

The Anarchists Are Here. So I Blended In.

by Jeremy Lee Quinn

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I stand in front of the White House.

I just marched for hours in black bloc attire with a group of young radicals who call themselves the *FTP Coalition* (an acronym for an unflattering imperative directed at The Police).

We chanted. We entered a tunnel and obstructed traffic. The group leaders cussed out diners and others shoved umbrellas in the faces of onlookers if they recorded cell phone video. Some diners raised the solidarity fist. Others were appalled.

It is 11pm exactly now and the exterior lights on the White House go out, cutting down the illumination here in Lafayette Square.

An FTP march. Heard of it? It's a dead giveaway on a digital flyer circulating via Twitter, Reddit or Instagram that the march adheres to Insurrectionary Anarchism both in tone & tactics. The promotional flyers do not say BLM, but rather identify by the following:

Direct Action march

Abolish the police

No cops. No prisons. Total abolition

Mask up, Wear all black

Autonomous Action

Be water, Spread fire

No peace police

Diversity of tactics

The last two are key. The rule is not to police the protest, but rather allow for all autonomous actions even if "deemed to be illegal by the state." Our megaphone leader makes this clear and also has us repeat aloud, "We are not advocating for Anarchy. We are advocating for Anarchism."

Finally, somebody said it out loud and I have it on record at a march. Now I can take this ninja costume off and go home. Yes, the driving ideological force since the AutoZone windows in Minneapolis were busted out by a black bloc'd, umbrella wielding man in a respirator mask, has been Insurrectionary Anarchism. Those I have spoken to in the bloc are fluidly Anarchist, Antifascist, some Communist, with all sorts of nuanced variation. And yes, some call themselves Antifa.

The current Pan-Anarchistic goal: continuous disruption & revolution.

Why? The Insurrectionary Anarchist believes that without sustained, uncompromising Direct Action, there will only ever be marginal concessions granted by the status quo to the oppressed. That's the nutshell explanation. One Vancouver based anarchist group called for Occupy efforts to coalesce in Washington DC: Specifically here in Lafayette Square in front of the White House.

I glance about. There are 4 revolutionary war statues in this park, though it's Andrew Jackson that gets all the attention. The President loves him. Many don't.



President Andrew Jackson is universally reviled by protest movements on the Left for evicting the Cherokee from their native lands resulting in the death of ¼ of the tribe.

Let me back up. I entered this 3 ½ month investigation & infiltration looking for white supremacists, or whoever the white folks were agitating under the cover of protests since May 26th. Instead, as I marched city to city, I found dedicated followers of a self described “revolution.” Labeling them solely Antifa or Anarchist or BLM has been insufficient or inaccurate for different reasons. They do answer to “Radicals” or “Leftists.” However, some joining the mayhem al improviso aren’t necessarily versed in the trending Pacific Northwest style of Anarchism. Yet they embrace the tactics. Everybody is getting in on the tactics these days.

It was the tactics that went viral at the end of May. A new study by [Rutgers](#) backs up what I saw on the streets: Anarcho tactics spread via online memes and coded language from coast to coast. Immediately following May 26th, a “network enabled mob” mobilized through slogans, symbols and hashtags which made their way efficiently from the webosphere onto the streets.

As I traveled from Santa Monica, to Portland to Denver to Rochester, the trappings from the Anarchist playbook became more prevalent from crowd to crowd. By the time I arrived in Rochester, everybody had umbrellas, respirator masks and helmets. Teens skateboarded by me in black bloc garb, covered head to toe. It looked like Portland.

Rochester also had a vocal community of elders determined to keep the protest multi-generational. In my opinion, they succeeded, whereas the elders in Portland were overwhelmed. Youth there are indoctrinated with Anarchist site CrimethInc’s talking point from Ferguson 2014 that elders acting as “peace police” are sometimes “more dangerous than the cops.”

Inside and Out

When deep-rooted social conflicts are pushed to the surface, people rush to conceal them again. Hide away the problems. Keep trouble from spreading. Sew the ruptures in the social fabric back together. Whatever their motivations, proponents of social peace use both physical and rhetorical means to achieve this; sometimes, they’re more dangerous than the cops.

From CrimethInc: [The Ferguson Rebellion of 2014](#)



Rochester NY protests in September

J.Quinn

Portland was key. Anybody who had been to Portland over the summer saw first hand that BLM dimmed the stage lights & ended their rallies by 10pm, and then mostly white kids in black bloc took over well past midnight in the unabashed role of the aggressor.

By August the Pacific Northwest Youth Liberation Front and their coalition abandoned all pretense and began holding marches independent of BLM, attacking police precincts and perceived adversaries alike.

So, why wasn't anybody outside of Oregon & Washington state writing about it?



