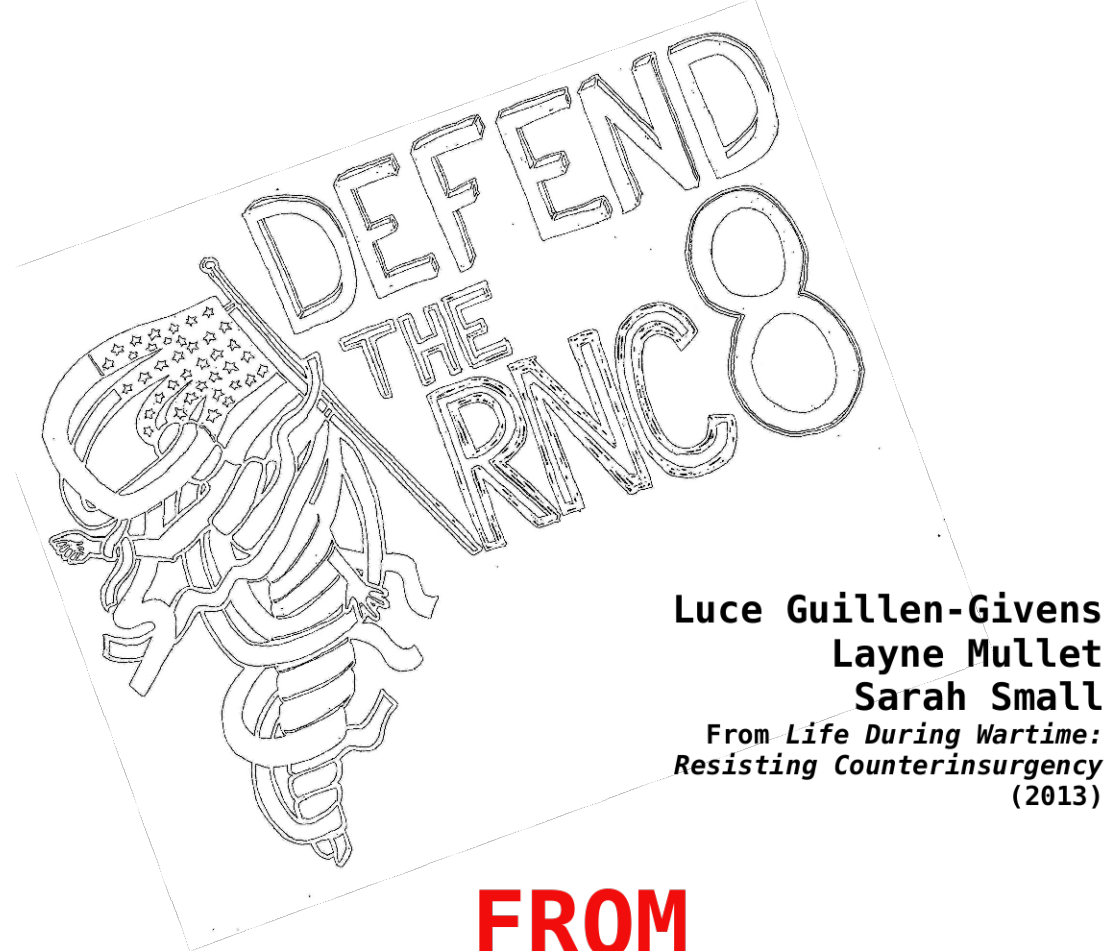


MAINTAINING A COZY RELATIONSHIP  
WITH THE STATE WILL BE AN  
INCENTIVE FOR CERTAIN ACTIVISTS  
TO DELEGITIMIZE OTHERS,  
DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM THE  
OPPRESSIVE NATURE OF THE SYSTEM  
WHILE ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL OF  
ISOLATING AND DESTABILIZING  
RADICAL MOVEMENTS. THE  
DICHOTOMY IS OFTEN TIED TO  
**TACTICAL DIFFERENCES,**  
EXEMPLIFIED IN MEDIA COVERAGE  
OF MASS MOBILIZATIONS WHERE  
COPS, CITY OFFICIALS AND  
REPORTERS TALK ABOUT HOW THE  
**"GOOD PROTESTERS"**  
WHO WILL BE MARCHING  
PEACEFULLY ARE IN DANGER  
OF BEING OVERSHADOWED BY THE  
**"BAD PROTESTERS"**  
WHO WILL VANDALIZE THINGS.



Luce Guillen-Givens  
Layne Mullet  
Sarah Small  
From *Life During Wartime:  
Resisting Counterinsurgency*  
(2013)

**FROM**  
**R E P R E S S I O N**  
**TO**  
**R E S I S T A N C E**  
*notes on combating  
counterinsurgency*

Chapter by:

Luce Guillen-Givens  
Layne Mullet  
Sarah Small

From:

*Life During Wartime:  
Resisting Counterinsurgency* (2013)

Ed.:

Kristian Williams  
William Munger  
Lara Messersmith-Glavin

Zine-ified by:

Some random activists on unceded  
Wurundjeri land

Note:

we could not photocopy this book so we  
have used slightly unconventional means  
to copy the pages. We tried to make the  
text as clear as possible!

ONE OF THE WAYS THE STATE  
SUPPRESSES MOVEMENTS IS  
THROUGH EXPLOITING EXISTING  
DIVISIONS, AND CREATING  
FALSE ONES, WITHIN  
POTENTIALLY INSURGENT  
COMMUNITIES.  
COUNTERINSURGENCY EMPLOYS  
THE "GOOD PROTESTER/BAD  
PROTESTER" DICHOTOMY AS A  
WAY OF MANIPULATING PEOPLE –  
BOTH THOSE WHO ARE  
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(THE "GOOD ONES") A MEASURE  
OF LEGITIMACY BUT PINNING IT  
TO THEIR WILLINGNESS TO HELP  
UNDERMINE THE WORK OF THE  
"BAD ONES."



to develop community-based anti-violence strategies. The group is led by lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and gender non-conforming people of color and has launched a campaign to teach local businesses how to intervene in violent situations without calling the police. Learn more at: [alp.org/community/sos](http://alp.org/community/sos). Philly Stands Up is another example of a group working to build the capacity of communities to address violence, developing transformative justice and community accountability models for responding to sexual assault. For more information, see: [www.phillystandsup.wordpress.com](http://www.phillystandsup.wordpress.com).

## FROM REPRESSION TO RESISTANCE: Notes on Combating Counterinsurgency

LUCE GUILLÉN-GIVINS, LAYNE MULLETT, AND SARAH SMALL

*ON AUGUST 30, 2008 WE WERE AWAKENED EARLY IN THE MORNING BY THE SHRILL ring of the telephone. The news on the other end of the line wasn't good: police were currently raiding three houses occupied by radical activists preparing to protest the Republican National Convention (RNC). Thinking our house would be next, we quickly packed up our belongings and headed out. We had been up late thanks to a raid on our convergence center the night before and were not eager to spend any more time with the police, the sheriff's department, or the Secret Service.*

*Unfortunately, our success in avoiding the police was short-lived. Within 72 hours, eight local organizers were rounded up and eventually charged with "conspiracy to riot in furtherance of terrorism." The next few days saw over 800 arrests as thousands of people protested in the streets of St. Paul.*

*What followed was a two-year political and legal battle. We learned that the raids and arrests marked the culmination of almost two years of police activity and involved multiple informants, surveillance teams, and undercover officers. In discovery we obtained thousands of pages of meeting notes, emails, debriefings and reports, hundreds of photos, and hours and hours of audio recording that the police had collected on our activities. Clearly the state had been intensively monitoring local activists since the convention was announced, and likely continues to do so to this day.*

Our experiences dealing with the aftermath of the RNC protests and related legal charges led us to think more deeply about the nature of policing and state repression, and what radical movements can do to counteract these attacks. In particular we were concerned with the more insidious elements of state intervention that work to undermine and co-opt movements along (and in conjunction) with the spectacle of police violence and mass arrests. We began to understand these tactics as a form of domestic counterinsurgency.

## WHAT DOES COUNTERINSURGENCY LOOK LIKE?

THOUGH COUNTERINSURGENCY HAS been something of a watchword in the global “war on terror,” its domestic applications are more obscured. Unlike in places where insurgency is already occurring, counterinsurgency strategy in the United States is primarily focused on preventing insurgent movements from taking root. This means that the state must work to create social conditions that make radical organizing difficult, and engage in constant (though sometimes low-intensity) disruptions of any activity that has the potential to threaten the existing power structure. These disruptions can range from COINTELPRO-style<sup>1</sup> assassinations like the murder of Fred Hampton<sup>2</sup> and lengthy prison terms for political dissidents, to surveillance and data collection on a wide range of public activities. Counterinsurgency can be the cops kicking down your door, but it can also be the co-optation of community organizing, the increasing capacity for sophisticated data-collection, the mapping of social networks, and the paid informant sitting quietly through meetings.

Activists generally remember to take basic security precautions, such as not sending sensitive information over email or discussing specific illegal actions at open meetings. What we often fail to do is address the group dynamics that make us vulnerable to disruption and infiltration, or make plans for how we can support each other when we are facing repression down the road. We tend to ignore the inevitable low-level intervention of the state in our movements, as well as the heightened repression meted out against other communities, until the moment we are confronted with “hard” tactics, such as brutality, prosecution, and imprisonment. Thus, our movements are only putting energy into combating repression when the battle is more than half over, past the point at which we would stand the best chance of winning.

This tendency may, in part, be due to the fact that activists often think there is a choice between the tactics and strategies that bring about repression, and those that avoid it. We believe that this distinction is a false one. While it's true, for example, that breaking a bank window is more likely to generate a rapid police response than circulating a petition, *any* campaign that mounts

History of Political Militancy and Incarceration, 1960s to 2000s,” in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 29–30.

- 47 Ricardo Jiménez was arrested in 1980 for his role in the Puerto Rican Independence movement. He spent almost twenty years in prison on charges of “seditious conspiracy” for his involvement with the FALN, and was one of eleven *independentistas* granted presidential clemency in 1999. Since then, he has been an educator, lecturer, and AIDS activist. See: Dan Berger, “The Real Dragons: A Brief History of Political Militancy and Incarceration, 1960s to 2000s,” in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 18–21.
- 48 CrimethInc. Ex-workers’ Collective, “Green Scared? Preliminary lessons of the Green Scare,” *Rolling Thunder* #5 (Spring 2008).
- 49 The RNC Welcoming Committee was infiltrated by one paid informant working for the FBI as well as one working for the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, who then became an RSCO corrections officer midway through the investigation. There was another corrections officer who infiltrated the Welcoming Committee for only a brief span of time, as well as an undercover narcotics officer who stuck around through the end. Leslie James Pickering, ed., *Conspiracy to Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism: the Collective Autobiography of the RNC 8* (Arisa, 2011), 218–236.

