

OLYMPIA MAY DAY



Two Reportbacks
From 2017

Olympia, WA: May Day Reportback

A group of about 100 people, mostly in black bloc, gathered at 4th and Capitol in downtown Olympia at 6pm last night in response to a call to march “against the Port and its world” in celebration of May Day. There was an incredible abundance of supplies—shields, reinforced banners, flags of various sizes, and regular banners. The slogans included “Delete the Port – Delete the State,” “Against the Port and its World,” “Become Ungovernable,” and “We Are The Birds of the Coming Storm.” Some people came carrying a banner reading “sn(A)cks” and handed out hot dogs to the crowd. A sound system arrived, bringing a festive mood.

After hanging out for 45 minutes with a handful of bike cops watching from across the intersection, the group took the street and marched up 4th chanting anti-prison, anti-racist and anti-nationalist slogans. The march came to a halt at 4th and Jefferson, and folks began building a blockade on the train tracks and shooting off fireworks. The legacy of last November’s week-long train blockade emboldened many to attempt to reestablish an autonomous zone. Various pallets were pulled out of nearby alleys and dumped on the tracks, but the large police presence made it difficult to build a substantial barricade. As we tried to acquire more material, a group of 50 or so police assembled in riot gear started marching in formation first west on 5th then east towards us on 4th. Behind the line of shields and reinforced banners, people in the bloc hurled rocks at the police. The mainstream media has reported that nine cops were injured.

Several apparent alt-right/fascists followed the march from the beginning, one saying he was there to “oppose communism.” There was also a crew who appeared to be white vigilante patriots, some of whom were wearing masks (including an American flag mask), who started following the march near the Artesian Well. Some have speculated that this group was associated with the downtown houseless community while others have speculated that they are associated with the fascists in attendance. The authors of this report-back can’t say for sure but both could certainly be true. The patriot crew immediately started antagonizing the march, taking issue with the slogans on the banners and the chants. After the patriots started shouting racist epithets, someone emerged from the bloc and

deployed bear mace in their general direction. The mace unfortunately hit bystanders, including a dog. The media has tried to paint this as the march intentionally attacking bystanders but it should be made clear that this is false nonsense perpetuated by capitalist media. That said, the authors of this communique would like to encourage people to be careful using pepper spray or bear mace in crowds—it very often hits unintended targets due to wind or other factors.

After this altercation the police started firing pepper balls, and the demo moved up Jefferson to State. Reinforced banners and shields were used to defend the march and allowed people to regroup multiple times. The police advanced with waves of pepper balls and concussion grenades pushing the



march north into a gravel lot by the propane store. In this lot the crew of vigilante patriots seen earlier reappeared with rocks in hand and began throwing rocks at marchers and generally looking for a fight. With riot police behind them and backing them up, the vigilantes and the march exchanged volleys of rocks. The march eventually went east on Olympia Ave, pulling a fence into the street to slow the advance of the police and vigilantes. The march then cut through the transit center and made its way to 4th and Capitol where it had started. At 4th and Capitol, US Bank had its windows smashed. The march then continued up Capitol with reinforced banners and shields catching less-lethal rounds from behind. The Olympia Federal Savings Bank, a bank known locally for evicting homeless people from their alley, then had several of its windows smashed. A block further up Capitol, more windows were smashed at the Starbucks on Legion.

At this point the march began to scatter, with many running through Sylvester Park and south into the surrounding neighborhood. A window at Key Bank was smashed. The march split as people tried to disperse. At this point individual accounts diverge considerably as people made their separate ways. Some were harassed by the patriots and 9 comrades were arrested, many of whom are trans people and people of color. Some were arrested in a group outside the library. Though they were forced to lie

face down on the pavement, one arrestee, head held high, defiantly sang antifascist anthem “Bella Ciao.” At the time of this writing all are being charged with felonies and arraignment is in a few hours. Please consider donating to this fundraiser. to help out the folks arrested.

