

BAD Press

Tracts in Individualist Anarchism –
the Best Of 1986-1999

The Boston Anarchist Drinking Brigade was founded in 1986 in Massachusetts, USA. Its aim was "[a] desire to avoid becoming a serious, committed, and humorless organization, coupled with the dissemination of individualist and other heretical ideas [that] made the BAD Brigade an object of continuous controversy within the anarchist scene."

The Brigade is part of the 'individualist anarchist' tradition whose roots can be traced back to the writings and works of mid-to-late 19th and early 20th century figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Josiah Warren, and Benjamin Tucker.



share with marxists of various sorts. In the lead-up to the April actions, there was no critique of government at all, just anti-corporate rhetoric that would appeal to any leftist. And in their press and internet discussions some anarchists even promote an anarchist politics of "municipalism" with taxes, referenda, and all decision-making by various unions and committees which sound very much like local governments. It is hard to find any mention of government's role in creating and maintaining this horrid economic arrangement we all live under.

While corporate capitalism is an enemy of working people, it could not wreak its havoc without the governments of the world to protect its privileges and promote its interests. The WTO is an organ of the various governments that participate in it, not a private organization. The cops so many anarchists enjoy fighting with are employees of the state, not the IMF, and are paid with money extorted from working people. Prison laborers in the united states and china are locked up and forced to work by government agents. Government polices, disempowers, and robs working people, enabling business owners, bankers, and landlords to dispossess them of the wealth they produce with their labor. Government preserves inequality and privilege and can never be the means of liberating people. This is the anarchist perspective, but it has been sorely lacking among anarchists of late.

Many anarchists, apparently, prefer to promote an image of themselves as anti-corporate activists who enjoy fighting with cops and smashing up businesses of which they disapprove, instead of putting forth a clear anti-statist position which would help others understand what makes anarchists and anarchy unique. It should come as no surprise, then, if people believe we advocate anarchy in its sense of disorder, instead of its alternative meaning of a libertarian world of free individuals and groups leading their lives in peace, without the burden of government on their backs.

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Anarchism Without Hyphens

There is only one kind of anarchist. Not two. Just one. An anarchist, the only kind, as defined by the long tradition and literature of the position itself, is a person in opposition to authority imposed through the hierarchical power of the state. The only expansion of this that seems to me reasonable is to say that an anarchist stands in opposition to any imposed authority. An anarchist is a voluntarist.

Now, beyond that, anarchists also are people and, as such, contain the billion-faceted varieties of human reference. Some are anarchists who march, voluntarily, to the Cross of Christ. Some are anarchists who flock, voluntarily, to the communes of beloved, inspirational father figures. Some are anarchists who seek to establish the syndics of voluntary industrial production. Some are anarchists who voluntarily seek to establish the rural production of the kibbutzim. Some are anarchists who, voluntarily, seek to disestablish everything including their own association with other people; the hermits. Some are anarchists who will deal, voluntarily, only in gold, will never co-operate, and swirl their capes. Some are anarchists who, voluntarily, worship the sun and its energy, build domes, eat only vegetables, and play the dulcimer. Some are anarchists who worship the power of algorithms, play strange games, and infiltrate strange temples. Some are anarchists who see only the stars. Some are anarchists who see only the mud.

They spring from a single seed, no matter the flowering of their ideas. The seed is liberty. And that is all it is. It is not a socialist seed. It is not a capitalist seed. It is not a mystical seed. It is not a determinist seed. It is simply a statement.

We can be free. After that it's all choice and chance.

Anarchism, liberty, does not tell you a thing about how free people will behave or what arrangements they will make. It simply says the people have the capacity to make the arrangements.

Anarchism is not normative. It does not say how to be free. It

and most widely-read writer associated with the anarchist movement, frankly advocates a strengthening of federal power and the political involvement of working people. He believes that criticizing the welfare state shows contempt for poor people and that it is the height of "arrogance and foolishness" for anarchists to criticize involvement in and support for statist politics. It is interesting that Chomsky's views have had such influence among anarchists, since the idea that supporting the united states government can somehow lead to a libertarian society resembles nothing so much as the argument of marxists that the authoritarian socialist state they advocate will one day produce an anarchist world.

In the absence of any anti-government message, the image of anarchists that most people seem to have come away with since the events in Eugene, Seattle, Washington, and London over the last year, is simply that of protesters who trash stuff and aren't afraid to fight cops. While property destruction and fighting cops are sometimes appropriate activities, they are not what makes an anarchist and do not promote an understanding of the anarchist critique of society among non-anarchists. It has been said that recent tactics on the part of anarchists have been worthwhile because they have brought attention to anarchists and have attracted new people to anarchist events and websites. But what are these people attracted to? Streetfighting with cops and trashing the gap or macdonalds, in all likelihood, not the idea of ridding the world of government and freeing up working people to choose for themselves where to shop, who to trade with, what kinds of food to grow and sell, and in general how to live their lives unencumbered by both corporate predators and politicians.

It is not the conventional news media that are to blame for the new image of anarchists. On the internet one can read anarchists happily recounting the actions of the black blocs as they confronted cops, "liberated" intersections, and smashed store fronts. The protesters in Washington chose to call themselves revolutionary anti-capitalists, a label they

Where Are the Anarchists?

An editorial in the December 4, 1999, issue of *The Economist*, referring to the events in Seattle in November, asked the question, "Why were there no anarchists among all those 'anarchists', by the way?" The question is a reasonable one for an observer to ask. While many of those who protested (and sometimes more) in Seattle were genuine, thoughtful anarchists, who felt that their actions there advanced the cause of human freedom, they failed to put forth a specifically anarchist point of view or adequately distinguish themselves from other protesters, most of whom advocated government action as the way to improve the lives of working people and protect our natural environment.

