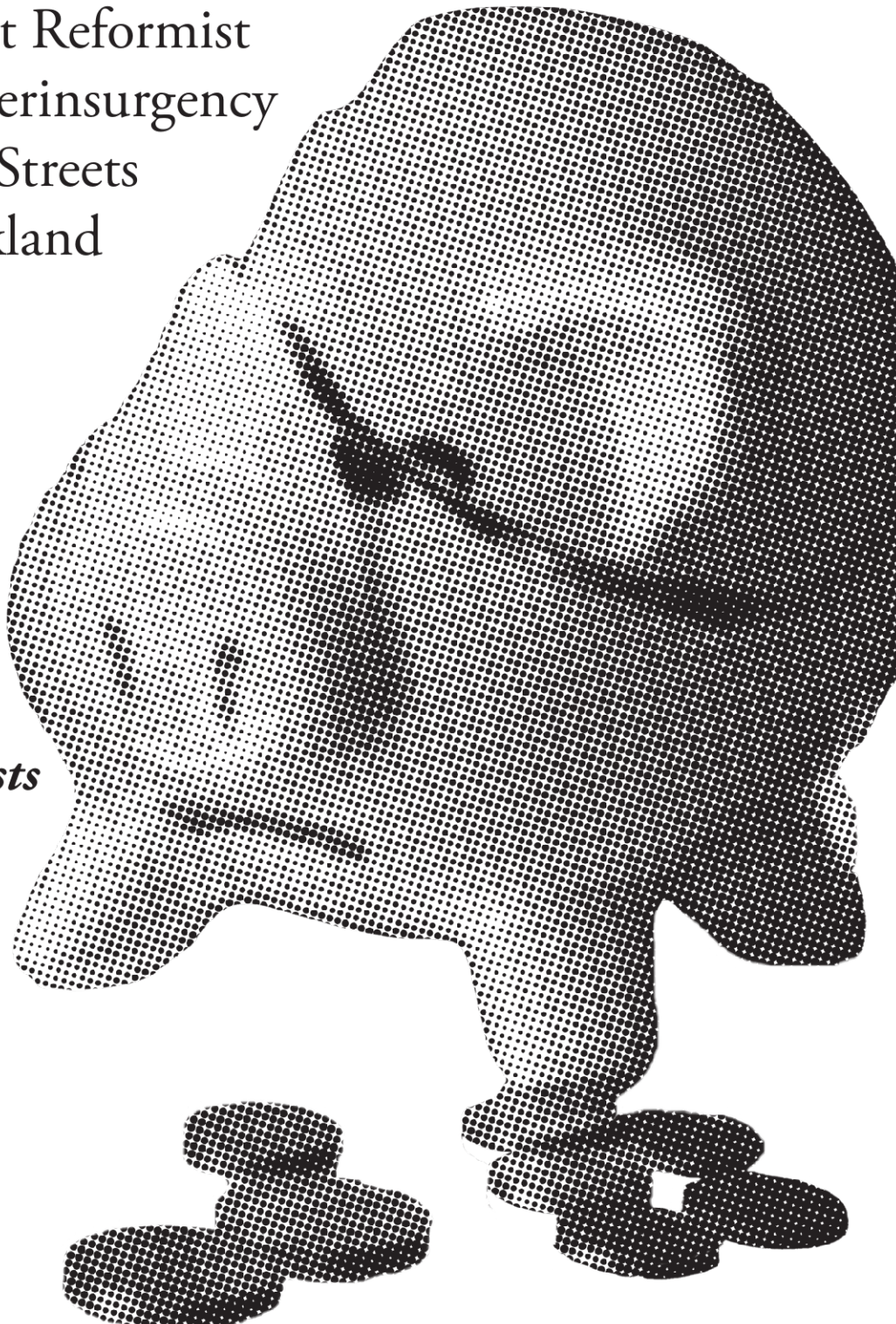


SHATTERING ABOLITION™

Against Reformist
Counterinsurgency
in the Streets
of Oakland

*by some
abolitionists*



Essay written and submitted by *some abolitionists* from Oakland, CA

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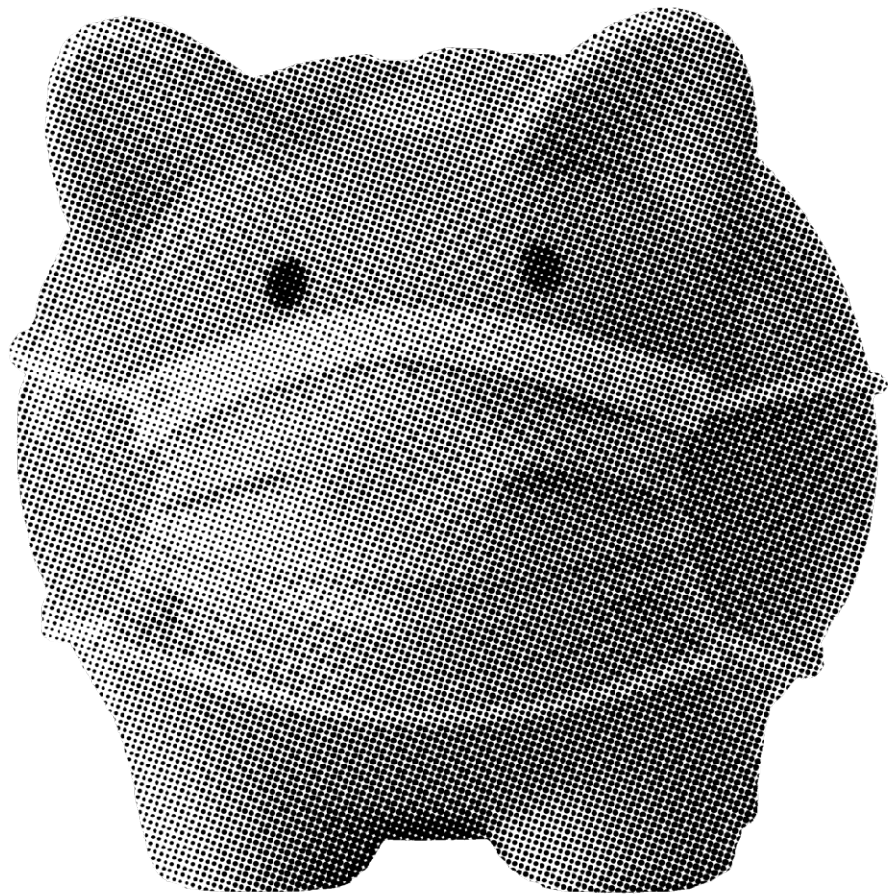


pdf available on haters.life

Shattering Abolition™:

Against Reformist Counterinsurgency
in the Streets of Oakland

by some abolitionists



Mapping the Terrain

Within the general context of The Movement™, abolition—whether through ‘Defund OPD,’ policy campaigns, transformative justice, and policing alternatives—has become inescapable within Oakland’s left-progressive-liberal continuum. “We Take Care of Us” is the slogan of the moment. A feel-good, aspirational assertion that masks a much more complex and ambivalent reality on the ground. In the current conjuncture, Abolition™ signals a number of competing, contradictory discourses of community safety, empowerment, self-determination, and abstract ‘justice,’ that leaves little room for non-reformist, autonomous, anti-capitalist, or anti-state struggles. Beyond paying lip service to the legacies of the Panthers, this is an abolition that is too often evacuated of its origins in the Black Liberation struggle, of maroonage, urban uprisings, and prison rebellions. An abolition that is unable or unwilling to engage with the practical, proto-abolitionist anti-political *self-activity* of Black and ‘brown’ proletarian youth—the “Great Sideshow Army”¹—rebellious against the conditions of their existence through organized car-caravan looting across the Bay. These undercurrents remain illegible to those ‘abolitionists’ with their eyes focused on “building power.”

At the time of this writing, the groundswell of popular momentum following the 2020 George Floyd Rebellion has largely dissipated or been channeled into ongoing policy proposals, failed Defund campaigns, electoral nonsense, a constellation of mutual aid projects of varying levels of success, and developing community-based service programs. There is valuable and important work happening, but that work exists within the general context of a reinvigorated non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) and NPIC-adjacent movement ecosystem still dependent on rich people’s money, indelibly shaped by funding from the likes of the Tides Foundation, Blue Heart, The William T. Grant Foundation, Arch Community Fund, BLM Global Network Foundation, and many others. Much has been written about the impact of foundation funding on ‘radical’ social movements, so we won’t rehearse that here.² But it has been interesting to see how a self-appointed ‘grassroots’ Black (and ‘brown’) leadership and the nebulously defined weaponized abstraction of Community™ are regularly mobilized in ways that further mystify their entrenchment in the same systems they purport to be working to abolish. This is by no means a new phenomenon with this particular milieu, which has consistently employed strategies of cooptation and demobilization such as during the 2009 Oscar Grant Rebellion,³ Occupy Oakland,⁴ and the George Floyd Rebellion.⁵ Additionally, the

