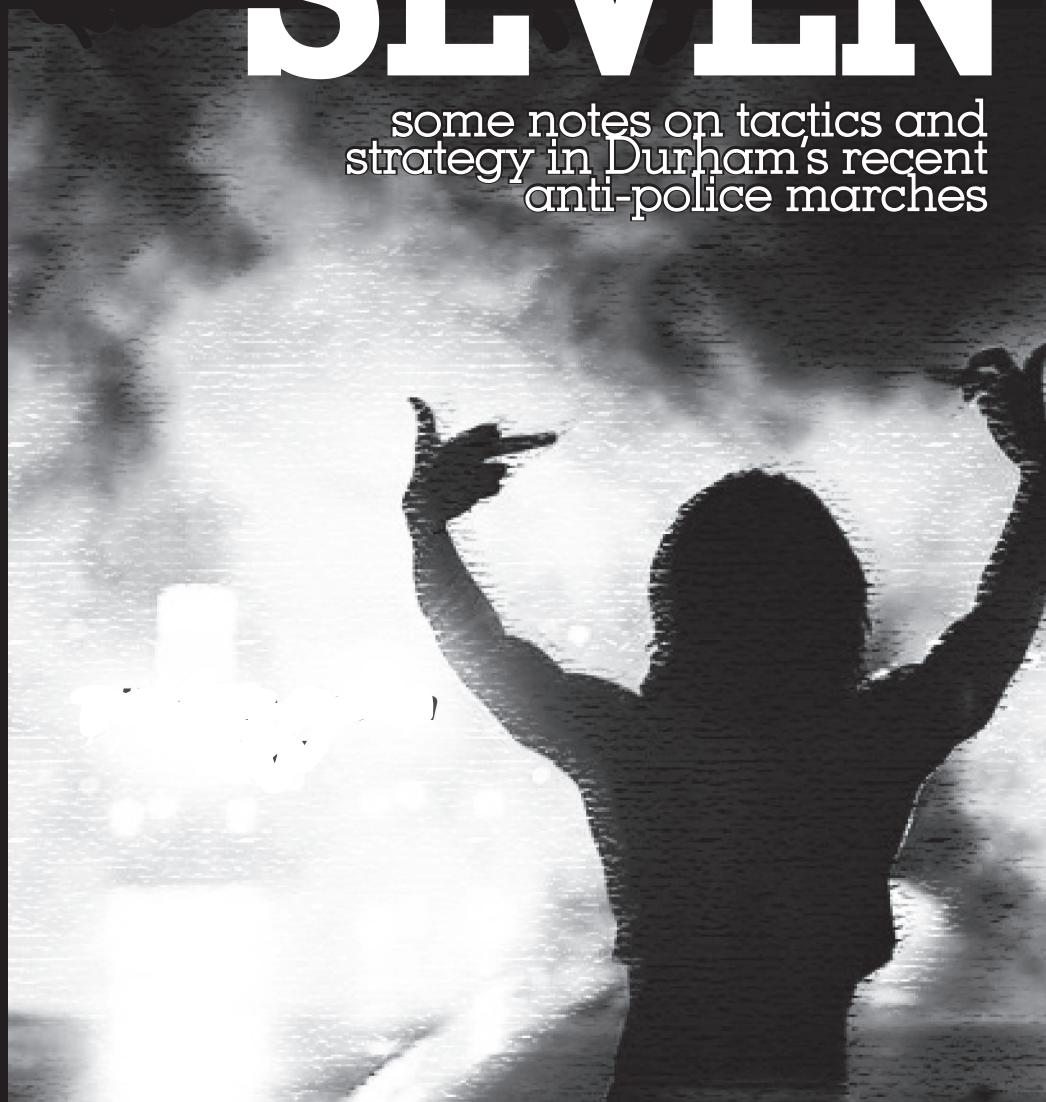


We revolt
simply
because, for
many rea-
sons, we
can no longer
breathe.