Unlike other advocates of social change, anarchists have historically opposed the existence of government and coercion. They have argued that free people are capable of organizing their lives as they see fit without the supervision of government with its laws, police, and military, which favor those who have economic or political power at the expense of the vast majority of working people. However, in their press and their public statements, this message is often absent. Anarchist activists in Seattle, London, Washington and elsewhere have criticized "globalization" and international capitalism in terms hardly different from those of other protesters. They condemn "free trade," the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF, but fail to present an anarchist alternative. The anarchists, by not presenting an explicit anti-government message, end up sounding like the nationalists and protectionists who lament the alleged decline of national sovereignty and advocate continued government intervention in people's economic arrangements.

In some cases, however, this is not just the result of a failure to make one's views explicit. Many people who call themselves anarchists are not opposed to using government as a means to promote the things they favor and see it as an acceptable and effective means of improving the lives of regular people. Noam Chomsky, perhaps the best-known

says only that freedom, liberty, can exist.

Recently, in a libertarian journal, I read the statement that libertarianism is an ideological movement. It may well be. In a concept of freedom it, they, you, or we, anyone, has the liberty to engage in ideology or anything else that does not coerce others denying their liberty. But anarchism is not an ideological movement. It is an ideological statement. It says that all people have a capacity for liberty. It says that all anarchists want liberty. And then it is silent. After the pause of that silence, anarchists then mount the stages of their own communities and history and proclaim *their*, not anarchism's, ideologies—they say how they, how they as anarchists, will make arrangements, describe events, celebrate life, work.

Anarchism is the hammer-idea, smashing the chains. Liberty is what results and, in liberty, everything else is up to people and *their* ideologies. It is not up to **the** ideology. Anarchism says, in effect, there is no such upper case, dominating ideology. It says that people who live in liberty make their own histories and their own deals with and within it.

A person who describes a world in which everyone must or should behave in a single way, marching to a single drummer is simply not an anarchist. A person who says that they prefer this way, even wishing that all would prefer that way, but who then says that all must decide, may certainly be an anarchist. Probably is.

Liberty is liberty. Anarchism is anarchism. Neither is Swiss cheese or anything else. They are not property. They are not copyrighted. They are old, available ideas, part of human culture. They may *be* hyphenated but they are not in fact hyphenated. They exist on their own. People add hyphens, and supplemental ideologies.

Liberty, finally is not a box into which people are to be forced. Liberty is a space in which people may live. It does not tell you how they will live. It says, eternally, only that we *can*.

Individualism, Anarchy, and Compassion

One of the problems that individualist anarchists have in trying to promote acceptance of their ideas among other anarchists, as well as many non-anarchists, is that they are sometimes seen as being insufficiently compassionate. Individualists envision a future where personal freedom, self-reliance, independence, and private property are the order of the day, and some believe that such a society would not provide well for those unable to work or otherwise fend for themselves. But, while an individualist society would certainly not provide aid to those in need in the same way that the welfare state or an anarchist commune would, free individuals are just as capable of being helpful to others as are the members and institutions of other kinds of societies.

Individualists tend not to emphasize the social service aspects of anarchist society, instead talking about the freedom it would provide for independent and able people to live the way they wish, collaborating or cooperating with others when and where they choose to. Collectivists, on the other hand, often concentrate on what individuals will get from the community in an anarchist future, e.g., free education, free health care, communal food stores, etc. This difference arises from their different views of people. Individualists see people as generally capable of fending for themselves when not prevented from reaching their full potential by government and law, whereas collectivists view people as unable or unlikely to lead full and happy lives without a formal social network of responsibilities and benefits, even in a stateless world.

Individualists don't believe anyone "deserves" anything other than the full fruit of their labor, ownership of property acquired by means of this labor, fulfillment of any agreement freely entered into with others, and the freedom to be otherwise left alone. Despite this, individualists do acknowledge that some people, and perhaps most people at some time, will need assistance from others to get by because of unforeseen and/or unfortunate circumstances.

apparently many anarchist are slow to learn. Unless anarchists develop a critique of the welfare state, abandon their leftist racism, and encourage people to rely on themselves and assume responsibility for their lives, there will be little to distinguish them from the rest of the authoritarian left, their anti-statist posturing notwithstanding. Only by encouraging libertarian actions in the present can we have any hope of a libertarian future.

people? Getting government out of the way is the only thing that will lead to the changes that can produce an improvement in the lives of people in LA. One important first step would be abolition of laws which restrict the entry of poor and/or black people into various jobs. Taxi regulations which constrict the transportation market, licensing of hairdressers, nurses and other occupations which excludes people who can't afford government-certified training programs or licensing fees, and zoning laws which prevent people from working out of their homes or setting up shops in some areas are all forms of government intervention in our economic life which keep many black people in poverty. Another area where state intervention is harming poor people is housing. Government-protected titles to abandoned property prevent people from homesteading and developing empty buildings, forcing them to rely on dirty, dangerous government housing. Additionally, drug laws, which criminalize a voluntary, private activity, promote the violence and theft that devastate many neighborhoods where black people live. Encouraging people to rely on themselves instead of the state can lead to self-sufficient, independent, and, hopefully, more rebellious people; people who will rebel against the real evils in society, the government and its laws, courts, cops, and military, not their neighbors and other non-coercive people.

The events in LA pushed leftists and anarchists to show where they stand, and, unfortunately, too many of them are standing on the wrong side. Leftists have been embracing government, racism, nationalism, murder, and destruction as the means to a free society at least since 1917. Historically, however, anarchists have talked of the need for consistency of means and ends, i.e., only moral or ethical means can yield moral or ethical results. But the anarchists who produced LA Today and The Libertarian Mutualist and those who share their views, expect us to believe that murder, assault and theft today will somehow lead to freedom and anarchy in the future. The experience of the authoritarian socialist movement has put the lie to such ideas, but

And individualists do have ideas about how such people would be helped in a stateless society.

Long before the welfare state came into existence, fraternal societies existed in the United States which provided both formal and informal mutual aid in the form of life insurance, health insurance, survivors benefits, old age housing, and other social services. And these societies, such as the Masons, the True Reformers, and the Ladies of the Maccabees, consisted largely of poor working people who banded together voluntarily to take care of themselves and their fellow members. These groups, of course, were in addition to the family and churches which were primary providers of reciprocal assistance before the government began providing social security and other benefits.