¹See: The Transmetropolitan Review, “The Great Sideshow Army” <https://thetransmetropolitanreview.wordpress.com/2020/08/02/the-great-sideshow-army-an-oakland-story/>

²See: Incite!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*; Robert Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*

³See: “Unfinished Acts” blog <https://unfinishedacts.noblogs.org/>; Raider Nation Collective, “Raider Nation, Vol. 1: From the January Rebellions to Lovelle Mixon and Beyond” (2009); see esp. Bring the Ruckus, “Do the Right Thing: New Start for Abolitionism in Oakland” https://georgecicciariello.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/rnc04_13edit.pdf

⁴See: Escalating Identity, “Who is Oakland: Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety, and State Co-optation.” <https://escalatingidentity.wordpress.com/2012/04/30/who-is-oakland-anti-oppression-politics-decolonization-and-the-state/>

⁵See: APTP, “Hitting the Streets of Oakland and Wanting a World Worth Fighting For,” <https://www.>

media spectacle surrounding such ‘organizing’ and subsequent efforts to replicate this work in other geographies serves to further marginalize and invisibilize locally-rooted autonomous organizing.

In June 2021 the ostensibly ‘coalition-led’ Defund OPD Campaign—kicked off several years prior by the Anti-Police Terror Project, but reinvigorated in the wake of the 2020 rebellion—celebrated their big ‘win,’ with \$18 million from the Oakland Police Department reallocated to the police-friendly Department of Violence Prevention, who in turn dispersed the money to various community organizations to support in grassroots non-police violence prevention programming. Interestingly, once that money dropped, at the Behest of APTPs ‘leadership,’ the ‘coalition’ went on a hiatus, one that they still haven’t returned from. Whether this is due to funding, the concerted post-2020 ‘law-and-order’ reaction, capacity/morale, or the structural limits of fighting to ‘defund’ the police through policy, lobbying, and speaking at city council meetings, the celebration of this ‘win’ falls flat, even by their own metrics, as OPD’s budget continues to rise.

With a new ‘progressive’ Mayor and District Attorney in office, for many in the NPIC movement milieu the current moment signals a turning point, an opportunity for us to get the much needed reforms our communities ‘need.’ As our esteemed comrades might argue: while we recognize the limits of our elected officials, at least now we have people “on the inside” who we can “hold accountable.”

At best this position is shaped by hopeful naivete and some faith in the system’s redemption. At worst this is a strategic maneuver by politicians-in-waiting, whose proximity to state power can serve as a means for access to evermore funding, resources, and political influence. And all the while, a growing increasingly emboldened right wing ‘law-and-order’ reaction⁶ bubbles beneath the surface, ready for the right opening. The twinned manifestations of the Party of Order in a moment of compounding crisis, each with its own agenda, vying for control.

What follows is a reportback on the APTP-organized “Justice for Tyre Nichols” Emergency March and Rally held on Sunday January 19, 2023 from some homies who were in attendance, as well as scattered thoughts and analysis for ‘fellow travelers’ on tactics, strategies, and potential ways to move given our current terrain of struggle. Our critiques should not be read as disingenuous, or vindictive cheap shots, targeting particular groups for petty reasons. This is not our interest or intention; we leave that to those that play the game of politics. Rather we hope to illustrate a more general analysis of the ‘terrain of struggle’ here in the Town through engaging with specific, concrete moments that we find particularly instructive. Tl;dr: ***1) Abolitionist practice must support proletarian self-activity and foster the conditions for escalation and open revolt against the state and capital--and this happens on***

antipoliceterrorproject.org/blog-entire/emergency-communique-george-floyds-murder

⁶Referring here to the astroturfed organizing in support of OPD Chief LeRonne Armstrong (supported by the local NAACP), the backlash mobilized against the “Reimagining Public Safety” task force, the mayoral race recount debacle, the omnipresent “Crime Wave” narratives, the recent failed reactionary Seneca Scott campaign etc.--the list goes on.

multiple scales; 2) NPIC ‘movement organizations’ are structurally incapable of doing this, and indeed are compelled to act against self-activity by quelling or redirecting potentially conflictual energies; and 3) They achieve this in part by claiming to represent a whole ‘community’ or ‘identity,’ delegitimizing those who take approaches not compatible with theirs.