See also: Lisa Fithian, “Sexism, egos, and lies: Sometimes you wake up and it is not different,” *The Rag Blog*, March 22, 2010, <http://theragblog.blogspot.com>.
- 50 North American Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network, “Cooperating Plea Agreements and Related Court Documents,” NA-ELPSN website, <http://ecoprisoners.org>, (accessed February 28, 2012).
- 51 Friends and Family of Eric McDavid, “Background,” FFEM website, <http://supporterteric.org>, (accessed February 28, 2012).
- 52 The vouching process meant that attendees to the strategy session were required to provide two known references within the activist community who could attest to their credibility and history with the movement.
- 53 Fithian, “Sexism, egos, and lies: Sometimes you wake up and it is not different.”
- 54 Pickering, ed., *Conspiracy to Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism: the Collective Autobiography of the RNC 8*.
- 55 Friends and Family of Eric McDavid, “Background” and “Court Docs,” FFEM website, <http://supporterteric.org>, (accessed February 28, 2012); and Cosmo Garvin, “Conspiracy of Dunces,” *Sacramento News and Review*, July 27, 2006, <http://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/conspiracy-of-dunce>.
- 56 Vanessa Grigoriadis, “The Rise and Fall of the Eco-Radical Underground,” *Rolling Stone Magazine*, August 10, 2006; and CrimethInc. Ex-workers’ Collective, “Green Scared? Preliminary lessons of the Green Scare,” *Rolling Thunder* #5 (Spring 2008).
- 57 There are numerous examples of organizations doing transformative justice work. Since 1997, the Audre Lorde Project’s Safe Outside the System Collective has been working



- the *Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 322–34. And Jan Susler, “More Than 25 Years: Puerto Rican Political Prisoners” in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 356–58.
- 38 At first glance, it might seem contradictory for anarchists to become involved with and committed to a movement centered on a demand for nationhood. While we sometimes wrestle with the particulars of what it means to be involved in a national liberation struggle, we also see that at the core of anarchism is a belief in self-determination, and this belief is also at the core of anti-colonial struggles.
- 39 Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project, “Proclaim Release: A Call to Conscience and Action for the Release of Puerto Rican Political Prisoners” in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 322–34.
- 40 For more information about the alternative institutions that have been built in the Puerto Rican community by The Puerto Rican Cultural Center in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago, see: <http://prcc-chgo.org/>.
- 41 For more information about Oscar López Rivera, go to: <http://boricuahumanrights.org/free-oscar-lopez-rivera/>.
- 42 Grand Jury Resistance Project, “Recent Grand Juries” Grand Jury Resistance Project website, <http://grandjuryresistance.org/resisting.html>, (accessed March 12, 2012).
- 43 This legacy of resistance began in 1937, when Juan Antonio Corretjer spent a year in prison for refusing to provide the FBI key documents internal to the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. Jan Susler, “Puerto Rican Independence Movement Under Attack in New York and San Juan,” in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 359–62. and Grand Jury Resistance Project, “Recent Grand Juries” Grand Jury Resistance Project website, <http://grandjuryresistance.org/recent.html#puertorican2>, (accessed March 12, 2012).
- 44 “Recent Grand Juries” Grand Jury Resistance Project website, <http://grandjuryresistance.org/recent.html>, (accessed April 4, 2012).
- 45 J. Soffiyah Elijah currently serves as the Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York, and was previously the Deputy Director of the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School. She was the attorney for former political prisoner Marilyn Buck, and has represented numerous other political prisoners and social activists. “J. Soffiyah Elijah,” Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School website, <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/cji/staff/elijah.htm>, (accessed April 4, 2012).
- 46 Laura Whitehorn is a white, anti-imperialist lesbian who was a member of Students for a Democratic Society, the Weather Underground, and the May 19<sup>th</sup> Communist Organization. She spent 14 years in prison as part of the Resistance Conspiracy case. She is an editor at *POZ*, a magazine for people affected by HIV, and has continued to organize in support of incarcerated people. See: Dan Berger, “The Real Dragons: A Brief

a potentially successful challenge to existing power structures, regardless of its tactics, will face some form of repression. Our reality is this: we can fight to win, and in so doing encounter state repression, or we can limit ourselves to ineffective modes of activism and agitation in the false hope that this will keep us safe. Counterinsurgency can be brutally effective, and coming to terms with this reality can easily lead to fatalism. But while we can't avoid being subjected to counterinsurgent methods, we can take a comprehensive approach (as the state does) and work to affect the terrain of attack.

If we're serious about growing revolutionary movements with the capacity to effect long-term, radical change, then we have to move beyond a purely defensive posture, wherein our efforts are primarily reactive, into an era of proactive movement building. One way to think about this challenge is to conceive of the conditions that would need to exist in order for insurgent movements to thrive, and to create those conditions within the arenas of radical struggle in which we are already engaged. By steadily laying this groundwork, we can better position ourselves to seize the moments when the state tries to pin us down as opportunities not just to resist, but to actively fight back.

We have by no means developed an exhaustive list of what those necessary conditions might be, but we have sketched out some of the lessons that we've learned. First, we believe that it is not possible to avoid counterinsurgency while working to create radical social change. Police harassment, arrests, and imprisonment are elements of virtually every successful social struggle and we must prepare for and confront this reality. Second, we believe that our approach to resisting counterinsurgency must be holistic; that is, we can't just focus on outsmarting the state. Instead, we must also transform the way we work and take care of each other, and learn to work together across our many differences. And finally, we believe that we can turn moments of state repression into opportunities to build and strengthen our movements.

We rely heavily on examples from the RNC 8 case, but also bring in other, much more severe, instances of state repression faced by the Puerto Rican independence movement and other national liberation struggles, as well as more recent cases falling under the umbrella of the “Green Scare.” In so doing, we don't mean to suggest any direct parallel between the various examples. Rather, we've chosen this range of examples both because they draw on our personal experiences and because we feel that they help to provide a more comprehensive view of the sorts of state repression to which radicals today are vulnerable. We have included our more personal experiences and reflections individually in *italics*, and our broader analysis in the regular text.

## WHERE WE'RE COMING FROM

**Luce Guillén-Givins:** *In 2006, I started organizing with a group called the RNC Welcoming Committee. We were Twin Cities anarchists and anti-authoritarians who came together to develop protest infrastructure against the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota. From August 30 through September 1, 2008, seven other people and I (the "RNC 8") were arrested and charged with multiple counts of conspiracy and terrorism for our roles in organizing for the protests. Most of us were arrested before the protests even began and were held in jail until they were over. None of us were charged with actually doing anything; conspiracy charges are based on what the state believes we said, thought, and intended to do. At the peak of the prosecution, we were charged with four separate felonies: "conspiracy to riot," "conspiracy to commit criminal damage to property," "conspiracy to riot in furtherance of terrorism," and "conspiracy to commit criminal damage to property in furtherance of terrorism." We faced up to 12 years in prison if convicted.*

*Along with many dedicated supporters, we spent two years waging a massive legal and political campaign to get the charges dropped. In what I think was our biggest unqualified victory, the County Attorney buckled to public pressure and dropped the terrorism charges against us less than six months after filing them. In August of 2010, one of our codefendants decided to cut his losses and plead guilty to a single gross misdemeanor. He chose to serve a short term in jail, rather than a longer period on probation. Despite our disappointment in his decision to take a plea, the fact that he had so much room to negotiate—without testifying against the rest of us—was a sign of the power our support campaign wielded. A month later, and with only a month left before trial, the State dropped all of the charges against me and two of my codefendants. A few weeks after that, the four remaining codefendants each pled guilty to a single gross misdemeanor. They were sentenced only to probation and community service, a massive reduction from the charges the State had pursued at a cost of over \$250,000 and more than three years of police and legal work.<sup>3</sup>*

*We also had other successes over the course of those two years. We contributed to the demise of the County Attorney's gubernatorial campaign, and built some unlikely alliances with people and organizations in Minneapolis and across the country. The successes of our support campaign were only possible because we used our fight as a vehicle for capacity-building. As the case and support campaign progressed, opening new doors in terms of radical networking and solidarity, our experiences pushed us to start fleshing out this idea of capacity-building as a starting point for thinking about resistance to counterinsurgency. The ideas sketched out in this article are predicated on the belief that this can be a winning strategy for revolutionary movements.*

times, before he was then indicted for an entirely unrelated fur farm raid in Minnesota. In September of 2010, he pled guilty to a single, reduced charge connected to that action, served six months in federal prison, and is now on probation. Scott and Carrie Support Committee, SCSC website, <http://davenportgrandjury.wordpress.com>, (accessed February 26, 2012).

- 35 This case comes on the heels of a recent Supreme Court ruling, *Holder v. the Humanitarian Law Project*, which held that activities such as referring lawyers, providing nonviolent conflict resolution training, and even donating food and blankets to humanitarian groups with alleged ties to designated "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" (FTOs), qualify as "material support for terrorism," a federal crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The federal government decides what groups to include on its list of FTOs with no real public oversight or recourse. For instance, the African National Congress was on the list as it fought Apartheid in South Africa; in fact, it wasn't removed until 1998. Michael Deutsch, "Material support for terrorism: FBI actions, grand jury subpoenas mark ominous expansion of law," *The Rag Blog*, November 16, 2010, <http://theragblog.blogspot.com>; and Jeremy Gantz, "Terrorist by Association," *In These Times*, December 13, 2010, <http://www.inthesetimes.com>.
- 36 The Freedom Road Socialist Organization describes itself as "a revolutionary socialist and Marxist-Leninist organization" whose members are very active "in labor, oppressed nationality, anti-war and anti-imperialist, and student movements." Freedom Road Socialist Organization, About FRSO, FRSO website, <http://frso.org>, accessed January 28, 2012. There are currently two groups operating under the name "Freedom Road Socialist Organization" as a result of an internal split in 1999. The group to which we refer in this article uses the website <http://frso.org>. For further documentation on this split, see "Public Statement on the Future of FRSO," <http://frso.org>, (June 1999), and "Statement on the Split," <http://www.freedomroad.org> (January 1, 2000).
- 37 On September 10th, 1999, eleven former members of the FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, or Armed Forces of National Liberation) walked out of prison after spending between 14 and 19 years behind bars. The FALN was a U.S.-based Marxist guerrilla organization that was fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. They claimed responsibility for over 100 armed actions within the United States in the 1970s and '80s, targeting symbols of U.S. military, police, and corporate power. By the early 1980s many of them had been arrested and charged with seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. They received sentences ranging from 35 years to life in prison, and many of them never expected to leave prison at all. However, the independence movement refused to accept what amounted to life sentences for their political prisoners, and many Puerto Ricans and their allies worked for two decades to bring the prisoners home. After many years of hard work on the outside, and the steadfast non-collaboration of the prisoners themselves, the impossible happened: in his final days in office, President Bill Clinton commuted their sentences. A month later they were freed. See: Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project, "Proclaim Release: A Call to Conscience and Action for the Release of Puerto Rican Political Prisoners" in *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from*



