disconnection with the land and the immediacy of the senses. This appeal to "reality" haunts much eco-activist thought and will become a prevalent strain in Green Anarchism that increasingly gains in popularity as more anarchists arrive in Eugene in the early 2000s.

But as writers like David Harvey and Raymond Williams have shown, nature has always been inextricably linked with social activity ever since the appearance of humans. As Williams writes, although such idealizations of nature are understandable in the face of the growing threat against natural ecosystems, they spare "the effort of looking, in any active way, at the whole complex of social and natural relationships which is at once our product and our activity."⁵² Although such a binary outlook that juxtaposes nature against culture might be useful for polemical purposes in activists making their case for forest defense, once they take it as a fundamental duality, it dulls their understanding of the complex interconnections between social and natural environments.

But, as mentioned earlier, a more fundamental problem with *Pickaxe* is how mass distribution forced a non-egalitarian and semi-sexist structure upon it by featuring Tim Ream as its main narrator. Ream's narrative authority extended off the screen and into distribution as he toured with the film in 2001. For two months he visited around forty cities. He would find an organizer in each town where it would be screened to publicize the event, as well as provide a screen, a dark room, speakers, and a video projector. He would send them a press release that they would release two weeks before the screening. Ream introduced the film for twenty minutes, claiming that "my opening remarks were so radical I would have someone leave during

it." At film's end, he would then turn off the sound as the credits rolled and begin speaking for another hour. He states, "Only after I told them everything they needed to hear, I would then tell them about local events going on that they needed to be involved in."⁵³ If there was time remaining, he would conduct a Q&A, but he didn't find it that important since "it can often become grandstanding moments" by those in the audience.

Ream took pride in his ability to captivate audiences. He notes, "I ruled the roost during my presentation. Hardly anyone got up during that time." The presentation like the film similarly reveals Ream's compelling nature. He is a natural storyteller and charismatic person. But this doesn't necessarily lead to the most egalitarian, nonhierarchical formats as questions get waylaid for information during the presentation and other voices get subsumed beneath his voice-over in the film.

Yet as Ream and Tim Lewis began constructing the film, the Eugene community was further radicalizing itself, drawing in a more explicit anarchist element. This led to some tensions on *Cascadia Alive!* since its producer, from 1998 to around 2001, Cindy Noblitt was not comfortable with a more explicit anarchist presence on the show. John Zerzan observes, "Cindy was very anti-anarchist. She wanted to keep them off the show. It was becoming quite an issue since more wanted entry." Noblitt herself agrees that "I don't tend to glorify property destruction, as Tim and his anarchist friends did."

Part of the tension also arose from the way Noblitt structured the show in a more hierarchical form. According to Shadowwalker, "We would be told who the guests were going to be, what videos were going to be shown. It was a much more top-down structure with Cindy." This would change once Shadowwalker became producer of the show in 2001. He notes, "With me, we would all gather about an hour before the show and discuss who is going to be brought on as a guest, what videos were going to be shown. We would do it on the fly. It was a more open input format."

Eventually, the aggressive anarchist tactics used at Fall Creek descended onto the streets of Eugene on June 18, 1999, during the Carnival against Capital. Over 160 cities planned coordinated street actions against the G8.⁵⁴ Eugene produced one of the most radical demonstrations in the United States. After smashing computers and VCRs in the streets of downtown Eugene, some protesters began smashing windows of businesses they deemed evil: a bank, a furniture store, and a Taco Bell. Eugene anarchists explained in a zine: "Economic sabotage becomes a way to strike back at governments, corporations, and individuals who actively participate in the

destruction of the natural world or the exploitation / oppression of people, while *avoiding actual physical harm to the people responsible*.⁵⁵ Taco Bell was selected because “the animals slaughtered in factory farms . . . do not have the time to wait for humans to decide that this mass killing is wrong.”⁵⁶ The local furniture store Brenners was “targeted for selling leather.”⁵⁷ After several hours of protest, property destruction, and general disruption, the cops fired tear gas and pepper sprayed protesters.

Cascadia Alive! dedicated its June 30, 1999, show to the events of June 18, seeing it as a harbinger of things to come. Rough handheld footage begins the show documenting the protests: anarchist signs spray-painted on display windows, protesters stamping on the top of parked cars, cops firing teargas, and chalked messages reading “Destroy What Destroys You.” An acoustic song plays over the footage as someone sings, “The age of reason is over.” A sequence follows documenting the San Francisco protests. The host then presciently states, “That was the beginning of the worldwide revolution against global capital. This is just the beginning, and we’re going to be doing it again when the World Trade Organization comes to Seattle in November.”

Many Eugene activists shared this view that the energy, anger, and rioting that manifested itself in Eugene on June 18 produced the detonation point for the escalated tactics that would soon take place in Seattle. John Zerzan states, “When that riot happened here in June in 1999, the word was out that Eugene anarchists are going to raise havoc in Seattle.” So while people from the progressive Left created the infrastructure for Indymedia and translated some eco-activist direct action into an urban setting, the Eugene eco-activists brought a highly aggressive and confrontational style that worked rather successfully in the forests to the streets of Seattle. It was in those streets where members of Indymedia and Eugene anarchists would converge and also clash.

The Battle in Seattle

Seattle became a focal point for various activists and Left groups in 1999, since the World Trade Organization (WTO), recently established in 1995, represented a reactionary global organization antithetical to democratic oversight and government regulations. Unlike the General Agreement on Trade in Service from which it emerged, the WTO wielded much more powerful sanctions, fortified a permanent structure, and argued for unilateral trade agreements.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the organization cloaked itself in

secrecy by often making agreements behind closed doors and asking for government approval afterward.⁵⁹

The establishment of such an autocratic and unaccountable organization represented to many a dramatic curtailment of democratic oversight and sovereignty of nations. A popular brochure distributed before and during the Seattle protests bluntly states, “This system sidelines environmental rules, health safeguards and labor standards to provide transnational corporations (TNCs) a cheap supply of labor and natural resources.”⁶⁰ Particular criticism concerned the 1986–1994 Uruguay Rounds of trade negotiations that extended oversight of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trades to “non-tariff barriers to trade” like “food safety laws, product standards, rules on the use of tax dollars, investment law and other domestic laws that impact trade.”⁶¹

Some commentators at the time identified the links between the tactics used in the streets of Seattle with those in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. L.A. Kauffman writes that “the roots of Seattle’s Black Bloc . . . lie in the tempestuous forest activism on the West Coast from the middle of the 1990s onward” and specifically identifies Warner Creek and its use of lockdowns as being particularly influential.⁶² Similarly, Eddie Yuen highlights how “the Earth First!-ers raised the stakes of blockading with both technical innovations (tripods from the Penan people’s struggle in Sarawak, lockdown devices, tree sits) and a fearless commitment to making the defense of wilderness more a literal endeavor and less a media event.”⁶³

Another strong link between forest defenders and alter-globalization protesters was their view of the protests as rejecting an alienating environment. For example, in *We Are Everywhere* the Notes from Nowhere Collective write:

Our capacity to create and to produce is separated from that which is produced—the ‘product’ so instead of deciding together the best ways we can meet our own needs, while respecting the needs of others and the planet, our energies are appropriated to produce for the profit of others. Consequently, we are alienated from the very fruits of our work and work itself becomes something tedious, imposed, and suffered, rather than something imagined, anticipated, and creatively experienced.⁶⁴

Counter-summit protesting allows people to seize back their labor and creative energies through intimate connections with others and a clear

purpose: resistance. The carnivalesque atmosphere trumps one's alienation. The collective writes, "Passivity disappears when the carnival comes to town, with its unyielding demand for participation. . . . It is a moment when we can break free from the alienation that capitalism enforces in so many ways."⁶⁵

Counter-summit protesting provides a moment of prefigurative politics where the world one desires in the future can temporarily manifest itself in the streets. Such an outlook doesn't submit the means for its ends but asserts that the means are as important as the ends. One must start practicing egalitarian, non-alienated relations in the present moment if one wants to create a future egalitarian, non-alienated society. Alter-globalization protests are clearly an extension of the lifestyle activism emerging from the U.S. counterculture during the 1960s and 1970s, as I discussed in Chapter Two.

Not surprisingly, counter-summit protesting also carries with it many of the limits of lifestyle activism by overidealizing personal fulfillment and street resistances. It tends to ignore the more tedious and demanding work of long-term community-building and outreach or simply acknowledges it without much follow-through. For example, Dan Merkle, who helped organize the Independent Media Center in Seattle, argues that creating the IMC and participating in direct-action protests give "us the opportunity to get away from the drudgery of meetings and things that are so far off in the distance. Most people want to do something real. They don't want to stuff envelopes. They don't want to talk about stuff. They want to do stuff."⁶⁶ The language is remarkably similar to that of forest activists who juxtapose their supposedly immediate connection with nature and direct action against the artificiality of culture and schooling. Here again "talk" is juxtaposed against doing "something real," like building an Independent Media Center. This stance holds an implicit anti-intellectual attitude that conflates thought with passivity and action with activity rather than seeing them as complimentary and equally necessary. Furthermore, it celebrates certain actions like building an IMC as more important than others like stuffing envelopes. Of course, most people don't like stuffing envelopes, but it nonetheless remains an important yet unglamorous part of activism. Rather than acknowledging the alienating process that surrounds all of us, such rhetoric wants to champion a sacrosanct place whether it be the woods or the carnivalesque direct actions occurring in the street to escape alienation altogether.

Furthermore, such an outlook dramatically fails to imagine the type of long-term community organizing needed to involve disenfranchised

communities that do not have the time, resources, and privileges to engage in such protests. For example, anyone on parole who is arrested for a misdemeanor during a protest action could receive significant jail time for breaking probation.⁶⁷ Implicit class and racial assumptions guide the idealization of North American and European direct-action protests that at times forget that they are only a limited tactic that can only be used by the select few and don't significantly address the socioeconomic inequities perpetuated by neoliberalism and such activism.

Indymedia and the New Economy

The Seattle WTO protests and Indymedia were made possible due to significant developments in information technology during the 1990s, like the digitization of the telecommunications network, development of broadband transmission, and technological breakthroughs in microelectronics and software.⁶⁸ This marks the rise of the network society where vertical corporate bureaucracies transform into horizontal structures with privileged positions coalescing around certain nodal points. Knowledge and information generation is cherished in such an environment as much as the inherent worth such knowledge and information hold.⁶⁹ Transmission speed becomes one of the key aspects of such knowledge generation, which the explosion of information technologies in the 1990s capitalized upon.

The hype regarding information technology eventually escalated into the dotcom bubble of 1997–2000, as technological infrastructures developed at a pace that outpaced demand. This heralded the birth of the so-called New Economy with its celebration of flexible working hours, creativity, and a collective work environment. People from artistic backgrounds were more in demand since, according to Andrew Ross, “the character of work within the knowledge economy conforms more and more to the way in which artists customarily work.”⁷⁰ Their unattached and adaptable attitudes to differing circumstances suited them perfectly “to the ideal industrial definition of the flexible knowledge worker.”⁷¹ The belief in the New Economy led to collective hysteria over the promises and profits that supposedly accompanied it.

This jingoistic faith in capitalism remaking itself into a more humane form surrounded Seattle in 1999, since it served as one of the hubs of high-tech industries and the New Economy. As one Seattle protester noted, “I mean it’s Seattle—we’ve got all the techies you’d ever want and all these companies specializing in everything they need to stream these stories [on the Indymedia website] all over the world.”⁷² While representing an ideal

setting of the New Economy that the World Trade Organization championed, Seattle also provided the critical technological infrastructure in resisting it by establishing Indymedia and its website. Seattle symbolized the dialectical nature of neoliberalism in garnering profits and hegemonic control for capital while at the same time providing new opportunities for resistances against it.

In spite of all the technological support available, the Indymedia website almost did not happen. Only through a chance encounter at Free Speech TV between its in-house techie Manseur Jacobi and Matthew Arnison led to its final incarnation. Originally the site was conceived on a Windows platform that would have limited access to those in Seattle. Arnison introduced them to a Linux-based, open-source program that allowed for immediate open publishing of videos, photos, and articles across the globe. The site went live only three days before the protests.⁷³

The rest of the story is fairly well-documented elsewhere. The Independent Media Center was created, serving as a hub for independent journalists, videographers, and photographers. Due to the website's open publishing format, participants posted their media immediately concerning events unfolding in Seattle—particularly exposing significant police violence. Jeff Perlstein claims that the site had over a million hits.⁷⁴

The IMC also produced its own daily paper named *The Blind Spot*. It printed two thousand copies each day of the paper, as well as posting pdf copies online that activists from across the globe could print and distribute.⁷⁵ It also produced a daily half-hour show, *Showdown in Seattle*, which was celebrated by some activists as democratically distributing videographers' footage attending the event.

Other Indymedias quickly developed globally, with a total of a 110 in 2003—though most were operational only for a very brief period of time. A general overhyped euphoria defined much discussion of the Indymedia phenomenon. Ana Nogueira writes in a typical hyperinflated tone, “The Indymedia phenomenon has indeed spread like wildfire, recklessly endangering the corporate media’s monopoly on expression and intellectual property.”⁷⁶ Similarly, in less bloated terms, Dorothy Kidd writes, “The IMC prefigures a form of ‘autonomous communications,’ which is not only independent of the ownership of global corporations and governments, but also of the logics and languages of the mainstream stenographers to power.”⁷⁷ Yet such statements fail to account for the ways in which Indymedia had internalized some of “the logics and languages” of neoliberalism and older, hierarchical practices and socioeconomic privileges.

Showdown in Seattle and The Limits of the Hacker Ethic

I would like to briefly focus on the creation of *Showdown in Seattle* to analyze some of the limits of Indymedia production and its related processes, as well as to analyze the vision its daily broadcasts made possible. I will also explore ways in which later Indymedia actions attempted to correct some of its initial shortcomings while ignoring others. My critique, however, should not be read as discrediting the Indymedia project, but instead seen as a tempering of the self-celebratory narrative to address some of the contradictions and complexities that inhabit much North American media activism. By addressing some of the limits of the broadcast and its production practices, we can better understand how specific conditions both enable and foreclose certain possibilities, and connect with some of the problems associated with other forms of video activism discussed in this book.

Frequently, a democratic rhetoric surrounds the production of *Showdown in Seattle* by conflating the video activists who participated at the IMC with that of the footage making it into the series. Randy Rowland, a member of Pepper Spray Productions, states, “We had hundreds of cameras. Not only did we interview people who were very thoughtful, but we also got the good shots. Everyone brought their footage to the IMC and this then turned into *Showdown in Seattle*.⁷⁸

Overlooked in such description was how video editing was completed in a separate location in the Queen Anne Hill district from IMC headquarters located in downtown Seattle. A separate house was needed, according to Jeff Perlstein, “because they were going to really need to be crunching video all the time, twenty-four hours, in order to produce this nightly satellite broadcast, and then also logging all the footage coming in each day from the streets from all the videographers that were going to be out there.”⁷⁹ DeeDee Halleck similarly notes, “It was too chaotic down there [at the IMC] and impacted [by the protests]” to edit video for the series.⁸⁰

Some of the videotapes logged at the IMC were then bicycled to the separate location for editing and eventual satellite uplink through Deep Dish Television. But most remained at the IMC due to the overflow of footage and understaffing of video personnel. Also, unlike the Indymedia Center, which was mostly open to anyone, the editing suite was occupied by only seven video groups: Pepper Spray Productions, Paper Tiger Television, Changing America, Whispered Media, Headwaters Action Video Collective, Video Active, and Free Speech TV (FSTV). As a result,

a filtering process occurred that mainly used footage shot by these groups and excluded most of the rest. As Eric Galatas of FSTV relates, “I was down in the media center ingesting tapes, making sure they were labeled and filled out the proper forms. But they were rarely using things other than their own footage. Probably because they knew what they wanted to shoot, they had good B-roll films. But in actuality there were maybe five or six cameras telling those stories you saw on *Showdown*.⁸¹

Even the IMC itself was not always the symbol of nonhierarchical direct-action media-making. Chris Burnett recalls, “I remember tensions with people not willing to share their material with the IMC.”⁸¹ There was also a certain elitism by some of the techies who provided infrastructural support for the IMCs in general. Robert Wyrod remembers how this became a persistent issue with many IMCs that soon followed: “I remember feeling a little shut out by the techies. In Philly [during the 2000 RNC] a young woman who was new to the stuff was there and no one would talk to her. She was a white, middle-class young woman who was getting frustrated.”⁸² Rachel Rinaldo recalls how the IMC that formed during the April 2000 A16 demonstrations in Washington, DC, exhibited tech elitism, too. “People were bringing their own equipment for their own use and not others. Here are boys with toys attitude. Here I am going to bring my fancy MAC setup and camera to show them off but not let others use. It made me a little bit uncomfortable.”⁸³

The result of tech elitism and cliquishness among already established video groups provided fodder for later criticism regarding Indymedia’s exclusionary practices and its implicit ideological beliefs. To give credit where it is due, the short time schedule to produce a show and uplink it within a twenty-four-hour time period during Seattle created a strong impediment in riffling through all shot footage and incorporating it into the broadcast, since time-constraints simply would not allow for such deliberation. Michael Eisenmenger, the lead producer of *Showdown in Seattle*, decided not to do live uplinks again for any counter-summit protest due to criticisms of the lack of diversity behind the productions.

Eisenmenger also notes that as a result of the critique, Paper Tiger Television, the group he was affiliated with, “organized a youth group of color and paid to bring them down to [the] DC [protests in 2000] and they went out and shot and edited a segment for *Breaking the Bank*.⁸⁴ Yet, Dave Graeber recalls, “The kids didn’t really feel like it was their space. The first thing someone said to them was, ‘Don’t touch anything.’ There was a lot of effort in trying to get people of color on camera, and not getting them

behind the camera.”⁸⁵ This speaks to a larger issue about the ways in which alter-globalization media activists often provided superficial solutions to much deeper structural inequities, which we will see occur throughout this section. We also saw this occur before as PTTV and DDTV attempted to diversify its personnel for its second series for the *Gulf Crisis TV Project*, where new diverse yet inexperienced producers were brought on but not given adequate training and support to make much of an impact.

Showdown in Seattle highlights the new types of collective subjectivities that protests make possible. The streets occupy a prime location where such new collective subjectivities take roots, since protest marches and direct actions drew wide constituencies together. The series chronicles not only the new collective formations occurring between labor groups, environmentalists, and direct-action anarchists but also how the protesters’ blockading of the streets forced new interactions between them and the WTO delegates. During part III of the series, an interviewer speaks to two protesters holding anti-WTO signs. While discussing the no-protest zone of the city, two WTO delegates pass by. The cameraman/interviewer swivels to follow the two men and then hones in on one of them by asking how the meetings are going. He turns and replies, “Pretty well.” The camera frames him in a medium close-up, part of his head being cut by the top frame as the cameraperson asks, “I heard some delegates are leaving early.” The man denies this while refusing to stop, forcing the camera to follow him. As the cameraperson abandons well-framed footage to simply keep up with the delegate, we see once again the slippage between the space of the film and the space of the political that Patricia Zimmerman highlights, which we saw operating earlier when eco-activists were filming forest defenses.⁸⁶ The cameraperson sacrifices the well-placed framing of the earlier interview to capitalize on the opportunity of the passing delegates. Protesters blocking the streets forced the delegates to pass their way on foot. Contrasted against earlier sequences of protesters yelling at the delegates who they blocked from entering the convention center, this semi-civil conversation between protester and delegate reveals the self-delusion of the delegate, who refuses to acknowledge any change from business as usual.

The delegate attempts to stride past the interviewer with rote answers and a hollow smile. But as the questions continue, the delegate starts to expose his underlying irritation, pretention, and assumptions. After the interviewer mentions that a lot of people are angry with the WTO, the delegate pauses at a corner and smiles back, “A lot of people are ignorant, too.” The interviewer notes, “It’s not like the World Trade Organization knows it all.” The delegate

interrupts and finally fully faces the camera stating, “I’ve been working on this for twenty-eight years. I know it very well.” Through persistence the cameraman has finally forced an engaged interview. After being asked what he works on, the delegate replies, “International trade. It started after the war because the failure to understand the importance of trade helped to cause World War II. It brought Hitler to power. It was after World War II that people said, ‘That can’t happen again.’ And the GATT was founded.”

This becomes an interesting moment where the streets and the camera allow the interviewer to pierce the shell of secrecy of the WTO by having a delegate explain his self-serving narrative about the WTO. Rather than stressing the WTO working on behalf of multinational corporations, he frames it as an antifascist narrative—that trade relations somehow yield democracy and that fascism is associated with trade barriers. In other words, it reveals the delegates’ belief that trade and democracy are synonymous, whereas the protesters view exactly the opposite to be true. This is made explicit when the interviewer mentions that people feel fascism rising again in spite of free trade. The delegate laughs and walks off.

Nonetheless, this is an amazing moment where the camera forges dialogue between the protester and delegate by taking advantage of the street actions that forced delegates onto the streets to return home. The sequence, in other words, reveals how the camera serves as an extension of the street actions but in a different modality. Some of the collective concerns of the alter-globalization movement get translated into the one-on-one dialogue that occurs. This gets visualized as the camera literally turns from two protesters critiquing police actions to follow the two delegates to initiate dialogue. The strange symmetry between the two groups at this moment is uncanny as the camera moves from one group to the next—though clearly allied with the protesters. Collective concerns get translated through the interviewer’s discussion with the delegate. After the sequence, the episode ends with a man singing over the credits, “People let’s go up to Seattle to storm.” This invocation to collective protest connects the cameraperson’s singular focus to that of all protesters, thus reminding us that the earlier sequence is intimately tied with collective grievances and issues, not simply one person’s curiosity.

Part V of the series also shows interviews with delegates. But unlike the earlier sequence, they are in full sympathy with the protesters. This is revealed not only through their words but also through their body language as they stand still and face the camera, showing their full participation and acknowledgment of the validity of the interview. For example, John Mwaniki,

a delegate from Zimbabwe, states, “The issues that the delegates were talking about here and the issues that people outside were protesting about concurred. The only difference was that the people out there weren’t allowed in here.” His testimonial refutes the denial coming from Western economists and politicians who claim the protests had no impact upon the meetings. For example, Jeffrey J. Schott writes in *The WTO After Seattle*, “Ultimately, the WTO meeting fell victim not to protests outside in the streets, but rather to serious substantive disagreements inside the convention center among both developed and developing countries over the prospective agenda for new trade talks.”⁸⁷ Similarly, WTO Director C. Fred Bergsten states, “The main problems were inside rather than outside the conference hall.”⁸⁸ But *Showdown* exposes the permeability between the inside and the outside of the WTO. Additionally, it reveals how once again the Western nations dictate a script that largely disregarded Third World delegates’ concerns. The Western nations want to minimize the popular support behind some of Third World delegates’ views since it would ultimately imply Western nations’ disconnection from and disregard of the vast majority of their people.



The delegate refuses to even face the camera in *Showdown in Seattle* (1999). Nonetheless, the video reveals how protest had forced both protesters and delegates to speak with one another.

This new subjectivity between diverse Left groups and other individuals is stressed during the sequence’s ending where a series of interviews follow. One young Hispanic man states, “I’ve never seen people stand up

like this before. It's really opened my eyes to amazing possibilities." Footage of protesters yelling "This Is What Democracy Looks Like!" follows. A female teamster then observes, "Teamsters and turtles together at last. That was so wonderful. Of course, we belong together. The same people who exploit natural resources exploit human resources." More protest footage follows of banners until an interview with a black man fades in. He states, "It's time to stop feeling as though we are isolated entities living lives of unsatisfactory consumption and oppression. We can do it." As he speaks, protest footage plays linking his observations to the actual occurrence of collective mobilization and identities occurring on the street. The video's formal structure weaves together the diverse voices in the streets to at least briefly glimpse what new, powerful collective coalitions might look like, such as when teamsters can espouse both pro-environmental and pro-labor sentiments in the same breath.

Yet in addition to providing amazing immediate coverage of events and hinting at a new collective subjectivity, *Showdown* suffers from being firmly lodged at times within a Western, white privileged perspective. This becomes apparent with its coverage of police violence in its third and fourth episodes. On one level, this focus is completely understandable since such violence was unanticipated and people were in collective shock about what was happening to them. Yet, at the same time, the fact that protesters did not expect police violence reveals the socioeconomic privilege that they take for granted by not having historically suffered from police harassment. One can only be amazed by police violence if one hasn't been normalized to it on a daily level. As Juan Gonzalez observes, "The movement seems unduly obsessed with generating media attention to how police are treating it. To those of us who grew up and still live in black and brown neighborhoods in this country or emigrated from the Third World, it is hardly noteworthy that some cops can be brutal, especially when they toss you in jail."⁸⁹ The focus on violence in Seattle and particularly in latter videos concerning counter-summit protests seems to straddle the line between documentary evidence to be used in courts and simple amazement by privileged media activists who had never experienced police violence before and were in disbelief that it was being used against them.

This hints at larger racial and class privileges of the alter-globalization movement that resonate with the similar limits of earlier direct action, anarchist-inflected organizing of the video guerrillas in the 1970s and ACT UP/NY in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Seattle protests, like these earlier moments, did not supply the needed infrastructure for greater

participation by historically disenfranchised communities. Furthermore, the implicitly white activist culture that underlies counter-summit protest-ing and the techno-libertarian practices of Indymedia additionally fore-closed wider participation.

Many critiqued the absence of people of color in the alter-global-ization leadership. Kristine Wong recounts repeatedly being ignored by various protest groups as she attempted to assist in establishing a panel that could address people of color during the protests. She asserts, “The fact that I had to ask a Washington, D–based group for permission to get access to a space to educate others about local struggles in my own city of residence was ironic and disturbing.”⁹⁰

Likewise, Elizabeth Martinez stresses the lack of outreach to work-ing-class communities of color.⁹¹ Since much white organizing occurred over the internet, those without such technological resources became excluded from the conversation. Martinez asserts that unlike the 32 per-cent of white families in the income range of \$15,000–\$35,000 a year who possessed a computer, only 19 percent of black and Latino communities possessed them at the time.⁹² These statistics also reveal that even among white participants only a select minority had reliable and sustained access to a computer and the internet.⁹³

Similarly, one of the central problems with Indymedia in regards to the racial and class privileges its technology reinforced was that the organization was never originally intended to be a sustained network with a shared ideological outlook to effectively work on such issues. According to Sascha Meinrath, who was involved with establishing the Urbana-Champaign IMC, “Indymedia was just about documenting what was going on in Seattle and to meet local needs for that one protest. So everything was built for that one thing. Only after the event we decided that we should do it afterwards.”⁹⁴

As it became clear that the IMCs were going to grow not just domes-tically but globally, some IMC members attempted to adopt a Principles of Unity. During the April 2001 Press Freedom Conference in San Francisco, some 50 IMC volunteers met to discuss the Principles and other issues. According to Chris Burnett, who drafted the *Proposed Charter of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers* that held the Principles of Unity, “I wrote the Principles of Unity based upon the United Nations charter except as a radical version of it. Someone copied this document on the listserv. We then hashed them out over the weekend for 48 hours and rewrote and changed language and fine-tuned the Principles of Unity.”⁹⁵

The differences between the first draft and final one are revealing in how more concrete concerns addressing the IMC's relation to community and diversity get diluted. For example, the issue of self-determination takes on a central role in the first draft. It states: "The movement for independent media is fundamentally a struggle for dignity, respect, and self-determination of people whose voices are often overlooked by the powerful. The CNIMC claims no special privileges in the representation of individuals, groups or social movements, but rather sees itself as an ally to people who are struggling for their own voices to be heard."⁹⁶ The ability of media to restructure collective identities and advance political self-determination gets highlighted. Furthermore, the document stresses the ways in which disenfranchised communities lack media access.

This language concerning race and community mostly gets lost in the final draft that instead promotes "the self-organization of autonomous collectives."⁹⁷ Unlike the original draft that suggests "all IMCs shall work together collaboratively to decide policy in regards to racist, sexist, or discriminatory content exhibited on an IMC website or within a locality," the final version more loosely asserts that all IMCs shall be committed to equality "and shall not discriminate, including discrimination based upon race, gender, age, class or sexual orientation." The language change here is telling by revealing the tensions between decentralization and direct democracy that Todd Wolfson identifies elsewhere.⁹⁸ The first draft emphasizes direct democracy by having the IMCs actively collaborate to decide unified policy regarding racial discrimination whereas the later draft stresses decentralization and the IMCs' vague commitment to equality. The stronger language that commits the IMCs to a unified stance regarding discrimination gets purged for a more decentralized and vague attitude.

As Richard Templin notes, the Principles of Unity "was not to develop a single political ideology but a unifying set of ideals found throughout a wide range of philosophies and political conditions."⁹⁹ But such vague principles that stress "self-organization," "open exchange and open access to information," and "nonhierarchical and antiauthoritarian relationships" don't provide for an adequate infrastructure to seriously address issues of racial privilege, unequal distribution of resources, and specific socioeconomic conditions that negatively impact the formation of IMCs. Additionally, as Todd Wolfson notes, the Principles' weak stance does not offer any shared collective identity and "make it difficult for indymedia to make productive decisions or create coherent shared plans."¹⁰⁰ Not surprisingly, the Principles were never ratified, since even this sketchy list of goals

proved too autocratic for some chapters that felt they infringed against their autonomy.

The IMCs also prided themselves on not advocating any singular political ideology. For example, Evan Henshaw-Plath who served as a central tech person in developing the infrastructure for many IMCs across North and South America explains, “We don’t advocate a particular ideological perspective. Rather, we have a terrain of ideologies which are both contradictory and complimentary, but reflect the postmodern undercurrents of the anti-globalization struggle.”¹⁰¹ Simply sorting out the double-speak of such a statement proves challenging. The first half of the statement suggests the various ideological influences of Indymedia whereas the later part admits the IMCs grounding themselves in the specific ideologies of the alter-globalization movement. This contradictory line of thinking is symptomatic of the confused general line of Indymedia: to proclaim ideological neutrality or hybridity while still espousing rhetoric and adopting practices from the white, middle-class, Western progressive and tech communities. This seemed disingenuous not only to many people of color but also to anyone else who didn’t politically agree with the Indymedia line, like many of the eco-activists and anarchists from Eugene, as we will see.

Indymedia was deeply structured by a hacker ethic or what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron call the “California ideology.” They assert that by mixing principles of the New Left and New Right, “the California ideologues preach an antistatist gospel of high-tech libertarianism—a bizarre mish-mash of hippie anarchism and economic liberalism beefed up with lots of technological determinism.”¹⁰² Additionally, this type of utopian thinking “depends upon a willful blindness toward the other, much less positive features of life on the West Coast—racism, poverty, and environmental degradation.”¹⁰³ This helps explain the changes in drafting the Principles of Unity. Not only are discrimination issues minimized and relegated to be decided by individual IMC chapters, but an implicit faith regarding the equalizing power of networks and technology to triumph over inequality lurks beneath the Principles. The Principles, for example, assert that nonhierarchical and antiauthoritarian relationships will arise from consensus decision-making as if there are not inherent problems regarding such lengthy processes that exclude those having to work nine-to-five jobs, raise children, or simply survive day-to-day.

This technological fetishization gets encapsulated in Jason Adam’s *Blur: How the Network Paradigm Gives Social Movements the Upper Hand*. This document became extremely popular among alter-globalization

activists and was posted on the Indymedia listserv.¹⁰⁴ The article describes the networks defining Indymedia and the alter-globalization movement in general with an acronym: SPIN (Segmented, Polycentric, Integrated, Network).¹⁰⁵ It argues for “the inherent capability of networks to outperform administrative hierarchies,” in part because “there is . . . no central head to chop off.” Furthermore, the diversity of constituents of the network will provide an “internal schism” that “will usually result in a positively diverse, autonomous growth of self-determined groups making it possible for the network to truly become ‘all things to all people.’”¹⁰⁶ He illustrates these points with examples from Seattle by claiming that although at the beginning of the day leadership mainly comprised the Direct Action Network and the AFL-CIO, “by midafternoon the balance of power had shifted dramatically to the grassroots leadership from within both organized and unorganized sections of the RIF-RAF [Radical Interconnected Formations and Rank and File unionists].”¹⁰⁷

Although there is a certain degree of truth in Adam’s observations, it idealizes the tactics and practices by the alter-globalization movement by ignoring some of their contradictory tendencies (like claiming to “Be the Media,” while establishing an editing house that only a few exclusive groups had access to), as well as the racial critiques that people like Elizabeth Martinez and Kristine Wong address. Racial inequalities and implicit hierarchies get leveled out for the celebration of the networks. At best, it offers a hollow celebration of people with multiracial backgrounds and non-straight as “natural margin walkers . . . since they are able to walk margins more effectively, thus creating networks; this should be encouraged.”¹⁰⁸ But the reality of Seattle proved otherwise; well-established groups primarily organized the demonstrations and media production and excluded many people of color from participating in significant ways. Furthermore, when other groups used tactics that the main organizers found incompatible with their beliefs, like the use of black bloc tactics that engaged in property destruction, they were routinely denounced and ostracized.

Such limits are an extension of the technological utopianism that we saw operating in Chapter Two with the video guerrillas. Just as many video guerrillas naively envisioned the arrival of new video technology as a harbinger of a more equitable world that could transcend racial, gender, class, and sexual restrictions, many from Indymedia similarly transplanted such faith onto internet technology. Yet both guerrillas and IMCers failed to note how such technological availability and use remained deeply classed, raced, and gendered. Their dubious faith in technology supplanted

a needed analysis of the local and global capitalist forces that limited technological availability and dictated some of its uses.

This shortsightedness regarding the political economy of technology and the labor involved in its use was seen most dramatically when Indymedia activists fetishized free labor as somehow inherently democratic rather than seeing it as the new paradigm of work for neoliberalism. Matthew Arnison argues that Indymedia is different from earlier alternative news shows that were mainly used to train people for professional jobs: “And that’s where we can break the whole system down because we’re not trying to have paid employees; we’re not trying to have jobs. It’s just volunteer-based and hopefully it will always be volunteer-based.”¹⁰⁹ An idealization of networks and naivety regarding capitalist practices frame Arnison’s comment that associates paid work with professionalization whereas unpaid labor somehow inherently leads toward nonmonetary, “authentic” activist goals.

Capitalism, however, suggests otherwise. As many feminists like Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Kathi Weeks, Silvia Federici, and Leopoldina Fortunati have shown, unpaid labor has always been a staple of capitalist production, as innumerable hours of unpaid domestic work provided the critical infrastructure for paid labor. James and Dalla Costa, for instance, assert that the heterosexual family serves as “the very pillar of the capitalist organization of work” where male workers rejuvenate themselves daily for their next day’s onslaught at the job, where new workers are produced, raised, and trained, and where affective relations between family members moderately temper the intolerable conditions of capitalism.¹¹⁰

Neoliberalism, if anything, further incorporates and makes explicit such free labor and its affective dimensions into its structure. Silvia Federici, for example, highlights how the service, recreation, and entertainment industries “are picking up the traditionally female task of making one’s family happy and relaxed” by exploiting the affective labor that once was primarily located in the home.¹¹¹ The ubiquity of cell phones and other mobile digital screens place individuals on constant call and hopelessly blurs leisure and labor time. Spec, freelance, and unpaid work dominates much commercial media production. As the historical record shows, many who had been central in producing Indymedia at the time easily shifted into professional media jobs thereafter or simultaneously held corporate jobs while engaging in Indymedia activities during their free time.

The failure to not recognize the centrality of unpaid labor within capitalism shows an utter lack on some Indymedia activists’ part to recognize how capitalism works and to take for granted the sexist, gendered nature

that such free work has always entailed. Yet a stance glorifying free labor recurrently emerged in Indymedia activist discussions. In 2004, for example, one Indymedia listserv member suggested that some volunteers get paid at least a minimum wage in order for critical work to get completed. But another immediately replied, “I do not agree that we must, or should, ‘dirty our hands’ with it [money]. . . . Activism is not, should not be, a means to make a buck.”¹¹² Unpaid labor also arises again in 2006 when some Indymedia participants claim one shouldn’t receive pay since “for [Subcomandante] Marcos, and for many IMCistas of the global South, not receiving pay is one of the essential aspects of being part of our movement.”¹¹³ Little did some of these activists know that the free labor they were celebrating held a much more intimate relationship with the capitalist practices that they ostensibly rejected. By valorizing free labor as somehow pure and untouched by filthy lucre, Indymedia activists implicitly idealized their own work by refusing to see how it played into the larger practices of neoliberalism, as well as disproportionately excluding a majority of people who did not have the time or income to supply free labor to Indymedia’s upkeep and development.

Later Indymedia Videos

Later video productions were no longer immediately uplinked to satellites during the time of protest. Instead, more time was dedicated to the production and its completion in order to incorporate more participants. For example, before the FTAA 2003 protests in Miami, call-outs went across the IMC listserv for equipment and participants.¹¹⁴

Around forty-fifty videographers and media activists from across the country descended upon the Miami IMC. New York City-based videographers Brandon Jourdan and Brad Will brought some computers and hard drives to supply the infrastructure of the IMC. While at the IMC, participants distributed the filming of segments for what would become *The Miami Model*. Sasha Costanza-Chock recounts the process: “We had daily face-to-face meetings about what we covered and what was coming up. We then assigned teams to cover different actions and different people. We had about 40 to 50 shooters and about 10 editing teams.”¹¹⁵ Although more footage was incorporated into the film than was included in *Showdown*, the production process didn’t prove any more hospitable to involving people who normally didn’t have access to video technology.

After the footage had been shot, each group covering a specific section of the film would reconvene at their place of origin to work on editing

it. Then after each individual section had been assembled, the rough cuts were then mailed to San Francisco to the Bay Area IMC for final editing. There a select group worked on postproduction, color correction, the insertion of graphics, and more fine editing that created a more coherent whole. Yet establishing such formal coherence proved a difficult task. As Evan Henshaw-Plath recounts, “Editing an Indymedia film is really strange. You are editing B-roll, and you are trying to create a story out of it. That is really hard. But the point of these films isn’t to be shown in the cinema but as an organizing tool.”¹¹⁶ As a result, most Indymedia productions are rather uneven with some stronger sections mixed against much weaker ones. They represent an auteurless cinema where issues of coherence and singular vision give way to more immediate concerns like creating a timely release to help mobilize for future actions and providing a variety of semi-diverse outlooks regarding the action. Not unlike *Cascadia Alive!*, Indymedia productions tend to prioritize activism and urgency over well-honed productions and artistic expertise. This is not to say all of their productions are inept. But formal concerns give way to activist expediency when need be.

Since Indymedia films are mainly addressed to activists already engaged in the alter-globalization movement, they provide interesting documents in the way they speak to their own movement’s concerns. For example, Sascha Costanza-Chock remembers how editors of *The Miami Model* (2004) intentionally minimized police brutality in order to focus on the local community.¹¹⁷ This becomes apparent from the video’s opening sequence, which shows a night-lit distant shot of Miami from a car driving into the city as Spanish-language radio plays over the audio track. Exit signs pass before us as the city grows in size. The sequence cuts to Max Rameau who belongs to the Miami Workers Center and would eventually become instrumental in developing Take Back the Land in 2006. Footage of dispossessed minorities lining the streets and dilapidated buildings follows as Rameau recounts Miami’s history as “the poorest big city in the U.S.” Contrasting the FTAA’s desire to not “show the poverty here,” *The Miami Model* takes pains in establishing the histories of everyday people in the city. In particular, the opening sequence highlights Overtown, Miami’s historically poor black district. Rameau directs the camera’s gaze to local historic sights of police brutality. Following a shot of the Overtown Arcade, Rameau notes how Neville Johnson was shot in the head by the police after being questioned why he was playing hooky from school. Rameau later identifies a highway overpass where Arthur MacDuffie was rundown by the police off his motorcycle. The police removed his helmet, smashed

his skull and then replaced it claiming he died from the crash. All of this backstory is important, since it situates the violence that will be visited upon protesters by the Miami police during the FTAA in a longer history of police violence primarily directed toward minority communities. The police violence at the FTAA is nothing more than an extension of the violence already directed toward its minority communities.



The Miami Model (2004) reveals the poverty that the City of Miami attempted to obscure from view in anticipation of the FTAA in 2003.

Another sequence in *The Miami Model* addresses the backstory concerning the city's reactionary attitude toward its populace's right to protest. We witness the implementation of a 2003 protest ordinance that requires groups of eight or more people meeting for over thirty minutes to get a permit and outlaws any group of two or more people who draw public attention and disrupt the flow of traffic. Tellingly, before focusing on the November 13 city council meeting discussing the ordinance, a series of news clips play. A local NBC anchor introduces her segment claiming, "Tonight we take you inside the anarchists' world for some answers." Footage follows of burning trash dumpsters, youth clad in black returning volleys of exploding tear gas canisters, and a police cruiser with a spray painted anarchist symbol on it. The newscaster states, "Miami is supposedly the next target." The footage then cuts to the November 13 city council meeting. This news footage serves as an important preface that suggests the disinformation provided by the commercial news that overhypes the

dangers of counter-summit protesting as directly fueling the creation of such reactionary and oppressive legislation. The sequence reveals the links between commercial news hype and draconian city legislation that are both premised upon false and reactionary information.

The Commissioner furthermore reveals his condescending attitude toward the citizenry he is supposed to represent. In shaky handheld footage, he states in a monotone voice: "Apparently some of you are naive enough or uninformed enough that you didn't notice what happened in Seattle, in Davos, Switzerland, in Cancun." Yet his next statement fully reveals his alliance with property over that of human rights: "I happen to own property in that 'nest of global capitalism' and am proud of it, and will continue to do so." His speech bluntly exposes the alliance of the city commission with property interests. Protesters walk around the council chambers with their mouths taped and "free speech" written on them, accenting the ways the ordinance defies the rights of free speech guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution for the sanctity of property.

The sequence is followed by footage of the cops harassing protesters. In a faux-friendly tone, a bike cop tells a group of people that they have to disperse within twenty minutes if they don't have a permit. When asked why twenty minutes, the cop states that other police had already been observing them for ten minutes. The cop peppers his threats with pseudo-friendly jingoist phrases like, "We'll be here to make sure you guys are safe." But the real message with the police threateningly surrounding the youthful protesters is: if you defy this ordinance, we will bust you.

Once again, rather than simply focusing on police harassment alone, *The Miami Model* follows the causes that lead to such harassment. The video exposes how reactionary news reports allow the local city government to enact reactionary legislation that further enables the cops to harass the city's populace. It is not simply the problem of a few renegade cops, but a reactionary systemic structure where commercial news, city officials, the police, and corporations ally their interests against human rights and the guarantees of the U.S. Constitution. The film later stresses that the *Miami Herald* donated \$217,000 of advertising in support of the FTAA and \$62,500 in cash to subsidize the summit. The notion of unbiased reporting gets jettisoned when a news organization holds a literal investment in the event that should require noncommittal coverage.

After chronicling the events of the protests, the video returns back to Overtown to reemphasize the local community. Marvin Dunn from the Overtown Community Gardens speaks about how "the expressway

destroyed this community. . . . It takes basically white people from east to west across the community. If they don't look down, they don't even have to look at black people." The camera's focus upon this community at ground-level contrasts against the looming highway overhead and the imperialist, racist mindset that prioritized the flow of commuter traffic over that of the integrity and success of a black community. A series of interviews follow from Overtown residents regarding their difficulties like being paid below minimum wage and having reduced welfare support. Shots finally follow of a lush garden with blooming red and blue flowers. Dunn states, "What you are now looking at used to be two huge vacant lots owned by the city. We began planting here without asking for permission. They probably would have said no. Now we have hundreds and hundreds of plants out here. In two or three months we are producing a winter crop for the community." We watch Dunn direct people to take some shovels in order to assist the garden.

This final sequence shows some anarchist principles at work, like direct-action and prefigurative politics. Rather than asking the city for permission, the Overtown community simply establishes the change they want to see. The Overtown Community Garden somewhat fits Hakim Bey's definition of a temporary autonomous zone. He stresses how such zones are established under the radar of the state:

We are looking for "spaces" (geographic, social, cultural, imaginal) with potential to flower as autonomous zones—and we are looking for times in which these spaces are relatively open, either through neglect on the part of the State or because they have somehow escaped notice by the mapmakers, or for whatever reason.¹¹⁸

Overtown in general is such a site of this neglect, with its abandoned lots proving an even more vulnerable location for reclamation and the establishment of a temporary autonomous zone.

Additionally, Bey defines a T.A.Z. as "an intensification, a surplus, an excess, a potlatch, life spending itself in living rather than merely surviving."¹¹⁹ A community garden becomes the incarnation of this goal of life spending itself in living through exercising outdoors by gardening and the beautification of the community through plants, trees, and flowers. This end sequence reveals anarchist principles in action, self-directed by members of the community. It diversifies the notion of anarchism since it reveals how predominantly black, underprivileged communities are

already seizing upon some of its principles in order to revitalize their community and establish a sense of self-worth.

It also anticipates the Take Back the Land movement eventually led by Max Rameau in 2006. He asserts that direct-action land takeovers gain particular importance for those who have been the most marginalized in society, like poor black homeless people. Rameau notes, "While it was difficult to completely negate the years of conditioning imposed on people from the broader society, the idea that we were building something new and different captured the imagination of our residents and supporters in a real and lasting way."¹²⁰ This sequence is the film's strongest argument in suggesting how to diversify anarchism by actually interacting with local communities to see how anarchist principles might already be manifesting themselves through their actions. Rather than adopting a purist anarchist ideology, one must instead look for the hybrid ways anarchism arises in unexpected ways.

This desire to see anarchism extend itself into communities outside of the United States defines much of Indymedia's 2006 film *I: the Film*. It mainly focuses upon the creation of IMC Argentina after the 2001 debt protests that traumatized the nation. We witness Indymedia activists seizing hold of an abandoned bank to establish their IMC. Similar to the community garden, the bank seizure represents another temporary autonomous zone, where anarchist-influenced individuals repurpose the bank to serve their countermedia agenda. Footage shows participants removing a panel from the bank's boarded front where they bolt-cut through its security fence. A dozen people rapidly enter its abandoned, dilapidated structure. A camera wildly swings around as it observes people reconnecting the electricity, sweeping the floors, and cleaning up. A man speaks as we watch the aforementioned footage, "I feel euphoric. I want to start doing stuff now. Hoping this will fill with people and eager to reach people in the neighborhood who couldn't be a part of this." People flood into the bank, revealing how the seizure of this space already galvanizes their participation. We are watching a new collective subjectivity forming before us as a result of the seizure of a T.A.Z. and the implementation of Indymedia within it. It stresses that Indymedia is primarily about fostering connections and developing a new, collective, empowered subjectivity premised upon some anarchist principles more so than the establishment of a website. Although such networking might often be limited in terms of demographics, it nonetheless provides for a powerful and inspiring force for all of those involved.

This sequence contrasts against an earlier section of the film that stresses the old subjectivity forged through decades of state repression and

violence toward its people. Unlike the free-floating filmmaking of the bank seizure, where people joyously fill the frame, an earlier interview sequence frames a man who won't even look into the camera or at the interviewer. He states, "Anyway, I am complaining. I mean they're filming us from everywhere." The footage quickly cuts to a man in sunglasses ducking into a car looking intimidatingly back at the camera. He has a stiff military or police demeanor, suggesting that actual surveillance might be at work. The interviewee continues, "It's not that I am suspicious of you but I have to ask myself. . . . You learn to value life. It's not fear but you take precautions. I could tell you what I think, but I don't know you." Fear and suspicion permeate the entire sequence not only through the man's attitude and speech but also with shots of suspicious looking people punctuating it. Unlike the euphoria of the bank sequence, this one reveals a subjugated and isolated subjectivity that suspects everyone and won't state what it truly thinks for fear of being discovered and punished. The bank sequence brazenly ignores the law by repurposing a reactionary institution for the community's self-interest. This sequence fears the law and its surveillance to such an extent that it refuses to comment on anything but its own fear, subjugation, and general distrust.



I: *The Film* (2006) reveals how a new collective subjectivity forms during the appropriation of a bank by everyday people.

Regardless, however, of the film's desire to show anarchism in action in local communities and the forging of a new collective subjectivity, it falls back into clichés regarding the inherent democratizing potential of networks. In one sequence, ambient electronic music plays as a female

voice-over intones, "This network is a horizontal porous thing. Individuals, collectives, newspapers, radio stations, they move in and out of the peripheries. Disappearing here and reappearing there." Once again, such idealistic statements fail to recognize the inherent limits of networks and anarchist organizing. It acts as if similar conditions determine all individuals' actions, whereas we have just witnessed earlier footage of how state dictatorship has conditioned an older generation to fear simply expressing their opinions.

Only in one instance does a member express doubt by stating, "There is a culture that is purely global, and very virtual, very internet that is made up of a generation of activists who go all over the place, and it creates a rift" between those virtually connected and those not. But rather than further addressing this issue, the film cuts to Part III and has another man express: "One of the sayings we have taken from Indymedia Chiapas is to be the voice of the voiceless." But this doesn't reconcile the problems of the first question that addresses self-empowerment and the limits of a virtual, network-based movement. It represents an aporia not only for IMC Argentina but for all of Indymedia, which never adequately addressed this question in other than a cursory and haphazard fashion. *I: the Film* reveals the limits of Indymedia's thoughts and how an entrenched hacker ideology prevents it from ever fully moving beyond the clichés of celebrating network empowerment and nonhierarchical structures.



The newly resistant collective subjectivity is contrasted against a more paranoid and individualistic worldview that *I: The Film* presents elsewhere.

Property Destruction, Mediated Frames, and Eugene Anarchists

Another deeply entrenched ideology that often alienated those who didn't share it was Indymedia's condemnatory stance toward property destruction that parroted the outlook of the NGO leaders who organized the 1999 protest. For example, Medea Benjamin's piece in *Globalize This* "set off a veritable explosion of rage from the more militant anarchists."¹²¹ It is easy to understand why. The essay holds a pretentious, moralizing, self-righteous tone and sense of privilege to speak for the entire movement. She writes, "We think it is unfair for a small, unrepresentative group to use a massive, peaceful protest as a venue for destructive actions that go against the wishes of the vast majority of protesters."¹²² Her statement raises the question of whether she and her group Code Pink represent the wishes of the majority of the protesters.

Perhaps most obnoxiously, she blames black bloc protesters for inciting police violence, whereas all evidence reveals that the police had already been behaving badly long before property destruction took place. She asks rhetorically, "Or will a small group attempt to foist its tactics—and the resulting repression—on the movement in the naive hope that intensified conflict will 'bring on the revolution'?"¹²³ Such sanctimonious, elitist rhetoric offended many participants in Seattle who weren't linked to the NGOs and the progressive Left. As one can imagine, it deeply disturbed the anarchists from Eugene who attended the protests.

Tim Ream had arrived in Seattle early to assist organizing its IMC. He also wanted to study the general topography and groups to be involved in the actions. By the time Tim Lewis appeared, Ream "was like a producer who knew what was going on." On the first day of the actions, Ream connected with a media activist group that allowed him to use their Avid to edit footage that Lewis and others shot during the day. Ream states, "I started editing it at five or six in the afternoon, and Lewis kept bringing footage until twelve." Lewis continues, "We were editing until eight in the morning on an Avid, which we had never worked on before."¹²⁴ After they had mastered it, they produced five hundred copies of their thirty-minute video, *RIP WTO N30*, which they had completed by two in the afternoon and were selling in the streets the next day. "That was cutting edge stuff at the time," notes Lewis. Ream recounts, "Within three days, I had copies within two independent video stores in town. We got them into the hands of college students, church groups, unions, and then through a very organic process they were able to show them back to their communities."

But Ream and Lewis both claim that once the IMC started showing and distributing *Showdown in Seattle*, their film was no longer promoted by the IMC collective. Ream recalls, “Although *RIP WTO N30* was selling like hotcakes, as soon as Indymedia put out their video, they removed ours. We were suddenly too radical for the IMC.” Lewis recounts even more strongly, “They were assholes. Here they were being this indie media. There was Whispered Media, Cold Mountain, and others. Our politics were more radical than theirs. The Indymedia people didn’t like our message [regarding the advocacy of property destruction], but they had to distribute it since they were supposedly open to all. *Battle in Seattle* [*Showdown in Seattle*] came out and they took us right off their list because it wasn’t cool to be associated with property destruction. This gave me the motivation for doing *Breaking the Spell*,” which is an hour-long documentary regarding property destruction and the 1999 WTO protests.¹²⁵ Ream concludes, “I am glad they decided to pitch in and get the IMC scene running, but their political agenda was fucked. To think our community broadly conceived should be a censorship of voices is crazy.”

Breaking the Spell serves as an interesting document that not only addresses the complex relations between the anarchist community and property destruction but also offers a more sophisticated understanding of the relations between grassroots media and commercial media than simply the celebration of the former and the denunciation of the latter. The video shuttles back and forth between Seattle 1999 and the media attention raining down on the Whiteaker neighborhood immediately following the protests. By alternating between the global day of action and the local community, the video reveals a dialectical process at work between the manifestation of property destruction in the streets of Seattle and its emergence from a radicalized neighborhood community. *Breaking the Spell* attempts to situate the property destruction not only within a deeper political tradition and a specific community but also with a principled intentionality in order to distance it from being misconstrued as a seemingly spontaneous event erupting from the adolescent egos of a few privileged young white males.

The video’s championing of property destruction is not unique among certain anarchist communities and has historical links with the direct-action forest campaigns of the 1990s. Yet such videos have received little attention by film and media scholars. Jane Gaines asserts that one reason might be that humanities scholars hold “a certain queasiness about acts of violence” and tend to reduce “all acts to a generic violence that denies the specificity of people’s struggles and cancels the validity of their claims.”¹²⁶

Gaines sees contemporary activist media as somewhat akin to other “body genres” like horror, melodrama, and porn, which all strongly rely on affect and emotion. The link is not as tenuous as it might first sound since activist media makers often refer to their own films as “riot porn” or “protest porn.”¹²⁷ Within the packaging of *Breaking the Spell*, its distributors, CrimethInc., warn:

The most vital thing to recognize about pornography, of course, is that it is the opposite of sex. It exists to serve its own ends: every representation represents representation itself before anything else. . . . Watching a documentary is nothing like experience in real time, on location, with concrete stakes and personal context. And, of course, if what you’re truly interested in is changing the world, it doesn’t really matter what you watch.¹²⁸

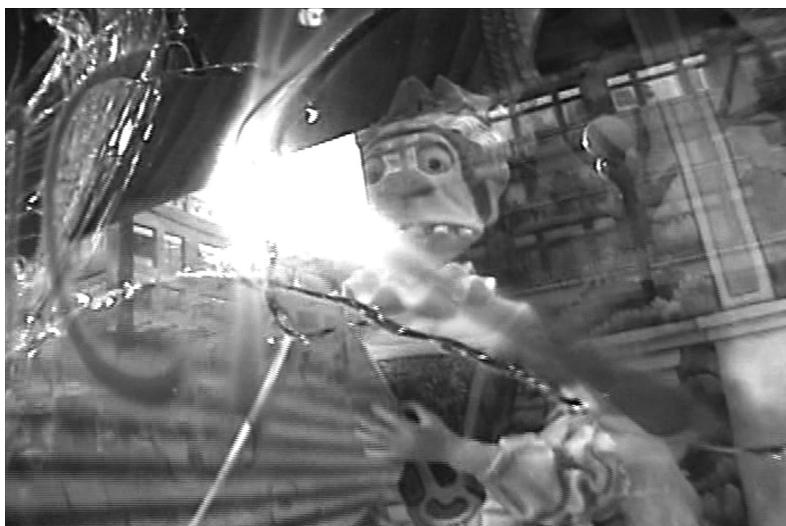
Yet the reason people chose to make a documentary rather than write a tract or make a speech often concerns wanting to reach wider audiences to have an emotional impact upon them for further mobilization.

Documentary video clearly cannot reproduce these affects, but it can approximate them and relate inklings of what it might feel like to be in the streets, to be resistant, noncompliant, a vector of bodies surging against repression, the state, and the sedimentations of global capitalism. As Jane Gaines observes, “The whole rationale behind documenting political battles on film, as opposed to producing written records, is to make struggle visceral, to go beyond the abstractly intellectual to produce a bodily swelling.”¹²⁹ The very fact that CrimethInc. must insert a warning against conflating the film with reality reveals the intention behind activist documentary to blur the lines of the screen world with that of reality.

Not coincidentally, the screen and the display window serve as central symbols throughout *Breaking the Spell*’s focus on violence. Feminist film theorist Judith Mayne notes how display windows often serve a prominent function in films as metaphors for the screen, a contradictory site marking both a threshold and obstacle for its observer.¹³⁰ The display window invites the observer to fantasize about possessing the pristinely displayed object while also physically distancing it with a protective wall of glass.

Breaking the Spell draws these contradictory meanings to the forefront as its camera lingers on various smashed display windows. For example, in one scene while a protester rants against capitalism, the camera

traces over the cracks of a display window. Behind it, we observe an animatronic elf shielding itself, as if traumatized by the violence and the gaze of the camera itself. The camera focuses upon the cracks to emphasize the barrier that the display window represents but which is often overlooked due to its transparency. The cracks make visible the display window's material status as both a provocateur of consumer desires and obstruction to immediate gratification. This critique of consumption is emphasized as we hear a protester offscreen yell: "Do not choose to consume their TV, do not choose to consume their food."



The cracks in the display window reveal both the allure and prohibition that capitalism enacts through consumerism. From *Breaking the Spell* (1999).

Later in the film, a Eugene anarchist explains to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, "We need to dismantle private property, and this begins by breaking the spell. And that's what a smashed window does." It draws to the forefront the contradictory position that capitalism imposes upon all of us: to enflame our materialistic desires while simultaneously denying them. This anarchist stance is identical to the rationale earlier provided by the ACME collective: "When we smash a window, we aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property. . . . The number of broken windows pales in comparison to the number of broken spells—spells cast by a corporate hegemony to lull us into forgetfulness of all the violence committed in the name of private property rights and all of the potential of a society without them."¹³¹

Earlier on in the video Lacey Phillabaum stresses the reasons why corporations were targeted for property destruction: “Microsoft, Boeing, Bank of America, US Bank, Fidelity Investments, all those corporations that had their shit fucked with on that day had invested in the WTO meetings and paid for the meeting to be in Seattle.” Elsewhere in the film another activist states that property destruction serves as an “economic incentive to not hold meetings like that at all, much less in the Northwest. It is a psychological incentive to reconsider the kind of society we live in.” Speaking in such cogent, informative, and relaxed ways offers a counterimage to the normal stereotype of anarchists as thoughtless, out-of-control people who are victims of their emotions. Their seeming anarchic destruction has thoughtful principles informing it.¹³²

Violence, or more particularly property destruction, acts as a catalyst to not only speak about the tensions of capitalism but also to draw clear metaphors like a smashed display window to the forefront, where these tensions converge. Violence is not simply an action but also a discourse, as Frantz Fanon reminds us. I do not invoke Fanon here in a desire to conflate First World conditions with those of the Third World, nor collapse 1960s colonial resistance with that of the alter-globalization movements in some token move, but simply because Fanon has been one of the most articulate spokespeople concerning violence, which has far-reaching implications.

Fanon often reminds the reader in *The Wretched of the Earth* about “the language of force.” In the chapter, “On Violence,” Fanon carefully reveals how force and violence course through Western values, religion, and education. Violence permeates the entire colonial culture—even when it is not physically poised to strike. He writes, “The very people who had it constantly drummed into them that the only language they understood was that of force, now decide to express themselves with force.”¹³³

Furthermore, he speaks of the redemptive power of violence in reconstituting one’s sense of self and community: “At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence.”¹³⁴ In another instance he writes how violence forces collectivization: “Personal interests are now the collective interest because in reality *everyone* will be discovered by the French legionnaires and consequently massacred or else *everyone* will be saved.”¹³⁵ The latter point is worth stressing since it was precisely the association of property destruction by the black bloc in Seattle with that of all other protesters that disturbed liberal leaders of the NGOs. They didn’t want the taint of such

tactics on their organizations, thus revealing the negative elements of the collectivizing force of violence.

Fanon's observations have not been lost on certain members of the anarchist community. AK Thompson cites Fanon in *Black Bloc, White Riot* to stress the transformative power of violence. He writes that although "no analogy can be drawn between the political repression endured by the colonized and the relatively minor indignities endured by anti-globalization activists," "what does remain common to each instance is the fact of transformation."¹³⁶ Thompson continues, "What emerged at the end could not have come into being without first having passed through violence. This transformation, which can be measured by considering the new forms of political subjectivity it yields, can be analyzed and operationalized by movements striving to become political."¹³⁷ Thompson poses this transformation in rather idealist terms as moving toward "unmediated production," as if violence somehow provides for the falling away of history and ideology as we enter into what he calls "post-representational politics."¹³⁸ But this emphasis upon the creation of a new politicized and collectivized subjectivity through property destruction and violence remains an important point—even given its divisive nature among others.

Similar sentiments are expressed by black bloc anarchists within *Breaking the Spell*. In one instance, a female activist states: "There's nothing in the world like running with a group of two hundred people all wearing black, realizing each of you is anonymous, each of you can liberate your desires, each of you can make a difference right there because everyone has your back. Everyone's there for the same reason." Of course, the brutal reality was that everyone was not there for property destruction, which led to the tensions between black bloc participants and nonviolent protesters. For better or worse, everyone was lumped together by the police, and the nonviolent protesters bore the brunt of police violence while the black bloc fought back or, more often, ran away. Property destruction became an easy target in some protesters' minds in rationalizing the police violence against them. But in reality, it at most might have escalated an already hostile attitude that the police held long before the arrival of any activist.

Regardless of how one evaluates the effectiveness of property destruction during the Seattle WTO protests, *Breaking the Spell* emphasizes "the language of force" by exploring how property destruction drew mass media attention, for better and worse. In the aforementioned sequence when the protester is explaining property destruction's ability to break the spell to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, the camera focuses on the reporter's wedding

band and then the Nike swoosh label on his sneaker. Although the reporter seems to be dutifully transcribing the activist's words on a pad, the symbol of the state shackling his finger and the corporate logo branding his shoe expose the ideological filters that the activist's story will be mediated through. The camera serves as witness to the ways in which the reporter is already embedded within capitalism and the state to such an extent that he doesn't question wearing Nike shoes to an anarchist enclave that allegedly inflicted property destruction against NikeTown. This focus on the Nike logo also resonates with an earlier sequence where we see a cop's gloved hand with a Nike logo holding a truncheon defending NikeTown. The branding links the bias of the *Chicago Tribune* reporter with that of the interests of the police state, suggesting that there is no reason to collude between both groups since they are already submerged within a capitalist ideology that unites their outlooks toward property destruction.



The close-up of the Nike swoosh shows the inherent bias of the reporter towards property destruction. From *Breaking the Spell*.

Yet the video's and the activists' attitude toward the *60 Minutes* report about them is rather different. We view them watching the broadcast at Tiny's Tavern. The film highlights *60 Minutes'* use of activist footage of both police violence and property destruction. Rather than framing it as if *60 Minutes* is appropriating their work, the video instead suggests that the anarchists are temporarily hijacking *60 Minutes*. As Tim Ream states: "*60 Minutes* is going to do what we always thought it was going to do: it's going

to sensationalize property destruction. And I think that's a good thing. We want youth all over America thinking that this is a sensational way to act."