What is shared here comes from conversations with homies, comrades, and acquaintances deeply involved in local struggles. We offer this incomplete, imperfect analysis to provide context for our current moment, to continue thinking rigorously and seriously about how we can act as abolitionists, anarchists, and communists, and rebels. We hope others will engage with this, critique us, draw additional connections, and share your own experiences and analysis, alongside the urgent work of meeting each other, building our networks, and taking action (ideally offline).

‘Fuck Around and Find Out’

January 29th, 2023—A frigid evening in downtown Oakland, throngs of people assembled on Broadway, on the block between 12th and 13th in front of Oscar Grant Plaza, blocking the street. We assembled in front of a wood-paneled truck adorned with large speakers and boldly colored banners, the command center for the rally organizers. Around 5:45 the rally program kicked off, and the diverse crowd had swelled to perhaps over 500. The rally was much as you would expect; speaker after speaker—mostly ‘organizers’ and ‘community leaders’ from non-profit organizations like the Ella Baker Center, Urban Peace Movement, and Communities United for Youth Restorative Justice, as well as family members who lost loved ones to police violence. Like any good media spectacle, the photographers and journalists rolled deep; everywhere you looked there was a camera. As these things go, the pseudo-abolitionist canned talking points and rhetoric espoused by speakers dampened some of the crowd’s furtive energy, with the Cat Brooks show ft. APTP & Friends posturing radical and remixing the same shit we have heard dozens of times before.

Naturally, they warmly invited the newly elected District Attorney, Pamela Price up to the truck to speak, described by Cat Brooks as a ‘revolutionary.’ Aside from our honorable leader, Cat Brooks, Price spoke for the longest, much to the delight of our white progressive ‘accomplices.’ We were urged to hold her accountable, support her, and be grateful that someone in ‘The Movement™’ was in office to represent our interests. Still, scattered boo’s and shouts of *Free Them All! You’re the Pig Too!* disrupted this glowing reception, if only for a brief moment.

This was the first significant blow to the momentum of the march—the absurdly long and performative phase of speeches and press ops that opened it up. This was not a smart move on anyone’s part, unless the goal (as we suspect) was to diminish any potential for conflictuality from the jump. Even the more radical assertions read as performative, to the point of being almost silly—some of the organizers on stage were even fully ‘bloc-ed up’ shouting rah-rah-rah chants: *Shut it down! Fuck the Police! We Take Care of Us! Stop Fucking With Us!* On the other hand, the less charismatic

chant leaders struggled through clunky chants they very clearly were unfamiliar with. Ultimately, this whole show served to tire out any potential troublemakers, giving OPD even more time to position itself to direct the course of any potential action.

As the sun set, the march began to move very slowly down Broadway, led by the truck blocking both sides of the street. Spirits began to pick up despite the cold; the feeling of solidarity and collectivity was—dare we say—infectious. There was a lot of anger and energy amongst the crowd again, despite over an hour of standstill listening to speech after speech after speech.

While we were given orders to ‘self-organize’ ourselves, the rally’s managers urged that “families, children, and elders” were to be in the front behind directly the truck, followed by Black and ‘brown’ community members (again who and what ‘community’ refers to here was left unstated) and ‘allies and accomplices’ in the back. What being allies and accomplices actually entailed was left unsaid, but implicitly it meant enforcing order and following orders; to allegedly protect the more vulnerable marchers.

The march itself was tailed by a contingent of fancy black SUV’s and motorized vehicles—the Community Ready Corps security team. Our benevolent protest caretakers. We were instructed that if the security team tells us to do something then we need to understand that they have our best interests in mind and follow suit. It’s for our own good. Trust us, we’re the professionals here. The community. The real stakeholders. The legitimate leaders. Get in line, you are here to make us look good for the media.

How generous of them.

Our contingent continued down Broadway “at the community’s pace,” set by the organizers to be painfully slow. It seemed that energy was building as we moved past the banks, hotels, and fancy businesses. The media circus continued, as photographers scrambled along the sides for the perfect shot. “This is what the news will be talking about tomorrow,” our fearless organizers proclaimed!