Similar voluntary associations and social networks could again provide the bulk of assistance for needy individuals in an anarchist society. There would, however, need to be different provisions made for those who were permanently unable to work or take care of themselves. But, just like vast numbers of Americans, despite heavy taxation to support government benefits, also contribute voluntarily to private charities, individuals in a stateless world would also contribute to private organizations dedicated to the care of those unable to care for themselves.

There remains the question of those able, but unwilling, to provide for themselves. In an individualist society, unless those unwilling to work were able to convince some individual or group that their companionship or existence was worth the cost of their upkeep, they would have to either work or leave the community and seek more hospitable surroundings. It is unlikely, however, that even the most altruistic collective or commune would long tolerate slackers more gladly than would a group of individualists. Additionally, since the amount of work necessary to acquire the means to feed, clothe, and house oneself would probably not be nearly as much in any kind of future anarchist society as it is today, it is not unreasonable to expect everyone who is able to

work for their keep.

Collectivists seem to believe that individuals and their private organizations cannot be trusted to be compassionate, and that, therefore, compassion must be socialized and administered by the community. Individualists, on the other hand, while perhaps not motivated primarily by compassion, work towards a world where people, as free individuals, can establish voluntary, overlapping networks to provide for all their needs and those of others. When free people are confronted with a problem, individualists believe, they will rise to the occasion. Although collectivists may talk more about the social benefits of anarchist society, individualists will provide them just as well, and in a freer setting.

choices that non-black and/or non-poor people make, and are therefore not responsible for the violent acts that some of them engage in. On the other hand, many of these leftists consider white people universally responsible for the actions of some people who are white, and therefore, in their moral system, all white people are fair targets for the "rage" of the "oppressed." As someone wrote in LA Today, "We have to realize that the conditions people of color suffer under in this country fully justify any act of resistance they choose to take, even if it "takes out" a few of our kind ("our kind" meaning whites, anti-racists and racists alike). Some of the victims may be good persons, activists, good friends or lovers, but we must be careful to lay the blame where it belongs: not on Black[sic] people but on the racist white capitalist system itself. In the blinding anger of insurrection people don't stop to ask your class credentials or your opinions on racism: if you're white you're a target. This is to be expected Not fun, but expected." Note that they say that racist murder is "not fun." They never say it is "not good."

Poor and/or black people, despite having fewer options in a number of areas in their lives, due both to racism and restrictive laws, still are capable of making choices about their actions, and are responsible for the consequences of their decisions, just as other people are. To think otherwise is to infantilize black people and/or poor people, to consider them less fully human than other people. Such thinking lays the basis for paternalistic interventions in their lives by the state, ensuring their continued dependence and poverty. Despite the fact that leftists blame the state and white people for the violence and destruction in LA, they turn to the state (run primarily by white people) to remedy the situation, not by leaving people alone, but by becoming more involved in people's lives. They support government housing, government jobs, welfare, government-funded and regulated child care, government funded drug "treatment," more black cops, and other government-centered programs and activities. If racist government is the problem, how can it be depended upon to change things to the benefit of poor black

produced LA Today, to the writers in The Revolutionary Worker, leftists and anarchists have defended, and "understood," and explained, and excused this hatred and violence. They blame Reagan and Bush and racism and the courts and the cops and the firefighters for the destruction and murder in LA. Not one of them has said beating and killing other people who have not initiated or planned to initiate violence against another person is wrong, regardless of what happened in the courts earlier that day. The writers in LA Today were blunt enough to label the violence in LA as not only justified, but necessary, while the editor of The Libertarian Mutualist was moved to "commend the brave perpetrators of random violence for being right on target." Neither have any of these writers said burning down other people's homes and shops is wrong. Ayofemi Folayan, in Sojourner, even implicitly blamed the fire department for the fires in LA, despite the fact that firefighters were being attacked when they tried to do their job, instead of holding those who lit them responsible. They all apologize for (in the words of Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous) "the excesses committed by a population enraged beyond measure," as if rage is an excuse for murder.

When a man, frustrated by his job and life in general, beats his girlfriend, do these people call on us to understand his rage? When cops, enraged by the refusal of one of their victims to obey their orders beat the shit out of him, are we expected to understand their rage? No, of course not. In such circumstances, we are expected to hold these violent individuals responsible for their actions and condemn them accordingly. The events in LA were no different. The haters there were no more defensible than the cops who bashed Rodney King.

The reason these writers were willing to defend the perpetrators of the violence in LA is because they apply a double standard to people, a racist and class-biased double standard. They seem to postulate that, because of institutional racism and economic inequality, black and/or poor people are incapable of making the same moral

Anarchism: Communist or Individualist? *Both*

I have been struck for a long time by the contrast between the largeness of the aims of Anarchism, the greatest possible realization of freedom and well-being for all-and the narrowness, so to speak, of the economic program of Anarchism, be it Individualist or Communist. I am inclined to think that the feeling of the inadequacy of this economic basis-exclusive Communism or exclusive Individualism, according to the school-hinders people from acquiring practical confidence in Anarchism, the general aims of which appeal as a beautiful ideal to many. I feel myself that neither Communism nor Individualism, if it became the sole economic form, would realize freedom, which always demands a choice of ways, a plurality of possibilities. I know that Communists, when asked pointedly, will say that they should have no objection to Individualists who wished to live in their own way without creating new monopolies or authority, and *vice versa*. But this is seldom said in a really open and friendly way; both sections are far too much convinced that freedom is only possible if *their* particular scheme is carried out. I quite admit that these respective doctrines, and these alone, give complete satisfaction and leave no problem unsolved (in their opinion). But they must not imagine that all people are constituted after their model and likely to come round to their views or remain "unreclaimed" adversaries on whom no sympathy is to be wasted. Let them but look on real life, which is bearable at all only by being varied and differentiated, in spite of all official uniformity. We all see the survival of earlier Communism, the manifold workings of present-day solidarity, from which new forms of future Communism may develop-all this in the teeth of the cut-throat capitalist Individualism which predominates. But this miserable bourgeois Individualism, if it created a desire for solidarity, leading to Communism, certainly also created a desire for a genuine, free, unselfish Individualism, where freedom of action would no longer be misused to crush the weaker and to form monopolies, as today.