-F. Fanon

ONE FOUR SEVEN

some notes on tactics and
strategy in Durham's recent
anti-police marches



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ONE FOUR SEVEN

some notes on tactics and strategy in
Durham's latest anti-police marches

On Friday, December 5th, ten days after hundreds of protesters took over the Durham Freeway in response to the ongoing murder of Black and Brown people, Durham took to the streets again. This protest was most immediately a reaction to the decision of a New York Grand Jury to not press charges against the cop who murdered Eric Garner, but it was clearly part of the same trajectory initiated by the August uprising in Ferguson, Missouri. A movement against the police has begun. This thing we are experiencing contradicts itself constantly, expressing itself simultaneously with molotov cocktails, flipped police cruisers, and outright hostility to police on the one hand and platitudes about peaceful protest and demands like body cameras and racial sensitivity training on the other. Nonetheless, a movement it has clearly become. At this point demonstrators have blocked highways and bridges in over 170 cities around the country, sometimes violently confronting police and burning or smashing entire city blocks. The East Bay has not stopped rioting for three weeks. Smaller or less spectacular actions—rallies, die-ins, teach-ins, etc.—have occurred probably in the thousands. For many of us, this has become the most important social struggle of our (young) lives. Skills we learned in earlier movements apply now with urgency, and new skills and new ideas take hold at a rapid rate.

This movement was catalyzed and has been led by the uncompromising revolt of Black people, initially from those in a small, poor midwestern suburb few of us

had ever heard of. Its central expression is an antagonism towards the white supremacy that defines modern American policing, echoed in the common chant "Black Lives Matter," but its roots also reach deeply into other realms of class, economy, and gender. These deep roots, and the fact that continued demonstrations are no longer responding to any one single killing but rather a deep-set pattern of racism, make cooptation or recuperation by authorities difficult. What could a single police chief or politician possibly do to assuage enough people's concerns? What responsible Black leader could possibly lead the country into an era of "humane" policing? Realistically, there are no demands to be made, no leader or party who can "fix" the police, because the police *are not broken*. They're doing exactly what they have been historically designed to do.

In line with such a perspective, we've focused this account of Durham's most recent march not on questions of "the political," like making demands or pressuring city officials, but rather on how we can continue building our own power as a diffuse but growing crowd-in-motion. When we blockade or occupy the streets or buildings of our city, what makes us powerful? What are the strategies used by the police to contain our rage during protests, and how can we defeat them? These are questions of social relations, the trust and communication we have or have not built between us, and they are also questions of infrastructure, tactics, tools, movement, and space. Even for those still

jail blockaded at every entrance, the gleeful shopping sprees of Southpoint Mall disrupted by hundreds of bodies, high-school walkouts, community substations vandalized every night, the Black-led disruption of white church services (a common tactic used in Birmingham in 1963), walls painted from head to toe with the names of those stolen from our communities by the state, symbols of complacency or normality attacked, and a hundred other things. Certain methods of discontent will speak to some more than others, but all of them could combine to make us all more powerful.

We hope that this discussion continues, that many others take the time to share their reflections in writing and in dialogue, and that this struggle continues to grow deeper in its fierceness and vision.

For the New Worlds in our Hearts,
For anarchy,
the destruction of whiteness,
and every other obstacle in our way.



this fashion, we should expect that gas will make an appearance. There are multiple ways to mitigate its effects. A close buddy, a t-shirt as a mask, a bit of vinegar, and staying calm is a good start; throwing back gas canisters and lighting fires to cut the gas' chemical effect are good ideas too.

Kettle and Dispersal

The march got smaller after leaving DPAC the second time, eventually making its way all the way back to CCB plaza and north into the bar district near Geer and Corporation Streets. The gentrified bar district, on the border of Black and Brown neighborhoods and the rough location where Chuy was picked up last November, could have been a ripe space for confrontation. The area was mostly quiet, however, and people soon decided to march back to downtown to pressure the DPD HQ to release our friends. The crowd only made it about a block before facing a hard line of riot cops in front, and soon a line of bike cops in back. A kettle was in the works, something many people here have little experience with.