The march eventually climaxed in front of the OPD headquarters and positive ‘abolitionist’ imagery and slogans, as well as remembrances for Tyre Nichols and other victims of police violence, were projected on the side of the mostly empty building. Evidently this was the highlight of the march, if we are to trust local news media’s representation of the evening. Very few police officers were present near the mostly empty building, but the peacocking continued. Speech after speech parroting the same tired and inflated rhetoric. “When we call you will we see you in the streets??” Again underscoring ongoing policy work—the graveyard of social movements—to take policing out of traffic stops. *Organizing gets the goods*, proclaimed the champions of Defund OPD. *When we fight, we win!*

In line with APTP’s strategic orientation, branding was paramount. A key chant: *APTP (Fuck the Police!)*

As the speeches began to suck the energy out of the crowd, as the possibility of anything more than more symbolism foreclosed, throngs of attendees began to drift back up Broadway and numbers began to dwindle down to about 150-200. An explicit move to defuse momentum? As our audacious activist friends projected uplifting and empowering anti-policing imagery, a group of around a dozen or so people (presumptuously labeled agent provocateurs) dressed in black—*gasp*—had the audacity to break down the stupid fucking orange barricades that had been set up in the front on 7th street. And on closer look—may have even been Black and brown youth??

Absolutely unacceptable. Again highlighting the presence of “families” and “elders” in the march and the need for safety, the misguided miscreants were ordered to stand down, to take that shit elsewhere. This was a respectful, orderly mobilization, and any threats to Order would not be tolerated. For Oakland’s former would-be-mayor, the self appointed sole legitimate spokesperson for Black Oakland, the fearless ‘abolitionist’ leader of The Movement,[™] her word is law. And like the Law itself, it is backed up by an implicit (or explicit) threat of organized force in the form of the security team.

Addressing the potential troublemakers, the ones who came ‘for the wrong reasons,’ it strong statement against the outside agitators, who were almost sure to be white and not from Oakland. That’s the only explanation for this behavior, right? Cat warned they should keep their activities away from the good, peaceful protestors, that they better not be targeting any BIPOC businesses. *or else we will be having a much more serious conversation.* “Shut it Down!” chants be damned—any ‘violent’ activity threatening corporate or police property and surveillance/banking technology was made coeval with threatening ‘vulnerable peoples’ safety, isolating and shining a spotlight on the “white” wreckers. Business must continue as usual. This is a respectful march remember?

The consequences were left unstated but likely involved our militarized movement protectors. On cue, CRC shined their high beams on the crowd so as to dissuade any more potential hooligans, as she began to set the agenda for a peaceful, conciliatory return march. *How dare you.*

Tensions remained high as APTP organizers sought to reassert their rightful role as protest leaders, and highlighter-vest clad marshals distributed themselves throughout the crowd. Despite their best efforts, as the march snaked down 7th Street, small groups of militants began taking action without the direction of protest leaders. (Allegedly) the first major buildings that were tagged were markers of gentrification and capital, as well as (alleged) property damage to dozens of parking meters—technologies of the predatory state—and a Wells Fargo ATM. Incendiary slogans appeared on walls and windows alike: “RIP Tyre,” “BLM,” circle-A’s, “ACAB,” and “Fuck 12.” *How disrespectful!*

Protest marshals meekly attempted to intervene and reason with them: *We are going to ask that you stop doing that. The organizers don't want this and we need to listen to them.* Don't they understand we're doing something important here??

Emboldened white progressives—apparently the social base for APTP—leaned into their self-appointed roles as enforcers, and sought to set the situation right. Several of these ‘accomplices’ attempted to chastise these masked vandals, and arguments and light skirmishes broke out along the perimeters of the march. It seemed that the consensus was not as complete as the organizers presumed—as some attendees, even appearing to be from ‘the community’ actually encouraged these criminal elements: *don't stop, keep it going!* Even as our supportive liberal comrades got in their faces—even pushing—asking *why are you doing that?* How dare they interrupt this historic march!

In response to this breakdown of norms, a particularly emboldened NPR-listening yuppie—supported by scattered white-guilt tripping gentrifier transplants sporting ‘radical aesthetics’—shouted: *Just because you're loud doesn't mean you're right!* An apt statement, given that the loudest voices there were on a truck with amplified sound struggling to remain in control of their controlled opposition.

Much to the chagrin and confusion of the organizers and respectable protesters, even the much esteemed University of California Office of the President building didn't escape this carnival of petty vandalism, perhaps pointing towards the close relationship between campus and city policing. This was too far. Something had to be done.