- January 4, 2011. "Prisoner Advocate Elaine Brown on Georgia Prison Strike: 'Repression Breeds Resistance,'" *Democracy Now! The War and Peace Report*, New York, NY: December 14, 2010. More information on Pelican Bay at <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/>.
- 27 Learn more about Decarcerate PA at <http://www.decarceratePA.info>.
- 28 "Investigation Finds US Drones Strike Pakistan Every Four Days, Killing 775 Civilians Since 2004," *Democracy Now! The War and Peace Report*, New York, NY: August 15, 2011; "Let's Admit It: The US Is at War in Yemen, Too," *Wired Magazine*, Wired Magazine website, <http://www.wired.com>, (accessed June 17, 2012).
- 29 Stephen Lendman, "Police State America—A Look Back and Ahead," December 17, 2007, <http://www.globalresearch.ca>, (accessed February 28, 2012).
- 30 Center for Constitutional Rights, "Communications Management Units: The Federal Prison System's Experiment in Social Isolation," Center for Constitutional Rights website, <http://ccrjustice.org>, (accessed January 20, 2012); and Margot Williams and Alyson Hurt, "Population Of The Communications Management Units," National Public Radio, NPR website, September 29, 2011, <http://www.npr.org>.
- 31 In the year before the RNC, the Welcoming Committee held two national meetings to develop a protest strategy for the convention. The outcome was a pair of goals: to build capacity and crash the convention. The plan for disrupting the RNC was to use a variety of tactics to blockade main points of access to the site of the convention and prevent the RNC delegates from getting there. Different affinity groups and clusters from different areas of the country would "adopt" different segments of downtown St. Paul and blockade them in whatever way they saw fit. The plan was designed to allow for decentralized, autonomous direct action to happen in a coordinated fashion, making space for people to participate in a diverse but unified set of actions while opting for whatever tactics they were most comfortable with.
- 32 Patrick F. Gillham, "Securitizing America: Strategic Incapacitation and the Policing of Protest Since the 11 September 2001 Terrorist Attacks," *Sociology Compass* 5/7 (2011): 637.
- 33 All debates about the merits of pacifism and the moral weight of violence aside, we're unaware of any actual organized intent to create violent protest at summits and conventions in recent U.S. history. More often than not, the threat of "violence" some activists worry about is either entirely fabricated by law enforcement and the mainstream media, or else refers to vandalism and property destruction rather than any actual physical harm to people. See Sam Worley, "Fighting in the Streets," *The Chicago Reader*, February 23, 2012.
- 34 The Animal Liberation Front action under investigation had occurred in southern Iowa while Scott and Carrie were in high school in Minnesota, and the subpoenas were an outlandish attempt by the Assistant U.S. Attorney to close a long-open case. Both Scott and Carrie refused to testify before the grand jury, and were jailed for civil contempt in November of 2009. Two days later, Scott was indicted under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act. Carrie was held for four months before being released just as arbitrarily. In a string of highly abusive prosecutorial moves, Scott's indictment was amended several

**Layne Mullett:** *Sarah and I live in Philadelphia, but temporarily relocated to Minneapolis before the RNC to help prepare for the protests. Upon returning to Philly, we knew that we wanted to continue fighting for our friends who were facing terrorism charges in Minnesota. However, the context for resisting state repression in Philadelphia during this time was somewhat different than in Minneapolis. Philadelphia has a long history of racist police violence and has also been the site of some of the most dramatic repression in recent U.S. history (most notably the MOVE bombing in 1985<sup>4</sup>). Philadelphians had even had their own experience hosting the RNC, where scores of protesters were beaten and jailed by police. But in 2008, many leftist organizations were focused on other issues, and state repression was low on the list of priorities.<sup>5</sup>*

*Sarah and I knew that we wanted to publicize the case and generate political and financial support for the RNC 8, in part because Luce is a close friend, but also because we believed that the use of terrorism charges against people organizing public protests set a dangerous precedent that could extend well beyond Minnesota. However, we knew that getting people on the East Coast to support eight anarchists from the Midwest was going to be a hard sell. For the RNC 8 case to feel relevant in Philadelphia, our work would have to be done in a way that went beyond advocating for those eight defendants and moved towards strengthening our ability to fight state repression in general.*

*Traditional forms of support for people facing political charges include fundraising for bail and legal expenses, showing support in the courtroom, holding events to raise awareness, and engaging in public advocacy to try to affect the outcome of the case. We wanted to do all these things, but do them in a way that shed light on a wide range of resistance to repression. Using this approach would, we hoped, allow us to incorporate RNC 8 support into our already existing political work rather than diminishing our capacity to carry that work forward.*

*While in some historical moments fighting specific instances of state repression has helped build movements,<sup>6</sup> it can often make people feel worn down and isolated. We wanted to counter this tendency, and instead attempt to:*

1. *connect this case to a legacy of repression against political movements across generational, racial, and ideological lines, and use the RNC 8 support work as a platform to raise awareness and funds for others facing state repression and imprisonment,*
2. *help create the conditions for a movement in Philadelphia that was more prepared to combat repression, and*
3. *make connections between political prisoners/state repression and broader anti-prison and social justice movements.*

*As we moved forward we carried each of these goals with us, and tried to develop our activities to meet them. What took shape, in its best moments, mirrored some of the ideas outlined in this essay.*

## KNOWING OUR HISTORY

THE FIRST NECESSARY condition of fighting counterinsurgency is an awareness and critical analysis of state repression. We cannot defend against an enemy we haven't anticipated, nor can we effectively strategize if we don't have an understanding of what we're up against. Those of us who are likely to be targets of counterinsurgency operations—and it is important to stress how broadly that likelihood applies—are better positioned to deal with attacks against us if we start out with a strong analysis of what we might face.

The history of repression in the United States is older than the state itself, and this repression mirrors an equally long legacy of resistance. Yet one of the striking aspects of activist responses to counterinsurgency tactics is an expression of total shock. How many times have we seen the same thing play out?—the look of confusion and disbelief clouding someone's face as they talk about a recent political arrest or prosecution, stating that they “never thought this could happen here,” or wondering what happened to “democracy.”

The truth is that many activists in the U.S. are startlingly unaware of the country's brutal legacy of repression.<sup>7</sup> There are several major factors at play here, but among the most significant are high turnover rates and generational divisions. Cycles of entry into and burn-out from radical movements are often as short as a few years, and the sharing of lessons across these micro-generational divides is shoddy, at best. In a society where radical histories are buried and distorted, the lack of intergenerational engagement undermines our best chance at knowing our own histories. For example, there are currently over 70 leftist political prisoners in the U.S.,<sup>8</sup> mostly people who have been struggling behind bars for decades; yet many of us can only name one or two of them. It's sobering to think that people who struggle for revolutionary liberation in this country today wouldn't know about people who've spent years in prison for doing the same. Not only does this rob our comrades of the support they need and deserve, it also prevents us from gaining the wisdom and insight that comes from learning about and talking with previous generations of dissidents and freedom fighters.

**Luce:** *In Minneapolis, prior to the RNC, work had already been done within the anarchist community that put the issue of state repression on the table in a historically grounded way. Twin Cities activists (viewed collectively) were experienced with state repression: A decade before the RNC, Minneapolis was with*

and monitor activities of individuals and organizations within the U.S. It also includes a section that considerably broadens what activities can be prosecuted under terrorism statutes. In 2011, President Obama signed a four-year extension for key provisions of the PATRIOT Act. See American Civil Liberties Union, *Reform the Patriot Act*, ACLU website, <http://www.aclu.org/reform-patriot-act>, (accessed February 28, 2012); and American Civil Liberties Union, *How the USA PATRIOT Act redefines "Domestic Terrorism"* ACLU website, <http://www.aclu.org/national-security/how-usa-patriot-act-redefines-domestic-terrorism>, (accessed February 28, 2012).

- 18 Since that time, the state's case against the SF8 has unraveled. In 2009, charges against almost all the defendants were dramatically reduced or dropped. Only one defendant, Francisco Torres, remained—and he had all of his charges dismissed in August of 2011. This success comes in part from the broad base of mass support built by the SF8 and their allies, which included resolutions of support from the San Francisco Central Labor Council, the Berkeley City Council, and several San Francisco Supervisors. See: Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, *Cisco Cleared! Last of the Charges Dismissed*, Free the San Francisco 8 website, <http://www.freethesf8.org>, (accessed February 29, 2012).
- 19 The speaker was from the National Boricua Human Rights Network's Philly chapter. The National Boricua Human Rights Network is an organization that works towards the decontamination, development, and return of the island of Vieques to its people; the release of the remaining Puerto Rican political prisoners; and an end to the continuing political repression and criminalization of progressive sectors of the Puerto Rican community. For more information see: <http://boricuahumanrights.org/>.
- 20 Marilyn Buck was a white anti-imperialist revolutionary and poet who spent a total of 29 years in prison for her actions in support of Black liberation movements and against U.S. imperialism. Perhaps most famously, she was accused of helping free Assata Shakur from prison. Buck was released from prison on July 15, 2010, and enjoyed 19 days of freedom before passing away from uterine cancer on August 3, 2010. An audio version of Marilyn Buck reading her poem “Wild Poppies” is available at [http://www.freedomarchives.org/wildpoppies/wild\\_poppies\\_poem.html](http://www.freedomarchives.org/wildpoppies/wild_poppies_poem.html) For more information see: Friends of Marilyn Buck, *Our Dear Sister and Comrade Marilyn Buck has Joined the Ancestors*, Friend of Marilyn Buck website, <http://www.marilynbuck.com>, (accessed February 29, 2012).
- 21 “Racial Disparity Interactive Map,” the Sentencing Project, <http://www.sentencingproject.org/map/map.cfm>, (accessed March 3, 2012).
- 22 David Gilbert, *Love and Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 84.
- 23 Brian Glick, “War at Home: Covert action against U.S. activists and what we can do about it,” (South End Press Pamphlet Series, 1999).
- 24 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 5–12.
- 25 Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 58–94.
- 26 “Prisoners at Supermax Ohio Penitentiary Begin Hunger Strike to Protest 17+ Year Solitary Confinement,” *Democracy Now! The War and Peace Report*, New York, NY:



- <sup>12</sup> In 1974, small farmers in Western Minnesota began working through civil channels to stop construction of a 453-mile transmission line that would cut through their farmland and produce devastating environmental and financial effects. When the permit was approved in 1977, a wave of both legal and illegal resistance began, including sabotage of construction infrastructure, human blockades, and, eventually, the toppling of 15 separate transmission towers in four years. (RNC Welcoming Committee, *The Struggle Is Our Inheritance*, 41–49).
- <sup>13</sup> The “Green Scare” is a term used to describe state repression of the radical environmental and animal rights movements in the U.S. The term came into wide usage in 2005 after “Operation Backfire,” one of the largest domestic terrorism investigations in U.S. history. Operation Backfire culminated that year in a nationwide, multi-agency sweep of raids and arrests of members of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). The defendants in Green Scare cases have faced steeply disproportionate sentencing for the political nature of their crimes, as well as terrorism enhancements subjecting them to especially punitive conditions while incarcerated. See: Will Potter, “What is the ‘Green Scare?’” Green is the New Red website, <http://www.greenisthenewred.com>, (accessed February 26, 2012).
- <sup>14</sup> Ramona Africa is a former political prisoner, member of the MOVE family, and the sole adult survivor of the 1985 Philadelphia Police bombing of a MOVE family house. (See 5).
- <sup>15</sup> Sara Jane Olson is a former political prisoner who was arrested in 1999, after 23 years living as a fugitive. She was indicted on charges relating to a 1975 bank robbery where a bystander was killed, and several attempted bombings, all committed by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). In 2001, Olson took a plea agreement; she was released to St. Paul, MN, on parole in 2009. The SLA was a controversial armed revolutionary group based in California in the early ’70s.
- Chuck Haga, “June 27, 1999: The life and times of Sara Jane Olson,” *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, March 21, 2008; Tim Harlow, “March 23: A return to prison, not St. Paul,” *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, March 23, 2008; John Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975).
- <sup>16</sup> Leslie James Pickering was a “Founder and Spokesperson for the North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office, serving with the organization from early 2000 until the summer of 2002. During this period the Press Office sustained two raids by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms and local law enforcement agencies, responded to over a half dozen grand jury subpoenas, conducted public presentations, produced booklets, newspapers, magazines, and a video on the Earth Liberation Front and handled the public release of communiqués for dozens of the most vital Earth Liberation Front actions.” Leslie James Pickering, <http://lesliejamespickering.com>, (accessed July 15, 2012).
- <sup>17</sup> The USA PATRIOT Act, whose official title is “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism,” was passed in the fall of 2001 following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The act greatly enhances law enforcement’s legal ability to conduct surveillance

to one of the largest police actions in the state’s history—a raid on the Minnehaha Free State.<sup>9</sup> In 2000, some of the same people who had been integral to the Free State were targets of another massive police operation, in response to protests at a conference of the International Society for Animal Genetics.<sup>10</sup> In each of these incidents, radical activists were severely brutalized by police in violently theatrical raids, and the ISAG raid was followed by serious criminal charges against one of the organizers. (As it happens, he would later be one of the RNC 8.) Yet frequent burnout meant that few who were actively involved in organizing against the RNC were fully cognizant of this recent history, and even fewer had been around to experience it first-hand.

Those of us in the RNC Welcoming Committee were acutely aware of this problem, and felt that our capacity was limited by the disproportionately small presence of older activists with more experience. We were also critical of mass mobilization organizing that lacked roots in local communities, feeling that too often large mobilizations brought with them a traveling show of radicals who skillfully implemented infrastructure for the protest but ignored local campaigns, communities, and histories of struggle. When they left, the skills went with them, the local community was left to deal with the fallout of the protests, and no meaningful exchange between “locals” and “out-of-towners” occurred. We wanted the RNC to be different, both by strengthening our local work and by contributing to the political development of the thousands of people we hoped would come through. So as one of our first group projects, we gathered submissions and published “*The Struggle Is Our Inheritance*,” a zine chronicling some major events in Minnesota’s radical history.

The zine begins, “Substantive, radical change is only accomplished with a firm understanding of the past.”<sup>11</sup> It covers a range of topics, such as the 1934 Teamsters’ Strike, the emergence of the American Indian Movement in the ’70s, and rural Western Minnesota’s anti-power line movement.<sup>12</sup> The production of the zine was educational for those of us involved, and its publication helped to foreground the idea of a radical heritage in the organizing against the RNC.

I also worked with a group called EWOK! (Earth Warriors are OK!) that was active in supporting Green Scare prisoners.<sup>13</sup> We put on many well-attended fundraisers and educational events to that end, bringing speakers from across the country to talk about their experience dealing with state repression. The speakers we brought over the course of the group’s life, including Ramona Africa,<sup>14</sup> Sara Jane Olson,<sup>15</sup> and Leslie James Pickering,<sup>16</sup> amongst others, represented a range of movements and eras of state repression. We also created and distributed a zine documenting past instances of FBI harassment of earth and animal liberation activists in the Twin Cities, basic “know your rights” information, and more in-depth analysis of how to deal with government disruption and interference.

**Sarah Small:** After the RNC, one of the first things we started to plan in Philadelphia was a large event that would raise awareness and money for the

RNC 8, but we didn't want it to focus only on their case. At that time there were eight former Black Panthers, dubbed the "San Francisco 8," who were facing charges stemming from the killing of a San Francisco police officer in 1971. The original charges against them had been dismissed in 1975 after it was revealed that the case was based on statements that one of the defendants made after he and two of his codefendants were tortured for several days while in the custody of the New Orleans Police Department. The USA PATRIOT Act<sup>17</sup> made it possible for these bogus charges to be brought against the same men decades later, in 2007.<sup>18</sup> The Patriot Act also played a role in the RNC 8 case: additional felony charges were added through the use of "terrorism enhancements" under Minnesota's version of the law. In fact, the charges brought against the RNC 8 were the first time the Minnesota Patriot Act was ever used.

We wanted to bring the two cases together to highlight the fact that repression against anarchists is not exceptional; it mirrors strategies the state has used to attack other movements (and is often less severe than the repression visited on struggles led predominately by people of color). It was important to engage in a campaign that saw different cases of repression as interlinked, and we wanted to make sure that our work on behalf of the RNC 8 helped generate support for others facing state repression as well. We decided to make the event a joint fundraiser, with the proceeds split between the RNC 8 and the SF8 defense funds. Layne and I knew it would be challenging to pull off such a large event on our own, so we teamed up with a couple of local activists with similar goals and politics.

We convened a panel of speakers who were part of different radical movements, including representatives from the RNC 8, the SF8, the Puerto Rican Independence movement,<sup>19</sup> and the sole adult survivor of the MOVE bombing. The panel was called "Conspiring for Change," in reference to the fact that most of the panelists had either faced conspiracy charges or were involved in fighting for others facing them. This event was successful, both as a fundraiser and as a way to situate today's anarchist and radical movements within the context of a long legacy of struggle against the state. It also sowed the seeds of some new political relationships that would deepen and grow over the next few years. This effort led to the formation of a new group, which we named the Wild Poppies Collective after a poem by former political prisoner Marilyn Buck.<sup>20</sup> The collective has worked together since 2009, organizing educational events and actions about prisons, state repression and political prisoners.

## UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF DOMESTIC COUNTERINSURGENCY

JUST AS IT is important for us to make connections across generations of activists that have experienced repression, it is equally important for us to

lifestyle. The bombing killed 11 of the inhabitants, including five children, and destroyed 60 nearby homes. Margot Harry, *Attention, MOVE! This is America* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1987).

- 5 A notable exception is the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Philadelphia-based organization that is led by Pam Africa and advocates for the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal. For more information see: [www.freemumia.com](http://www.freemumia.com).
- 6 For example, the Black Panther Party was popularized on a national level through their campaign to free party founder Huey Newton. Also, in the 1970s the Puerto Rican independence movement in the U.S. was built at least in part through a successful campaign to free five Puerto Rican Nationalists, one of whom was imprisoned for attempting to assassinate President Truman in 1950, and four of whom had fired guns on the floor of Congress in 1954. See: David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993) and Dan Berger, "The Real Dragons: A Brief History of Political Militancy and Incarceration, 1960s to 2000s," *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer. (Oakland: PM Press and Kersplebedeb, 2008), 15–19.
- 7 For those looking to learn more about this history, a great place to start is the documentary film *COINTELPRO 101*, directed by former political prisoner Claude Marks. It provides a broad outline of the effects of government repression against U.S.-based movements in the '60s and '70s. *COINTELPRO 101*. DVD. Directed by Claude Marks. (San Francisco, CA: The Freedom Archives, 2011).
- 8 Jericho Movement, "Prisoners," Jericho website, <http://www.thejerichomovement.com>, (accessed February 28, 2012).
- 9 The Minnehaha Free State was the work of a loose coalition of radical environmentalists, neighborhood organizers, and Native American activists who joined together in the summer of 1998 to stop the reroute of Highway 55 through park land, Native sites of spiritual and historic importance, and neighborhoods in South Minneapolis. To this end, for almost 16 months, they illegally occupied empty houses and park land in the middle of the planned reroute. On December 20, 1998, over 800 police officers raided the Free State, violently arresting over two dozen people. Another encampment was set up two days later and lasted through the following December. Ultimately, the reroute went through. See RNC Welcoming Committee, *The Struggle Is Our Inheritance: A History of Radical Minnesota* (2007), 71–75. Available for download at: <http://zinelibrary.info>.
- 10 The annual ISAG conference, a meeting of academics and corporate representatives, was met with two days of rowdy, unpermitted protests leading to over 100 arrests, a violent house raid, felony charges, and individual exclusion orders on released demonstrators. Individual exclusion orders bar specific named individuals from attending certain events or being in certain locations, where their presence would normally be a legal right protected by the U.S. Constitution. See RNC Welcoming Committee, *The Struggle Is Our Inheritance*, 82–83.
- 11 RNC Welcoming Committee, *The Struggle Is Our Inheritance*, 2.



While the devastating effect that repression can have should not be underestimated, we also believe that repression has the potential to act as a force-multiplier, expanding instead of curtailing the possibility for resistance. Of course, this is only true to the extent that we refuse to be daunted by increasingly high stakes. We might be afraid, but we should accept that fear will be a part of the process of building a world based on justice and love.

The function of counterinsurgency is to make us believe that the cost of resistance is always greater than the potential gains of fighting for liberation. But we can change the calculus. We can turn moments that are supposed to destabilize and drain our movements into moments that allow us to grow, become more expansive, learn our history and create new alliances. We can use these moments to educate our communities about how to fight repression, build strength in moments of fear, and tap into an amazingly rich and inspiring history of resistance. And these actions can move us from resisting repression to sowing the seeds of tomorrow's insurgencies.