Neither Communism nor Individualism will ever disappear; and if by some mass action the foundations of some rough form of Communism were laid, Individualism would grow stronger than ever in opposition to this. Whenever a uniform system prevails, Anarchists, if they have their ideas at heart, will go ahead of it and never permit themselves to become fossilized upholders of a given system, be it that of the purest Communism.

Will they, then, be always dissatisfied, always struggling, never enjoying rest? They might feel at ease in a state of society where all economic possibilities had full scope, and then their energy might be applied to peaceful emulation and no longer to continuous struggle and demolition. This desirable state of things could be prepared from now, if it were once for all frankly understood among Anarchists that both Communism and Individualism are equally important, equally permanent; and that the exclusive predominance of either of them would be the greatest misfortune that could befall mankind. From isolation we take refuge in solidarity, from too much society we need relief in isolation: both solidarity and isolation are, each at the right moment, freedom and help to us. All human life vibrates between these two poles in endless varieties of oscillations.

Let me imagine myself for a moment living in a free society. I should certainly have different occupations, manual and mental, requiring strength or skill. It would be very monotonous if the three or four groups with whom I would work would be organized on exactly the same lines; I rather think that different degrees or forms of Communism will prevail in them. But might I not become tired of this, and wish for a spell of relative isolation, of Individualism? So I might turn to one of the many possible forms of "equal exchange" Individualism. Perhaps people will do one thing when they grow older. Those who are but indifferent workers may continue with their groups; those who are efficient will lose patience at always working with beginners and will go ahead by themselves, unless a very altruist disposition makes it a pleasure to them to act as teachers or advisers to

No Justice, No Peace, No Excuse

Since late April, much has been written in the left and anarchist press about the acquittal of the cops who beat Rodney King and the beatings, killings, and stealing that followed shortly afterwards in Los Angeles. As could be expected most of the leftist press either endorsed or apologized for the violence committed by the residents of LA, while justly condemning that of the LA Police Department. What is more distressing, but no less surprising, is the fact that some of the anarchist press, as well, has either supported or been unwilling to criticize the beatings and killings that took place in LA on April 29 and the following days.

During the "uprising" or "rebellion," as leftists and many anarchists are fond of calling the events in LA, people of many different colors were beaten and/or killed, for no reason other than hatred; hatred sometimes based on racist feelings, sometimes simply based on viciousness and lack of respect for the lives and property of others. Few of those attacked were cops and none of them were politicians, judges, or even jurors in the trial of the cops who beat King; they were primarily people going about their own business who were unlucky enough to cross the path of their attackers. The businesses, homes, and meeting places of many people, again, people of various colors, were trashed, burned and stolen from, including the Aquarian bookstore, the oldest black bookstore in the United States, and the First AME Church, the oldest black congregation in LA. These were not generally the businesses, homes, or institutions of the wealthy, but the small shops of neighborhood business people and the homes of poor people.

Is this what the revolution means to the left in the United States? Is this the kind of society anarchists wish to build?

From June Jordan in *The Progressive*, to the editor of *The Libertarian Mutualist*, to Barbara Smith and Phill Wilson in *Gay Community News*, to the anonymous anarchists who

The problem with all of this is that those who identify themselves or other as members of a culture attach more importance to groups of people than to the individuals that comprise them. All individuals have a set of ideas, ethics, values that are uniquely their own, even though many of these may be shared in various combinations with others. Everyone acts in unique ways, some of which, again, may be similar to those of other individuals, but never the same. All groups are made up of some number of such unique beings, and therefore, little can be said about any group that will accurately describe all of its members. Trying to inform someone about the thoughts, feelings, or activities of another by describing their "culture" is foolhardy.

Misunderstanding and intolerance are going to happen at times between people for all sorts of reasons. The best way to minimize the likelihood of such conflicts is to look at others as individuals, fellow human beings, not as specimens of a foreign culture to be studied. Believing that all non-coercive individuals are worthy of respect, tolerance, and decent behavior will lead to just treatment of others. Promoting individuality will promote a true diversity of ideas, experiences, and lifestyles. All values and actions are ultimately those of individuals, and people should be free to live their lives unbound by the cultural assumptions of others. Multiculturalism, while holding out the promise of greater understanding and tolerance, in fact only leads to more stereotyping and misconceptions, and more intolerance of individual differences.

younger people. I also think that at the beginning I should adopt Communism with friends and Individualism with strangers, and shape my future life according to experience. Thus, a free and easy change from one variety of Communism to another, thence to any variety of Individualism, and so on, would be the most obvious and elementary thing in a really free society; and if any group of people tried to check this, to make one system predominant, they would be as bitterly fought as revolutionists fight the present system.

Why, then, was Anarchism cut up into the two hostile sections of Communists and Individualists? I believe the ordinary factor of human shortcomings, from which nobody is exempt, accounts for this. It is quite natural that Communism should appeal more to some, Individualism to others. So each section would work out their economic hypothesis with full ardor and conviction, and by-and-by, strengthened in their belief by opposition, consider it the *only* solution, and remain faithful to it in the face of all. I intend neither to defend nor to combat Communism or Individualism. Personally, I see much good in Communism; but the idea of seeing it generalized makes me protest. I should not like to pledge my own future beforehand, much less that of anybody else. The question remains entirely open for me; experience will show which of the extreme and of the many intermediate possibilities will be the best on each occasion, at each time. Anarchism is too dear to me that I should care to see it tied to an economic hypothesis, however plausible it may look today. Unique solutions will never do, and whilst everybody is free to believe in and to propagate his own cherished ideas, he ought not to feel it right to spread them except in the form of the merest hypothesis, and every one knows that the literature of Communist and Individualist Anarchism is far from keeping within these limits; we have all sinned in this respect.