The organizers cut the music and Cat Brooks hopped on the mic: *How dare you disrespect us uplifting Black life—take that shit down the street! Yeah ya'll think you're incognito. Keep it up and find the fuck out.*

And just like that, the area became too hot for the bad actors to continue. Order was restored.

We keep us safe!

Our Takeaways

There are a few core myths about the Justice for Tyre Nichols march in Oakland, organized by the Anti-Police Terror Project, that are currently circulating on social media:

Myth 1: the march was overwhelmingly made up of people who desired to express their outrage through the state-sanctioned, symbolic action.

» Many people within the march were not hostile toward to defacing of property, some even expressed interest and support.

Myth 2: that the crowd was overwhelmingly made up of ‘vulnerable’ people who desired no conflictual tactics to be taken up and did not feel safe around people

defacing property.

- » It's quite a stretch to label the scattered minor acts of property destruction and vandalism as a threat to the 'safety' of attendees.
- » The largest contingent of people mobilized to attempt to police conflictual tactics were WHITE MEN who were following Cat Brooks call to action.

Myth 3: that the people engaging in conflictual tactics were a) all 'white people' and b) not mindful of people within the march who did not want to engage or be around such tactics

- » Given their long history APTP organizers and supporters know this assertion is untrue, but continue to mobilize this narrative time and time again to position themselves as the sole legitimate arbiters of anti-police organizing in Oakland, demanding deference from Black and 'brown' militants who conveniently become "white" when their course of action extends beyond policy proposals and self-congratulatory parades. This is a particularly odious and paternalistic mobilization of the politics of representation to erase and silence dissent from *within* the 'community.'

Myth 4: that APTP is an abolitionist organization.

- » they are in fact a non-profit industrial complex entity that pays lip service to abolitionism when it is convenient; it's not fucked up to acknowledge this.
- » by centralizing organization of the rally/march and directing it through self-aggrandizing leadership, the march was easily controlled and peoples organic anger domesticated.
- » APTP opportunistically used this moment to **CO-OPT, DEFUSE, AND REDIRECT** - for the purposes of pushing their agenda for more reform and publicity, asserting their position of leadership within social movements and local politics.
 - ◇ *Question:* what is the material basis of this type of reformist counterinsurgency?⁷ i.e. ongoing funding streams; careers in the non-profit sector; consolidation of power away from autonomous direct action and community self-determination

These myths are important to unpack because the dominant narratives that is circulating about the march is on the one hand problematically celebratory — the fabrication of the crowd's desire for "peaceful protest" — which in turn serves to erasure a spirit of conflictuality that was clearly expressed by many in the crowd.

- The loudly pacifist character of APTP and their allies is what's also being taken up in the mainstream media coverage—legitimized under the aegis of "Black leadership"—diminishing what was actually a quite significant acceptance of and desire for more conflictual tactics that was simmering early on in the march.

- This emboldens a form of pacifist morality that only serves to further weed out and criminalize certain tactics and expressions of anger that organically emerged from the crowd. It defuses escalation and demoralizes the collective.
- As the march commenced people continued through Chinatown, where many smaller businesses were not touched despite Cat Brooks' fear mongering about that possibility. Even in that case, the racist nature of many local business and their participation in the reproduction of the police apparatus is deeply fucked up, and organizers diminished this point by acting as their protector and savior.
- It's not that there shouldn't be distance from aboveground groups advocating for conflictual tactics and underground networks carrying them out. ***Obviously not everybody is interested in or prepared for a riot or confrontation. That is not what this critique is about. This is about defending and emboldening people's capacity to revolt and exercise their own agency, and challenging the ways in which a particular organization is made to stand in as the sole legitimate arbiter of Black and 'brown' 'community' grievances.***
- So sure, as local grassroots journalist Trash Night Heron argues, people might be "burnt out" on "more radical shit" and "the energy might not be there."⁷ Everybody has their lane and knows what they are comfortable with, or what possibilities arise at a given moment. But our understanding of "sensing the vibe" is that APTP organizers' made a concerted effort to marginalize protestors they were not able to contain or control. As if minor (alleged) vandalism and property destruction was any threat to the 'respectable' attendees. As friends and comrades can attest, ***this is not an isolated incident, but rather a pattern of how this milieu moves.***

On the other hand, a further investigation into the nature of APTP's program of reformist counterinsurgency is needed.