## NOTES

- 1 In 1956, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover launched a domestic counterintelligence program known as COINTELPRO. COINTELPRO had a wide range of targets on the left, from the Communist Party-USA, Martin Luther King, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement. The expressed goal of COINTELPRO was to destroy targeted organizations by increasing divisiveness and causing intense interpersonal and political disagreements. The FBI did this in subtle ways by provoking feuds between activists and organizations, and when those tactics failed they resorted to force and coercion. The program targeted right-wing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, too, but the nature of the FBI's approach to these groups was qualitatively different. See Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2001) and Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2001).
- 2 Fred Hampton was a leader of the Chicago Black Panthers. On December 4th, 1969, he was murdered in his sleep by the Chicago Police Department. See Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Toronto: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009).
- 3 For more information on the RNC 8 case, see *Conspiracy to Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism: The Collective Autobiography of the RNC 8*, Leslie James Pickering, ed., (Arisa Media Group, 2011).
- 4 In 1985, the Philadelphia Police Department dropped a C-4 bomb on a house owned by the MOVE family, a Black liberation organization that advocated a "back-to-nature"

understand that counterinsurgency tactics do not only target existing political movements. Perhaps the most devastating counterinsurgency efforts are those designed to prevent movements from emerging in oppressed communities. The state does this in part by enacting social, legal, and policing strategies that criminalize and incarcerate poor people and people of color. Any analysis of repression that does not include the 2.3 million people in prison in the United States, or the fact that black people are incarcerated at a rate more than five times that of whites,<sup>21</sup> will lead us to false conclusions about how to resist repression. We can and must make our fight against overt repression of political movements tie back to the realities of mass incarceration and the legacy of white supremacy.

Incarceration rates began their dramatic increase in the late 1970s in the wake of massive radical social struggles, especially in black, Latino and Native communities. White supremacy plays a major role in upholding existing power structures, and efforts to fight white supremacy are met with particularly harsh repercussions from the state. Some of this repression is immediate and obvious—from 1968 to 1971, the FBI was either directly or indirectly involved in as many as 40 murders of Black Panthers.<sup>22</sup> And the American Indian Movement and its supporters were targeted even more intensely, with the state playing a role in 69 murders on the Pine Ridge reservation alone between 1973 and 1976.<sup>23</sup> But backlash against these movements is also mobilized through racially coded policies like "the War on Drugs," which was officially launched by Ronald Reagan in 1982 at a time when drug use was actually *decreasing*, and which led to massive imprisonment of people of color and, to a lesser extent, poor whites.<sup>24</sup> The War on Drugs itself increased the state's capacity for counterinsurgency, particularly in poor urban communities, as millions of dollars in federal funding was directed towards militarizing local police departments.<sup>25</sup> And the drug war was just one component of the conservative "law and order" policies that were specifically designed to create a conservative backlash against the civil rights and liberation movements of the preceding decades, and to prevent such movements from emerging in the future.

The expansion of the prison industrial complex shapes the context in which we operate and affects our ability to imagine what kind of resistance is possible. We believe that genuine efforts at fighting counterinsurgency must acknowledge the profound effect that mass incarceration has had on crushing resistance movements. And we also believe that the fight against mass incarceration is critical, both inside and outside the prison walls. We take inspiration from the many political prisoners who have been part of anti-prison movements and who continue to remind us that the entire prison system must be a central target of our struggles. As the recent prison strikes at Pelican Bay and across the nation prove, not even the most repressive conditions can



stop the development of organized resistance. It is our job as radicals on the outside to amplify this resistance and help it grow.<sup>26</sup>

**Layne:** *The Wild Poppies Collective saw the struggle to free political prisoners as intimately connected to fighting the prison industrial complex. We felt that freeing political prisoners was one aspect of a larger struggle against state repression and mass incarceration, but initially found it hard to make these connections manifest themselves in practice. In 2010 we became aware of Pennsylvania's plans to build three new prisons and expand several others across the state. That seemed like an opportunity to broaden our work, and in 2011, the WPC helped launch a campaign against the prison expansion projects. The campaign, called Decarcerate PA, is demanding a moratorium on prison construction, a reduction in the prison population, and the reinvestment of money in our communities. Our hope is that this campaign can help build a united front against mass incarceration in Pennsylvania, and that successful decarceration efforts could lead not just to the release of political prisoners but to many others targeted by the racist police state.*<sup>27</sup>

Of course, global and domestic counterinsurgencies have taken on new dimensions since September 11, 2001. Globally, the U.S. has waged two long-term and official wars of occupation, in Iraq and Afghanistan, while escalating the practice of unofficial, imperialist warfare throughout much of the world, including increased drone strikes and other military operations in Pakistan and Yemen.<sup>28</sup>

Though we do not believe that the post-9/11 era represents a *fundamental* change in the character of repression employed by the American state, neither do we want to downplay the sweeping and insidious nature of the domestic mechanisms of repression enacted under the banner of a global “War on Terror.” The past ten years have seen a massive wave of legislation on both the federal and state levels aimed at criminalizing entire communities (namely, Muslims, Arabs, and immigrants as a whole), as well as a shift towards codifying tactics that police agencies previously employed illegally.<sup>29</sup> Thousands of people, mostly Muslim men, have been imprisoned indefinitely in military prisons abroad and in civilian prisons within the U.S., many without even a nominal guarantee of due process.

The post-9/11 era has also shaped the prison system—for example, with the creation of “Communications Management Units” designed to severely restrict communication with the outside world. People held in the CMUs are permitted only one 15-minute phone call a week, and are barred from any physical contact during the few visits they are allowed. Muslims (primarily of Middle Eastern descent) make up the vast majority of the CMU population, though the units also house other inmates, including a few earth and animal liberation prisoners. People are held in the facilities for a number of

and ableism are not “side issues”; they exist both within and outside of our movements, and we cannot successfully fight the state while ignoring these realities. Indeed, what point would there be to toppling the state while leaving its mechanisms of oppression in place?

The more time that women, people of color, and queer and trans people must spend fighting for the space to be heard, respected and valued within the movement, the less time and energy we have available for fighting the state. Conversely, the more we find ways to struggle against systemic oppression, the more space is opened up for people to feel safe participating in the struggle. A vision of safety for everyone is inextricably tied up with our vision of liberation. In this context, safety does not mean that we will never experience trauma, but real “security culture” involves creating spaces where people feel comfortable participating and bringing their full selves to the work. It is essential that we work to build communities capable of supporting people as they take calculated political risks. The more we support each other and hold each other accountable, the better positioned we will be to channel our creativity and energy into taking risks that, while they may lead to repression, can move us towards the goal of revolutionary change. Creating supportive communities and safer spaces is not just an end in itself; it creates a context where we are able to fight for a world without oppression, even in the face of heightened attacks from the state.

## CONCLUSION

WE DON'T MEAN to suggest that honesty, cooperation, and a good history lesson are all that's required to wage a successful revolution in the United States. However, we do believe that without a commitment to these things, victory will be impossible. And while we would have preferred not to spend two years engaged in a time-consuming and costly legal battle fighting trumped-up charges against the RNC 8, the lessons we learned were invaluable. Our connections to other struggles are deeper, our analysis is stronger, and we believe that the movements that we are a part of have grown as a result of these experiences.

In this chapter, we have proposed a proactive strategy for protecting our movements from counterinsurgency methods. We see the following as key components of that strategy: understanding both our history and our current context, valuing honesty across ideologies and rejecting false divisions, and committing to noncooperation and to fostering real security culture and community safety. This list is neither foolproof nor exhaustive, but we believe that it can take us at least part of the way towards turning moments of repression into opportunities for movement building.

with in their own right, and also insofar as they leave us vulnerable to disruption by government forces.

While we believe that radical movements should be able to protect themselves and function outside of criminal legal apparatuses, we often lack the skills and the will to address conflict and abuse head-on. At the same time, many radicals, recognizing that cops are dangerous to the communities they police, are working to build alternative forms of justice and methods of harm reduction. There are organizations imagining and developing ways to create genuine community safety by building upon methods of handling conflict that have long existed in communities that haven't been able to rely on the police, as well as finding new ways of addressing various forms of violence.<sup>57</sup> Those of us struggling against overt forms of political repression would do well to learn from these movements. Our communities are often torn apart by abusive behaviors, sexual assault, and other forms of interpersonal violence, and these divisions are easily exploited by infiltrators. We become less vulnerable when we have methods in place to honestly address the conflict and violence that emerge as we are working, struggling, and living together.

**Layne:** *One of the things I got out of reflecting on my experiences organizing against state repression is the need to develop proactive, visionary movements that can not only withstand state intervention, but are also creating new ways of building organizations and communities. We started out trying to build support for the RNC 8 while they were facing protest-related legal charges, which was in many ways a pretty narrow and specific goal. But through doing that work we made connections with a lot of people who were approaching issues of state repression from a multitude of perspectives, from fighting for national liberation to developing models of transformative justice and envisioning a world without prisons or police. Each of these components has something extremely valuable to offer for fighting counterinsurgency. The trick is to figure out how to combine these elements into a comprehensive strategy that can not only withstand counterinsurgency tactics, but can also move us forward towards creating genuinely insurgent, revolutionary movements here in the United States.*

*I think that ideas of transformative justice, of finding ways to actually deal with harm outside of the criminal "justice" system, are crucial to this project. Envisioning and enacting real alternatives to the dysfunctional, soul-destroying systems that people are subjected to under capitalism can give us some of the tools we need—in particular the ability to communicate about difficult issues and create systems of accountability to each other—that make our movements strong enough to withstand state repression and much more likely to resist infiltration.*

Fighting oppression should be primary in our work, and not just a means to avoiding repression. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism,

reasons, such as involvement in prison organizing, drug convictions, various supposed communication infractions, and alleged or actual affiliations with foreign and domestic groups—on both the right and left—classified as “terrorist organizations.”<sup>30</sup>

CMUs are one of the clearest examples of how various and often separate targets of counterinsurgency—Arab Muslims, Black people, and radical activists, for instance—are being subjected to similar counterinsurgency tactics. Through building an understanding of the connections between different targets of counterinsurgency we can decrease exceptionalism in our movement and illuminate potential coalitional organizing strategies. Recognizing these intersections and the common enemy that has created them is critical for building mass support for incarcerated people whether they are considered political prisoners or not. In building revolutionary movements in the United States, we must address the systemic nature of white supremacy, xeno- and Islamophobia, and state repression, and use these intersections as a place to create unconventional alliances and new fronts of struggle.