By embedding television viewing from an anarchist point of view, by having *Breaking the Spell* hijack *60 Minutes* for its own agenda, the video offers an important reminder that regardless of how commercial media frames controversial issues like property destruction, no matter how much its narrative pull might attempt to disown such acts, other counter-messages and desires seep through. Sensationalism works both ways: trivializing activism into discrete, contained acts of violence and entralling viewers by the violence. It simultaneously recognizes and disavows the anger, the frustration, and the violence that late capitalism fosters. Other anarchist groups have noted as much before. For example, the Profane Existence Collective states, "Romanticizing this sort of stuff shows people—especially the people who live in places that are generally isolated from revolutionary activity—that people are struggling against unjust forms of power all over the world, and that sometimes these people win."¹³⁹ Romanticization and sensationalism lead to exposure regardless of how it is framed. This is not to say that analyzing the framing of stories is not important, but it serves as a reminder that people make their own meanings that might counter such framing and that mass culture is much more contradictory than some acknowledge.

The video tellingly ends with a clip from *60 Minutes*. As amateur footage of black bloc members breaking display windows explodes across the screen, a female activist states: "When you stare at a television and you see logos and you're in a daze, and these symbols pop up everywhere in life. When that is shattered, it breaks the spell. And we're trying to wake up people before it's too late." Here the screen and the display window converge where the discourse of violence intersects with its acts. The video shows how actions and articulations are one and the same. The sensationalism of property destruction led the mass media to focus on the black bloc anarchists of Whiteaker. Yet contrary to the belief that the mass media's focus on activist violence trivializes issues of global justice, *Breaking the Spell* suggests otherwise: that both sensationalism and intelligent discussion can coexist, that violence doesn't necessarily cancel out all the messages of the alter-globalization movement but can at times augment it, and at moments the full language of force might actually make its way onto the commercial airwaves. John Zerzan recalls, "There was at first a lot of second guessing for participating in the *60 Minutes* interview. We had a week to wait for the show and thought it would be a hatchet job. But it actually was a fair account. They let us say everything we wanted to say."



Activists watching *60 Minutes'* coverage of their actions during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. *Breaking the Spell* appropriates commercial media into its structure, suggesting the ways in which activists utilize such media for their own purposes.

With the hot glare of media attention drawn upon the anarchist community of Eugene, Oregon, an influx of new people entered the scene. But the activist community was unprepared for such growth. While its media production and direct actions increased throughout the early 2000s, Eugene's anarchist-based community also started fraying at the edges through ideological divisions.

Green Anarchy, Cascadia Media Collective, and Gender Divisions

Due to the victory of Warner Creek, the media attention on the Eugene anarchist actions in Seattle, and the continuing aggressive tree-sitting campaign of Fall Creek, Eugene saw an influx of anarchists who were inspired by a Green Anarchist position that many Eugene activists either adopted or were partially influenced by. John Zerzan served as its prominent advocate. According to Tim Ream, "The success of Warner Creek created fertile ground for Zerzan's ideas to be widely accepted and discussed. There weren't many people who were key Warner Creek activists who were involved with him. But Warner Creek could be read in a Green Anarchist way: group of primitivists ripping out the signs of technology to protect

nature. It catapulted some of his ideas in that he embraced the Warner Creek success.”

Before specifically defining Green Anarchism, it should be noted that it has a long history well before its appearance in Eugene and through Zerzan’s writings. Some point back to the 1970s with the appearance of Edward Goldsmith’s report *Blueprint for Survival*, where he claimed one should reject an industrial economy that betrays ecological principles and instead model oneself after preindustrial tribal groups that lived in a balanced relationship with the natural world.¹⁴⁰ Green Anarchism, also known as anarcho-primitivism or primitivism, went through many permutations. Most relevant to this study is the appearance of Saxon Wood in Eugene in early 2000. He had been a founding member of the British-based zine *Green Anarchist*. But after falling out with the editorial collective, he moved to Eugene to found a new magazine, *Green Anarchy*. While producing the zine, Wood also worked as a temporary editor for the *Earth First! Journal*.

After producing four issues of *Green Anarchy*, Wood temporarily left town and gave de facto editorial control to John Zerzan, Felonious Skunk, Stapleicide, and others. When he returned, he found the zine had taken a much more radical anticivilization stance than he advocated. Ultimately, his ideas were not welcome, and he was ousted from the zine. *Green Anarchy* became a central forum for advocating anarcho-primitivist ideas with a circulation of eight thousand copies per issue and ran from 2000 to 2008.¹⁴¹

Green Anarchy’s Summer 2002 issue most explicitly stated its philosophy in an article titled “What Is Green Anarchy?” First and foremost, the article discusses primitivism by asserting that “primitivism recognizes that for most of human history, we lived in face-to-face communities in balance with each other and our surroundings, without formal hierarchies and institutions to mediate and control our own lives.”¹⁴² It continues, “While some primitivists wish for an immediate and complete return to gather-hunter band societies, most primitivists understand that an acknowledgement of what has been successful in the past does not unconditionally determine what will work in the future.”¹⁴³

Although one might take issue with anthropological data that Green Anarchists employ to paint a rather idealized picture of past societies as proto-anarchist communities, it gets at a more central issue of how the Marxian concept of alienation pervades all of their writing. For example, John Zerzan writes in *Future Primitive Revisited* that tribal human life existed “in a state that did not know alienation or domination.”¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere

he identifies the alienating effects of technology: “a moribund world continues its estranged technological rationality that excludes any continuously spontaneous, affective life: the person is subjected to a discipline designed, at the expense of the sensuous, to make him or her an instrument of production.”¹⁴⁵ This is not all that different from Herbert Marcuse’s belief in *One-Dimensional Man* that “today this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality” thus producing a “subject which is alienated . . . and swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms.”¹⁴⁶ But, ultimately, Marcuse argues to use technology as a liberator for human goals rather than technocratic and capitalist ones, whereas Zerzan wants civilization and technology abolished altogether.

“What Is Green Anarchy?” similarly condemns symbolic culture and technology as alienating. An overdependence on both “leads to an objectification, alienation, and a tunnel-vision of perception.”¹⁴⁷ The editors view technology in deterministic ways by asserting “the values and goals of those who produce and control technology are always embedded within it.”¹⁴⁸ This contrasts against a more Marxist point of view that sees technology as embedded within social relations that can always undergo alterations.¹⁴⁹ For primitivists, however, technology’s sociopolitical origins always inhabit its form and limit its uses.

Green Anarchism often risks idealizing indigenous groups as their superego against civilization. Although they frequently caution against such idealization, their language sometimes slips into such a framework while discussing contemporary indigenous groups at an abstract level without much historical specificity. For example, Homer Bust asserts in “We Are All Indigenous,” “We once lived unmediated from the earth, ate directly from the forest, drank straight from its waters, slept touching the ground, healed ourselves with its plants, made all our decisions concerning our lives with people we loved.”¹⁵⁰

Such an idealized description is one step shy of the clichéd 1970s antipollution commercial that has an unspecified Native American rowing a canoe down a river to come across a trash-ravaged embankment.¹⁵¹ As he rows, a lap-dissolve shows immense clouds of waste from industrial smokestacks. As he reaches shore and wades through its trash, a narrator states, “Some people have a deep abiding respect for the beauty that was once this country.” A medium-close up appears of the Native American. The narrator continues, “And some people don’t.” A rack focus shot switches from the Native American to a nearby highway. A driver throws trash out the

window of a car that lands at the Native American's feet. The camera then pulls in to a close-up of a tear running down his eye.

The writer seems to be aware of the danger of his description when he asserts that "I do not wish to 'play native' or co-opt traditions, but to tap into and learn from a physical and spiritual knowledge."¹⁵² But he never cites any specific indigenous knowledge or histories, thereby pillaging a host of clichés that whites have historically employed to show their supposed respect for Native people without having to trouble themselves with actually learning their traditions and histories or speaking to them in any sustained way. This imperialist tradition manifests itself earlier in the protest footage of *Cascadia Alive!* when a Native American man sings while predominantly white protesters block a road. The film shows no respect for the inherent indigenous tradition itself but employs Native American imagery to legitimize the authenticity of eco-activists' crusade. This falls into a long line of Western Left activists pillaging Native American imagery for their own purposes since the 1960s.¹⁵³

It should be made clear, however, that not many people accepted all of anarcho-primitivism's tenets in Eugene. Tim Ream asserts that "I am down with the anti-technology critique to an extent." Yet he continues, "If you buy into John's critique of the world, you end up not doing anything. If you aren't actively involved in smashing the state, then you are supposedly wasting your time." Lauren Beaton, who was the only female member of the Green Anarchy collective, states, "They had some really good points like pre-agriculture and pre-wealth societies having less hierarchy and oppression, and working in small groups you have this greater egalitarianism. But I saw it more as an ideal. I don't think we could go back to that, and if we did, it would be cataclysmic and horrible with suffering." So one must maintain a clear distinction between the Green Anarchy position advocated on paper and the more complex attitudes activists held toward it on the ground.

As *Green Anarchy* took root in 2000, Randy Shadowwalker, producer of *Cascadia Alive!*, developed a new group with Charles Overbeck called Cascadia Media Collective (CMC). Other core members consisted of Kurt Jensen, Lisa Igoe, and Steve Heslin. Tim Ream and Tim Lewis sold Shadowwalker their editing system. Part of the inspiration for the Collective emerged from Seattle. Members paid out of their own pocket to travel. Sometimes they were fairly unprepared, like the 2001 Quebec City protests where Kurt Jensen and Randy Shadowwalker were detained for lacking passports and a coherent story.

But *CMC* also developed as a natural outgrowth of the work being done on *Cascadia Alive!* As Shadowwalker recounts, “It was the cream of the crop of video guys and women from *Cascadia Alive!* We took all these random components of the show and funneled them into a specific group with a more intentional purpose.” In turn, the greater expertise of the members of *CMC* could also then be used to assist the public access show. *CMC* produced a series of videos, like *A Year in the Streets*, a compilation of riot porn from various actions, and *Guerrilla Video Primer*, which was to assist in training activists in filming protest actions and related events.

While making the *Guerrilla Video Primer* in 2002, however, the Eugene anarchist community began to implode due to factions caused by sexism. Shadowwalker claims that one main reason for such tensions was due to the increased media visibility Eugene had gained: “A lot of people who saw themselves as main players felt that their position was exponentially larger than it should have been. People had big egos at the time.” Similarly, an anonymous article written for the anarchist zine *Rolling Thunder* comments on the media attention Eugene received: “Those who fall prey to believing the media hype about themselves become dependent upon this attention, pursuing it rather than the unmediated connections and healthy relationships essential for long-term revolutionary struggle, the most valuable visibility is anchored in enduring communities, not media spectacles.”¹⁵⁴ This is an identical critique that Todd Gitlin lobbs at those who became celebrities of the New Left for having lost connection with the communities they represented for the allure of stardom.¹⁵⁵ The dialectics between spectacle and on the ground organizing in Eugene had been broken, making it no longer clear if media production/spectacle is serving activist goals or if activist goals are now serving spectacular ends.

Tim Lewis came under particularly heavy fire regarding his media appearances. As a *Eugene Weekly* article states, “Anarcho-feminists had been calling Lewis an attention-hogging sexist for months” and required that he have a female to host the screening of his film *Breaking the Spell*, which Lacey Phillabaum did.¹⁵⁶ Kari Johnson observes how “the men would definitely step up regarding the camera. That was just it: unless you try to make something else happen, people will go up to the tallest man or most confident looking one and ask for his perspective.”

Also, a sexist division of labor plagued various anarchist organizations. Lauren Beaton notes, “As much as anarchists talk about equality, there was a gender divide. Women ran the infoshop and the Food Not

Bombs. Men did the publishing. There weren't just the issues of sexism but of men not going out of their way to make women feel welcome. They [the men] didn't see this as a problem." Kari Johnson further explains the invisibility of women's issues to the anarchist scene: "The older men are defining anarchism as a problem dealing with the police and the government; they're not worried about being raped or beaten by their partners. They just don't understand it that someone who is lower on the rungs of society isn't as worried about the police. Men can act as police towards women, too."

Johnson hints at the way in which sexism did not just revolve around gender divides but also generational ones, too. Tim Lewis comments, "For me it was more of an ageist thing because I am a middle-aged white guy. It had a lot to do with youth."¹⁵⁷ But the generational divide played into some older men aggressively flirting with younger women who newly entered the scene. Some men would also disparage more vocal women. Leeanne Siart remembers, "There were older male activists who would do things like refer to women who were vocal as 'feminazis' creating tensions based on women wanting to speak out when they felt things weren't right."¹⁵⁸ As Lauren Regan remembers, "I felt it was high time for a lot of men to be conscientious about their shit in letting women speak at meetings, letting women take leadership positions."

Yet another significant problem in addressing the sexism, in addition to men's resistance to it, was that the main woman making the accusations, who I will not name since I could never get in touch with her, had a combative and juvenile attitude. For example, she created a list of names of the men she and others found sexist and posted them around the neighborhood on flyers. As Lauren Beaton recalls, "She definitely went about things in a very bombastic way by riling people up. She drew attention to issues, which did create more discussion."

But Jim Flynn suggests that some of the bombastic rhetoric produced by this woman and some of her supporters resulted not just from the inexperience and impulsiveness of youth but also from deeply traumatized backgrounds: "Some of those women had grown up in alcoholic families or had been raped. They deserved to do the type of anti-oppression work that needs to be done and feminist work that needs to be done." The problem was in the manner in which it was done that ultimately ended up severing friendships and dividing the community.

Cascadia Alive! provides a unique document to witness the Eugene anarchist community spiraling out of control and tearing itself apart from

2000–2003. The March 8, 2000, show reveals a different aesthetic at work than earlier episodes. John Zerzan hosts the show in a large, all black studio. Although the set is more spacious, it also strikes one as emptier and quieter. The pranksterish and spontaneous feel of the earlier episodes has been replaced by a more staid and self-enclosed aesthetic. The camerawork is much more sedate and static. Rather than inviting diverse participants who are engaging in several actions and events across the Eugene community, the show largely centers on a roundtable discussion with four anarchists concerning the role of Eugene in the alter-globalization movement. They debate the role of property destruction and anarchism in general. One of the participants states, “We need people working on it [protests] at a lot of different levels.” Yet the show feels hermetically sealed with little input outside of those immediately participating.

Four women host the show on May 17, 2000, focusing on anarchism and feminism. One of the women, Correy, states, “When I hear anarchy talked about, there is a lot of talk about the government, the police, and corporations. . . . But there is not so much awareness of my reality and women’s reality and people who are not whites’ reality.” Raven, another host, continues, “When you are talking about rules and those being ruled, you have to talk on some level about men and women. Historically, you know, women have been and remain the property of men.” At the end of the show, a woman calls in questioning anarchism’s basic principles: “The basic concept that individuals can rule themselves is based in basic trust and understanding of human nature being fundamentally good. The problem with that is that women know that is not true. We know we are victims. We know we are powerless.” One of the hosts comments, “Having lived the last four years in the Whiteaker, I have a hard time believing that anarchists will create a society that is equal and just for everyone.”

Another segment frames one of the hosts within a low-angle, handheld shot critiquing free space. Because the prior week’s episode offered an elegiac remembrance of the closing of Icky’s Tea House, a popular free space, she feels the need to comment: “Free space doesn’t work because people really disenfranchised are attracted to that space.” She mentions how her house next door to Icky’s had to have metal bars put on for fear of break-ins. She notes, “A lot of crazy stuff was going on. . . . They were doing a lot of damage to the structure itself. They were having bonfires in the front.” This is an interesting moment since it seems strange to be making a defense of property on an anarchist show. She speaks in a condescending, moralizing tone, not helped by her looking down at the audience from a

low camera angle. She recounts how her female friend, an owner of the natural grocery store, was seen with Icky's owner, who was not going to renew the lease as a free space. She states, "She was automatically guilty by association with him" starting a three-year war of the community against her grocery store and creating "general terrorism against the three women who worked there."

This segment addresses a host of conflicting political tensions. Although the host correctly defends women from harassment, the fact that some of the women are property owners seems to be beyond her, which would problematize her simple gender reading of events. She doesn't speak about Icky's being hostile toward women as an unsafe space, but that it is attracting undesirables that required her and her ex-husband "to put metal bars on our place." This seems like an extremely reactionary position that has nothing to do with gender issues but more with property rights, class privilege, and middle-class pretensions.

But the second half of the story more directly addresses in part sexist dynamics in the harassment of the female natural grocery owner. But still the host fails to address the owner's relationship to capitalism that might have also been at issue. It is not simply that the female grocery store owner was seen speaking with Icky's owner, but that both are seen as inherent problems from an anarchist point of view that wants to abolish private property altogether. The question arises but is never addressed: How do gender issues play into anticapitalist anarchist stances? Does this mean that no female owner can ever be subject to direct-action aggression because gender naturally trumps her class position?

But rather than address such complicated terrain the host instead belabors her own simplified reading of the situation, which points to a serious limit of the new formation of *Cascadia Alive!*, which has become much less about asking questions and creating dialogue than ramming an ideological purist stance at viewers. This is not to say that the issues addressed by this episode are not relevant and needed. But it is to say that the method in which they are addressed is heavy-handed and often extremely simplified.

Later shows grow even more dogmatic and self-flagellating. On January 24, 2001, the show presents a video entitled *Confessions of a Manarchist*. A series of newspaper articles chronicling the domestic abuse of women by men appear as a male narrator states, "My fear of compromising my standing with other alpha males has kept me silent." He continues how manarchists "co-opt revolutionary rhetoric to perpetuate sexism and

patriarchy.” He finally concludes, “Hopefully, this piece will act as my coming out and not another tokenistic act of feminism.” The programmatic way in which the narrator speaks over the imagery of physical assault reveals the video’s dogmatic, unimaginative stance and perfunctory manner.

The internal divisions among the community manifest themselves during the next week’s episode as a man and a woman demonstrate how to maintain friendships even though they might disagree. The male host states, “Kari and I wanted to talk about some of the stuff we disagree on and some of the stuff we agree about.” They address the male’s support of porn and Kari’s rejection of it. After stating their positions, Kari states, “At this point, I am not going to cut you off as an associate.” Her choice of language is revealing. Even though this sequence is supposed to model conflict resolution, Kari’s qualifier “at this point” hints at the ways in which she might very well cut him off for his views in the future. Additionally, her referring to him as an “associate” rather than a friend suggests a less than warm relationship between them and exposes how bonds of friendship have given way to more formal relations.

By 2003, the show reveals the absolute dysfunction that plagues the anarchist community. The August 20 episode contains a painful sequence entitled “Abraxus Leaves Town.” In this segment, Abraxus recounts “for three months I endured being abused in this community” being called an abuser. As a gay man and someone who had been raped, he states “it was a really devaluing construct of that term.” He concludes, “Eugene is a lot of talk but not play. You have a lot of people putting on airs that they are standing against sexual assault or against the state. I was silenced by the very important part of my being—in feminism. These people calling themselves pseudo-feminists were silencing me.”

This dysfunction also manifested itself in the pages of *Green Anarchism*. In a 2004 article entitled, “The Left-Handed Path of Repression,” Crocus Behemoth notes how a “plague” was introduced into the community by a small group of former or currently enrolled, middle-class college students whose objective seemed to be not only silencing the opinions they didn’t like but also destroying personally and publicly, the individuals who expressed those opinions.¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, the author never mentions feminism by reducing tensions to class issues. Furthermore, by stressing college students as the instigators the article implies that outsiders from the community are creating problems, that the community itself doesn’t warrant any critique. The article’s xenophobia easily quarantines the problem to middle-class outsiders, leaving the sexist dynamics of the activist

community unexamined. Similar to the woman on *Cascadia Alive!* who can only read Icky's in terms of gender issues, the writer of the *Green Anarchy* article can only frame things according to class issues. This shows the fundamental disconnect between both outlooks that cannot even admit that the other person's terms might in part be accurate. The article's critique replicates the very sexism that women had been criticizing since it fails to identify gender at all as an important term of the debate. It accuses the other side of using "authoritarian, guilt-ridden politics" without accounting for its own authoritarian, sexist policies and practices.

By the time the federal government and state started cracking down on eco-activists in 2001, the scene had already been splitting apart due to ideological divisions related to feminism and age. That year, Jeff Luers was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison for setting a couple of trucks on fire. By spring 2003, Jake Ferguson, who had been a part of Warner Creek campaign, became an FBI informant who taped conversations of prior members of Earth Liberation Front who had been involved in property destruction.¹⁶⁰

By 2006, the entire Eugene anarchist community had collapsed. After the first round of arrests in 2005, "environmentalists took a serious step back," according to Lauren Regan, afraid that they would be accused next of domestic terrorism, a trumped-up charge perpetuated first by the FBI in 1987. Tim Ream seconds, "It scared some people, since people are going to jail for a long time. It created a you're in or you're out type of attitude. So many people were willing to compromise on their values and turn their comrades in." Lauren Beaton states, "It was shocking and also divisive. They [those arrested] were good humans who were put in an impossible situation. When you feel this destruction of everything that is good and right, you need to do something. These people cared too much. Their hearts were too big." Kari Johnson simply states that the arrests and informing "had a dampening effect. That is what it is for." In 2006 thirteen Eugene-based environmentalists were arrested as "domestic terrorists" and were awaiting trial. Some of them like Lacey Phillabaum, Jennifer Kolar, and Stanislas Meyerhoff flipped and became informants.

The informing and arrests that proliferated throughout 2005 and 2006 shred the final few remaining threads of solidarity that still held the anarchist community together through its gender battles. The very principles that guided the anarchist community had been immolated by betrayal, ideological dogma, and self-preservation. This can be most clearly seen in Ann I. Solation's, "Initial and Final Communiqué" for *Green Anarchy* in 2006. The article denies the need for affinity groups by prioritizing the

reliance upon oneself. She writes, “By going solo one can act more closely to their [sic] own desires and take full advantage of their unique skills, as well as better safeguard against their limitations.”¹⁶¹ She realizes the difficulties entailed in hiding a secret life of activism from the ones you love: “This is not only emotionally challenging, ripping at our very being, but how we actually achieve this separation with any amount of success is overwhelming and seemingly unattainable, and certainly not too agreeable in our mythic ‘perfect anarchist world.’ That is until one recognizes what is at stake: our freedom.”¹⁶² Such a sentence speaks to the immense levels of alienation and betrayal felt by the Eugene community. Anarchist principles and movement-building succumb to meaningless goals and safety that no longer have any relation to anarchist practices. The sense of prefigurative politics in enacting the change one wants to see gets sacrificed out of fear. She writes, “We are ultimately alone,” which rings like the final solipsistic nail being pounded into the movement’s coffin. Collective solidarity withers to individual self-preservation. Anarchism gives way to paranoia. The state had successfully infiltrated the movement’s soul through the ideological fissures the movement itself provided. Fourteen years of activism had come to a grinding halt.

Indymedia Newsreal, Police Repression, and 9/11

As Indymedia expanded, some of its participants began thinking of how to develop its networks beyond simply covering counter-summit protests. According to Eric Galatas, a new working-team model began to develop during IMC coverage of the 2000 protests in Philadelphia and L.A. An editor, producer, and videographer would team up to offer immediate coverage by quickly shooting in the field and editing the footage shortly thereafter. Galatas thought, “So the idea was what if we could do that after these big convergences? What if people could be reporting in their own home town? Free Speech TV already had this project Direct Action Headline News.”¹⁶³ The news program was founded by Rachel Rinaldo and Robert Wyrod in 1999. Its first episode addressed the Seattle protests. The news consisted of excerpts shot by other activists and then master edited by Wyrod and Rinaldo for distribution over Free Speech TV. Wyrod recalls, “Eric was supportive of making this a permanent program so it became *Indymedia Newsreal*.”¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, the creation of *Indymedia Newsreal* was to counter the sense of exclusion that pervaded the IMCs during counter-summit

protests. Galatas comments, “That was a big part of *Newsreal*. A lot of people felt alienated from the process of the IMCs since they were a social networking thing. If you knew Free Speech TV or Paper Tiger or Michael Eisenmenger, you had a better chance of being on the inside of that circle and having your stuff used.”¹⁶⁵

By November 2000, Rinaldo had outlined the basic format of *Indymedia Newsreal* over the IMC-Video listserv. She proposes “a compilation of independently produced segments. Although Indymedia could grow to include a wide range of content, we feel it would be wise to start with a focus on news about direct actions and local organizing.”¹⁶⁶ Each segment, which would run for no more than five minutes, would have its own producer who would “supply info. Credits with a graphic on how viewers could contact the organizers in the segment and the producing group.” The segments would then be sent to FSTV where they would be master-edited. Rinaldo asserts, “Producers maintain editorial control, and are credited for their work, yet the final program remains an inclusive, collective effort.” According to Galatas, the segment producer and editor received fifty and seventy-five dollars, respectively, for their contributions.

Rinaldo postulates that screenings serve a critical function of encouraging “local activists to contribute to the series.” Furthermore, they would provide a forum where further activism could take place: “Audience members might also learn from tactics used by activists in other cities, all of which may lead to more collaboration between activists and local video producers.” This is a very similar attitude as we have seen operating in Third Cinema that use film screenings to further mobilize audiences. Yet unlike Third Cinema that held a distinct anticolonial position, Indymedia held no such clear-cut political line or goals except for vague celebrations of decentralization and “being the media,” which made it difficult to sustain momentum.

Rinaldo cautioned that a problem with *Newsreal* might be having difficulties in receiving steady contributions. She notes, “Video production at the IMCs has been successful in part because experienced producers have been willing to work on a specific project for a short, intense period. Trying to funnel this collective spirit into an ongoing project might be too much for an already over-extended video activist community.” This comment proved prescient since *Newsreal* would continuously struggle with not having enough material for each episode. It also signals a more significant issue that Todd Wolfson identified plaguing Indymedia in general: an inability to build long-term institutions and goals.¹⁶⁷ Although *Newsreal*

signaled a rare proactive moment other than chasing protests, it lacked the infrastructure to make such a project truly sustainable, as we will see.

The very name of *Newsreal* harkens back to the 1960s and 1970s *Newsreel* group discussed in Chapter One. DeeDee Halleck suggested such links on the listserv: “Actually, I think it would be a really great thing if Indymedia video folks would look at some of the old newsreel films. I recommend the black panther ones and the ones about the Columbia strike. . . . I think it’s good to sort of connect with the history of all these struggles in alternative media . . . to be proud of a tradition.”¹⁶⁸

By connecting with these traditions, one would also become aware of other aesthetic structures and opportunities to engage viewers. In one post, Halleck recommends everyone watching *The Battle of Chile* (1975). She asks: “What about trying to get beyond the format of the demos and the cops? What about trying to get some statements from each of the countries affected by the agreements . . . and do something more formally innovative with maps of the countries and graphics?”¹⁶⁹

This concern with aesthetic form well-matched Rinaldo’s and Wyrod’s interests. Rinaldo expressed frustration with the fact that “there wasn’t much aesthetic experimentation [in video activism]. It was often very straightforward and sometimes an uninteresting aesthetic.” Wyrod similarly notes, “The Indymedia aesthetic bothered me. It was heavy-handed how it framed everything. It sometimes used graphics and texts in interesting ways but also in extremely didactic ways.”

But as another member of the listserv suggests, more experimental aesthetics require time and expertise that a lot of people simply do not possess and that might not lead to timely videos. He writes, “The kind of programs you mention—*Battle of Chile*—these revolutionary documents took much more time and consideration (Guzman spent years editing this after smuggling his film out of Chile). *This is What Democracy Looks Like* is an example of this reflective and well-considered approach, but it took 9 months to make after Seattle,” thus rendering it a relic rather than useful for the moment.¹⁷⁰ This raises the ever-present question regarding whether video’s aesthetic appeal or immediate distribution should take priority. To provide the latter means sacrificing the former to an extent. But to provide a problematic aesthetic and clichéd form minimizes the range of potential viewers the video might reach.

If anything, the opening graphic of *Indymedia Newsreal* represents an ideal that Rinaldo, Wyrod, and Galatas would like to inspire. Grainy footage of a cop turning toward us from earlier newsreel footage plays.

Another black-and-white shot shows a youthful Kathleen Cleaver saying, "Everybody knows that all the people don't have liberties. All the people don't have freedom . . . justice . . . power, and that means none of us do." Behind her, footage plays of the Black Panthers demonstrating and marching. Links are made in this opening sequence not only to earlier media activist groups like *Newsreel* but also to a black radical tradition that in actuality remains largely invisible to the North American alter-globalization movement. The opening sequence promotes a diversity that people like Kristine Wong and Elizabeth Martinez saw decidedly lacking on the ground during Seattle. The opening projects an ideal moment where white and black activism converge, something that the predominantly North American, white alter-globalization movement never achieved.

The rest of the sequence emphasizes the new sense of collective subjectivity that recent forms of activism promote. Footage plays of various street protests. A woman's disembodied voice proclaims, "Women are intending to fill the streets and reclaim the streets and reclaim the spaces that have been absolutely hijacked." As she speaks, we watch footage of people occupying the streets with a lap dissolve to a bulldozer crashing through a tree as eco-activists lie down before it to block its actions. By blurring the events, the sequence suggests that they are all interrelated. Furthermore, it reveals the influence of direct-action eco-activism informing street actions by having the street action visually dissolve to reveal the forest actions behind it. The proclamation of women's interests over the footage also implies how all such direct actions are feminist to a certain extent since they have women asserting their bodies and voices regardless if the action is regarded as explicitly feminist or not. The sequence hints at an invisible unity that guides all the direct-action activism appearing before us. This is stressed during the segment's final sequence that has 1999 Seattle footage appear in grainy black-and-white as if from a newsreel film. Gender, racial, geographical, and historical distances all collapse into this opening sequence that suggests a totalistic vision the guides the global justice movement. Of course, once again, this is more of a utopian vision than an actual reality. But the opening strives to give viewers a glimpse of what such a unifying vision might look like.

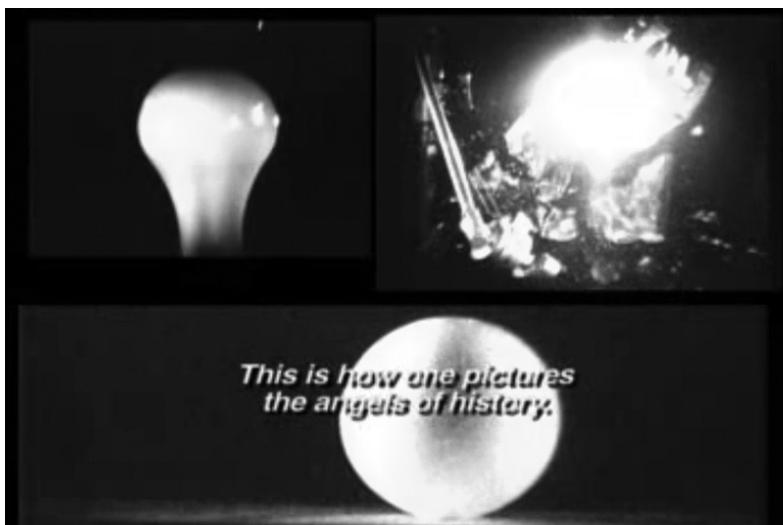
In addition to word of mouth, a monthly call-out on the listserv requested segments. The quality would vary dramatically. Often the segments would be very amateurish and run longer than the five-minute limit. Sun Mountain Productions, for example, in the April 2007 *Newsreal* episode chronicles a demonstration against police brutality. Two cameras

frame the meager demonstration of about a dozen people. One camera frames the speakers too close, lopping off their heads. The footage occasionally cuts to participants of the rally listening to the speakers. Although the rally holds importance for its participants, it is extremely boring footage to watch. Its best moment occurs during its last six minutes as a white woman testifies to the power of media in intimidating the police who are harassing residents of her apartment complex. She recalls mentioning to the police that she is affiliated with the Copwatch of the local ministry. She then describes taking a picture of the cops with her cellphone before running upstairs to her apartment to get a pad and paper to write down the officers' badge numbers and license plates. She states, "By the time I got down, those cops were running to their cars. And I had to get behind the undercover cars and write their plates down. [Three left.] But the last one was a little slow getting into his car. He actually gave up and handed me his business card. . . . Once I mentioned the reverend with Copwatch, that's when they were fleeing when I went to get my notepad." No such footage of the action exists, so the segment is talky and static. But at least the testimony suggests the activist power behind the media we are watching.

On the other end of the spectrum, the same episode contains an experimental segment called "Remembering Walter Benjamin." We watch blue-tinted footage of light bulbs exploding and reverse footage of them reconstructing in slow motion. Dramatic sound accompanies the footage. The sequence quotes a famous section from Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed." During the last line we watch the bulb reconstitute itself. But the quotation then continues along with the wreckage of light bulbs: "This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned." The sequence rather ingeniously literalizes an abstract concept of history in the smashing of a light bulb. It also makes a text laden quote graphically enjoyable to watch.

The light bulb also metaphorically relates to the media critique we watch scroll over our screen. White letters on an all-black background state: "Question messages from mainstream media! What do Hollywood action films really say? Challenge corporate media and resist the Bush regime!" The smashing of the light bulb suggests the smashing of the mesmeric ideological trance in which television holds its viewers. It is the smashing

of our screen, not unlike the similar action done to display windows by anarchists in Seattle. The segment breaks the spell by eliminating its picture altogether so that only words critical of the medium scroll across its screen. This sequence resonates with Richard Serra's 1973 video *Television Delivers People*, which also indicts the entertainment industry with a scrolling white text over a black screen. The video adopts a similar puritanical stance that Serra's word-laden video promotes. Yet "Remembering Walter Benjamin" holds a more mixed attitude since its earlier sequence relies heavily upon television's spectacle to make the smashing of a light bulb seem to represent the catastrophe of history itself.



Indymedia Newsreal screened both very rudimentary videos and more experimental works, as seen here in its "Remembering Walter Benjamin" (2007) segment.

The two segments of this video reveal the two poles of the *Newsreal* project. On one hand, it wants to provide access to those who normally don't have the ability to distribute their materials. It allows unheard voices to express themselves and people to work on their media skills for a national and global audience. The videos might be long and somewhat boring, but their importance lies in the democratic processes that lie behind them in providing a distribution platform that fosters media-making by those who don't necessarily have the training and allows underrepresented voices to be heard. On the other hand, it provides experimental footage to challenge the ways we think about the medium and suggest other aesthetic directions

that video activism might take. It does not see the avant-garde and documentary as opposed to one another but supports them equally and speaks to a larger history of film and video activism that has blurred boundaries between experimental and documentary realms.

Unfortunately, with the events of 9/11 and greater police repression during protests, *Newsreal* became even more difficult to maintain. Both events deflected the forward momentum of the alter-globalization movement. Evan Henshaw-Plath observes, “You have a huge amount of splintering in social movements. People are moving into antiwar protesting. This shifts protesting from being prefigurative to negative by wanting to stop the war. Even though the social movements didn’t get smaller, the domestic protests against the Iraq war didn’t get the same numbers. And they were no longer forward moving. The antiwar movement wasn’t looking towards new forms of organization.”¹⁷¹

Unable to keep up with new advances in platforms of open publishing and locked into a model of media organizing that seemed ideal for chronicling counter-summit protests but little else, Indymedia began to lose its numbers and people’s interest. Steev Hise, who became editor of *Newsreal* in 2006 recounts how its infrastructure began to collapse: “It had already gone downhill in terms of people participating. It was a constant struggle getting submissions. A couple of months after I started, the producer disappeared. I had both jobs until 2009 when I pronounced it a dead project.”¹⁷²

He already announced on the listserv in July 2007 that “we received ZERO submissions for the July *Newsreal*, and were only able to put together a show from a couple previous submissions we had left, a piece I did in Germany at the G8, and another piece from the internet.”¹⁷³

By serving as the show’s editor, Hise witnessed formulaic activist videos that increasingly irritated him. He notes, “You start picking out these clichés and these flaws. . . . They shoot their jiggly whatever and that’s enough. And you would have this overly long material like sixteen minutes of a rally around a library.”¹⁷⁴ Even worse was the intentionality sometimes behind such bad footage: “For some people, it is a conscious thing: they don’t believe in doing anything—some kind of anti-aesthetic. They think it is about presenting something minimally, producing something not too slick.”

In spite of the lack of submissions, Hise nonetheless asserts in June 2008 that “the segments on *Newsreal* should be consciously and carefully produced and chosen with this in mind. They should have plenty of background, and they should be crafted to be both attention-grabbing and

persuasive to a channel surfing and potentially indifferent viewership.”¹⁷⁵ This statement flies in the face of *Newsreal*’s open door policy to produce any videos that they receive. Additionally, it disregards that even during its height of popularity, *Newsreal* never received enough high quality submissions to fuel a half-hour show.

Hise’s critique ultimately reveals not only his frustration with the Indymedia aesthetic and the limited time *Newsreal* had left as a project, but more importantly the limits of Indymedia itself, in that it could never move beyond the activist ghetto it emerged from. This is not to say that it wasn’t an important mechanism for global justice activists to speak with one another, extend their networks, and develop their media skills, nor that some of their videos weren’t important. Many IMCs still exist and have proven themselves crucial in filming the 2008 RNC in St. Paul and the G8 in Pittsburgh. A “reboot” of the network was discussed during the 2016 World Social Forum in Montreal, with many of the old issues surrounding gender, labor, and politics arising once again. But with the advent of newer technologies and open publishing platforms, with the advance of some media activists’ skills and the desire to reach larger constituencies, with the desire to establish more intimate ties with the immediate community and foster grassroots activism, Indymedia has increasingly become a vehicle of a bygone age when counter-summit protesting briefly held the allure of the new and perhaps held a greater importance than it deserved.

Newsreal died in 2009.

To see where media activism is developing in the twenty-first century we must trace the developments of the networks and their new configurations that Indymedia and the eco-activism of the Pacific Northwest fostered. Learning from the limits of Indymedia, eco-video activism, and the alter-globalization movement in general, the media activism of the twenty-first century attempts to improve upon their experiments. As Jay Sand notes about Indymedia, “It was a laboratory of how to organize and what lessons people learned from it. Recent developments are them applying such lessons from their organizing and nonorganizing lives. Whether it is another twenty years before there is a nonhierarchical organizing again, its roots will have passed through Indymedia.”¹⁷⁶ The final two chapters focus upon the new seeds of media activism that have fallen from the branches of Indymedia and eco-video activism in the forms of meme production, community organizing/skills-sharing organizations, and a new generation of anarchist video makers.

CHAPTER FIVE

FORGING INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: MEME CREATION AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

As NOVEMBER 2009 NEARED AND THE GLOBAL RECESSION continued to pummel middle- and working-class people, as hundreds of thousands of the recently unemployed scavenged for a decreasing number of low-wage, disposable service industry jobs, as foreclosures reached a new high with 2.8 million homes shuttered, displacing families and individuals, as working-class people's desires to attend college were deflated against the reality of tuition hikes, various global justice activists assessed the inheritances left in the wake of the famed Battle of Seattle for its ten-year anniversary.

In the December 2009 issue of *Turbulence* Rodrigo Nunes bluntly claims, “The movement had never existed. It was a mirage, produced in a moment of hugely and rapidly increased capacity of communication and coordination, and wide-eyed astonishment at a just-discovered capacity to produce moments of convergence whose collective power was much greater than the sum of its parts.”¹ David Solnit, a Seattle organizer, agrees: “There is no global justice movement. At best, ‘global justice’ is a common space of convergence.”²

A new consensus among many within the global justice community had pronounced the time of death of counter-summit protesting in 2001 with 9/11 and the U.S. government’s growing repression against activists. As we saw in the prior chapter, the FBI launched Operation Backfire in 2004 to target what they deemed “domestic terrorism” by the Earth Liberation

Front (ELF). By 2006, thirteen activists were indicted and given lengthy prison sentences for acts of property destruction. The same year, seven members of the Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty campaign were found guilty for inciting attacks against Huntington Life Sciences for simply posting critical material on their website. Also during the same year, George W. Bush signed the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act into law, which extended the definition of domestic terrorism as constituting “damaging or interfering with” an animal enterprise and instilling “reasonable fear” in people connected with animal industries.³ Such a nebulous definition can transform almost anyone protesting animal cruelty into a domestic terrorist.

More recently, two *New York Times* articles reveal the lengths the FBI took in tracking animal rights and environmental activists and extending their own surveillance power. One article explains how anarchist organizer and writer Scott Crow, “who has been arrested several times during demonstrations but has never been convicted of anything more serious than trespassing,” had been tailed by the FBI for three years.⁴ The Agency had tracked e-mails and phone calls and attached a video camera to a telephone poll across the street to watch his movements, as well as tailing him to meetings at bookstores and cafes.

In another article, journalist Charlie Savage documents how the FBI has extended the category of “assessments,” which “allows agents to look into people and organizations ‘proactively’ and without firm evidence for suspecting criminal or terrorist activity.”⁵ Not only do the new rules allow agents to search databases without documenting their decision to do so, but it also allows them to search people’s trash and administer lie detector tests without any factual evidence of wrongdoing. After 9/11 a disproportionate amount of attention by law enforcement has fallen upon the Muslim-American community, as journalist Trevor Aaronson has documented.⁶ Protest and terrorism have been conflated to such an extent that NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton designed an eight-hundred-person unit named the Strategic Response Group to confront both despite widespread protest.⁷

All the harassment and arrests of U.S. activists, as well as the extension of surveillance abilities by the federal government, has left a chilling effect upon many social justice communities and organizations. A new structure of feeling emerged as activist communities became engulfed by two Middle East Wars, escalated global warming, a worldwide financial collapse, one of the worst oil spills on record in the Gulf of Mexico, and increased repressive pressure from their own government.

Yet in spite of this seemingly bleak outlook, newer forms of video activism have proliferated. As this and the next chapter will show, three new modes of North American video activism have arisen: 1) *meme organizations* composed of media activists who are attempting to construct narratives that galvanize a wider public to engage in social justice; 2) *community-based skills-sharing groups* that attempt to empower those who have been historically disenfranchised from making media and having their voices heard and taken seriously; and 3) *new video makers* who are experimenting with aesthetic form in ways to push activist media in more engaging directions that speak to the desires of a younger generation and engage with new social media platforms.

Ultimately, these three new formations of activist media are the inheritors of the legacy of Indymedia, the alter-globalization movement, and eco-activism since many of their founders and participants had belonged to at least one of them. Many had direct connections with IMC networks. As videographer Brandon Jourdan notes, “The social networking that occurred through them [the Indymedia networks] has continued even though much of the physical network no longer exists.”⁸ These new media formations reveal that Indymedia’s legacy was more as a social network than as an institution. It created the links between hundreds of activist media makers and groups that assisted in the formation of many community and national media projects.

Furthermore, contemporary North American video and media activists and organizations all wrestle with addressing the limitations and possibilities that accompany anarchist-inflected media activism. Many have tempered such anarchist practices in order to build needed infrastructure for outreach into historically disenfranchised communities with varying results. This chapter will focus on meme-based organizations and community-based skills-sharing groups. The next chapter will address the new generation of anarchist-inflected video makers with a particular focus on Franklin López, who is considered by many as one of the most skilled and media savvy.

Memes and Meta-Narratives

A peculiar synergy between social justice concerns and marketing strategies embodies the outlook of organizations like Not an Alternative and SmartMeme.⁹ As Thomas Frank has demonstrated, throughout the 1990s business and marketing increasingly appropriated the rhetoric of

populism. Marketers insisted “that successful brands would have to invent some high-profile scheme for identifying themselves with liberation; they would have to identify and attack some social ‘convention’; and would have to align themselves with some larger ‘vision’ of human freedom.”¹⁰

This is perhaps no better encapsulated than by *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, a proclamation of the newly emergent creative class. It announces that the internet has attracted all sorts of creative individuals, “people with stories to tell and the passion to tell them with verve and humor, style and wit. Compared to this kind of personal, intimate, knowledgeable, and highly engaged voice, which is emerging bottom-up on the Internet today, top-down corporate communications come across as stale and stentorian—the boring, authoritarian voice of command and control.”¹¹ This language is a direct appropriation of the rhetoric of the media democracy movement that asserts a binary opposition between top-down, passive consuming and bottom-up, active participation.

Additionally, the manifesto appropriates Italian autonomous Marxist theory and its belief that knowledge-based work serves as the postmodern engine of late capitalism. Theorists like Paolo Virno, Antonio Negri, Mario Tronti, and Franco Berardi turned toward Marx’s *Grundrisse* to help explain the workers’ revolts occurring in Italy during the early 1960s, as well as the general insurrectionary actions igniting globally. Paolo Virno, for example, argues that Marx makes a significant advance in the *Grundrisse* by establishing “that abstract knowledge—in the first place scientific knowledge but not only that—begins to become, precisely by virtue of its autonomy from production, nothing less than the principle productive force, relegating parcelized and repetitive labor to a peripheral and residual position.”¹² This produces the socialized worker “where capital suffuses the entire form of life. To be socialized is to be made productive, and to become a subject is to be made subject to value—not only as an employee but as a parent, shopper, and student, as a flexibilized home worker, as an audience in communicative networks, indeed even as a transmitter of genetic information.”¹³ Capital has increasingly siphoned off the labor and inventions produced by others—whether they be people, animals, or nature—for surplus value beyond a limited point of production.

For autonomous Marxists, the reevaluation of capitalism’s permeation into all aspects of life becomes an important theoretical development since anticapitalist struggles are then no longer confined to the point of production but can extend into the multifarious realms of distribution, exhibition, and consumption. As a result, this new mode of capitalism

makes identity/subjectivity a central site of battle since it traverses production and exhibition realms and makes digital media activism a main locus of struggle.

As one can imagine, *The Cluetrain Manifesto* erases this struggle by instead simply glorifying capitalism's permeation into everyday life. Similar to Thomas Frank's observation that neoliberalism asserts the market as the site of democratization and populism, the manifesto proclaims that "the community discourse is the market."¹⁴ According to the authors, the market and the community must become one and the same for the renewal of capital: "this convergence promises a vibrant renewal in which commerce becomes far more naturally integrated into the life of individuals and communities."¹⁵

Knowledge serves as the primary resource for a neoliberal economy. Since everyone possesses some different aspects of it, some specialized skills, some shared affects, all of life becomes mined: "Companies need it. Without it they can't innovate, build consensus, or go to market. Markets need it. Without it they don't know what works and what doesn't; don't know why they should give a damn. Cultures need it. Without play and knowledge in equal measure, they begin to die. People get gloomy, anxious, and depressed."¹⁶ The best way to integrate the market and community is through memes.

According to the manifesto, "Enduring ideas are viral memes: social DNA that constantly evolves, raising collective consciousness through conversations that can only grow."¹⁷ The goal of the modern-day corporation is to inject these memes into the conversational bloodstream in order to spread viral marketing ideas, colonize underground culture, and commodify every aspect of life. Yet, as the biological metaphor implies, these corporations are less interested in sharing concerns than infecting everyday language with the logic of the market.

The whole idea of memes became popularized in progressive communities two years prior to the appearance of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* in Kalle Lasn's book, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must*. The term "culture jam" originated in 1984 from the performance-based musical group Negativland and refers to the ability to alter the meaning of well-known mass cultural object in order to expose its hidden assumptions or use it against the commodified system it emerged from. A good jam, according to Naomi Klein, "is an X-ray of the subconscious of a campaign, uncovering not an opposite meaning but the deeper truth hiding beneath the layers of advertizing euphemisms."¹⁸ The

idea was lifted from the Situationists of the 1960s, who used a similar tactic in *détournement*: “a turning around and reclamation of lost meaning” from mass culture.¹⁹ This would be done through tagging graffiti on walls, rewriting comic strips along anticapitalist lines, and using cobblestones from the streets as projectiles against the police.

Lasn’s nonprofit organization, Adbusters Media Foundation, culture jams most effectively through its reworking of advertisements like Absolut Vodka with its Absolut Impotence campaign:



An Adbusters subvertisement undercutting the phallic nature of the ad with suggested impotence due to drinking.

Not only does the ad undermine the phallic representation and implicit sexism that undergirds Absolut iconography, but it also reveals the ill effects that all too often accompany vodka-infused nights as failed attempts at sexual intimacy ensue. In other words, this “subvertisement”, to use Lasn’s term, exposes the male fear and impotency that underwrites many alcohol advertisements and commercials.

Lasn’s appeal to memes reveals an attempt to counter the staid and worn-out language often employed by the traditional Left. According to Lasn, “We find in *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *Z*, *Extra*, *The Multinational Monitor* and dozens of Left-sprung books, magazines and

newsletters the same old authors repeating the same old ideas of yesterday.”²⁰ Progressives instead must establish newer tactics and strategies that are better equipped in dealing with a postmodern landscape. As we will see, this is one point of consistency that unites many contemporary digital media activist groups like Adbusters, Not an Alternative, and SmartMeme: the need to invent new methods and strategies that inspire people who have been swept up in the surge of a media-saturated, neoliberal world.

For Lasn memes become a central tactical answer. He asserts: “Thirty years ago, the Situationists had a half-baked idea about

détourning consumer capitalism, putting power in the hands of the people and constructing a spontaneous new way of life. Now it's up to culture jammers to finish the job.”²¹ In such a postmodern environment, memes become the central way to seize the cultural momentum. According to Lasn, “Memes compete with one another for replication, and are passed down through a population much the same way genes pass through a species. Potent memes can change minds, alter behavior, catalyze collective mindshifts and transform cultures.”²² They become key ideas that the culture pivots upon.

Yet Lasn’s biological metaphor of meme production as being passed down “the same way genes pass through a species” is deeply flawed. Memes aren’t organically passed around through word-of-mouth, but instead are disproportionately transmitted and regulated largely by commercial interests. The biological metaphor obfuscates the political economy of how five multinational corporations—Time Warner, News Corporation, Viacom, Bertelsmann, Disney—control a majority of the content that most people see, hear, and read.²³ This helps explain why Lasn’s nonprofit, the Media Foundation, has been unable to distribute its counter-memes on commercial networks for the past twenty years. Networks refuse to sell airtime to memes that are against their own best interests. Yet Lasn continues to naively assert, “If you are able to buy time and get your ad aired, you win by delivering your message to hundreds of thousands of attentive viewers.”²⁴ As we will see, a similar biological metaphor will also plague SmartMeme’s notion of meme production.

One, however, should not dismiss Lasn’s tract as nothing more than empty bravado, but see within it an emerging zeitgeist of rethinking tactics and the use of spectacle for progressive goals by contemporary activists. Stephen Duncombe, one of the founders of Reclaim the Streets, has become a leading voice in challenging older Left beliefs that overemphasize the purity and strength of the truth to convert people to the cause. Instead, he believes in “appropriating, co-opting and, most important, *transforming* the techniques of spectacular capitalism into tools for social change.”²⁵ Within the shell of clichéd television shows, advertisements, and movies, Duncombe sees utopian longings: “Complaints about the unreal fantasies of Hollywood and the ‘lack of representation’ in television sitcoms miss the function of entertainment: to escape the here and now, to imagine something different, something better.”²⁶ Progressives need to harness a politics that “embraces the dreams of people and fashions spectacles which give these fantasies form—a politics that understands desire and speaks to the

irrational; a politics that employs symbols and associations; a politics that tells good stories. In brief, we should have learned to manufacture *dissent*.²⁷

This appeal to twenty-first-century media savviness, however, is not really new. Duncombe simply repeats the same observations that Hans Magnus Enzensberger made over thirty-five years ago. Enzensberger also warned New Left activists to stop dismissing commercial media as the opium of the people and recognize the utopian potential that lurks within it: “The attractive power of mass consumption is based not on the dictates of false needs, but on the falsification and exploitation of quite real and legitimate ones without which the parasitic process of advertising would be redundant. A socialist movement ought not to denounce these needs, but take them seriously, investigate them, and make them politically productive.”²⁸ The Enlightenment belief of false consciousness—that people simply need to hear the truth to throw off the shackles and blinders of commercial media—ultimately alienates everyday folk from progressive movements by insulting their intelligence and dismissing their desires as unreal. Yet, as Enzensberger observes, capital often recognizes people’s collective wishes more quickly than its opponents. But capital does so “only so as to trap them and rob them of their explosive force.”²⁹ Rather than dismissing these desires, the Left must “take them literally and . . . show that they can be met only through cultural revolution.”³⁰ The alter-globalization movement, as discussed in the previous chapter, became a new manifestation of this desire even though many of its participants seem historically unaware of the ways in which similar attempts were pursued in earlier decades. Similarly, the two groups under discussion here—Not an Alternative and SmartMeme—are outgrowths of this struggle and desire to rework the spectacle in more progressive ways.

Not an Alternative

Not surprisingly, Beka Economopoulos, one of the founders of Not an Alternative, was involved with Reclaim the Streets and worked with Stephen Duncombe for a number of years. Similar to Duncombe and Lasn, Economopoulos asserts that “there needs to be really serious conversations about updating our tactics and approaches for a new media landscape and environment. We need to leverage the tools of advertising, spectacle, etc. for other means and use art as a means to alter people’s perspectives.”³¹

Similarly, Jason Jones, another founder, saw the need for a new media model after his difficulties working with Indymedia. He notes, “I also got

involved with Indymedia but was immediately frustrated. We started to produce this TV show on Deep Dish Network. I was frustrated with the content we were shooting. No one was going to watch this. They are so bad at explaining what they're doing. So that's how we started our organization."

Due to these experiences, Not an Alternative emerged in 2004. As a nonprofit arts collective located within Williamsburg, Brooklyn, it attempts to create new memes by hosting discussions/presentations by people within and sympathetic to the global justice movement, as well as to employ tactical media that unites local and global activists. Perhaps most importantly, Not an Alternative dialectically connects local struggles with global issues. Economopoulos notes how "we are interested in connecting the local back to the wider context." Jones continues: "Even though we had local campaigns, there was always a kind of negating of it, of pointing to the universal. . . . We want to be emblematic of what a community can be—like Chiapas. It became a symbol of what the world could be. You work in the local but situate yourself in the global. That is our semi-secret intent: to negate the local campaigns and push towards the global."

Not an Alternative's intent to fuse local and global issues harkens back to the allegorical tactics of older Left political struggles. Fredric Jameson notes the strategic importance of political allegory among the old Left:

An older politics sought to coordinate local and global struggles, so to speak, and to endow the immediate local occasion for struggle with an allegorical value, namely that of representing the overall struggle itself and incarnating it in a here-and-now thereby transfigured. Politics works only when these two levels can be coordinated; they otherwise drift apart into a disembodied and easily bureaucratized abstract struggle for and around the state, on the one hand, and a properly interminable series of neighborhood issues on the other.³²

Similarly, Not an Alternative feels that global issues must connect with the local so that community struggle can address and challenge wider social-political practices of neoliberalism.

We see this allegorical logic at work within *Homeless Tent City*, a short video documenting the tent city that Picture the Homeless, a grass-roots organization run by and for homeless people, and Not an Alternative constructed on July 23, 2009.³³ Not an Alternative became involved

since issues of gentrification and homelessness predominate within Williamsburg, a migratory epicenter for largely white, early twenty-somethings who attempt to lose their roots behind a hipster veneer of Converse, vintage clothes, thick black glasses, and cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. Economopoulos notes, “I am a walking and talking advertisement for gentrification regardless if I want to be or not. You have to realize that a story is associated with that: the creative class, like myself, was fueling gentrification. So we need the creative class to take back control and inject politics into this hipster culture and further the cross-pollination of these communities. We need to translate across languages and cultures to create an intervention between the activist community and the arts community.” This led Not an Alternative to work more with local communities. According to Economopoulos, “We are happy to see a resurgence of localism in all these projects. Our interest is now to tip the balance a little bit and have people work with the local to understand how notions of local representation relate back to larger issues.”

Picture the Homeless (PTH) became an ideal collaborator since they already viewed homelessness as related to broader systemic issues. According to one of its former members Rob Robinson, “I would always say gentrification leads to displacement which leads to homelessness which leads to criminalization.”³⁴ Max Rameau of Take Back the Land spoke with Picture the Homeless early on and stressed how local concerns like feeding and housing people connect with broader issues like building a more equitable society where people take control of their lives. Such an outlook not only unified long- and short-term goals but also assisted the homeless who ran the organization “to make decisions by simply applying those principles and objectives to any given situation.”³⁵

Since Picture the Homeless is led by current and former homeless people with about fifty hardcore members, it provided a reserve of activists who shared this allegorical understanding of homelessness that Not an Alternative could amplify. Additionally, PTH endorses a collaborative politics. According to Joseph Midgley, “Our motto is: Don’t talk about us. Talk to us.”³⁶ Jason Jones reinforces, “They have a politics that we already believe in. We wouldn’t have chosen them simply because they are homeless. They have some amazing points and analysis.”

So when both groups met in early 2009, they naturally gravitated toward one another since they shared a systemic understanding of homelessness, gentrification, and criminalization caused by neoliberalism. Furthermore, PTH was already planning direct actions of occupying vacant

lots and buildings that would readily lend themselves to the type of spectacle-based, meme-producing videos that Not an Alternative envisioned. Such actions were decided upon after PTH conducted a vacant property count with other groups from Fordham University, Union Theological Seminary, and Hunter College. They assessed that the total number of abandoned buildings and lots could potentially house two hundred thousand people. New York City has less than forty-one thousand homeless people. As a result, homelessness and the warehousing of the homeless in a deeply flawed shelter system could easily be eliminated if empty lots and buildings were converted into livable housing. PTH's direct-action campaign drew attention to this reality and solution.³⁷

The tent city action serves as a clear example of how Not an Alternative redirected spectacle to serve social justice issues. Under the guise of shooting a music video, PTH and Not an Alternative cut through fencing of an abandoned lot owned by JP Morgan Chase to erect a homeless tent city, emphasizing the available space that could be used by the homeless instead of left in disrepair.

This strategy of shooting a faux music video to address homelessness—which implicitly contrasts the splurge and excess of the entertainment industry with the austere existences of the homeless—is a type of tactical media, a term that arose in 1996 from the Next 5 Minutes conference. It refers to multiple usages of old and new media for noncommercial purposes and the popularizing of social justice issues. It often breaks the fourth wall by transforming spectators into participants of the event being staged. But tactical media remains difficult to define since its practices and methods change depending upon the specific context in which it is being deployed.

Furthermore, tactical media is often difficult to document since participation and immediateness are defining elements of it, which most written and recorded accounts fail to adequately relay. Yet Not an Alternative intentionally creates tactical media practices that are made to be recorded. As Economopoulos notes, “We are always thinking about how spectacle or public events or theater will read per video and the media.” As a result, *Homeless Tent City* translates the event of a homeless tent city rather adeptly to video since a concern for electronic distribution had been embedded within the very event itself.

One must remember, however, that the video serves multiple purposes: 1) a cloak to engage in direct action of establishing a tent city; 2) a video presence that potentially disarms and can document potential police

abuse; and, finally, 3) a reconstruction and affective component that can motivate others to do the same and partially share in the experience. It is this third element, as Raymond Williams tirelessly emphasized, that makes art and literature relevant for sociopolitical analysis. It, more than traditional histories and statistical evidence, relates a structure of feeling: “a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange.”³⁸ According to Williams, the true social content of art and literature, in a significant number of cases, lies within “this present and affective kind, which cannot without loss be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships.”³⁹ So when investigating *Homeless Tent City* one must ask what type of structure of feeling it relates, as well as what type of political allegory it weaves.

Additionally, the video does not simply reflect the direct action taking place, but becomes a key element in defining it and mobilizing diverse constituencies. Not an Alternative’s use of video is the latest extension of video being incorporated into activism for the past forty years as we saw during its initial integration into the video guerrillas’ lifestyle activism. *Homeless Tent City* functions as a particular tactic that attempts to unite middle-class white hipsters with more economically disadvantaged communities composed mainly by people of color. Not unlike Newsreel’s mission to assist the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Not an Alternative similarly employs video-making to assist those who don’t share the same socioeconomic privilege. Yet unlike Newsreel’s ambiguous relations to the League, Not an Alternative’s goals and outlooks are more explicit and well-matched with that of Picture the Homeless.

The video was mutually considered an extension of an earlier video/direct action of a building occupation that both groups collaborated on. According to Rob Robinson, both videos were posted on the Picture the Homeless website and bring “value to the work. These are homeless people who found an alternative way to house themselves. Video was a powerful way to show that. It also gave other homeless people around the city ways to get involved in the organization.” Furthermore, Robinson relates, the incorporation of art into social justice work and direct action “not only resonates with the people doing the actions, but also with the people in the community, siding them with you very quickly. When you say, ‘There’s no place like home,’ and what a beautiful park that empty lot would make, one that JP Morgan Chase held empty for speculation for twenty-eight years, people understood that.”

For Not an Alternative, the videos were used during talks. According to Economopoulos, “Our target audience is smaller and more niche. We are interested in accessing those people who are interested in the intersection of art and activism. Not that many people think about this.”⁴⁰ Also, they posted the video anonymously on YouTube and other open source video distribution sites like Vimeo in the hopes of it going viral or at least being used by other groups.

Furthermore, they staggered the release of *Homeless Tent City*, which was divided into two parts. The first part chronicles Not an Alternative’s assisting Picture the Homeless in building props and the stage. The second part mainly focuses on Picture the Homeless’s takeover of the vacant lot. Not an Alternative released the second part first in order to highlight the actions of Picture the Homeless by minimizing their own presence, for fear that they might seem as middle-class saviors of the poor. As Beka Economopoulos notes, “We wanted to get out a story of the day that was Picture the Homeless’s and could be used as an organizing, advocacy, and fundraising tool for the group.”⁴¹ The entire video was only released later and mainly used for activist, art, and hipster audiences. With this in mind, I will now analyze the video in its entirety.

Homeless Tent City

Homeless Tent City begins at the Change You Want to See Gallery, located in Williamsburg. We watch a series of young people making signs and building frameworks for the homeless tent city stage a few days before the action. A middle-aged white man explains to us: “We’re making props or shovels, which say, ‘A Place to Call Home.’ These tools represent self-determination on the part of homeless people and others who are tired of empty promises and determined to create the housing for themselves through direct action.”

Interestingly enough, no homeless are present, or if they are, the video doesn’t emphasize their presence. The tools might represent self-determination, but the geography of Williamsburg demonstrates exclusion. This is not necessarily a critique of Not an Alternative but of the structural segregation that gentrified neighborhoods embody. This reveals how geographic location can challenge the mission of progressive groups like Not an Alternative that want to breach racial and economic divides. Tellingly, the action proper takes places in East Harlem, exposing the way in which middle-class activists have the privilege to enter poor communities but not vice versa.

During a section entitled “How to Build: A Place Called Home,” we watch organizers construct a stage to the Chain and the Gang song “Chain Gang Theme,” which has a tambourine shaking on the beat underscored by a funky bassline. The distorted voice of lead singer Ian Svenonius states: “I see progress / in the sun setting at distorted night / in the moon getting bright. This is what they said / they said to me / a beach from the surf / meets the sand / for you and me / and the chain gang.” A monotone female voice then enters repeating, “Chain gang.” The music already holds a good deal of hipster cachet since Svenonius was founder of the DC political punk band Nation of Ulysses, which had a strong underground following.

Not surprisingly, the sequence possesses a DIY attitude, instructing viewers in a how-to video fashion: “Step #1: install the Stage. A. attach the two floor sections. B. slide bolts through the holes. Tighten on butterfly nuts. Step #2: attach the poles.” With each instruction, we watch accompanying video of the related construction. Yet the refusal to capitalize the instructions suggests that these instructions—unlike most how-to videos—are more of a suggestion done in collaboration with the viewer rather than authoritatively demanding the viewer’s blind observance. The video’s irony and music assumes a hipster viewer familiar with punk rock and its DIY culture.