- The dynamics of the "Justice for Tyre Nichols" rally/protest march on January 29th is a microcosm of the larger program of non-profit industrial complex driven counterinsurgency that make up the general context for this rally. The historical-material formation and cultural-political impact of APTP, its allies, and antecedent milieus must be more rigorously examined, as it reflects the range of methods through which conditions for an insurrectionary (or dare we say revolutionary) abolitionist movement to grow.
- APTP also represent a paradigm for studying how big-tent foundation-funded 'abolitionist' organizations operate in other major cities, creating a mirage of grassroots movement that is simply not going to lead to action needed to stop the march of U.S. anti-Black and racist colonial genocide, conquest, occupation, and warfare.

⁷From Twitter thread with coverage of that night's protest: https://twitter.com/hyphy_republic/status/1619878824757596160

- » Sure, there are lots of well intentioned, sincere people doing important work in these sorts of organizations, particularly in service provision and supporting to families impacted by state violence. Everybody has their lane and it okay to do things that are ‘good’ or ‘necessary’ that aren’t necessarily revolutionary or abolitionist. Nor are we negating the urgency for the ‘unglamorous’ day-to-day relationship building and tasks that are necessary to sustain and deepen our resistance. That’s not what this critique is about. What we are attempting to sketch out is challenging the ways that these sorts of organizations come to stand in for and represent a domesticated *container* for channeling popular rage and discontent, and how they mobilize that position to foreclose possibilities for alternative strategy or action. Self-interest is at play for sure, but these interests inseparable from their material and ideological basis. Individual personalities might be particularly annoying, but here lies the crux of the issue. And this has dire consequences on the ground and is the source of our discontent.
- » There is both a political element to this—in terms of the conscious maneuvering by leadership in proximity to progressive elements of the State and Capital—as well as a structural basis that contextualizes all of this, as in how the funding and organizational structures of non-profits facilitate the kinds of moves that they make, the possibilities that are ‘thinkable.’ *Can’t threaten our funding right? How would we support our communities then??* It cultivates individual and collective desires, conceptions of freedom, what it means to be in movement and act collectively so as to fit neatly within the confines of politics, recuperation into the Spectacle, albeit in a more ‘radical’ flair. The inability to reckon with this tension—what we perhaps might term structural counterinsurgency—seems to be at the root of the inability of ‘movement journalists’ and progressive allies to understand anarchist critiques of APTP as anything more than ‘personal attacks,’ spreading ‘lies,’ and disrespecting ‘legitimate’ leadership. We’re sure some of those we are critiquing are shitty people with bad intentions, but the real issue is that they see themselves as being something they aren’t, and have appointed themselves as the only legitimate representatives of something that can’t be represented. And in these times of compounding crisis, that consensus seems to be unraveling in real time, and these tensions are sure to intensify. Counterinsurgency isn’t always a conscious conspiracy. It’s an operating logic of the State and Capital. *State Tactics, right?*

- How might these threads of inquiry into this specific case illuminate a more general analysis of the Oakland/Bay Area liberal-to-progressive political establishment and its role in recuperating, coopting movements, and defanging insurgency?

Scattered Thoughts on Abolitionist Street Action

- When a march like this happens in the downtown area, there is an overwhelming focus on the centralized Spectacle. At the very least, a Spectacle could potentially generate some momentum, the turn-out of people grows, and buzz draws more people in. This can increase the capacity of a march to: 1) plug up major business area and 2) protect people who move fluidly through the crowd to escalate on its periphery or through breakaway groups with clear exit strategies. But this also can mistake the march as that which catalyzes revolt in the first place (a point we will return to below).
- Concentrated attention on the march in a downtown area can also free up other parts of the city, as OPD resources would focus on a single site.⁸ If a disruptive march concentrates enough attention in a downtown area, then a few things may potentially happen:
 1. Large numbers people may continue to show up and support that march;
 2. Centralized groups can act and branch off from the march in different ways, without forcing the main march to be the site of a kettle;
 3. Organized groups of people can be freed up to act autonomously in other parts of the city.
- The largest momentum killer for a march is speeches and media performance.
 - » This is clearly APTP's bread and butter method of reformist counterinsurgency⁹ against street action.
 - » Nothing is worse for empowering people to escalate and take action into their own hands than an authoritative, charismatic leader with a microphone. Cat Brooks said to the youth breaking the barricade: "do that shit somewhere else, not here"... but what this did was *isolate* attention on conflictual methods instead of allowing for the march to create the scene where people could move fluidly and act to escalate.
- While marches can be important places for people to converge and connect across a wide range of experiences navigating action in the streets, what generally escalates demos into more generalized revolt is the peripheral acts of property defacing, vandalism, and sabotage—coupled with an actual practice of "we keep us safe" amongst the crowd. Along with people hitting the streets elsewhere in tandem. Even if there is a wide range of people (with vastly differing

⁸This is a strategy that was highly successful for the car caravan looting sprees of 2020-21 that often coincided with major protest activity.