Noise Demo

After hearing that comrades had been brutally attacked, with 9 kidnapped by the racist and transphobic pigs, a group of about 40 people gathered outside of the creepily-named Thurston County Accountability and Restitution Center at about 11PM on May 1. Many of those present did not participate in the march, but nonetheless showed up to support. We had several drums, a megaphone, a saxophone, and a whole bunch of pots and pans. People were able to make a tremendous amount of noise to let our comrades know that they are not alone. We did one lap around the facility and then went around to the front of it, holding a banner with faces of the 1886 May Day martyrs on it. At that point an absurd number of police cars arrived, roughly 15, mostly sheriffs. They started suiting up in riot gear and the march dispersed.

Noise demos are an anarchist tradition, a way to express solidarity with prisoners. Though they can be risky in that they present a way for police to identify potential participants, it is important that we show up for arrested comrades, and encourage others to do the same. The action doesn't end when we head home after the demo. After the party there's the after-party: jail and court support, aftercare and emotional support, decompression spaces, fundraising, writing report-backs and analysis, and continuing to spread the spirit of revolt that brought us into the streets together.

Analysis

Though it is typical for hecklers to troll May Day and other anarchist street demonstrations, this year showed a clear escalation in antagonism from right-wing and fascist forces. Out on the street yesterday, it felt like civil war. Fighting against two different opponents—the police and right-wing vigilantes—was very difficult. Could de-escalation have been used to keep the patriot types at bay while we defended ourselves from the police? How do we differentiate organized alt-right/fascist militants from random aggressive jerks? How do we better ensure that we don't hurt or enrage bystanders?

The march perhaps began too early in the day—it might have been better scheduled for two hours later, at 8PM. Darkness would have provided better cover and made it easier for folks to disperse and de-bloc.

Reinforced banners and shields were invaluable but when matched by huge numbers of police, we were at a drastic disadvantage. In the future, folks should continue to be intentional in their preparation: next time, let's have even more shields, light body armor, and helmets. This cannot be over-stated. We held our ground as best we could but ultimately failed to construct a barricade on the train tracks.

Shields provide cover and protection, poles and projectiles can be used both offensively and defensively, and spray-painted slogans leave messages in our wake. What kind of tools do you feel most comfortable using? Have you practiced? How can affinity groups organize action roles to maximize safety and effectiveness? What formations work best in a given situation? Have you studied the terrain—do you know the alleys, hiding spots, escape routes? Let us take strategy and tactics more seriously and have ongoing conversations about how we can maximize our strengths (anonymity, fluidity, solidarity) and minimize our weaknesses (vulnerability, disorganization, small numbers).

In the course of an hour we experienced intense joy, desperate fear, and profound sadness. We should be proud of ourselves for the courage we displayed in the face of impossible odds. We defended ourselves against the cops and the vigilantes and the pepper balls and the flash bangs. We sent out signals of disorder and showed that the facades of capital—of the Port's world—are not invulnerable to our rage. We honored the memory of the Haymarket Martyrs and the rebellious spirit of May Day. Let this be a lesson in the power of solidarity and passion. With greater numbers and better organization, anything is possible.

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Why Did Those Anarchists Destroy Downtown Olympia?

As the smoke from May Day clears we hear many people asking, why? Why did what happen, happen? We also hear many people throwing around baseless accusations and assumptions; it was a bunch of angry white men, there was no message, they weren't really anarchists, it was just mindless vandalism. We are writing this to address some of this and to counter the narrative of the police, business owners, and main stream media. We cannot speak for everyone there, but as some participants we can speak for ourselves.

We also want to stress that critiques of the black bloc and what we as anarchists do is good and valuable, the problem is when these critiques are A) based solely on the narrative of the state, the police, business owners, and the like. They're going to lie because as anarchists we are fundamentally opposed to the existence of hierarchies like the state, the violent enforcers of the social order known as the police, and bosses, landlords, business owners, and all manner of capitalists – big or small, local, national, international, or intergalactic. B) when they are based on baseless accusations such as that it was all mindless vandalism or a bunch of angry white men, points which we will address later. And C) not done in good faith, rather coming from a place of solidarity and wanting us to sharpen our theory and be more strategic and imaginative in our actions and communications, instead coming from a place of misunderstanding, purposeful ignorance, and tearing us down in order to build up yourself.