Yet the division of labor between both groups reinforces the spatial, class, and racial segregation. While Picture the Homeless mobilized its people and conducted civil disobedience training with Max Rameau from Take Back the Land, Not an Alternative was charged with designing a decoy set and action that diverted police attention from PTH members who would cut open a chain-link fence to occupy the empty lot. The premise of the faux fashion show relied upon Not an Alternative employing their hipster, middle-class, white status as leverage. As Economopoulos notes, “We blend into the Manhattan landscape as yet another photo shoot.”⁴² When Not an Alternative arrived to the action with digital cameras, boom microphones, green awning, catering table, and a local waitress who looked like a Godard actress pretending to be a model, some of the members of PTH were taken aback. Rob Robinson states, “I was just standing there with my jaw dropped. They backed up an eighteen-foot truck and in an hour a tent city appeared in the lot. Some of the males on the street were falling all over themselves for this girl in the skimpy clothes.” As the crew held a green screen, Picture the Homeless cut through the fence while the lot’s superintendent went to lunch.

Additionally, the spectacle of the action, as well as the connections that both groups had fostered with professional journalists, drew the commercial press such as Collin Moynihan, who blogged about it for the *New York Times*. Not an Alternative minimized their role in the action by referring the press to members of Picture the Homeless. Based upon Moynihan's article, this strategy worked. Not an Alternative remains unmentioned, whereas three members from Picture the Homeless are quoted. This attention led to CNN picking up the story live, causing an influx of people and groups to contact Picture the Homeless.

Furthermore, the presence of professional journalists served as a deterrent to police harassment. Rob Robinson, who served as police negotiator, would introduce the reporters to the police. He notes: "If the police are going to vamp on me, they will know right away that the news media will be reporting it." Although Not an Alternative's cameras seemed to have a minimum impact in terms of deterring police harassment, the spectacle that they supplied provided Picture the Homeless with a platform to be heard and protected. As Jason Jones observes, "From my perspective, most of them [Picture the Homeless] are the most amazing speakers. But if you put them on some corner with their demos, no one pays any attention to them. Our vision of what we are contributing, we are building a stage. This is our common place and a stage so the police won't fuck with you."⁴³

This tactic of creating a spectacle to draw commercial journalists, as well as to relate one's message clearly and immediately to the surrounding community, reveals a rather complex understanding of media where independent and mainstream practitioners are not simply viewed as oppositional but complimentary. It shows how spectacle and meme production can foster such cross-collaborations, not only between diverse community organizations like Not an Alternative and Picture the Homeless but also between commercial and grassroots media.

The video, however, also documents the failure of the faux music video to mask the groups' intentions to occupy the lot, which leads to an interesting confrontation between Economopoulos and a Hispanic superintendent. Unlike the quick and smooth editing of the rest of the video, the camera clandestinely observes at length the confrontation between the two from a shaky medium shot. It often loses framing of the Hispanic man who asks in somewhat broken English: "Who gave you the right to open that up? I told you and I give you this warning. I tell the super. You don't tell me you want to open this up. I don't care how many times you want to be here. You don't have the right to open this here." Economopoulos

responds, "My producer told me . . ." But he interrupts, "I don't care about your producer."



Homeless Tent City (2009) addresses the contradictory ways in which activism may assist a cause while nonetheless reasserting white privilege.

It is a painful moment where the white, middle-class activism of Not an Alternative's action becomes exposed and problematized. Although engaged in social justice work to draw attention to homelessness, Not an Alternative's direct-action spectacle leads to unintended consequences: placing a lower-class Hispanic's job at risk. Awkwardly, the viewer feels for the superintendent's plight, the overseer of private property who in a purely theoretical way we should view as part of the problem. But the moment uncovers the complicated racial and class components that undermine such a seemingly clear-cut direct action against private property: middle-class whites' ability to invade and disregard the limits of private property, and the ethnic, lower-class minorities who are forced to deal with the mess. This loss of political orientation is embodied in the shaky camera work and long shot, creating the most visually disruptive moment of the video—as if the hipster style can no longer keep at bay this sudden messy reality. As Economopoulos notes, "It is important to demonstrate and show to people these things aren't really simple black and white issues. Privilege and race and class are going to arise as dynamics. The question is to what end you are leveraging it."⁴⁴

The second part of the video focuses more on the homeless, who are decidedly lacking in its first half, which led Not an Alternative to release this part of the video first. Most significantly, homeless self-determination is best represented by a speech given by one of the homeless, Jean Rice:

I want to use this moment to encourage other people in the community to come and join us. This struggle is inevitable. This struggle is not because Picture the Homeless is anti-establishment or anti-police. We were thrown in front of the struggle because as populations increase and land becomes premium and we can't afford the market rent. . . . This major problem has to be reconciled. But it shouldn't be reconciled by business entities in collusion with the banking cartels making decisions in closed rooms like the Manhattan Institute that dictate how the land is going to be used, by whom, and at what value.

While Rice speaks, we see shots of people walking and hugging one another, eating and listening. His voice unifies these diverse individuals and groups into a movement based upon homeless self-determination and systemic analysis that establishes homelessness as an outgrowth of capitalism. By documenting a homeless person speaking for himself, the video shifts him from a state of victimization to that of testimony, transforming the man from an object to a subject who takes control of his situation and acts collectively.

This is decidedly opposed to the ways in which traditional liberal documentaries often treat their subjects. As Elizabeth Cowie notes, these subjects "must be properly helpless, as well as voiceless, or at least voicing only their plight, their suffering, and must not make any overt demands for help. Nor should they be able to provide a sophisticated analysis of their circumstances and its causes, or else they will rival the spectator as knowing subject."⁴⁵ *Homeless Tent City* not only shows the homeless analyzing their situation but also allegorically connecting their struggle to other global struggles. Rice continues: "We stand here at the vanguard of the struggle representing the landless people from Brazil to South Africa, from Miami to Maine, saying this will not be an urban Trail of Tears, and we will not go without a struggle." His voice no longer simply represents the existing community and struggles converging in East Harlem but now extends through space and time back to Indian Removal of the nineteenth

century to the land takeovers occurring globally. His voice stands in for all of them, as homelessness is a shared condition that stretches across racial, ethnic, and geographical lines. Homelessness becomes the dominant meme that dialectically connects local struggles in East Harlem with global struggles in Brazil and historical dispossession produced by Manifest Destiny. According to all involved, Rice created this speech on the spot. Yet his analysis reinforces the same allegorical project at work that Not an Alternative endorses.

Interestingly, the strength of this struggle is maintained throughout the video, even during the final arrests of the protesters. The homeless coalitions chant: "They say gentrify. We say occupy." As they chant, a slouching officer passionately reads from a sheet of paper: "We're asking you to leave the property peacefully. Anyone remaining on the property will be subject to being arrested." His voice, however, can hardly be heard above the chants, in spite of being amplified by a bullhorn. After speaking, he seems at a loss of what to do. Economopoulos comments that "this one cop making the statement is really fucking hating it. It is a rich scene and complexifies things with the police. The police officers knew others who were dealing with foreclosures. The good guy and bad guy dynamic is a little muddled there since they didn't want to be there. We were going after Chase bank."⁴⁶ The police become incorporated into the spectacle created by Picture the Homeless and Not an Alternative, unable to control the event since they are saddled with an ineffective and outdated script.

The final funky Chain and the Gang song "Reparations" in the video stresses police impotence. Over a swinging bass line, Svenonius sings, "I'm / gonna need some / reparations / right now. Put a / deposit / in my account / if you want," while the participants of the occupation are being walked individually into the back of a paddy wagon. But rather than being framed as punishment or the crushing hand of the state, it all gets absorbed as a part of the direct-action spectacle, as if the arrests are nothing more than the last act of the movement. The humorous lyrics of the song and its upbeat tempo make the activists seem in on the joke, the hipsters of the spectacle, whereas the cops are stuck playing the hopeless square, a reluctant paternal authority having to do a job that they clearly rather not be doing. Unlike much activist video that accentuates the conflict between protesters and the police, as if the movement's very existence hangs in the balance, *Homeless Tent City* instead reveals the ridiculousness of confrontation. Here, the anticlimax and empty symbolism of the arrests is accentuated by the relative indifference on the arrestees' faces

toward their own detainment. The spectacle of the homeless tent city and video-making itself undermines the police's spectacle of mass arrest. As Economopoulos mentions during her interview, "Activism's goal is to win a particular thing, perhaps a more short-term goal. Art's goal is to shift the symbolic order."⁴⁷

Homeless Tent City shifts this symbolic order, at least in regards to the police and the arrests at its end. Yet at the same time, the video reveals its own limitations: how geographic apartheid and white privilege rids homeless people from occupying its first half, and how spectacular white activism at times boomerangs against the disadvantaged that such direct action is supposedly set out to help. Furthermore, the video reveals how media-making becomes an important element in direct-action tactics by providing a decoy, deterring police harassment, undermining authority, and establishing future bonds among community organizations.

As Rob Robinson relates, "Picture the Homeless and Not an Alternative was particularly strong after that. We saw how media could move our work and messaging could help us organize, with folks in the art world lending their services." Due to their interaction, Picture the Homeless ended up hiring a media person who could focus on using social media for organizing actions and distributing their message. Economopoulos has done some further individual and group trainings with Picture the Homeless. Robinson asserts that the group learned how "art proved that those messages can resonate with the community and the people doing the actions. We found a way to work together to lift both groups to a more beneficial position."

Yet unlike other working-class social organizations like the Philadelphia-based Media Mobilizing Project (MMP), where media production by the working class and working poor themselves serves as an essential tool for community organizing, which we will soon investigate, Picture the Homeless reveals another strategy whereby working-class organizations ally themselves with other cultural workers in their collective actions. In other words, Picture the Homeless incorporates some aspects of video activism into its organizing but doesn't fully make video production an organizational strategy to be adopted by the homeless themselves. As Beka Economopoulos and Jason Jones note, "It's really about capacity. If you want to do media production, we can show you how to do it. But, at the same time, not everyone has to be good at everything. We try to add value with our skill set."⁴⁸ These two different relations of working-class people's use of media stems from much older debates and tensions emerging

from groups like the New York Film and Photo League, Newsreel, and the Miner's Campaign in Britain that continue into present-day organizational debates of media-based social justice organizations like MMP, Not an Alternative, and the Canadian Media Co-op.

Overall, Not an Alternative and *Homeless Tent City* illustrate the compromises and successes that the direct action adoption of spectacle among global justice activists entails. It both enables diverse constituencies to unite and temporarily seize control of a moment and place, shifting the symbolic regime in their favor, as well as reinforcing certain racial and class privileges that such actions attempt to undermine.

SmartMeme

SmartMeme was founded in 2002 in San Francisco as a training collective for social movement activists and organizations with a particular environmental emphasis. According to Patrick Reinsborough, one of its founders, “We asked, ‘What type of space could be opened in the corporate media in regards to direct actions?’ We need a close analysis of power in the community and organizational structures, but we also need to help analyze power in narrative strategies.”⁴⁹

Storytelling provides a central function of SmartMeme’s tactic, which is: “1. Understand the story we are trying to change; 2. Identify the underlying assumptions that allow that story to operate as truth; 3. Find the *points of intervention* in the story where we can challenge, change, and/or insert a new story.”⁵⁰ Reinsborough expands: “People recognize their common stories, which allows them to unite, change things, and the vision that they will carry out. There is nothing new about storytelling, but what has happened now is that our tools are intended to fill, to help people tell more holistic stories. We don’t have time to tell the single issues. We need to get at the structural issues.”⁵¹

One way to get at the structural issues is to differentiate between “the story of the battle” from “the battle of the story.” The former is about the particular direct action, which relates back to a specific community and local solutions. “The battle of the story,” however, “is the larger struggle to determine whose stories are told, how they are framed, how widely these stories are heard, and how deeply they impact the dominant discourse. The battle of the story is the effort to communicate the why—the interpretation and relevance of actions and issues—that helps a social change message reach a broader section of the public.”⁵²

To get at the battle of the story, SmartMeme holds three-hour training sessions with activist groups, normally before an upcoming action. SmartMeme assists in deconstructing the upcoming action into five categories: conflict, character, imagery, foreshadowing, and assumptions. During the first few hours, participants brainstorm how their side and the opposition would define each category. For example, in the category of foreshadowing SmartMeme asks: “How does each story show us the future? What is the vision that the story offers of how things will be if the conflict resolves successfully?”⁵³

The embedding of a direct-action protest in a wider narrative is not unlike what we saw Picture the Homeless and Not an Alternative doing, who are not simply concerned with housing and feeding the homeless but also with addressing the structural inequities produced by gentrification, the shelter system, and the prison-industrial complex. But unlike Not an Alternative, which established a sustained relationship with Picture the Homeless, SmartMeme may or may not have fostered such relations before a training session, depending upon the group being assisted.

SmartMeme asserts that activists need to stop speaking just among themselves. Reinsborough notes that “audience is the core of any strategic communications mission. You can either mobilize people who already agree with you or other communities. Your goal is to either subvert the dominant culture or you are trying to defect from it. The latter method, defecting, is frankly a way a lot of white activists act out without questioning their privilege.”⁵⁴

Riot porn, for example, is a classic example of the movement speaking solely to itself. Reinsborough notes: “There is no message. There is no frame that situates them,” which is often true of the videos, but this statement overlooks how the viewing context might provide for background information, like we saw Tim Ream providing when he toured with direct-action footage regarding the Warner Creek campaign.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, riot porn videos had grown formulaic rather quickly—partially due to the collective production methods employed, as well as a general lack of necessary time to further polish them. Although innovations were attempted within some counter-summit protest documentaries produced by Indymedia, the collective production process and need to be produced quickly imposed certain limitations upon the videos. According to SmartMeme, working within an activist framework was not enough. Efforts needed to be made to translate such stories and concerns to wider communities, an often elusive holy grail that many media activists have sought before with mixed results.

As a result, SmartMeme asserts that activists must turn their attention toward influencing popular culture. For SmartMeme, “Popular culture is an ever-evolving, contested space of struggle, where competing voices, experiences, and perspectives fight to answer the questions: Whose maps determine what is meaningful? Whose stories are considered ‘true’?”⁵⁶

This mission sounds remarkably similar to that of British cultural studies during the 1970s and 1980s. Stuart Hall made an appeal at the end of “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’” for the analysis and reclamation of popular culture:

Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in the struggle. It is the area of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture—already fully formed—might be simply “expressed.” But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why “popular culture” matters. Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don’t give a damn about it.⁵⁷

Yet two central changes have occurred: 1) an environmental concern has now trumped a socialist politics; and 2) due to its reliance upon marketing and business strategies, SmartMeme offers a less decidedly materialist analysis of popular culture, which, in the end, will plague the efficacy of its grander ambitions.

In place of materialist analysis, SmartMeme appeals to memes and reinforcing business and marketing concepts and models. Memes, according to the group, are “self-replicating units of cultural information that spread virally from person to person and generation to generation with a life of their own.”⁵⁸ As can already be seen, SmartMeme inherits the biological metaphor that the authors of *The Clue Train Manifesto* and Kalle Lasn promote, which lacks adequate analysis of how a capitalist political economy regulates the flow of memes. Although SmartMeme warns: “The story-based strategy is not intended to be a replacement for traditional organizing and movement-building, but rather a set of complimentary tools made all the more relevant by the contemporary cultural context.” Their reliance upon business and marketing models at times naturalizes meme production, as if somehow operating independently from a neo-liberal political economy and its cultural mode of production.⁵⁹ Although

the organizations and groups they assist often focus on community organizing, it is not entirely clear how such on-the-ground actions connect to the battle of the story except in very traditional ways like speaking to reporters and publicizing the event. Unlike Not an Alternative, which embedded its video activism within the event and built a spectacle-based action based upon a message developed through its collaboration with Picture the Homeless, SmartMeme's approach can seem at times rather programmatic and distanced from the organization being assisted. The training session after all is a common corporate device where outside trainers briefly descend into a conference room, offer their wisdom, and then depart for another company. There is a disturbingly similar operation occurring with SmartMeme's approach, with a crucial difference in that many of their trainers have most likely worked with some of those being trained in other contexts and will continue to do so through both formal and informal future relations.

This problematic reliance upon business and marketing models becomes most apparent in SmartMeme's 2006 publication *The Future of Foresight: Long Term Strategic Considerations for Promoting the Precautionary Principle*. This text sets out the premises and assumptions that guide their related document, *Mapping 2020: Charting a Precautionary Future*. The 2020 scenarios that SmartMeme develops are based upon the timeline developed by the UK communications company BT Group. According to *The Future of Foresight*: "The timeline is used by think tanks inside the military, government and corporate sector to 'kick off' scenario development and long term planning sessions. The timeline is well done, extensively researched and interactive."⁶⁰ The document continues: "Our assumption is that even if the predictions don't happen, many governments and organizations will be planning based around the potential of them happening. Thus the 'map of the future' that we've assembled and are using is the same one the 'opposition' and governments are using to plan."⁶¹

Unexplored, however, are the assumptions and biases incorporated into such timelines by the military, government, and corporate sector. Although it is wise to be aware of the opposition's models, it becomes deeply problematic when progressive groups attempt to transpose such models into a Left agenda. The very idea of scenario planning, as SmartMeme admits, is the product of the social sciences and business community. They assert: "We are not experts in scenario planning, nor are we trained social scientists, nor psychics! However, we do deeply believe that in order for

social movements to create a world in which we want to live, than [*sic*] we need to develop tools for creating long-term strategy and vision.”⁶² But incorporating a model is not “developing tools,” but instead relying upon a highly flawed static sociological outlook that is unable to address historical contingency and social change, the nuances and complexities of collective action, contradictory desires, etc. Many problematic assumptions, in other words, accompany such models. Without a thorough analysis of these assumptions, the models become as much a hindrance as a help.

For example, a technological determinism pervades the entire document of *The Future of Foresight*. It asserts: “We see the generational shift bringing a greater integration of network and media empowerment into mass culture. As the screenagers grow up, they will demand and create more of a culture of creative mass participation.”⁶³ But why would a generational shift bring “greater integration of network and media empowerment into mass culture?” Why will screenagers demand “a culture of creative mass participation”? Political economists like Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian offer fairly convincing evidence that suggests the opposite to be true: an era of greater media consolidation, regulation, and privatization of the commons. Also, if children are being marketed at ever younger ages, identifying themselves primarily as consumers, what type of “creative mass participation” might that yield?

Because such questions are not raised, the assertions made by *The Future of Foresight* sound more like the bluster of marketers that easily sweep issues of political economy and the historical conditions that impact generational actions to the side. Technological and generational determinism supplant more pressing questions like: What to do if the new generation has a totally commodified notion of “mass participation”? What to do if empowerment is actually forestalled by the integration of networks and media into our daily lives?

This naiveté, determinism, and bluster similarly plagues the ten scenarios of *Mapping 2020*. One scenario imagines parents and advocates popularizing a precautionary principle (PP)—a meme—that advocates for a toxic-free space for newborns through consumer products and outreach: “Your ‘PP child-proof’ nursery, a children’s book about PP concepts using an Owl character, a line of baby care products branded as ‘made with Precaution.’ Parenting books and seminars emphasized the PP as a framework for decision-making. PP advocates working with progressive educators also produced a widely taught elementary school curriculum.”⁶⁴ Unexplored is the more difficult task of imagining the particular practices

that advocates need to engage in order to “mainstream” the idea. It is as if activists have direct access to mass markets and viewers. This conveniently overlooks how mass-distribution networks might alter the message of the PP into less politically progressive direction and how a capitalist political economy and mass media infrastructures needed to distribute such a message create the very toxic environments that the PP message challenges. Can neoliberalism actually solve its own problems or is this mere green-washing? No investigation is taken of the consequences that mainstreaming a progressive meme might have. Nor are specific questions raised as to how exactly to enable such a meme campaign—what specific practices one needs to engage in to make this happen and the subsequent concerns and problems such attempts raise.

This is rather surprising coming from an organization that focuses quite often on climate issues. Reinsborough explains, “The climate crisis is driving dramatic changes. We need to wed those two words—“climate” and “justice”—together. That is the only way we can win the battle of the story. . . . We need to be smashing these webs of these existing [reactionary] stories that limit the world as they are. If we are going to change it according to old scripts, then we are simply not going to make it into the world we want to be involved in. Frame smashing—that is what we are involved with.”⁶⁵ But it remains unclear what these new frames should look like.

SmartMeme’s video entitled *The Copenhagen Moment*, created in anticipation of the Copenhagen climate talks held in December 2009, is framed in an extremely clichéd and dull manner.⁶⁶ It begins with tacky, synthetic music (à la John Tesh) as a series of talking heads speaking before a forest backdrop relate provocative yet ultimately meaningless aphorisms. One tells us: “The next ten years will define the next twenty years, and what happens in the next two years is going to define the next ten years, so it puts us on this crazy timeline.” Another says: “If you’re interested in seeing social justice change, now’s the time. When I say that, it’s an invitation and a challenge to give whatever you’ve got.” Another says: “I believe in agency. I believe in ingenuity. I believe in the capacity of human beings to change.” A decidedly New Age feel pervades the entire production, with the talking heads acting like they are imparting the secrets of life to the viewer rather than clichéd activist rhetoric that we have heard time and again, and will likewise arise during Occupy Wall Street videos analyzed during the book’s conclusion.

The video assures the viewer that “in July 2009, SmartMeme convened leaders who are connecting climate change to social justice to



The Copenhagen Moment (2009) presents itself like a New Age commercial for activism.

strategize on framing the ‘Copenhagen moment.’’ Intercut throughout the video are activists speaking in a wooden lodge, writing notes, pointing to marker-scrawled posters, listening intently with hands crossed—all very deliberative and purposeful. But we never get a sense of the new framing emerging from this process. Instead a barrage of feel-good statements ensues about the infinite capacity of humanity for social change and the importance to do so. Specifics regarding the actions needed to be taken decidedly lack.

The activist videos that emerged from Copenhagen seem equally stilted. Reinsborough asserts that “our Copenhagen voice was how to amplify different voices. The Indigenous caucus has a unique platform to speak about this. We framed all those actions not because indigenous folk are great, but they also share our perspective against a market correction to the ecological disaster. They have the most wisdom and balance regarding eco-destruction.”⁶⁷ In *Indigenous Environmental Network at the US Embassy*, we watch a small group of activists attempt “to deliver a message to President Obama as he traveled to Oslo to accept his Nobel Prize.”⁶⁸ Shaky handheld and badly framed footage dominates. Boom mics and trees often interfere with the framing of activists from the Indigenous People’s Power Project, Arctic Village, and Indigenous Environmental Network, who make the typical speeches regarding environmental degradation. The lack of press and the paltry number of protesters make the direct action

seem ineffective and far from SmartMeme's desire to make its message "go mainstream if it is to influence the larger national political agenda."⁶⁹

In an off-center frame, with frequent external microphone noise, an Ojibwe activist asserts: "I just want to say that we were successful. Obviously, they weren't going to try to let us in . . . but that goes to show you that you have to have persistence. Don't take no for an answer. He said he would deliver the message to the ambassador, that was Mr. Terence McCulley, the deputy to the U.S. embassy, who claims to have Cherokee background himself. He said it would be an honor to accept our declaration." Footage follows of another activist thanking people for attending before awkwardly fading out on her in mid-sentence. What the accepted declaration states is never explained.

One does not want to belittle the action, which was undoubtedly important for those participating, but it is hard to see how it differs much from any past action and amateur coverage of it. Unlike Not an Alternative, where the video clearly imagines its audience as a politicized hipster, SmartMeme's videos still speak within the same shoddy formulaic conventions. Although indigenous folk are now central to the struggle, the methods and aesthetics remain unchanged. Unlike the well-crafted yet not entirely unproblematic, direct action and video of Not an Alternative, the Copenhagen action seems badly organized and tired. Of course, this has as much to do with the limits of counter-summit protesting as with SmartMeme's inability to materialize their vision through direct action and video.

Debates quickly ensued afterward concerning the climate camp's use of spectacle-based protests—particularly its class politics. Rodrigo Nunes points out: "If you are middle-class, urban, highly skilled etc., which is the profile of many of the movements I was just describing, the circuits you are likely to tap into in order to secure your own reproduction (pay your bills) are those which would have an interest in the re-presentation of these struggles: media, academia, the arts etc."⁷⁰ This constituency, therefore, comes to dominate the most media-driven aspects of protesting. As David Graeber documents, "the direct-action scene in general is overwhelmingly dominated by people who were also engaged in some kind of creative self-expression" with many coming from a middle-class background.⁷¹

Those who founded the camps offer an even more precise critique of the class-based division of labor operating within the camps. The camps themselves were largely composed of working-class people, "while the media and outreach teams was [sic] dominated by the middle-class/

politically liberal end of the spectrum.”⁷² Because media relations was run by liberals, the radical message of the climate camps was ultimately diluted to become more amenable for distribution across mass media. As one group notes, “In the drive to build a mass movement, the Camp’s message should not be so compromised by the needs of mainstream media that it causes as many people to be disenfranchised as are brought on board.”⁷³ It is primarily problems like this—the desire to mass distribute one’s message while at the same time preserving its radical outlook—that a group like SmartMeme evades. Furthermore, it questions if the media activism that groups like SmartMeme champion overvalorizes their own middle-class interests and skill sets at the sake of more systemic analysis.

By gearing their message to commercial media, the camps’ protest actions were not related to a more systemic critique of capitalism that might seem too radical for distribution to mass audiences. The Free Association believes that “one can chart a narrowing, rather than an expansion, of the focus of antagonism” of countermobilization protests like climate camps.⁷⁴ This creates a weaker analysis occurring internally among participants as they attempt to popularize their message. One anarchist group notes that “while the camp itself talks about capitalism being the problem, the critique is shallow, often veering into liberalism as it fails to express the key principle of radical social change being part of its demands.”⁷⁵

This is precisely the same limit at work within *SmartMeme*. As it attempts to extend its meme into commercial culture, the critique against capitalism gets lost. Even though Patrick Reinsborough realizes that “most of the world asks the global capitalists on how to rewrite and reinvest in the climate crisis,” *SmartMeme* consistently fails to explore how environmental destruction is an essential component of capitalism—as is poverty (among many other things)—and the ways in which its own memes of climate justice might be compromised by capitalist greenwashing that appropriates Left language to suggest that the very cause of environmental destruction—capitalism—can also be seen as its solution.

It is telling and surprising that *SmartMeme* fails to address the most successful current meme campaigns regarding the environment: those run by capitalists. An article in the *New York Times Magazine* profiles pro-environmental Wall Street investor Jeremy Grantham, who runs the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment. Grantham’s quarterly newsletters, remarkably, contain explicit critiques of capitalism: “Grantham has serious doubts about capitalism’s ability to address the biggest problems facing humanity. When he reminds us that modern capitalism isn’t

equipped to handle long-range problems or tragedies of the commons . . . when he urges us to outgrow our touching faith in the efficiency of markets and boundless human ingenuity.”⁷⁶ This quote raises the question of what it means when a Wall Street investor can not only explicitly state seemingly anticapitalist views but also garner a feature story in the *New York Times Magazine* section. Subsequently, why won’t a group like SmartMeme have its much more moderate message similarly mass distributed? Grantham draws this question to the forefront when stating: “The rather burdensome thought is that people won’t listen to environmentalists, but they will sometimes listen to people like me.”⁷⁷ Why?

Part of the answer is how disavowal structures late capitalist ideology in particular. According to Slavoj Žižek, capitalism is no longer premised upon false consciousness. Instead, disavowal primarily structures late capitalism and goes something like this: we know very well how things are, but still we act as if we do not know. So regardless of us knowing the inherent structural inequalities that capitalism yields, that democracy and a free market are antithetical concepts, that working hard does not result in accompanying prosperity, that the income gap between the wealthiest and poorest continues to grow, in spite of all this, we continue to act as if we did not know this since our actions themselves ultimately reinforce neoliberal practices. Our accompanying skepticism toward the market, which we like to consider as some form of intelligence of not being duped by neoliberal rhetoric, actually fuels neoliberalism all the more since we can intellectually consider ourselves outside of capitalist ideology whereas in reality we are even more inscribed into its regime. According to Žižek, “The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*.”⁷⁸ Developing off Louis Althusser, Žižek posits that ideology has most effectively inscribed us within its practices when we most decidedly believe that we are operating outside of it. The more removed we feel, the more subservient we have actually become.

Returning back to the *New York Times* article, the ideological mask is not that capitalism promotes democracy, better lifestyles, equality, consumer choice, and the like. Most people understand the extremely damaging effects wrought by a capitalist regime. The ideological mask is that the only answer in town is provided by capitalism itself. Instead of speaking in solely ecological terms, Grantham speaks through the market. As he states, “Global warming is bad news. Finite resources is investment

advice. . . . Americans are just about the worst at dealing with long-term problems, down there with Uzbekistan, but they respond to a market signal better than almost anyone.”⁷⁹ It is this very market solution that provides Grantham with *New York Times* coverage since, ultimately, his faith in capitalism remains unshaken. Capitalism might have made a mess of things and proven itself environmentally destructive, but it will, in the end, fix itself. As Richard McNeill Douglas notes, “Where climate change has won the attention of mainstream politicians [and one can add journalists, business people, etc.], they have tended to treat its successful mitigation as something that can be fitted into contemporary economic orthodoxy.”⁸⁰

SmartMeme’s kinder and gentler environmental message cannot be popularized in spite of its inclusive language, its appeal to green capitalism, and its bucolic imagery, since capitalists have already more effectively appropriated much of its discourse and visuals. From a marketing standpoint: What, after all, does *SmartMeme* have to offer consumer culture that capitalism itself already doesn’t do better and, on an admittedly superficial level, more “critically”? *SmartMeme* has geared its message so much toward commercial culture that it has become diluted in the process, indistinguishable from, and inferior to, the marketing PR that normally suffuses our mediascape.

This is the ultimate failure of *SmartMeme*: in its focus to mainstream its eco-meme, it has failed to adequately address how ecology has already become a predominant meme and consumer practice of neoliberalism. The question is not only how to get the meme out there, but, perhaps more importantly, how to redirect the ways in which capitalism has already seized upon Left imagery and memes to perpetuate and extend its domination.

Yet, it should be emphasized, SmartMeme nonetheless remains an important organization that undoubtedly offers a good service in assisting activists in framing their message. Clearly, most Left organizations would benefit from such a media-savvy approach in guiding their activism that places their issues within a wider framework that can appeal to people outside the immediate activist community.

It is only when SmartMeme addresses the mass distribution of activists’ messages that its project falls apart. Although their tactics of framing actions within local media might prove successful, national and global mass distribution remains a different story altogether. Without adequately exploring how to scale up one’s message and the accompanying limitations in seeking such goals, SmartMeme’s claims are nothing more than empty PR for the social justice movement.

I now turn toward the community-based skills-sharing organizations. As we will see in the case with Media Mobilizing Project and the Canadian Media Co-op movement, their media activism is often embedded within wider narratives that can allegorize local struggles into a global framework. In a sense they extend the meme work of this section by incorporating it into skills-sharing practices. Mobile Voices and Outta Your Backpack Media, on the other hand, are more concerned with reaching extremely disenfranchised communities where media production for activist purposes becomes the primary objective.

Community Organizing and Skills-Sharing

This section examines the rise of employing video and digital media in community-organizing and skills-sharing groups. The organizers of all the groups under discussion had all been involved with Indymedia and learned from its limits in conducting media outreach for different historically disenfranchised communities. Media Mobilizing Project employs a multimedia approach by using radio, the internet, video, and cable television to help enable working-class people in the greater Philadelphia area to collectively mobilize on various issues, such as workers' rights, affordable and quality education, and the like. Mobile Voices uses cell phone technology, the internet, and its own newspaper to organize Latino day laborers and other members of the working-class Hispanic community in Los Angeles to fight against discrimination, police harassment, and employment violations. Outta Your Backpack Media from Flagstaff, Arizona trains indigenous youth in video production in order to preserve and relate their culture and complicated relationships with Anglo culture to themselves and others. The final section focuses on the Canadian Media Co-op movement, which established a nationwide alternative media network in Canada. Many of its members have had experience with the limits of Indymedia, too. As a result, they are attempting to balance anarchist-inflected media practices with some hierarchical institutional structures to create a self-sustaining media network that empowers indigenous people, youth, and working-class folk in media production and activism. This section shows how video and internet technology has been made more available to historically disenfranchised communities but nonetheless still poses serious accompanying problems and limits.

Media Mobilizing Project

Media Mobilizing Project bridges community-based projects with meme construction.⁸¹ It not only uses media production to assist specific working-class campaigns within Philadelphia, but it also attempts to unite these campaigns together into a new, collective, working-class subjectivity. Class becomes the central meme that unites these struggles together.

Generally speaking, Media Mobilizing Project has been most directly influenced by the poor people's organizing movements that stretch back to the 1960s and the Indymedia movement. It serves as a fulcrum for class-based organizing and DIY media production. As we will see, media production, distribution, and exhibition become primary practices in fostering a collective vision among groups like taxi drivers, hotel workers, and high school students. Media is not simply used to represent their struggles but also serves as a centralized production activity that unites diverse working-class groups together within a singular space to convey their shared struggles.

With the deregulation, privatization, and liberalization processes of capitalism over the last forty years that have fragmented working spaces and isolated many workers from one another, media production provides a central role in at least two capacities. First, it gathers together workers who normally don't come into frequent contact with one another, as well as encouraging diverse groups to collectively organize and act in their own interests. It replaces the shop floor with the digital cutting room, allowing varied constituencies to explain and explore their shared working and living conditions and general concerns.

Secondarily, in the age of the socialized worker, where "social conditions are subsumed by capital," where every thought, feeling, action, and social relation serves as potential fodder for capital, then every aspect of daily life can potentially confront neoliberalism, too.⁸² Subjectivity, as a result, becomes one of the key terrains of resistance. Media production therefore provides a central activity in establishing a new collective subjectivity for groups like MMP, where political education, skills-sharing, and solidarity-building all converge. The videos that I will be investigating created by MMP serve the primary purpose of fostering class alliances not only through their viewing but also, and perhaps more importantly, through their production and exhibition practices, which give voice to working-class hopes, desires, and frustrations in response to a neoliberal regime that seems at best indifferent to their needs, if not directly opposed to them—all the while attempting to interweave these multiple insights

into a unified class alliance and narrative that can yield further collective action. As a result, we must not see the videos as an endpoint unto themselves, but instead as catalysts for further organization-building and the renewed suturing of class alliances. Additionally, the videos are related to a whole host of other media-making practices like a labor radio show, internet content, and most recently cable access production. No one form of media is prioritized. Instead the type of media deployed is contingent upon the specific needs of the working-class campaign to be launched. Although this book is primarily concerned with video activism, these other forms of media activism must be noted.

Forging a Working-Class Identity

Since most of the groups MMP works with are service-based, such as taxi drivers, hotel workers, and security officers, they all feel extreme isolation on the job. Ronald Blount, a member of MMP and president of the Philadelphia-based Taxi Workers Alliance, observes the positive impact that media-making has had in countering the alienating work of cab driving: “It is one of the most isolated occupations you can do. You are competing against other drivers for fare money. You are in a cab sixteen hours a day. This media-making has started to break down these barriers. Cabdrivers are starting to see themselves as a class instead of as individuals struggling against each other.”⁸³ This coincides with MMP’s mission as articulated by Rebekah Scotland, who works as MMP’s lead video organizer: “One individual working on something doesn’t draw him or her closer to the work that we are doing. It is about the collective experience of organizing the work. The people who are involved with it are coming from different backgrounds, coming across various sectors. As a result, we get a sense of where other people are coming from, a sense of other perspectives.”⁸⁴

In order to counter such isolation and alienation, workers meet in a collective space in order to share their stories. As Rebekah notes, “We need to start with a space where there is conversation and discussion so people can provide their stories. Most of our conversations are not about the technical side of filmmaking, but about the story and what and who we are trying to connect with. Then we are all learning in the process.” Thomas Robinson, president of the Philadelphia Security Officer’s Union (PSOU), stresses the profound impact a collective space had upon his thinking: “At first, we were submerged in our own struggles and our own issues. We didn’t realize so many other sectors of the workforce were going through

what we did. Not until you have these spaces and draw these groups together. It is almost like they are speaking directly to you. They don't know you. I don't know them, yet they have the same feelings that you are feeling, the same thoughts that you are having. You are no longer alone in these types of situations.”⁸⁵

This physical space provides a main location where collective identification across fragmented sectors of the working class begins and is sustained, since organizing, studying, outreach, and media production all converge there. Media-making becomes intimately linked to collective discussion. Bryan Mercer, once MMP’s Digital Inclusion Organizer and now Executive Director, insists that filmmaking “is both conceiving how the story should be structured, which is done collectively through meetings, and the physical editing it together.”⁸⁶ The conceptualization of the story, which leads to cross-identification between workers, is seen as a core aspect of media-making.

In addition to the meetings, some MMP members take skills-sharing classes that are usually held once or twice a week over a few month period. Thomas Robinson candidly observes, “I was very ignorant of how mainstream media portrays most stories. I didn’t understand the need for independent media. I was one of those people who read a newspaper every single day. I thought I was informed. But you realize that I wasn’t as informed as I thought so.” Ronald Blount adds, “I didn’t understand the importance of one word having a meaning, a certain phrase having a meaning. . . . For example, sometimes the commercial press would do a story on us. Personally, the story sounds okay. But then we would meet collectively and start looking at it and realize, ‘They are sending a negative message about us.’”

After the videos have been completed, they are then edited into an end-of-the-year montage that is screened during a December dinner where all members gather and new recruits are invited. As Shivaani Selvaraj, a founding member of MMP, relates: “We very deliberately understood that these people have never come together in the same room. We have a division of labor of different people supporting these coalitions. . . . From the beginning, we very deliberately were about creating a new identity through this process. The work of montage is important for this new possibility of subjectivities.”⁸⁷ Thomas Robinson observes, “We pledge to one another that ‘I am here to support you.’ It is the only way we can move forward. We can reflect on work that we did and the agenda on how to move forward and how to be better with what we are doing.”

For the remainder of this section I would like to focus upon the unionization effort of taxi workers in Philadelphia and MMP's assistance in creating *Taxi Workers: A New Era* video, which supported the unionization drive, in order to explore how media production practices and social movement organizing intertwine to mutually impact the video's aesthetics. Afterward, I focus on the 2007, 2008, and 2009 end-of-the-year montage reels that MMP produced for its membership dinner held every December, which brings together roughly 150 lead organizers and movement builders from MMP's constitutive groups and movements. I do this for two primary reasons: First, the clip reels dramatically reveal the changes in aesthetic form and focus that accompany MMP's organizational growth. They expose the traces of MMP's ever-developing organizational structure in both their assembly and the overall quality of the videos that they incorporate. Furthermore, they strikingly encapsulate the commonalities that unite the yearly productions, as well as expose the aesthetic developments and changes in perspective between years, which the analysis of a few individual videos cannot achieve as efficiently. Second, the montages palpably address the tensions created as MMP attempts to unite various working-class struggles within a more unified class narrative. Members of MMP fully recognize this difficult task. Shivaani Selvaraj relates that the organization "is a constantly not complete project. A part of the tension is the gap between the imagination and reality. There is this imagination of the ideal and the reality of existent conditions." So, in many ways, the MMP montages use the actually existing video documented struggles of the year to hint at what a more substantive class alliance of the future might look like.

A New Era

In the fall of 2004, a group of cabdrivers in Philadelphia began discussions concerning a spate of killings within the industry, as well as their stagnating wages that had not risen over fourteen years. A few years earlier a similar group of drivers came together in New York and started the New York Taxi Worker Alliance (NYTWA). Drivers in Philadelphia began a dialogue with NYTWA, and in 2006 established the Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania (TWA-PA). In the spring of 2006, behind the leadership of TWA-PA, Philadelphia cabdrivers went on strike over the proposal to put Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in all Philadelphia-based cabs. During the strike the TWA-PA was criticized in the press, but at the same time the

abysmal, precarious conditions of cabdrivers caught the attention of organizers and activists across Philadelphia. MMP, which was established in late 2005, reached out to cabdrivers to help them craft a counternarrative to the one propagated by the mass media.

In this process MMP assisted and guided the taxi workers in establishing a media strategy. As Ronald Blount observes, “When we first started, we would protest and holler in the streets, and that would be the end of it.” But as the taxi workers attended more MMP meetings and collectively discussed strategies with workers from other sectors, “the media became more important, since we would discuss how we were portrayed in the media after we had a strike. Was that a true reflection of what happened? How can we tell our own story? Taxi workers would be on Labor Justice Radio telling their stories. . . . Cabdrivers think no one cares, but when they hear other drivers talk about it, it just empowers them.” In addition, the Taxi Worker Alliance also produced a newsletter, *Waiting Times*, which goes into more detail concerning their issues and a website (<http://twapa.org/>).

Eventually, four or five taxi workers attended a three-month course on how to edit, shoot, and analyze cinematic aesthetics. This became the origins of the documentary *A New Era*. Ronald Blount recounts, “Even if we weren’t directly behind the cameras they [MMP members] would ask us: what are you trying to say? What are you trying to get out there? They would show it to us, and if we didn’t like it, we didn’t keep it. We worked closely with them with the editing of it. Me and Steve Chrevenka helped edit the whole thing.” The video was then distributed hand-to-hand among taxi workers in their mobilization drive, which further shows how collective identification continued between production and through the face-to-face interactions in distributing the video. Collective identification also occurred through screenings. In one case, MMP and TWA rented a van that they stationed in the Philadelphia airport holding lot where hundreds of cabdrivers wait to pick up an airport fare. *A New Era* was projected in the van on a portable screen.⁸⁸ Dozens of cabdrivers were able to watch the story of their struggle together, in a business when they are so often alone. As Ronald Blount notes of this experience: “During the election, we showed the *New Era* video, which just drew them in. Just hearing their issues on the screen was amazing.”

The taxi workers’ involvement in production with *A New Era* becomes evident from its opening shot: the image of a semi-empty street unrolling before a dashboard. This bumpy, handheld shot relates the sense of

isolation that accompanies the job and suggests the type of individualistic mentality that the Taxi Workers Alliance needs to overcome and transform into a more collective vision. Furthermore, the shot's unsteady movement grounds it within the jerking motions of the cab. We not only see, but in a sense feel the cabdriver's material conditions: the isolating work environment and the driver's vision and movements.



A New Era (2009) places us in the isolated point-of-view shot of a taxi worker at its beginning.

This emphasis upon the local and the material is important. As Patricia Zimmerman asserts: "the ground is where the bodies are and where new documentary strategies can be imagined that promote different histories and new subjectivities that rewire the new world orders. . . . Thus the local grounds political iconography, simultaneously anchoring it within bodies, terrains, communities, vocalizations, struggles."⁸⁹ Put another way, the local materializes specific struggles and marginalized histories. Rather than embodying struggle from a distance with the viewer at a remove from the community and protagonists being portrayed, as is typical of more standard, liberal documentaries, *A New Era* engages with the complexities and minutia of on the ground movement-building that engulfs viewers, in a sense making them into participants and suggesting an intimacy where the entire context does not need to be necessarily fully explained.

The video emphasizes the gradual transformation from an individualistic perspective to a more collective, working-class vision that the Taxi

Workers Alliance makes possible. Testimony plays a key role throughout. We see cabdrivers testifying before members of city council on the future of the citywide *Wireless Philadelphia* project (which the cabdrivers saw as a way to break their isolation through cheap reliable internet), and then during a 2008 Philadelphia Parking Authority public meeting discussing the regulation of taxis. Cabdriver after cabdriver articulately explain their general needs and the ways in which the city might assist. For example, Vice-President of the United Taxi Workers Feml Olanyni succinctly links the issues of labor and consumption: “We cannot be looking out for the welfare of the customer and not looking at the welfare of the person that’s providing the service. It goes both ways.” Not only do the testimonies reveal the dangerous working conditions of the cabdrivers, but they also show empowered workers telling their own stories and offering their own analyses of the situations. By speaking on their own behalf in front of various city commissions, the testimonials empower the drivers to speak on their behalf.

Along this line, the video then focuses on the theme of solidarity extending beyond cabdrivers into wider alliances with other working-class groups. In one scene, cabdrivers unite with urban high school students from the Philadelphia Student Union, community and labor activists from Philadelphia Jobs With Justice, and other rank-and-file union members at a rally against the poor working conditions of Allied Barton security guards on Temple’s campus. Later that day, many of these same groups and organizations joined the cabdrivers outside the Philadelphia Parking Authority, as the cabbies rallied in preparation for a one-day strike.

During the first rally, an activist from Jobs With Justice states: “We are here to show solidarity with the Allied Barton guards. Every service industry in the city: restaurant workers, hotel workers, the taxi drivers, all of us, we’re being stepped on. And the only way that we’re going to change that is if we all come together.” While he speaks, we watch sequences of students and other groups marching in the street. Fluid camerawork and editing rather eloquently reveal the unity among workers—form and content intermesh seamlessly, suggesting the power and connection fostered by multi-alliance struggles.

This collective vision takes hold most powerfully during the video’s ending as the grassroots campaign to elect the next TWA president takes shape. The viewer is aligned with handheld, unsteady camera movements of the cabdrivers, immersed within the actions taking place on the screen. In one instance, a shaky camera does not know who to focus

on when Ronald Blount, who is partially cut out of the frame, suddenly announces: “The campaign officially starts this minute. You campaign. I campaign.” Bottom-up history manifests itself, revealing its complexities as various handheld cameras struggle to contain it and the editing lunges to narrativize it. The camera serves as both observer and participant. This type of on the ground filmmaking “constitutes a political strategy that expands the notions of committed or guerrilla filmmaking into a joint effort between social actors and the action of image making. . . . The camera . . . is instead recast as a membrane, a permeable surface through which relations between and alongside maker and subject pass and commingle.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, it rejects the cynicism of a neoliberal mindset by showing people as actively engaged in determining their own destinies.

We watch cabdrivers standing in line and filling out ballots at folding tables stationed on street corners. We watch the blurry and low-lit night images of the counting of votes underneath a lone flashlight beam. Ultimately, we watch bottom-up democracy taking place. This historic moment does not easily expose itself before the camera. But the cabdrivers’ abilities not only to stake out public space for their own democratic wishes and collective desires but also to record their actions under adverse filming conditions, reveal in both content and form their tenacity and commitment to enact their desires. The stubbornness to record, to not wait for optimal filming conditions mirrors the cabdrivers’ tenacity in forming a union and demanding to be treated as equals under equally adverse working conditions of trying to make a living in a neoliberal city. They use these limits to their utmost advantage.

Quincy Taylor, a cabdriver and organizer at Philadelphia’s main 30th Street train station, articulates in a Haitian accent the importance of the TWA: “I believe that the organization of this type would be able to help us as cabdrivers within the entire city. Anything that it would take for this objective to be implemented fairly so that there be no misunderstanding or dispute among us I like to be a witness to, because it is historical, so far, as far as I can see.” As he speaks, we watch a montage of racially diverse cabdrivers orderly filling out their ballots before the election table. The video’s final shot punctuates the collective identification among cabdrivers produced by the TWA and filming: a handheld shot tracks a line of cabs in Center City and ends by walking toward a group of taxi drivers and MMP staff working the election table. The singular handheld vision of the video’s opening is contrasted against the collective vision of lined cabs and workers organizing. Playing over these images is a song written for the cabdrivers

campaign: "Listen up, y'all taxi drivers, in Phil'delphia town. We're sick and tired of the man always keepin' us down. So all those taxi drivers we're gonna' take a stand. Goin' ta' fight this ugly system. We're gonna' do everythin' we can."⁹¹ The acoustic guitar and harmonica give the song a folksy tone. The images not only reinforce the voice-over's professed belief in a taxi driver union, but the sharing of the audio space between Haitian voice and the Southern white drawl of the singer also accents the racial diversity of the cabdrivers who compose the union. Within the matter of a minute, the video masterfully establishes the unity yet diversity and confidence through form, music, and content that the taxi worker's alliance provides. *A New Era* locally establishes the cabdrivers' collective struggle within the specific material conditions of Philadelphia, while gesturing toward wider coalitions that might learn from and develop out of the cabdrivers' fight. By having the taxi workers participate in the production of the video, their struggle and attitudes manifest themselves through the video's aesthetics. Overall, *A New Era* reveals how political struggle influences the very form of the video when bottom-up movements take hold not only of their working conditions but also of the technology used to represent themselves.



The stubbornness to record, to not wait for optimal filming conditions mirrors the cab drivers' tenacity in forming a union and demanding to be treated as equals under equally adverse working conditions of trying to make a living in a neoliberal city. From *A New Era*.

Montage Reels and Exhibition as Coalition-Building

When MMP began its video production, there was no formal process in place. Instead, the work was done informally with the staff possessing little to no training. Shivaani Selvaraj admits, “I was shooting and training other people with no film training experience.” She further recalls the tremendous difficulty in getting the early videos produced: “I remember the nightmare of coordinating that. I am sure that we lost so much footage over the years. There was no system for so long. We were still relying on our personal connections with people who had the time and the desire to be able to shoot and edit. We had to rely on someone who often didn’t have formal training themselves.”

At this early stage of MMP’s career simply getting the videos finished took precedence over producing high quality productions. The need to quickly get members involved in video production and the validation of their voices by projecting their stories onscreen remained priorities in order to develop the organizational capacity of MMP, as well as act in a timely manner for the various struggles like the unionization of security officers and maintaining funding for Head Start.

The 2007 montage recounts in roughly ten minutes the coalitions and causes that MMP assisted throughout the year: the Philadelphia Student Union’s fight against the corporatization of Temple University, the saving of Head Start, the unionization of security officers and hotel workers, taxi workers protesting dangerous work conditions, and the fight against gentrification. The series of videos are mainly shot and edited in a minimalist manner: handheld camera, long shots, and talking heads. They relate an urgent need to simply document underrepresented people’s stories and struggles. As the videos progress, however, a somewhat more elaborate structure begins to emerge. For example, the Head Start video offers some tracking shots through a SEPTA train window of the stark industrialized landscape of inner-city Philadelphia while individuals recount in voice-over living in poverty.

But for the most part the videos mainly serve as a means of delivery of their message with minimal concern for form. These limits, however, should not be underestimated. Handheld interview-based filmmaking has often served a key place in establishing identification in bourgeois documentary filmmaking. Yet unlike bourgeois documentary filmmaking that often casts common people as victims when looking at social problems and places authority mainly with experts and the filmmakers, MMP empowers

everyday people. MMP's members actively protest in the street, demanding equality and respect while often offering succinct analysis of their situations. For example, one member of Head Start's parent council offers a quick but accurate history of community involvement with it: "We must know our history, and know that forty years ago before we were here that there were other people fighting and making sure that there was shared governance with parents and a parent policy council. So we must continue to fight for that for the next forty years and beyond. And it will be the parents who will determine if we have shared governance." So even within this rather simple form, the mere fact that MMP's members are crafting their own stories, shooting their own footage, and involved with editing counters commercial media's often disparaging view of the poor as helpless victims locked into a hopeless social context that they cannot even comprehend, let alone act against. The videos show them actively engaged in collective struggles, which are the natural results of their deliberation. Thought and action, as a result, become unified to reveal all the elements that constitute collective action.

Yet the 2007 montage largely fails to explain how these struggles are unified. At best, the montage brings the struggles into physical proximity within each other through editing. As Rebekah Scotland observes, "You can't force something that can't be done on its own. We try to place these things together as best we can. But if the individual groups aren't doing it, then we can't do it. If they are fighting on individual fronts, then we can't make them identify with each other. The montage is our best to get at that unity that might not exist yet even though they are fighting on a more narrow focus." This is not unlike, as we saw in Chapter Three, Testing the Limits' effort in 1987 to suggest coalition-building through montage in their first full-length video.

Tellingly, the one moment of unity among coalitions occurs naturally at the end of the video when various groups like the Philadelphia Student Union, Jobs for Justice, hotel and health care workers, and taxi drivers join security officers in their fight against poor working conditions of Allied Barton, which I describe earlier as a part of *A New Era*. The unity among workers is rather eloquently expressed through fluid camerawork and editing—as if form and content finally sync up for the remaining minute and a half of the video. The sequence provides a closing gesture of MMP's future ambitions to not only unify workers but also produce more seamless video-making.

By the time of the 2008 montage, MMP had grown to a network of eight organizations with fifty to one hundred members. Furthermore, with

additional resources and a growing budget MMP was able to hire some full-time and part-time staff with more concrete media and video production skills. Along with the new staff, MMP had also grown in prominence and this drew a more capable crowd of media makers that wanted to volunteer within the MMP network. The combination of factors led the 2008 montage to have a more polished feel than the prior year's montage.

The 2008 montage frequently layers music with voice-overs, cuts in a more sophisticated and frequent manner, incorporates tripod shots with handheld footage, minimizes talking heads with dynamic shots of coalitions organizing, speaking, and rallying, uses more professional quality video equipment that reduces the graininess that the prior year's montage exhibited, and adds Spanish subtitles. As a result, the montage is more dynamic. Much of the opening sequence takes place at an MMP leadership school held in the summer of 2008 at Villanova University. During a three-day session over a hundred leaders from the different groups within the MMP network converged to build relationships, study together, and strategize.

Similar to the end of the 2007 montage, the video highlights the natural alliances among coalitions to suggest the emerging intra-class alliance that MMP fosters. The video also ends with collective spaces of rallies, conferences, and meetings to punctuate the frequency of these growing coalitions and an increasingly unified intra-working-class identity. As Rebekah notes, "The beginning and the end focus on these spaces and conversations where a lot of study has been going on. It closes on the leadership space in West Virginia where we speak together about a broader struggle. It is difficult to capture that because it is an internal conversation." Although it might be difficult to capture that conversation, the editing of multiple voices intersecting with other images, once again, hints at a sense of fluidity, growth, and emergence of a working-class collective identity. The increase of images and voices of people speaking with one another from the 2007 montage to the 2008 one marks the exponential strengthening of this new subjectivity.

Interestingly, the main section of the video organizes itself around media-specific projects that were produced through MMP Radio Network, Labor Justice Radio, and MMP video collaborations. As a result, the video explicitly evokes at its beginning and ending how media production assists in fostering a collective identity and political vision. Furthermore, the central attention given to media shows the ways in which formal concerns and media practices were going through reevaluation by some MMP members.

For example, Rebekah recounts how MMP at the time began thinking about how to institutionalize a more permanent video production unit that could meet specific deadlines and perhaps initiate investigative journalism.

This increased training and new expertise in video powerfully manifests itself in the video excerpt of *A New Era* in the 2008 montage. Rather than rushing right to its message, the excerpt emphasizes mood and context. As mentioned earlier, it opens with a handheld tracking shot of cabs lined up in center city and then smoothly cuts to its end with cabdrivers signing up new members while a taxi worker musician plays guitar and sings over the images. This excerpt emphasizes the main trajectory of the video: a movement from an exploited, singular worker to that of a collective vision and action where music, image, and actions all seamlessly converge due to the work of the Taxi Workers' Alliance and their collective video production.

With the creation of the 2009 montage, MMP had established a much more permanent and institutionalized video production unit. With an even larger budget and more staff coming onto permanent positions MMP was better able to manage the media production workflow, transferring productions mainly to digital copies rather than relying on tapes. As Bryan Mercer explains, "Working with tapes is a problematic part of the workflow," since they are difficult to store, can easily get lost, and often require transferring to a more media-accessible form. He continues, "For 2009, we had all the media accessible to us so that we could digitally pull back new content whenever it was needed." Yet, he added, two other major components further enhanced video production quality: "We have an increased range of people working on the media. We have gone from just scattered filmmakers and people just getting trained on video to now having consistent teams making the videos. The other piece is we have figured out how to do low-end video work, as well as the high-end work, too," which allowed the organization to differentiate between levels of experience that didn't place video production at cross purposes.

One of the major transformations of 2009 was finally making MMPTV operational. Much of the initial inspiration of MMPTV was modeled after the success of Labor Justice Radio, which was launched in 2008 and is composed of seven workers and allies that come together weekly to make and produce a radio show for MMP that is aired on a low-power FM station in West Philadelphia. Rebekah explains, "I want MMPTV to be based on a structure that is flexible. Hopefully a lot of people in that crew would remain a part of it. The way it is going to work is by having clearly

identifiable roles: someone being a reporter for this segment this month then perhaps being an interviewer the next. We can also incorporate someone who wants to be a part of the production but only has an hour for that month that he or she can do it. MMPTV can encapsulate the filmmaking side now. It is something at the beginning of the month that we can arrange what our plan is. And we can have more regularly involved people who can take up the new work." The videos produced through MMPTV are not just used by coalition partners but also assembled into a half-hour show that is broadcast both on the MMP website (<http://mediamobilizing.org/>) and over the public access station, PhillyCam, twice a week with the show repeating for a month or two.⁹²

The 2009 montage reveals traces of these changes in that it is the most ambitious of the three montage reels. Not only has the editing, framing, and technical quality improved, but the montage possesses a culture jamming attitude by appropriating commercial news broadcasts, archival historical footage of Martin Luther King Jr., and music by Radiohead and TV on the Radio for its own politicized purposes. This incorporation of culture jamming adds a new, interesting dimension to the montage: rather than simply highlighting the oppositional role of independent media and social movements, the video suggests a more complicated relation between the work of MMP and surrounding commercial culture. Like much culture jamming, it employs the Situationist notion of *détournement*: "a turning around and reclamation of lost meaning; a way of putting the stasis of the [commercial] spectacle in motion . . . and reveal[s] a totality of possible social and discursive relations which exceeds the spectacle's constraints."⁹³

Similar to how the Situationists reclaimed comics and films to re-inflect them along lines of working-class struggle, MMP hijacks commercial news broadcasts of the 2008 economic collapse for MMP's mission of establishing a working-class collective vision and identity. For example, in the video's opening sequence, one newscaster announces: "While the DOW climbed higher again today, helped along by more solid bank earnings, we learn that Americans continue to lose their homes to foreclosure at the rate of 425 every hour, seven every minute." The sequence already reveals how even commercial media cannot hide the inversely proportional relationship between the economic health of investors and that of everyday people. The DOW's health remains untethered from the rampant poverty that engulfs working people and confiscates their homes.

But this narrative of economic collapse, desperation, and victimization thundering across commercial news outlets is integrated into a more

empowering framework of the voices of working-class people in their collective fight against dispossession. In one instance, over images of working-class people marching with signs stating, “We Stand with the Workers,” we hear the voice-over of a man say: “People have been thrust into poverty who had never been in poverty before, but now see that they will be able to align to the people who had always been in poverty. Then maybe we can come together and see that all our goals will be benefited by us working together.” The economic collapse, according to MMP’s scenario, can also be viewed as an opportunity to establish not only a collective working-class identity but also a collective vision that unites the recently fallen from the white-collar world with the goals of blue-collar, service industry workers who have been forced to think about and organize against neoliberalism’s downside, since they have never been one of its beneficiaries, a portend of Occupy Wall Street. The image of people marching suggests how mobilization is already occurring that the white-collar might be able to join. The overall sequence reveals the complex relation between independent and commercial media. It does not simply denounce commercial media of lying, but instead reveals how it frames the issue in a disempowered and limited framework. MMP’s goal is to harness this half-truth into a more engaged and broader outlook.

Unfortunately, this framework is dropped after two minutes, only to be supplanted by another meta-narrative concerning the unifying ability of media. As one unnamed voice-over states: “We see media and communications as the central nervous system of a movement against poverty led by the poor. Our radio, internet, video, and study led together the struggle of working people in Philadelphia and beyond creating our tapestry of our resistance.” We then see footage of the various fights. Not unlike the 2008 montage reel, the video is split in thirds with the introduction and conclusion emphasizing movement-building and the middle section focusing on media. But the links between media and movements are never made entirely clear. How media is supposed to connect these coalitions into a collective identity?

In some ways, the 2009 montage is more awkward than the 2008 due to its ambition to employ new formal techniques found in commercial documentaries, such as “Voice of God” narration. Throughout the montage, various disembodied voices speak in the royal “we” for the Media Mobilizing Project and jeopardize to overpower the other embodied voices. The narrative feels more forced, awkward, and hierarchical, with those of authority speaking for people rather than letting others chose

their own words. For example, we hear an unidentified woman state in voice-over: “Our work for federal reform must be grounded in supporting local struggles to protect and improve the institutions that serve poor and working-class people in Philadelphia.” As she speaks, we see people protesting. This is followed by a health care worker speaking on her front porch about hospital closures, in an effort to create a balance between omniscient narrator and visible subjects. But this doesn’t alleviate the discrepancy between those unidentified, disembodied voices that can speak in a more universal manner and those of specific working-class people who are identified and speak mainly in regards to their own struggles. Although this disconnect between omniscient narrators and working-class voices is partially mitigated at the December dinner screening, since most of the viewers connect the narrators with specific people whom they know, it still doesn’t solve the formal hierarchy within the videos of those who can speak frequently in a universal manner from those who cannot nor does it mend the diversity of struggles into a convincing unified working-class vision.

If anything, the sequence highlights the tensions between MMP’s desire to equitably represent singular struggles yet at the same time weave them into a common narrative. It also reveals how the incorporation of certain mainstream techniques from commercial documentaries like “Voice of God” narration in an attempt to suture these struggles together actually exacerbates the problem on a formal level. Yet on a practical level, since the actual screening location allowed most viewers to identify most, if not all, of the disembodied narrators, since they have intimately worked together, the “Voice of God” technique might not seem so alienating and authoritative. This sequence, ultimately, highlights the need to draw attention to the multifarious ways in which we must approach socially engaged media that can hold vastly different formal and site-specific meanings.

MMP, however, is well aware of these problems. In regards to the voice-over, Bryan states, “It is an experiment. If we have an opportunity to create a link, then we go for it. But it is by no means perfect.” Rebekah adds, “We wanted to incorporate more voices, but we didn’t have the time. It’s hard to find all the voices to all the footage and weave a story.” Many members hold a similar view to Ronald Blount when he states, “I just think MMP hasn’t really arrived at where it will truly be at. It is still evolving. It is halfway where it is going to be. It is amazing the way it has matured in the last four or five years.”

As the end-of-the-year montages reveal, the transformations regarding video production within MMP have been significant. Along these lines

there are a few lessons we can draw from the video production process, as well as media texts themselves, as tools for building working-class identity. The first lesson is that media, and in this case video, is a key tool for creating new collective class-based subjectivities across a variegated community. That said, the process of cultivating this singular vision is difficult and the problems are not simply resolved by the increased institutionalization of video production within MMP. In this sense, it becomes clear that higher quality video production that incorporates commercial techniques creates its own problems in cultivating a unified class identity, as the problems with voice-overs illustrates. Finally, the video production process and the media texts show that producing new class-based subjectivities seems to work most fluidly when the varied parts of the class are working together on a project or shared struggle. In this sense, the videos follow real world, offline projects where communities and subjectivities are already forming. The media-making further fosters such community with its final products, translating this already forming subjectivity and representing it to the community in a feedback loop to lead to further collective organizing and media production.

Mobile Voices

Mobile Voices (VozMob) is a cell phone–based platform used by low-wage workers and immigrants (mainly Hispanic) to assist in distributing their stories, pictures, and videos documenting police harassment, publicizing important news concerning workers and immigrants, and mobilizing collective actions. It represents the convergence between various immigrant/ workers’ rights groups with that of some faculty and graduate students at USC Annenberg School for Communication.