⁹"The reformist counterinsurgency pivots on a fervent belief that the spirit of progress, national improvement, and patriotic belief will prevail over a fundamentally violent order. In practice, this belief approximates a kind of pseudo-religion[...] There is yet another layer of fatal assumption that structures the reformist position: that those targeted for misery, displacement, and premature death under the existing social order must tolerate continued suffering while waiting for the reformist 'fix' to take hold." From Dylan Rodriguez's "Reformism Isn't Liberation; It's Counterinsurgency" <https://level.medium.com/reformism-isnt-liberation-it-s-counterinsurgency-7ea0a1ce11eb>

vulnerabilities) making up the crowd marching, without a conflictual dimension the march will stagnate and the symbolic protest lends itself to a larger media narrative that criminalizes conflictual methods where they are deployed.

- » There are a few ways around this. One idea is greater coordination among autonomous networks to form breakaway groups (with exit plans and specific targets/goals) that can act to escalate how they see fit. This must be decentralized and based on affinity. No single group of people or collective create a universal plan for anyone to “follow.” People take inspiration and interest in their own methods and targets. But a willingness to look out for each other on the ground is key. This does not take specialization of any sort. Only a willingness to keep people protected who move to take things to another level and help foster the conditions for revolt to burst open.
- Think about the state’s strategies for stopping marches as a method, and the implications of this for theorizing how insurrectionary ruptures unfold, as well as how you can best contribute to pushing the boundaries of what many believe is impossible. Both are contingent on *self-activity*, taking collective action irrespective of the ‘proper channels’ of Organization, respectable tactics, and gatekeeping. The non-profit industrial complex’s protest-spectacle-performance theater of the downtown march is not self-activity. How then do we counter / distrust these types of opportunistic control mechanisms in the street marches themselves? How can understanding such dynamics further clarify the limits and potential of marches as a form of convergence and challenge to law and order?
- At the end of the day, it’s prole self-activity that creates the potential insurrectionary ruptures. We should be looking to aid in fostering the conditions for revolt and participate in its reproducibility. It is about generalizing tactical knowledge and distributing tools, but it is more so about going out yourself and showing how it can be done. Maybe if a larger (decentralized) network of people were out there, ready and prepared to carry out some of these ideas into fruition the night would have gone differently?
- Lastly, to the anarchists, the troublemakers, the hood kids, the queers bashing back: we need to meet each other, to strengthen our networks of affinity. The pandemic and burnout have dissipated the potential for larger scale radical action. We gotta break out of our silos and talk to people outside our ‘scenes’ or that share our ‘ideologies.’ To think beyond even the spectacle of a riot or frontal clash. We can’t be specialists in insurrection, that’s a road to nowhere but disappointment or worse. We won’t will an insurrection into existence. Let’s think and act from the flatlands, not downtown. Leave that shit to the ‘organizers.’ Coordinate our own shit behind the scenes (the time of posting ‘autonomous flyers’ and hoping for a riot has passed), and sharpen our analysis of the present and capacity to act through love, study, and struggle.

RIP Tyre Nichols!

In the current conjuncture, Abolition™ signals a number of competing, contradictory discourses of community safety, empowerment, self-determination, and abstract ‘justice,’ that leaves little room for non-reformist, autonomous, anti-capitalist, or anti-state struggles. Beyond paying lip service to the legacies of the Panthers, this is an abolition that is too often evacuated of its origins in the Black Liberation struggle, of maroonage, urban uprisings, and prison rebellions. An abolition that is unable or unwilling to engage with the practical, proto-abolitionist anti-political self-activity of Black and ‘brown’ proletarian youth—the “Great Sideshow Army”—rebellious against the conditions of their existence through organized car-caravan looting across the Bay. These undercurrents remain illegible to those ‘abolitionists’ with their eyes focused on “building power.”