With that out of the way, let's begin with the long standing myth of the white anarchist. The crowd that assembled on may day was far from all white or male. People of all different ages, races, and genders – and some who cast aside gender altogether – assembled to celebrate May Day in the

streets. It's very easy to levy the charge of being all men and all white on a group using a tactic meant for anonymity against police surveillance and repression, and perhaps that speaks to it working if a group like the one that assembled can be cast as all male and all white. But on another level, this charge speaks to a failing in social justice discourses that says people who are white or who are male are not ever to go on the attack, never to wield violence against the system that wields an unimaginable amount of violence against us every day – from the violence of working our lives away for scraps to try and pay for the bare necessities of life to the police that enforce this system to the courts and prison system; the violence enforced by capitalism, racism, hetero-patriarchy, settler-colonialism – that people

who are white or male are to never levy violence against these systems and their defenders, even next to people of color who do, is mind-boggling and a recipe for constant failure.



The next point we'd like to address is that saying that there was no message, that it was just mindless vandalism. To address this in it's full we need a short history lesson about the origins of May Day. May Day has long been a special day for Anarchists for over 150 years starting with the wrongful execution of 8 Anarchists accused of throwing the bomb that kicked

off the Haymarket riot in Chicago in 1886 in which 4 people and 7 cops were killed, and many more wounded. From there on out it became a day to commemorate our fallen and to strike against the police, the state, and capitalism.

It has historically been celebrated by anarchists, communists, and socialists around the world since then with strikes, walk-outs, occupations, and riots. (For a more complete history of May Day). The main message of the day was that we are not protesters not activists, we are revolutionary anarchists against hierarchies, capitalism, the state, the police, white supremacy, settler-colonialism, antisemitism, hetero-patriarchy, uncompromisingly against all forms of oppression and hierarchy. We are not asking for reform, we are not asking anything from our enemies because the only things we

want – total freedom for all peoples – they cannot grant. We carry out our critiques in action; we pelt the police with rocks to declare they are not welcome or wanted, we smash the windows of banks and businesses to declare we want a world without bosses or capitalism.

And, on that note of small businesses, we wish to offer the words from the zine *Smashed Up: Young Service Workers on the Sanctity of Small Businesses* (which you can read here)



“The defense of small businesses in the Bay Area relies on a misplaced liberal morality which contrasts “good” local businesses and “evil” corporate ones. This dichotomy has become dogma for many people, who amount their consumer choices to brave political acts. Feel bad about sweat shops? Purchase your next gift at a local boutique! Recession got you down? Shovel dollars into your local economy and dad just might get his job back. But are local businesses actually better for the majority of us?

The dominant image of small businesses as Mom and Pop stores run by elderly couples who work long hours as a labor of love is not reflected in the local economy. The reality is closer to a young, wealthy owner who does not work in their own store but instead employs a small group of wage laborers.

And since small businesses don’t have the profit margins of large corporations, they often rely on sweatshop discipline and poverty wages to make ends meet. Most anyone who has worked in the industry can attest to a repressive atmosphere: workers are not allowed on breaks, are scolded for talking to co-workers and punished for showing up five minutes late. Furthermore, even service workers who make tips frequently earn below a living wage and are subjected to unpredictable work schedules that necessitate finding a second or third job. When these practices happen at large corporate chains, they become the themes of documentaries, muckraking articles in the liberal press, and bumper sticker

slogans. But when they're used by local businesses, they're written off as necessary evils.

In higher-end establishments, employers frequently justify poor treatment by trying to instill pride and artistic ambitions in their employees; workers are all but required to do extra learning, research, and labor outside of the workday to satisfy the employers' need to serve the coolest new cocktail or coffee bean. At a recent mandatory meeting for an East Bay-based organic catering company, workers were told by the CEO: "This is not a job; it's a craft. You are all artists, and you should treat your job as such. If you don't, you won't succeed in this company." What he was saying was that if you do not invest hours off the clock in becoming a more efficient and valuable worker, we won't employ you.