One of the key participants is The Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA), “a nonprofit, community-based organization that uses popular education methodology to educate and organize low-income immigrant families from Mexico and Central America.”⁹⁴ It provides a series of educational and work-related functions for and by immigrant communities including operating six day laborer centers around Los Angeles since 2003. According to Amanda Garces, one of the founders of Mobile Voices, “The Centers are funded through the City of Los Angeles to provide a humane space for workers to negotiate jobs.”⁹⁵

One of IDEPSCA’s central efforts revolves around extending popular communication capacity among low-wage, immigrant workers through

audio, video, and its worker-run newspaper *Jornada XXII*, started in 2000 at the Hollywood Community Job Center. According to Garces, “The mission of the newspaper is to allow day laborers and household workers to have a space to share their realities with other workers. Once the newspaper is printed, it is brought to IDEPSCA’s six day laborer centers, where it is shared with other workers.”⁹⁶

The newspaper became a central forum where the incipient idea of Mobile Voices began to take hold. Because of the demonization of Hispanic communities by Minutemen websites throughout 2006, Garces drew together the public communication team to focus on countering such anti-immigrant propaganda with a website of their own. According to Garces, “I showed them these anti-immigrant websites. They hadn’t been aware of them since many of our day laborers don’t have much technology at home and know little about it. The computers at the center are limited with not much time to navigate the internet.”⁹⁷ After becoming convinced that a web-based platform was needed, *Jornada* was transformed into a multimedia effort.

Another key participant was USC Annenberg School for Communication, where a faculty member was conducting research concerning the uses of mobile phone technology among poor communities within Brazil. Sasha Costanza-Chock, a PhD student at USC at the time and belonging to Indymedia, knew Garces from the 2003 Miami FTAA and the 2006 Border Social Forum in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. They also worked together at the Garment Workers Center. Sasha was instrumental in developing the cell-phone–based platform that would become VozMob. According to Garces, “Sasha has managed our project management software with our lead Drupal developer Mark Burdett [another Indymedia veteran]. They both are very committed to social justice and to our day laborer community. Sasha also facilitated the workshops for the Popular Communication Team to design the VozMob site.”⁹⁸

The team from USC worked together with IDEPSCA to implement a survey at its day laborer centers concerning cell phone use among working-class immigrants. They discovered the following:

78 percent of the workers currently own a mobile phone. When asked how many times a day they use their phone, 36 percent reported using it between 5 to 10 times a day, 31 percent reported 1 to 5 times a day and 25 percent reported more than 10 times. Only 3 workers reported using their phone

less than once a day. Workers reported using their phones for: family—82 percent; friends—73 percent; work—98 percent; emergencies—49 percent. Texts: 31 percent send texts, 50 percent receive texts; Photos: 47 percent take photos and 24 percent do not have cameras on their phones; Videos: 20 percent take videos, 33 percent do not have video recorders on their phones. Half of the workers (29) have never used a computer. 94 percent said they would like to learn how to use a computer. 23 percent currently own a computer.⁹⁹

As a result, because of their near ubiquity and familiarity among the Hispanic day laborer community, cell phones became the primary digital platform for organizing, along with the newspaper and the worker centers.

The importance of cell phone technology in mobilizing day laborers should not be surprising. Cell phones have become a primary device in organizing labor for a neoliberal economy. Franco Berardi notes, “Cellular phones are probably the technological devices that best illustrate this kind of network dependency. . . . It has a major function in the organization of labor as self-enterprise that is formally autonomous but substantially dependent.”¹⁰⁰ Although Berardi is primarily referring to information workers, it is equally applicable to low-wage labor defined by precarious hours and shifts, where cell phone access becomes mandatory in maximizing one’s hours of employment.

Yet this very device, representative of capitalism’s permeation into our lives, the tool par excellence for the socialized worker, can also be used to resist the fragmenting and alienating conditions produced by a neoliberal regime. Sasha Costanza-Chock observes that there remains “a great untapped possibility for the immigrant workers’ movement to fully integrate mobile communication strategies into their organizing efforts.”¹⁰¹ Mobile Voices is at the forefront of such a movement.

According to Amanda Garces, the primary mission of Mobile Voices is multilayered: “It is to counteract the anti-immigrant representation online and that of commercial media. The way we do that is by working with workers to tell their own stories, writing their own reality to make their own histories. We are subjects of our own history. And then through that it is also about empowering workers to be crossing the digital divide by using the technological tool that they already have. Many have cell phones, but they only use it for phone calls. The question becomes: how do we support them in their tools and in this digital media world?”¹⁰²

Workers can send a multimedia message that can include texts, voice, photos, or video from their cell phones to the VozMob website. What they can send depends upon the type of device they own and their phone plan. Those more experienced with the technology can edit their work online—extending text beyond the 160-character limit when sent by phone, deleting and adding photos and videos. Much of the material sent to the website serves as the primary articles appearing within *Jornada XXII*. Following each article within the newspaper is a web address where readers can access more photos, audio, videos, and text related to the article.

Key to VozMob's success is the way it connects with traditional media, like newsprint and oral culture. Cellular technology compliments more familiar formats such as newsprint so that the two become seamlessly intertwined. VozMob motivates day laborers to work on their writing in both Spanish and English since their texts will not only appear on the website but also in newsprint for their friends and colleagues to read. Similarly, those interested in writing are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the VozMob platform since news articles primarily originate from this technology. By embedding digital technology within more familiar media like newsprint, it helps allay the fears that some older day laborers and immigrants might have of it.

Mobile Voices uses a nonhierarchical framework to support immigrant day laborers in their use of the technology. Amanda Garces notes, "We do not believe in teaching but instead we learn together. Our trainings [at the Day Laborer Centers] don't necessarily focus on storytelling but more on how to use a cell phone as a tool for documenting abuses and together learning how to understand their phone and their plan. Then we share our stories. We found that some of the day laborers are more experienced than others. It helped when they show each other how to use the technology in small groups." She continues: "As one of our organizers, Pedro, says, 'We teach technology through VozMob.' In many of our workshops, we have workers who have never turned on a computer and who have never read their text messages. Once they see their stories on VozMob, stories we helped them do through their own phones, we begin to see their faces light up with curiosity and we start learning together."¹⁰³

In addition to trainings, the Popular Communications Team, those involved in developing *Jornada XXII*, meet every Tuesday for about three to four hours. While having dinner, they provide presentations about what each have been doing for the prior week. According to Garces, "We have different agenda items every week, and we almost always tried to include

a hands-on component: testing the system, doing stories, talking about the stories, etc.”¹⁰⁴ By creating a familial environment, workers feel freer to engage with the technology and develop their communication skills.

Media literacy is an important component during trainings. Garces notes: “Our first workshop wherever we go has a component of showing the negative ways our immigrant community is portrayed on the internet. This begins a conversation on how the media does not reflect our voices and why it is important to question and begin to share our own realities.”¹⁰⁵ Many of the writers within *Jornada* relate this critique of commercial media. For example, in the Spring/Summer 2011 issue, Manuel Mancia writes: “When we learn to differentiate between the lies that the media sends us from our lived realities we will recover our economy, which consists of saving what we earn in a week and ignoring the propaganda from the mainstream media.”¹⁰⁶

Learning digital media becomes a key antidote to the limits of corporate media framing. In another article, the collective writes: “Digital technology advances and facilitates information: it allows us to learn about events more rapidly from any geographic location, regardless of the distance between the different occurrences. Our phones have proven to be an excellent informative tool that takes us from being just consumers of the ideas of others but to include our own thoughts to interpret the world.”¹⁰⁷

This critique is familiar—one that we have heard from Indymedia to Paper Tiger to DIVA TV back to guerrilla video groups to Newsreel and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Yet Mobile Voices’ willingness to emphasize process by displaying the awkwardness of their writing allows others who are learning English to feel confident to contribute to the newspaper. In an article entitled “Integration,” the emphasis upon learning English and education in general are made explicit: “But we must bear in mind that education is very important in any part of the world and that this country provides the opportunity to become better prepared, since it has the schools where English classes or other subjects are offered at a very affordable price and that the only requirement is to set aside a bit of our own time, by learning the language we can better understand other cultures, and thus more strongly demand that our rights be respected.”¹⁰⁸

As a result, *Jornada* and VozMob become platforms where the gradual acquiring of writing, speaking, video, and photographic skills are all made visible. Many of the audio clips run for simply thirty seconds, with workers announcing in Spanish their names, origins, and job. One woman mentions her name is Maria. She is from Mexico. She cleans houses and

works every day. The voices are often quiet and hesitant, as if not used to hearing themselves talk. Background noise murmurs behind their voices. Occasionally a number from a keypad is accidentally pushed. But we are witnessing the incipient stages of the validation of their stories and familiarization with digital technology. Before one can use the technology, one must first realize that her voice matters.

Similarly, many of the videos only run for a few seconds—nothing more than fragments of everyday life. One video, entitled *Dancin on the Boardwalk*, runs for two seconds.¹⁰⁹ We watch the pixilated image of a woman dancing before the camera. The music blares. Another unsuspecting woman dances in the background. It is a fleeting moment of freedom outside of work and beyond some outside authority's gaze.

Another video entitled *Officer Write 'Em Up* suggests the opposite.¹¹⁰ The caption states: "He writes dozens every day." This is an instance of "sousveillance," the recording of a potential illegal and/or threatening activity from the point of view of an average observer. The video only runs for thirteen seconds. Interestingly, the image whips alive to capture the officer writing a ticket to what appears to be a woman. Both of them face away from the camera. The footage is rough, unsteady, and pixilated. Furthermore, it is shot sideways.



Officer Write 'Em Up (2010) shows the clandestine way in which Latino day laborers are documenting police harassment.

The form reveals much. There is an unfamiliarity with the technology. It is unclear if it is intended to be shot sideways or not. The video's extremely grainy image implies a low-end phone and the poverty of the owner. Additionally, the image represents a nonprivileged status: shot clandestinely from behind and perhaps from the hip. Unlike more privileged white, middle-class media activists who use the camera to directly confront the police, this video is simply about documentation and not intervention that draws attention to itself. Silence rather than explicit questioning dominates the frame with the occasional sound of a passing car marking the audio track.

Implicit within the recording lurks the suggestion of harassment. Not only does he "write dozens every day," but by not describing the specific offense, the caption implies that the real crime is simply being Hispanic. He writes dozens because he is white and the recipient is not. It also suggests the need to film the police because without it, a low-wage immigrant's testimony is not worth much—especially if the event should quickly turn for the worse.

Yet the website also displays more artistic works. *Ismael's Building* was made by Ismael Cervantes, a student at the Free L.A. Charter High School.¹¹¹ As he explains in a largely uninflected voice-over, "Basically, what uhm, my project is to compare a jail system with my apartment building." Like many of VozMob's projects, Ismael also struggles a bit with his English. But the awkward phrasings and sometimes extended pauses reveal a desire to learn and express himself.

The tone of the video is captured by its mournful jazz music—a piano, muted trumpet, and lone brushed snare drum. As he explains, "There's holes. There's rats. There's a lot of cockroaches." We see a series of photographs of crumbling concrete and cracked pavement. A laundry room is bathed under a jaundiced yellow light. Large chunks of concrete are missing from the walls and paint is chipped from the floor. Two lone dryers and washers stand at the far end of the room. The empty floor dominates the space. Red graffiti is scrawled across the left wall. The video doesn't frame what it says since Cervantes is so habituated to its presence that he doesn't notice it.

An image of a private property sign follows. The narrator explains: "They treat us with a lot of rules. You can play music at certain hours, really low. You pay rent in that building. You need to have your own freedom and your own time. And right now we don't really have that. And I feel really bad." Accompanying the matter-of-fact explanation are a series of



Ismael's Building (2010) provides a poignant sketch of living in oppressive and unsafe living conditions.

photos shot through railings, bars, and screened doors. We see an image of a single tree through a screened door. Even nature seems imprisoned in this environment.

The video reveals insight and talent through its juxtaposition of imagery and sound and its well-composed framing. It suggests the immense potential of this student if he can somehow escape from such oppressive conditions. The video is made all the more painful by the narrator's self-awareness of the psychic impact that his environment has upon him.

Video-making allows Ismael to wrest back control of his life, if only temporarily, and distance himself from his own oppression. But the video's brevity and minimalist style emphasizes that video-making alone is not enough, as other more pressing concerns impinge upon the amount of time and resources that can be dedicated to it.

Organizing and collective action understandably occupy much space on the VozMob website, revealing how media-making must be united with both of these strategies in order to transform the isolation and oppression we feel in Ismael's video into a collective vision and systemic change—not unlike the transformation that similarly occurs within *A New Era*. The struggles extend from the local to the national. A post from 2008 chronicles the organizing of car wash workers in downtown L.A. for a fair wage, better working conditions, and humane treatment. It mentions how the Carwash Workers Union won their right to picket in a case that was brought before the National Labor Relations Board. The writer, clearly a car wash worker, states: "After having targeted Auto Spa Express for several weeks, CLEAN returned to picket Vermont Hand Wash on September 13. For the past three weeks we have consecutively picketed in front of Vermont Hand

Wash with the help of allies, community members and students.”¹¹² The article then ends with a list of carwashes that readers should boycott and a URL address for more information.

During 2010, much focus had been upon Arizona’s anti-immigration legislation. Videos show immigrant rights activists protesting and blocking streets over the passing of S.B. 1070 that forces (Hispanic) immigrants to carry immigration documentation at all times and allows law enforcement to racially profile them. An article from *Jornada* by Valeria, a high school student attending an Arizona senate hearing regarding SB 1407, observes how the bill will use schools as immigration checkpoints. She describes the bill’s sponsor, Senator Lori Klein, as xenophobic and racist: “Besides saying students aren’t prepared for school, Senator Lori Klein said the students would always end up as gang bangers.” Valeria continues: “When Senator Klein was asked to clearly give her reasons as to why Senate Bill 1407 should be passed, instead did the opposite. She stayed off topic, nothing she stated made sense and had anything to do with the bill. She was cut off and her time ran out to complete her speech.”¹¹³ One can sense the student’s frustration at the end of the story as her grammar breaks down.

VozMob technology allows first-person accounts both locally and nationally to be delivered quickly to the immigrant day laborer community through cellular technology, the web, and newsprint. Furthermore, developing one’s technological, writing, and speaking skills becomes intimately and organically tied to the mission of giving voice to a community that has either been made invisible or demonized by much commercial media. The fact that these various technologies reveal the learning processes at work—the awkward phrasing, the shaky footage—as well as its participants’ improvement, encourages others to become involved, in spite of many working two jobs and having little time to contribute. The day laborer centers provide a needed space where community relations can develop and skills can be shared.

Outta Your Backpack Media

Outta Your Backpack media is a youth-led, indigenous-centered media-making organization located in Flagstaff, Arizona. Its founder is Klee Benally, lead singer of the Navajo punk rock band Blackfire. Benally had been raised in a political setting: “My parents took me to protests and meetings. At a very young age, I developed a political awareness. What was

being said and discussed in the corporate media wasn't really in line with what was happening on the ground at places most impacted. My brother and sister and I decided to start a band in response because at the time, in the late 1980s, we were influenced by political punk bands to use media to communicate ideas.”¹¹⁴

Benally's interest in video emerged in 2001 when Hopi Rangers and state and federal agents raided disputed Navajo ceremonial grounds at Big Mountain, Arizona. According to him, “They used bulldozers to bulldoze over the dancing grounds. They cut down and put the sacred tree of life through a wood chipper. They arrested one of my cousins who was born and lived there for eighteen years for trespassing. The next day I went to my relative's home with a video camera and did some quick interviews and made *Crisis on Black Mesa*.”

Additionally, because of commercial media's portrayal of the Navajo defense of Big Mountain as nothing more than “Navajos just celebrating their lawlessness,” Benally and others formed Indigenous Action Media (IAM): www.indigenousaction.org. The site not only provides media coverage of indigenous issues but also offers media support, such as communication strategies, consultation, and press conferences for other indigenous-based groups.

In 2004, Benally and others had been protesting the development of the San Francisco Peaks, located just north of Flagstaff and considered sacred land for more than thirteen indigenous tribes. Youth of the Peaks, a youth activist organization that mobilized between two hundred and four hundred people for each protest, became a key player in the direct actions. According to Benally, “The cops treated them as an anarchist gang and went into their high schools where they were organizing. They used the gang task force and would pull out kids from their classes to interrogate them without any parents, teachers, or school administrators, creating a very intimidating situation. Because of this misportrayal, the youth requested to have more media representation. They wanted to use media to get their views out more effectively. We worked with them and then Outta Your Backpack was born.”

Similar to Mobile Voices, skills-sharing and workshops are central. Workshops last from three to four days. Each day is dedicated to a particular phase: preproduction, production, and postproduction. There can be anywhere between ten to sixty youth participating, with breakout groups of about five to six people with a mentor. The mentor normally is a youth who has been extensively involved with Outta Your Backpack.

Media justice and media literacy are an important element of the first day of the workshop. According to Benally, “The first day we ask the youth: What is media? Where do they get their media from? What does media justice look like? And then we talk about framing, of course: the power of framing and power relationships within framing, who is telling the stories, who is benefiting, and whose interests are served. We are about analyzing frames and breaking frames. Then we analyze some films and look at how media shapes our identity—especially indigenous people. We investigate what types of stereotypes persist. It is very easy to look at Hollywood both past and present to see horrible representations. The most glaring injustice, however, is the invisibilization of indigenous people and our concerns.”

Invisibilization and stereotypes take a particularly heavy psychic toll on indigenous youth. Benally notes, “It is not surprising that young people feel overwhelmed by the issues, because there are so many dominant stories that project their disempowerment and reinforce their notion of despair and the impossibility of youth and the individual to do anything. The solutions are dissociated from the direct presence of youth. And so it is not a surprise that young people are in despair. The response then is what can we then do to reinstate or support positive self-worth with these youths in that they can be agents themselves or that they can be empowered, or give them examples and show them directions so that they can be empowered themselves and self-determined, motivated, and take initiative.”

Video-making and the workshops become key ingredients in re-empowering youth and offering them a sense of collective power. As Benally notes, “Our whole focus is understanding the collective process and creating an output of the workshops. It is important that something is produced. It isn’t about the final production quality being perfect. Our intention is to make sure that it is also collaborative.” Art in general and video-making in particular provide certain answers where youth can not only take control of their situation by filming it but also experiment with new forms of consensus-based, nonhierarchical organizing. All of the videos produced by Outta Your Backpack emerge from these three- to four-day workshops.

In most of the videos produced by Outta Your Backpack, cultural and political issues are inextricably intertwined. This is not entirely surprising since Navajo culture traditionally tends to see art and life as linked. According to Benally, “For the Navajo people, there is no separation between art and life. They are both an expression of our existence. Unlike Anglo communities where this link needs to be emphasized, it is assumed in indigenous communities since it is very much a cultural foundation.”

The politics, however, might be more implicit or explicit depending upon the group of filmmakers. For example, in *Child of Water* Camille Manybeads sings a traditional Navajo song.¹¹⁵ She sings alone, standing against the sacred background of the forests and mountains. She ceremonially dips her hands holding a shell into the river. Although the sequence might seem the simple recording of a song, it is also the video preservation of a culture that has been consistently under attack since the arrival of Europeans. Not only does it record the song and imagery on video, but shows how a younger generation is learning and transmitting the traditions of their elders, revealing continuity between generations. Such preservation through filming stretches back to similar goals of certain Third Cinema directors, like Glauber Rocha, who incorporated traditional peasant songs and traditions into his films for preservation and transmission.

The threat of Anglo culture to the existence of indigenous practices becomes more explicit in *Skary Skool*, a short film shot in a horror film style.¹¹⁶ On the surface, the film relates to the harassment that any high schooler might feel. But for indigenous youth, this harassment takes on a decidedly political tone. We hear a school bell ring that serves more as an alarm for the protagonist than signaling the beginning of the school day. An eerie keyboard with a distorted guitar plays an imposing riff as we watch an indigenous female student walk toward the school's entrance. She is immediately bumped into by another girl. We catch a black-and-white point of view shot from the lead protagonist: the girl who has pushed her has dark circles painted around her eyes and lines extending from her mouth, looking like the living dead while yelling in a distorted voice, "Watch out where you are going freak."

Although this can at first just seem simple harassment, the xenophobic undertones are made more explicit during the next confrontation, where a rabid tiny blonde cheerleader accuses her: "I can't believe you're such a super Indian wannabe hippie geek. What do you think you're in, *Smoke Signals*? Go hang out with your grandma at sheep camp, freak." Once again we see a black-and-white p.o.v. shot of a living dead cheerleader with black eyes and crusty mouth menacingly shaking her pom-poms. The referencing of *Smoke Signals*, one of the only commercially distributed films made by an indigenous director and writer, reveals how even this well-intentioned film can still be used to generalize and stereotype indigenous culture by Anglos. The sequence ends with a bell ringing, marking the end of another round of harassment.



Skary Skool (2009) shows a rabid, zombie-like cheerleader insulting a Navajo student.

The historical harassment of indigenous peoples and Anglo threat to their culture is emphasized when the lead character returns to her grandmother and cries. Her grandmother relates: "When I was younger, I was taken away from my home, my land, and my family. I was forced to go to boarding school. There they tried to change everything about us: our hair, our clothes, and our beliefs. Every day I was forced to reject my culture." She further comments that she is happy since at least her granddaughter can wear her hair in a traditional hairstyle, because even this minor demonstration of indigenous culture was denied to her in the past. This insight into the grandmother's background allows the girl to return to school with a renewed sense of cultural pride and identity, which allows her to no longer allow the bullies get into her head even though they still harass her.

This link between psychic trauma and the denial of indigenous cultures is perhaps best represented in *Inner Voices*.¹¹⁷ First of all, it provides a hybrid sense of indigenous youth culture by starting at a skate park with a soundtrack of a Marilyn Manson song playing. We watch a boy, Justin, dressed in a black hoodie, skating around. The video reveals the intersection between indigenous and skate punk cultures. Indigenous youth culture is a permeable one that intersects with industrial commercial music and skateboarding subculture. Even though the video is only roughly three minutes, it spends forty-five seconds simply showing the boy skating with others, offering a somewhat documentary-like feel.

Soon afterward, he falls and bumps his head against a tree, which causes him to hear rocks and trees speak to him. But rather than recognizing this communing with nature as a common indigenous animist belief,

the boy thinks he is instead going crazy and sees a psychiatrist. Anglo beliefs have so inculcated indigenous youths that they mistake and dismiss their own traditions for madness.

This rejection of indigenous culture is further emphasized in the condescending manner of the psychiatrist. After asking a series of ridiculous questions—such as “How terrified does this make you feel?”—and being confronted by Justin for asking them, the psychiatrist asserts, “I went through eight years of college. Don’t tell me how to do my job.” Rather than addressing his primary issue, she instead writes a prescription to sedate him. Psychiatry is revealed as nothing more than forcing indigenous people to assimilate to Anglo culture.

Finally, Justin begins accepting animist beliefs and asks a tree, “Why are you doing this to me?” The tree tells him: “I have seen many forms of abuse to my brothers and sisters.” This is followed by a series of photographs of the destruction of clear-cutting: leveled forests, splintered trees, and devastated landscapes. A Marilyn Manson soundtrack accompanies the imagery, suggesting the intersection between skateboard culture and indigenous concerns with the earth. The tree continues: “Thank you for listening, my child.” Justin responds: “Thank you, grandfather tree.”

This moment reveals how cultural awakening becomes synonymous with political awakening. In order to address the clear-cutting of trees, one must understand the sacredness of nature. Similarly, Anglo culture’s rejection of animism reveals a more systemic disrespect toward nature that allows for actions like clear-cutting to take place. Yet elements of Anglo culture, like the anger and frustration found in Marilyn Manson’s music, can be harnessed for other purposes, such as yoking it to indigenous anger over clear-cutting. The video provides a sophisticated attitude toward culture: while recognizing the destructive tendencies of much Anglo culture, it also identifies certain elements of it that might complement indigenous beliefs and politics. It reveals indigenous youth at a crucial cross-section—familiarized and often indoctrinated into the ways of Anglo culture yet still potentially influenced by indigenous ways. At its best, indigenous youth become a new locus of hybridity where Anglo influences might be used to support indigenous beliefs, as we can see with the first video under discussion, *Child of Water*, which employs video technology to preserve and transmit a traditional Navajo song.

One video that exposes the generational fractures in indigenous culture is *SB 1070: Repeal or No Deal!*¹¹⁸ This video, for the most part, is shot in an extremely boring talking heads documentary format. A series of

adults are shot in a static frame, sitting against a black background droning on about the problems accompanying the passage of this anti-immigrant bill. Clearly, the adults are there to lend authoritative weight in speaking about the law.

Intuitively, however, the video periodically jettisons this format with a series of mock interviews with the kids pretending to be interviewees. The first one has a boy with a boa, wide sunglasses, and black floppy hat speaking into a microphone on the street, “Fuck immigration law.” After a series of dull adult interviews, we return to the streets with a girl dressed in a disheveled black wig and a wild, bright bracelet responding to a question about what should be done about the law: “I don’t think it should be there at all. There should not be a law . . . like, we don’t have that on illegal Irishmen or illegal Canadians. You can’t just walk up to a random white person and go, ‘Where the fuck is your ID?’ That’s bullshit.” She then ends with a perky: “But, yeah, that’s all I’ve got to say.”



SB 170: Repeal or No Deal (2009) inserts irreverent mock interviews to undercut the solemnity of some of the more staid interviews with adults.

The off-the-cuff remarks and profanity are a welcome antidote to the rest of the video and speak to a few different tensions. On one level, there is a generational tension: in spite of these kids wanting the authority of adults to speak about SB 1070, they clearly find this authority dull and unimaginative. The handheld outdoor shots of the faux interviews reveal a liveliness and energy that completely lacks in the indoor, static official interviewees who all speak in a measured tone. It also suggests the tension between the traditional and seemingly authoritative talking-heads documentary form and the much more kinetic, handheld, lightweight, and irreverent aesthetic of a younger generation weaned on internet videos.

Finally, it reveals two different forms of activism: One is an older unmedia savvy form, shot within an extremely dull aesthetic hosting uninspired speakers—a type of activism that believes content triumphs form. It assumes media as a delivery mechanism for important content, but it is not all that concerned about aesthetics or having viewers enjoy what they're seeing. A Puritanical repugnance toward spectacle haunts it, as suggested by the black backdrop and static framing of many of the interviews. The faux interview sequences, on the other hand, are highly aware of form and willing to sacrifice precision of the message to make them more engaging. It understands that activism needs to catch people's attention. If it wants to speak to new nonpoliticized constituencies, it needs to engage in techniques that are familiar to them, just as activists like Kalle Lasn and Stephen Duncombe insist. Overall, what makes this specific video rather unsuccessful but interesting is how it symptomatically exposes the cross-impulses that the kids find themselves lodged within. They clearly reject the new Arizona state law, but they also reject the authority and drabness of the adult activist world that challenges the law. Once again, youth represents a hybrid intersection where generational tensions, activist strategies, and aesthetic forms collide. In its uneven presentation the video honestly explores the contradictory currents of indigenous youth culture and poses questions that new forms of media activism need to address.

The Canadian Media Co-op Movement

The Canadian Media Co-op movement began in 2009. But it has older roots located in the grassroots produced newspaper *The Dominion* and the Indymedia movement. While attending Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Dru Oja Jay founded the magazine *The Dominion* in 2003. It became known for its investigative journalism on indigenous struggles, Canadian mining, and other environmental and labor issues.¹¹⁹

In order to expand the readership of *The Dominion*, its staff came up with the idea of the media co-op to sponsor locals in various cities with a decentralized structure and a funding model with the onus on the readers. Oja Jay reflects, "We produced a slogan: 'Own your media.' This was not a producer/consumer model. Everyone had a stake in it so people who can write and do journalism should do that. People who read it should support it."

Indymedia served as a central influence on the new co-op model. Many of its participants had belonged to Indymedia. Dru Oja Jay had

helped found Maritimes Indymedia. Justin Saunders, involved with the Toronto Media Co-op, helped establish the IMC in Windsor, Ontario in 2000. Enid Godtree, a cofounder of the Toronto Media Co-op, had been fundraising abroad in Norway for the Indymedias in Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince George. As Justin Saunders notes, “The co-op movement has been inspired by Indymedia, but it has been focused on long-term, community-based news reporting and a co-op model. Indymedia was focused around events and not around for the long term. It was also broader in its focus. The co-op movement is all about the local stuff.”¹²⁰

There were three related areas of improvement regarding Indymedia that the co-op wanted to improve upon. One was Indymedia’s radical openness in allowing anyone to post to its site so that moderation of the posts consumed extensive valuable time that could have been used otherwise. The second issue was the limited collaboration occurring within Indymedia. Essentially there was no infrastructure to allow people to develop their skills or collaborate on longer term endeavors other than preparing for counter-summit protests. Finally, in the place of relying on only free labor, which tends to allow those with the most privilege to participate, the co-op hired paid staff. Oja Jay notes that “paid staff might lead to other power imbalances, but it allows you to better address them on the policy level. Paying for staff and articles, even at the meager rate that we do, offers more of a balance between the two.”

Many people who became a part of the Media Co-op were trained in “journalism” at *The Dominion*, which sees it as grassroots-based and intimately linked with the surrounding community. Enid Godtree eloquently states the co-op philosophy:

Media should be grassroots-based, and any type of accountability should be coming from that base. The accountability doesn’t mean that people pull your article, but if it sucks or is poorly written or riddled with logical flaws, it is going to be your community that is going to be holding your feet to the fire. You really only worry about the readership. Are they going to like your stuff or not? You are a part of their community and they are also your funders.¹²¹

One way in which the co-op helped train writers and build community was through a collaborative editing process that started with *The Dominion*. It allows a writer and editor to continuously work with one another rather

than simply having the writer submit a story and the editor editing it with either final approval from the writer or simply publishing it without the writer's feedback. Tracy Glynn, a founder of the New Brunswick Media Co-op, which isn't officially linked to the other co-ops, asserts that collaborative editing made "me become a better writer where you go back and forth with a contributor. It helped me realize some of the common mistakes that we all have: how to fact-check and spot some of the errors that they are making, and how to make for more effective reading."¹²²

As writers improve their skills, their pieces receive more prominent positions on the local and national websites. As Enid Godtree notes, "There is a ladder system. Anyone can post on the local's website if it doesn't violate our rules. If the piece is of higher quality, it becomes a feature on the local site. If it is even better, it is featured on the national site. And if it's even better, it gets published in *The Dominion*. This way, growing recognition fosters the development of a mostly volunteer organization."

As we can see, similar to Mobile Voices, the web stories feed into newsprint of *The Dominion* and sometimes the local two-page broadsheets produced at each local: *Balaclava* (Vancouver), *The Spoke* (Toronto), and *The Tide* (Halifax).¹²³ Likewise, the stories in newsprint can be further developed online, as well as commented upon by the readership. Megan Cotton-Kinch from the Toronto Media Co-op emphasizes the links between different mediums: "There is a synergy between old and new media. We were basing much of the stuff produced on the website and printed it up on the broadsheet. It is not about the technology but about the organizing."¹²⁴

Also, most of the co-ops—Halifax, Vancouver, and Toronto—attempt to hold skills-sharing workshops to engage people who have not had access to and training in various forms of media: video, photography, writing, and web design.¹²⁵ The level of skills-sharing varies depending upon the resources and personnel available at each local. Halifax offers classes on video, audio, printmaking, and writing. According to Hillary Bain Lindsay, "We advertise on our listserv. The workshops have been free with anywhere between ten and fifty people attending. Probably the longest one we had lasted for three hours."¹²⁶ The workshops are usually hosted by one of the co-op members or a sympathetic individual with skills in the subject being taught.

Vancouver had been the most active local in terms of skills-sharing. This was in part due to its high concentration of artistic people in a rather condensed geographic area. Dawn Paley of Vancouver Media Co-op notes

how they offered trainings on how to write a story for the web, how to edit a video, and the like: “We found that by doing those workshops we get new people coming to the workshop who you normally don’t see. We get a more diverse groups of people—culturally, economically, etc. It’s not a white middle-class type project—partially through circumstance and partially since we intentionally set it up that way. We don’t just want to be a group of middle-class kids representing people from a specific community. We want the community itself to do this.”¹²⁷

Also, Vancouver benefits from having a long lineage of independent media production and its art scene. The city has many media personnel who can assist the co-op. Therefore, the city has a media infrastructure that it can depend upon. Just as we saw in relation to direct-action AIDS video activism, where New York City’s status as a media hub allowed for a critical infrastructure for such activism to take place, Vancouver’s privileged position as the artistic mecca of Canada similarly provides its co-op with distinct advantages that the other co-ops do not possess.

All four co-ops—Halifax, Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal—share the same website design and link to each other’s pages. Yet they all originated at different times and within unique circumstances. Halifax formed in 2009. According to Lindsay, “We chose Halifax because I was here and Dru wanted someone involved in *The Dominion* to head it up. We also had quite a bit of support from Nova Scotia and Halifax. Dru was living here at the time. Local media here was also facing deep cuts, so there was a need for local news.” Lindsay was making most of the decisions for the first year since “there wasn’t a core group then. Now there is an editorial collective that is much more involved. In the beginning, we didn’t have core meetings for the first year.” As a result of its small staff, Halifax initially focused on its website and the creation of its broadsheet, *The Tide*.

Vancouver was the next local to form, organizing itself around the 2010 anti-Olympics Resistance to the Winter Olympics to be held in the city during February. According to Dawn Paley, “We had been organizing for the Olympics Resistance Network. In November 2009, we decided to not just do a media infrastructure from the Olympics Resistance, but instead do something longer term. We already had a web-based platform, so we wouldn’t need to start a new one. We put a lot of energy in doing fundraisers and promotions. We also had a physical space for the convergence with around fifty journalists working within that space. But we kept linking the Olympics Resistance to a larger context and longer challenges and resistances.”

Vancouver became particularly well known for its high quality, fast turnaround videos. They screened the videos they shot during the day in the evening. According to Paley, “In the lead-up to the Olympics Resistance Network people didn’t necessarily understand what we were about—people weren’t paying attention to it. But when we screened the first day on that Friday, when around eighty people came together to see the films, they were amazed by what they saw. They were worried that the co-op wouldn’t represent an anticapitalism, anticolonial framework, but we showed them otherwise.”

Vancouver is the most anarchist of the co-ops in not only its stance and content but also by refusing to take any donations from NGOs, labor, or any other reformist organizations. Yet in spite of many of their anarchist-inflected principles, the co-op operates on a two-tier structure. There are editor members who have been around for at least three months who make decisions regarding finances, tactics, and media production. Then there are general, weekly collective meetings where editors, writers, readers, and other contributors meet to discuss strategies and content.¹²⁸

Similar to Vancouver, Toronto launched around the G20 protests held in Toronto during the end of June 2010. But its original conception preceded the G20. Both Enid Godtree and Tim Groves were mainly responsible for the Toronto Media Co-op’s formation. According to Godtree, “We didn’t want to form yet another closed off, insular collective. We wanted to be part of a larger structure that allowed the locals to retain their autonomy.”

Montreal formed in 2011 and was the weakest of all the co-ops. A series of community meetings occurred in 2010 to discuss the need for a digital alternative media organization in a city that lacked one. Its emphasis was on providing audio stories, which would be posted on its website. But because resources were stretched thin in the co-op movement and lack of participation, Montreal’s co-op is now mostly defunct. Its website, however, continues to function as an aggregator for independent news. Additionally, the co-op’s location in Montreal serves as a hub where co-op leaders converge and national funds are collected (since all the co-ops must distribute half of their revenues to the national office).

The overall growth of the Canadian Media Co-op movement is reflected in its 2010–2011 annual review. There were 277 sustainers who provide 38 percent of the co-op’s income, around \$18,000. The 269 subscribers provide around \$5,000 income. The co-ops have increased revenues from paying contributors from 5 percent to 10 percent. In early 2011,

they held their first network-wide meeting in Montreal to discuss with contributors, readers, and editors “a provisional basis of unity, a network-wide decision-making structure, and a series of guidelines that put the Media Co-op on steady footing into 2012.”¹²⁹

In 2010, the Media Co-op also initiated its first online participatory budget. Its website informed readers where members and participants would vote on allocations—with member votes and comments holding more weight.¹³⁰ In the process, two main points of debate arose: 1) the payment of contributors and staff; and 2) prioritizing specific types of media production during 2011. Although most participants agreed that forms of payment were needed, there were concerns with low salaries. As one member noted: “As a supporter of *The Dominion*, I have to say that your practices of paying staff minimum wage and expecting volunteer hours horrifies me. We need to put our ethics into practice. Please pay your staff living wages . . . and they will have more to give than if they are being paid a mediocre salary.”¹³¹ Dru Oja Jay admits that the pay was far too low, but that still “it’s really easy for wage increases to eat up any new revenue and then some,” revealing the internal conflicts between equitable pay and running an organization on minimal funding.¹³²

Most volunteer media organizations and NGOs struggle with the balance between minimizing expenses and avoiding exploiting staff and contributors, often leading to burnout and resentment. The low pay, interminable work in maintaining the national organization, and alienating working conditions at the national level of working mostly online led to a mass of resignations in summer 2014, including Dawn Paley, Miles Howe, and Arij Riahl. It also made some key figures like Tim McSorely not run again for the board. These frustrations were compounded by the burnout that followed after the police infiltration of the Toronto and Vancouver Media Co-ops during the G20 protests in 2010 and the subsequent imprisonment of protesters in later years under trumped-up conspiracy charges, leaving the organization much weaker. Although it still functions at a national level, most of the co-op locals, aside from Halifax, have minimized their staff and activity, making their and *The Dominion*’s futures dubious.¹³³

There is often also a gendered division of labor, which remains unspoken during the budget forum. New Brunswick, Halifax, and Vancouver had been primarily administrated by women. As Dawn Paley notes, “The two women who are active here at the Vancouver Media Co-op do a lot of administrative stuff. The other woman is the one who organized to get the

internet connection set up, the bills get paid, and other tasks. So this work tends to get feminized." The tech area, not surprisingly, tends to be done mostly by men. Paley comments, "I have been struggling with dealing with men who don't reflect on the process. That's in the really early stages." As a result, the co-ops individually and collectively need to further assess how a gendered division of labor and other related inequities might negatively impact their organizational structures and practices. Since priority was understandably initially given to simply sustaining the co-ops, gender inequities became secondary concerns. Yet such inequities disturbingly mirror similar limits that we have seen operating in other media activist organizations like Newsreel, Indymedia, and eco-video activism. This unequal division of gendered labor might have partially led to Paley's resignation, since the Vancouver Media Co-op's upkeep was mainly maintained by women. Also, as of recently, accusations of sexism have been leveled against two male members of the Toronto Media Co-op. Although the exact nature of the charges have not been elaborated upon by anyone I have interviewed and some debate the validity of the allegations, the stigma surrounding the co-op has made some women uncomfortable in participating at the local level and further proves that gender issues need to be better addressed by the co-op system as a whole.

The second point of debate during the 2010 participatory budget meeting was the role of *The Dominion* and video in the co-op movement. A debate ensued if resources for the print publication should be shifted to more video-oriented efforts. Not surprisingly, Dru Oja Jay, *The Dominion*'s founder, argued for its vitality. He claimed that many of the subscribers were also sustainers: "Since those folks all receive *The Dominion*, one could make the argument that it's a more important part of being a member for them."¹³⁴ Likewise, J. Stevens argues, "*The Dominion* is a tangible publication and incentive that folks get in the mail and have mailed to other folks when becoming a sustainer. It makes the whole co-op more than just a blog site, and reaches an audience who may not surf for news."¹³⁵

Yet the Vancouver Media Co-op, which was the most video savvy, made a strong argument for increasing funding for video production. Both Dawn Paley and videographer Franklin López produced a video concerning police violence and harassment of activists and independent media during the Vancouver Olympics that ran widely across activist media networks and Democracy Now! López also adds, "Our video workshops are always at capacity and our video screenings are very popular in Vancouver.

Almost everyone who becomes a member in our local is interested in producing video. More resources toward training and paying for video pieces will raise the quality of our video productions and make the VMC a serious player in the growing world of online video.”¹³⁶

Although Vancouver was the only co-op strongly advocating for video, its stature as the most active and thriving co-op at the time lent more weight to its position. Ultimately, *The Dominion*'s print run was reduced from a monthly to six issues per year, freeing up funds to pay for contributors and staff, and invest more in video if need be. Its current print run is even more sporadic with having produced only one issue in the last eight months. Yet as the years passed from the fury of Vancouver's involvement in anti-Olympic protests, its video work and overall participation in the collective has precipitously dropped. Subsequently, Halifax now represents the most active and vital of the co-ops due to its broad local support and unique presence as the only independent media organization in a very small town.¹³⁷

Looking at each co-op's videos, Vancouver's are clearly the most highly skilled and well-produced. They all begin with a techno-sounding theme song and icon announcing their website. *Anti-Olympics Speakers Corner* is perhaps one of the most sophisticated videos emerging during the Olympics Resistance Network.¹³⁸ It begins with the hypermanicured imagery of a commercial for the Olympics. We watch sweeping aerial imagery of snow-covered mountain peaks and Vancouver in silhouette, shots of brightly colored speed and figure skaters. The announcer richly intones: “February 12, 2010, live, the twenty-first Olympic Winter games come to the splendor of Canada's coastal slopes and the postcard city by the sea.” Melodramatic synthetic strings accentuate the commercial's grandeur and hubris.

Suddenly, static confronts us as if someone has quickly changed the station. Two rednecks from a Canadian sitcom sit at a table full of empty Budweiser cans and four bottles of whisky. One says: “Fuck the Olympics 'cause the Olympics are boring as hell.” The video then cuts to a protester interrupting a press conference, yelling, “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land!” A news story follows regarding how “all the hipsters are out today to see which one will take the prize of this year's hipster Olympics.” The rednecks follow by saying: “What they oughta do is get all the prime athletes of all the countries get together and fight it out, last two standing get to kick a ball around for a while. Whoever scores first, the other one gets to behead 'em.”

The comedy show, although facile in its observations, identifies a disgruntled element with the Olympics that perhaps can be utilized by Olympic Resistance protesters. Similarly, the news story on the hipster Olympics not only emphasizes the artificiality of the official Olympics by connecting it with the general superficiality of hipster culture, but it also mocks the grandeur of the Olympics by imagining waif-like hipsters sporting thick plastic glasses and Converse participating. Not unlike *Not an Alternative*, the opening of the video suggests how various constituencies—rednecks and hipsters—might potentially be politically mobilized or at least sympathetic to the Olympic Resistance Network. Rather than isolating the Olympics Resistance Network as fanatics, the opening of the video reveals how it is tapping into wider disgust with the games.

The video then asks the question: “What Do You Think About the 2010 Olympic Games?” A series of interviews follow. But rather than being done in a traditional, boring talking heads style, each participant’s response is fragmented, alternating responses between five to ten seconds among interviewees. A heavy rhythm track punctuates the sequence. Each interview is shot inside a wooden room with a glass window looking out onto nighttime traffic with the participants holding their microphone. Although the shots are identical, the speaker’s different positions in the frame keep the imagery interesting through jump cuts. Additionally, a broad cross-section of lively interviewees proceeds. A somewhat homely librarian notes, “We are facing major budget cuts. Eighty members of our staff are going to work for the host city team.” An indigenous man states, “I am anti-Olympics because my grandma died making a stand at Eagleridge Bluffs.” A woman observes, “Feminists don’t want the Olympics because the Olympics are an excuse to promote the legalization of prostitution in this city.” Before she can become too strident, another guy states in ablest language: “Thirty million on the torch relay. Two hundred million on security. Shit is . . . retarded.”

The interviews are at times irreverent and always varied, offering engaging sound bites as well as a quick speed to prevent any sole person from dominating the moment and becoming too preachy. The speakers are spontaneous and engaged. The sheer weight of the avalanche of objections and cross-section of people testifying makes the anti-Olympic movement seem truly diverse, informed, and playful. These aren’t the dour activists of yesteryear but a lively, diverse group of politically informed participants. Vancouver Media Co-op transforms what could be yet another boring testimonial into a well-produced video that leaves one energized.



From *Anti-Olympics Speakers Corner* (2010) where a plethora of interviewees give voice to their opposition. Through the video's editing a new resistant and collective subjectivity appears.

Even the minimalist two-minute video, *Opening Shenanigans*, strikes one with its fairly sophisticated framing.¹³⁹ It takes place on February 12, 2010, during the opening ceremonies. We watch them from a handheld camera focused on a television screen at a bar. A skier stands boldly on a snow-covered peak with the television announcer boozing about the 2010 Olympics. The camera then zooms back to cops standing on the perimeter of a large night protest occurring in the street outside the bar. We hear the protesters celebrating and a drum banging. The camera swings back and forth between the glass-enclosed crowd watching the games inside the bar and the lively protesters outside, with the police dividing the two.

By contrasting the framing of the opening ceremonies with that of the street, the video reveals the false harmony of the Olympic spectacle. For example, we watch some televised, ornately costumed indigenous folk consecrate the opening ceremonies, while hearing a pounding indigenous drum and chant in the streets, suggesting that in spite of the seeming inclusion of indigenous interests, the games have excluded far more. The street sounds infiltrate the imagery of the games. Outside we see anarchist flags waving, placards reading "complacency is complicity," and people swarming in the streets. The overflow of protesters contrasts with the manicured, stylized, and unified imagery found on the television. The messiness of

democracy jars against the hierarchy and rigid order and control that defines the games.

Following the Olympics, Vancouver Media Co-op continued producing high quality, thoughtful videos. *Anti-Cop March*, produced a month after the Olympics to document a protest against police brutality, shows the co-op's desire to push protest video in innovative directions by emphasizing the creation of alternative subjectivities through its manipulation of time and space.¹⁴⁰ In particular, *Anti-Cop March* shows how protest and its documentation can create a more empowered and confrontational participant.

After hearing some background information regarding the rally by an onscreen speaker, Franklin López in voice-over explains: "That speech by a masked protester kicked off a demonstration commemorating the international day against police brutality." Already a certain mastery is suggested through this choice of "Voice of God" narration. Within such narration, as Bill Nichols notes, "the voices of others are woven into a textual logic that subsumes and orchestrates them. . . . The voice of authority resides within the text itself rather than with those recruited to it."¹⁴¹

Interview clips are sprinkled between López's observations. He notes: "The police presence was large considering the size of the demonstration. There were cops on bicycles, on foot, and a van with half-a-dozen cops trailed the march." With each description, we watch a matching piece of video footage, suggesting the harmony, control, and mastery between the visual and the audio. In spite of the police presence, the video relates a cool omniscient distance from their gaze and intimidation.

Under police surveillance, the voice-over comments: "One cop continuously documented the rally with a video camera." We watch a cop filming López. The camera-wielding officer looks uncomfortably back at López's camera documenting him. The shot places the viewer in the videographer's place, letting us, also, coolly observe the police officer from the safety of our screen. We feel both immersed within the crowd and at a safe distance from it, similar to how Franklin must feel behind the lens of his camera.

Yet suddenly the voice-over claims, "I asked him [the cop with the camera] why he was videotaping the crowd." López asks off frame why the cop is shooting video. Rather than the booming, measured, studio-controlled voice-over, his street voice is higher, more agitated, and struggling to find the words. By materializing his voice behind the camera and among the crowd, the sequence tempers the earlier moment's "Voice of God"

position by revealing an all-too-human videographer attempting to get answers from the police regarding their conduct.



Anti-Cop March (2010) reveals the police's awkwardness using video and inability to control the situation.

Yet unlike Mobile Voices' video *Officer Write 'Em Up* where the camera clandestinely documents police behavior, this video reveals how the camera provides a semi-protective shield for activists to lob questions at the police. López relentlessly grills the cop: "What purpose does that serve the police? For who's going to watch this tape? For what purposes?" The cop stumbles for answers: "It films the crowd. It just . . . uh . . . gets an idea for everybody that wasn't here what was going on." He attempts to film López and the crowd but gets too caught up in answering Franklin's questions and becomes distracted. The viewer is placed in the street, situated within the well-framed, activist handheld camera work and aggressive questioning, while gradually watching the officer lose control due to his ineptness at handling his camera and interview format simultaneously. López's camera does not just document the moment, but he also aggressively inserts himself into the scene to reverse power relations between cop and protester. The technology becomes a part of the activist strategy to challenge the police and in a sense take back control of the streets.

Another police officer intervenes. But before doing so, López states—now in a "Voice of God" narration that removes itself from the scene and freezes the frame: "Apparently the video cop was not providing satisfactory

answers, so a second cop interrupted my questioning by what he thought were better answers.” Of course, there is no need for López to assert the obvious. But the voice-over, distanced from the moment, emphasizes not only the control of Franklin’s presence on the ground but also a mastery of postproduction editing. The videographer controls both the street by drawing in two cops into the framing by his aggressive questioning and controls the medium by manipulating its temporal flow by stopping frames, inserting voice-over, and editing at will. The sequence reveals the double power of video-making as it extends the power felt on the street back into the editing suite. Video-making directly connects the streets with the screen. It provides a crucial link where political empowerment can traverse the public space of the streets into the private space of the editing suite and finally back to viewers watching it on their screens. *Anti-Cop March* shows the techniques used to make screen and street dramatically converge.

No other co-op reaches this level of skill in their video-making.¹⁴² Most of the videos on the other sites consist of short handheld footage documenting a moment important to the specific locale. No voice-over is used to situate the videos, suggesting that they are made primarily for local consumption with minimal resources. Halifax, for example, has short videos documenting a postal lockout and student protests against tuition hikes.¹⁴³ During the G20, Toronto provided basic videos that documented the protests and police harassment.¹⁴⁴

If anything, the Canadian Media Co-op movement points in the right direction by showing how it revises and moderates anarchist-inflected practices that circulated during Indymedia to create an infrastructure that integrates them into local communities and attempts to make them sustainable. Yet as the global recession worsened and protests in the cities where many of the co-ops were founded receded, so did involvement in the co-ops and video production. The future of the national co-op movement remains in doubt—though it has had a good five-year run. Some of the locals, like Halifax continue to thrive. Dru Oja Jay attributes Halifax’s success to not only generating local support in a small town but also their ability to integrate themselves with the local labor movement and create financial partnerships with the people they are covering.¹⁴⁵

But, as of August 2016, the Halifax Media Co-op collapsed because its two lead organizers resigned, becoming tired of sending half of their chapter’s revenues to the national co-op offices, which ostensibly wasn’t producing much media, journalism, and activism. As one current member explained to me, the mass of resignations that occurred in 2014 crippled

the organization, since the new people who eventually replaced the veterans were never adequately explained how the co-op structure worked. Furthermore, a staff person was hired in 2014 to implement a new plan for the co-ops that had never been collectively vetted, creating ill will between the new hire and other members. Although there had been a plan since 2014 for an annual meeting to occur where the structure of the co-op would be reviewed, it has still never happened. The current member I spoke with summarized the co-op movement as “basically a corpse” as of now.¹⁴⁶

Regardless of its crippled state, the co-op movement during its height was fully aware of the ways in which media production is inextricably linked to activist organizing and actions and the need to moderate anarchist-inflected practices with more hierarchical structures to sustain a movement. Making media is not simply about representing the disenfranchised but also collectively mobilizing communities, as well as other activists, in their mutual desire for social justice. Despite the unsustainability of the media co-op movement, its innovations and desire to improve upon the limits of Indymedia, and the way in which its own contradictions swallowed itself into chaos, expose the ways in which labor, gender, and organizing issues must be more adequately addressed to create a long-term grassroots media organization.

CHAPTER SIX

VIDEO NINJAS AND THE WORK OF FRANKLIN LÓPEZ

THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE ELITE GROUP OF ACTIVIST VIDEO MAKERS, sometimes self-mockingly referred to as “video ninjas,” occupy a complicated position between anarchist affinities and typical media careers. Although engaged in social justice activism and independent media, they are members of the creative class and inheritors of a neoliberal style of workflow. They represent in part a new international division of labor being produced by the service-based, information-driven economy. They are a part of what Richard Florida refers to as the super-creative core of the creative class. They are “scientists, engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, software programmers, etc.” who make up around 15 percent of the total population as of 2000.¹ Florida has idealized the flexible work patterns and creative life of this class by ignoring the immiserating conditions of the far more significant service class that bolsters the few who actually prosper. But he has correctly identified how a new mode of labor practices has increasingly predominated in the West.

Neoliberalism privileges a select few of those from artistic backgrounds. Their fluid work practices that merge work and pleasure, emphasize nonlinear thinking and affect mesh well with a knowledge-based economy. Capitalism, according to Florida, is “taking people who would once have been viewed as bizarre mavericks operating at the bohemian fringe and setting them at the very heart of the process of innovation and economic growth.”² Yet as Andrew Ross points out, “Florida’s nostrum, that creativity is everybody’s natural asset to exploit, is difficult to distinguish

from any other warmed-over version of American bootstrap ideology.”³ Such an ideology would anoint the select few for the exploitation of the many. But a few do indeed rise.

The video makers to be discussed here are attempting to redirect their privileged roles *against* neoliberalism. This is not to say that these video makers are living lushly or wallowing in wealth, but they nonetheless remain at the top of the labor pyramid that provides them with the resources (including financial, racial, and gender privileges) and independence to engage in unpaid or lowly subsidized creative work.

Aside from distributing their videos through their own websites and digital distribution platforms like Vimeo, many of the activist video makers sell their materials to both independent and commercial producers. Free Speech TV (FSTV), Grit TV, Link TV, and Democracy Now! have paid small amounts for either raw footage or preproduced segments. For example, FSTV paid \$150 for a speech for its keynote series, where a videographer would cover a highly desirable speaker. According to activist videographer Jeff Keating, “Sometimes I would ask them if they wanted me to shoot certain things. There was never a question of getting approval normally. Green festivals were also very productive. They always had a good list of speakers. I would go to certain things that other people weren’t covering. I would stay with friends and get in free as a reporter. I could cover all my expenses but not make any money out of it. But at least I wasn’t going into the hole.”⁴ Making a living from such low-paid work is dubious for most video makers unless they are willing to minimize cost-of-living expenses, share resources, and often live collectively.

But with the downturn of the economy such work became even more precarious as nominal payments for such footage were either severely reduced or eliminated altogether. Although some outlets like FSTV have reinstated such payments, they remain relatively low. People like Keating continue to work but at a much more irregular pace than before.

Other video makers sell footage to broadcast television and independent media outlets. Brandon Jourdan has sold footage to FSTV, Democracy Now!, and Grit TV. But he also notes, “I have contributed to the *New York Times*, Reuters, and *Huffington Post*. As a freelancer you don’t have to compromise. I tipped off a journalist from *The New York Times* about the New School student protests in 2008. I have caught stuff that other media hasn’t. This allows me to sell footage that others want. I don’t feel you should limit yourself to one outlet.”⁵ This flexible, piecemeal way of working has become a staple of the new economy where jobs remain temporary and benefits largely

nonexistent. As Andrew Ross has shown, white male workers tend to most highly value such working conditions: “Disproportionately white (90.6 percent) and male (66.2 percent), they were more likely to prefer their employment arrangements than any other workers in this category.”⁶ Therefore, Jourdan’s preference for his work is not surprising since it mirrors a general privilege that many white, male creatives share. Yet unlike the super creative class that Florida speaks of, most activist video makers earn meager salaries from their work, if that. Most have to supplement their incomes with other jobs and rely on the goodwill of others for free housing and food during an assigned project. Their preferences for such work often derive less from direct material benefits (though building their résumé and professional connections can lead to future work and potentially higher salaries) than a freedom to engage in a type of creative political work that is meaningful to them.

To give a specific example, Brandon Jourdan and David Martinez’s video, *Occupied Berkeley* (2009), provides a look into how independent production works and the vexed relations between media makers’ anarchist affinities and neoliberal practices. While shooting short videos for the Yes Men⁷ and waiting to fly out to Copenhagen to film the direct actions against the COP 16,⁸ Jourdan heard about the planning of a student strike and direct action to occupy Wheeler Hall on Berkeley’s campus to protest the tuition hikes, the firing of janitorial staff, and the general defunding of the public university system by the state. Jourdan recounts, “I decided to take that week to go to UC Berkeley and told Democracy Now! that something would happen. I got the nod from them that they would buy it for the show.” Dave Martinez, co-producer and cameraman of *Occupied Berkeley*, had already been filming failed student occupations at Berkeley throughout the fall, since he lives in the Bay Area. Also, Martinez had connections with independent producers back in New York City through his contributions to various Deep Dish TV series. Due to the makers’ connections and proven track record, Democracy Now! felt assured of the quality of the production and its timeliness.

Martinez’s and Jourdan’s relations with Democracy Now! are not all that different from many below-the-line video makers’ relations to commercial production outlets that Vicki Mayer chronicles in *Below the Line*. She notes how since the 1970s “the casualization of television work, from its outsourcing of tasks to nonguild members who deferred benefits to its reliance on multitasking entrepreneurs to drive down labor costs, had fragmented reliable work routines, rerouted career paths, and divorced professionalism from its assumed material benefits.”⁹ This neoliberal restructuring of media

production, as we can see, has impacted all levels of independent video production whether it be for progressive causes or the commercial industry.

Because job uncertainty and lack of benefits plagues independent video makers, they tend to recoup their losses in what Mayer has referred to as the surplus value of identities. For example, the softcore video makers she interviewed spoke about and fetishized technology as a way to reassert their masculinity.¹⁰ Similarly, activist video makers, who are mostly men, also tend to recoup their sense of professionalism and masculinity in recounting the danger of the actions they cover, their arrests, and the general mayhem where they had to maintain courage under fire. Martinez, for example, made a point of emphasizing that he shot *Occupied Berkeley* with a broken arm that he received from an earlier clash at a protest as we discussed the video at a party.¹¹ This is not to claim that such accounts are disingenuous. But it is to suggest that within a neoliberal economy the stories we recount about ourselves do not simply transparently reveal something about our inner beliefs. They also serve as self-promotion and branding as these video makers jockey for future jobs, career paths, and professional encounters. They both express the video makers' beliefs and become a calling card for future employment. It remains difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate insight from salesmanship in such a context since the video makers' self-narratives are intimately intertwined with their careers.

Returning to my analysis of *Occupied Berkeley*, Jourdan and Martinez arrived early in the morning at Wheeler Hall. According to Jourdan, "I told the students I was working for Democracy Now! and asked them if they would mind if I could go in with them. Some of the kids were nervous. They covered their faces and worried that they would be identified in leading the occupation." Martinez had already established trust with many students since he had been videotaping their earlier unsuccessful occupations throughout the semester. While Jourdan was filming inside, Martinez filmed the occupation from the outside. Jourdan called the *New York Times* and various California newspapers to say that a journalist was inside, hoping that a mainstream news presence might deter or at least mitigate police violence and harassment. Jourdan recounts, "I was throwing my DV tapes outside the window to Martinez so the cops wouldn't take them. When the police eventually entered, I was arrested with a small infraction and then released."

Occupied Berkeley attests to Jourdan's and Martinez's skill.¹² It is a rather precise and engaging video made in a short turnaround time. The video begins with a low-end, ominous riff as titles establish the location, event, and main issues: "On November 18th, the regents of the University of California

voted to raise undergraduate tuition 32 percent. The regents' new budget plan would also mean the layoffs of workers and furloughs throughout the state of California." An establishing shot of Wheeler Hall follows, the site of the occupation. We see a U-lock clasped across door handles and chairs stacked up as further barricades. Already we have the unique vision of seeing the occupation from the inside, not unlike what we saw earlier in Newsreel's *Columbia Revolt*.

Students efficiently and effectively explain their situation. A masked student states, "It's not only about students, but it is about faculty members. It's about workers. It's about all of us being fed up with this crisis in priorities. They say it's a financial crisis. But that is not the truth. It's what they value and honor in the education system that's the problem. We're fighting for a public good." A young, black-clad woman wearing a bandanna over the lower half of her face lists the students demands: rehiring of thirty-eight fired staff, a one-dollar lease for the student co-op, a fair contract for the only immigrant-owned business on campus, and rejection of the tuition hike.

Her dress, furthermore, signifies a black bloc alliance. The black bloc is not an organization but an anarchist protest tactic. It produces an affinity group of black-clad individuals with their faces covered who engage in aggressive direct actions such as property destruction or, in this case, the forced occupation of a building. The students' tactics and dress suggest their anarchist affinities regardless if all of them are aware of this or not. Yet they are applying such tactics to defend the integrity of a state institution—something self-identified anarchists are supposed to oppose since the state is often viewed one-dimensionally as a site of oppression—thus revealing a hybrid political approach at work.



Occupied Berkeley (2009) has students dressed in anarchist fashion even though they are protesting in defense of state education.

The piece keeps the confrontation with the police outside of the hall to a visual minimum, not unlike the direct-action videos of ACT UP. A photo-montage of students blocking cars and being dragged by the police follows. We then witness a brief moment of the police beating a protester relentlessly. But the video quickly shifts back inside Wheeler Hall to emphasize negotiations and how a sympathetic faculty member would like to enter the hall with the chief of police. The students instead suggest that negotiations be brought outside so “the rest of the students, faculty, and workers that are outside can participate in the conversation as well,” as one student explains. Such a comment, once again, reveals the students’ anarchist inclinations to involve all participants into the process by creating a nonhierarchical space. This sequence also conveys Jourdan’s and Martinez’s care and skill in not allowing the students’ issues and strategies to get lost among depictions of police repression. Violence never supplants the core issues, which all too often happens within activist videos. Like the earlier ACT UP direct-action videos, the piece emphasizes anarchist-inflected processes as much as it does protesters’ demands by the makers’ embedding at least one camera with the students. Not only do the students’ demands challenge the neoliberal assumptions guiding public education in California, but their actions also model the type of nonhierarchical relationships that the bureaucracy of university life implicitly rejects.

During the last two minutes, the film documents the police’s invasion into the hall. One could say it is the riot porn section of the video, but watching the police breaking down the doors and then seeing the camera swing from the doors and running with the students inside the hall for safety provides stunning, rare footage. Compared to the rest of the video’s well-framed footage, the camera temporarily loses control, shooting wildly, embodying the panic that has gripped the students. The camera joins the students in hiding in the back of a classroom. The framing shakes as the camera is jostled by the overflowing bodies entering the room. The camera frantically scopes the room before focusing upon the squatting students. Finally, the filming regains composure and steadily frames the door as the police enter.

This type of activist camerawork is significant in the way it situates itself differently from traditional documentary form by further stressing the type of embodied immediacy that Roger Hallas identified operating in direct-action AIDS activist videos. As Patricia Zimmerman notes, this on-the-ground type style of filmmaking “constitutes a political strategy that expands the nature of committed or guerrilla filmmaking into a joint

effort between social actors and the action of image making.”¹³ We witness this uniting of political action and image making most dramatically as the camera runs for cover and is jostled by the other student bodies. When the camera positions itself to steadily focus on the classroom door as the police enter, it is not just documenting an event but also moderating the police’s behavior. Filming itself becomes an intervention made explicit by Jourdan’s refusing to sit on the floor with the other protesters. Because Jourdan remains standing, the camera holds a somewhat defiant position that visually locates itself literally on the side of the protesters while at the same time carving out an optimum viewpoint from which to observe how the protesters are being treated by the police. This moment clearly represents the different but related registers of the space of video-making and the space of the political. The video, as a result, not only captures the affective dimensions of a student group being invaded by the police but also provides a direct intervention during the moment of confrontation between students and police.



Occupied Berkeley emphasizes the way in which Brandon Jourdan inserts himself into the action by utilizing the “space of the film” as a form of resistance.