## HONESTY ACROSS IDEOLOGIES

OFTEN, CONVERSATIONS ABOUT creating broad-based support for leftist causes are infused with the belief that we have to compromise or hide the most radical elements of our political analysis and activities to avoid alienating “the masses.” We reject this idea for two reasons: First, there is no homogenous “mass” of people. We live in a diverse society, and no single message or framing will or should appeal to everyone. And second, we believe that we can develop broad-based support through being as open and up-front about our politics as possible. This support is necessary as counterinsurgency attempts to isolate and marginalize radical voices and actions. Speaking as anarchists, we know that many people disagree with us, our arguments, and our visions for the future. However, disagreement need not be avoided and, when handled thoughtfully, is a critical component of political engagement and development—on both sides. The harder gap to bridge is the one created by false pretense: no one likes being lied to, especially not based on the condescending assumption that they couldn’t “handle” the truth. And in addition to the risk of alienating potential supporters and comrades through dishonesty, we lose unexpected opportunities for affinity and solidarity when we fail to present ourselves and our politics in a transparent manner.

**Luce:** *There are lots of examples of the benefits of political honesty, but a few from RNC organizing stick out in my mind. Our first endeavor in preparing for the RNC was to construct an explicitly anarchist force that other groups had to grapple*



*with, in one way or another. We weren't always well received. But more often than not we were able to gain recognition and respect amongst other anti-RNC organizing groups, in part, because we were the first group to emerge publicly in opposition to the convention, and in part because of our sheer determination. By the time the large, leftist anti-RNC coalition held a conference to gather endorsements for the opening day march, we had already been active for over a year. We took our place at the table as anarchists and, because we had made genuine and serious contributions to the body of anti-RNC efforts, even groups whose tendency would have been to write us off had little option other than to recognize us.*

*The Welcoming Committee's commitment to holding space for anarchists at the RNC meant that far more anarchists came to the protests than would have otherwise, and they came having already put time into preparing for the blockading strategy<sup>31</sup> that had been collectively agreed upon at the national meetings leading up to the RNC. The respect that we earned from other local organizations, however uneasily it was given, helped pave the way for real support after some of us were arrested and as the RNC 8 case (and, to a lesser extent, other felony cases) proceeded through the court system.*

*The eight of us were falsely accused of conspiring to do some extreme and ridiculous things, including saving buckets of urine for months prior to the convention to throw at cops, planning to kidnap delegates, and running a "terrorist training camp." Alongside these accusations, our anti-authoritarian politics were put in the spotlight. Ramsey County prosecutors thought that other anti-RNC protesters and the public at large would be shocked and horrified, both by the beliefs we actually held and by the absurd things we were accused of doing. They banked on the assumption that our allies would turn against us and, frankly, this would have been a reasonably likely outcome. But the fact that we made ourselves visible—anarchist politics and all—for almost two years before had given fellow activists time to get used to us and even develop an affinity with us. We weren't the scary anarchists of legend, descending on a good city from elsewhere, hell-bent on wreaking havoc, and our work over those two years had at the very least earned us the chance to tell our side of the story.*

*I also benefited personally from this approach at my job. At the time, I had been working in a college cafeteria on and off for six years. While I didn't walk around my workplace trying to convert people, I was open about my political beliefs and activities. When my mug shot flashed across the local news and I was publicly branded a terrorist, my coworkers and managers—who might otherwise have bought the state's narrative—had an honest relationship with me to counterbalance the hype. I didn't lose my job or suffer any repercussions, suspicion, or harassment at work (as happened to at least one co-defendant), and my manager even held my position during the time I was unavailable as a result of my arrest.*

sat through months and months of meetings but refused to share in the collective workload in any measurable way; Dugger was also confronted for having made numerous explicitly sexist remarks but then not held to account for his failure to change.<sup>54</sup> And "CS Anna," the FBI informant used to entrap and convict Eric McDavid, was emotionally abusive, and constantly crossed boundaries and violated consent by pushing Eric and his codefendants to engage in highly risky, illegal activity.<sup>55</sup>

None of these are behaviors we should tolerate, whether someone is working with law enforcement or not. And perhaps if we took these issues more seriously, some of these informants wouldn't have been able to establish a foothold in radical organizing circles in the first place, while others might have been forced out later on.

Additionally, we need to examine the challenges that substance abuse and addiction pose to community safety. A striking example of this is the story of Jacob Ferguson, a former member of the ELF whose transformation into a paid government informant was the turning point in Operation Backfire. His long-standing heroin addiction was no secret amongst folks in Eugene, Oregon, where he lived. But he kept the depth of his substance abuse problems from some of the people he was working with on ELF actions, and those who *were* aware apparently declined to intervene. Hence, he was able to participate in highly risky, clandestine activity, and the people he worked with placed their freedom in his hands. Several years later, when an unlucky chain of events brought him into contact with law enforcement, his drug activities gave them a point of leverage and his intimate knowledge of ELF activity became his ticket out.<sup>56</sup> At numerous points along the way, the people around Ferguson made poor decisions by failing to treat his addiction seriously enough, and the result has been a devastating process of prosecution, snitching, and imprisonment. How best to deal with these issues is an open and complicated question, but the pattern of ignoring or minimizing the seriousness of addiction, or isolating it as a personal problem instead of a community concern, produces dangerous consequences.

## REAL COMMUNITY SAFETY

AS A MOVEMENT, we need to build upon the idea that we don't just need to keep the cops out. We need to create models of genuine community safety and accountability that don't replicate either the macho posturing or the punitive discipline of the system we are trying to overturn. We must address conflict and trauma, combat systemic oppression and inequality, and establish systems to care for each other in times of hardship. Negative interpersonal dynamics and oppressive behaviors are serious problems that need to be dealt

informants had the chance to learn vital information about their lives and behaviors that they withheld from the larger group. Much of this information—what they were doing with their free time, how they appeared to make money, who they were getting close to—didn't necessarily appear suspicious on its face. But when pieced together with the intuitive reactions some of us had, it created an overall picture that clearly suggested these people were informants.

After the RNC was over and the informants had been discovered, I became aware of one particularly glaring example of the dangerous gap in our group communication. It came out that the FBI informant had failed to go through the vouching process that the rest of us completed in order to attend an important strategy meeting a few months prior to the convention.<sup>52</sup> Two different groups of people—a subcommittee he worked with, and the individuals handling registration for the conference—had attempted to get references and background information on him, and he evaded all of their inquiries. The subcommittee dropped the issue, figuring that the folks handling vouches would resolve it; and, in turn, the registrars let his failure to complete the process on their end slide because they figured his subcommittee wouldn't have let him in if he weren't vouched for. The two groups never talked to each other about this, though, and unbeknownst to everyone else, he was admitted to the session in violation of the security protocol we had agreed on. He was the only local informant present, as the protocol had successfully weeded out the others, and he secretly recorded the entire meeting, adding fodder to the prosecution's case against us down the line.

It's doubtful that we would ever have found definitive evidence against most of the infiltrators in the Welcoming Committee, but there was enough out there to justify a decision not to work with any of them. I believe we would have gotten to the point where we felt comfortable making a group decision to kick them out well before the RNC, and before much of the damage was done, if we had prioritized the work of building internal trust and respect and, essentially, of caring for each other.

It is significant that many informants who have been "outed" in the last several years have had reputations for highly problematic and even abusive behaviors. The most notorious of these cases is Brandon Darby, the Texas-based FBI informant mentioned above, who had a reputation for being violent, patriarchal, egotistical, dishonest, and aggressively disruptive. His position and abuse of power in post-Katrina New Orleans' Common Ground collective drove a lot of people, particularly women, out of the organization.<sup>53</sup> While Darby is perhaps an archetypal informant in exhibiting these traits, other recent informants have displayed a different—but still problematic—array of behaviors. Andrew Darst, the FBI informant in the Welcoming Committee, was extremely unreliable, emotionally manipulative, and dishonest. Chris Dugger and Marilyn Hedstrom, both also Welcoming Committee infiltrators,

## REJECTING FALSE DIVISIONS, CREATING GENUINE SOLIDARITY

ONE OF THE ways that the state suppresses movements is through exploiting existing divisions, and creating false ones, within potentially insurgent communities. Counterinsurgency employs the "good protester/bad protester" dichotomy as a way of manipulating people—both those who are politically engaged, and those who aren't. In this model, the state pits activists against each other, granting some of them (the "good ones") a measure of legitimacy but pinning it to their willingness to help undermine the work of the "bad ones." The idea is that maintaining a cozy relationship with the state will be an incentive for certain activists to delegitimize others, diverting attention from the oppressive nature of the system while accomplishing the goal of isolating and destabilizing radical movements. The dichotomy is often tied to tactical differences, exemplified in media coverage of mass mobilizations where cops, city officials and reporters talk about how the "good protesters" who will be marching peacefully are in danger of being overshadowed by the "bad protesters" who will vandalize things.

Whereas in previous decades protests were often either repressed or simply ignored, the post-911 era has seen the emergence of a more sophisticated model of protest policing. This model, sometimes called "strategic incapacitation," is designed to neutralize specific protesters while maintaining an appearance of the freedom of speech and assembly. According to sociologist Patrick Gillham, strategic incapacitation

is characterized by the goals of "securitizing society" and isolating or neutralizing the sources of potentially disruptive protest actions or events. These goals are primarily accomplished through (1) the use of surveillance and information sharing as a way to assess and monitor risks, (2) the use of pre-emptive arrests and less lethal weapons to selectively disrupt or incapacitate protesters that engage in disruptive protest tactics or *might* do so, and (3) the extensive control of space in order to isolate and contain disruptive protesters whether actual or potential.<sup>32</sup>

From a policing perspective, this model is most successful if the people who have been identified as the "good protesters" will voluntarily vilify the other protesters in the media and provide the police intelligence on more radical protest activity. The strategic incapacitation model can also create rifts in coalitions of protesters who otherwise might work together effectively despite different tactical or ideological approaches.

To avoid playing into the state's hands, we have to inoculate our movements with the belief that what we have to gain through solidarity is more



valuable than what we might gain through divisiveness. This doesn't mean that we can, or should, avoid meaningful conflict, but that we have to think more deeply about the *causes* of that conflict and the most constructive methods of dealing with it.

**Luce:** *One of the most enduring legacies of anti-RNC organizing is what we call the "St. Paul Principles." In our conversations with anarchists who had been a part of organizing for past mass mobilizations, we heard one issue come up over and over again: the nonviolence pledge. That is, it was not uncommon for major players in a given mobilization to require a pledge of nonviolence as a precondition to formal involvement in the protest organizing. This pledge easily (and to some extent, by design) becomes a wedge driven between groups that might otherwise have worked well together.*<sup>33</sup>

Many of us in the Welcoming Committee felt that it was important to avoid any sort of nonviolence pledge for two reasons. One was a matter of principle: though we saw no strategic value in violent protest at the RNC, there was an overwhelming rejection of pacifist ideology within the group and a belief that nonviolence pledges do more harm than good for radical organizing. The other reason was merely practical: we wanted to avoid being backed into a corner where a refusal to sign any sort of pledge cut us out of general anti-RNC organizing, or where the adoption of such an agreement turned off some of the anarchists we intended to make space for at the protests. So we decided to preempt the whole situation by approaching the other major organizers and proposing a different set of protest agreements—one that foregrounded solidarity and noncooperation with the state.