By romanticizing small businesses like the hip restaurants, cafes and bars currently springing up all over Oakland, we gloss over the experiences of the low wage workers who make them possible. When compared to the horrendous treatment that service workers must endure, the shattering or spray-painting of a few windows does not even the score. "

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In a city that is being rapidly gentrified, the attack against property is an action which attacks gentrification. We are rapidly being drowned in the rising rents of Olympia, homeless people, queer and trans people, people of color are being increasingly harassed by the police in an effort to 'clean up' the cities image to bring wealthy investors to create niche shops that are full of over priced bullshit that most of us cant even afford.

All the while, it is the voice of the business owners that is constantly hailed as the voice of 'the community' when in reality they are nothing more than a wealthy, land owning majority that doesn't give a shit about poor and houseless people. The city, the developers, and the business owners have



shown themselves to be completely accountable and act like there is real community involvement in the development of Olympia when in reality they just put together bullshit

surveys and 'community' meetings where we are told of predetermined choices where if we're lucky we can vote on things we had no power in choosing. If we're not happy with that, we can go to city council meetings where we can voice our displeasure that get's logged in meeting minutes and filed away never to be looked at or thought about again.

We also aimed to show through our actions that the police are not omnipotent and all powerful, that we are not powerless, that we can attack and get away with it (although it's worth noting that not every riot is an attack and not every attack is a riot). You, too, can get together with your friends, dress in black, and throw rocks at cops. Maybe try it sometime, it's fun. So yes, there was a reason, there was a message, though for sure our methods of really getting that message out needs work.

And finally the charge that we're not really anarchists is...ridiculous. We are anarchists and we throw rocks at cops just as much as we feed people and house people and put together community projects. There are some anarchists who don't or can't run around in the streets and throw rocks at cops and break windows, and that's great and we love them. We're all anarchists and you probably know some of us. We might be your cashier, your neighbor, your child, sibling, or parent. There's a lot of us and we do a lot of different things.

But we riot, and it's fun, but it's not just for fun. We put our freedom and physical safety on the line to fight for our freedom because we know reform doesn't work and we know capitalism is killing us and the world and the state is kidnapping and killing us and our loved ones and we cannot continue to let this go on. We are not asking everyone to run around in the streets with it, the riot isn't the revolution. We are also not asking for

people to agree with us, to never critique us, to uncritically support us. All we want is for you all to know why we did it and to give a counter-narrative. For Total Freedom!
For Anarchy!

-Black Autonomy Action Faction

P.S. If you want to know more about why we riot, we'd suggest you read this.

Why Riot - <http://www.ultra-com.org/project/why-riot/>

If you want to know more about Anarchists and what some of us may believe, we'd suggest these texts.

To Change Everything - <https://crimethinc.com/tce>

Life Without Law - <http://www.tangledwilderness.org/life-without-law/>

Work. Community. Politics. War - <http://prole.info/wcpw.html>

Anarchy - <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/errico-malatesta-anarchy>

SOLIDARITY with the MAYDAY₉

On May 1st, 2017, people marched in downtown Olympia to celebrate of May Day and against the Port, capitalism, the state. The march was harassed and attacked by both police and non-state vigilante patriots. **9 people, mostly People of Color and/or queer, were arrested and are now facing felony charges for their alleged participation in the march.**

The City of Olympia wants to make an example of the May Day 9 to scare others away from fighting for a world where people aren't criminalized for being houseless, where young Black people aren't punished for surviving a police shooting, and where the boot of colonization is finally lifted off the neck of Indigenous peoples.

When we support people caught up in the criminal legal system we undermine the state's ability to isolate and punish those who dream of a better world. Support means donating money for legal fees, cooking meals, doing emotional labor for those targeted, and showing up for court dates, and it also means continuing the struggle against hierarchy and domination in all their forms.



Donate online:
<http://find.us/maydayarrestees>

More updates at
itsgoingdown.org
pugetsoundanarchists.org