Jourdan, like many other video makers, is highly aware of the importance of aesthetics in situating audiences. He speaks of his own framing in terms similar to SmartMeme’s outlook: “One thing that is also important for people making independent types of media: too often the flaw is the story of the battle dominating over the battle of the story. We need to frame our videos in progressive terms rather than reactionary ones. Alternative

media is at its best in its ability to innovate storytelling.” This wider framing of the battle of the story is abundantly clear in how *Occupied Berkeley* establishes the main issues at its beginning, assuming that its audience might be unfamiliar with them and tracing how these concerns relate to California as a whole. Furthermore, the video effectively minimizes its focus on police repression by maintaining primary focus on the students’ issues, tactics, and strategies.

Yet in spite of all this careful framing and well-crafted editing, only the riot porn section of the video went viral over the web. Jourdan complains, “I get frustrated in the fact that the footage that went viral was the police brutality rather than the message of the students holding up in Berkeley. This somehow gets overlooked.” This observation speaks to a larger dilemma in social justice media: how might video makers be able to counter the simplification of their content into nothing more than riot porn when it is distributed? Furthermore, it questions why riot porn tends to trump other material rather than simply coexist with it.

The popularity of the most violent imagery of *Occupied Berkeley* speaks to an even older problem of spectacle-based activism: how does one prevent one’s message from being co-opted and distorted? The Black Panthers provide an illuminating example here. Although they engaged in many mundane but essential tasks like supplying food, childcare, transportation, and education to the community, their image of being armed and standing in formation predominated in mainstream media. At the same time, as T.V. Reed explains, such imagery should not simply be dismissed as an empty theatrical stunt. He writes, “While to many the Panthers may have seemed to be engaging in mere posturing, to many others their revolutionary posture spoke volumes about no longer knuckling under to white power. Those people may not have believed that a revolution was at hand, but they got the message that only a new kind of black person would dare even to speak revolution to the white world.”¹⁴

A more serious problem arises, though, when such imagery not only trumps activists’ other actions but also further draws down police and government repression and violence. The Black Panthers’ confrontational imagery and attitude helped lead to the untimely deaths of many of their members by bolstering white prejudices already held by many police and government officials. This reliance upon a spectacle of confrontation might energize some viewers to join such movements or engage in sympathetic actions. But such imagery comes at a high price of drawing further police and government infiltration and violence that exacerbates the

internal tensions within such groups and accelerates their dissolution as it had done for the Black Panthers and would later impact eco-activists during the 1990s and 2000s after the Earth Liberation Front engaged in arson against environmentally unsound organizations and drew immense federal scrutiny and repression against much of the environmental movement.

What *Occupied Berkeley* further adds is that even producing one's own independent media doesn't prevent its more sensationalistic aspects from being distorted and overemphasized as it is distributed over the web. It exposes the limits of such media in reaching wider audiences in its original form. And it raises the question of whether such fetishization can ever be avoided.

As this brief example shows, the practices of activist video makers are complicated and at times contradictory. Although clearly allied with the students in defending affordable higher education, Jordan's and Martinez's reliance upon a career of independent video-making nonetheless engages in neoliberal practices that actually challenge the very existence of state support. Although one does not want to overplay the significance of two progressive video makers' actions as simply supporting a neoliberal worldview, they gesture toward the contradictory terrain such activist media makers must negotiate as they level their skills against capitalist practices that they are also implicated within. Similarly, Democracy Now!, which provides a viable distribution platform for *Occupied Berkeley* to be viewed by the progressive community, relies upon the very practices of outsourcing below-the-line video makers that we also see operating in commercial productions. In other words, the political economy of activist media-making tends to problematize in part the progressive material being filmed. Here neoliberal networks and anarchist affinities converge into a twisted terrain of hybrid practices. As opposed to the rhetoric that often posits neoliberalism and anarchism as mutually exclusive, we can see their affinities and relations—without suggesting that they are identical.

Difficulties in Making Activist Media

Despite independent video makers like Brandon Jourdan, Dave Martinez, Flux Rostrum, Franklin López, and a select few others thriving, the economic meltdown in 2008 has made it even more difficult for many of them to survive. FSTV, for example, shrank from twelve employees to three. In 2011 Eric Galatas, its program director at the time, stated, "We used to give

\$150 a speech for our keynote series. We eliminated that. We also eliminated staff positions that weren't that productive, but we are still paying documentary producers. Our rate has actually increased a bit, not much. The payments have increased because we pay for longer license periods. So we are paying hefty fees to Democracy Now!"¹⁵

This reallocation of payments and fees made it easier for those already well-connected within media activism to sustain themselves but proves daunting for others. Jeff Keating notes, "When Free Speech was paying me, I was putting a lot of effort into it. But everything seems to be now changing directions. Now people are shooting stuff on their cell phones and putting it on YouTube. The whole object of doing media is getting it out there. I need to change my whole process if I don't have access to Free Speech TV. If your goal is to get media out, then you need a new way to do it." Flux Rostrum also notes, "Free Speech TV used to buy some of my pieces, but they no longer have any money, and I'm not keen on giving fully produced videos to a television station for no money."¹⁶

Similarly, Randy Rowland, a member of the Pepper Spray Collective, also notes the changing model of independent media due to digital media's availability and internet distribution: "I'm personally trying to figure out what the lever is to move the world with. It used to be film and then became video. But I'm not sure if the Indymedia model is the one anymore. Now everyone has something on the web, which is creating overload. It used to be where we could just show raw footage and a voice-over of protesters. Although the democratization of the technology initially has watered down the aesthetic standards, now much more high quality stuff is being produced." This provides a dilemma for him: "I am a full-time activist even though I have a day job. There is no way I am going to make movies of that quality."¹⁷ Because of oversaturation on web-based platforms, the relatively high-quality video produced by many media activists, and decreasing funds available to support new video makers, the scene has in a sense become more insular within media activist communities.

Despite the decreased funding, there has always been tension between freelancers and the production outlets, as well as tension within the outlets themselves. Flux Rostrum recounts how "Democracy Now! has used clips from several of my videos often without giving any credit and always for free. I no longer bother with them after they used some footage of mine from mountaintop removal protests repeatedly." As mentioned earlier, the limited to nonexistent funding for video makers to submit their work to such outlets like Free Speech TV, Grit TV, and Democracy Now!

has led to tensions among video makers who want distribution but not to be exploited, while understanding that such independent media outlets are underfunded and have limited resources at their disposal.

There have also been tensions within the organizations themselves, which is a fairly common phenomenon. This was most dramatically emphasized by the fallout that happened at Pacifica in the late 1990s between new board members and existing staff as a new corporate model supplanted a nonhierarchical grassroots one. This transformation and growing hierarchy is not unique as organizations move into an official nonprofit status. For example, Brenda Rawlins, field director for Prometheus Radio Project, notes how Prometheus nonetheless maintained its collectively run base, even while it became a nonprofit and established a board of directors: “I am still wrapping my head around why they have a board with a consensus-based group. There is a loving tension. There is no hatred. I have worked in some other organizations where there was tremendous tension between the autonomous staff and the board. Many of times, the executive director, the crux figure who is supposed to be the fulcrum, when that person is weak and can’t provide the resources, by having no designation of the middle there for quite some time, it can throw some things out of business.”¹⁸

Also, some employees of nonprofits feel deeply exploited. Andrew Lynn who learned media-making at Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) still critiques the organization for its low pay and alienating working conditions: “There is a huge pay disparity between upper management and those who are freshly hired or long-term staff workers. There were a lot of things that pissed me and other people off. There was a lot of unhappiness with a lot of people working there, which is ironic, since it is such an amazing place.”¹⁹ His ambivalence of calling MNN “an amazing place” while nonetheless being “pissed off” at the situation is representative of many media activists’ mixed attitudes toward the organizations they work within, where their ideals battle with the pragmatic necessities of producing work and day-to-day living, which we also saw occur in the Canadian Media Co-op.

All of these issues came to a head at Free Speech TV in 2009. According to Eric Galatas, “We had some layoffs. You can say that it was because of our founding donor who didn’t want to give our general manager what he wanted or the general manager wasn’t good at acquiring funds.” Also, there was a rather unpopular incoming executive director: “That relationship did not work out. It resulted in low morale among staff. I

was actually fired and then rehired. He ‘parted’ with the organization. This led to greater tension with the workers who were already upset with the hierarchical structure of the organization.”

Employee unhappiness was already apparent in 2002 when they voted to form a union. The union strongly opposed the incoming dysfunctional CEO who was hired by management because he was supposedly a good fundraiser. Galatas recounts, “The CEO did some really strange things before the contract was signed,” but Galatas wouldn’t elaborate exactly what. He continues: “We told the management that they should reconsider the offer, but the managers were discussing the hire with the staff, who then turned around and said that they would support his case. It is my speculation that they wanted management to crash and burn so that they could then propose converting FSTV into a workers collective.”

Kyle Harris, former acquisitions manager at FSTV who was one of those laid off, offers a very different interpretation of the collectivization efforts: “In regards to collectivization, there were a lot of tensions between middle management and upper management. The way the union approached the collectivization was fairly positive, with hopes that it could operate on a truly democratic level. It seems like there was a lot of bitterness over collectivization from middle to upper management. It was interesting since many of these folks had once advocated very publicly for a democratically run workplace. They certainly have worked nonhierarchically in social movements. Much of the collectivization had to do with the way things were being addressed in the workplace, such as a disrespectfulness and huge rudeness that characterized the behavior of the managers to the employees.”²⁰

Galatas, who was central to establishing Indymedia in 1999 in Seattle, expressly states, “I am in principle for a worker-run collective.” But even when he was organizing Indymedia, he foresaw limits with their consensus-based model: “When I went to Seattle, the IMC would hold consensus-based meetings for four or five hours without deciding anything. The role I took on was facilitating meetings. I would limit conversation of people talking for too long and assess the agenda and agree how long each item would take. I would make sure that we would accomplish those goals. Some people who are strict or have ideological adherence to anarchist principles really want to focus more on the process, because they feel that after you have cleared those hurdles you have a smoother decision-making body. But it depends on how large that body is and how well they know one another for this to work.”

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Seattle IMC organizational structure was more complexly run than has often been assumed: a mix between consensus-based practices and hierarchy. Although the IMC was largely run by consensus, it nonetheless had some restraints and implicit hierarchies. Younger media activists who have idealized Seattle 1999 resurrect some of these tensions when pushing current media organizations in less hierarchical directions or resist the newly created hierarchies as grassroots organizations convert to nonprofit status. These tensions are even greater when those organizations are run by the elders of the alter-globalization movement, whom younger activists assume to be sympathetic with anarchist principles.

Soon after the collectivization process was brought to the board in 2009, most of the FSTV staff was fired, leading to some bitterness among the media activist community and a deafening silence among those who still depended upon FSTV for distribution and support. My goal here is not to demonize FSTV, but to explore the complex tensions that underlie many independent media organizations, while also suggesting how tacit misapprehensions of the meaning of Seattle 1999 still plague the independent media community and ultimately exacerbate already existing tensions.

Regardless of their relationship to such organizations, most of these independent video makers desire to improve the quality of their work by either experimenting more or establishing a more professional/accessible quality. Brandon Jourdan states, “I feel that there is this constant friction between a more experimental/documentary style and the more voice-over/journalistic pieces. The difference between say a documentary and journalism is pure aesthetics. I’m trying to develop a more experimental style. I feel a bit restricted even by journalism. You are limited by form. You can have more radical content, but it is not really challenging aesthetically.” Similarly, Kyle Harris claims, “Challenging aesthetics, making that link between aesthetic transformation and challenging traditional forms are difficult and not necessarily happening at the level I want it to. The activist scene is not speaking about it.”

Harris was in a unique position to assess the quality of activist video since he was acquisitions manager for Free Speech TV from 2000 to 2009. After having viewed thousands of low-quality submissions, Harris wrote the polemic “Beyond Authenticity: Aesthetic Strategies and Anarchist Media.” As Harris explains, “What led me to write that piece was experiencing so much of that sloppy Indymedia style from being a programmer at Free Speech TV and watching the videos fail to connect with audiences.

Watching thousands of these poorly made documentaries that were in part coming out of that world of experimental media that pooh-poohed those ideas of accessibility was kind of annoying.” The article’s formalist emphasis upon aesthetics rather than the contexts in which media is produced can be seen as overcompensating for the lack of formal concern found among many activist communities.

One of the article’s main points of contention is that anarchist media makers need to abandon a DIY, punk-inflected, rough-edged style for a more accessible form if they hope to distribute their videos outside of the activist ghetto. Harris notes, “Gestural camerawork, punk aggression, and Surrealist and Dada explorations of the non-rational have paved the way for the pitfalls of DIY video production: sloppy camerawork, blown out sound, poorly lit images, and incoherent narrative.”²¹

The reliance upon the punk aesthetic stems from two significant issues. One, “far too often, activist media producers presume viewers are familiar with the social and historical context of their story.”²² This is understandable since the activist world is so insular yet thriving that one can easily be deceived into thinking that it has greater outreach and influence than it does. For example, anecdotally speaking, when first conceptualizing my radical media course, I considered not including Indymedia, since I had wrongly assumed that anyone my age and younger was familiar with it. But when I asked students the first day of class if they had heard of Indymedia, not one had. As my research and interaction with media activists had deepened, the gulf between my students and myself had grown, as this thriving world of media activism and social justice movements I’m involved with have little explicit contact with their mediascape.

The second issue, according to the article, emerges from the antirational romanticist traditions that influence much of contemporary Western anarchism. Harris notes that “these traditions honor the importance of individual creative expression and resist character-driven linear narratives.”²³ They are particularly influential among anarcho-primitivists. As Harris correctly observes, “They believe that to move away from the symbolic and representational pushes us away from the horrors of civilization towards a feral *telos*, a wild, utopian future, best exemplified artistically in the paintings of abstract expressionists.”²⁴ As seen in the example of Green Anarchism discussed earlier, there is a tension between those who see culture as a vital tool to express oneself and collectively organize around and those who view it as a hindrance, a mere superstructure that forecloses pure unmediated relations between individuals. Harris asks, “In our desire

to liberate ourselves from the oppressive structures of Western civilization and tradition, have we rejected some of the best tools available?”²⁵

Accordingly, “Anarchists should consider the enormous importance of entertainment and education that high quality media products create, and develop the institutions that can support the production of such work.”²⁶ If anarchists hope to speak to a broader constituency, it means reconsidering classical narrative strategies like character development and emphasizing product as much as process:

If we want to compete with the Right, we must consider surrendering some of our structurally unappealing aesthetic tendencies. We must generously challenge the aesthetic carelessness often found in community media aesthetics and support quality, grassroots products, and producers whose work competes in the broader social arena. We must financially and culturally support producers whose quality of work and attention to structure evolves. We must also help sustain the work of media producers beyond their training, continuing to provide equipment and strategies for accessing equipment to the people involved in community-based projects. Training youth and community members to make media will only be fruitful when participants cultivate a sustainable expertise that extends beyond the education experience itself.²⁷

Harris’s polemical reasoning problematically devalues process and the socioeconomic limits that restrict dispossessed people’s engagement with media production. For example, training youth and community members has value outside of just cultivating “a sustainable expertise that extends beyond the education experience itself,” as examples like Media Mobilizing Project, Outta Your Backpack Media, and Mobile Voices all attest. The process of media-making restructures identity individually and collectively, as well as becoming an inherent practice of direct action and political engagement. But to give Harris credit, his polemical focus on form stresses an issue that remains largely ignored on a general level at most media activist conferences and social forums. Although particular groups and organizations might be having discussions regarding aesthetics, these have not translated into a general discussion among media activists.

Harris’ outlook resonates with the work that groups like SmartMeme and Not an Alternative are doing in recrafting the story of the battle into

the battle of the story. Yet absent from Harris's article is the more tricky question of how the mandates of mass distribution might neuter one's activist message in ways unrecognizable. Although Harris and others often act as if mass distribution simply revolves around formal issues, such wide release is also contingent upon the content and its framing, as well as professional connections with the gatekeepers of commercial media. Also, formal issues are deeply tied with content, as we saw in the earlier discussion of how the eco-activist message of *Pickaxe* was compromised in part as its makers attempted to gain distribution on PBS.²⁸

For the remainder of the chapter I want to focus on the work of Franklin López. I do this for three reasons: 1) López has been making videos for over ten years, so his output offers a barometer of the innovations of anarchist video-making for the past decade; 2) his work explicitly addresses many of the central tensions found within North American anarchist communities; and 3) his work is highly respected by many other media activists, thus warranting an extended analysis of it. In rather conventional terms, López is an auteur, but his video-making refuses to let us speak about it in simply individualistic terms since it always relates to wider movement issues and practices. As Robin Wood observes in "Ideology, Genre, Auteur," "It is only through the medium of the individual that ideological tensions come into particular focus, hence become of aesthetic as well as sociological intent. It can perhaps be argued that works are of especial interest when the defined particularities of an auteur interact with specific ideological tensions and when film is fed from more than one generic source."²⁹ Along similar lines, hip-hop, the avant-garde, popular culture, and anarchist traditions all converge within López's work, yielding a compelling hybrid form that's fraught with tensions from its multiple sources. By offering close analysis of some of López's work I can address some larger issues that surround certain strains of North American anarchism and its relation to activist media-making.

Franklin López's Anarchist Vision

Franklin López was born in Puerto Rico and split his childhood between Trujillo Alto, a suburb of San Juan, and Washington, DC. According to López, "My dad operated an all-news channel in San Juan and that got me hooked on video. I would go there after school and taught myself how to edit video."³⁰ Also, his father was deeply involved in Puerto Rican politics. López recalls, "During the 1970s he spearheaded a campaign that

succeeded in granting Puerto Ricans the right to vote in US primaries. In the 1980s he started an ambitious news TV station on the island. . . . Canal 24 focused on investigative reporting, something that disrupted the action news model of most local evening news programs.”³¹ Due to the channel’s explicit and controversial reporting, such as linking Columbian drug cartels with the CIA, his father “became the target of several politically motivated government investigations” and was imprisoned for 63 months.³² This background clearly highlights the ways in which radical politics, police and state repression, and independent media-making became yoked together in López’s childhood.

During the 1990s, López moved to Atlanta to found subMedia. He recounts: “In 1997 . . . we began production of ‘Hempyclopedia,’ a CD-ROM and music compilation that told the story of the hemp plant through multimedia and had 10 kick-ass tracks by Southeastern bands. We secured nationwide distribution, but our investor could not come through with the necessary funds for marketing so I was stuck with 5,000 CDs I couldn’t sell.”³³ By 2001, right after 9/11, he began working with Atlanta Indymedia. López notes, “Since then I’ve worked on several Indymedia projects including *Gigante Despierta!*, a DVD compilation about the 2006 May Day immigrant marches.”³⁴

Before moving to Vancouver, B.C., López worked as a producer at Democracy Now! While there, he noticed how “several of the producers there also came from Indymedia, so in a way Democracy Now! is an extension of Indymedia.”³⁵ This reinforces the idea that one of Indymedia’s main inheritances was its creation of a social network among activist media makers that carries over into current organizations and groups.

López, however, was equally influenced by the anarchist group CrimethInc. and the copyleft movement. He states, “CrimethInc. taught me not to ask for permission and convinced me that the current paradigm of intellectual property is bullshit.”³⁶ This debt becomes abundantly clear in his DVD/zine *Molotov 2*. Within it, he reprints articles by free speech lawyer Lawrence Lessig and CrimethInc. challenging copyright issues. He recounts how he bootlegged videos back in Atlanta by using a Panasonic video mixer to bypass the tape’s anticopying Macrovision encoding.³⁷

Throughout *Molotov II*, interviews, and his web show, *It’s the End of the World as We Know It*, to be discussed later, López highlights his indebtedness to the culture jamming tactics of the avant-garde and hip-hop communities. He writes, “Back when Grand Master Flash was sampling vinyl and creating hip-hop was he afraid of what Chic was going to do to him

for snagging the beat from ‘Good Times?’ I bet in the back of his mind was a little something bugging him. In the end he and others said ‘fuck it’ and went on to create what would become a mega-industry and probably the most exciting music form of the last 100 years.”³⁸

Yet at the same time, Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN) had an equally profound influence.³⁹ EBN sifted through the detritus of commercial television to sample and distill it into a techno-infused critique that was then distributed on bootleg VHS tapes and eventually led to multimedia tours. As Josh Pearson, one of EBN’s founders, observes, “People are getting more and more cynical while still watching television. And everyone kind of knows, ‘They’re just fucking with us. They’re just manipulating us. It’s all just propaganda.’ So when we take television and manipulate it, it provides us with a cathartic release.”⁴⁰ López recounts the first time he saw a tape by EBN: “Holy fuckin’ shit, these guys were taking it to the next level. They were making music with video samples and making political statements to boot. Yep, the new art form was already here.”⁴¹

López’s diverse interests in hip-hop, anarchism, the avant-garde, eco-activism, and popular films manifest themselves within his videos. As a result, his work provides a nodal point where many of the tensions between and within these influences manifest themselves. As a result, his work allows us to address some of the overriding concerns related to contemporary North American anarchism in a condensed form.

One of the central tensions found within López’s work and North American anarchism as a whole is between a tradition of social anarchism deeply influenced by socialism and that of lifestyle anarchism that originated within the 1960s’ counterculture. This issue came to a head in 1995 with the publication of Murray Bookchin’s extremely crotchety *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*. Written partially in reply to L. Susan Brown’s *The Politics of Individualism*, he claims that Brown and others like Hakim Bey represent a larger trend where “thousands of self-styled anarchists have slowly surrendered the social core of anarchist ideas to the all-pervasive Yuppie and New Age personalism that marks this decadent, bourgeoisified era. In a very real sense, they are no longer socialists—the advocates of a communally oriented libertarian society—and they eschew any serious commitment to an organized, programmatically coherent social confrontation with the existing order.”⁴²

Implicit within Bookchin’s critique is how lifestyle anarchism replicates the very practices of neoliberalism: an emphasis upon immediate gratification, the exaggerated significance of lifestyle choices making a

political impact, and the fetishization of the ego and individual choice. For Bookchin, lifestyle anarchism resurrects the worst narcissistic habits of the 1960s, leading to a completely idealized and dehistoricized notion of the ego. Bookchin observes: "Their ideological pedigree is basically liberal, grounded in the myth of the fully autonomous individual whose claims to self-sovereignty are validated by axiomatic 'natural rights,' 'intrinsic worth,' or, on a more sophisticated level, an intuited Kantian transcendental ego that is generative of all knowable reality."⁴³ Ultimately, such liberal suppositions "would amount to ignoring the fact that the ego is the product of an *ever-formative history*" and emerged during the Renaissance with the rise of capitalism.⁴⁴ Lifestyle anarchism's celebration of individuality, in other words, is deeply entwined with capitalism and its hierarchies, violence, and injustices.

L. Susan Brown in *The Politics of Individualism*, the book that provoked Murray Bookchin to write *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, identifies the implicit Sartrean existentialist attitude that underlies much North American anarchist thinking. She writes: "The argument is not that anarchism can work because human beings are 'naturally' co-operative or responsible, but rather that anarchism is possible because we have the freedom to create ourselves."⁴⁵ This is the Sartrean position found in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and *Nausea* (1938). Brown emphasizes, "When Sartre states that 'Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,' he is saying that the human individual is freedom, because at first we are nothing."⁴⁶ But this stance overlooks Sartre's eventual rejection of this position and turn toward Marxism during the 1960s to build a more sophisticated framework that his earlier existentialist thinking neglected.

What makes Brown's book interesting is its explicit acknowledgment of how this throwback to 1950s existentialism courses throughout much lifestyle anarchist thinking, which understandably annoyed Bookchin as politically naive and ill-informed. In spite of appeals to rupturing with the past and establishing new norms and living practices, many lifestyle anarchists are caught up in a nostalgic mindset.

We can see the inheritances of this existentialist attitude in many of the works of CrimethInc. and other romanticist anarchist traditions that believe individual choice can circumvent history. In *Days of War, Nights of Love* an anonymous CrimethInc. author writes: "There is nothing we despise more than history. Nothing could be more crippling than the feeling that we are part of a chain of events, an inescapable chain reaction that predetermines everything we do, everything is possible."⁴⁷ The Sartrean

aspects are even more highlighted in a later essay: “The rupture that occurs when you shake off everything that has come before is not just a break with the past—you are ripping yourself out of the past–future continuum you had built, hurling yourself into a vacuum where *anything* can happen and you are forced to remake yourself according to a new design.”⁴⁸ This is exactly Sartre’s point when he writes in *The Transcendence of the Ego*: “Thus each instant of our conscious life reveals to us a creation *ex nihilo*. Not a new *arrangement*, but a new existence. There is something distressing for each of us, to catch in the act this tireless creation of existence of which *we* are not the creators.”⁴⁹ For the existentialist and romantic anarchist, direct action allows history and mediation to completely fall away like a second skin.

In its most extreme form, this romanticism can lead to the rejection of symbolism and culture as a whole. In *Recipes for Disaster*, a CrimethInc. author writes, “The opposite of direct action is representation. There are many kinds of representation—words are used to represent ideas and experiences, the viewers of soap operas let their own hopes and fears be represented by those of the protagonists, the pope claims to represent God—but the most well-known example today can be found in the electoral system.”⁵⁰ A naive dichotomy exists between unmediated, direct, and honest action versus mediated, indirect, and compromised thought.

As we saw in Chapter Four, this anticivilization strain reaches its highest pitch in anarcho-primitivist thinking. It argues for a collapse of civilization and a return to the organic cycles of life that capitalism and civilization have corrupted. Anarcho-primitivist Terra Greenbrier writes, “Our desires for sanity and balance are constantly co-opted by the ‘Spectacle’—the all-encompassing world of mass media and its conformist and consumerist values that tell us who we are and why we are alive.”⁵¹ She continues, “We numb our pain and depression with alcohol, or distract ourselves from it with superficial pursuits like pop culture, junk food, shopping or religion.”⁵² Although there is some truth in what Greenbrier says about how mass media and consumerism mediate our lives in unhealthy directions, this conception of an unmediated life free from any symbolic capture leads to a rather idealized, semi-religious conception of life. As another anarchist writes, “To claim to be outside of it [culture] for even an instant, living as we do in a world that is made up almost entirely of human constructs (whether physical, social, or philosophical) is worse than madness—it is misplaced fanaticism of a decidedly Christian bent.”⁵³

Yet for Greenbrier and others, there is only one solution: “surely the point has been made crystalline that Civilization must collapse or be made to collapse.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Derrick Jensen, who became celebrated by many anarchists with the release of his two-volume set *Endgame*, writes in a prophetic, messianic mode: “And someday history will come to an end. When the last bit of iron from the last skyscraper rusts into nothingness, when eventually the earth, and humans on the earth, presuming we still survive, find some sort of new dynamic equilibrium, there will no longer be any history. People will live once again in the cycles of the earth, the cycles of the sun and moon, the seasons.”⁵⁵ This is nothing short of an anarchist Revelation. The clairvoyant, seemingly omniscient tone of Jensen goes against the general anarchist mantra of “no gods, no masters” by making him into a prophet of disaster and renewal.

Yet some anarchists have challenged this misanthropic notion of culture and antirepresentationalism. In “So You Want an Insurrection,” the anonymous author writes, “There is no such thing as a zone free of cultural identifiers—efforts to stay free of cultural limitations must begin by integrating multiple cultural contexts rather than pretending to be outside all of them.”⁵⁶ The writer continues: “In response to the extravagant notion that we should jettison culture as a site for mobilizing resistance, we counterpose the project of building a *culture of resistance*, a space in which people of multiple cultural backgrounds can develop common reference points in order to attack hierarchy in all its forms.”⁵⁷

This culture of resistance often links to punk rock and other music scenes within anarchist communities. Mark Andersen, a community organizer and punk rocker, notes: “For me, there is no activism—maybe no life itself—without the glimpse into other possibilities that rock music helped to provide. It was through this vision and validation that I found the courage to live, to learn, to speak out, and, finally, to begin to act in small but at least personally significant ways.”⁵⁸ An anonymous author in the 2009 issue of *Rolling Thunder* writes: “The fact that the decentralization and iconoclasm of the punk scene occurred outside any rigid ideological framework contributed to it being a more fertile and unpredictable space than many more explicitly radical milieus have been.”⁵⁹ In the same issue, Klee Benally writes about punk’s importance in indigenous communities: “The reason we got into punk-style music was because of the high energy and social-political expression. From bands like Dead Kennedys and Subhumans there was a unique aggressive quality of resistance to the same dominant culture that we are in conflict with. So in

certain respects punk music has changed us and many young people on our reservation.”⁶⁰

Punk anarchism marks an interesting convergence between lifestyle politics and collective action, between a rejection of corporate culture, yet a deep investment in culture itself, an appeal to unmediated reality and a realization that all is mediated. As David Graeber observes, the distinction between lifestyle and social anarchism is less a dichotomy between the two than a tension within much anarchism.⁶¹ As a result, much anarchist thought and culture reveals these tensions within it. Franklin López’s work, deeply influenced by hip-hop, punk, and the avant-garde, particularly highlights such tensions and reveals a gradual movement away from a more romanticized notion of anarchism toward a more politicized and collective vision—without completely abandoning the earlier tendencies. His oeuvre provides a discrete body of work where we can watch such negotiations and developments taking place.

Early Work

Two of López’s earliest videos were inspired by the CrimethInc. anthology, *Days of War, Nights of Love*. His first video is named after and based on an article called, “Why I Love Shoplifting from Big Corporations.” The title alone is interesting since it implies that shoplifting from mom-and-pop stores might be problematic, but neither article nor film investigate why that might be. Instead, they are both wedded to a romantic notion of shoplifting that borders on New Age self-help. The film and text opens with the line: “Nothing compares to the feeling of elation, of burdens being lifted and constraints escaped, that I feel when I walk out of a corporate store with their products in my pockets.”⁶² The film emphasizes this elation by following with a lively Black Mona Lisa song and cutting to a woman badly disguised as a man running from a store with a shopping cart and a cop following.

The male voice-over continues: “In a world where everything already belongs to someone else, where I am expected to sell away my life at work in order to get the money to pay for the minimum I need to survive, where I am surrounded by forces beyond my control or comprehension that obviously are not concerned about my needs or welfare, it is a way to carve out a little piece of the world for myself—to act back upon a world that acts so much upon me.” This is a strangely self-defeating admission. The narrator imagines himself in a deeply alienated world that he has little understanding

of and ability to control. Instead, he only desires “to carve out a little piece of the world for myself.” This, of course, is what most people do when either attending the movies or hanging out with one’s family or other like-minded activities. They use their moments of happiness to dampen feelings of dread against a deeply unjust and inhumane world. In spite of the seemingly radicalized position of the video, it ultimately suggests a commonplace individualistic solution to the systemic problems of an alienating world. As Laura Portwood-Stacer notes, “Neoliberal discourses of individual autonomy promote the idea that we are each endowed with the agency to choose the best way of life and that the means to realize our choices are readily available if only we will commit to them.”⁶³ The video reveals how such a neoliberal outlook infects anarchism as well.



Why I Love Shoplifting from Big Corporations (2003) idealizes theft as if outside of capitalism rather than intrinsic to it.

The video becomes increasingly delusional as it overvalorizes individual acts of theft. Shoplifting is seen as an existential act, as if it removes the individual from the continuum of history and ideology: “Everything changes when I shoplift. I’m no longer negotiating with faceless, inhuman entities that have no concern for my welfare; instead, I’m taking what I need without giving anything up. I no longer feel like I am being forced into an exchange, and I no longer feel as if I have no control over the way the world around me dictates my life.” The emphasis upon

"I" and personal feelings stress how emotion trumps any type of political awareness. It is not what really exists, but how one feels. It's not about justice but pleasure. It is the logic of lifestyle activism that we saw operating in the Videofreex's practices coming full circle in all its self-centered rationalization.

This feeling of escape and freedom can only occur if one fetishizes the significance of shoplifting. As Marx well knew, the commodity appears to us as an elementary thing. But in reality it is the site where a series of social relations and material practices converge. Since "the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities,'" Marx began *Kapital* with an analysis of the commodity in order to move into a complex understanding of commodity relations and practices.⁶⁴

The problem with López's video and CrimethInc.'s text is that they both still consider the commodity a thing and the individual action as isolated from it. The narrator naively asserts: "Shoplifting is a refusal of the exchange economy. It is a denial that monetary value can be ascribed to everything." But this reveals a stunted notion of what constitutes the exchange economy. It is not simply the purchasing of goods, but more importantly how capitalist relations reinscribe our daily practices and conceptions of ourselves. More importantly, the video overlooks how such an economy overvalorizes the significance of individual action and choice. Similar to how consumers consider their purchase as some form of independence, lifestyle anarchists similarly overvalorize their theft as an autonomous action that somehow breaks from the logic of capital.

But the overvalorization of theft is premised upon an economic system that atomizes actions and people from one another and forecloses a more systemic understanding of how they might relate. For example, the video and text overlook how theft is already inscribed into the system. Employers are well aware that over half of their employees are stealing from them. One need only look online to see the endless business sites dedicated to theft prevention. Furthermore, theft becomes a vicious circle whereby losses are often offset by lower wages and less benefits for employees, as well as greater workplace surveillance. Theft, in other words, does not free one from an exchange economy, but actually is an essential part of it that corporations have already accounted for.

But such analysis gets supplanted by slick visuals, such as the quick editing of the woman stealing various items with a smile on her face that shows how individual pleasure directs her politics. The reductive notion

of shoplifting as liberation is encapsulated in the sequence where there is a standoff between a mall cop and the woman. He stops her in her car in the parking lot. He leans over into her open window as she looks guiltily forward. He stares sternly at her before withdrawing a chocolate bar from his jacket pocket and says, “You dropped something,” not realizing that she stole the items. After thanking him and taking the chocolate bar, she backs the car to where the cop is walking and defiantly removes her wig and tosses it at him. He picks it up in confusion.

This sequence reveals how the complex political economy of theft’s relation to capitalism is jettisoned for a juvenile standoff between shoplifter and cop. An antiauthoritarian attitude is wrongly associated with a more significant rebellion against capitalism. But in reality, cop and shoplifter are both bit players. The video’s voice-over inflates this individualistic moment of rebellion as if it is a systemic challenge against capitalism. The video reveals the worst aspects of lifestyle activism, where individual choices gain a bloated political significance that actually assists capitalism rather than challenging it.

This romantic vision of shoplifting becomes tempered in López’s 2010 promotional short for CrimethInc.’s *Steal Something from Work Day*, which occurs on April 15. Replacing the romantic rhetoric of theft as liberation, theft is now posited as inscribed within the system. The narrator asks: “Have you ever wondered why rich people never seem to be doing much yet are always making tons of money while the rest of us have to work our entire lives and never seem to get ahead? Well, that’s because the rich are fucking crooks not content to continue stealing from us through their vicious system of wage slavery. These greedy bastards keep getting caught breaking their own rules.” A television set is shown with a series of news clips chronicling the downfall of Enron, the trial of Rod Blagojevich, and the Joseph Bruno scandal.

The video then cuts to a series of black-and-white illustrations and pictures of American slavery and indigenous land dispossession. The voice-over notes: “You should not be surprised considering that this entire society is built upon a foundation of theft.” The video systematically links theft to capitalism and historically moored in the imperialist foundations of the United States. Romantic, existentialist notions of theft cannot gain traction since theft is revealed as a central practice of capitalist ideology—from land removal to low wages to the selling of political positions. The video quickly and effectively offers cursory yet systemic links in the ways that theft undergirds our present system.



Steal Something from Work Day (2010) holds a sophisticated notion of theft being a natural part of capitalism. Activists should instead steal for communal purposes rather than for profit.

Therefore, the narrator questions, “Why are we letting all these fucks have the fun?” The narrator quotes statistics about how four out of five employees are already stealing from work. So he asks: “If you’re part of the other measly 20 percent, what are you waiting for, an invitation?” Rather than acting outside of the system, this video instead suggests that one works inside of it, but for communal purposes rather than individualistic ones. The narrator suggests: “When trying to figure out the best items to pilfer from your job, try to include things that have practical uses for your community, such as groceries, camping equipment, computers, color printers, photocopiers, cash, or whatever else you find lying around.” With the final suggestion, an image of a tank appears on screen. The video is more dialectical than *Why I Love Shoplifting* by linking individual actions to community support. Also, it explores how theft can be used for community-oriented, anticapitalist purposes.

The video illustrates theft in action through its culture jamming approach that pilfers imagery from commercial media. We see shots from *Trading Places* and *Caddyshack*, films that somewhat implicitly critique wealth, but not as radically as López’s work. Nonetheless, such copyright theft reveals how certain elements of popular culture might already contain potential anticapitalist potentialities that can be harnessed into a more

critical configuration if only assembled in a more radical context. Unlike *Why I Love Shoplifting*, theft is no longer posed as acting outside of capitalist culture, but a maneuver that can be used to appropriate the potential critical elements of mass culture in new configurations that might actually challenge some of its prevailing practices.

The professional, high quality nature of *Steal Something from Work Day* exposes how culture jamming can become an art form unto itself by repurposing popular culture into original and engaging new forms. Additionally, the video challenges the individualistic notion of the romantic artist locked up in a room generating completely original ideas. It reveals art as an assemblage and the artist as a bricoleur savvy enough to discern and rearrange the potentialities of popular culture with critical inflections. López notes: "Plagiarism is an especially effective method of appropriating and reorganizing ideas, and as such it can be a useful tool for a young man or woman looking to encourage new and exciting thinking in others."⁶⁵

Therefore, the video not only suggests that someone steal something from work, but it also demonstrates the effective use of theft through its engaging form. Implicitly then, the video is not arguing that theft in itself is revolutionary. But the directions in which theft might be oriented and reconfigured can offer engaging, new, enjoyable, community-oriented purposes. Theft is no longer defined by how it makes one feel as in *Why I Love Shoplifting*, but instead by how it is employed and for whom.

The most romantic and reactionary of López's early videos is *Join the Resistance: Fall In Love*. The video is also based on a CrimethInc. text from *Days of War, Nights of Love*. From its start, the video announces how it conceptualizes the world in simplistic dualities. On the upper left screen we watch a white bourgeois couple joylessly preparing for work: getting dressed, brushing their teeth, and eating breakfast. In the lower right corner we watch an interracial hipster couple—an Asian woman and white man—calling in sick and having sex. The alienation between the bourgeois couple is formally stressed by them being split into two frames while the interracial couple are framed together.

The video's imagery of bourgeoisie life seems antiquated. A female voice-over says: "Falling in love is the ultimate act of revolution, of *resistance* to today's tedious, socially restrictive, culturally conservative, patently ridiculous world." She continues later in a monotone voice: "The average bourgeois man has no overwhelming, smoldering desires. Sadly, all he knows is the silent despair that comes of spending his life pursuing his goals set for him by his family, his educators, his employers, his nation,

and his culture, without ever being able to consider what needs and wants he might have on his own." We watch a series of pale blue and jaundiced yellow split frames of the bourgeois man and woman emphasizing their estrangement from one another as their colorless lives unfold.



A simplified opposition that contrasts the alienation of the working white couple with that of the relaxing interracial couple in *Join the Resistance* (2003).

But this language and imagery seem more indicative of the 1950s than the 2000s. It is as if the 1960s never happened and capitalism had not reoriented itself toward a more pleasure-based formation. As Daniel Bell and other conservative critics continuously warn: capitalism has transformed itself from a puritanical, production-based economy to a libidinal, consumer-oriented one. Bell writes in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*:

The new capitalism continued to demand a Protestant ethic in the area of production—that is, in the realm of work—but to stimulate a demand for pleasure and play in the area of consumption. The disjunction was bound to widen. The spread of urban life, with its variety of distractions and multiple stimuli; the new roles of women, created by the expansion of office jobs and the freer social and sexual contacts; the rise of a national culture through motion pictures and radio—all

contributed to a loss of social authority on the part of the older value system.⁶⁶

Slavoj Žižek similarly notes in a more psychoanalytically inflected stance that bourgeois Westerners no longer confront an authoritarian father and regimented lifestyle but instead “the obscene father who enjoins you to enjoy, and thus renders you impotent or frigid much more effectively” since social propriety and restrictions have been removed.⁶⁷

This is not to claim that authoritarian regimes and households no longer exist, but that the orientation of late capitalism undermines such authority and libidinal repression in the West as it extends into the inner recesses of our lives and attempts to colonize all of our desires. Contemporary advertising culture with its endless appeals for antidepressants, erectile dysfunction, and plastic surgery would have been inconceivable a mere fifty years ago. Underlying most of these ads is the injunction to enjoy yourself—even if it might lead to horrifying side effects.

Join the Resistance’s monochromatic, repressed bourgeois world, on the other hand, seems decidedly disconnected from the postmodern, overly libidinal world we now inhabit. It fails to recognize how desire itself is harnessed and sold back to us. According to Daniel Bell, wants rather than needs define contemporary bourgeois society. Wants “are by their nature unlimited. Society is seen not as a natural association of men—the polis or the family—ruled by a common purpose, but a composite of atomistic individuals who pursue only their own gratification.”⁶⁸

Ironically, the video’s interracial, unrepressed couple embodies neo-liberal tendencies as we watch them constantly make out and fondle each other in public. The video wants us to believe that this is somehow freeing, a rejection of the work ethic for that of libidinal gratification. But capitalism no longer cares if most of us work. As long as we have credit or some other means of temporary purchasing power, it is content to leave us to become ensnared in our hyperindividualistic search for authenticity and momentary desires. As Daniel Bell notes, contemporary capitalism fosters an obsession with the self and authenticity: “the concern of this self is with its individual *authenticity*, its unique, irreducible character free of the contrivances and conventions, the masks and hypocrisies, the distortions of the self by society.”⁶⁹ The romantic anarchist desire for direct action, immediacy, and existential freedom is an extension of this late capitalist impulse and obsession with self-development. Bell continues: “This concern with the authentic self makes the motive and not the action—the

impact on the self, not the moral consequences to society—the source of ethical and aesthetic judgments.”⁷⁰ This sounds remarkably similar to the vulgar forms of lifestyle anarchism that *Join the Resistance* and *Why I Love Stealing* endorse.

Love within *Join the Resistance* becomes the vehicle that leads to authenticity: “Burning passion is an antidote that will cure the worst cases of despair and resignation”; “Love permits no lies, no falsehoods, not even any polite half-truths, but lays all emotions bare and reveals secrets which domesticated men and women cannot bear.” But there is something juvenile about the video’s conception of love. It is temporary, explicitly heterosexual, and mainly limited to sex. It fails to recognize the compromises, difficulties, anger, and other such issues that arise during the sustained love between sexual and nonsexual partners. The love of the video is one that immediately accompanies lustful beginnings. But it certainly is not the type of love that keeps people together for years, decades, and lifetimes, and allows friendships to blossom.

The dichotomous world that the video erects between the bourgeoisie and the hipsters, between work and love, speaks less to the way the world is than as a secret desire for the way the video wants it to be. If we take cultural theorists like Daniel Bell and Slavoj Žižek seriously, one of the main challenges of contemporary capitalism, at least for the middle class, is that there is no longer a singular defining authority in control. According to Žižek, “It is due to the fact that ‘nobody’ is in charge, that *there is no such power*, no ‘Other of the Other’ pulling the strings . . . we find ourselves constantly in the position of having to decide about matters that will fundamentally affect our lives, but without a proper foundation in knowledge.”⁷¹

In the absence of such authority that can clearly sort out our world and pull us back from the brink of nihilism, in a postmodern world where all is permitted and one is commanded to enjoy oneself, “the secret transgressive source of libidinal satisfaction,” according to Žižek, becomes a desire for “some extreme form of strictly regulated domination and submission.”⁷² Žižek observes that “beneath the hysterics rebellion and challenge to paternal authority there is thus a hidden call for a renewed paternal authority, for a father who would really be a ‘true father’ and adequately embody his symbolic mandate,” which sounds a lot like much of romantic anarchist culture and well-suits the trajectory of *Join the Resistance*.⁷³

This secret desire for an authority figure to rage against should not be all that surprising since a core constituency of romantic and lifestyle anarchists is post-students. Authority structures of school and parents loom

large, easy foils for young adults still in the process of defining themselves. Some anarchists have noted the ways in which parental authority haunts anarchist rebellion and protests. One writes, “In the last analysis, the so-called ‘mainstream’ audience most of them [anarchists] imagine they are dressing up for at their demonstrations and political events is probably just the spectre of their bourgeois parents, engraved deep in their collective unconscious as a symbol of the adolescent insecurity and guilt they never got over.”⁷⁴

Evasion, a popular book distributed by CrimethInc., explicitly evokes the way the dominating authority of the narrator’s parents plague him. He observes, “Long ago I turned my back to the warm, inviting chokehold of ‘Parents’ House’ comfort. A house I pledged to never use as a substitute for creativity—laundry only.”⁷⁵ His admission that he still uses his parents place for laundry reveals his own vexed relationship with them. He needs their presence for not only clean underwear but also a clean conscience where he can measure his own actions and lifestyle choices against.

Likewise, the author’s love of train hopping is primarily defined by the threat of being beaten by the train yard cop, the bull: “But take away the risk of hopping trains, the danger, and so goes the fun. Free run of a train yard, great. There would be no sneaking, running, or hiding from the bull. No cat and mouse thrill. The tense moments I relish, glued to the interior boxcar wall, the sound of crunching gravel closing in—it’s the bull, and he’s coming for *you*.”⁷⁶ This final observation explicitly exposes the bald need for authority to play a foil in much romantic anarchist subcultures to give them meaning. If the police didn’t exist, one would need to invent them, which is exactly what *Join the Resistance* does.

Inexplicably, a barrel-chested cop harasses various characters throughout the video. He forces a homeless man to stop foraging through trash cans. He pushes aside the white hipster protagonist and observes him menacingly from beneath his sunglasses. We see a split screen of the cop stonily observing the hipster couple as they walk and meet an Indymedia friend who holds a camera. This becomes the visual equivalent of “take away the risk, you take away the fun.” The couple’s transgressions can only be defined in relation to the bland bourgeois couple and the cop’s icy and absolute stare. Without the authoritative gaze, the couple’s freedom disappears. Their actions seem mere whims rather than challenges to authority.

The video concludes in a ridiculous and melodramatic feverish pitch. Radiohead’s acoustic song “True Love Waits” plays as the hipster couple observes the cop trailing after a homeless man in an alley. Hipsters and

authority square off. The white hipster prevents the cop from clubbing the homeless man. As he does so, the cop aims his gun and shoots. Miraculously he misses and instead hits the bourgeois woman who for some unknown reason observes the actions from her parked car. The cop then shoots the male hipster. Caught within the dual gaze of authority—the cop and the bourgeois—the hipster couple shares their last blazing moments together. This ending sequence reveals all of the ideological limits of the video: the way in which freedom is premised upon and desires the parameters of clearly defined authorities and rules; the evanescent and unsustainable nature of love that the hipster couple embodies; and the hackneyed melodrama that often implicitly undergirds romantic anarchist visions.

More importantly, the cop disappears by the video's end only to reappear in countless other anarchist-inspired documentaries and videos. The fetishization of the police and authority in general runs throughout much anarchist culture. Films like *Join the Resistance* and texts like *Evasion* expose how this focus upon authority is not simply dictated by protest conditions where police presence and violence have become increasingly heavy but also by a profound need to have an absolute authority to define one's freedom against. Texts such as these confirm Žižek's question: "What if the disintegration of the public ('patriarchal') symbolic authority is paid for (or counterbalanced) by an even stronger disavowed passionate attachment to subjection?"⁷⁷

This observation questions some of the motives of those attending counter-summit protests who attempt to invoke the anger of the police for minimal goals. I saw such stupidity on display during the 2012 Tampa protests at the Republican National Convention. The cops largely refused to arrest and physically harass the small group of around three hundred protesters. By day three, a large ensemble of activists decided to march to the convention center not for a planned action but simply to get arrested. Unsurprisingly, protesters were divided over this action and many refused to attend. In addition to effecting social change and creating progressive bonds, do some people attend such protests because they also need to be reassured that brute authority still exists in a postmodern age, that their sense of freedom can only be measured by the repression they suffer?

Middle to Late Work

López's middle to late work becomes increasingly concerned with a global perspective and community issues. This is not a surprising development

since many in the politicized anarcho-punk community often moved in the same direction after their introduction to this culture. The anarcho-punk collective Profane Existence had been arguing since the early 1990s for punks to branch out and get involved with wider communities. They write, “We need to turn our anger and disgust with middle class America and creatively channel it into mass-based political action.”⁷⁸ One way in which Profane Existence did so was by offering their meeting space to other constituencies protesting the first Gulf War.

We observe López’s concern with larger constituencies in his co-produced film *Ground Noise and Static*, which documents the 2008 Republican and Democratic National Conventions held respectively in St. Paul and Denver. López teamed up with Pepper Spray Productions out of Seattle to produce shorts that documented both conventions. He reflects, “We were a small team of two video makers, one photographer, and one video editor (me).”⁷⁹ López and the others soon realized that they had enough material to make a thirty-minute video. He recounts, “So we huddled at Pepper Spray headquarters and got to work. We ‘wrote’ the film using texts written as report backs and analysis published by other activists from different Indymedias, and four people helped to trim down the footage while I edited the master project. We worked furiously for six days and premiered it in Seattle on the seventh day. How biblical!”⁸⁰

The video begins by chronicling the preparations of the RNC Welcoming Committee, an anarchist coalition serving as a conduit for activists to connect with one another. Not only did the Committee begin preparing a full year and a half in advance of the convention’s arrival, but it also held a weekend-long planning and training meeting where over a hundred activist organizations met. In the process, the Committee created what became known as “The Saint Paul Principles” that kept debates internal, opposed state repression, and supported a diversity of tactics by organizing separate and distinct actions that didn’t conflict with one another. The rest of the first half of the video deals with police repression against the organizers, as well as against journalists.⁸¹

Overall, the RNC section of the video implies an audience already familiar with the issues, since it mainly focuses on tactics, strategy, and police repression. We watch testimonials from arrestees like members of I-Witness video, Amy Goodman, the Pepper Spray collective, and Flux Rostrum—all familiar journalists and video makers within the activist world. Interestingly, the Republican agenda and the problems activists and organizers might have had with it remain unexplored. The video simply

assumes that Republicans are inherently corrupt and antithetical to anarchist beliefs. Similarly, there is no discussion regarding the overall beliefs of anarchism. Tactics are mentioned, but no overall framework explains what anarchism is nor why it is relevant. The video, once again, assumes the audience to already be sympathetic and knowledgeable about such issues.

The second half of the video is more interesting, since it assumes a less familiarized audience with the protests at the DNC. In voice-over it announces, “There is a resistance movement growing throughout the land and all around the world, a movement that is bigger than elections, a movement that broadly unites people across a diversity of class, social, political, economic, racial, and gender lines. We know there is something fundamentally wrong and even suicidal as a species with the corporate vision of the future, so the movement went to Denver to stand and to be counted on the side of the better world that is possible.” Although some familiarity is assumed in the voice-over, it is clearly rallying around and defining a united collective vision. We watch images of people protesting in the streets with signs against the war, an indigenous person chanting before protesters, and close-ups of black bloc anarchists. The visuals reinforce the voice: how protests unite diverse constituencies that normally don’t often come together physically and ideologically.

The video continues with speeches by Larry Holmes of the Workers World Party and indigenous activist and academic Ward Churchill. Cynthia McKinney, Green Party presidential candidate, states: “When it came to war and occupation, the democratic leadership showed us that financing an illegal and immoral war based on lies was more important than the people’s desire for peace.” Journalist Jared Jacang Maher offers an account of the exorbitant amount of money invested in police surveillance for the convention. This is followed by the requisite riot porn footage of police harassing and clubbing protesters, but it is kept to a minimum.

The video efficiently addresses the false claims of the DNC convention being the most environmentally friendly. A montage ensues of Republican and Democratic presidential candidates speaking about “clean coal technology,” thus undercutting their environmental message. The narrator and a series of interviewees explain how the “greenwashing” of the convention seamlessly coincides with corporations’ own claim that they can solve the very environmental destruction that they fostered in the first place.

As one can see, the video establishes some core issues that the protests are galvanized around. It does not assume a familiarity with all issues and clearly views itself as a recruiting device for viewers to become more

politically active. The narrator explicitly addresses this appeal to the less informed when stating: "The green capitalism march was a success in causing a spectacle to counteract the Dems' green image and got into the heads of unsuspecting political tourists. This was a powerful victory as normal folks become disillusioned with the political system and look for real alternatives beyond what is offered by the democratic leadership." Similar to this march, the second half of the video uses engaging spectacle and a variety of styles and sources to draw in tangential viewers. This style becomes the modus operandi of López's later work: his use of popular culture and a slick professional style, with energetic cutting that uses the language of spectacle against itself to speak to wider and younger constituencies.

The video powerfully ends with the Iraq Veterans against the War. During an unpermitted march, we watch various vets testify against the inhumanity of the war. Ron Kovic, Vietnam veteran and protester, testifies: "We are not going to be silent. This is not what America is about." The connection between Vietnam and Iraq provides a historical continuum for these protests, as well as suggesting both wars as being ill-informed American military interventions, where the hubris of political leaders trumped common sense and mass-based resistance.



Ground Noise and Static (2008) shows how the 2008 DNC protests in Denver allowed for new activist coalitions to form.

As we watch a large number of people marching toward the DNC, a rapidly playing acoustic guitar enters the soundtrack, musically translating

the excitement of the march to the viewer. We listen as a veteran shouts on a bullhorn: "We have come here to hold the Democratic Party accountable. We have come here to talk with Senator Obama. We do not want to hurt you. And we don't want you to hurt us." As he speaks, we watch cops with riot shields hovering over the crowd in a mechanical cherry picker. Miraculously, however, the police stand down as the disciplined and immaculately dressed veterans hold their ground. The synergy between veterans and civilians is translated through the protest as civilian protesters repeat a bereted veteran's chant: "We are / Awaiting negotiations / With Senator Obama / The Democratic Party / Is scared shitless right now." In the end, the democrats agree to allow the veterans to read their letter to the delegates and Obama meets with them.

It is an inspiring moment where direct action not only draws together diverse constituencies, not only halts the police but also actually impacts the convention and some of its delegates and senators. As the narrator notes: "Their actions reached those unreachable by other means, and by example call out on all Americans to exceed the limits, to break ranks, to join the revolution." The video moves from simple documentation of anarchist tactics and police terror of its first half to an inspiring, well-focused account during its second half that does not just document DNC protests but more importantly addresses the central issues of the protests and uses them as a model for future organizing. Even though the RNC section dominates twenty minutes of the video's total thirty-minute running time, it seems unfocused, defeatist, and unable to articulate any type of unifying vision. The remaining DNC section, however, reveals how effective video activism does not need a long running time to make a profound point and prove inspirational. It harnesses the best elements of Indymedia in its handheld footage, critique and appropriation of commercial footage, and its use of music and quick and concise editing. It also reveals a sharp eye that can dissect and connect immediate actions and events with larger issues and contexts. In many ways it anticipates López's development as a filmmaker with the production of his online web show *It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine) (ItEotWaWKI)*.

The web show is López's crowning achievement. Its name is pilfered from the R.E.M. song of the same title. The show began in 2006 as a biweekly ten-minute webcast from his SubMedia homepage (<http://submedia.tv/index.htm>). It has grown in length between fifteen and twenty minutes in the last few years and is produced more irregularly.⁸⁴ López states that "when I first started I had the goal of doing one a week. But I realized that

was impossible.”⁸² He recounts the time-consuming process of arranging the show: “First, I compile the news I’d like to cover. If there is common thread between them, I try to tie them up. Then I write the first headline, and that one sets the tone for the rest of the headlines. As I write I look for accompanying footage, which is a backward way of working, but the footage sometimes informs what I talk about or sometimes I have to write shows for sound bites. After I figured out the thread or theme, I look for a clip or movie or TV show to intro the show and a musical section that matches the theme for a midshow break. The second half of the show is usually an interview, but sometimes I like to rant. I usually have five or six interviews in the can, so sometimes it works out that I can match the theme of the show with the interview. Making the show takes me about three eight-hour days.”⁸³

López plays the Stimulator, our disembodied, postmodern/sci-fi, foulmouthed host who floats over the screen in three red-bordered squares that encompass negatives of his eyes and mouth. Digitized fuel clouds burn postapocalyptically behind him. As López notes, “Aesthetically I stole Ice-T’s character in *Johnny Mnemonic*, where he would split his face into three squares when he wanted to broadcast his messages on pirate TV.”⁸⁵



The Stimulator image was influenced by the film *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995).

The show is broken down into thirds. The Stimulator spends the first third recounting recent ecological, political, and economic disasters along

with anarchist-based and indigenous resistance news. The middle section presents music from a politically engaged musician with accompanying video or mash-up composed by López himself. Its final section holds either an interview with an activist or a rant by the Stimulator provoked by recent events or viewer e-mail. The show has been broadcast over Miro, Free Speech TV, and various radio stations and podcast.

It is not only the masterful appropriation and fusion of different styles of hip-hop, punk, and experimental art that makes *ItEotW* compelling to watch but also the importance it affords to art's role in activist politics. As López notes, "Art is the gateway drug to get people hooked on the truth."⁸⁶ The problem, however, is that many media activists aren't "very aware of previous media movements, and that is partly because there is not continuity within counter-cinema media movements. Because of this, many media activists start producing within a creation 'box' and don't experiment with different styles until they encounter them."⁸⁷

As a result, the Stimulator dedicates a significant portion of the shows not only to speaking about art and music but also to demonstrating how a culture jamming, hip-hop-infused aesthetic can create captivating material. During episode twenty-one of the first season, the Stimulator asserts, "In fucked-up times, music, art, and film play an important part of the Resistance. When the chips are down, there ain't nothing like Mos Def or Rage Against the Machine to lift my spirits up. What I'm trying to get at is that if we spot some hot political art, we need to support and nurture it with our dollars and our word of mouth. For it will give us strength during our times of weakness." Along similar lines, every show during its early seasons ends with the request: "Support this show, motherfuckers, and buy some shit from our store."

Yet this stance doesn't result in a simplistic championing of underground culture against that of the mainstream. At its best and most poignant, the show hacks into popular culture to unmoor its fleeting flashes of anarchic rebellion and utopian dreams from the rather reactionary narratives that they are embedded within. Episode thirteen of season two ends with a sequence from *Fight Club* where Brad Pitt's character and other fight club members are about to castrate a wealthy country club patron. Pitt declares, "We haul your trash. We cook your meals. Don't fuck with us." Another episode begins with a magic trick infomercial. The footage shows a camera slowly zooming back on a pair of handcuffs resting on a table. The host announces: "We will show you how to escape from a set of professional handcuffs, just like the famous escape artist Houdini did." Dubbed

in quickly afterward: "This is for entertainment only and should never be used to escape from the police." Regardless of *Fight Club*'s conservative message that all resistance ultimately results in establishing new forms of oppression or the infomercial's ultimate desire to promote magic tricks, *ItEotW* reveals the instances of genuine class rage that pervade the former and the ways in which magic tricks can be appropriated by direct-action groups to resist the police in the latter.

In a later episode entitled *The Revolution Is Now*, from season four, the Stimulator shows riot footage of the Get Off the Fence contingent in Toronto during the G8/G20 in June 2010.⁸⁸ We watch a cop car being burned and plate-glass windows of corporations being smashed. The Stimulator notes, "That day the people were writing their own history. As the space of the corporate world was stolen back and placed in the hands of the new pioneers, it's only appropriate that I steal back Walt Whitman's words from the walls of the smashed Levi's store." We then see a smashed display window with the chalked words of Whitman's poem. The video continues by pilfering Will Geer's famous recitation of the poem that the Levi's Go Forth ad originally appropriated. We hear: "Come my tan-faced children / Follow well in order, get your weapons ready, / Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes? Pioneers! O Pioneers!" Riot footage plays during this recitation. We watch black bloc anarchists walking hand in hand down the street. With the mention of weapons, we watch a cop car window being smashed. As axes are referenced, we see an anarchist chipping away at a bank window. It continues: "We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger, / We youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend. . . . So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship / Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost. Pioneers! O Pioneers!" We watch various shots of youth marching, wild handheld camera shots staring down rows of black-clad police. It concludes: "We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world / Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march, Pioneers! O Pioneers!" We watch a cop car burn. Through the fire and smoke, it is as if we can somehow discern this future mightier world. A final shot of a youth throwing a rock at a display window emphasizes this seizure of space, imagery, and words.

The amalgamation between poem, advertisement, and riot footage suddenly becomes quite moving as Walt Whitman's words converge in the present moment, transcending their historical limits with a spirit that unites youth and the desire for a better world from various ages. The somber

music and periodic lone snare punctuating underneath the poem also elevates the riot footage from the mundane and clichéd to an almost visionary stance. Two romantic traditions converge to invigorate one another: that of Walt Whitman's American romanticism and that of López's romantic anarchism. And in spite of all the faults associated with both of them—their idealizations and naivety, their implicitly spiritual quest—moments such as these found within *ItEotW* forcefully reveal their true power to ignite imaginations of what better, mightier futures might actually feel like.



In *ItEotW* López fuses the imagery of property destruction with the words of Walt Whitman to suggest how past resistances relate to present ones.

Furthermore, the sequence actualizes a transcendental experience that many anarchists write about when engaged in protest. In *Expect Resistance*, one anarchist recounts: "The only sensations I experienced at that moment were euphoria and the impression that I was flying over the concrete beneath me without touching it."⁸⁹ Another anarchist states: "It is as if the hundreds of people involved are collectively operating a Ouija board, upon which all their individual movements—conscious or unconscious—strain against or flow into each other, becoming something different and unfamiliar, even supernatural."⁹⁰ But unlike these descriptions, which state the experience, López's video makes one feel the experience or at least a close correlation to it.

Finally, the sequence implicitly addresses how even the compromised world of advertising similarly acknowledges and seizes upon this utopian

element only to haul it back to a consumerist vision. Rather than rejecting this, López reinflects the commercial's powerful audio track with riot footage, thus not only liberating it from its consumerist bent but also adding a powerful affective element to footage that often seems *de rigueur* for much anarchist-inspired riot videos.

The June 28, 2008, show of the second season perhaps best exemplifies López's skill as a political mash-up artist. The episode begins with a sequence from the 1979 film *The Warriors*. Within it, assorted New York street gangs have congregated together. A leader from the podium preaches: "That's twenty thousand hardcore members, forty thousand counting affiliates, and twenty thousand more, not organized, but ready to fight. Sixty thousand soldiers. Now there ain't but twenty thousand police in the whole town. Can you dig it?" The camera dramatically circles around him as he speaks, panning over the waves of warriors surrounding him. The crowd then explodes into action.

This sequence thematically ties to the worldwide rebellions against high fuel prices that the Stimulator reports on occurring in Spain, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Portugal, France, and the UK. The Warrior clip will later resurface when the Stimulator ponders midway into the show: "What is the threshold when Americans will say enough is enough?" Here we witness López's talent as an editor and writer.

The Stimulator continues: "I'll tell you when: around late August when a gallon of gas will be five bucks, when the electric grid crashes on the hottest day of the year." We watch quickly edited images of Walmart workers clapping, the skeleton of a television framing a boarded-up street, an Enron logo, and shots of abandoned homes. We not only get an abbreviated contrast of the class gulf but also an implicit critique of commercial television that suggests only by kicking out its screen can we begin to see the socioeconomic issues that it masks. Furthermore, the Enron logo not only symbolizes corporate greed and its disdain for workers, but by having it flash on the screen when mentioning electricity, it also recalls the 2001 California blackouts and price-fixings the company malignantly delivered upon the state's residents. The logo condenses images of corporate greed, arrogance, and a general disregard for overall human welfare.