In the above I have used the terms "Communist" and "Individualist" in a general way, wishing to show the useless and disastrous character of sectional exclusiveness among

Anarchists. If any Individualists have said or done absurd things (are Communists impeccable?), to show these up would not mean to refute me. All I want is to see all those who revolt against authority work on lines of general solidarity instead of being divided into little chapels because each one is convinced he or she possesses a correct *economic* solution of the social problem. To fight authority in the capitalist system and in the system of State Socialism, an immense wave of real Anarchist feeling is wanted, before ever the question of economic remedies comes in. Only recognize this, and a large sphere of solidarity will be created.

which arose out of ignorance of how others lived. Diversity is inhibited when people view "cultural" groups in this manner and fail to appreciate the truly diverse ways of the individuals who make up these groups.

At a time when racism and nationalism on the part of white american people are roundly, and rightly, criticized, multiculturalism, instead of promoting understanding between groups, often simply strengthens group ethnic identity among people who are not white, reinforcing barriers between different groups and individuals. Multicultural can, at times, even be used simply as a code word for non-white, with some organizations or events which describe themselves this way including certain people and excluding others based on their skin color or "culture." And once one identifies oneself as a member of a certain culture, defining how members of this culture are supposed to think and behave, it becomes possible to exclude even members of one's own culture as well, if they don't exhibit "appropriate" cultural values. Such people can be dismissed as race traitors or castigated for not "thinking black," for instance, just as some feminists have attacked pro-porn women as "male-identified." Prescribing racially or ethnically correct behavior discourages diversity and hinders understanding of and interaction with people who are different in some way.

In response to such generalizing, some people promote self-identification as a "sub-culture." While countering the stereotyping involved in defining broad groups of people as culturally the same, such refining of identity breeds exactly the same sort of stereotyping, on an even narrower basis. Creating a sub-cultural identity promotes the same inaccurate idea that people who share some superficial characteristics are all alike, embracing some people the definers wish to associate with, and rejecting others whom they would rather not be around. Examples of such self-created sub-cultural groups are jewish lesbian daughters of holocaust survivors (this is for real) or gay and bisexual black men. Not exactly multicultural or diverse.

Multiculturalism, Individualism, and Diversity

In multi-colored, multi-ethnic societies, and especially in the united states, much is being made of the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. Individuals are called on to respect others' cultural values and practices, organizations are urged to become more diverse, and some people are making careers for themselves as diversity counselors. The impetus for much of this comes out of the desire on many people's part to change racist attitudes and combat discriminatory practices. However, emphasizing cultural differences and promoting ethnic identification rather than acknowledging individual differences that occur in all social groups does not promote diversity of human thought and experience. It only reinforces inaccurate preconceptions people have about those who they perceive as different in some way.

Multiculturalists tell us that we must be sensitive to the culture of other people. But, identifying a person's culture does not really tell us very much about that person. While there are some beliefs or practices that one generally encounters only and/or commonly among those from a certain country or ethnic group, not everyone in any of these countries or groups will share these. In the past it was considered insensitive to assume that people behaved or thought a certain way simply because they were white, or black, or an immigrant from haiti. Now, it appears that such cultural pre-judging is encouraged.

Cultural "competency" programs are used in many organizations, supposedly to encourage cooperation between various ethnic groups and promote diversity. But what is taught in such workshops and seminars is that black americans think and act this way, filipinos eat and worship that way, and russians bring up their children thus.

Misinformation like this encourages other people to assume that all members of these groups act and think similarly, an attitude just as likely to promote misunderstanding as older, bigoted ideas about people of different ethnic backgrounds

The Poverty of the Welfare State

As the government, at various levels, attempts to cut back on welfare and other entitlement payments to poor people and/or require people to work in exchange for their welfare benefits, anarchists in the united states have been talking and writing about what the appropriate anarchist response should be. Some have come to the position that anarchists should support state welfare for poor people and actively oppose cutbacks, arguing that poor people deserve state assistance since they are the victims of capitalist economic relations, that capitalist corporations are a greater threat to poor and working people than the state, and that forcing people to work will cause even worse working conditions for many than already exist, further impoverishing people. In addition, the argument that, since the state provides welfare to corporations and the rich, it is only fair that the poor should get some, is also made by some anarchists. While these arguments are made in good faith, and with the intent of helping poor people, anarchists should be looking into the matter more deeply and coming up with critiques of state welfare and solutions to poverty more consistent with libertarian thinking, instead of falling in line behind the modern nanny state.

It certainly makes sense to make the best of the existence of a welfare state and take advantage of the programs that have been instituted in response to the demands and movements of radical or progressive statist, but it is quite another thing to look to these programs as the preferred way to solve social problems. Calling for the dismantling of the welfare system for poor people may not be the best place for anarchists to start in the fight against the very existence of the state, but arguing for its continued maintenance"or even its expansion"as if this were the only way to help people in need, is not the right course of action either. As we do in regard to other social problems, anarchists should be advocating non-statist solutions to the problems of poverty. While doing away entirely with government is the ultimate

remedy for poverty, other measures which could be proposed and implemented under the state, such as decreased taxation to increase the wealth of the working poor, deregulation of health care to decrease health care costs, and a return to mutual aid societies in place of extortionate insurance companies, are much more in line with anarchist principles than cheerleading for AFDC.

Anarchists historically have tried to lessen the influence of government in the lives of poor and working people. When faced with poverty, anarchists have advocated self-organization of and direct action by workers to secure at least a greater portion of the fruit of their labor. When fighting battles against corporations, anarchists did not call for the government to enact labor laws, but criticized the state for using its police and military to defend corporate interests. They demanded the state get out of the way, not that it rescue the poor. And anarchists have foreseen a future where competent, independent individuals and/or groups, freed from the restraints of statist society, take care of themselves and their associates in whatever ways make sense to them. This historical anarchist vision would appear to have been lost on some in modern times.