*The St. Paul Principles went as follows:*

1. *Our solidarity will be based on respect for a diversity of tactics and the plans of other groups.*
2. *The actions and tactics used will be organized to maintain a separation of time or space.*
3. *Any debates or criticisms will stay internal to the movement, avoiding any public or media denunciations of fellow activists and events.*
4. *We oppose any state repression of dissent, including surveillance, infiltration, disruption and violence. We agree not to assist law enforcement actions against activists and others.*

*When we conceived of the St. Paul Principles, we expected an uphill battle, in particular because our blockading plans roughly coincided with the big*

*you couldn't vouch for, would have mitigated the damage done by some of these informants. But we believe that our movements need to be operating with a much broader conception of what keeps us safe and secure. Healthier group dynamics not only allow us to function better collectively, but also make it easier to spot those who are being intentionally disruptive.*

While going through the recordings made by the informants in the RNC 8 case, it became clear that the comments that would be most damaging when played in court were not ones having to do with the actual protest planning. Instead, what seemed most useful for the prosecution were the multiple examples of macho posturing in which organizers were discussing actions that they clearly had no intention of, or capacity for, carrying out. Had the group actively discouraged this kind of talk, rather than tolerating or encouraging it, the state would have been stripped of the empty, inflammatory sound bites that constituted the backbone of their case.

**Luce:** *The Welcoming Committee's internal operation was highly dysfunctional, characterized by things like monopolies on information, grossly uneven workloads, and fraught interpersonal power dynamics. This situation made us especially vulnerable to infiltration and ill-equipped to deal with it. Most of the informants didn't fit in to the group socially or culturally, but rather than being domineering and provocative, they tended to sit on the sidelines, listening and asking questions and hiding behind the explanation that they were "inexperienced." In this way, they played on people's sympathies, and thus weren't held accountable for behaviors that really weren't okay, such as making incredibly sexist comments or refusing to contribute to the group's work.*

*The FBI informant preyed on younger and less experienced people who felt that their work and opinions were not valued within the larger group. In big meetings, he was quiet and unassuming, while also at times being quite inquisitive. This made some people feel like he genuinely cared about what they thought and did. FBI recordings showed that as he gained those people's trust, he started to push conversations in dangerous directions, subtly needling and prodding people into posturing about criminal activity well beyond the scope of the organizing they were actually engaged in.*

*As the RNC unfolded and we realized who the informants were, it became clear that they were all people who had raised alarms for many of us over the course of their involvement and who, with a better internal process, we would have been able to kick out early on. Those of us who were particularly suspicious had taken steps to limit our contact with some of these individuals, protecting ourselves individually but failing to protect the group. And as the eight defendants pored over audio and video surveillance obtained through legal discovery, these suspicions were validated as it was apparent that the FBI informant in particular had behaved in ways that were unacceptable. Those who were closer to the*

Second, the time lapse between the actions and the indictments in the Operation Backfire cases meant that many of the defendants were no longer active in radical environmental struggles and had stepped back from the movement as a whole. The minority of defendants who steadfastly refused to cooperate were people who had remained deeply involved in social justice movements, or who had retained strong personal relationships to people and communities that are committed to noncooperation. Most of the snitches in Green Scare cases have been people who no longer had a deep connection to any radical movement that would hold them accountable. Many defendants were facing multiple life sentences for actions they took as a part of a struggle that was no longer present in their daily lives. In this context, it's easy to see how an internal moral code alone wasn't enough to keep all of them from informing on each other.<sup>48</sup>

Ultimately, the responsibility for their actions rests on the shoulders of the snitches themselves, but the cooperating Green Scare defendants highlight weaknesses in our movements. We have to ask ourselves hard questions about whether or not we foster an environment that is both supportive and challenging, especially as people's politics, tactics, and the nature of the movement itself develop and change over time. We must build accountability with each other, because making choices to protect our movements in the face of serious consequences runs counter to the ways that we have been socialized to conceive of our self-interest. When the movement is weak, it can be difficult for people to realize that the decisions we make *do* have an impact on our collective future. Therefore, it is essential that we create relationships that are both supportive of personal and political growth *and* are able to deepen, grow, and maintain accountability over the long-term. There is no foolproof way to insulate ourselves from future risk, but we can give ourselves an advantage through thoughtful, constant nurturing of strong relationships and healthy communities.

## REAL SECURITY CULTURE

WE NOW KNOW there were two paid informants and two undercover cops who had infiltrated the Welcoming Committee, as well as an activist from Texas who had already been flipped by the FBI but was only outed through his role in an RNC-related case.<sup>49</sup> There were also numerous informants used in the Green Scare cases. Some of them had been operating in radical communities for years and were flipped by the Feds,<sup>50</sup> but at least one was a paid infiltrator from the beginning.<sup>51</sup> Adhering to traditional security culture guidelines, such as never indulging in discussions about past illegal activity for nostalgia's sake or never engaging in clandestine activity with people who

*anti-war march on the first day of the convention. To our surprise, several of the major groups organizing the march were enthusiastic about the idea. The St. Paul Principles were integrated into the endorsement of the big march, which had the effect of bringing on board some of the groups who would otherwise have been most inclined to impose and enforce a nonviolence pledge.*

Beyond being divided over tactics, radical movements are often deeply divided by ideological differences. Without minimizing these differences, it is important to struggle to find common ground. When we become too dogmatic or only seek out alliances within our own political milieu, we fail to learn from the experiences of other movements. We also deny ourselves the chance to create a broad and diverse base of support for our own struggles.

*Luce: Prior to the RNC, I identified a strategic value for the anarchist movement here in fostering better relationships with non-anarchist groups. But it wasn't until I had the privilege of watching the fruits of that labor, both at the protests during the RNC and in the community response to legal fallout afterwards, that I truly felt the necessity of such cross-movement solidarity. There is a huge difference between having an intellectual commitment to bridging ideological and social gaps in our movements, and holding a genuine sense of solidarity. Most organizing groups had agreed to the St. Paul Principles before the RNC, but the agreement was often rife with mutual wariness. After the convention, this uneasiness dissipated, and in its place, a sense of collective struggle started to emerge. Signing on to the principles had seeded the idea of this collective struggle, and as the eight of us and the Welcoming Committee as a whole were attacked by the state, other "signatories" felt that they were under attack by extension. Support for our defense was far more diverse than support for our previous organizing had been. And though the St. Paul Principles were specific to the RNC protests in letter, even today people invoke them explicitly in discussions of ongoing community work in the Twin Cities, and model new protest agreements after them across the country.*

Genuine cross-movement solidarity is especially powerful insofar as its growth nurtures and sustains new work in unpredictable ways. While maintaining a critical approach to political and tactical differences, we should also make intentional strides towards opening ourselves up to these new—and sometimes unconventional—alliances. This work has to take place both on the level of personal transformation, and as a matter of organizational culture.

*Luce: While developing the RNC8 support campaign we decided to frame our defense within a broader analysis of state repression, and to intentionally tie it to ongoing political work outside of the defensive realm. For example, we planned most of our events as joint fundraisers, whether with other legal defense funds or*



groups engaging in proactive political work. Our insistence on using this model was occasionally a point of frustration for some within the defense committee, who felt like they had signed up to support the RNC 8 and, instead, got stuck with the responsibility of supporting a whole movement. But in the end, members of the defense committee voiced an appreciation of the collective efforts at pushing the boundaries of our support; it made the often mundane work of fundraising and courtwatching more meaningful, and provided ways for people to bring their own political priorities to the table. The practice of continually pushing a narrative that anchored our case to a bigger analysis of repression lent our support work more of a feeling of the mutual aid that is sometimes lacking in legal defense campaigns.

A striking example of this, in my mind, came about in the fall of 2009. Carrie Feldman and Scott DeMuth, two people many of us were friends with, and who had been involved in anti-RNC work among other things, were subpoenaed to a grand jury in southern Iowa relating to an ongoing investigation of an Animal Liberation Front action that had occurred several years prior. Scott and Carrie were initially positioned to receive relatively little support, since the case came seemingly out of nowhere, and animal rights activity receives a chilly reception in many parts of the left. But despite their case having only a circumstantial connection to the RNC, we piggybacked support for the two of them onto RNC 8 infrastructure, hoping that the goodwill afforded us would be extended to them. Our supporters as a whole were remarkably open to this, and it greatly expanded the scope of solidarity for Scott and Carrie as their case progressed.<sup>34</sup>

In September of 2010, as Scott's case was nearing resolution and our own trial date approached, I had a moment of thinking that this local spell of overt repression was finally drawing to a close. Then, on September 24th, I woke up to the news that the FBI was raiding several houses around the metro area. The situation that has unfolded in the time since is this: Two dozen activists, most of them in Minneapolis and Chicago, were subpoenaed to a federal grand jury investigating alleged "material support for terrorism."<sup>35</sup> Based on search warrant affidavits, it appears that the targets of the investigation have been chosen because of their international solidarity work, especially in support of Palestinian liberation. For some of them, an additional and overlapping component of the investigation seems to be their membership in the Freedom Road Socialist Organization.<sup>36</sup> All have refused to cooperate with the grand jury.

Many of these new targets had been active supporters of the RNC 8 as our case progressed. Over the course of our own support campaign, we had started cooking a free meal for supporters once a month as a gesture of appreciation for their work. The meals provided a monthly space for those dealing with the RNC aftermath to gather unencumbered by the obligations of fundraisers, speaking events, and meetings, and the sense of community fostered at these dinners was hugely beneficial to all of us, emotionally and psychologically. As our friends dealt with their own unfolding political case, some of the RNC 8 and the folks who were involved in

arrest in 1985, when she was being kept in isolation, unsure of what would happen to her or her comrades. Whitehorn responded that she had sung songs from her childhood to pass the time and help calm her nerves. This story left a lasting impression on me because it served as a reminder that we all have internal resources that we can use to make it through extremely stressful situations, but we need to be open to the fact that these resources may not come in the forms that we expect.