A flag burning underway July 31st, two nights after a deal was struck by Oregon state for Federal officers to withdraw.

Perhaps the Anarchist's greatest gift came from the President of the United States tweeting in early June that a 75 year old Buffalo, NY affordable housing activist, shoved to the then bloodied concrete by Police, "could be an ANTIFA Provocateur." When POTUS suddenly switched to using the term "Anarchists," many in the media & general public naturally did not believe him. Antifa is also a simpler wholesale slang term.

Also, as the tactics permeate online independent of the ideology itself, it's not easy to decipher. Anybody can take a shirt off and drape it over one's face and stir things up. Conversely some Insurrectionary Anarchists may not dress in black bloc at all or may have a wide array of self identifications. The unifying Anarchist cause, however, is to abolish all police and all prisons. Total abolition of the state.

I can't speak to those who are just getting in on the action because it's trending, but the die hard adherents do not even vote.

Case in point, British comic book Auteur Alan Moore who wrote the Guy Fawkes mask laden *V for Vendetta*, and other Anarchist themed works such as *Watchmen*. Moore wrote on twitter last year that he only voted once in the last 40 years and that he intended to do so once again.

Anarchist youth are not Biden voters. Many aren't even 18.

So why did the website for Vancouver Anarchist collective [AdBusters](#), organizers of Occupy Wall Street in 2011, start resembling a Democratic party super-pac in September stoking fears of a stolen election? Their digital flyers advocated for an "*improvisational jazz*" style of "tone changing" protest specifically in DC beginning September 17th. Would it be reasonable to expect such sustained peaceful protest without issuing a condemnation of Diversity of Tactics ?

My liberal friends are starting to panic. "Don't they realize they're playing right into the hands of the law and order candidate and ongoing criticism of weak Democrat mayors?"

Well yes. Again, I re-emphasize: Anarchists do not vote. They want revolution.

It's hard to mount a revolution against Joe Biden.

Finding the canard is the challenge with Anarchists. I covered them in 2011 in NYC but also previously in California in 2007 during the UC Berkeley tree sit action. Propaganda sparring, manipulating the media and exhausting their adversaries at their own game is all part of the fun.

That keeps the public always guessing. Will an older generation of Canadian Anarchists really ever be able to summon a crowd here in DC for a populist action? Or will young Anarchists rather just continue with their weekly scheduled harassment of outdoor diners ?

One point perhaps least understood is that the Anarcho revolutionaries don't know day to day themselves what they're going to get.

The first time I donned Anarchist attire & blocked up was at a California rally and the organizer, a woman also dressed up like a ninja, approached me, "They declared an unlawful assembly. They may try to bull rush us from up that side street. Keep an eye out."

I riffed, and nodded “ok.” That’s protest jazz. You don’t know who is gonna show up or who is going to be down to do what. That’s what we’ve seen: Autonomous protest jazz to the tune of broken windows and crackling fire, all tools openly advocated by CrimethInc online as they have been at it since Ferguson 2014 and the 1999 Seattle WTO before that.

In DC, it didn’t go down as Adbusters advertised. One man sleeps in the park in a makeshift tent constructed out of tarps. The Occupy anniversary date of September the 17th that was to mark the start of the 50 day occupation has come and gone.



A lone activist tent withstands the previous day’s rain. Barricades impede access.

It’s midnight & I leave the park. Not wanting to be cited for a failure of imagination, I don’t count the Anarchist youth out just yet between now and the [5th of November](#).

I even consider their side. Yet, if police and prisons are to be reconceived, the true believers aren’t looking to bring it about democratically but through continued manipulation and agitation.

There is an antidote. Perhaps it is the Anarcho pacifism the uncool, older generation is touting and a connection to History beyond just Spain in the 1930s (Insurrectos love to talk about Spain). If so, then it's time for elders to raise their voices even louder, like those in Rochester who helped quell the destruction there. Across the country intellectuals, journalists, artists, political leadership and communities of all colors can call for universal, practical police & prison reform while denouncing the violent social disruption exacerbating Antifacist vs Patriot Gang-ism: That which tears the fabric of our society.

The first step is to stop pretending Insurrectionary Anarchists don't exist.

They have been in plain sight, networked under "Torch Antifa" long before May 26th. If they continue with impunity between now and November, they may succeed even further at tearing down, rather than building up, a society that might otherwise gravitate towards progress.

Jeremy L. Quinn is editor of PublicReport.org investigating Insurrectionary Anarchism in America "Under the Cover of Protests." He is also the host of [Uncovered Anarcast](#) podcast.

- *All photos above were my own*



Adbusters had engagement issues. The initial effort above failed to catch fire & was modified.