A number of anarchists seem to have bought the idea that since government can sometimes be more responsive to the demands of poor people than private capitalists, the state can be seen as a guardian against their depredations. This is inconsistent both with the anarchist analysis that the state props up capitalism, and with the reality that in some cases private companies provide better for their employees and customers than state enterprises care for their clients and workers. At least part of the reason it is, at times, easier to squeeze concessions out of the state, is that it costs the individuals in government nothing: they will simply force working people to foot the bill for any increase in welfare benefits by increasing taxes. In the case of a private capitalist enterprises, the owners of the business are not always able to pass on the costs of better employees benefits to the consumer, and consequently may lose some

that others need to be protected (in large part, from themselves) by those more enlightened, i.e., the anti-porn people. Urging others to restrict their experiences and rely on the opinions of others in such matters as reading and viewing preferences, including the reading and viewing of porn, while not unanarchic, is certainly illiberal.

More objectionable to anarchists, however, are the anti-porn activists who are frankly censorious. While we have not come across any anarchists who endorse laws banning porn, many anarchists support destruction of the property of porn dealers. Destruction of films and books which some people wish to sell to others who voluntarily seek to buy them is just as much censorship as any government mandated law. While sharing the views of the other anti-porners who seek to protect others from porn, these people go a step further and use coercive force to achieve their ends. This is totally incompatible with the kind of voluntary society sought by most anarchists, and should be denounced by all freedom-lovers.

Pornography, like any other form of entertainment can be good or bad, based on the individual merits of any particular work. However, as a genre of literature or film, it is no better or worse or good or evil than any other. If porn is bad or sexist, the best strategy is to criticize it and discuss it with others, and/or make good, non-sexist porn, not suppress it. Sex and its depiction are a source of pleasure for many and our freedom to indulge in both should be defended, or at least tolerated, by anarchists. Censors, including those who claim to be anarchists, are the enemies of freedom, and anarchists who support them call into question their commitment to a free society.

thus effectively suppressed. This is unfortunate, since such a discussion would show the fallacies in the anti-porn arguments.

Even though it seems odd that sexual liberationists and anarchists would find porn offensive, it is certainly true that people have different tastes. Just because I like porn doesn't mean that you should. But, if one finds something offensive, one should simply avoid it, and thereby avoid the offense. However, anti-porners are not content with this strategy when it comes to porn. They feel that if it offends them, it must offend others, primarily women, and they take it upon themselves to protect these others from it. Additionally, since they feel it leads otherwise non-violent, women-loving men onto the path of violence and sexism, they feel they need to prevent men from seeing porn as well.

As stated above, anti-porners differ on the strategy they employ to achieve these ends. While those who rely on argument and protest to influence others to avoid porn are preferable to the censors, their ideas about people are problematic for those with an anarchist perspective. People are free agents who make choices and decisions based on what they observe, hear, and otherwise experience, and are responsible for the outcome of these choices. The libertarian way to deal with other free agents who choose to view or read materials of which one disapproves is to let them see these books or movies and then discuss the material with them and try to convince them of one's point of view. The issue should be debated in a free marketplace of ideas, a marketplace where all should feel free to view the images or writings under discussion, not simply taking the word of the puritans that porn contains degrading or harmful images or words. People who pressure porn dealers to stop distributing porn, and who encourage others to avoid porn based on someone else's experience of it, while engaging in a non-coercive, and therefore acceptable form of activity, do not respect the decision-making ability of others. Nor do they trust the strength of their own arguments when up against a person's own experience of pornography. Such people feel

of their profits if they give in to workers, demands for higher pay or other improved working conditions. But the only time either the state or capitalist businesses provide any benefits to anyone but themselves and their allies, is when they are pressured to do so. Welfare, social security, and other government benefit schemes were created in response to social movements, not out of governmental beneficence, just as good benefits in many private corporations are the result of strong labor movements which forced the owners to reimburse the workers for a greater portion of their labor than was the case previously. Governments and capitalist enterprises have largely the same interests, and both can be forced to make concessions by vigorous opposition from their subjects or employees.

While workers pressuring their employees for a better deal is simply a case of people demanding part of what is rightfully theirs anyway, recipients of welfare payments and other benefits are asking the government to take someone else's money and give it to them. Many advocates of maintaining the current welfare system, however, correctly state that it doesn't cost very much in the greater scheme of things. State spending on weapons of mass destruction and payments to corporations are each much more costly than welfare programs for poor individuals and families. Additionally, many working people, not commonly thought of as welfare recipients do, in fact, receive such benefits, as when middle class people get medicaid to pay for their nursing home expenses, or working people obtain free care from hospitals, the costs of which are covered by the government. While this is all true, this does not justify government theft of working people's money to give to someone else. The money raised from taxation to fund corporate welfare, AFDC, and medicaid is stolen property, as is the money from compulsory fees on insurance companies to fund free care programs, which the insurers pass on to their customers. The rich don't pay taxes, and the very poor don't pay taxes. It is the huge number of working people in the middle who do, and who support the other two

groups. And, while many in the middle get some of their extorted money back in the form of benefits, most of them pay out more than they receive, otherwise there wouldn't be any left for the rich and the poor.

The rich and their corporations are wealthy because they or their ancestors were able unjustly to acquire some of the wealth produced by others. They were able to do this only because the state and its police and military support the institutions of profit, interest, and rent which transfer money from working people to those who "own" businesses, banks and dwellings. Rich people don,t deserve the wealth they already possess and certainly should not receive any of the money that is stolen directly from workers by the government, or any of the other advantages they receive at the expense of taxpayers. Among the poor people who receive money or other benefits from the state, on the other hand, there are those who are in genuine need. Some are truly the victims of circumstances largely beyond their control, and others have made bad choices and expect or hope that others will bail them out. But there are also welfare recipients who are simply parasites who feel that others should work to support them in the lifestyle to which they,ve become accustomed (just like the rich) Being poor does not make one virtuous or deserving. However, since at least some poor people are deserving of assistance it is preferable that tax money fund AFDC, medicaid, and food stamps, rather than corporate welfare and the military, but none of the recipients, rich or poor, are *entitled* to the money extracted by force from working people.

Since such forcible transfers of money are not acceptable, we need to seek other, non-coercive means, to enable people to better fend for themselves. As mentioned earlier, tax cuts, health care deregulation, and voluntary mutual aid societies would all mitigate poverty, even if implemented in a statist society. Getting rid of the state and its protection of capitalist economic relations entirely will produce even more options for people to make their own way, resulting in higher incomes; cheaper goods including health care, food, and

and mutually pleasurable. There is certainly some porn which depicts rape or other coercive and violent sex, but it is a small portion of the porn produced and consumed.