Fostering fear is a key part of the psychological dimension of counterinsurgency strategy. When people cooperate with police investigations, it is often because they are afraid of the consequences and don't truly believe that the movement will give them the support they need. Of course, people are responsible for their own actions, and the movement cannot afford to support those who decide to collaborate. But when so many people in the last decade have felt compelled to snitch, it must be because we as a movement are doing something wrong. We need to create more opportunities to talk about the psychological effects of state repression, and how we can successfully counteract them. Finding ways to support people who are in scary situations and also teach ourselves how to handle our fear is absolutely essential in building movements that can effectively and strategically respond to our current conditions. Learning to cope with fear does not mean simply showing bravado in the face of repression. Instead we must learn to create spaces that allow us to be vulnerable with each other and be honest about our weaknesses and apprehensions. Building this kind of support helps keep us true to our beliefs and vision even in the face of extreme consequences. It is not enough to believe in our cause; we must also learn to believe in each other.

The development of trust and support should be strong enough to stand the test of time. The Green Scare cases make the necessity of building long-lasting relationships within our movements very clear. In Operation Backfire, the authorities were able to flip a single person and send him around the country wearing a wire, to find his former comrades and get them to talk about the actions they had done together. Eventually, more than two-thirds of the Backfire defendants turned informant, which has created a snowball effect: the informants offered the state new leads in investigations that had gone cold years ago, meaning more and more people have been prosecuted and, in turn, many of them have snitched, producing even newer leads and cases.

One of the factors in the state's success was the passage of several years between the ELF actions and the arrests. There are two implications: First, it meant that people had grown complacent, believing that they were in the clear; having dropped their guard, they were vulnerable. The state's successful strategy in this instance speaks to the ever-present possibility of repression, and reminds us of the dangers of waning vigilance. The state is both patient and proactive, and repression doesn't stop just because a group is no longer active.

*EWOK!* did such a thorough job of saturating the south Minneapolis punk and anarchist scene with this information that it became somewhat routine for us to get calls when folks in town (or sometimes, in other states) were harassed by the FBI or subpoenaed to grand juries and wanted help finding legal support and getting the word out. In 2007, the FBI approached a kid who had been arrested for graffiti and asked him to infiltrate vegan potlucks looking for information on anti-RNC organizing because he “looked the part.” Though he wasn’t involved in political work, he knew he had the right to refuse. He had seen the *EWOK!* zine and, rather than help the feds, he contacted us with his story, even passing on the business cards and phone numbers of the FBI agents who had propositioned him. *EWOK!* was able to spin this into a number of local mainstream media stories, further expanding awareness of the state’s use of informants and of the specific repressive efforts already underway.

**Sarah:** Because many younger activists and organizers in Philadelphia were not experiencing direct state repression, there was a lack of consciousness about the possibility of state action against us. Wanting to use this moment of relative calm to help people prepare for the possibility of future repression, the Wild Poppies Collective put together a workshop designed to both teach about the legal aspects of grand jury resistance and also talk about the psychological aspects of dealing with counterinsurgency.

For the grand jury portion of the workshop we brought in a radical lawyer, Soffiyah Elijah, who has represented political prisoners since the early 1980s and who was able to speak to participants about the specific ways that grand juries are used to gather information about movements.<sup>45</sup> She outlined some of the most effective strategies for resisting grand juries and dealing with the judicial system. Two former political prisoners, Laura Whitehorn<sup>46</sup> and Ricardo Jiménez,<sup>47</sup> helped facilitate the workshop and also led us in a discussion about the emotional aspects of dealing with imprisonment. We wanted to open up space for people to talk openly about fear, instead of just falling back on bravado or ego to get through scary situations. Bravado may look good in the streets, but can quickly fall apart once activists are facing interrogations or long prison sentences. However, building structures of support where we can sustain each other emotionally through difficult situations creates a much stronger foundation for noncooperation over the long term.

Whitehorn and Jiménez spoke not only about the details of their cases, but also of how they were able to cope emotionally with the intense situations they found themselves in after being arrested. By openly talking about the fears and challenges they faced during their arrests and their time in prison, these older activists opened up space for workshop participants to ask questions about how to face these fears head on. During the question and answer session, one younger activist asked Whitehorn how she had kept herself together emotionally in the days after her

our defense committee were looking for meaningful ways to provide support and decided to start organizing a similar monthly meal for them. I think this sort of activity would have been unlikely prior to the RNC, but the work we’ve all engaged in together has built a feeling of solidarity strong enough to nurture new, cross-movement bonds.

One of the subpoenaed activists once said to me, “We’re standing on your shoulders.” While we can’t reasonably take any credit for their noncooperating stance, this statement illustrates the extent to which RNC 8 support work injected new attention to state repression in the Twin Cities and established a set of expectations about how to deal with it. The work that went into both our case and Scott and Carrie’s cases had become a local reference point for principled resistance to state repression by the time these subpoenas were issued, providing both inspiration and concrete models for possible radical responses.

**Layne:** Another positive outcome from doing RNC 8 support in Philadelphia was the development of a lasting relationship between the Wild Poppies Collective (WPC) and local Puerto Rican Independence activists. One of the WPC members had a previous relationship with the National Boricua Human Rights Network and invited a long-time independence activist to speak on the Conspiring for Change panel. Following the panel, we became involved in the campaign to free Carlos Alberto Torres and Oscar López Rivera, the two longest held Puerto Rican political prisoners in the U.S.

As we learned more about this history, it quickly became clear that there was a lot to learn from the independence movement, both because of their unwavering militant non-collaboration with the state and because they are one of the few movements that has successfully freed the majority of their political prisoners.<sup>37</sup> In order to support these ongoing struggles, the WPC held events featuring former political prisoners from the Puerto Rican movement and hosted discussions about colonialism in Puerto Rico.<sup>38</sup> These generated support, at least in our immediate political circles, among people who were not previously thinking about U.S. colonialism as a present-day reality. Had we been thinking about the RNC 8 support campaign in a more narrow way, or if we had only sought relationships with other anarchists, we would have missed this opportunity to deepen our understanding of anti-colonial struggles and learn from others who had been fighting state repression for decades.

**Sarah:** In 2010, Layne, Luce, and I, along with another member of the WPC, traveled to Puerto Rico with a delegation from Philadelphia to celebrate the release of Carlos Alberto Torres. Before his release, Torres was one of two remaining political prisoners out of a group of Puerto Rican independentistas who were arrested during the early 1980s and accused of being members of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN). While a highly successful campaign resulted in Bill Clinton commuting the sentences of eleven FALN prisoners in 1999, Torres and



his co-defendant Oscar López Rivera remained in prison. Torres' release after 30 years was an occasion of enormous celebration. His freedom, as well as the release of the 11 political prisoners in 1999, was the culmination of decades of work by the Puerto Rican independence movement and their allies. Part of their success lay in building a campaign that worked on multiple fronts, from gaining the support of Nobel Laureates and religious and political leaders,<sup>39</sup> to staging protests and acts of civil disobedience, to building alternative institutions like clinics and schools where the history of anti-colonial resistance could be taught.<sup>40</sup>

We felt incredibly lucky to be invited to participate in Torres' homecoming. At the time, Luce was still facing two felony charges, and we thought it would be fitting for us to celebrate the release of a political prisoner before she might herself become one. It was an amazing opportunity to learn from a successful 30-year campaign as well as to talk about the upcoming RNC 8 trial. But what we got from our time in Puerto Rico, more than any specific strategy lessons, was the inspiration that came from being with so many people who have fought for their independence with ferocity and love and who were willing to extend their love and support to others in the struggle. And while Oscar López Rivera remains in prison, we continue to fight for his release.<sup>41</sup>

On our last night in Puerto Rico we were eating dinner with two independentistas who had worked for decades for the freedom of the political prisoners. As we were celebrating Carlos' release, and talking about the upcoming RNC 8 trial, one of them said to Luce, "If you go to prison, we'll be there in Minnesota to celebrate when you get out." This was the kind of cross-movement, inter-generational solidarity we had set out to build when we started working on the RNC 8 case, and it came about because we sought out the chance to work in solidarity with people across ideological and cultural divides.

## CREATING THE CONTEXT FOR NONCOOPERATION

TO SUCCESSFULLY RESIST counterinsurgency we need to develop a context that both demands and supports noncooperation with the state. At its most basic, noncooperation means refusing to give any information on movement activities to law enforcement, or to aid in their investigation and targeting of political movements. There are a few components that are necessary to actively support and build a culture of noncooperation. The first is education. We need to teach each other why noncooperation is so important, and what it looks like in practice. The second is figuring out how to support each other as we experience fear. And the third is developing relationships and movements that can be sustained over the long haul.

There are numerous ways that people choose to engage in noncooperation, ranging from declining to answer questions in police interviews to becoming

fugitives to avoid criminal prosecution. The principle of noncooperation with law enforcement is crucial to maintaining political integrity. It has proven to be an extremely effective method of limiting the damage done by, and even incapacitating, investigations aimed at weakening radical movements. In particular, the principle of noncooperation and its effectiveness has shone in the history of resistance to grand juries. Examples of grand jury resistance abound, including in the Black liberation movement, earth and animal liberation movements, and anti-war and international solidarity movements, just to name a few.<sup>42</sup>

The Puerto Rican Independence Movement has an especially strong tradition of grand jury resistance. Puerto Rican activists and their supporters have faced numerous rounds of grand jury subpoenas, beginning in the 1930s, and reoccurring during high moments of struggle in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s, and most recently in 2007.<sup>43</sup> Generations of independence activists and their supporters have refused to cooperate with grand juries, even when they are jailed for contempt of court. This has limited the amount of information that the state has been able to gather about movement activities. And when faced with the realization that the threat of imprisonment was not enough to gain compliance, the government at times has even been forced to withdraw grand jury subpoenas.<sup>44</sup>

However, developing this kind of consistent noncooperation takes some serious work on our part. We can't just assume that people in our movements already know that they shouldn't talk to the FBI or testify before a grand jury, even if they recognize the state as an enemy. Sometimes people cooperate with law enforcement or talk to the cops because they believe they have "nothing to hide" or because they think they can "outsmart" them by only giving information that is assumed to be widely known or publicly available. But while we can't always know exactly what information the state has or how it will be used, we do know that data collection is a first and vital step in counterinsurgency efforts. Providing information to activists about the principles behind non-collaboration and how to respond when the state shows up at your door can help foster a movement that is able to withstand this kind of intervention.

**Luce:** For a lot of younger people who became involved in anti-RNC organizing, EWOK! materials and events were what introduced them to this idea, and it played a big role in the fact that no one from Minneapolis turned informant during the RNC or its aftermath. In our work, we highlighted the destructive nature of cooperation with the state. We emphasized that our movements do not have the capacity to deal with the devastating effects of snitching and collaborating—the seeds of deep distrust, the grand jury subpoenas, the criminal indictments and prison sentences—and promoted the idea that we cannot afford to support people who collaborate.