The Stimulator proceeds: "When all you can afford to eat is Mac and Cheese"—shot of a Kraft commercial—"When you finally fucking realize that the wool has been pulled over your eyes"—images of Ron and Nancy Reagan waving, representing the hollow promises of "morning in America," a dream that broke the backs of millions of working-class folk—"and that

everything you have been told is a motherfucking lie”—shots of Donald Rumsfeld press briefings and the terror alert chart, suggesting the fear-inducing lies that pervade our daily existence—“Your time, your life, your dreams, belong to you, and not your boss, your church, or your so-called government. When you do the math and if millions of us gather”—shots of various protesters from the 1960s to the present followed by an insert of *The Warriors* clip of “Can you dig it?” and then a shot of the Tiananmen Square protester halting a tank before him—“we can take this motherfucker head on, slay the beast that enslaves us and get on with building a world that we can be proud of”—the final section of *The Warriors* clip asserts, “Can you dig it?” with the crowd then roaring. This entire sequence represents a complex attitude that both interrogates popular culture and critically appropriates it, that seizes upon its imagery to create momentum to think and act beyond its limits. It is an amazing moment of political pastiche despite its somewhat desperate reliance upon catastrophe in generating collective action.



The television in *ItEotW* frames the poverty that normally never makes it on commercial screens.

Yet the show also periodically catapults so far into the realms of the far Left that it begins uncomfortably orbiting the realm of far Right paranoia. López, to his credit, addresses this at times. In episode eighteen of season three, the Stimulator distinguishes himself from conspiracy theorist talk show radio host Alex Jones, who believes that the government

is drugging the water supply, FEMA is preparing concentration camps, and the New World Order is secretly assembling its rule behind closed doors. As the Stimulator states, “The world is not that simple. Trying to explain our dire state of affairs by blaming a few white men who meet in dark rooms is retarded.” But some of his thoughts at times suggest otherwise—like his belief that Bush and Cheney might have been involved in September 11—even though he realizes that this might cause some of his viewers to be “worried about the Stimulator being one of those conspiracy nuts.” True enough.

The show has also become increasingly focused on rioting, which López acknowledges with the creation of a new character called The Agitator, who similarly floats disembodied over the screen but in blue-bordered squares. The Agitator is the reactionary political unconscious that haunts the show. In a season three episode entitled *World on Fire*, the Agitator accuses the Stimulator: “All you do is play riot porn.” When the Stimulator rejects this, the Agitator suggests that the show be called RPM, for “Riot Porn Masturbation.” In another episode of the same season, *Islamophobia*, the Agitator announces, “Welcome to this lubricated carnival of smash, smash, smashing good times.” With each reference of “smash,” we watch a plate-glass window being attacked by black bloc protesters.

López realizes the difficulty of balancing riot porn footage with a concern for larger issues and community-based initiatives. In *The Revolution Is Now* episode of season four, the Stimulator warns: “Confronting the security apparati and smashing capitalism is only one side of the motherfucking resistance. The other side is the folk building roots in the community while providing alternatives to the corrupt beast that we are trying to liberate ourselves from.” The show supplies many interviews with grassroots organizers, but most of the main footage is riot porn. We don’t often get footage and intimate reports from grassroots, community-oriented actions. Often communities are only directly seen through protests. For example, when the Olympics Resistance was taking place in Vancouver, the show covered the Tent City that was created to draw attention to homeless issues in the city. But community focus is often subsumed by direct-action riot footage that makes it visually and narratively subservient. More mundane community organizing beyond that of protest actions remains largely absent.

This increased focus on rioting, however, also stems from the show’s gradual apocalyptic vision of catastrophic economic and environmental collapse—most typically associated with anarcho-primitivists like John Zerzan and Kevin Tucker, and writers like Derrick Jensen. Not surprisingly,

López's most recent film, *END:CIV* is loosely based on Jensen's *Endgame* books.

END:CIV, López's most ambitious work to date, attempts to synthesize many of his concerns regarding indigenous rights, anticapitalism, and anarchist-inflected eco-activism.⁹¹ In many ways, this concern to offer a more totalizing vision of radical politics emerges from a radical Canadian context that newspapers like *The Dominion* and the Canadian Media Co-ops embody. López was a key figure in the video arm of the Vancouver Media Co-op. Coinciding with the release of his film during the beginning of 2011, *The Dominion* released its special climate justice issue that addresses many of the same concerns as the film. The editorial collective asserts that the only way a powerful climate justice movement can arise is if it is organized "around frontline communities—Indigenous, racialized, working class or poor, in the North, and South, the same communities that are most severely impacted by the ecological crisis and least responsible for it. . . . If it [the climate justice movement] is many things, it should at least be a call to address mass poverty and suffering, the energy and biodiversity crisis, and climate change within an integrated vision of human progress."⁹² Clearly, a seventy-five-minute film cannot address all of these issues, but *END:CIV* attempts to tackle many of them.

Derrick Jensen at first seems a strange figure to use for such purposes. He had temporarily become a darling of some anarcho-primitivists with the release of *Endgame*. The two-volume set offered twenty premises of why civilization must be destroyed. Jensen defines civilization as "a complex of stories, institutions, and artifacts" that leads to the creation of cities that concentrate people in such high densities that they require the importation of food and other resources. This, according to Jensen, leads to an imbalanced life and the spoliation of the earth and all of its animal, mineral, and vegetable inhabitants. But how, after all, could a filmmaker dependent upon such technology and living within various cities like San Juan, Washington, DC, Atlanta, and Vancouver somehow utilize a position like Jensen's?

Jensen seems the antithesis of López. Rather than using popular culture and redirecting it in critical inflections as López does, and who acknowledges how we are always mediated by culture, Jensen holds a primitivist belief that we can somehow escape culture altogether. He writes, "Beneath our enculturation, beneath the addiction, beneath the psychopathology, our bodies remember that we are meant for something better than this, that we are not apart from our human and nonhuman communities,

but a part of them, that what we allow to be done to our land base (or our body) we allow to be done to ourselves.”⁹³

For Jensen, it is as if one can unshackle oneself from the edifice of culture only to reconnect to this primordial self that somehow coexists underneath this false self. Jensen makes explicit appeals to “the you who thinks not what the culture taught you to think, but what you think. The you who feels not what the culture taught you to feel but what you feel.”⁹⁴ This is not unlike the previously mentioned romantic anarchist distrust of symbols and history, and shows an affinity between Jensen’s philosophy and anarcho-primitivism. A messianic vision underlies Jensen’s vision, where subject and object, where human and nature, are finally reconciled after the day of eco-judgment and all artificiality falls by the wayside like an empty husk. The fall of civilization is the return to Eden, where superstructural cultural concerns wither among more pressing needs of survival. The fact that Jensen’s critique is dependent upon the very symbolic language of the culture that he wants to dismember remains conveniently unmentioned.

Understandably, López minimizes Jensen’s messianic, anticultural outlook since it can potentially undermine any sense of agency—why fight if the world is doomed anyway?—and offers a simplified and dismissive conception of culture that López does not share. Yet this messianism resurfaces with the film’s focus upon eco-catastrophe—as I will show later.

López also minimizes Jensen’s analogies between the exploitation of industrial civilization and Jensen’s own experience with familial violence. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Jensen’s writing since it allows him to explore the psychological aspects of systemic exploitation while often anthropomorphizing capitalism. He states: “familial violence within this culture is in many ways a microcosm of the violence the culture tricks out on the larger stages of history and the landscape.”⁹⁵ One excellent example of how the two regimes of violence converge is the guilt that activists take on for the ills perpetuated by capitalism. Jensen notes, “To blame members of the resistance for the backlash by those in power when resistors do not follow the agreed-upon rules is yet more acceptance of the abusers’ logic: If I hit you, it is only because you made me do it.”⁹⁶ This is an important reminder not to personalize and internalize the exploitation and violence occurring around us and not to complacently accept the logic of late capitalism.

Yet Jensen tends to overanalyze the two regimes by often anthropomorphizing capitalism. He writes, “Capitalism is so jealous it couldn’t even allow the existence of the Soviet version of itself.”⁹⁷ This is a foolish

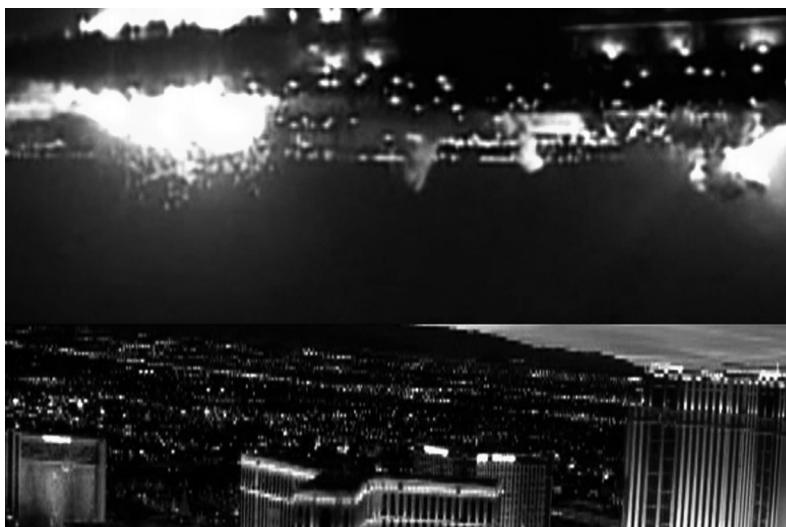
understanding. Capitalism is indifferent to everything other than maximizing profits. It is an amoral system. The Cold War cannot be explained as capitalism's jealous desire but more a result of contradictory tendencies of Western ideology that were overdetermined by capitalism but certainly not solely directed by it.

Clearly Jensen has been psychically damaged as a child from his father's physical and psychological abuse. Jensen is sensitive to this fact. He writes, "An argument I've heard too often having to do with this [his critique of civilization] is that because I was abused as a child, I am not, in fact, angry at the culture but at my father."⁹⁸ Jensen rejects this reasoning, as he well should since it trivializes his critique and its insightful moments. Yet Jensen's worldview clearly is colored by that of a survivor of familial violence which often leads him into faulty analogies and simplifications of the mechanism's of civilization. His abuse doesn't discredit all of his insights, but it does reveal where some of the limits of his thinking originate and temper his more bombastic statements as symptomatic exclamations of one who is still working through his abuse in his analysis of civilization.

END:CIV, however, is less about Jensen than using him and his writings as platform for concerns that are being addressed within the Media Co-op Movements and other radical Left Canadian groups and organizations. Within its short screening time—seventy-five minutes—the film attempts to synthesize an enormous amount of issues: indigenous resistance, eco-activism, violence, greenwashing, and capitalism's endless expansion that leads to environmental destruction and the exploitation of all life.

At its best moments, *END:CIV* concisely and efficiently condenses these issues into a powerful visual. To illustrate the way in which violence buttresses civilization, the film breaks into a horizontal split screen. On the top we see a night view of the bombing of Iraq. On the bottom half we watch a helicopter film Las Vegas at night. The sequence exposes the insularity of Western culture that can shield itself from the violence we perpetuate abroad. As the imagery continues, two infomercial voices discuss cooking in somewhat frantic tones: "I'll just take a couple eggs." "How many?" "Two is good." "What else?" "Ham." "Good." "Tomato. Onion. Cheese. Oh, everything." "Now watch: I am chopping the ham and veggies, grating the cheese and whipping the eggs all in three seconds. The machine that just made those smoothies made an omelet." The voice-over's contrast against the sequence's brutal imagery of the invasion of Iraq is the film's

clever way of illustrating the saying, “You have to break some eggs to make an omelet,” by linking the two together: we have to destroy the country in order to democratize it; we need to bomb Iraqis to control the oil that makes places like Las Vegas possible; we need to destroy the Third World in order to fuel our First World spectacular and excessively consumptive existence.



The split screen allows *END:CIV* (2010) to expose how the exploitation of foreign countries directly relates to the consumerism of the West.

The sequence continues with a split screen between a diamond infomercial and starving African kids and abused African workers, a chicken commercial and images of cramped, unsanitary factory farming conditions, jeans commercials and Asian seamstresses hunched over tables making repetitive movements, and, finally, a barrage of nuclear reactors, clear-cuts, and strip-mining juxtaposed against the Dow Jones ticker, a toaster, and a microwave. In the matter of a little more than a minute, the film links our consumption habits to the endless harmful production practices that they foster. The barrage of imagery overwhelms the viewer suggesting the pathology and ignorance that Western culture must create in order to either normalize violence internally or outsource it to other countries in the form of war and labor abuse. What at first might seem separate entities—war, infomercials, diamond mining, and the like—are dramatically yoked through the simple yet effective model of thinking of these practices as circuits of capitalism where our ceaseless demand for goods

and services are premised upon the hidden exploitation and destruction of other peoples, lands, and animals.

The section linking greenwashing and the appropriation of environmental and indigenous resistance provides for an equally salient moment. After watching an underwater shot of the Deep Horizon oil spill, the sequence cuts to a montage of “green capitalism” logos flashing one after another on the screen: Green Product, BioBag, Botanica, and so on. Pink Floyd’s “Money” plays, implying the sequence’s critical attitude. We watch a series of green commercials claiming that purchasing oil, toilet paper, and other products will help preserve X number of trees and rivers. Voiceovers of various activists critique this commodified attitude. Jensen states, “These solutions take the industrial economy as a given: how can we save the industrial economy, and, oh, it would be nice if we still have a planet.” Another interviewee states that the problem with such solutions is that they are “rooted in that very same cultural lie: nature is resources . . . and something to be utilized.”



END:CIV directly addresses the ways in which many mainstream environmental NGOs have incorporated themselves within a capitalist outlook.

These false solutions not only extend to corporations but also to reformist environmental organizations that have increasingly modeled their organizational structure and activist outlook upon a corporate

framework and have been incorporated into the industrial economy. The sequence announces: “In May 2010, twenty-one logging companies signed a deal with several major environmental organizations, including Greenpeace and the David Suzuki Foundation.” We watch a press conference between these companies and environmental groups. Avrim Lazar, CEO of Forest Products Association of Canada, asserts from behind his podium: “One interesting piece of the agreement is, with Greenpeace, David Suzuki, Forest Ethics on our side, when someone else comes and tries to bully us, the agreement actually requires that they come and work with us in repelling the attack and we’ll be able to say, ‘Fight me. Fight my gang.’”

The clip is particularly damning, since not only are these mainstream environmental organizations teaming up with logging corporations, but they are being incorporated into capitalism’s insidious logic. Anyone who disagrees with them is a “bully.” Criticism of the logging industry is classified as an “attack.” These environmental groups are considered a “gang” in the pockets of the loggers. The incorporation of these environmental groups with loggers attempts to delegitimize more radical groups’ critiques as unjustified and irrational. It offers the appearance of compromise between corporations and environmental groups, but the language employed reveals the incorporation of these environmental groups into a capitalist logic and a corporate mindset.

Furthermore, these reformist environmental groups further appropriate indigenous resistance. The film states how in the 1990s the Nuxalk Nation engaged in direct actions to protest their sacred land from being exploited by industry, but soon after “their struggle was eventually co-opted by well-funded environmental groups, including Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and Forest Ethics.” Dru Oja Jay, founder of *The Dominion*, notes: “The end result was a closed-door negotiation . . . where a lot of the groups that actually did the work—the direct actions and did the marketing campaigns—were shut out of the process. Public oversight was removed. And the protocols signed with First Nations were shunted aside.” Throughout this account, we watch grainy direct-action footage of the Nuxalk people hanging banners, blocking dirt roads, engaging in sacred ceremonies, and being arrested—doing the main work of getting the issues recognized. But reformist environmental groups treat indigenous people and their actions as a mere means to supposedly greater ends, which ultimately reinforces an imperialist project that supports the state, capitalism, and the well-being of NGOs.

This sequence well-illustrates Andrea Smith's observation how NGOs promote "a social movement culture that is non-collaborative, narrowly focused, and competitive."⁹⁹ It reveals not only how corporations foist greenwashing in their advertising but also the ways in which the missions of environmental groups get compromised as they adopt a capitalist mindset and a colonial relationship gets reinscribed between whites and indigenous populations. The sequence seamlessly interweaves indigenous, environmental, and economic issues together into a singular and poignant critique.

Yet due to the amount of environmental destruction, postcolonial aggression, and capitalist exploitation the film chronicles, catastrophic imagery weighs heavily throughout it, threatening to crush any sense of collective resistance underneath its weight. This immediately becomes apparent during the film's opening montage. We see an image of a Pac-Man game standing in the corner of a white-brick room. Underneath the glowing computer maze we watch frantic imagery of cows being slaughtered, oil being pumped from the desert, trees falling, harpoons piercing flesh, dead bodies, mines blown, oil covered fowl, nuclear explosions, Doppler hurricane imagery, flooded streets, kids watching TV, a shopper removing items from a shelf, armies marching, and men firing guns. A series of voice-overs announce: "It is getting more historic. The rate of change is accelerating whether we are talking about the extinction of species or the thoroughness of the techno-culture"; "We are living in an ecological apocalypse"; "Most scientists continue to underestimate how far down the path to climate catastrophe we already traveled"; "When the oil starts to run dry and those in power have to assert their power in a time of dwindling resources, I think they're going to turn to much more blunt and cruel methods of enforcing their power." Wild techno music plays underneath this onslaught of statements and imagery. Finally, the sequence ends with a flashing "Game Over" sign.

Apocalyptic imagery and catastrophe are fairly regularly employed by anarchists and various environmental movements. *Silent Spring* is usually credited as one of the first and most powerful environmental books to prophesize a postapocalyptic world created by some mysterious "white granular powder" remarkably similar to DDT falling from the skies.¹⁰⁰ As climate change has increasingly become a part of the radical imaginary during the twenty-first century, disaster looms ever larger in anarchist and environmental critiques.

For example, in *Expect Resistance*, CrimethInc. dedicates an entire section to disaster, suggesting that opportunity might also lurk within

catastrophe. The anonymous writer asserts: “Disasters throw everything into disarray and into question: the wide world reasserts that anything is indeed possible, and we find ourselves tossed out of our prisons, ready or not, shivering on the sidewalk before the ruins.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, in *Recipes for Disaster* someone writes, “You might not be ready to own up to actually desiring one, but a disaster would at least offer a chance to escape your cage and explore the unknown for a little while.”¹⁰²

This disaster imagery and desire for apocalypse takes on an idealized state within the romantic anarchist imagination. Disasters, in such an outlook, allow the Sartrean existentialist condition to fully manifest itself where all routines fall by the wayside and history evaporates in a flash. It is a secular messianic vision, which one anarchist writer notes when claiming, “It’s no coincidence the Millennium referred to in so many religious traditions is to be ushered in by a phase of terrible destruction: the kingdom of heaven arrives through the smoke.”¹⁰³ But unlike the Rapture where only the faithful survive, environmental collapse ensures no one’s safety—except perhaps only the wealthy.

Even a moderate environmental group like SmartMeme engages in disaster scenarios. Within its *Mapping 2020*, the tenth scenario the organization proposes is: Peak Oil and The End of the World As We Know It. Although it offers a hopeful scenario where “the public became familiar with the value of resource management and the ecological consequences that were at stake for their communities and the planet as a whole,” it also offers a disastrous worldview, too.¹⁰⁴ They imagine “by 2014, as the Gulf Stream suddenly halted and the West Antarctic Ice Shelf began rapidly disintegrating, temperatures plunged in Europe and ocean levels began to rise globally. . . . In place of reason, impatience and desperation caused things to quickly dissolve into irrationality and rage. . . . Nihilism became the dominant political force of the era.”¹⁰⁵ The world ends in an orgy of violence and disarray reminiscent of a Michael Bay film: “Local governance had collapsed in large areas of the planet as massive influxes of coastal refugees and the break down in global transport led to food and water shortages. Historic, ethnic and class rivalries rapidly bubbled to the surface.”¹⁰⁶

Yet SmartMeme and romantic anarchists employ apocalyptic imagery to emphasize its dialectical nature. It is not just there to frighten us but also to urge us into action before it actually becomes a reality. Mark Levine writes that apocalyptic imagery both has a deterministic death-side and a messianic and liberatory vision. He writes, “It is this implication of apocalypse as an idea geared towards enabling people—in the face of total

wipe-out—to utterly change their lives for the *good* which, in our age of total crisis, I submit, remains redolent with potentiality.”¹⁰⁷ Slavoj Žižek similarly emphasizes the negative dialectics of apocalyptic imagery: “We have to accept that, at the level of possibilities, our future is doomed, that the catastrophe will take place, that it is our destiny—and then, against the background of this acceptance, mobilize ourselves to perform the act which will change destiny itself and thereby insert a new possibility into the past.”¹⁰⁸

But this is an extremely delicate balancing act between the empowering and disempowering aspects of catastrophic imagery. The endless imagery of oil decimated landscapes, smoking clouds engulfing the horizon, fuel stacks on fire, and devastated clear-cuts that run throughout *END:CIV* makes one feel as if the apocalypse is upon us and there is not much to be done. When López screened the film at my university, an earnest student asked afterward about what was to be done. Someone from Earth First! spoke about a tree-sitting protest occurring in one of our northern campuses, and another person mentioned a couple of other environmental groups the student could get involved with, but these answers seemed to pale in comparison to the forces of destruction that the film chronicles.

Because López in part uses Jensen to situate his film, and Jensen shares much apocalyptic imagery with anarcho-primitivism, the film inherits some of latter’s misanthropy and deterministic framework. Andrew Flood emphasizes how the very elements of Marxist determinism, a political philosophy that many anarchists reject, get incorporated into the catastrophic rhetoric of anarcho-primitivism: “The oil running out argument is the primitivist equivalent of the orthodox Marxist ‘final economic crisis that results in the overthrow of capitalism.’ And, just like the orthodox Marxists, primitivists always argue that this final crisis is just round the corner.”¹⁰⁹

What remains to be addressed is how capitalism actually runs upon disaster. Naomi Klein asserts in *The Shock Doctrine* that “now wars and disaster responses are so fully privatized that they are themselves the new market.”¹¹⁰ Capitalism thrives under disaster situations whether natural or self-imposed. Greenwashing seems to be a strong indicator of how corporations are readying themselves to fully capitalize upon devastating climate change. As Andrew Flood notes, “The mass deaths of millions of people is not something that destroys capitalism. . . . Destruction can serve to regenerate capitalism.”¹¹¹

The type of catastrophe theory advocated by Jensen, anarcho-primitivists, and the film strikes one as too pat, too easy—a form of magical thinking that conveniently ignores how we need to transition from our current state of affairs to a more sustainable way of life, how our lifestyles need to alter and our priorities need to be reassessed. This catastrophe theory solves all by assuming the imminent collapse of history, capitalism, and ideology. It does not realize how our very identities, language, and actions are already ideologically inscribed. There is no final cleansing. There is only the dirty work of persevering and attempting to self-consciously enact the changes we actually want to see.

Furthermore, such an outlook can lead to political defeatism. If the world is on the brink of collapse, why not simply exploit our natural resources even more voraciously by keeping our lights on twenty-four hours a day, doubling deep-sea drilling for oil, and accelerating strip-mining since such actions will ultimately bring us to collapse sooner rather than later? The theory can be used to justify and accentuate the very worst consumer practices.

We can witness such fatalism in some of the responses to Andrew Flood's critique of anarcho-primitivism. One frantic user responds:

Burn it out. And let it burn itself out. We must stop enacting all this legislation to “protect” the environment. We must stop recycling. We must stop trying to live on the earth now as though we can create sustainability while capitalism is still around. Because no matter how many acres of forest we save and no matter how many milk jugs you send to the recycling bin, the transnational corporations are still going to be there. . . . So how do we burn it out? Squander ever [sic] resource we can get out [sic] hands on. Contribute to global warming as much as possible by using fossil fuels. Kill as many species as possible. I know you are already probably pissed off about saying this, but stick with me. Lets [sic] face it. Everything I am saying we should do, burn fossil fuels and trash the environment, is going to be done inevitably by corporations and governments. . . . Second, if we cause all of this destruction rapidly, instead of slow motion, there is the chance that some parts of the earth will emerge from this phoenix like rebirth.¹¹²

A similar fatalism at times undercuts *END:CIV*, too. After a series of images of Martin Luther King Jr. and Subcomandante Marcos, one activist notes, “I think we need to accept that the majority of institutions and the majority of people will never be on our side. And so we have to sit down as individual activists, as communities of resistance, and we have to say, ‘What will it take this culture to stop destroying the planet? Persuasion has not worked.’”

If activists seriously believe that a majority of people will never be on their side, they are inevitably creating a vanguard that anarchist-inspired movements should be opposed to. Social movement-building depends upon spreading one’s message and extending activism into wider constituencies. By foregoing these concerns, one then wonders what the point of activism is.

END:CIV never addresses the specific difficulties and contradictions in building a mass-based radical movement. Instead, the film launches into a defense of the most extreme form of environmental support: the use of force/violence. In part, the film’s focus on violence is important since it is routinely ignored or condemned within liberal political circles. North American pacifism comes under particularly heavy attack since it is viewed as a largely middle-class, Western white movement that has foreclosed more radical possibilities. Peter Gelderloos, author of *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, observes in the film: “Especially in North America, the pacifist and nonviolent advocates had a very defining role and even a censoring role in determining what other people’s participation can be.” Already we can see how critics like Gelderloos often conflate pacifism and nonviolent direct action as one and the same. Although the two can converge, they certainly are not the same thing. Not only are there multiple forms of nonviolent direct action, but there are also different types of pacifism.¹¹³ As Francesca Polletta observes, although the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Martin Luther King Jr. might have adopted a more autocratic model, the Congress of Racial Equality held a “cooperative ethos that pacifists embraced, their insistence on collectivized tasks and consensus-based decision-making, and their reluctance to centralize or bureaucratize all reflected their opposition to a mass society in which the lust for power had eclipsed the possibilities of human connection.”¹¹⁴

This problematic conflation between pacifism and direct action (and their various strains) gets reinforced through the film’s imagery. While Gelderloos speaks, we watch black-and-white imagery of SCLC

demonstrations followed by shots of Obama's presidential campaign with people holding signs, "Change We Can Believe In." The relation between the two is unclear. Is the film conflating the SCLS as just an earlier form of what Obama would harness in his supposedly grassroots campaign? Or is it suggesting the ways in which contemporary politicians have diluted a more radical message and grassroots organizing of the civil rights movement? This lack of differentiation and historical specificity is disturbing.

Although Jensen throughout the film carefully states that he doesn't have a problem with nonviolent action—all types of tactics are needed—but instead with the ways in which "pacifists, especially in the U.S., end up not supporting more radical or militant work," at times the film implies that pacifism and nonviolent direct action are hopelessly compromised. For example, one activist forcefully states, "We've got a couple of myths on the Left that I would really encourage that we get over. The first is that social change happens by moral suasion. It doesn't. It happens by force."

This is a simplistic understanding that fails to see force as both an action and a language, which Frantz Fanon never ceased reminding us in *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is something not only to act upon but also to use rhetorically to generate collective support. But the film misses this point by instead having its interviewees mainly focus on the enemy: the corporations. Jensen states, "You can't argue with psychopaths. You can't argue with fascists. And you can't argue with those who are benefiting from an economic system." This latter point is completely hypocritical from a white male author who most decidedly benefits from capitalism in the sale of his books, his speaking tour, and the very film he appears within. One *must* argue with those who are benefiting from an economic system or one would end up excluding many people from the movement.

This stance also overlooks the dialectics of capitalism that can both immiserate people while still satisfying other needs of theirs. For example, it can pay them an unlivable wage while providing for easy credit to purchase low-priced consumer goods. The interests of a fair wage are offset by cheap commodities. Or to use a more historical example: how capitalism disrupted older patriarchal relations of keeping women home by injecting them into the workforce, as well as addressing them as consumers.¹¹⁵ One would not want to argue for a return to women's entrapment within the home before capitalism seized upon them as workers and consumers.

Furthermore, the use of direct action through force/violence within the film remains unquestioned as if its positive effects are undeniable and

its deployment unproblematic. It is romanticized within a certain masculine mythos. Typical of the existentialist influences of North American romantic anarchism, the film similarly sees direct action and the use of force as tearing through the veneer of middle-class, pacifist ideals. It conveniently overlooks the ways in which it splintered the community in Eugene, Oregon, and accelerated the repression of its eco-activists. It neglects to mention how even minor instances of ecological resistance are being classified as forms of domestic terrorism by the FBI. And, finally, it overlooks unequal socioeconomic conditions that do not allow a majority of people to practice such adventurist tactics. It glorifies violence over the equally important goals of outreach and community-building.

Ultimately, the film embodies what Marti Kheel refers to as the “heroic ideal” of direct action. According to the Kheel, the eco-warrior who adopts such a stance “often denounced other forms of activism as cowardice. Behind these tirades lurks the specter of the sissy, with its link to the devalued female world.”¹¹⁶ Pacifism becomes this sissified Other in the film. It is denounced as a “cesspool of democratic plurality” and “has as its primary role to make resistance harmless.” Anything less than force and direct action is viewed as ineffective, passive, and, ultimately, feminine.

Furthermore, many of the individuals in the film echo a masculine warrior stance and the need to fight. Paul Watson, the founder of the Sea Shepherd Society, is routinely interviewed. Yet Kheel notes how Watson exemplifies the military chic of the eco-warrior movement. She writes, “Militarism is more than a metaphor for Watson, who states that ‘right now we’re in the early stages of World War III. We are the navy to Earth First!’s army. It’s the war to save the planet.”¹¹⁷ Peter Gelderloos, also a prominent interviewee throughout the film, speaks in similar warrior terms. He dismisses pacifists, writing, “The vast majority are simply sheep who sign petitions, raise funds, or hold protest signs, while an educated, well-dressed minority who seek audience with politicians and other elites hold all the power.”¹¹⁸ Instead, he continues, “we must realistically accept that revolution is a social war, not because we like war, but because we recognize that the status quo is a low-intensity war and challenging the state results in an intensification of that warfare.”¹¹⁹ Although he may not like war, the recurrent imagery of it in his writing suggests that he indeed likes being associated with it.

Most noticeably missing within the film and its interviewees’ accounts is an emphasis upon the compassion that is needed to connect us with our world. As Marti Kheel notes, one needs the “development of

compassion for the nonhuman world, and an understanding of why such care is so singularly absent in our current culture.”¹²⁰ Anger and irony are the film’s predominant tones. Although the film interviews many women, they are caught up in a masculine pose and rhetoric that doesn’t allow for a diversity of opinion.

This masculine stance can often lead to a general lack of compassion for those who suffer from physical abuse within anarchist communities, which has been addressed by some anarcho-feminists. In speaking about domestic abuse situations, one female anarchist writes, “I struggled to understand how friends that could theorize so extensively about anarchist politics could be so oblivious to the power and abuse in their relationships and the relationships around them.”¹²¹ Not only does the author call for creating support structures for those who have been abused and the perpetrators, she calls for men to investigate the ways in which they perpetuate abusive behavior even when they are attempting to address it. For example, the author recounts a winter 2008 Earth First! Organizers Conference that attempted to address domestic abuse. Yet instead, “the space was designed for perpetrators to talk and survivors to listen. It became a perpetuation of the very thing it was intended to counteract.”¹²² Ultimately, anarchists need to acknowledge the emotionally difficult work that is needed to address such issues. She writes, “It is easy to avoid doing what is agreed upon or what one knows is needed, simply because it is hard. A support network should be the encouraging, yet unyielding voice that doesn’t let that happen.”¹²³

Another writer explicitly links the patriarchy and violence that haunt some anarchist circles:

When we do talk about violence against women, we often muddy the waters and distort the issues. We carefully repeat that women can also abuse men, men can abuse men, women can abuse women, trans folks can abuse trans folks, and so on. And while all of these factors do need to be discussed in our intimate relationships, it is important not to lose focus on what is key here. There is a pattern of accepted violence and abuse towards women so intense that all women, whether survivors or not, are affected. . . . We need to talk about patriarchy and authority. We need to make it clear that abuse, sexual assault, and any other form of violence as control are not mistakes or moments of poor judgment or phases that men

might go through. We must clearly define that abuse is not anarchist and will not be tolerated.¹²⁴

The author carefully addresses the ways in which an individualistic philosophy might undercut more systemic gender abuses. One can see how a highly existential philosophy can excuse any individual action as “mistakes or moments of poor judgment” since history and ideology are after all illusory within such a mindset, holding no more power than one allows them. Yet issues of violence against women confront such existential individualism with patterns of abuse and systemic ways in which patriarchy, violence, and force are inscribed into one’s individuality and ideological outlook.

Overall, if North American anarchism wants to confront domestic abuse and some of its own patriarchal rhetoric in addressing direct action and the use of force, it needs to take on a decidedly more feminist orientation. Yet some writers like Bob Black have dismissed feminism as nothing more than a bourgeois ideology. In *Anarchism after Leftism*, he writes, “Feminism is so obviously an Establishment ideology and so remote from its (largely mythical) radical roots that its affirmation by anarchists will become ever more perfunctory.”¹²⁵ Black’s arrogant dismissal of diverse strains of feminism reveals an incredibly hypocritical attitude that dismisses gender as a secondary concern. Yet, as L. Susan Brown notes, “Anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes *all* relationships of power, it is inherently feminist. An anarchist who supports male domination contradicts the implicit critique of power which is the fundamental principle upon which all of anarchism is built.”¹²⁶

Similarly, another anonymous anarcho-feminist writes, “I also dream that one day ‘anti-capitalist’ work will have to be legitimized as ‘feminist’ . . . When we talk about power and control in partner abuse, we are discussing the same dynamics that play out between an individual and the state, a worker and a boss, an animal and a vivisector. False notions of ‘authority’ exist in all these circumstances. . . . We are not talking about random incidents here, but patterns of abuse that are endorsed by our society to control an entire segment of the population.”¹²⁷

The failure of *END:CIV* to speak about the relation of force and violence to patriarchal culture is a grave oversight that implicitly disregards gender issues as subsidiary concerns. Following one screening of the film, a viewer questioned López about the film’s glorification of violence and lack of feminist perspective. Although López noted how many women spoke

throughout the film, he admitted that the film failed to investigate the gendered coding of violence. As long as anarchism fails to address issues concerning gender and feminism, the community is at risk of factionalizing over such issues, as happened in Eugene, Oregon, where feminist ideology challenged the individualistic tenets of romantic anarchism that many held.

Therefore, *END:CIV*'s inability to question the patriarchal premises of the use of force that it advocates reveals a systemic oversight found in many North American anarchist communities that do not adequately address gender concerns in relation to direct-action tactics. As one queer activist notes, "Anti-authoritarians who think spectacular representations of violence can be turned against their masters are playing with fire in more ways than they think."¹²⁸ Ultimately, much riot porn "glorifies the moment of physical conflict, while removing the social context that gives it meaning."¹²⁹ Similarly, *END:CIV* refuses to investigate the gendered social context that gives rise to force and violence, and, more importantly, fails to ask how its defense of force differs at all from that of patriarchal culture.

Conclusion

What makes López's oeuvre unique is how it explicitly reveals the promises and the pitfalls within North American anarchism since it condenses many of its diverse issues within its frame. It exposes the compelling results when the aesthetic traditions of political hip-hop and the avant-garde are successfully intertwined; it exemplifies how activists must trawl through popular culture in order to identify and reconfigure its hidden utopian impulses in more radical directions; and it discloses the dangers of the reactionary nature of some strains of anarchist thought that disregard gender issues and endorse elitist and individualistic outlooks. As artists Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland observe, "Because art is understood as a realm of the qualitative, where our assumptions about how the 'real' world works can be temporarily put on hold, it is the place where exciting experiments in social reorganization can take place. It is in this space that we can catch glimpses of liberation."¹³⁰ At its best, López's work engages in constructing a new vision where popular culture serves the interests of the poor and dispossessed, where humor is reignited within activism, and the DIY ethics of punk and hip-hop allow those with talent and gumption to be the media once again. Furthermore, it reveals the tensions between lifestyle and social anarchism, between a romantic championing of the individual

and direct action and more systemic analysis of capitalism and patriarchy, between artistic vision and the need for a coherent strategy.

END:CIV is López's boldest attempt to address wider constituencies and to offer a tentative totalistic vision of the world that might lead the way forward. It attempts to use the climate justice movement as a framework that might be able to synthesize multivalent impulses and goals of indigenous, environmental, and workers' rights campaigns. Yet the film also manifests some of the limits of a romantic anarchist tradition that fetishizes the use of force, the individual, and vanguardist appeals. These contradictory impulses in López's work reveal the power of art to condense multiple desires within one work so that the tensions become more apparent and the utopian impulses more clarified. *END:CIV* (and López's work as a whole) has its limits, but within these limits it also sketches passageways to the future by dissecting the culture at large and prying open its fissures with collective political action and a vision of a better world.

Yet it should be recalled while making such work López was involved with the Vancouver Media Co-op in training people in video production, conducting media outreach, and producing collective videos. In other words, even given his enormous talent as an anarchist video maker, López always grounded his video activism within a larger organization and collective outlook that equally emphasized skills-sharing and community outreach. Although priority has been given to the close reading of his work in this chapter since it has so far received no sustained analysis, López has always seen his work as a part of wider activist practices. For example, he globally toured with *END:CIV* for over a year to use it as a pretext to join activist communities together in one room. When he screened it at my university, he drew together a packed house of students, faculty, Earth Firsters, anarchists, feminists, and other members of the surrounding community. Many had never met before. By providing a venue for various constituencies to gather together and share their interests, the screening allowed for new relationships to be fostered that continue until this day, which I can personally attest to. So no matter what the formal and thematic limits of the film, it provided a forum where new activist connections and friendships emerged. López's use of film screenings as sites where new collective radical subjectivities could form is an extension of the same attitude initially held by many Third Cinema directors who similarly saw film as a pretext to political engagement and collective action.

CONCLUSION

FUTURE OCCUPATIONS

WHILE FULLY IMMersed IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH FOR THIS project, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) suddenly appeared after being inspired by the multiple revolts occurring throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The type of anarchist-inflected digital media activism that had been simmering just beneath the surface gained visibility as youth abroad and domestically seized social media, video, radio, and cell phone technology to assist in collectively organizing and popularizing their global resistances.

Occupy Wall Street's origins resonate with two primary tendencies I have already discussed: 1) meme production; and 2) the organization of media around a protest like we saw occurring with the origins of Indymedia and some of the Canadian Media Co-ops. In regards to the first point, Adbusters Media Foundation initiated the call for a protest to demand that the political leaders of the G20 tax the rich to fully support needed social programs and environmental regulations. It set the date for September 17, 2011. Other than providing for an enthralling flyer of a female dancer arched eloquently on the bull statue of Wall Street with teargas



The iconic Adbusters photo that announced the creation of Occupy Wall Street.

swirling behind her and black-clad protesters poised for battle, Adbusters did little else but tweet and popularize the event on its website.

Even worse, the date Adbusters set was ill-timed for two reasons. One: organizers only had six weeks to prepare for the event. To put this in perspective, the 1999 WTO Seattle protests took over a year in preparation to get about forty thousand onto the streets with the assistance of organized labor and NGOs. Second: it was impossible to shut down Wall Street on September 17 as it was a Saturday.¹ Adbusters' hype had trumped practical concerns of logistics. But in spite of these limits, people mobilized in numbers unanticipated.

In regards to organizing a campaign and media around a protest, OWS shared some similarities and yet held vast differences with Indymedia's origins in 1999. Like Indymedia, OWS's duration was uncertain. It was unclear if the protest was only to last for a couple of days and if it was to remain only in New York City. Its unexpected rapid growth into other cities far outstripped the sudden growth of Indymedia, which was initially dependent on developing around counter-summit protests and required a far more elaborate technological infrastructure than is required now. Furthermore, unlike Indymedia, which had to develop its own website since social media did not yet exist, OWS already had existing platforms of Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr to publicize actions and post photos, written accounts, and videos.

If anything, OWS highlights how social media has become increasingly integrated into twenty-first century activist actions. As Paolo Gerbaudo argues, social media not only complements on the ground organizing but also serves "as a vehicle for the creation of new forms of proximity and face-to-face interaction."² This is not to underplay the less glamorous tasks of everyday organizing that occur through meetings, phone calls, and other exchanges. Unlike many accounts by mass media that fetishize the use of social media in recent protests, social media builds off and at times restructures more traditional forms of collective organizing as this book has repeatedly emphasized.

According to a poll of five thousand respondents who were involved with Occupy encampments across the United States, 77.3 percent used social media to post something about Occupy.³ This should not be surprising since Occupy in general was largely a middle-class movement. According to the same study, the main participants of the encampments were mostly young professionals and students between the ages of twenty and forty.⁴ Of those surveyed, 29 percent held graduate degrees, with another 49 percent claiming that they either held a college degree or had some college experience. Over 80 percent identified as white, with 5 percent identifying as Latino, 5 percent as Asian, 5 percent Native American,

and only 3 percent as African-American.⁵ Clearly, the Occupy movement in general represented a fairly privileged sector.

A study conducted regarding Occupy Wall Street from February to July 2012 is largely congruent with the aforementioned survey on Occupy in general. It found that 67 percent of participants were white, with African-Americans participating at 6.5 percent and Asians at 4 percent—relatively low numbers for a city as diverse as Manhattan. Almost 80 percent of participants held either a college or graduate degree, 28 percent had an income of over \$100,000, And 24 percent had an income between \$50,000 and \$74,999. Around 30 percent made under \$50,000. Most tellingly, only 5 percent of participants identified themselves as blue collar.⁶

As Paolo Gerbaudo demonstrates, the middle-class mores were being translated in OWS's elitist approach to social media. During its early days, 82 percent of OWS social media interactions occurred on Twitter, whereas Facebook posts, a more popular and accessible social media site, only tallied at 3 percent.⁷ Additionally, the Facebook posts were uninspired and unidirectional, mainly consisting of links to articles and videos. The interaction provided by such a social media site remained untapped. By underutilizing Facebook, OWS excluded a significant portion of users from timely updates and engagement.

Even more troubling is how the dependency of social media might be leading to a logic of aggregation over a logic of networking. Jeffrey Juris explains, "Whereas networking logics entail a praxis of communication and coordination on the part of collective actors that are already constituted—including particular organizations, networks, and coalitions—logics of aggregation involve the coming together of actors *qua* individuals."⁸ Because of various social media platforms' limits, in particular Twitter with its narrow character limit, it becomes difficult to facilitate complex discussions and develop strategies that had been done in the past during the alter-globalization movement on listservs, as well as over the phone and face-to-face. As a result, a collective identity becomes more difficult to establish and sustain when social media plays a primary role in organizing. Although social media's role in activism is still far from clear, its presence forces one to reflect on the ways in which new social media platforms might be altering organizational structures within activist formations in both progressive and problematic ways.

What remains certain, however, is that Occupy Wall Street offers a more recent example of how neoliberal inequities can be perpetuated when anarchist-inflected practices are uncritically adopted. Although it never

announced itself as anarchist, OWS adhered to many anarchist tenets, such as holding general assemblies (GA) based upon consensus decision-making, direct-action protest and organizing, and attempts at nonhierarchical relations. Many positive things emerged from the Occupy movement, such as shifting national attention back to issues of poverty and inequality, exposing police violence—yet again—to global audiences, and rejuvenating ties and a sense of agency among activists and those interested in social justice.⁹ But as the dust settled on OWS, much critique has also arisen regarding the dysfunction and inequities perpetuated by its anarchist tendencies and liberal outlook. Todd Gitlin recalls sitting through numerous general assemblies where class and racial tensions flared among a sea of confused working groups lacking any direction.¹⁰ According to many participants, Zuccotti Park, the site of the occupation, self-segregated along class lines with middle-class members occupying its east end and its lower-class members at its west, exposing how class divisions within the 99% persisted.¹¹

In spite of individual appeals for equity, informal leaders arose who often held a privileged racial and class status. In Zuccotti Park, the People of Color Working Group issued a Call to People of Color on October 1, 2011, after observing the prevailing whiteness of the general assemblies. In it, the working group asserted, “This monumental movement risks replicating the very structures of injustice it seeks to eliminate. And so we are actively working to unite the diverse voices of all communities, in order to understand exactly what is at stake, and to demand that a movement to end economic injustice must have at its core an honest struggle to end racism,” which OWS never did.¹²

Furthermore, the GA obscured the informal hierarchies and working relations that actually determined OWS actions by falsely asserting itself as the primary forum for such decision-making. As the collective Not an Alternative address: “Rarely were actions the product of GA decisions. Instead, they were organized by independent groups skirting around the GA structure, acting in the name of principles. Had autonomous groups waited on the GA to make decisions, the actions and encampments across the country would never have emerged.”¹³

The videos produced by OWS also arose through such informal channels and reflect many of the racial and class privileges of the people who created them. According to a national survey, only 8 percent of participants of the Occupy movement created video.¹⁴ Although one can assume that the percentages might be higher for those creating video in OWS, as it is located in Manhattan, a media hub of the United States, one would be safe to assume that it was still a minority of people doing so.

These racial and class privileges became most apparent during the live-streaming of events. Those with privilege often considered livestreaming as providing “transparency” in their activism. Yet many people of color and transgender and queer people felt uncomfortable being filmed and streamed, since their images’ transmission left them exposed and vulnerable to anyone’s gaze. Furthermore, those narrating the livestreams, often white and male, started to achieve a celebrity that opposed OWS’s nonhierarchical aspirations.¹⁵

Most of the videos produced by OWS are based on a vague liberal impulse that refused to engage with structural inequities that the People of Color Working Group identified. *Where Do We Go from Here?*, for instance, opens with synthetic ethereal music.¹⁶ The camera smoothly floats across the screen capturing attractive and diverse participants—young and old, black and white, male and female—speaking to one another, determinedly typing on laptops, and providing food. Periodically, someone spouts a hollow aphorism: “It kinda feels like something is finally being done. Like people are waking up”—or a worn-out civil rights cliché: “When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus . . . no one knew that four years later there would be a comprehensive Civil Rights Act.”



Where Do We Go from Here (2011) reveals the worst aspects of the class privilege behind Occupy Wall Street as a kind of “collective narcissism.”

The video’s sanctimonious feel—established through its semi-religious music, floating camera movements, and hollow rhetoric—can be off-putting. It presents those depicted within it as the anointed and leaves the rest of us less pious rabble watching from the outside in the cold. It possesses an oppressive inclusivity that smothers us by its ever-present wind music and beautified participants who imploringly stare out at us

during its conclusion. The video makes OWS seem more like a New Age cult than a diverse movement, more therapy than politics, a United Colors of Benetton commercial rather than a documentary seriously engaging with structural disenfranchisement. It reinforces Todd Gitlin's observation that "many were the ways in which the movement could come to feel that its primary achievement was itself—a sort of collective narcissism."¹⁷

The effacement of actual inequities within OWS led some people of color to produce their own videos in response. In *Occupy the Hood*, Malik Rhasaan, from Queens, states how people of color were underrepresented at OWS even though Wall Street practices have been negatively impacting communities of color for decades.¹⁸ He notes, "If the white community has a cold, we have the flu. So what I did was I went on the internet and made a Twitter just as a sounding board, and it worked."

Rhasaan's style is much more minimal than in other OWS videos. The visuals largely consist of a two-shot of Malik and another black male with a red Che Guevara shirt speaking before a handheld camera. The camera swivels a bit to gaze upon other participants. Malik relates useful information directly to the camera: "And they stopped the welfare and they stopped food stamps on October 1st in Detroit." An occasional photograph of protesters and famous supporters like Cornel West is interspersed in the mere three minutes of footage.



Occupy the Hood (2011) has a down-and-dirty filming style, emulating the lack of resources at hand for its videographers.

Malik asserts, "We've been occupied for years. Wall Street has been built upon slave bones." A shot of a flag waving "Debt is Slavery" follows

showing the linkages between the metaphor and the historical reality. He continues, "They're feeding more people here than my mayor feeds." The camera turns around to show a table where food is being dished out to a line of people. The camera zooms in on some apples, bread, condiments, and boxes of additional supplies. The other man adds as the camera swivels back, the sound of his voice fades in as the camera's mic returns to him: "I want to thank all the people who have donated to OWS. If it wasn't for you guys keep on funding it, keep on donating, keep on sending clothes, socks, shoes, tampons and Tampax for the ladies, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, a lot of things wouldn't be possible. We just blessed."

A sense of urgency pervades the sequence not only in the amount of information mentioned but also through its rough camera style that frantically scans the backdrop while simultaneously trying to focus upon the two speakers. The camera ingests as much as possible in a very limited amount of time. Furthermore, the sequence's rather spotty sound and minimal editing suggests that its makers do not have much familiarity with video production but are nonetheless jumping into the fray since the moment requires it.

The minimal production style speaks to the poverty and neglect that have suffused urban, working-class communities. The video lacks the music, smooth editing, and general gloss found in other OWS shorts. Unlike the New Age demeanor of *Where Do We Go from Here*, with its moderate pacing and smooth camera movements that imply the socioeconomic privilege that informs the video's aesthetic form, *Occupy the Hood* captures within its shaky camera movements, choppy editing, and shorter length a more amateur approach employed by someone who has been more versed in the ways of YouTube videos than formally trained at film school.

These two videos represent some of the advances and setbacks that still relate to anarchist-inflected video activism. The lower costs of technology and accessibility of new distribution platforms have allowed historically disenfranchised people like Malik more access to video production than ever before. So after witnessing the racial privilege that predominated throughout the GA and the failure of its organizers to address it, Malik could return to Queens and make videos with his friends that forced such issues to be addressed and get publicized in the media.¹⁹ But those with racial and class privileges continue to make longer, more professionally produced, and often better publicized videos. Furthermore, those with privilege are more likely to have their videos distributed in highly visible venues, not only since they often hold connections to the gatekeepers of such venues like activist film festivals and public broadcasting but also

because the “more professional” quality of their videos often appeals to the aesthetic biases of such gatekeepers that make distribution possible.

Because OWS relied both upon anarchist-inflected practices and a vague liberalism that failed to explore how such outlooks are premised upon implicitly informal exclusionary and hierarchical practices—even when people of color repeatedly stated so—it couldn’t help but alienate itself from a majority of working-class and minority communities. For example, even though the occupation of Zuccotti Park bordered Chinatown, one of the last remaining poor immigrant communities in Manhattan, no attempts were made by OWS organizers to create a community alliance despite the long history of organizing by Asian-American activists located there.²⁰

Where to Go from Here

Much more research needs to be conducted on local and global social formations that produce video and digital media activism. A materialist approach would further heighten its analysis by investigating the practices that make such activism possible. Anthropologists like Faye D. Ginsburg, Jeffrey S. Juris, and more recently Todd Wolfson have been leading the way.²¹ Similarly, researchers like Paolo Gerbuado, Michael Chanan, and Maple John Razsa have been particularly concerned with a global perspective and how new media and video production supply newer forms of activist practices that produce a resistant collective identity.²²

Also, there needs to be a more thorough understanding of how anarchist-inflected practices direct much contemporary digital media activism. Although this has been gestured to in some work concerning AIDS media activism during the 1980s and 1990s and played a predominant role in John Downing’s 1984 book *Radical Media*, it is surprisingly absent in much of the current research.²³ Only by coming to terms with anarchism and its varying practices can one better contextualize the type of digital media-based activism taking place in the present—such as the various copwatch groups emerging in Harlem, Austin, and Ferguson, Missouri—and chart its longer historical trajectory.

If anything, I hope that this book not only inspires some further research on video and digital media activism, but that the historical overview provided here might assist media activists or those who simply want to incorporate video, cell phone, and web-based technologies into their activist practices. Many of the people I interviewed mentioned the need for histories concerning film and video activism that would better orient their own work.

These activists mostly had to belatedly stumble upon the existence of prior movements like Third Cinema, Newsreel, and the video guerrillas.

As a historian, it is frustrating to watch movement participants repeat the errors of the past due to historical myopia. The Occupy movement is a case in point. The limits of the consensus-based process seemed to catch many of its participants by surprise even though its shortfalls had been well demonstrated multiple times earlier: within the alter-globalization movement during the 2000s, within ACT UP during the late 1980s, within Movement for a New Society that popularized such anarchist-inflected decision-making during the 1970s and 1980s, and during the commune movement of the late 1960s. George Lakey, a founder of Movement for a New Society—arguably one of the central catalysts of introducing consensus decision-making, the spokes council method, and lifestyle politics into activism within the United States during the 1970s and 1980s—warned, “I certainly don’t feel that consensus ought to be conceived as sacrosanct, the only way to make decisions, or something like that. . . . I certainly couldn’t see operating all of society on the basis of consensus.”²⁴ Yet some proceed as if the lessons learned in the past have no bearing on the present.

Similarly, the whole debate regarding the property destruction unleashed by black bloc tactics during Occupy Oakland protests became a perverse repetition of the very same debates surrounding the 1999 WTO protests. Chris Hedges condemned such actions as “the cancer in Occupy.” He makes the same blanket assertions that have been made earlier by suggesting that such actions justify police repression and hold no rationale other than “an inchoate rage to be unleashed on any target.”²⁵ No effort is made to understand the tactic’s historical origins or political rationale behind them.

David Graeber quickly shot back identifying Hedges’s historical ignorance:

It was back in 1999 that people used to pretend “the Black Bloc” was made up of nihilistic primitivist followers of John Zerzan as opposed to all forms of organization. Nowadays, the preferred approach is to pretend “the Black Bloc” is made up of nihilistic insurrectionary followers of The Invisible Committee, opposed to all forms of organization. Both are absurd slurs. Yours is also 12 years out of date.²⁶

Although black bloc tactics are certainly debatable, to roll out old arguments as if they are new and don’t have any historical context is politically irresponsible.

As a result, this book is not only about filling in a needed history regarding the development of anarchist-inflected video activism and the beginning of wider digital media activism; it is also about the complexities of specific historical moments that such activism emerges from and is entangled with. Anyone who has done activist work fully understands the problems and limits that accompany it. Understandably, many are resistant to publicly voice such limits for fear that the opposition will seize hold of them and exploit them to undercut the movement's good intentions. Although this is a valid concern, I want to argue that we need to come to terms with these contradictions and the ways in which greater historical forces shape and at times pervert the practices we adopt.

Two central lessons for media activists arise from this admittedly limited history that I have traced. One: if one is truly concerned with outreach and skills-sharing into historically disenfranchised communities, purist conceptions of anarchist-inflected practices hold severe limitations. First of all, such conceptions fail to recognize the significant amount of cultural, political, and economic capital required to engage in many of them, such as consensus decision-making and aggressive direct-action protests. Such practices often implicitly champion an abstract individualism that supposedly can break free from socioeconomic bonds to reinvent oneself anew and ignore the vast disparities that exist among different segments of our population. This does not mean that such anarchist-inflected activism and media production need to be abandoned altogether, but that their practices need to be tempered to become welcoming and provide the necessary support for those who not only lack economic resources, but more importantly the cultural capital to believe that their voices matter. Anarchist-inflected activism also needs to recognize the necessary expenses to supply an infrastructure such as child care, travel costs, food costs, and the like to help level the playing field among participants. Of course, one cannot wait for all such resources to become available since they never will. But it does require one to imagine what resources are necessary and desirable to create true skills-sharing and outreach into diverse communities. It also requires that one must keep in mind the unequal distribution of resources among participants, which have grown worse during the recent global recession where Hispanics lost 66 percent of household wealth and blacks lost 53 percent, whereas whites only lost 16 percent.²⁷

But other less costly changes must occur, too, such as moderating and examining one's lifestyle activism to see how it might smuggle hidden class, gender, sexual, and racial privileges within it. One must explore the

lifestyle practices of the communities one wants to partner with in order to better assess the appropriateness of one's own lifestyle activism. To fail to do so would leave us just like the Videofreex as they entered Lanesville, NY, to engage a working-class community that they had little to no knowledge about and weren't really committed to changing their own habits for the sake of outreach. This has similarly plagued much of the Western alter-globalization movement, where "a kind of hybrid mishmash of hippie, punk, and mainstream middle-class white culture, with incorporated chunks of more exotic revolutionary traditions" made itself nearly impossible "to communicate with anyone outside their own charmed little circle."²⁸ In many ways, these limits force Left organizations to rethink how their goals and practices might intersect with marginalized communities and extend into larger geographical spaces, as Media Mobilizing Project and Mobile Voices are respectively doing in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

Also, it means incorporating a feminist perspective within such anarchist-inflected media practices since technology and labor in general has been gender coded. As this book has repeatedly shown, feminists have been arguing for the links between anarchism and feminism for decades. Yet time and again we see a gender divide emerging among anarchist-inflected video practices as we did in the Videofreex, ACT UP, eco-video activism, Indymedia, the Canadian Media Co-op, and some recent anarchist video-making. Also, the fetishization of violence we saw *END:CIV* and the Earth Liberation Front advocating holds troubling implications by failing to explore how such violence also connects with domestic abuse predominantly directed against women, both inside and outside of anarchist circles. Clearly anarchism and feminism are deeply compatible philosophies. The fact that they haven't been more thoroughly integrated strikes one as a severe limitation.

The second lesson concerns the connections between aesthetics and content. On a most basic level, those engaged in video activism need to become aware of past traditions like Third Cinema, Newsreel, the video guerrillas, and other direct-action video groups whose styles they could harness in their own work. If anything, later work by groups like Testing the Limits, DIVA TV, Not an Alternative, and Media Mobilizing Project as well as individuals like Franklin López do a good job of tapping into the rich imagery and forms of prior popular and radical culture. There is a movement away from a low-fi aesthetic as the technology and editing software improve and become more affordable. Of course, this improved quality partially depends upon one's socioeconomic status. For example, Latino day laborers will most likely never have the same access to technology and

leisure time to work on elaborate videos as say someone who is a professional video maker. But in general the overall quality has improved.

With this said, however, a more realistic assessment regarding commercialized aesthetics and the ability to mass distribute videos needs to still occur among activists. Often, it is wrongly assumed that a more professional type video will necessarily gain wider distribution even though historically this has not been the case. Mass distribution has only been available to a very limited selection of film and video. As has been shown elsewhere, even documentaries like *The Spanish Earth* (Joris Ivens, 1937) that had bent over backward to incorporate commercial techniques and minimize its politics, while doing well economically at independent cinemas, had nonetheless failed to gain mass distribution since the material was still considered too controversial at the time.²⁹

As this study has shown, not much has improved with the advent of cable television and other social media sites since mass distribution is still dictated by a very limited amount of gatekeepers and has gotten even more constrained in the era of mass consolidation of media outlets. Distributing media to one's activist community should not be underestimated since it provides for solidarity, local coalition-building, and mutual support that might lack otherwise. Media-making and viewing serve as vital practices in sustaining one's involvement and keeping focused on immediate campaigns and goals. If one is lucky enough to have local public access, the avenues are available to distribute one's videos, music, and art to a wider segment of the local community outside of an activist enclave, as Cascadia Alive!, Media Mobilizing Project, and Paper Tiger Television have done. Deep Dish TV has allowed such productions to reach select national audiences through satellite broadcast.

Problems arise, however, as ambitions reach for wider audiences that broadcast television provides. Only rare instances have allowed for activist video to reach a wide market, as we saw occur during the creation of the first *Gulf Crisis TV Project*. Because of the general lack of coverage provided by broadcast television regarding the war and the fact that the war had not yet commenced, public television widely distributed its first four episodes in the U.S. and Channel Four broadcast it in Britain. But the window for mass distribution was short. By the time of the release of the second series only months later, it received no broadcast distribution. The war had now begun and caused public broadcasting stations to worry that a critical outlook might negatively impact their federal funding and offend viewers from donating to a station that seemed "biased" in its coverage.

In most cases broadcast television completely cut off such activist work from being distributed altogether, as the examples of *Voices from the Front*, *Stop the Church*, and *Pickaxe* readily demonstrate. The last example is the most painful in that Tim Lewis and Tim Ream dramatically restructured the film, which ultimately offended many women in the local community as being more sexist in approach and undercut a biocentric worldview by focusing on a male host. The dramatic change in the film's form didn't lead to PBS distribution but ended up further factionalizing the local community. Such an example serves as a warning that one needs to become acutely aware of the political implications that underlie formal choices and to maintain a careful balance between local concerns and wider distribution ambitions. If anything, the work of Top Value Television becomes an example of the negative impacts that can happen when one's work gets absorbed into broadcast television. Prior concerns with process and equality, as well as links to a wider activist community, often get sacrificed in order to gain access to better technology and larger audiences.

Also, as we have seen with many skills-sharing organizations, better quality videos do not necessarily translate into making the technology and skills more accessible for historically disenfranchised communities. Many of times, process needs to take precedence as people get their hands on technology for the first time and have only recently been afforded the self-worth that their voice and vision matters. The rough production style of videos and writing found in Mobile Voices, for example, provides encouragement for others to engage in video and writing that they might initially consider beyond them.

This emphasis on process has become particularly pronounced in the creation of some copwatch groups emerging from working-class communities of color. For example, Jose LaSalle, founder of Copwatch Patrol Unit (CPU) in Harlem, started filming the police with no training in video and activism. He recounts, "I didn't know nothing. I was just out there recording and see what would happen. Many times when police officers would tell me to put away the camera or get the 'f' out of our faces, I would put the camera away and left. After two months of doing it and marching with the Ramarley Graham family, I started learning my rights, knowing my rights, started learning the constitution protects me to video record anyone out in public view and started using that against the police."³⁰ Ultimately, due to such perseverance, LaSalle had chapters of CPU in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Harlem. New ones are currently being pursued in Queens and Staten Island.

Overall, such work and emphasis on process allows for community organizing to take place in particularly distressed areas of the city. LaSalle relates,

"We try to create other avenues for people other than documenting police to help with our communities any way we can. So we have a lot of other connections with other groups doing other things. We connect these families to these groups. We have job developers when people are looking for a job. It is a great thing. We try to be a family unit in the areas we patrol. We not only have your back here—that the police know they are being watched by us—but we are here to help in anything else we can. . . . When we come to this community, people are happy to see us." This happiness became readily apparent as a Hispanic icy vendor interrupted my interview with LaSalle in West Harlem to express his gratitude in Spanish for CPU making the police stop harassing vendors for minor violations like having their carts too close to the curb. After the vendor fist bumped LaSalle and myself, LaSalle commented, "These people are working hard. They have licenses. So why are you [the police] harassing them?" Here is yet another recent example of how video-making directly translates into community organizing and activism, where cop watching becomes only an initial tactic in repairing and developing community relations in neighborhoods that have been under economic and social duress for years.

Improving the general aesthetic quality of activist video for those who have the time and resources to dedicate in cultivating it is an admirable goal. But to argue that such higher quality videos naturally lead to mass distribution or imply that professional looking video trumps other concerns like skills-sharing and collective organizing seems deeply problematic if not outright misguided.