Moreover, like violent non-sexual movies and books, it is simply a depiction of a fantasy, made up by the author, or performed by consenting actors/actresses. Violent porn is no more real violence than are the Halloween movies. And if anti-porn people are truly concerned about the violence and not the sex in porn, why is it that they protest only porn shops or destroy porn mags and video store, while ignoring Friday the Thirteenth and horror magazines and books.

One aspect of the whole phenomenon of porn that is often left out of the discussion is that of homosexual porn. Much of the pornography produced today shows men having sex with men, with a growing proportion depicting woman-woman sex. The anti-porners tend to ignore homoporn because it gives the lie to many of their arguments. If depictions of inequitable sexual encounters between men and women are degrading to women, why aren't similarly inequitable encounters between men and other men (which are very common in all-male porn, with its tops and bottoms) degrading to men? And if they are degrading to men, why isn't such porn offensive to men, especially bottom men? And, if there is S/M imagery and (pretend) violence in this porn, why doesn't this result in widespread violence against men, and even rapes of men?

A discussion of such issues never takes place, since most of the people who oppose heteroporn are unwilling to talk about, let alone criticize, queer porn because they do not want to risk being seen as "homophobic" or otherwise politically incorrect. This is due to the fact that porn has often been seen, rightly, as liberatory by homosexualist men (and recently also by some homosexualist women), and is a much more open part of mainstream life for queer men than heteroporn is in straight society. Because of this "politicization" of queer porn, any discussion of homoporn by the anti-porners, few of whom are homosexualist men, is likely to be criticized by gay liberationists as "anti-gay", and

enjoy pornography. (See, for instance the book *Caught Looking* by Kate Ellis, et al, or *Writing Sado-masochistic Pornography: A Woman's Defense* by Deborah Ryder.) While the anti-porn movement views women as a class, who all share the same goals and desires, women are not a mass of automatons who all think and feel alike; some are pro-porn and some are anti-porn, just like men. Additionally, the images of women in porn are no more sexist and demeaning towards women than the images of women in most literature and visual media, from novels to movies to TV to magazine ads. In a sexist society, most images of women are going to contain at least some of the sexist attitudes common to both women and men. Besides, some pornography contains women characters who are very independent, self-motivated and concerned with their own pleasure, especially in S/M porn where women are frequently on top. What bothers these people is not the image of women in porn, which is like that elsewhere in society, but its sexual explicitness; they are uncomfortable with sex.

Anti-porn activists also claim that porn, with its allegedly degrading view of women is responsible for the attitudes and actions of men towards women, and therefore is different from other forms of expression. But, as with other types of writing and pictures, porn generally shows what people want to see and are comfortable with; it doesn't plant foreign ideas in people's minds. And, even in the few cases where novel ideas are introduced to people in porn, they remain just that, ideas. Men do not rape or beat women because they see it in a movie. Sexism, rape, and beatings of women by their partners existed long before the widespread dissemination of modern pornography, and societies with little or no porn are no less sexist and violent than those where it is common.

The claim that men are made violent by porn, besides being inaccurate, is also based on a myth: that most pornography is violent. Most porn is composed of depictions of non-violent, consensual, mutually pleasurable sex. Some of it also contains S/M sex, which, while including the trappings of violence, and involving (apparent) pain, is also consensual

housing; and, consequently, many fewer needy people. The end of government will mean the end of involuntary poverty, and therefore the end of the need for much of what now constitutes welfare. The small number of people unable to work who need assistance from the community can easily be helped by one form or another of mutual aid, depending on the economic structure of the community in which they live.

Anarchy is based, at least in part, on the idea that simply getting government out of the way would allow people to look at and solve their problems all by themselves. This also applies to poor people. They are generally not helpless incompetents who have no options other than having the state look out for them. In fact, poor people are victimized by corporations not because the state has failed to protect them, but because the state has prevented them from protecting themselves. Laws and other government action preserve capitalism with its profit, interest, and rent, all of which are theft from working people of all classes. Without the state and its armed thugs in the police and military, capitalism would not survive for long, since people would simply keep what was rightfully theirs and stop paying rent, do away with the banking monopoly, and work their factories and businesses for themselves. We don't need state welfare, we need state abolition.

Risky Business

Our daily activities are constantly interfered with or prohibited by innumerable laws, rules, and regulations. Our choices about where we want to live, what kind of work we want to do, how we want to raise our kids, and what kind of recreation we wish to enjoy are all restricted by the government and those who support government. Anarchists advocate a different kind of world: society without any government, a world where people are free to live as they please as long as they respect the freedom of others to do likewise. But the prospects for such a new society seem pretty dim in light of most people's enthusiastic support of government and its increasing control over our lives.

So many people seem so willing to give up their autonomy to the oversight of others, seeing this intervention as the price they must pay for a modicum of security in an otherwise unsafe world. They don't, however, seem to realize what they are giving up in their attempt to make their lives as risk-free as possible.

Risk reduction is certainly a reasonable goal, but risk elimination is an impossibility. Few of us want to get sick, injure ourselves, or die. Yet, many of life's activities, ranging from the most mundane to the most exciting, are fraught with risk, and one is put in the position of trying to balance one's desire to live a satisfying life with one's wish to avoid harm. Unfortunately, this attempt to balance our sometimes conflicting wants can lead to difficulties for both the individual concerned and for others.

If we all genuinely wished to avoid any danger we might encounter, the world would be quite a different place. No one would drive a car, use in-line skates, work in a hazardous occupation, have a cocktail, or smoke a cigarette or joint, since all of these activities carry a risk of harm to the person who does them. Most people, however, choose not to completely avoid all such activities, as the usefulness or pleasure of engaging in them outweighs the hazards

An Anarchist Defense of Pornography

Pornography continues to be a controversial issue, including among anarchists, whom one might expect to be among the strongest supporters of free sexual expression. However, many anarchists have criticized pornography and some have supported and/or participated in the anti-pornography movement, the members of which not infrequently strive to prevent those wishing to view pornography from doing so. Some anarchists in Canada even went so far as to firebomb a sex video store, an activity which many other anarchists either ignored or chose not to criticize. Meanwhile, those of us who defend pornography and freedom of expression, sexual or otherwise, are dismissed as sexists and reactionaries. Why is it that supposed lovers of freedom and sexual liberation seem to forget their principles when it comes to sexually explicit literature and pictures.

The anti-pornography movement, including its anarchist members and supporters, is not monolithic. Some dislike dirty books and movies, but support people's freedom to produce and consume such material. They rely on argument and protest in an attempt to change the attitudes of those who like porn, encouraging them to refrain from indulging in it, and do not support censorship. Others, again including some anarchists, feel that physical attacks on porn stores or government-mandated censorship are acceptable tactics in the fight against porn. While only the latter position is censorious, and therefore unanarchic, the former position, which is contemptuous of depictions of sex is also problematic in a movement which purportedly favors sexual freedom.

Pornography is simply a depiction, in words or pictures, of sexual activity. Most people find sex a good, pleasurable activity and looking at pornography is sexually arousing for many people. Anti-porn people frequently say that the images of women in porn are degrading and offensive to women. However, while some women certainly are offended by pornographic images they find degrading, other women

names or otherwise offended by the speech of others, a clear distinction must be maintained between emotional distress and physical pain. Self-defense is completely justified when one is physically attacked, whatever the reason. But, offensive speech, while we may wish to respond to it using various non-violent methods, is something we must allow if we wish to have a free society.

Another rationale for stifling the expression of others is that, even though the speakers or writers are doing no more than propagating certain ideas, these ideas might encourage some people to engage in actions which could physically hurt others. It is certainly true that people's actions are motivated by what they think, and that their ideas may be influenced by others. Nevertheless, wherever people acquire the beliefs which motivate them, each individual is responsible for her or his own actions. If someone, after hearing a racist speech attacks someone of a different color, or destroys someone's porn magazine after reading an anti-porn article, the attacked are justified only in defending against their attackers, not the speaker or writer. Only hostile actions merit a physical response.

The way to respond to ideas with which one disagrees is to propagate different ideas. Open debate of opposing ideas is the best method of finding the truth and promoting ethical philosophies. Only those who fear that they will lose in such a debate advocate that the views of their opponents should be suppressed. Those who advocate a new kind of society where people live in freedom, but feel it is necessary to suppress the ideas of others in order to achieve this new world, might benefit from a look back at the history of the soviet union, where exactly such a philosophy was implemented. As an early critic of the leninists said, "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently."

involved. One can modify the risk by driving slowly, wearing protective gear, or drinking or smoking moderately. People make these kinds of decisions daily as they live and move in this uncertain world.

Sometimes the choices a person makes about what activities to engage in may seem foolish or overly cautious to others. For instance, some people at minimal risk of acquiring an HIV infection sexually, may swear off all sexual contacts, instead of simply choosing partners and/or sexual activities carefully. But, while such people may be unnecessarily restricting their activities and denying themselves pleasure, their activity has no effect on uninvolved others and should, therefore, be none of their concern.

Problems arise, however, when well-meaning, but overly cautious people decide to seek the assistance of governments to protect themselves and others from real or imagined risks. Government intervention then forces everyone to curtail their activities in accord with the wishes of the least daring and adventuresome among us. Laws regulating housing construction, requiring occupational and institutional licensure, and restricting sales of both therapeutic and recreational drugs, are all purportedly in place to protect us from harm. But they in fact not only result in housing shortages, homelessness, unnecessarily costly health care, crime, and unemployment, but also cause a general cultural and social impoverishment. When we cannot choose for ourselves what kind of home we want to live in, what kind of health care provider we wish to consult, who should care for our children, who can fix our hair, or what drugs we wish to take to cure us or entertain us, our lives are that much more limited, less interesting, less satisfying, and less free.

Many people become so used to government caretaking and supervision, that they see it as the only solution when bad things happen. Because people are occasionally hurt when using fireworks, many states totally ban sales to or use by

individuals. And since some parents irresponsibility led to injuries to children, there was an attempt in massachusetts to make it illegal for any parent to leave any child under 14 unsupervised at any time. While there may appear to be some merit in these actions, the same rationale could be used to ban motor vehicles and suntanning. Is that the kind of safe, but dull and lifeless world we want?

Life is unsure, and sometimes unsafe. That is the human condition. But life can also be exciting and pleasurable. Some people are willing to give up a lot for a promise of security. That is fine as long they don't also try to prevent others from taking chances. Some of us are unwilling to trade our freedom for security and would rather incur some risks while living our lives as we see fit. And those who don't approve should mind their own business, for a change.

Insult and Injury, Ideas and Actions

Virtually everyone in the united states claims to support freedom of speech and expression. When debate arises around attempts by certain individuals to exercise this freedom, however, one frequently finds purported free speech advocates among those hoping to suppress the speech of others. Unfortunately, the position taken by many anarchists and leftists on this issue is no more principled than that taken by more mainstream conservatives and liberals.

In practice, most people, whatever label they use to describe themselves, support the freedom to say things with which they agree, but favor efforts to prevent the expression of ideas which they strongly oppose. Many conservatives, for instance, wish to prevent any discussion of homosexuality which does not condemn it, but advocate the freedom of college students to use racist expressions. While, on the other hand, quite a number of liberals and leftists support allowing black racists to speak on college campuses, but oppose attempts by white racists to have public rallies. And anarchists have frequently sided with those who oppose free speech, going so far, at times, as to physically attack white racists.

One argument heard from those who wish to stop others from expressing themselves is that saying or depicting something nasty is the same as doing something nasty. By this logic, racist speech is the same as physically attacking someone because of their color, or the acting out of a rape scene by performers in a video is an actual rape. This is simply untrue. But using expressions like "verbal assault" to describe name-calling tends to blur the difference between speech and action, between insult and injury. Even as children, we were taught that "sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will never hurt us." And, while it is not true that we are not in some way "hurt" by being called