Hopefully, this book has brought some of these issues to the forefront to assist present and future video and media activists with their goals. So when another burst of media activism explodes into view or perhaps already is quietly percolating away before reaching critical mass, we don't have to watch history painfully repeat itself as farce.³¹ Instead, as Walter Benjamin long ago observed, we need to be like the angel in the Paul Klee painting *Angelus Novus* and critically observe the wreckage of the past that keeps blowing us inexorably into the future.³² From its scraps we might be able to recognize new configurations that could unexpectedly open up future possibilities. We must jettison the anarchist fantasy that we can suddenly escape the past and present alike to reinvent ourselves anew as this inevitably and ironically leads back to the same old dead ends. The past indelibly imprints itself on us, like it or not. At best, we need to use its force to propel us into unseen future directions. This is what history can assist us in accomplishing: reassembling a handful of fragments of the past through our present concerns in order to portend better, future paths. Hopefully, the shards reassembled here will prove themselves useful.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives

- ACT UP/NY Archive. ACT UP New York Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division. New York Public Library. New York.
- Cascadia Alive!* (DVD Archive). Special Collections. University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.
- Deep Dish Television Archive. The Fales Library and Special Collection. New York University, New York.
- Guerrilla Television Archives, 1965–1997. The Fales Library and Special Collection. New York University, New York.
- Paper Tiger Television Archive, 1981–2008. The Fales Library and Special Collection. New York University, New York.
- Videofreex Archive. Video Data Bank. School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Author Interviews

- Beaton, Lauren. March 7, 2012.
- Benally, Klee. March 9, 2011.
- Bird, Stewart. January 29, 2013.
- Blount, Ronald. December 10, 2010.
- Burnett, Chris. October 23, 2011.
- Costanza-Chock, Sasha. November 14, 2011.
- Cotton-Kinch, Megan. May 19, 2011.
- Dorsey, Ann. February 22, 2012.
- Economopoulos, Beka, and Jason Jones. September 29, 2010, and February 12, 2012.
- Flynn, Jim. January 23, 2012.
- Galatas, Eric. August 12, 2010, and January 19, 2011.
- Garces, Amanda. May 25, 2011, and June 9, 2011.
- Georgakas, Dan. June 13, 2014.
- Glynn, Tracy. June 10, 2011.
- Godtree, Enid. June 13, 2011.
- Halleck, DeeDee. April 22, 2011.

Hamlin, Mike. June 19, 2014.
Harris, Kyle. February 21, 2011.
Henshaw-Plath, Evan. September 23, 2010.
Hise, Steev. March 2, 2011.
Jay, Dru Oja. September 20, 2010, and February 24, 2015.
Jenik, Adriene. February 7, 2012.
Jensen, Kurt. January 9, 2012.
Johnson, Kari. January 9, 2012.
Jourdan, Brandon. July 7, 2010.
Keating, Jeff. July 20, 2010.
LaSalle, Jose. July 19, 2016.
Laughling, Josh. February 29, 2012.
Lewis, Tim. October 13, 2010, and January 3, 2012.
Lichtman René. February 3, 2013.
Lindsay, Hillary Bain. May 10, 2011.
López, Franklin. June 21, 2010.
Lynn, Andrew. April 15, 2011.
Marcus, Daniel. February 9, 2012.
Meinrath, Sacha. November 3, 2011.
Mercer, Brian. November 18, 2010.
Midgley, Joseph. February 22, 2012.
Noblitt, Cindy. March 7, 2012.
Paley, Dawn. August 25, 2010, and March 9, 2015.
Rawlins, Belinda. July 6, 2011.
Ream, Tim. November 29, 2010.
Regan, Lauren. March 28, 2012.
Reinsborough, Patrick. October 21, 2010.
Rinaldo, Rachel. February 25, 2011.
Robinson, Rob. February 13, 2012.
Robinson, Thomas. December 3, 2010.
Rostrum, Flux. April 23, 2011.
Rowland, Randy. April 29, 2010.
Sand, Jay. February 15, 2011.
Saunders, Justin. May 31, 2011.
Scotland, Rebekah. November 5, 2010.
Selvaraj, Shivaani. December 1, 2010.
Shadowwalker, Randy. May 16, 2012.
Siart, Leeann. April 30, 2012.
Stout, Jon. March 26, 2012.
Wyrod, Robert. March 30, 2011.
Zerzan, John. April 2, 2012.

Secondary Sources

- Abraham, Kera. "Flames of Dissent." *Eugene Weekly*, November 22, 2006. <http://www.eugeneweekly.com/2006/11/02/coverstory.html>.
- ACME Collective. "N30 Black Bloc Communiqué." In *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, edited by Eddie Yeun, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton-Rose. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2002.
- Adams, Jason. *Blur: How the Network Paradigm Gives Social Movements the Upper Hand* (handout).
- Adamson, Morgan. "Labor, Finance, and Counterrevolution: Finally Got the News at the End of the Short American Century." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 803–23.
- Aguayo, Angela. "Activist Street Tapes and Protest Pornography: Participatory Media in the Age of Digital Reproduction." *Jump Cut* 56 (Winter 2014–2015): <http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/AguayoProtestVideo/index.html>.
- Ali, Christopher. "The Last PEG or Community Media 2.0? Negotiating Place and Placelessness at PhillyCAM." *Media, Culture, and Society* 36, no. 1 (2013): 69–86.
- Allen, Ernie. "Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers." In *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee*, edited by Dick Cluster, 70–109. Boston: South End Press, 1979.
- Andersen, Mark. *All the Power: Revolution without Illusion*. Chicago: Punk Planet Books, 2004.
- Anonymous. "From the Haight." In *The New Left: A Documentary History*, edited by Massimo Teodori, 362–64. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.
- Arlen, Ann. "Public Access: The Second Coming of Television?" *Radical Software* 1, no. 5 (1972): 81–85.
- Armes, Roy. *Third World Film Making and the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Armstrong, David. *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America*. Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1981.
- Aronowitz, Stanley. *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992 edition.
- Arrighi, Giovanni, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein. In *Anti-systemic Movements*. New York: Verso, 1989.
- Bagdikian, Ben. H. *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.
- Barbrook, Richard, and Andy Cameron. "California Ideology." In *Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates, and Pirate Utopias*, edited by Peter Ludlow, 363–87. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Barlow, Melinda. "Feminism 101: The New York Women's Video Festival, 1972–1980." *Camera Obscura* 18, no. 3 (2003): 2–39.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "Requiem for the Media." In *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, edited by John G. Hanhardt, 124–43. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1987.
- Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- _____. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York: Perseus Books, 1976.

- Benjamin, Medea. "The Debate Over Tactics." In *Globalize This! The Battle against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule*, edited by John G. Hanhardt, 67–72. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Berardi, Franco. *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009.
- _____, Marco Jacquemet, and Gianfranco Vitali. *Ethereal Shadows: Communications and Power in Contemporary Italy*. New York: Autonomedia, 2009.
- Bey, Hakim. *T.A.Z.: Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism* (Second Edition). New York: Autonomedia, 2003.
- Bifo, "Anatomy of Autonomy." In *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, 148–70. Brooklyn: Semiotext(e), 1980.
- Black, Bob. *Anarchism after Leftism*. Missouri: Columbia Alternative Library, 1997.
- Boggs, Grace Lee. *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Boggs, James. "The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook." In *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, edited by Stephen Ward, 77–143. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011.
- Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso, 2007.
- Bonanno, David. "No Strings on NEA Funds." *Philly.com*, June 7, 1990. http://articles.philly.com/1990-06-07/news/25914910_1_nea-advisory-council-nea-funding-grant-recipients.
- Bookchin, Murray. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Oakland: AK Press, 2004.
- _____. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*. San Francisco: AK Press, 1995.
- _____. "Social Ecology." In *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, edited by Janet Biehl. London: Black Rose Press, 1999.
- Bordowitz, Gregg. *The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous*, edited by James Meyer. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004.
- Brown, L. Susan. *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2003.
- Buell, Frederick. "A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse." In *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, edited by Stefan Skrimshire, 13–36. New York: Continuum, 2010.
- Burnett, Ron. "Video: The Politics of Culture and Community." In *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, edited by Stefan Skrimshire, 283–303. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Burton, Julianne, ed. *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Cain, Nancy. *Video Days and What We Saw Through the Viewfinder*. Palm Springs, CA: Event Horizon Press, 2011.
- Caldwell, John T. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- _____. "Hive-Sourcing Is the New Out-Sourcing: Studying Old (Industrial) Labor Habits in New (Consumer) Labor Clothes." *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 160–67.

- Castells, Manuel. *The Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- _____. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Massachusetts: Polity, 2012.
- _____. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- Christopherson, Susan. "Labor: The Effects of Media Concentration on the Film and Television Workforce." In *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, edited by Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko, 155–66. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul on Ice*. New York: Delta Press, 1968.
- Cornell, Andrew. *Oppose and Propose: Lessons from a Movement for a New Society*. Oakland: AK Press, 2011.
- _____. *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the 20th Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016.
- Costanza-Chock, Sasha. "Mic Check! Media Cultures and the Occupy Movement" *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 11, no. 3–4 (2012): 375–85.
- _____. "Se Ve, Se Siente: Transmedia Mobilization in the Los Angeles Immigrant Rights Movement." PhD diss., USC, 2010.
- Cowie, Elizabeth. "The Spectacle of Actuality." In *Collecting Visible Evidence*, edited by Michael Renov and Jane M. Gaines, 19–45. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Coyer, Kate. "If It Leads It Bleeds: The Participatory Newsmaking of the Independent Media Center." In *Global Activism, Global Media*, edited by William de Jong, Martin Shaw, and Neil Stammers, 165–78. London: Pluto Press, 2005.
- CrimethInc., *Days of War; Nights of Love*. Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2001.
- _____. *Expect Resistance*. Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2007.
- _____. *Guerilla Film Series*, Vol. 1. Salem, OR: CrimethInc., no date.
- _____. *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook*. Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2005.
- _____. *Work*. Salem, Oregon: CrimethInc., 2011.
- Crimp, Douglas, ed. *Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988.
- _____. *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Dalla Costa, Mariarosa, and Selma James. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. London: Falling Wall Press, 1975.
- Debray, Régis. *The Chilean Revolution: Conversations with Allende*. New York: Vintage, 1971.
- DeLeon, David. *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- DeLuca, Kevin Michael. *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1999.
- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Downing, John. *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984.

- Duberman, Martin T. "Anarchism Left and Right." *Partisan Review* 7/6 (Fall 1966): 610–15.
- Duncombe, Stephen. *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*. New York: New Press, 2007.
- Dyer-Withford, Nick. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Eisenstein, Sergei. "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form." In *Eisenstein's Writings, 1922–1934*, edited by Richard Taylor, 59–64. London: BFI Publishing, 1988.
- _____. "Vertical Montage." In *Eisenstein: Toward a Theory of Montage*, edited by Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor, 327–99. London: BFI Publishing, 1994.
- Engelman, Ralph. *The Origins of Public Access Cable Television 1966–1972*. Columbia, SC: Association for Education and Journalism and Mass Communication, 1990.
- Engler, Mark, and Paul Engler. *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Nation Books, 2016.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. "Constituents of a Theory of the Media." In *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, edited by John Thornton Caldwell, 51–76. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.
- Epstein, Barbara. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolence Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Eugene Anarchist Action Collective. *Anarchists Are Going to Eat Your Children and Other Myths, Misinformation, and Misunderstanding*. Eugene, OR, 2000.
- Fairfield, Richard. *Communes USA: A Personal Tour*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1972.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
- Federici, Silvia. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland: PM Press, 2012.
- Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York: Bantam, 1970.
- Flood, Andrew. "Civilization, Primitivism, and Anarchism." <http://struggle.ws/andrew/primitivism.html>.
- _____. "Dreaming Reality Where the Past and Future Meet the Present: A Report on the Second Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism." http://struggle.ws/andrew/ecnounter2_report.html.
- Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Fortunati, Leopoldina. *The Arcane Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*. Translated by Hilary Creek. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995.
- Frank, Thomas. *One Market Under God*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.
- Fuchs, Christian. *Culture and Economy in The Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- García Espinosa, Julio. "For an Imperfect Cinema." In *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Robert Stam and Toby Miller, 287–97. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

- Gelderloos, Peter. *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007.
- Georgakas, Dan, and Marvin Surkin. *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998.
- Gerbaudo, Paolo. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press, 2012.
- Geschwender, James A. *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Gever, Martha. "Video Politics: Early Feminist Projects." *Afterimage* 11, no. 1–2 (Summer 1983): 26–28.
- Gilbert, David, Robert Gottlieb, and Gerry Tenney. *Toward a Theory of Social Change: The 'Port Authority Statement.'* <http://www.sds-1960s.org/PortAuthorityStatement.pdf>.
- Ginsburg, Faye D., Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, eds. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Berkeley: University of California, 2002.
- Gitlin, Todd. *Occupy Nation: The Roots, The Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street*. New York: Itbooks, 2012.
- _____. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam, 1987.
- _____. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California, Press, 2003.
- Gonzalez, Juan. "From Seattle to South Central." In *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, edited by Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton-Rose, 347–51. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2001.
- Goodman, Paul. *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative*. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Gordon, Uri. *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice and Theory*. London: Pluto Press, 2008.
- Gould, Deborah B. *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Graeber, David. "Concerning the Violent Peace-Police." *n+1*, February 9, 2012, <http://nplusonemag.com/concerning-the-violent-peace-police>.
- _____. *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2013.
- _____. *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. Oakland: AK Press, 2009.
- _____. "The New Anarchists." In *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Possible*, edited by Tom Mertes, 202–15. New York: Verso, 2004.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.
- Greenbrier, Terra. "Against Civilization, For Reconnection to Life!" In *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, edited by Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II, 198–203. Oakland: AK Press, 2006.
- Greyson, John. "Strategic Compromises: AIDS and Alternative Video Practices." In *Reimagining America: The Arts of Social Change*, edited by Mark O'Brien and Craig Little, 60–74. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1990.

- Gross, Jane. "Bleak Lives: Women Carrying AIDS." *New York Times*, August 27, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/27/nyregion/bleak-lives-women-carrying-aids.html>.
- Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás. "The Viewer's Dialectic." In *New Latin American Cinema*. Vol. 1, edited by Michael T. Martin, 108–31. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'." In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, edited by John Storey, 508–18. London: Pearson, 2009.
- Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Halleck, DeeDee. *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.
- Hamlin, Mike with Michele Gibbs. *A Black Revolutionary's Life in Labor: Black Workers Power in Detroit*. Detroit: Against the Tide, 2012.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.
- Harris, Kyle. "Beyond Authenticity: Aesthetic Strategies and Anarchist Media." In *Realizing the Impossible: Art against Authority*, edited by Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland, 210–19. Oakland: AK Press, 2007.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- _____. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990.
- _____. *Rebel Cities: From the Right of the City to the Urban Revolution*. New York: Verso, 2013.
- Hedges, Chris. "Black Bloc: The Cancer in Occupy." *Truthdig* February 6, 2012, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_cancer_of_occupy_20120206.
- Hess, John. "Notes on U.S. Radical Film, 1967–80." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 21 (November 1979): 31–35. <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC21folder/USRadicalFilmHess.html>; <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC21folder/USRadicalFilmHess.html>.
- James, C.L.R. *American Civilization*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993.
- James, David. *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- _____. "The Movies Are a Revolution: Film and the Counterculture." In *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael Doyle. New York: Routledge, 2002, 275–303.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Jensen, Derrick. *Endgame*. Vol. 1, *The Problem of Civilization*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006.
- Jerome, Judson. *Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism*. New York: Continuum Book, 1974.
- Juhasz, Alexandra. *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

- _____. "So Many Alternatives": The Alternative AIDS Video Movement." In *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*, edited by Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, 298–305. New York: Verso, 2002.
- Juris, Jeffrey S. *Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- _____. "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2 (May 2012): 259–79.
- Kaplan, Dora. "Selected Short Subjects." *Women & Film*, no. 2 (1972): 37–45.
- Kauffman, L.A. "Who Are Those Masked Anarchists?" In *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, edited by Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton-Rose, 125–29. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2001.
- Kheel, Marti. "Direct Action and the Heroic Ideal: An Ecofeminist Critique." In *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, edited by Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II, 306–18. Oakland: AK Press, 2006.
- Kidd, Dorothy. "The IMC: A New Model." *Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication* (2003): https://docs.indymedia.org/pub/Global/ImcEssayCollection/IMC_a_New_Model.pdf, 5.
- _____. "Shards of Remembrance: One Woman's Archaeology of Community Video." In *Women in Grassroots Communication: Furthering Social Change*, edited by Pilar Riaño, 179–91. London: Sage Publications, 1994.
- King, John. "Chilean Cinema in Revolution and Exile." In *New Latin American Cinema*. Vol. 2, edited by Michael T. Martin, 397–419. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo*. New York: Picador, 1999.
- _____. *The Shock Doctrine*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007.
- Kramer, Larry. *Reports from the Holocaust: The Story of an AIDS Activist*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Landers, Timothy. "Bodies and Anti-Bodies: A Crisis in Representation." *The Independent* 11, no. 1 (January/February 1988): 18–24.
- Landy, Marcia. *Film, Politics, and Gramsci*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- La Rosa, Melanie. "Early Video Pioneer: An Interview with Skip Blumberg." *Journal of Film and Video* 4, no. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 30–41.
- Lasn, Kalle. *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must*. New York: Quill, 1999.
- Lawrence, Mark Atwood. "Containing Globalism: The United States and the Developing World in the 1970s." In *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, edited by Dan Berger, 205–19. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
- Lenin, Vladimir. *What Is to Be Done?* In *The Lenin Anthology*, edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1975.
- Levine, Mark. "The Apocalyptic as Contemporary Dialectic." In *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, edited by Stefan Skrimshire, 59–80. New York: Continuum, 2010.

- Levine, Rick, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger. *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000.
- Lewis-Colman, David M. *Race against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Lim, Andrea. "Chinatown Is Nowhere." In *Occupy! Scenes from an Occupied America*, edited by Astra Taylor, Keith Cessen, and editors from *n+1, Dissent, Triple Canopy*, and *The New Inquiry*, 99–104. New York: Verso, 2011.
- Linder, Laura R. *Public Access Television: America's Electronic Soapbox*. London: Praeger, 1999.
- López, Ana M. "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American Cinema." In *New Latin American Cinema*. Vol. 1, edited by Michael T. Martin, 135–56. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- López, Franklin. "Throw the Bottle!" *Molotov 1*. Atlanta: subMedia.
- Lotringer, Sylvère, and Christian Marazzi. "The Return of Politics." *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, 8–22. Brooklyn: Semiotext(e), 1980.
- MacPhee, Josh, and Erik Reuland. "Introduction: Towards Anarchist Art Theories." In *Realizing the Impossible: Art against Authority*, edited by Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland, 2–5. Oakland: AK Press, 2007.
- Marcuse, Herbert. "On the New Left." In *The New Left: A Documentary History*, edited by Massimo Teodori, 468–73. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.
- _____. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.
- Martinez, Elizabeth. "Where Was the Color in Seattle?" In *Globalize This! The Battle against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule*, edited by Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach, 74–84. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. New York: Penguin, 1976.
- _____. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: Norton, 1988.
- _____. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: International Publishers, 1964.
- _____. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 594–617. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.
- Mast, Gerald, ed. *Detroit Lives*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994.
- Mayer, Vicki. *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Mayne, Judith. *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- McChesney, Robert. *The Political Economy of Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008.
- Miekle, Graham. *Future Active: Media Activism and the Internet*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Miller, Timothy. "The Sixties-Era Communes." In *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, 327–51. Routledge: New York, 2002.
- Mookas, Ioannis. "Culture in Contest: Public TV, Queer Expression, and the Radical Right." *Afterimage* 19, no. 9 (April 1992): 8–9.

- Morgan, Robin. *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicles of a Feminist*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Muhammad, Ahmad. "1968–1971: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers." *Libcom.org*, <http://libcom.org/library/league-revolutionary-black-workers>.
- Negri, Antonio. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. New York: Autonomedia, 1991.
- Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Nogueira, Ana. "The Indymedia Revolution." *Punk Planet* 43 (May/June 2001): 70–74.
- Notes from Nowhere. *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*. New York: Verso, 2003.
- Nunes, Rodrigo. "What Were You Wrong About Ten Years Ago?" *Turbulence*, no. 5 (December 2009): 38–39.
- O'Hara, Craig. *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise!* Oakland: AK Press, 1999.
- Ó Siadhail, Seán, Bruce Girard, and Amy Mahan. *Global Media Governance*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.
- Parsons, Patrick R. *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
- Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Perlin, Ross. *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the New Economy*. New York: Verso, 2012.
- Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Polletta, Francesca. *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Portwood-Stacer, Laura. *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Potter, Will. *Green Is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011.
- Profane Existence. *Making Punk a Threat Again!* Oakland: Loin Cloth Press, 1997.
- Pytlinski, Deanne. "Utopian Visions: Women in Early Video Art." PhD diss., CUNY, 2006.
- Rameau, Max. *Take Back the Land: Land, Gentrification, and the Umoja Village Shantytown*. Oakland: AK Press, 2012.
- Razsa, Maple John. *Bastards of Utopia: Living Radical Politics After Socialism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.
- _____. "Beyond 'Riot Porn': Protest Video and the Production of Unruly Subjects." *Ethnos: A Journal of Anthropology* 79, no. 4 (2014): 496–524.
- Reed, T.V. *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Reinsborough, Patrick, and Doyle Canning. *Re:Imagining Change: How to Use Story-Based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World*. Oakland: PM Press, 2010.

- Renov, Michael. "Newsreel: Old and New. Towards a Historic Profile." *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 20–33.
- _____. *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- Robé, Christopher. "The Convergence of Eco-Activism, Neoliberalism, and Reality TV in *Whale Wars*." *Journal of Film and Video* 67 no. 3 (Fall 2015): 94–111.
- _____. "Criminalizing Dissent: Western State Repression, Video Activism, and Counter-Summit Protests." *Framework* 57, no. 2 (2016).
- _____. *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and the Emergence of U.S. Left Film Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Ross, Andrew. *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- _____. *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.
- Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Roszak, Theodore. *The Making of a Counter Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 1969.
- Saalfield, Catherine. "On the Make: Activist Video Collectives." In *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, edited by Martha Geever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar, 21–27. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- _____. "Tongue Tied: Homophobia Hamstrings PBS." *The Independent* (October 1991): 5–6.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Schiller, Herbert I. *Information and the Crisis Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Shepard, Benjamin. *Queer Political Performances and Protest: Play, Pleasure, and Social Movements*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- _____, and Ronald Hayduk, eds. *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*. New York: Verso, 2002.
- Sklar, Robert. "Good Morning, Lanesville." *American Film* 3, no. 4 (February 1978): 26–32.
- Smith, Ralph Lee. *Wired Nation: Cable TV: The Electronic Communications Highway*. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972.
- Sofri, Adriano. "Organizing for Workers Power." *Radical America* 7, no. 2 (March 1973): 33–45.
- Solanas, Fernando, and Octavio Getino. "Towards a Third Cinema." *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Robert Stam and Toby Miller, 298–316. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Stark, Trevor. "'Cinema in the Hands of the People': Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film." *October* 139 (Winter 2012): 117–50.
- Stephens, Julie. *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Stern, Gerd. "Support of Television Arts by Public Funding: The New York State Council on the Arts." In *The New Television: A Public/Private Art*, edited by Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons, 140–56. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977.

- The Stimulator. "The Battle for Creative Innovation." *Molotov* 2. Vancouver, BC: subMedia.
- _____. "Snitching on the Resistance: How Celebrity Activists Have Set Off a Witch Hunt against Militants." *Balaclava* 6 (July 16–31, 2010): 2.
- Stringer, Tish. "Move! Guerilla Films, Collaborative Modes, and the Tactics of Radical Media Making." PhD diss., Rice University, 2006.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005 edition.
- Teasdale, Parry D. *A Micro-TV Service in the United States: Report to the Federal Communications Commission*. Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission, April 1980.
- _____. *Videofreex: America's First Pirate TV Station & the Catskills Collective That Turned It On*. New York: Black Dome, 1999.
- Templin, Richard E. III. "Rage against the Machine: How Indymedia's Radical Project Is Working to Create the New Public Sphere." PhD diss., Florida State University, 2009.
- Thompson, AK. *Black Bloc, White Riot*. Oakland: AK Press, 2010.
- Tripp, Luke. "Black Working Class Radicalism in Detroit." *The Repository at St. Cloud*, http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=ews_wps.
- Turner, Fred. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Viénet, René. *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1992.
- Virno, Paolo. "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment." In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 12–33. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Virno, Paolo. "Virtuosity and Revolution." *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 188–209. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Watney, Simon. *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Watson, Mark. "The Countercultural 'Indian': Visualizing Retribalization at the Human Be-In." In *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, edited by Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner, 209–23. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Wayne, Mike. *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*. London: Pluto Press, 2001.
- Willemen, Paul. "The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections." In *New Latin American Cinema*. Vol. 1, edited by Michael T. Martin, 221–51. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- Williams, Raymond. "Ideas of Nature." *Culture and Materialism*. New York: Verso, 1980, 67–85.
- _____. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Wolfson, Todd. *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

- Wong, Kristine. "Shutting Us Out: Race, Class and the Framing of a Movement." In *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement*, edited by Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George Katsiaficas, 204–14. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004.
- Wood, Robin. "Ideology, Genre, Auteur." In *Film Theory and Criticism*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 592–601. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Wright, Steve. *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.
- Young, Cynthia A. *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Young, Nigel. *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977.
- Zerzan, John. *Future Primitive Revisited*. Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2012.
- Zimmerman, Patricia. *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. New York: Verso, 2009.
- _____. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. New York: Verso, 1999.

NOTES

Introduction: The Emergence of Video Activism

1. Flux Rostrum interviewed by the author, April 23, 2011.
2. Name changed for confidentiality purposes.
3. Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 52.
4. Alexandra Juhasz, “So Many Alternatives’: The Alternative AIDS Video Movement,” in *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk (New York: Verso, 2002), 298.
5. See Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (New York: Verso, 1989).
6. Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 41.
7. John Downing, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984), 18–22.
8. Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the 20th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).
9. Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 57.
10. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
11. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2007); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
12. Boltanski and Chipello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 201.
13. Ibid., 467.
14. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 147–48.
15. Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 191.
16. Esther Kaplan, “The Spy Who Fired Me,” *Harper’s*, March 2015, 36.

17. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Herbert I. Schiller, *Information and the Crisis Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
18. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (London: Falling Wall Press, 1972), 33.
19. Ibid.
20. Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995), 126–27.
21. Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 178.
22. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right of the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2013), 57–66; Andrew Ross, *Fast Boat to China: Corporate Flight and the Consequences of Free Trade* (New York: Pantheon, 2006).
23. Manuel Castells, *The Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 229.
24. Herbert I. Schiller, *Information and the Crisis Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 52.
25. Todd Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3.
26. Laura Portwood-Stacer, *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
27. Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999).
28. <http://www.starbucks.com/responsibility>.
29. Christian Fuchs, *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 91–203.
30. Franco Berardi, Marco Jacquemet, and Gianfranco Vitali, *Ethereal Shadows: Communications and Power in Contemporary Italy* (New York: Autonomedia, 2009), 16.
31. Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 133.
32. Thomas J. Sugrue and David M. Lewis-Colman, “Black-Power Caucuses,” chap. 6 in *Race against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 90–111.
33. Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein, *Anti-systemic Movements*, 75.
34. Melanie La Rosa, “Early Video Pioneer: An Interview with Skip Blumberg,” *Journal of Film and Video* 64, no. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 38.
35. Jean Baudrillard, “Requiem for the Media,” in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John G Hanhardt (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1987), 139.
36. For more regarding the exploitation of interns, see Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the New Economy* (New York: Verso, 2012).
37. John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); John T. Caldwell, “Hive-Sourcing Is the New Out-Sourcing: Studying Old (Industrial) Labor Habits in New (Consumer) Labor Clothes,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 160–67; Mayer, *Below the Line*.
38. Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Norton, 1988), 55–61.

39. Vladimir Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?," in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), 96–112.
40. Sergei Eisenstein, "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form," in *Eisenstein's Writings, 1922–1934*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), 62.
41. David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 24.
42. David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 23.
43. The student's name has been changed for his protection.

Chapter One: Autonomous Rebellions: The Twilight of Leninism, Film, and Unions

1. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 60.
2. Ibid., 56–57.
3. Ibid., 60.
4. Quoted in Régis Debray, *The Chilean Revolution: Conversations with Allende* (New York: Vintage, 1971), 172.
5. Ibid., 175.
6. John King, "Chilean Cinema in Revolution and Exile," in *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 2, *Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 403.
7. Mark Atwood Lawrence, "Containing Globalism: The United States and the Developing World in the 1970s," *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, ed. Dan Berger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 210.
8. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 67.
9. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.
10. Ibid., 16.
11. David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 195.
12. For some of the most important works, see Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds. *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: BFI, 1990); Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto Press, 2001); Michael T. Martin, *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1, *Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997); Julianne Burton, ed. *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Roy Armes, *Third World Film Making and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
13. Paul Willemen, "The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections," in *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 225.
14. Ana M. López, "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American Cinema," in *ibid.*, 140.
15. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 282.
16. Ibid., 283.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 284.
19. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, "The Viewer's Dialectic," in *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1, 110.
20. Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," in *Film and Theory*, 292.
21. Patricio Guzmán, "Politics and the Documentary in People's Chile," in *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers*, ed. Julianne Burton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 52.
22. Ibid., 56.
23. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 14.
24. Ibid., 10.
25. Willemen, "The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections," 248.
26. Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," 266.
27. Ibid., 273.
28. García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," 288.
29. Ibid., 291.
30. Ibid., 293.
31. Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," 284.
32. Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 64.
33. Zusanna M. Pick, "Interview with Patricio Guzmán," *Ciné-Tracts: A Journal of Film and Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 33.
34. Patricio Guzmán, "The Battle of Chile," *Framework* 11 (Autumn 1979): 4.
35. Regis Debray, *The Chilean Revolution: Conversations with Allende*, 122.
36. Ibid., 111.
37. Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (Brooklyn: Semiotext(e), 1980), 13.
38. Bifo, "Anatomy of Autonomy," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, 152.
39. Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 3.
40. Ibid., 76.
41. Adriano Sofri, "Organizing for Workers' Power," *Radical America* 7, no. 2 (March 1973): 38.
42. René Viénet, *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1992), 85.
43. "An Interview," *Radical America* 5, no. 5 (September/October 1971): 37.
44. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 25.
45. Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 196.
46. Sofri, "Organizing for Workers' Power," 35.
47. Ibid., 45.
48. "Who Wants to Work? Boredom on the Job," *Newsweek*, March 26, 1973, 80.
49. Daniel P. Moynihan, "Boredom on the Assembly Line: Industry Contends with a Threatening New Phenomenon," *Life*, September 1, 1972: 30.
50. Ibid.

51. Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 26.
52. Barbara Garson, “Luddites in Lordstown,” *Harper’s* 244 (June 1972): 68–71.
53. James, *Allegories*, 195.
54. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Thomas J. Sugrue and David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
55. Robert Mast, ed., *Detroit Lives*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 305.
56. Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
57. Mike Hamlin with Michele Gibbs, *A Black Revolutionary’s Life in Labor: Black Workers Power in Detroit* (Detroit: Against the Tide Books, 2012), 149.
58. Young, *Soul Power*.
59. Ibid., 20.
60. Luke S. Tripp, “Black Working Class Radicalism in Detroit,” *The Repository at St. Cloud*, http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=ews_wps, 7.
61. Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 305–6.
62. Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998), 167–71.
63. See Sugrue, *The Origins*.
64. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Delta Press, 1968), 159.
65. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 70–71.
66. Ibid., 69.
67. Ibid., 88.
68. “At the Point of Production,” *Radical America* 5, no. 2 (March/April 1971): 64.
69. Ibid., 64.
70. Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 309.
71. Hamlin with Gibbs, *A Black Revolutionary’s Life in Labor*, 37.
72. Ernie Allen, “Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers,” in *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee*, ed. Dick Cluster (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 100.
73. Ibid., 79.
74. Hamlin with Gibbs, *A Black Revolutionary’s Life in Labor*, 152.
75. Allen, “Dying from the Inside,” 95.
76. “Black Editor: An Interview,” *Radical America* 2, no. 4 (July/August 1968): 31.
77. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 16.
78. “Black Editor: An Interview,” 33.
79. Hamlin with Gibbs, *A Black Revolutionary’s Life in Labor*, 75.
80. Mike Hamlin interviewed by the author, June 19, 2014.
81. Muhammad Ahmad, “1968–1971: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers,” *Libcom.org*, <http://libcom.org/library/league-revolutionary-black-workers>.
82. James A Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 178; Ahmad, “1968–1971: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers.”
83. Quoted in Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 73.

84. John Hess, "Notes on U.S. Radical Film, 1967–80," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 21 (November 1979): <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC21folder/USRadicalFilmHess.html>.
85. Young, *Soul Power*, 102.
86. "Memo: A Note on Distribution (Jan. 1968)," in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, ed. Massimo Teodori (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co.), 389.
87. Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," 283.
88. Norm Fruchter, Marilyn Buck, Karen Ross, and Robert Kramer, "Newsreel," *Film Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1968–Winter 1969): 46.
89. García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," 291.
90. Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," 272.
91. Fruchter, Buck, Ross, and Kramer, "Newsreel," 48.
92. *Ibid.*, 46.
93. Young, *Soul Power*, 117.
94. *Ibid.*, 114.
95. Stewart Bird interviewed by the author, January 29, 2013. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
96. Young, *Soul Power*, 119.
97. Michael Renov, "Newsreel: Old and New. Towards a Historic Profile," *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 25.
98. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 113; Bird interview.
99. David James, "The Movies Are a Revolution: Film and the Counterculture," *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 295.
100. "Some Unfinished Business," in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, 391.
101. Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 17.
102. Only decades later, during the fortieth anniversary of the Columbia uprising, would the white alumni hear the reasons for this split. Frustrations with having to clean up after white protesters and their undisciplined behavior, as well as the university's discriminatory policies towards black athletes and harassment of black student by white campus police, were only a few issues. See Robert Friedman, "1968 and the Spirit of Hamilton," *Columbia Spectator*, May 1, 2008, www.columbiaspectator.com/print/72673.
103. Young, *Soul Power*, 112.
104. David Gilbert, Robert Gottlieb, and Gerry Tenney, *Toward a Theory of Social Change: The 'Port Authority Statement'*, <http://www.sds-1960s.org/PortAuthorityStatement.pdf>; Herbert Marcuse, "On the New Left," in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, 468–73; James Boggs, "The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook," *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Ward (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 77–143.
105. Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 112.
106. *Ibid.*, 211–12.
107. Tom Hayden, "Two, Three, Many Columbias," *The New Left*, 345.
108. James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 225.
109. Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 325.
110. *Ibid.*, 183–84.

111. E-mail correspondence with Newsreel member who chose to remain anonymous, March 17, 2013.
112. In addition to the filmmakers, a few other political people from NY Newsreel accompanied them. One was George de Pue, who by most accounts created problems among black groups by pushing a Black Panther and Weatherman agenda. No one can recall the names of the other members of this faction. For more information, see Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 114.
113. Ibid., 115.
114. For more, see Trevor Stark, “Cinema in the Hands of the People”: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film,” *October* 139 (Winter 2012): 117–50.
115. Guzmán, “Politics and the Documentary in People’s Chile,” 56.
116. James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 174.
117. Hamlin interview.
118. René Lichtman interviewed by the author, February 3, 2013. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
119. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 114.
120. Ibid., 134.
121. Ahmad, “1968–1971: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers.”
122. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 20003), 161–62.
123. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 80.
124. Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 158–59.
125. Allen, “Dying from the Inside,” 104.
126. San Francisco Newsreel’s *Repression* (1969) opens with similar imagery.
127. Tripp, “Black Working Class,” 9.
128. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 447.
129. C.L.R. James, *American Civilization* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 181.
130. Ibid.
131. Boggs, *The American Revolution*, 99.
132. Ibid., 96.
133. Ibid., 105.
134. Ibid.
135. Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 104.
136. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (London: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 11.
137. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 106–19.
138. Bird interview. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
139. Morgan Adamson, “Labor, Finance, and Counterrevolution: Finally Got the News at the End of the Short American Century,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 818.
140. Ibid., 817.
141. Stark, “Cinema in the Hands of the People,” 126.
142. Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 104.

143. Quoted in Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 224.
144. Ibid., 102–4.
145. Ibid., 102.
146. Hamlin interview.
147. Hamlin with Gibbs, *A Black Revolutionary's Life in Labor*, 75.
148. Ibid., 80.
149. Boggs, "The American Revolution," 222–23.
150. John Downing, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984), 128–29.
151. Anonymous interview, March 17, 2013.
152. James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 221.
153. Young, *Soul Power*, 149.
154. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987), 362.
155. Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicles of a Feminist* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 123.
156. Dan Georgakas interviewed by the author, June 13, 2014.
157. Morgan, *Going Too Far*, 116.
158. Young, *Soul Power*, 109.

Chapter Two: Video Guerrillas, Eco-Media, and Exodus

1. Paul Goodman, *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative* (New York: Random House, 1970), 161.
2. Ibid., 145.
3. Ibid.
4. Martin B. Duberman, "Anarchism Left and Right," *Partisan Review* 33 (Fall 1966): 615.
5. Nigel Young, *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 137.
6. Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 51.
7. Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.
8. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 57–58.
9. Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 196.
10. Ibid., 198.
11. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 34.
12. Anonymous, "From the Haight," in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, ed. Massimo Teodori (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co.), 363.
13. Timothy Miller, "The Sixties-Era Communes," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 334.
14. Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), 1.

15. *Work in America, Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 46.
16. Ibid., 50.
17. Judson Jerome, *Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism* (New York: Continuum, 1974), 56–57.
18. Ibid., 104.
19. Ibid., 83.
20. Quoted in Fairfield, *Communes USA*, 195.
21. Murray Bookchin, *Post-scarcity Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), viii.
22. Miller, “The Sixties-Era Communes,” 343.
23. Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 240–79.
24. Jerome, *Families of Eden*, 116.
25. Andrew Ross, *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 255.
26. Susan Christopherson, “Labor: The Effects of Media Concentration on the Film and Television Workforce,” in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, ed. Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 155–66.
27. Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 217–72.
28. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 65.
29. It is only fairly recently—within the last ten years—that we have begun to see digital technology actually becoming available to historically disenfranchised communities of color, as the recent spate of homemade videos witnessing police violence against black men and women indicates.
30. Gerd Stern, “Support of Television Arts by Public Funding: The New York State Council on the Arts,” in *The New Television: A Public/Private Art*, ed. Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 143.
31. Ibid., 151.
32. Bookchin, *Post-scarcity Anarchism*, 48.
33. Ibid., 81.
34. Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology,” in *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, ed. Janet Biehl (London: Black Rose Press, 1999), 32.
35. Editorial, *Radical Software* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 2.
36. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 94.
37. William Brodsky, “Recycling Biotopology 1972, Notes from Ecology Tool and Toy,” *Radical Software* 1, no. 5 (Spring 1972): 36. Ellipses in original.
38. Parry Teasdale and Carol Vontobel interviewed by Deirdre Boyle, April 18, 1984, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series IV, Box 6, File 255.
39. Ibid.
40. Youngblood, “Video,” *Print Project America* 1, no. 1, December 1970, 1–10, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series I, Box 4, Folder 123.
41. Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 94–95.

42. *Women's Video Festival Catalogue*, NYC, 1976, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series I, Box 1, Folder 59.
43. Melinda Barlow, "Feminism 101: The New York Women's Video Festival, 1972–1980," *Camera Obscura* 18, no. 3 (2003): 21.
44. Ibid.
45. Victoria Costello, "The Context of Video," *TeleVISIONS* 3, no. 2 (May 1975): 19.
46. Ibid.
47. Ben Levine, People's Video Theatre, interviewed by Deirdre Boyle, November 1, 1984, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
48. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987), 349.
49. Nancy Cain, *Video Days and What We Saw Through the Viewfinder* (Palm Spring, CA: Event Horizon Press, 2011), 46.
50. Deirdre Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 14–25.
51. Parry D. Teasdale, *Videofreex: America's First Pirate TV Station & the Catskills Collective That Turned It On* (New York: Black Dome, 1999), 17.
52. Teasdale and Vontobel interviewed by Boyle, April 18, 1984.
53. Ibid.
54. David Cort interviewed by Deirdre Boyle, November 9, 1983, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series 4, Box 6, Folder 237.
55. Carol Vontobel interviewed by Pamela Jean Smith, DVD, Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, July 23, 2005.
56. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 32–33.
57. Don West interviewed by Deirdre Boyle, May 21, 1984, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series IV, Box 6, Folder 256.
58. Teasdale, *Videofreex*, 186.
59. Ibid., 44.
60. Ibid., 185.
61. Nancy Cain interviewed by Pamela Jean Smith, DVD, Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, October 7, 2005.
62. Quoted in Marcia Landy, *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 181.
63. Vertical montage was a concept developed by Soviet film theorist and director Sergei Eisenstein. See Sergei Eisenstein, "Vertical Montage," in *Selected Works*, vol. 2, *Towards a Theory of Montage*, ed. Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1994), 327–99.
64. Vontobel and Teasdale interviewed by Boyle.
65. Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 95.
66. Ibid., 91.
67. May Day Collective statement, *Radical Software* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 31.
68. "Mayday in Washington: The Videofreex Journal," *Radical Software* 1, no. 5 (Spring 1972): 61.
69. May Day Collective statement.
70. Cain interviewed by Smith.
71. May Day Collective statement.

72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Robert Sklar, "Good Morning, Lanesville," *American Film* 3, no. 4 (February 1978): 30.
75. Cort interviewed by Boyle.
76. Vontobel interviewed by Smith.
77. Parry Teasdale interviewed by Chris Hill, March 1996, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series I, Box 4, Folder 138.
78. For more information regarding the latter, see Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
79. Teasdale, *Videofreex*, 32.
80. Cort interviewed by Boyle.
81. Teasdale and Vontobel interviewed by Boyle.
82. Curtis Ratcliff interviewed by Pamela Jean Smith, DVD, Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, September 16, 2005.
83. Deanne Pytlinski, "Utopian Visions: Women in Early Video Art" (PhD diss., CUNY, 2006), 232.
84. Ibid., 224.
85. Ann Woodward interviewed by Pamela Jean Smith, July 18, 2005, DVD, Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute, Chicago.
86. Vontobel interview by Smith.
87. Cain interviewed by Smith.
88. Vontobel and Teasdale interviewed by Boyle.
89. Ibid.
90. Quoted in Pytlinski, *Utopian Visions*, 14.
91. Ibid., 87.
92. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 193.
93. Vontobel interviewed by Smith.
94. Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 295.
95. Dora Kaplan, "Selected Short Subjects," *Women & Film* 1, no. 2 (1972): 38.
96. Martha Gever, "Video Politics: Early Feminist Projects," *Afterimage* 11, no. 1–2 (Summer 1983): 27.
97. Ibid., 26.
98. Cain interviewed by Smith.
99. Costello, "The Context of Video," 19.
100. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 202.
101. Parry D. Teasdale, *A Micro-TV Service in the United States: Report to the Federal Communications Commission* (Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission, April 1980), 32–41.
102. Teasdale interviewed by Hill.
103. Sklar, "Good Morning, Lanesville," 28–29.
104. Teasdale, *Videofreex*, 150.
105. García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," 287.
106. Teasdale, *A Micro-TV*, Appendix 2.

107. Ibid., 42.
108. Quoted in Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 266.
109. Teasdale interviewed by Hill.
110. “Fobile Muck Truck,” *Radical Software* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 4.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 210.
114. Franco Berardi, Marco Jacquemet, and Gianfranco Vitali, *Ethereal Shadows: Communications and Power in Contemporary Italy* (New York: Autonomedia, 2009), 16.
115. Deirdre Boyle offers an excellent account of the grassroots fights over cable television within *Subject to Change*, which I will not repeat here.
116. Laura R. Linder, *Public Access Television: America’s Electronic Soapbox* (London: Praeger, 1999), 2.
117. Ibid., 4.
118. Dorothy Kidd, “Shards of Remembrance: One Woman’s Archaeology of Community Video,” in *Women in Grassroots Communication: Furthering Social Change*, ed. Pilar Riaño (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 183.
119. Ralph Engelman, *The Origins of Public Access Cable Television, 1966–1972* (Columbia, SC: Association for Education and Journalism and Mass Communication, 1990), 20.
120. *Video Access Center*, newsletter 1, no. 13: 8, Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Series I, Box 5, Folder 154.
121. Ibid.
122. George Stoney interviewed by Faye Ginsberg and Barbara Abrash, June 17, 1996, Guerrilla Television Archive, Series I, Box 4, Folder 135.
123. Ann Arlen, “Public Access: The Second Coming of Television?,” *Radical Software* 1, no. 5 (Spring 1972): 82.
124. Ralph Lee Smith, *Wired Nation: Cable TV: The Electronic Communications Highway* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), 87–88.
125. Ibid., 91.
126. Patrick R. Parsons, *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 265.
127. “Introduction [to Cable],” *Radical Software* 1, no. 5 (Spring 1972): 80.
128. Cain, *Video Days*, 46–47.
129. *Cooperstown, TV Is a Museum*, Guerrilla Television Archive, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 153.
130. Ibid.
131. “Top Value Television Coverage of 1972 Political Conventions,” *Radical Software* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 13.
132. Ibid., 13–14.
133. Ibid., 13.
134. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 176.
135. Paul Goldsmith interviewed by Deirdre Boyle, October 13, 1983, Guerrilla Television Archive, Series IV, Box 6, File 241.
136. Teasdale, *Videofreex*, 88.
137. Vontobel and Teasdale interviewed by Boyle.

138. Teasdale, *Videofreex*, 88.
139. “Top Value Television Coverage,” 13–14.
140. *Ibid.*, 13.
141. See, for example, the “Riot Porn” subreddit, http://www.reddit.com/r/Riot_porn.
142. Boyle, *Subject to Change*, 62.
143. TTVT, *The Prime Time Survey* (TTVT 1974), Guerrilla Television Archive, Series I, Box 4, Folder 140.
144. “The Independent Documentary: The Implications of Diversity”—Conference Report, April 10–12, 1983, Guerrilla Television Archive, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 172, 14.
145. “David Loxton on the Television Laboratory at WNET/13,” *Videoscope* 1, no. 3 (1977): 43–44.
146. Boyle, *Subject to Change*, 74.
147. TTVT, *The Prime Time Survey*, Guerrilla Television Archive, Series I, Box 4, Folder 135, 1.
148. *Ibid.*, 8.
149. *Ibid.*, 23.
150. *Ibid.*
151. Boyle, *Subject to Change*, 180–81.
152. Quoted in *ibid.*, 181–82.
153. The MacBride Commission, *Many Voices, One World* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 148.
154. DeeDee Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 95.
155. Zimmerman, *States of Emergency*, 33.
156. *Ibid.*, 3.

Chapter Three: Action=Life: AIDS Video Activism, the Gulf Crisis, and Satellite Distribution

1. For more information regarding early AIDS activism see chap. 1 of Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
2. There are too many books to mention here, but some notable ones are: Gould, *Moving Politics*; Larry Kramer, *Reports from the Holocaust: The Story of an AIDS Activist* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986–2003*, ed. James Meyer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, ed., *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization* (New York: Verso, 2002); Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Douglas Crimp, ed., *Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).
3. In regards to these earlier movements, see T.V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (New York: Verso, 1997); Chris Robé, *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and the Emergence of U.S. Left Film Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

4. Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3.
5. Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 33.
6. Ibid., 27.
7. Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 140; Patrick R. Parsons, *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 630–35.
8. “The Independent Documentary: The Implications of Diversity,” conference report of Public TV and Independent Documentaries Conference, *Guerrilla Television Archive, Fales Library, NYU*, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 172.
9. Sandra Elgear interviewed by Sarah Schulman, July 22, 2008, ACT UP Oral History Project, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/elgear.pdf>.
10. DeeDee Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 117.
11. Ibid., 118.
12. Ibid., 119.
13. Untitled, Paper Tiger TV Archive, Admin, Fales Library, New York University, MS 276, Box 4, Folder 27.
14. “Paper Tiger Collective Structure,” Deep Dish TV Archive, Fales Library, New York University, Box 3.
15. Adriene Jenik interviewed by the author, February 7, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
16. Daniel Marcus interviewed by the author, February 9, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
17. Untitled, Paper TV Archive, Admin, Fales Library, New York University, MS 276, Box 4, Folder 27.
18. Jenik interview.
19. Marcus interview.
20. DeeDee Halleck interviewed by the author, April 22, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
21. Halleck interview.
22. Greg Bordowitz interviewed by Sarah Schulman, December 17, 2002, ACT UP Oral History Project, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/bordowitz.pdf>.
23. Civil Disobedience Training, ACT UP/NY Archive, New York Public Library, Series IV, Reel 10, Box 14, Folder 7.
24. Ibid.
25. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 175.
26. Ibid., 175–76.
27. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 66.
28. Gregg Bordowitz, “The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous,” in *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings*, 56.
29. Quoted in Catherine Saalfeld, “On the Make: Activist Video Collectives,” in *Queer Looks*, ed. Martha Geever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (New York: Routledge, 1993), 27.

30. Bordowitz interviewed by Schulman.
31. David Robinson letter to membership, April 9, 1990, ACT UP/NY Archive, NYPL, Series III, Reel 6, Box 8, Folder 6.
32. Robyn Hutt interviewed by Sarah Schulman, June 25, 2008, ACT UP Oral History Project.
33. John Greyson identifies nine different forms of AIDS tapes: from cable access shows to experimental critiques of mass media. But the direct action videos to be discussed here play a central role in influencing future U.S. activist street tapes, most notably that of the alter-globalization movement. See Greyson, "Strategic Compromises: AIDS and Alternative Video Practices," in *Reimaging America: The Arts of Social Change*, ed. Mark O'Brien and Craig Little (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990), 60–74.
34. Roger Hallas, *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 88.
35. John Greyson, "Strategic," 70.
36. Hallas, *Reframing Bodies*, 90.
37. Saalfeld, "On the Make," 29.
38. Jeffrey Juris, *Networking Futures: The Movement against Corporate Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 21, 124.
39. Michelangelo Signorile interviewed by Sarah Schulman, September 20, 2003, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/signorile.pdf>.
40. Ibid.; Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes, ACT UP/NY Archive, NYPL, Series VII, Reel 26, Box 35, Folder 7–15.
41. Media Committee Announcement, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series II, Reel 2, Box 3, Folder 9.
42. Signorile interviewed by Schulman.
43. Jane Gross, "Bleak Lives: Women Carrying AIDS," *New York Times*, August 27, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/27/nyregion/bleak-lives-women-carrying-aids.html>.
44. ALL-CRAFT letter to the *Times*, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series II, Box 3, Folder 5.
45. June 1, 1988 Budget, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series III, Reel 5, Box 7, Folder 10.
46. September 6, 1988, Coordinating Committee Minutes, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series VII, Reel 26, Box 35, Folder 15.
47. Signorile interviewed by Schulman.
48. ACT UP/WHAM! Media Center for *Stop the Church* Action, ACT UP/NY Archive, NYPL, Series IV, Reel 11, Box 15, Folder 3.
49. Hutt interviewed by Schulman.
50. Elgear interviewed by Schulman.
51. Bordowitz interviewed by Schulman.
52. Ibid.
53. Hutt interviewed by Schulman.
54. Bordowitz interviewed by Schulman.
55. Bordowitz, "Picture a Coalition," in *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous*, 30.
56. Ibid., 31.
57. Timothy Landers, "Bodies and Anti-Bodies: A Crisis in Representation," *The Independent* 11, no. 1 (January/February 1988): 24.
58. Greyson, "Strategic Compromises," 72.

59. Catherine Gund (Saalfield) interviewed by Sarah Schulman, April 20, 2007, ACT UP Oral History Project, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/gund.pdf>.
60. Ibid.
61. Elgear interviewed by Schulman.
62. Gund interviewed by Schulman.
63. Robert D. McFadden, “30 Improper Strip-Searches Follow AIDS Rally Arrests,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1989: <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/02/nyregion/30-improper-strip-searches-follow-aids-rally-arrests.html>.
64. Murray Bookchin, *Post-scarcity Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 15.
65. Bordowitz interviewed by Schulman.
66. Alexandra Juhasz interviewed by Sarah Schulman, ACT UP Oral History Project, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/juhasz.pdf>.
67. Dear Sirs letter, August 25, 1988, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series III, Reel 5, Box 8, Folder 1.
68. A Plea for Common Sense, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series III, Reel 5, Box 7, Folder 1.
69. Media Report, Stop the Church, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series IV, Reel 11, Box 15, Folder 4.
70. Maralyn Matcuk, “Backlash-Wary Gays Rip Protest at St. Pats,” *New York Post*, December 13, 1989, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series IV, Reel 11, Box 15, Folder 4.
71. “No Apology for St. Pat’s Protest,” *New York Post*, December 14, 1989, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series IV, Reel 11, Box 15, Folder 4.
72. Catherine Saalfield, “Tongue Tied: Homophobia Hamstrings PBS,” *The Independent* (October 1991): 5.
73. Quoted in David Bonanno, “No Strings on NEA Funds,” *Philly.com*, http://articles.philly.com/1990-06-07/news/25914910_1_nea-advisory-council-nea-funding-grant-recipients.
74. Ioannis Mookas, “Culture in Contest: Public TV, Queer Expression, and the Radical Right,” *Afterimage* 19, no. 9 (April 1992): 8.
75. Zimmerman, *States of Emergency*, 16.
76. Elgear interviewed by Schulman.
77. Hallas, *Reframing Bodies*, 100–101.
78. Hutt interviewed by Schulman.
79. Hallas, *Reframing Bodies*, 99.
80. For more on the liberal documentary’s biases, see Elizabeth Cowie, “The Spectacle of Actuality,” in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19–45.
81. Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 8.
82. “Welcome to the Deep Dish Directory!,” Deep Dish TV Archive, Fales Collection, NYU, Box 14.
83. Dwight Oestricher, “Activism on the Airwaves,” *City Limits* (January 1992), DDTV Archive, Box 7.
84. Jesse Drew, *A Social History of Contemporary Democratic Media* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 73–74.
85. “Deep Dish TV: Using media as an organizing tool,” DDTV Archive, Box 13.
86. Ibid.

87. *Speaking of AIDS* callout, DDTV Archive, Box 3.
88. Stephanie Poggi, "The Dis on AIDS," *Gay Community News* (June 12–18, 1988), DDTV Archive, Box 1.
89. Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions*, 170–71.
90. "Report to the Steering Committee, March 6, 1990," DDTV Archive, Box 10.
91. Dan Marcus, "The Gulf Crisis TV Project: Alternative Media, Activism and Access to the Airwaves," PTTV Archive, MS 276, Box 4, Folder 75, 15. Much of the background material here is taken from Marcus's excellent master's thesis.
92. Marcus, "The Gulf Crisis TV Project," 19.
93. "Call for Tapes on the Gulf Crisis," PTTV Archives, MS 276, Box 2, Folder 20.
94. Marcus, "The Gulf Crisis TV Project," 12.
95. Zimmerman, *States of Emergency*, 102.
96. Marcus, "The Gulf Crisis TV Project," 22.
97. Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions*, 178.
98. Hector Gutierrez, "Antiwar Program Angers Cable Viewers," *Rocky Mountain News*, PPTV Archive, MS 276, Box 1, Folder 11.
99. Dear Activist Letter, PTTV Archive, MS 276, Box 1, Folder 4.
100. "Deep Dish: Using Media as an organizing tool," DDTV Archive, Box 13.
101. Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions*, 183.
102. Marty Lucas quoted in Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions*, 184.
103. Marcus, "The Gulf Crisis TV Project," 24.
104. Ibid., 26.
105. Ibid., 24.
106. Peter Belcastro letter, DDTV Archive, Box 3.
107. February 2, 1990, DIVA TV Meeting Minutes, ACT UP/NY Archive, Series II, Reel 3, Box 4, Folder 9; Dean Lance interview with Sarah Schulman, June 7, 2012, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/lance.pdf>
108. Jon Stout interview with the author, March 26, 2012.
109. Saalfeld, "On the Make," 26.
110. *AIDS TV*, 189. Juhasz offers an insightful and in-depth account of her other AIDS-related video work in chap. 6 of *AIDS TV*. Much of the background material is taken from there.
111. Ibid., 186.
112. Ibid., 187.
113. Ibid., 190.
114. Ibid., 210.
115. Ibid., 234.
116. Ibid., 215.
117. Ibid., 217.
118. Hallas, *Reframing Bodies*, 105.
119. Benjamin Shepard, *Queer Political Performances and Protest: Play, Pleasure, and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 135.
120. Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise!* (Oakland: AK Press, 1999), 71.
121. David DeLeon, *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 120.
122. The Red Scare was initiated in 1917 by government raids on Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) headquarters across the nation and culminated

in the Palmer Raids of 1920 where thousands of radicals were arrested, as due process and habeas corpus were suspended. In regards to the negative impact of McCarthyism on the New Left, see John Downing, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984), 48–49.

123. Profane Existence, *Making Punk a Threat Again!* (Oakland: Loin Cloth Press, 1997), 36.
124. “Music as a Weapon: The Contentious Symbiosis of Punk Rock and Anarchism,” *Rolling Thunder* 7 (Spring 2009): 72.
125. For example, see *Punk Planet* 38 (July/August 2000), dedicated to “voices of the New Left.”
126. Mark Andersen, *All the Power: Revolution without Illusion* (Chicago: Punk Planet Books, 2004), 209.

Chapter Four: From the Forests to the Streets: Eco-Video Activism and Indymedia

1. See Todd Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), chap 1.
2. Quoted in Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire and the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2008), 78.
3. Graham Mickle, *Future Active: Media Activism and the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 145.
4. Naomi Klein, “The Unknown Icon,” in *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002), 121.
5. David Graeber, “The New Anarchists,” in *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Possible*, ed. Tom Mertes (New York: Verso, 2004), 210.
6. Eric Galatas interviewed by the author, August 12, 2010.
7. Quoted in Tish Stringer, “Move! Guerilla Films, Collaborative Modes, and the Tactics of Radical Media Making” (PhD diss., Rice University, 2006), 54–55.
8. Andrew Flood, “Dreaming Reality Where the Past and Future Meet the Present: A Report on the Second Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism,” http://struggle.ws/andrew/ecnounter2_report.html.
9. Stringer, *Move!*, 63.
10. Jeff Perlstein interviewed by Miguel Bocanegra, Center for Labor Studies, October 15, 2000, <http://depts.washington.edu/wtohist/interviews/Perlstein.pdf>.
11. Even Henshaw-Plath interviewed by the author, September 23, 2010.
12. Quoted from Stringer, *Move!*, 64.
13. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 62.
14. Jay Sand interviewed by the author, February 15, 2011.
15. Henshaw-Plath interview.
16. Rachel Rinaldo interviewed by the author, February 25, 2011.
17. Quoted in Stringer, *Move!*, 65.
18. Ibid., 57.
19. Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II, “Introduction: A Fire in the Belly of the Beast: The Emergence of Revolutionary Environmentalism,” in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 16.

20. Murray Bookchin, *Post-scarcity Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 24–25.
21. Ibid., 29.
22. Ibid.
23. Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 2–3.
24. Ibid., 17.
25. Ibid.
26. Jim Flynn interview by the author, January 23, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
27. Josh Laughling interviewed by the author, February 29, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
28. Randy Shadowwalker interviewed by the author, May 16, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
29. Tim Lewis interviewed by the author, October 13, 2010.
30. Lauren Regan interviewed by the author, March 28, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
31. Kurt Jensen interviewed by the author, January 9, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
32. Quoted in Vanessa Grigoriadis, “The Rise and Fall of the Eco-Radical Underground,” *Rolling Stone*, August 10, 2006, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=11&sid=4b7c506e-72d1-4859-846a-f7ff55c>.
33. Lewis interview, October 13, 2010.
34. Tim Ream interviewed by the author, November 29, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
35. Tim Lewis interviewed by the author, January 3, 2012.
36. Ann Dorsey interviewed by the author, February 22, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
37. Cindy Noblitt interviewed by the author, March 7, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
38. Kari Johnson interviewed by the author, January 9, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
39. Lauren Beaton interviewed by the author, March 7, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
40. We will see this footage re-edited differently eventually in *Pickaxe*, the film Tim Lewis and Tim Ream made in 2001. *Cascadia Alive!* aired much of the rough footage that Lewis shot of Warner Creek and other actions throughout its existence.
41. Ron Burnett, “Video: The Politics of Culture and Community,” in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed. Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 289.
42. Lewis interview, October 13, 2010.
43. Ibid.
44. John Zerzan interviewed by the author, April 2, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
45. Dorsey interview.
46. Lewis interview, October 13, 2010.
47. I am thinking of Richard Slotkin’s concept of regeneration through violence found in his trilogy of books: *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology*

of the American Frontier, 1600–1860 (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1977); *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985); *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992).

48. Sergei Eisenstein's *October* holds an interestingly parallel use of editing in a famous dance sequence where the Tzar's army surrenders to the Bolsheviks. Music immediately plays afterward with men from each side dancing together. The cutting continues at a breakneck speed until we can no longer tell the difference between groups or the men. Here music and cutting suggest the ways in which a new collective subjectivity is forged through the Russian Revolution.
49. DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 57.
50. CrimethInc., *Days of War, Nights of Love* (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2000), 139–40.
51. CrimethInc., *Work* (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2011), 295.
52. Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," in *Culture and Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2005), 83.
53. Ibid.
54. The G8 is an international, undemocratic government forum that includes the United States where various countries' leaders secretly decide the world's fate.
55. Eugene Anarchist Action Collective, *Anarchists Are Going to Eat Your Children and Other Myths, Misinformation, and Misunderstanding* (Eugene, OR: n.p., 2000), 5.
56. Ibid., 6.
57. Ibid., 8.
58. Seán Ó Siadhail, Bruce Girard, and Amy Mahan, *Global Media Governance* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 54.
59. Ibid., 68.
60. Working Group on the WTO, "A Citizen's Guide to the World Trade Organization" (Inkworks, July 1999), 1–2.
61. Ibid., 4.
62. L.A. Kauffman, "Who Are Those Masked Anarchists?" in *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, ed. Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas, and Daniel Burton-Rose (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2002), 126.
63. Eddie Yuen, "Introduction," in *The Battle of Seattle*, 10.
64. Notes from Nowhere, *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism* (New York: Verso, 2003), 109.
65. Ibid., 177.
66. Quoted in Kate Coyer, "If It Leads It Bleeds: The Participatory Newsmaking of the Independent Media Center," in *Global Activism, Global Media*, ed. William de Jong, Martin Shaw, and Neil Stammers (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 170.
67. Max Rameau, *Take Back the Land: Land, Gentrification, and the Umoja Village Shantytown* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 11.
68. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 170.
69. Ibid., 32.
70. Andrew Ross, *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 144.

71. Ibid.
72. Quoted in Richard E. Templin, III, "Rage against the Machine: How Indymedia's Radical Project Is Working to Create the New Public Sphere" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2009), 21.
73. Madhava, "Reclaim the Streets, Reclaim the Code," *Punk Planet* 43 (May/June 2001): 102.
74. Perlstein interview, 12.
75. Templin, "Rage against the Machine," 22–23.
76. Ana Nogueira, "The Indymedia Revolution," *Punk Planet* 42 (May/June 2001): 72.
77. Dorothy Kidd, "The IMC: A New Model," *Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication* (2003), https://docs.indymedia.org/pub/Global/ImcEssayCollection/IMC_a_New_Model.pdf, 5.
78. Randy Rowland interview by the author, April 29, 2010.
79. Perlstein interview, 10.
80. DeeDee Halleck interviewed by the author, April 22, 2011.
81. Chris Burnett interviewed by the author, October 23, 2011.
82. Robert Wyrod interviewed by the author, March 30, 2011.
83. Rinaldo interview.
84. Michael Eisenmenger interviewed by Todd Wolfson, November 21, 2005.
85. David Graeber quoted in Heather Haddon, "To Channel 7, We Don't Mean Jack," *Punk Planet* 43 (May/June 2001): 81.
86. Ibid., 91.
87. Jeffery J. Schott, "The WTO after Seattle," in *The WTO after Seattle*, ed. Jeffrey J Schott (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2000), 5.
88. Ibid., x.
89. Juan Gonzalez, "From Seattle to South Central," in *The Battle of Seattle*, 350.
90. Kristine Wong, "Shutting Us Out: Race, Class and the Framing of a Movement," in *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement*, ed. Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George Katsiaficas, (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004), 207.
91. Elizabeth Martínez, "Where Was the Color in Seattle?" in *Globalize This! The Battle against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule*, ed. Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000), 80.
92. Ibid., 76.
93. According to a 2013 government report, 59 percent of urbanized whites earning less than \$25,000 own a computer, whereas only 45 percent of blacks and 44 percent of Hispanics from the same quadrant own one. See U.S. Department of Commerce, *Exploring the Digital Nation: America's Emerging Online Experience*, June 2013.
94. Sascha Meinrath interviewed by the author, November 3, 2011.
95. Burnett interview.
96. Chris Burnett, *Proposed Charter of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers*, April 24, 2001, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-uk/2001-May/000249.html>.
97. Principles of Unity, May 21, 2001, <http://indymedia.org.au/principlesofunity.html>.
98. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, chap. 5.

99. Templin, “Rage against the Machine,” 26.
100. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 131.
101. Quoted in Ana Nogueira, “The Indymedia Revolution,” *Punk Planet* 43 (May/June 2001): 70–74.
102. Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, “California Ideology,” in *Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates, and Pirate Utopias*, ed. Peter Ludlow (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 373.
103. Ibid., 364.
104. Stringer, *Move!*, 212.
105. Jason Adams, *Blur: How the Network Paradigm Gives Social Movements the Upper Hand* (handout), 3.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid., 3.
108. Ibid., 10.
109. Madhava, “Reclaim the Streets, Reclaim the Code,” 103.
110. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *Women and the Subversion of Community* (London: Falling Wall Press, 1972), 35.
111. Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 48.
112. Bmedia e-mail, July 31, 2004, <http://lists.indymedia.org/pipermail/imc-satellite/2004-July/0801-k9.html>.
113. Quoted in Todd Wolfson, “From the Zapatistas to Indymedia: Dialectics and Orthodoxy in Contemporary Social Movements” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 5 (2012): 153.
114. L. Ross, “Needed Video Equipment for FTAA/SOA,” October 18, 2003, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-video/2003-October/003172.html>.
115. Sasha Costanza-Chock interviewed by the author, November 14, 2011.
116. Henshaw-Plath interview.
117. Costanza-Chock interview.
118. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Autonomedia, 2003), 101.
119. Ibid., 110.
120. Max Rameau, *Take Back the Land: Land, Gentrification, and the Umoja Village Shantytown* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 86.
121. David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 42.
122. Medea Benjamin, “The Debate over Tactics,” in *Globalize This!*, 68.
123. Ibid.
124. Lewis interview, October 13, 2010.
125. Ibid.
126. Jane M. Gaines, “Political Mimesis” in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 97.
127. For good discussions of riot porn, see: Angela Aguayo, “Activist Street Tapes and Protest Pornography: Participatory Media Culture in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” *Jump Cut* 56 (Winter 2014–2015): <http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/AguayoProtestVideo/index.html>; Maple John Razsa, “Beyond ‘Riot Porn’: Protest Video and the Production of Unruly Subjects,” *Ethnos: A Journal of Anthropology* 79, no. 4 (2014): 496–524.
128. *CrimethInc. Guerilla Film Series*, vol. 1 (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2004).

129. Gaines, "Political Mimesis," 91.
130. Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 43.
131. ACME Collective, "N30 Black Bloc Communiqué," in *The Battle of Seattle*, 118–19.
132. Contrast this scene with one from *Battle in Seattle* (2007), a ridiculous fictional portrayal of the protest. In it, a black-clad anarchist hurls a newspaper vending machine through a plate glass window nearly hitting a pregnant woman. Afterward, he yells threateningly, "Do you want your kid working to death in a sweatshop making lady clothes? Don't shop here!"
133. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 42.
134. Ibid., 51.
135. Ibid., 11–12.
136. AK Thompson, *Black Bloc, White Riot* (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 142.
137. Ibid., 142–43.
138. Ibid., 25.
139. Profane Existence, *Making Punk a Threat Again!* (Oakland: Loin Cloth Press, 1997), 111.
140. PNR, *Green Anarchism: Its Origins and Influences* (Santa Cruz, CA: Black Powder Press, 2009), 3–4.
141. Felonius Skunk, "Welcome to (the Best of) *Green Anarchy*," in *Uncivilized: The Best of Green Anarchy* (Oakland: Green Anarchy Press, 2012), 2.
142. The Green Anarchy Collective, "What Is Green Anarchy?," in *Uncivilized*, 14.
143. Ibid.
144. John Zerzan, *Future Primitive Revisited* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2012), 2.
145. Ibid., 34.
146. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 10, 11.
147. "What Is Green Anarchy?," 16.
148. Ibid., 19.
149. Andrew Ross, "Hacking Away at the Counterculture," in *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, ed. John Thornton Caldwell (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 267.
150. Homer Bust, "We Are All Indigenous," in *Uncivilized*, 304.
151. "Keep America Beautiful" PSA, 1971, available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epCKjaStFu0>
152. Ibid., 305.
153. Mark Watson, "The Countercultural 'Indian': Visualizing Retribalization at the Human Be-In," in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 209–23.
154. "Green Scared: Preliminary Lessons of the Green Scare," *Rolling Thunder* 5 (Spring 2008): 32.
155. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 161–62.
156. Kera Abraham, "Flames of Dissent," *Eugene Weekly*, November 22, 2006, <http://www.eugeneweekly.com/2006/11/02/coverstory.html>.
157. Lewis interview, October 13, 2010.

158. Leeanne Siart interviewed by the author, April 30, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
159. Crocus Behemoth, "The Left-Handed Path of Repression, in *Uncivilized*, 111.
160. For more information, see Will Potter, *Green Is the New Red* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2011); *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, dir. Marshall Curry, 2011.
161. Ann I. Solation, "Initial and Final Communiqué," in *Uncivilized*, 287.
162. *Ibid.*, 288.
163. Eric Galatas interviewed by the author, January 19, 2011.
164. Wyrud interview.
165. Eisenmenger interviewed by Wolfson.
166. Rachel Rinaldo, e-mail, November 16, 2000, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-video/2000-November/000911.html>.
167. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 22.
168. DeeDee Halleck e-mail, February 22, 2001, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-satellite/2001-February/000184.html>.
169. DeeDee Halleck e-mail, March 21, 2001, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-video/2001-March/001043.html>.
170. Michael Eisenmenger e-mail, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-video/2001-March/001047.html>.
171. Henshaw-Plath interview.
172. Steev Hise follow-up interview with author, March 2 2011.
173. Steev Hise e-mail, July 6, 2007, <http://archives.lists.indymedia.org/imc-satellite/2007-July/0706-t5.html>.
174. Hise follow-up interview.
175. Steev Hise, "Indymedia Newsreal: What's the Objective?," June 11, 2008, <http://listsindymedia.org/pipermail/immc-satellite/2008-June/0611-su.html>.
176. Sand interview.

Chapter Five: Forging into the Twenty-First Century: Meme Creation and Community-Based Organizations

1. Rodrigo Nunes, "What Were You Wrong about Ten Years Ago?," *Turbulence* 5 (December 2009): 39.
2. David Solnit, "Analyse This!," *Turbulence* 5 (December 2009): 5.
3. Will Potter, *Green Is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement under Siege* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011), 131.
4. Colin Moynihan and Scott Shane, "For Anarchist, Details of Life as F.B.I. Target," *New York Times*, May 28, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/us/29surveillance.html>.
5. Charlie Savage, "F.B.I. Agents Get Leeway to Push Privacy Bounds," *New York Times*, June 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/13/us/13fbi.html>.
6. Trevor Aaronson, *The Terror Factory: Inside the FBI's Manufactured War on Terrorism* (New York: IG Publishing, 2014).
7. Scott Heins, "A Visit with the 'Goon' Squad: Meet the NYPD's Specially Trained Protest Police," *Gothamist*, December 17, 2015, http://gothamist.com/2015/12/17/bratton_nypd_protest_unit.php#photo-1.
8. Brandon Jourdan interviewed by the author, July 7, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.

9. SmartMeme's name has since changed to the Center for Story-Based Strategy, but I will retain the original name since it was what they went by when I was conducting my primary research on them.
10. Thomas Frank, *One Market under God* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 259–60.
11. Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000), x.
12. Paolo Virno, "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 21.
13. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 81.
14. Levine et al., xxix.
15. Ibid., xxxiii.
16. Ibid., 8.
17. Ibid., xiv.
18. Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999), 281–82.
19. Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 86.
20. Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must* (New York: Quill, 1999), 118.
21. Ibid., 214–15.
22. Ibid., 123.
23. This has been well documented, see: Ben. H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); Robert McChesney, *The Political Economy of Media* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008).
24. Lasn, *Culture Jam*, 134.
25. Stephen Duncombe, *Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy* (New York: New Press, 2007), 16.
26. Ibid., 13.
27. Ibid., 9.
28. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," in *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, ed. John Thornton Caldwell (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 62.
29. Ibid., 63.
30. Ibid., 64.
31. Jason Jones and Beka Economopoulos interviewed by the author, September 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
32. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 330.
33. *Homeless Tent City* can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/6129654>.
34. Rob Robinson interviewed by the author, February 13, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
35. Max Rameau, *Take Back the Land: Land, Gentrification, and the Umoja Village Shantytown* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 82.
36. Joseph Midgley interviewed by the author, February 22, 2012. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.

37. Ibid.
38. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 131.
39. Ibid., 133.
40. Jones and Economopoulos interview, February 12, 2012.
41. Beka Economopoulos e-mail, June 23, 2014.
42. Jones and Economopoulos interview, February 12, 2012.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Elizabeth Cowie, “The Spectacle of Actuality,” in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, eds. Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 32.
46. Jones and Economopoulos interview, February 12, 2012.
47. Jones and Economopoulos interview, September 29, 2010.
48. Jones and Economopoulos interview, February 12, 2012.
49. Patrick Reinsborough interviewed by the author, October 21, 2010.
50. Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning, *Re:Imagining Change: How to Use Story-Based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 28.
51. Reinsborough interview.
52. Reinsborough and Canning, *Re:Imagining Change*, 46.
53. SmartMeme handout distributed at a training session.
54. Reinsborough interview.
55. Ibid.
56. Reinsborough and Canning, *Re:Imagining Change*, 19.
57. Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (London: Pearson, 2009), 518.
58. Reinsborough and Canning, *Re:Imagining Change*, 32.
59. Ibid., 35.
60. SmartMeme, *The Future of Foresight*, 21, <http://www.sehn.org/pdf/smartMeme.2020.Strategy.pdf>.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 4.
63. Ibid., 14.
64. SmartMeme, *Mapping 2020: Charting a Precautionary Future*, 12, <http://www.sehn.org/pdf/smartMeme.2020.Scenario.pdf>.
65. Reinsborough interview.
66. The video can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4fP_DNu0C8.
67. Reinsborough interview.
68. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDjf5errEOI>.
69. SmartMeme, *The Future of Foresight*, 6.
70. Benji Gerdjes, Gavin Grindon, and Rodrigo Nunes, “Protests Past and Protest Futures: A Critical Conversation About the State of Protests and Cultural Composition,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* 2, no. 3 (2009–2010): 3.
71. David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 255.
72. A.g.r.o.a.t., “Critiquing Climate Camp,” in *Criticism without Critique: A Climate Camp Reader* (Toronto: Shift Magazine, 2010), 11.
73. Ibid., 13.

74. The Free Association, “Six Impossible Things before Breakfast,” *Turbulence* 3 (Summer 2008): 20.
75. “A g.r.o.a.t,” “Critiquing Climate Camp,” 15–16.
76. Carlo Rotella, “A Darker Shade of Green,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2011, 36.
77. Ibid.
78. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 32–33.
79. Rotella, “A Darker Shade of Green,” 37.
80. Richard McNeill Douglas, “The Ultimate Paradigm Shift: Environmentalism as Antithesis to the Modern Paradigm of Progress,” in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (London: Continuum, 2010), 198.
81. Much of this material was conceptualized with Todd Wolfson and Peter Funke in our coauthored articles: “Suturing Working Class Subjectivities: Media Mobilizing Project and the Role of Media Building a Class-Based Social Movement,” *Triple C* 10, no. 1 (2012): 16–29; “Rewiring the Apparatus: Screen Theory, Media Activism, and Working-Class Subjectivities,” *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture, and Society* 28, no. 1 (2016): 57–72.
82. Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), 114.
83. Ronald Blount interviewed by the author, December 10, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
84. Rebekah Scotland interviewed by the author, November 5, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
85. Thomas Robinson interviewed by the author, December 13, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
86. Brian Mercer interviewed by the author, November 18, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
87. Shivaani Selvaraj interviewed by the author, December 1, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
88. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0utLcal4ngk>.
89. Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 87.
90. Ibid., 95.
91. “Taxi Driver: Sweat Shop on Wheels” is a song written by John Wessel McCoy during an MMP leadership retreat in 2008. At the end of the retreat, which included about 120 leaders from across Philadelphia, there was an appreciation exercise where each group was appreciated. During this exercise Wessel McCoy and others sang this song to members of TWA-PA. The song later became an anthem of sorts for TWA-PA.
92. For more on PhillyCam, see Christopher Ali, “The Last PEG or Community Media 2.0? Negotiating Place and Placelessness at PhillyCAM,” *Media, Culture, and Society* 36, no. 1 (2013): 69–86.
93. Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture*, 86–87.
94. Sasha Costanza-Chock, “*Se Ve, Se Siente*: Transmedia Mobilization in the Los Angeles Immigrant Rights Movement” (PhD diss.: University of Southern California, 2010), 177.

95. Amanda Garces interviewed by the author, May 25, 2011.
96. Ibid.
97. Amanda Garces interviewed by the author, June 9, 2011.
98. Garces interview, May 25, 2011.
99. Costanza-Chock, "Se Ve, Se Siente," 180.
100. Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 89.
101. Costanza-Chock, "Se Ve, Se Siente," 196.
102. Garces interview, June 9, 2011.
103. Garces interview, May 25, 2011.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Manuel Mancia, "Economy, Work, and Traditional Media," *Jornada XXII* 4, no. 5 (Spring/Summer 2011): 2.
107. The New Generation of the XXII Century, "To Our Readers," *Jornada XXII* 4, no. 5 (Spring/Summer 2011): 1.
108. Alma, "Integration," *Jornada XXII* 2 (November 2009): 3.
109. The video can be seen at <http://vozmob.net/en/story/dancin-boardwalk>.
110. The video can be seen at <http://vozmob.net/en/story/officer-write-em>.
111. The video can be seen at <http://vozmob.net/en/story/ismaels-building>.
112. Betsy Estudillo, "The Struggle for Justice Continues for Carwash Workers," September 2, 2008, <https://vozmob.net/en/story/struggle-justice-continues-carwash-workers>.
113. Valeria V.M., "Valeria, Witness to Arizona's History," *Jornada XXII* 4, no. 5 (Spring/Summer 2011): 3, https://vozmob.net/sites/default/s3files/la_jornada_2011_final.pdf.
114. Klee Benally interviewed by the author, March 9, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
115. The video can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwDXPKu_NQc.
116. The video can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYt_q3JtTDY.
117. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6tZq5pZRcQ>.
118. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnCe48m8UwI>.
119. Dru Oja Jay interviewed by the author, September 20, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
120. Justin Saunders interviewed by the author, May 31, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
121. Enid Godtree interviewed by the author, June 13, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
122. Tracy Glynn interviewed by the author, June 10, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted. New Brunswick Media Co-op has its own distinct page, since it chose to break from the other co-ops for various reasons: wanting a separate funding structure, a different website design, and to be less based on working groups.
123. Montreal did not have a broadsheet. All other broadsheets are now defunct.
124. Megan Cotton-Kinch interviewed by the author, May 19, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
125. Montreal briefly had a co-op for a few years, but it never solidified like the others and is now defunct, although its website is still operational.

126. Hillary Bain Lindsay interviewed by the author, May 10, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
127. Dawn Paley interviewed by the author, August 25, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
128. Ibid.
129. *Standing Our Ground: Media Co-op Annual Review 2010–2011*, http://www.mediacoop.ca/sites/mediacoop.ca/files2/mc/year_in_review_report.2010-11-3.pdf.
130. Participatory Budget e-mail, November 4, 2010.
131. “Paying Contributors,” <http://www.mediacoop.ca/fr/decision/4717?destination=node%2F4717>.
132. “Paying Staff,” <http://www.mediacoop.ca/fr/decision/4626?destination=node%2F4626>.
133. Dru Oja Jay interviewed by the author, February 24, 2015.
134. “Producing the Dominion,” <http://www.mediacoop.ca/node/4720>.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Jay interview, February 24, 2015.
138. The video can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/8037760>.
139. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrTtSwpWciM>.
140. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI6cSgkJ0BE>.
141. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 37.
142. Even Vancouver now lacks the same intensity it had in 2010 and 2011 regarding video-making with the departure of two of its key creative personnel, Dawn Paley and Franklin López.
143. The video can be seen at <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/video/halifax-postal-workers-locked-out/7473>.
144. The video can be seen at <http://toronto.mediacoop.ca/video/g20-toronto-water-delivery-protest/3827>.
145. Jay interview, February 24, 2015.
146. Anonymous member of the co-op movement in discussion with the author, August 9, 2016.

Chapter Six: Video Ninjas and the Work of Franklin López

1. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Basic Books: New York, 2002), 69.
2. Ibid., 6.
3. Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 41.
4. Jeff Keating interviewed by the author, July 20, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
5. Brandon Jourdan interviewed by the author, July 7, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
6. Andrew Ross, *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 158.
7. The Yes Men are Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, who engage in various theatrical stunts to expose the irrationality of capitalism and the utopian

hopes that remain just beyond its purview. Such stunts include posing as entrepreneurs who recycle shit into fast food and impersonating Canadian government officials to claim that its government is dramatically decreasing emissions.

8. COP 16 is shorthand for the 16th United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2010.
9. Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 67.
10. Ibid., 81–82.
11. David Martinez, discussion with the author, August 10, 2016.
12. The video can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/7998841>.
13. Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 95.
14. T.V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 57.
15. Eric Galatas interviewed by the author, January 19, 2011.
16. Flux Rostrum interviewed by the author, April 23, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
17. Randy Rowland interviewed by the author, April 29, 2010. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
18. Belinda Rawlins interviewed by the author, July 6, 2011.
19. Andrew Lynn interviewed by the author, April 15, 2011.
20. Kyle Harris interviewed by the author, February 21, 2011. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
21. Kyle Harris, “Beyond Authenticity: Aesthetic Strategies and Anarchist Media,” in *Realizing the Impossible: Art against Authority*, ed. Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 211.
22. Ibid., 214.
23. Ibid., 216.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 218.
26. Ibid., 212.
27. Ibid., 213.
28. For more analysis regarding the discussion of mass distributing activist material over broadcast television, see Chris Robé, “The Convergence of Eco-Activism, Neoliberalism, and Reality TV in *Whale Wars*,” *Journal of Film and Video* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 94–111.
29. Robin Wood, “Ideology, Genre, Auteur,” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 595–96.
30. Franklin López interviewed by the author, June 21, 2010.
31. The Stimulator, “Snitching on the Resistance: How Celebrity Activists Have Set Off a Witch Hunt against Militants,” *Balaclava* 6 (July 16–31, 2010): 2.
32. Ibid.
33. Franklin López, “Throw the Bottle!” in *Molotov* 1 (Atlanta: subMedia).
34. López interview.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.
37. The Stimulator, “The Battle for Creative Innovation,” in *Molotov 2* (Vancouver, BC: subMedia), 1.
38. Ibid.
39. An EBN video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR2IKjApPzo>.
40. Quoted in *Sonic Outlaws*, dir. Craig Baldwin, 1995–2005.
41. López, “Throw the Bottle!”
42. Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 1–2.
43. Ibid., 11.
44. Ibid., 53–54.
45. L. Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2003), 163.
46. Ibid., 167.
47. CrimethInc., *Days of War, Nights of Love* (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2000), 17.
48. Ibid., 114.
49. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 98–99.
50. CrimethInc., *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook* (Olympia, WA: CrimethInc. Workers’ Collective, 2005), 13.
51. Terra Greenbrier, “Against Civilization, for Reconnection to Life!,” in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 199–200.
52. Ibid., 199.
53. CrimethInc., *Days of War*, 128.
54. Greenbrier, “Against Civilization, for Reconnection to Life!,” 199.
55. Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*, vol. 1, *The Problem of Civilization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006), 41.
56. “Say You Want an Insurrection,” *Rolling Thunder* 8 (Fall 2009): 16.
57. Ibid., 17.
58. Mark Andersen, *All the Power: Revolution Without Illusion* (Chicago: Punk Planet Books, 2004), 20.
59. “Music as a Weapon: The Contentious Symbiosis of Punk Rock and Anarchism,” *Rolling Thunder* 7 (Spring 2009): 72.
60. “The Rebel Call Blackfire,” *Rolling Thunder* 7 (Spring 2009): 79.
61. David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 254.
62. CrimethInc., *Days of War*, 235.
63. Laura Portwood-Stacer, *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 145–46.
64. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 125.
65. The Stimulator, “The Battle for Creative Innovation,” 4–5.
66. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Perseus Books, 1976), 75.
67. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (New York: Verso, 1999), 345.

68. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 22.
69. Ibid., 19.
70. Ibid.
71. Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 336–37.
72. Ibid., 345.
73. Ibid., 334.
74. CrimethInc., *Days of War*, 51.
75. CrimethInc., *Evasion* (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2001), 49.
76. Ibid., 16.
77. Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 344.
78. Profane Existence, *Making Punk a Threat Again!* (Oakland: Loin Cloth Press, 1997), 35.
79. López interview.
80. Ibid.
81. For more on the RNC 8 and video activism see Chris Robé, “Criminalizing Dissent: Western State Repression, Video Activism, and Counter-Summit Protests,” *Framework: Journal of Cinema and Media* 57, no. 2 (2016).
82. Franklin López interview on Indy TV, Rochester, Indymedia, December 10, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBPqlmRG-fA>.
83. López interview.
84. Sadly, Lopez announced the end of the show in December 2016.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. The video can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/114174578>.
89. CrimethInc., *Expect Resistance* (Salem, OR: CrimethInc., 2007), 120.
90. “Breaking the Frame: Anarchist Resistance to the G20,” *Rolling Thunder* 9 (Spring 2010): 21.
91. The video can be seen at <http://www.submedia.tv/endciv-2011/>.
92. “Fair Weather Warning,” *The Dominion* 76 (April 2011): 3.
93. Jensen, *Endgame*, 358.
94. Ibid., 333.
95. Ibid., 71.
96. Ibid., 160.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid., 459.
99. Andrea Smith, “Introduction: The Revolution Will Not Be Funded,” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 10.
100. Frederick Buell, “A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse,” in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (New York: Continuum, 2010), 14.
101. CrimethInc., *Expect Resistance*, 188.
102. CrimethInc., *Recipes for Disaster*, 1.
103. CrimethInc., *Expect Resistance*, 189.
104. SmartMeme, *Mapping 2020*, 23.
105. Ibid., 22.

106. Ibid.
107. Mark Levine, "The Apocalyptic as Contemporary Dialectic," in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (New York: Continuum, 2010) 61.
108. Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (New York: Verso, 2009), 151.
109. Andrew Flood, "Civilization, Primitivism, and Anarchism," <http://struggle.ws/andrew/primitivism.html>.
110. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 13.
111. Flood, "Civilization, Primitivism, and Anarchism."
112. Andy, December 16, 2006, <http://anarkismo.net/article/1890#comments>.
113. For a recent account regarding nonviolence resistances, see Mark Engler and Paul Engler, *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).
114. Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 41.
115. For more information on this, see: Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
116. Marti Kheel, "Direct Action and the Heroic Ideal: An Ecofeminist Critique," *Igniting a Revolution*, 309.
117. Ibid.
118. Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 93.
119. Ibid., 142.
120. Kheel, "Direct Action and the Heroic Ideal," 309.
121. "Thinking Through Perpetrator Accountability," *Rolling Thunder* 6 (Fall 2009): 36.
122. Ibid., 43.
123. Ibid. 39.
124. "Languages of Legitimacy: The Legal System, Anarchists, and Violence against Women," *Rolling Thunder* 3 (Summer 2006): 53.
125. Bob Black, *Anarchism after Leftism* (Columbia, MO: Columbia Alternative Library, 1997), 150.
126. Brown, *The Politics of Individualism*, 185.
127. "The Struggle against Domestic Violence: Interview from the Front Line" *Rolling Thunder* 3 (Summer 2006): 59.
128. "Say You Want an Insurrection," *Rolling Thunder* 8 (Fall 2009): 26.
129. Ibid.
130. Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland, "Introduction: Towards Anarchist Art Theories," in *Realizing the Impossible*, 5.

Conclusion: Future Occupations

1. David Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, A Crisis, A Movement* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2013), 32.
2. Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 13.

3. Sasha Costanza-Chock, "Mic Check! Media Cultures and the Occupy Movement," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 11, no. 3–4 (2012): 380.
4. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 166.
5. Occupy Research, "Preliminary Findings: Occupy Research Demographic and Political Participation Survey," <http://occupyresearch.net/2012/03/23/preliminary-findings-occupy-research-demographic-and-political-participation-survey/>.
6. Ruth Milkman, Stephanie Luce, and Penny Lewis, *Changing the Subject: A Bottom-up Account of Occupy Wall Street in New York* (New York: Murphy Institute, CUNY, 2013), <http://ht.ly/he6Ea>.
7. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 114.
8. Jeffrey S. Juris, "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2 (May 2012): 266.
9. According to statistical analysis, news coverage of income inequality spiked during the height of OWS's coverage. The term was only mentioned around 1,200 times in August 2011. By October 2011 it reached almost 4,000. See <http://ht.ly/he6Ea>.
10. Todd Gitlin, *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* (New York: Itbooks, 2012), 98–99.
11. Writers for the 99%, *Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 63.
12. Ibid., 114.
13. Not an Alternative, "Counter Power as Common Power," *Roar Magazine*, June 6, 2014, <http://roarmag.org/2014/06/counter-power-as-common-power/>.
14. Costanza-Chock, "Mic Check!" 379.
15. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2012), 176.
16. The video can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/30778727>.
17. Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 94.
18. The video can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/30146870>.
19. More recently we have witnessed homemade videos by poor people of color documenting the deaths of various black men by the police in New York, Baltimore, and Ferguson, Missouri. Poor communities' accessibility to video via cell phones has dramatically allowed those historically marginalized to spark and influence national debate regarding police brutality and, to some extent, structural racism and economic disenfranchisement, in unprecedented ways. More research needs to be conducted regarding this important development.
20. Audrea Lim, "Chinatown Is Nowhere," in *Occupy! Scenes from an Occupied America*, ed. Astra Taylor, Keith Cessen, and editors from *n+1*, *Dissent*, *Triple Canopy* and *The New Inquiry* (New York: Verso, 2011), 99–104.
21. See: Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, eds. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2002); Juris, *Networking Futures*; Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*.
22. See: Gerbaudo *Tweets and the Streets*; Michael Chanan, *Tales of a Video Blogger*, 2012, <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/19617596/>

- TalesOfAVideoBloggerLowRes.pdf; Maple John Razsa, *Bastards of Utopia: Living Radical Politics After Socialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).
23. Roger Hallas, *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds., *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization* (New York: Verso, 2002); John Downing, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984).
 24. Quoted in Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose: Lessons from a Movement for a New Society* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), 47.
 25. Chris Hedges, “Black Bloc: The Cancer in Occupy,” *Truthdig!*, February 6, 2012, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_cancer_of_occupy_20120206.
 26. David Graeber, “Concerning the Violent Peace-Police,” *n+1*, February 9, 2012, <http://nplusonemag.com/concerning-the-violent-peace-police>.
 27. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right of the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2013), 133.
 28. David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 239–40.
 29. Christopher Robé, “The Good Fight: The Spanish Civil War and U.S. Left Film Criticism,” *Framework* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 79–107.
 30. Ramarley Graham was an unarmed man shot to death by the police in his apartment in 2012. Jose LaSalle interviewed by the author, July 19, 2016. All subsequent quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise noted.
 31. Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978, 594).
 32. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257–58.

INDEX

- 9/11. *See* September 11 attacks
- ACT UP *See* AIDS activism
- ACME collective 238
- Adbusters Media Foundation 266, 397–98
Lasn, Kalle 265, 266, 268, 323
- affinity groups 131–33, 136, 138, 144, 149, 252, 341
- AFL-CIO 225
- AIDS activism
- ACT UP 18, 121–57, 166–68, 171–72, 174, 220–21, 237, 242, 405, 407
 - ACT UP NY 18, 122, 123, 127, 138, 155, 168, 172, 221; consensus decision-making in 131–33
 - Angry Initiatives/Defiant Strategies* (1988) 159
 - Be a DIVA* (1990) 167
 - Bordowitz, Greg 126–27, 130, 132, 133, 140, 143, 152, 154
 - Carlomusto, Jean 127, 128, 130, 133, 140, 141, 154, 159
 - City Hall action 139, 144
 - DIVA TV 126, 130–36, 144, 145, 153, 167, 312, 407
 - Target City Hall* (1989) 134–36, 139, 144–48, 166, 168
 - DYKE TV* 167
 - Gay Men's Health Crisis 121, 130, 159, 167
 - Greyson, John 134, 144, 159
 - HIV TV* 171
 - Juhasz, Alexandra 3, 121, 126, 127, 152, 157, 168, 170, 171
 - Kramer, Larry 143
 - Like a Prayer* (1991) 167
 - Living with AIDS* 130, 141, 159, 167
 - Media Committee 132, 136–39, 153
 - Stop the Church* (1991) 126, 138, 148–54, 165
 - Target City Hall* (1989) 134–36, 144–48, 166, 168
 - Testing the Limits (TTL) 126–27, 154–55, 168, 302, 407
Elgear, Sandra 126, 127, 133, 140, 145, 154
 - Question of Equality, The* (1995) 168
 - Testing the Limits* (1987) 134–35, 140–45
 - Voices from the Front* (1992) 154–57, 165, 409
 - Watney, Simon 124, 140
 - Women's AIDS Video Enterprise (WAVE) 168, 170, 171
 - We Care* (1990) 109
 - Women's Health Action Mobilization (WHAM!) 138
 - Akerman, Chantal 101
 - Albert, Michael 180
 - Allende, Salvador 17, 21–23, 26, 28–33, 48, 64
 - alter-globalization movement 18, 92, 173–74, 177, 179, 212, 218, 219, 221–22, 224–25, 228, 239, 242, 249, 256, 259, 260, 263, 268, 349, 399, 405, 407
 - Carnival Against Capital 210
 - counter-summit protesting 177, 212–13, 217, 221–22, 230, 253, 259–61, 281, 287, 324, 368, 398
 - Direct Action Network 225
 - Alternative Media Center (AMC) 108, 110, 111
 - Ama L'Uomo Tuo (Always Love Your Man)* (1975) 101
 - anarchism 2, 4–6, 9, 10, 20, 67, 68, 70, 74, 135, 172–73, 176, 181–82, 199, 224,

- 231–32, 233, 248–49, 253, 345, 350, 352, 354–55, 358–59, 366, 370, 376, 394–95, 404, 407
 ACME collective 238
 anarcho-primitivism 4, 244, 246, 350, 356, 379–81, 388–89
 anarcho-syndicalism 4
 black bloc 212, 225, 235, 239–40, 242, 341, 370, 375, 379, 405
 green anarchism 176, 209, 350
 new anarchism 6–9, 10, 67, 172
 romantic anarchism 376, 392, 395
 Andersen, Mark 174, 357
 Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act 262
 Animal Liberation Front 172, 181, 182
 Ant Farm 74–76, 109, 115
Inflatables Illustrated (1971) 75–76
Anti-Cop March (2010) 333–35
Anti-Olympics Speakers Corner (2010) 330–32 Araki, Gregg 172
 Aronowitz, Stanley 36
 Arrighi, Giovanni 11
 Autonomous Marxism (including Autonomist/Workerist Movement) 17, 177, 264
 exodus 67–72
A Year in the Streets (2001) 247
- Bagdikian, Ben 284
 Baker, General 38, 40, 42, 43, 49, 57, 59, 61, 62
 Barbrook, Richard 224
 Bateson, Gregory 74
Battle of Chile, The (1975) 17, 23, 26, 28–33, 64, 65, 89, 255
 Baudrillard, Jean 12
Be Seeing You (1968) 57
 Bell, Daniel 364–66
Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, The 364
 Benally, Klee 316–18, 357
 Benjamin, Medea 235
 Berardi, Franco 7, 10, 11, 34, 264, 310
 Bey, Hakim 4, 231, 354
 Temporary Autonomous Zone 231–32
 Birri, Fernando 24
 black bloc 212, 225, 235, 239–40, 242, 341, 370, 375, 379, 405
 Black, Bob 394
 Black Economic Development Conference 49
 Black Manifesto 49
 Black Nationalism 38, 42, 63
 Black Panthers 47, 59, 83–84, 256, 344–45.
See also Cleaver, Eldridge; Hampton, Fred; Newton, Huey
 Boggs, Grace Lee 49
 Boggs, James 41, 47, 52–54, 58–59, 65
 Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello 6–7, 72, Bookchin, Murray 70, 74, 75, 151, 181, 182, 354, 355
Ecology and Revolutionary Thought 181
Ecology of Freedom, The 181
Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism 354–55, 358, 395, 360, 366
Towards a Liberatory Technology 75
 Bordowitz, Greg 126–27, 130, 132, 133, 140, 143, 152, 154
 Boyle, Deirdre 117
Breaking the Spell (1999) 236–38
Bring the Troops Home 162–63
 Brown, L. Susan 354, 355, 394
 Burnett, Chris 217, 222
 Burns, Red 110
- Cain, Nancy 84, 85, 89, 95–101, 103, 104, 111, 119
 Canadian Media Co-op 19, 280, 291, 323–36, 347, 380, 397, 407
Anti-Cop March (2010) 333–35
Anti-Olympics Speakers Corner (2010) 330–32
Dominion, The 323–26, 328–30, 380, 385
 Jay, Dru Oja 323, 328, 329, 335, 385
 New Brunswick Media Co-op 325
 Olympics Resistance Network 326, 327, 330, 331
Opening Shenanigans (2010) 332
 Paley, Dawn 325–29
 Carlomusto, Jean 127, 128, 130, 133, 140, 141, 154, 159
 Carnival Against Capital 210
Cascadia Alive! 185–211, 228, 246–52, 408
 Cascadia Forest Defenders 16, 172, 184–85, 187, 198, 212
 Cascadia Media Collective (CMC) 243–46
 Castells, Manuel 9
 Castro, Fidel 38, 41, 51
 Challenge for Change 109–10
 Chanan, Michael 404
 Chicago Seven trial 79, 84
Chicago Travelogue: Hoffman, Rubin, and the Yippies (1969) 87–88, 114
Child of Water (2008) 319, 321
 Chile, coup of 1973 26, 28, 33
 Churchill, Ward 370
 civil rights movement 38, 133, 391
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) 390
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) 6
 class privilege 6, 12, 18, 66, 80, 177, 221, 222, 250, 400, 401, 403

- Cleaver, Eldridge 39, 49, 114
 Cockrel, Ken 38, 43, 45, 49, 56–58
Columbia Revolt (1968) 44, 46, 47, 55, 341
 communes 69–72, 74–75, 94–95
 communication, means of 24, 73, 103,
 123–24, 157, 161
Communications Update 127
Confessions of a Manarchist 250
Copenhagen Moment, The (2009) 285–87
 copwatch groups 197, 257, 404, 409, 410
 Cort, David 84, 85, 91–95, 98, 119
 counter-summit protesting 177, 212–13,
 217, 221–22, 230, 253, 259–61, 281, 287,
 324, 368, 398
 CrimethInc. 4, 209, 237, 353, 355–56, 358,
 360, 361, 363, 367, 386
Days of War, Nights of Love 355, 258, 363
Evasion 367, 368
Recipes for Disaster 356, 387
Crisis on Black Mesa 317
 Cuba 7, 22, 38, 39, 40, 45
Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, The
 364
 Dalla Costa, Mariarosa 8, 54, 226
Days of War, Nights of Love 355, 258, 363
 Debray, Régis 31
 Deep Dish Television (DDTV) 18, 120, 122,
 158–60, 176, 216, 269, 339, 408
Showdown in Seattle (1999) 160, 165,
 215, 216–27, 236
 Deleuze, Gilles 4
 DeLuca, Kevin Michael 3, 182 183, 205
 Democracy Now! 329, 338, 339, 340, 345,
 346, 353
 Democratic National Convention (1972)
 113
 Democratic National Convention (1976) 89
 Democratic National Convention (1996)
 179
 Democratic National Convention (2008) 369
 Detroit Newsreel 37, 47, 48, 59, 61, 62
 Detroit Uprising (1967) 39
 direct action 121, 122, 123, 129, 131, 132,
 134–36, 140, 149, 151, 155, 157, 167
 spectacle-based direct action 19, 49, 114,
 122–24, 129, 143, 148, 174, 176–78,
 182, 183, 283, 287, 344
 Direct Action Headline News 253
 Direct Action Media Network! (DAMN!)
 180
 Direct Action Network 225
 DIVA TV 126, 130–36, 144, 145, 153, 167,
 312, 407
Target City Hall (1989) 134–36, 139,
 144–48, 166, 168
 Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement
 (DRUM) 39
Dominion, The 323–26, 328–30, 380, 385
 Downing, John 1, 5, 404
 Duncombe, Stephen 267, 268, 323
DYKE TV 167
 Earth First! 2, 3, 4, 20, 181–85, 198, 212,
 244, 388, 392, 393, 396
 Earth Liberation Front 198, 252, 261, 345,
 407
 eco-activism 18, 174–78, 181–83, 192, 205,
 209, 256, 263, 354, 380, 382
 Eugene, OR, 16, 18, 175, 178, 181, 183,
 243, 392
A Year in the Streets (2001) 247
Breaking the Spell (1999) 236–38
Cascadia Alive! 185–211, 228, 246–52,
 408
 Cascadia Forest Defenders 16, 172,
 184–85, 187, 198, 212
 Cascadia Media Collective (CMC)
 243–46
Confessions of a Manarchist 250
Eugene Weekly 106, 187, 247
 Fall Creek 198–99, 210, 243
 Ferguson, Jake 198, 199, 252
Green Anarchy 243–53
Guerrilla Video Primer (2002) 247
 Lewis, Tim 184–86, 197, 199–204,
 208, 210, 235, 246–48, 409
 Noblitt, Cindy 187, 210
 Operation Backfire 261
Pickaxe (2001) 199–209, 352, 109
 Ream, Tim 184–87, 192–96, 199–202,
 209, 235–43, 246, 252, 281, 409
 Regan, Lauren 184, 198, 248, 252
RIP WTO N30 (1999) 235, 236
 Shadowwalker, Randy 184, 187, 210,
 246–47
 Warner Creek 183–88, 190–91, 198–
 203, 205–7, 212, 243–44, 252, 281
 Zerzan, John 199, 210–11, 242,
 243–45, 249, 379, 405
 Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty 262
Ecology and Revolutionary Thought 181
Ecology of Freedom, The 181
 Economopoulos, Beka 268–71, 273–76,
 278, 279
 Eisenmenger, Michael 217, 254
 Eisenstein, Sergei 14
 Elgear, Sandra 126, 127, 133, 140, 145, 154
 Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN) 354
END:CIV (2011) 380, 382–95
 Engelman, Ralph 110
 Enzensberger, Hans Magnus 268

- Eugene, OR See eco-activism
Eugene Weekly 106, 187, 247
Evasion 367, 368
- Fanon, Frantz 239–40, 391
 Federici, Silvia 10, 226
 feminism 94–102, 202, 249–52, 394–95, 407
 Ferguson, Jake 198, 199, 252
 film aesthetics
 long shot 208, 276, 301
 montage 44, 50, 52, 53, 90, 100, 143,
 145, 149, 151, 155, 161, 294, 295, 299,
 301–8, 342, 370, 384, 386
 rough aesthetic/rough footage 14, 45, 75,
 79, 116, 127, 142, 189, 190
Finally Got the News (FGtN) (1970) 17, 24,
 37, 42, 44, 47–49, 50–64
 Firestone, Shulamith 96, 102
 Florida, Richard 337, 339
 Fortunati, Leopoldina 8, 226
 Foucault, Michel 4
Four More Years (1972) 113–17
 Frank, Thomas 263, 265
 Free Speech TV (FSTV) 2, 20, 167, 176,
 215, 216, 253, 254, 338, 346, 347–49, 374
 90s Channel 163, 167
 Galatas, Eric 217, 253–55, 345, 347, 348
- Gaines, Jane 236, 237
 Galatas, Eric 217, 253–55, 345, 347, 348
 García Espinosa, Julio 24, 25, 27, 28, 44, 99,
 103
 Garces, Amanda 308–12
 Gay Men's Health Crisis 121, 130, 159, 167
 Geever, Martha 100
 Gerbaudo, Paolo 398, 399
 Getino, Octavio 25, 27, 28, 43, 44
 Ginsburg, Faye 127, 404
 Gitlin, Todd 49, 83, 114, 247, 400, 402
 Glaberman, Martin 52
 Global Village 69, 74, 77, 79, 109
 Goodman, Paul 67
 Graeber, David 179, 217, 287, 358, 405
 Gramsci, Antonio 27, 89–90
Green Anarchy 243–53
 Greenpeace 3, 122, 181, 182, 385
 Greyson, John 134, 144, 159
Ground Noise and Static (2008) 369, 371
Guerrilla Television 113–19
Guerrilla Video Primer (2002) 247
 Guevara, Che 38, 41, 51, 402
Gulf Crisis TV Project 18, 123, 159, 160–67,
 218, 408
 Gulf War 173, 178, 369
 Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás 24, 25
 Guzmán, Patricio 17, 26, 28, 30, 33, 48, 255
- Hall, Stuart 282
 Halleck, DeeDee 127, 128, 130, 160, 216,
 255
 Hamlin, Mike 38, 40, 42, 43, 48, 49, 59
 Hampton, Fred 83
Harriet (1973) 99–101
 Harris, Kyle 348–52
 Harvey, David 6, 7, 11, 22, 209
 Hayden, Tom 47
Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times
 (1981) 128
HIV TV 171
 Hoffman, Abbie 49, 79, 87, 88, 114
Homeless Tent City (2009) 269, 271–80
Hour of the Furnaces (1968) 43
- Ice* (1969) 60
I: The Film (2006) 232–234
 I-Witness video 369
 Independent Media Center (IMC) 179–80,
 213, 215, 222
 Burnett, Chris 217, 222
 Direct Action Headline News 253
 Direct Action Media Network! (DAMN!)
 180
 Eisenmenger, Michael 217, 254
I: The Film (2006) 232–234
Independent, The (newspaper) 143
Miami Model, The (2004) 227–30
 Newsreal 253–60
 Perlstein, Jeff 179, 215, 216
 Principles of Unity 222
This Is What Democracy Looks Like
 (2000) 221, 255
- Independent, The* (newspaper) 143
Indigenous Environmental Network at the
 US Embassy (2009) 286–87
 indigenous struggles 16, 18, 19, 82, 84, 127,
 178, 192, 245–46, 286, 287, 291, 316–23,
 370, 374, 331, 361, 380, 382, 384–86, 396
- Inflatables Illustrated* (1971) 75–76
Inner City Voice (ICV) 41
Inner Voices (2006) 320–21
 Institute of Popular Education of Southern
 California (IDEPSCA) 308
 intellectuals 23–24, 27, 28, 35, 37, 40, 49,
 52, 65–67, 74, 180
Interviews in the Streets (1976) 89–90
Ismael's Building (2010) 314–15
It's the End of the World as We Know It
 (2006–2016) 353, 372–80
- James, C.L.R. 52
 James, David 16, 43, 60
 James, Selma 8, 54, 226
 Jay, Dru Oja 323, 328, 329, 335, 385

- Jensen, Derrick 357, 379–82, 384, 388–91
Join the Resistance (2003) 363–68
Jornada XXII 309, 311, 312, 316
Jourdan, Brandon 19, 227, 263 338–40,
 342–45, 349
Juhasz, Alexandra 3, 121, 126, 127, 152,
 157, 168, 170, 171
Juris, Jeffrey 136, 399, 404
- Kidd, Dorothy 215
King, Martin Luther, Jr. 305, 390
Klein, Naomi 21, 178, 265, 388
Kovic, Ron 371
Kramer, Larry 143
Kramer, Marian 42, 54, 58
Kramer, Robert 44, 45, 60, 61
- labor
 gendered division of labor 60, 61, 64–66,
 71, 96, 98, 101, 107–8, 120, 124, 176,
 177, 190, 199, 200, 203–4, 225, 226,
 243, 253, 260, 328, 329, 336, 338, 370,
 394, 395, 401, 406, 407
 playbor 71
 service-based labor 8, 9, 65, 71, 72, 293,
 337
 unpaid labor 57–58, 226–27
Labor Justice Radio 296, 303, 304
Lakey, George 405
Lanesville TV 85, 95, 100, 101–7, 115, 189
Lanesville TV—Overview (1972) 103–5
Lanesville TV—Retrospective (1973) 103
Lasn, Kalle 265, 266, 268, 323
Latino groups 16, 83, 142, 291, 313–14, 407
League of Revolutionary Black Workers 17,
 23, 28, 36, 37, 39, 54, 59, 96, 272, 312
Baker, General 38, 40, 42, 43, 49, 57, 59,
 61, 62
Black Economic Development Conference 49
Black Manifesto 49
Black Nationalism 38, 42, 63
Cockrel, Ken 38, 43, 45, 49, 56–58
Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement
 (DRUM) 39
Finally Got the News (FGtN) (1970) 17,
 24, 37, 42, 44, 47–49, 50–64
Hamlin, Mike 38, 40, 42, 43, 48, 49, 59
Inner City Voice (ICV) 41
Kramer, Marian 42, 54, 58
Revolutionary Union Movement (RUM)
 17, 39
United Auto Workers 17, 23, 39
Watson, John 38, 41–45, 48–49, 51–52,
 57, 62–63
Lenin, Vladimir 14, 41
- Lewis, Tim 184–86, 197, 199–204, 208, 210,
 235, 246–48, 409
Like a Prayer (1991) 167
Lily and Cleaver Tapes (1971) 86
Living with AIDS 130, 141, 159, 167
López, Franklin 20, 263, 329, 333–35,
 337–97, 407
END:CIV (2011) 380, 382–95
Ground Noise and Static (2008) 369, 371
It's the End of the World as We Know It
 (2006–2016) 353, 372–80
Join the Resistance (2003) 363–68
Steal Something from Work Day (2010)
 361–63
subMedia 353, 372
Lord of the Universe (1973) 117, 118
Lotta Continua 34, 40
- Mao Zedong 38, 41, 51
Marcuse, Herbert 47, 245
Marker, Chris 48, 57
Be Seeing You (1968) 57
Martinez, Dave 339, 340, 342, 345
Marx, Karl 13, 34, 35, 52
Grundrisse 264
Kapital 360
Marxist-Leninist organizing 35, 39, 40, 67
May '68 23, 34, 35, 40
May Day Realtime (1971) 90–94, 115
media activism 3, 8, 11, 16, 20, 23, 24, 37,
 66, 73, 109, 120, 121, 123, 124, 176, 177,
 181, 185–211, 216, 260, 263, 265, 288,
 291, 293, 323, 346, 350, 397, 404, 406,
 410
Media Committee 132, 136–39, 153
media literacy 189, 312, 318
Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) 12, 19,
 279, 280, 291–96, 299, 301–8, 351, 407,
 408
Labor Justice Radio 296, 303, 304
New York Taxi Worker Alliance
 (NYTWA) 295
Taxi Workers: A New Era (2008)
 295–300
Miami Model, The (2004) 227–30
Mobile Broadcast News 11, 20
Mobile Voices (VozMob) 1, 16, 19, 291,
 308–16, 317, 325, 345, 351, 407, 409
Garces, Amanda 308–12
Institute of Popular Education of South-
 ern California (IDEPSCA) 308
Ismael's Building (2010) 314–15
Jornada XXII 309, 311, 312, 316
Officer Write 'Em Up (2010) 313, 334
Moore, Michael 11

- Negri, Antonio 4, 6, 10, 52, 264
 neoliberalism 7–11, 13, 21–23, 71, 102, 125, 177, 179, 214, 215, 226, 227, 265, 269, 270, 285, 289, 290, 292, 306, 337, 338, 345, 354
 neorealism 24, 25
New Brunswick Media Co-op 325
New Economy 8, 214–15, 338
New Left 6, 17, 23, 24, 27, 38, 41, 43–49, 61, 66–68, 83, 94, 98, 106, 122, 224, 247, 268
New Queer Cinema 172
Newsreal 253–60
Newsreel 12, 17, 24, 28, 37, 38, 42–48, 50, 59, 62, 64–66, 255, 272, 280, 312, 329, 341, 405, 407
Columbia Revolt (1968) 44, 46, 47, 55, 341
Detroit Newsreel 37, 47, 48, 59, 61, 62
Ice (1969) 60
 Kramer, Robert 44, 45, 60, 61
New York Newsreel 17, 24, 42–48, 59–61, 65
 Newton, Huey 49
News World Order 165–66
New York Film and Photo League 12, 92, 280
New York Newsreel 17, 24, 42–48, 59–61, 65
New York State Council on the Arts 73, 122, 158, 168
New York Taxi Worker Alliance (NYTWA) 295
Next 5 Minutes Conference 271
 Noblitt, Cindy 187, 210
Not an Alternative 19, 263, 271–81, 283, 287, 331, 351, 400, 407
 Economopoulos, Beka 268–71, 273–76, 278, 279
Homeless Tent City (2009) 269, 271–80
Occupied Berkeley (2009) 339–45
 Jourdan, Brandon 19, 227, 263 338–40, 342–45, 349
 Martinez, Dave 339, 340, 342, 345
Occupy Wall Street (OWS) 2, 285, 306, 397, 399, 404
Occupy the Hood (2011) 402–3
Where Do We Go from Here (2011) 401–2
Officer Write 'Em Up (2010) 313, 334
Olympics Resistance Network 326, 327, 330, 331
Anti-Olympics Speakers Corner (2010) 330–32
Opening Shenanigans (2010) 332
Operation Backfire 261
Operation Dissidence 163
Outta Your Backpack Media 16, 19, 291, 316–18, 351
 Benally, Klee 316–18, 357
Child of Water (2008) 319, 321
Crisis on Black Mesa 317
Inner Voices (2006) 320–21
SB 1070: Repeal or No Deal! (2010) 321–23
Skary Skool (2009) 319–20
 Paik, Nam June 12
 Paley, Dawn 325–29
Paper Tiger Television (PTT) 16, 18, 120, 122, 127, 189, 216, 217, 408
Bring the Troops Home 162–63
Communications Update 127
Gulf Crisis TV Project 18, 123, 159, 160–67, 218, 408
 Halleck, DeeDee 127, 128, 130, 160, 216, 255
Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times (1981) 128
News World Order 165–66
Operation Dissidence 163
People's Video Theatre 74, 80, 81, 84, 122, 193
Pepper Spray Productions 216, 369
 Perlstein, Jeff 179, 215, 216
Pickaxe (2001) 199–209, 352, 109
Picture the Homeless (PTH) 269, 270, 272–83
 police harassment/repression 16, 24, 65, 144, 177, 179, 197, 221, 230, 253–61, 275, 279, 291, 308, 313, 335, 370, 410
 Polletta, Francesca 390
Popular Front, The 124
Prime Time Survey, The 118
Principles of Unity 222
Process Video Revolution (1971) 87, 115
Profane Existence 172, 173, 242, 369
Prometheus Radio Project 347
 property destruction 83, 175, 210, 211, 225, 235–43, 247, 252, 262, 341, 375, 405
 public access (television) 109–12, 120, 126, 130, 141, 144, 157, 158, 164–67, 186–87, 195, 196–98, 247, 305, 408
 punk 172–74, 196, 204, 274, 316–17, 320, 350, 357–58, 369, 374, 395, 407
 Andersen, Mark 174, 357
Profane Existence 172, 173, 242, 369
Punk Planet 173
Question of Equality, The (1995) 168
 race/racism 16, 23, 24, 37–39, 46, 54–55, 60–63, 112, 152, 223–25, 276, 375, 400

- white privilege 52–53, 221, 276, 279
Radical Software 75, 77, 78, 96, 108, 110, 111
 Raindance 74, 77, 96
 Reagan, Ronald 120, 125, 377
 Ream, Tim 184–87, 192–96, 199–202, 209, 235–43, 246, 252, 281, 409
 Reclaim the Streets 267, 268
Recipes for Disaster 356, 387
 Red Scare 172
 Regan, Lauren 184, 198, 248, 252
 Renov, Michael 43
 Republican National Convention (1972) 114, 115
 Republican National Convention (2000) 217
 Republican National Convention (2008) 260, 369
 Republican National Convention (2012) 1, 16, 173, 268
 Revolutionary Union Movement (RUM) 17, 39
 Riggs, Marlon 154
Tongues Untied (1989) 126, 154
 riot porn 92, 116, 237, 247, 281, 342, 344, 370, 379, 395
RIP WTO N30 (1999) 235, 236
 Rocha, Glauber 319
 Ross, Andrew 71, 214, 337, 339
 Rostrum, Flux 1, 19–20, 345–46, 369
Mobile Broadcast News 11, 20
 Roszak, Theodore 68–69
 Rubin, Jerry 87, 113–14
 Sartre, Jean-Paul 355–56, 387
 satellite broadcasting 18, 20, 112, 123, 158, 216, 408
SB 1070: Repeal or No Deal! (2010) 321–23
 Schiller, Herbert 9, 128
 Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 3, 182, 392
 September 11 attacks 1, 253–61, 262, 353, 379
 sexism 8, 9, 59–61, 65, 95–97, 99, 152, 202–3, 247–52, 266, 329
 male chauvinism 59, 61
 Shadowwalker, Randy 184, 187, 210, 246–47
 Shamberg, Michael 94, 96, 113, 115–19
Showdown in Seattle (1999) 160, 165, 215, 216–27, 236
 Signorile, Michelangelo, 136, 137, 138
 Situationists 266, 305
Skary Skool (2009) 319–20
 Slotkin, Richard 205
 SmartMeme 19, 263, 266–68, 280–91, 343, 351, 387
Copenhagen Moment, The (2009) 285–87
Indigenous Environmental Network at the US Embassy (2009) 286–87
 Smith, Ralph Lee 111
Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism 354–55, 358, 395, 360, 366
 Social Forum
 U.S. Social Forum 16
 World Social Forum 16, 260
 Solanas, Fernando 25, 27–28, 43–44
 Sony Porta-Pak 15, 73
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) 390
Steal Something from Work Day (2010) 361–63
 Stoney, George 110
 Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty 262
Stop the Church (1991) 126, 138, 148–54, 165
 strikes 32, 34, 36, 39, 42, 46, 186, 210, 239, 249, 255, 295, 296, 298, 332, 339, 389, 407
 student strikes 46, 339
 wildcat strikes 34, 39
 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) 6
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) 6
 Subcomandante Marcos 179, 227, 390
Subject to Change (1969) 84, 85, 115
 subMedia 353, 372
 Sugrue, Thomas J. 6
 Take Back the Land 228, 232, 270, 274
Target City Hall (1989) 134–36, 144–48, 166, 168
Taxi Workers: A New Era (2008) 295–300
 Telecom Act of 1996 125
Television Delivers People (1973) 258
 Television Lab 74, 117, 118, 120
 Testing the Limits (TTL) *See* AIDS Activism
 Third Cinema 16, 17, 23–28, 37, 38, 43–45, 48, 65, 99, 103, 109, 254, 319, 396, 405, 407
 García Espinosa, Julio 24, 25, 27, 28, 44, 99, 103
 Getino, Octavio 25, 27, 28, 43, 44
 Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás 24, 25
 Guzmán, Patricio 17, 26, 28, 30, 33, 48, 255
 Battle of Chile, The (1975) 17, 23, 26, 28–33, 64, 65, 89, 255
 Hour of the Furnaces (1968) 43
 Rocha, Glauber 319
 Solanas, Fernando 25, 27–28, 43–44
This Is What Democracy Looks Like (2000) 221, 255

- Tongues Untied* (1989) 126, 154
 Top Value Television (TVTV) *See* video guerrillas
Towards a Liberatory Technology 75
Trashing and Gassing (1972) 115–17
 Tronti, Mario 10, 264
TVTV Looks at the Academy Awards (1976) 118
- United Auto Workers 17, 23, 39
 unionization 12, 295, 301
 unions 7, 11–13, 17, 23, 24, 28, 32, 36–39, 52–54, 86–87, 158, 159, 160, 225, 235, 271, 293, 295, 298–302, 315, 348
- Video Access Center (VAC) 110
 video guerrillas
 Global Village 69, 74, 77, 79, 109
 Guerrilla Television 113–19
 People's Video Theatre 74, 80, 81, 84, 122, 193
 Raindance 74, 77, 96
 Top Value Television (TVTV) 17, 72, 112, 409
 Four More Years (1972) 113–17
 Lord of the Universe (1973) 117, 118
 Prime Time Survey, The 118
 Shamborg, Michael 94, 96, 113, 115–19
 TVTV Looks at the Academy Awards (1976) 118
 World's Largest TV Studio (1972) 113–16, 119
 Videofree/Media Bus 17, 69, 70, 72–74, 77, 80, 83–113, 115, 119, 122, 162, 189, 193, 360, 407
 Cain, Nancy 84, 85, 89, 95–101, 103, 104, 111, 119
 feminism 94–102
 Harriet (1973) 99–101
 Interviews in the Streets (1976) 89–90
 Trashing and Gassing (1972) 115–17
 Chicago Travelogue: Hoffman, Rubin, and the Yippies (1969) 87–88, 114
 Cort, David 84, 85, 91–95, 98, 119
 Lanesville TV 85, 95, 100, 101–7, 115, 189
 Lanesville TV—Overview (1972) 103–5
 Lanesville TV—Retrospective (1973) 103
 Lily and Cleaver Tapes (1971) 86
 May Day Realtime (1971) 90–94, 115
 Process Video Revolution (1971) 87, 115
 Subject to Change (1969) 84, 85, 115
 Vontobel, Carol 85–86, 91–99, 104–5, 115, 119
 Women's Lib Discussion (1970) 98–99
- Women's Lib Rally* (1970) 97–98
 videotape 15, 18, 79, 81, 83, 84, 88, 111, 112, 132, 174, 179, 216
 coalition-building 121, 140, 144, 168, 301–8, 408
 countersurveillance 133, 135
 mass-distribution networks 201, 209, 285, 290, 352, 408, 410
 surveillance 96, 166, 197, 233, 262, 333, 360, 370
 Viénet, René 34
 Vietnam 7, 37, 38, 45, 68, 90, 106, 117, 164, 371
 Virno, Paolo 68, 264
Voices from the Front (1992) 154–57, 165, 409
 Vontobel, Carol 85–86, 91–99, 104–5, 115, 119
- Wallerstein, Immanuel 11
 Warner Creek 183–88, 190–91, 198–203, 205–7, 212, 243–44, 252, 281
 War Resister's League 131
 Watney, Simon 124, 140
 Watson, John 38, 41–45, 48–49, 51–52, 57, 62–63
 Weatherman 83
We Care (1990) 109
Where Do We Go from Here (2011) 401–2
 Whispered Media 216, 236
 Williams, Raymond 209, 272
 Women's AIDS Video Enterprise (WAVE) 168, 170, 171
 Women's Health Action Mobilization (WHAM!) 138
Women's Lib Discussion (1970) 98–99
Women's Lib Rally (1970) 97–98
 women's liberation 18, 61, 74, 81
 feminist collectives 61
 feminist separatism 61, 98
 Women's Video Festival 80, 101
World's Largest TV Studio (1972) 113–16, 119
 WTO protests, Seattle 18–19, 123, 175–77, 214, 240, 405
- Yes Men 339
 Young Lords 59, 81–83
- Zapatistas 177–81
 Subcomandante Marcos 179, 227, 390
 Zerzan, John 199, 210–11, 242, 243–45, 249, 379, 405
 Zimmerman, Patricia 29, 91, 120, 125, 154, 218, 297, 342
 Žižek, Slavoj 87–88, 289, 365–66, 368, 388

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHRIS ROBÉ IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN FILM AND MEDIA studies at Florida Atlantic University. He has published essays on radical media in journals such as *Jump Cut*, *Rethinking Marxism*, and *Journal of Film and Video* and written a monograph titled *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and the Emergence of U.S. Radical Film Culture*. He is also a frequent contributor to the online journal *PopMatters*.

ABOUT PM PRESS

PM Press was founded at the end of 2007 by a small collection of folks with decades of publishing, media, and organizing experience. PM Press co-conspirators have published and distributed hundreds of books, pamphlets, CDs, and DVDs. Members of PM have founded enduring book fairs, spearheaded victorious tenant organizing campaigns, and worked closely with bookstores, academic conferences, and even rock bands to deliver political and challenging ideas to all walks of life. We're old enough to know what we're doing and young enough to know what's at stake.

We seek to create radical and stimulating fiction and non-fiction books, pamphlets, T-shirts, visual and audio materials to entertain, educate, and inspire you. We aim to distribute these through every available channel with every available technology—whether that means you are seeing anarchist classics at our bookfair stalls; reading our latest vegan cookbook at the café; downloading geeky fiction e-books; or digging new music and timely videos from our website.

PM Press is always on the lookout for talented and skilled volunteers, artists, activists, and writers to work with. If you have a great idea for a project or can contribute in some way, please get in touch.

FRIENDS OF PM PRESS

These are indisputably momentous times—the financial system is melting down globally and the Empire is stumbling. Now more than ever there is a vital need for radical ideas.

In the years since its founding—and on a mere shoestring—PM Press has risen to the formidable challenge of publishing and distributing knowledge and entertainment for the struggles ahead. With hundreds of releases to date, we have published an impressive and stimulating array of literature, art, music, politics, and culture. Using every available medium, we've succeeded in connecting those hungry for ideas and information to those putting them into practice.

Friends of PM allows you to directly help impact, amplify, and revitalize the discourse and actions of radical writers, filmmakers, and artists. It provides us with a stable foundation from which we can build upon our early successes and provides a much-needed subsidy for the materials that can't necessarily pay their own way. You can help make that happen—and receive every new title automatically delivered to your door once a month—by joining as a Friend of PM Press. And, we'll throw in a free T-shirt when you sign up.

Here are your options (all include a 50% discount on all webstore purchases):

- **\$30 a month** Get all books and pamphlets
- **\$40 a month** Get all PM Press releases (including CDs and DVDs)
- **\$100 a month** Everything plus PM merchandise and free downloads

For those who can't afford \$30 or more a month, we have **Sustainer Rates** at \$15, \$10 and \$5. Sustainers get a free PM Press T-shirt and a 50% discount on all purchases from our website.

Your Visa or Mastercard will be billed once a month, until you tell us to stop. Or until our efforts succeed in bringing the revolution around. Or the financial meltdown of Capital makes plastic redundant. Whichever comes first.