Fortunately, the cops weren't particularly practiced with the tactic. Some of the crowd was able to escape over fences through alleys, and the majority was able to physically push through the police line and avoid arrest. Around twenty-five or so were arrested at this point, though. Others marched to a nearby park where they made future plans and safely dispersed.

Hindsight is always 20/20, but we wonder if staying our ground at the train tracks north of DPAC might have made more sense than the smaller, fizzling effect of marching north of downtown. Could we have held our ground at that point? Would DPD have been forced to

gas us? Sometimes it makes sense to keep moving, sometimes it's better to stay and fight.

Moving Forward

The protests around the country have expanded beyond sole reference to any one police murder or "injustice." They continue to happen day after day after no law suits or legal avenues remain, after the media has moved on to covering other topics of the day. It's unclear how authorities will choose to contain this rebellion. Will whiteness itself, that historic savior of American state and capital, prevent enough people from identifying with the thousands of Black and Brown (and some white) people shutting down their cities, or has antagonism to the police spread far enough that even white people will risk themselves for another world? What other avenues of recuperation exist? In the sixties it was a newly risen Black political class that aided the white state in criminalizing revolutionaries and containing the urban riots that rocked the country, but that class has now lost much of its credibility. The Sharptons and Jacksons showed up to put out the fires of Ferguson, but plenty of Ferguson just wasn't hearing it.

In Durham, it feels to us like we are finding ourselves as a diverse and contradictory but motivated social force. The police are becoming aware of this too; we need to be able to learn from our successes and failures faster than they do. Whether highway takeovers continue or not, we would continue to explore various tactical options. What other avenues exist to take over space, express our rage against this system, and disrupt the running of the city, its economy and the various mechanisms that reproduce whiteness? We can imagine unpermitted cop-free block parties, occupied buildings, the downtown

committed to reforming the police as an institution, with whom we firmly disagree, these questions are crucial, as the only way even modest reforms will take hold will be if we can succeed in becoming an actual threat to those in power.

This is necessarily a topic that extends far beyond our own limited observations of last Friday's march, into the conversations with many others who have attended demonstrations in this city. In particular we are also drawing from observations of the patterns of police and crowd behavior displayed last winter when the police murder of 17-year-old Chuy Huerta was met with months of combative protests. We've tried to structure this piece to combine both personal experiences of the march and larger analysis about police strategy, as the two inform each

*'COP CLEARED IN CHOKING DEATH OF ERIC GARNER
IN NYC!!!!!!'*

'Jesus, they really just do not give a fuck do they?!'

I found myself over come with emotion; tears were running down my face... This surprised me—I mean I have been doing this stuff for nearly 15 years, of course they didn't indict that fucking cop, I am not naïve enough to believe that the state gives one fuck about any of our lives, particularly that of a black man. Nonetheless there I was, red eyes staring at the screen in grief and disgust.

A coworker came and we shared a short conversation about it.

- "Sup man how was your shift?"

- "We are living in a fucked up time man, a grand jury in New York just let off that cop who killed Eric Garner, he choked him to death on film in front of mad people in broad daylight."

- "Are you fucking kidding me? I hope they burn that whole city down I'm tired of this... I gotta go to the kitchen, tell me if there's gunna be a riot downtown ok? You didn't tell me yall were gunna take over the highway last week I would have called in sick."

After work my mom called me, once again correctly assuming that I was about to get into trouble.

- "How is Durham responding to the Eric Garner decision?"

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other. Nonetheless, this piece is largely analytical in tone. While between us we have decades of participating in these kinds of demonstrations, we would caution that we are by no means "experts" in any sense of the term. We hope and anticipate that many others will write about their own experiences and observations during last Friday, and after the demonstrations (hopefully) to come. We expect that some things that others have to say will overlap with this account, and others will differ. We welcome this cacophony of experiences and perspectives; unity is not our goal. In any case, the most important dialogue and lessons learned will occur not in internet articles but in the streets themselves, and afterwards in conversations with those with whom we share the most affinity.

“ “So far there isn’t anything planned that I know of, I think maybe this shit is really gunna crush people, like rage can carry people so far but I worry that the constant reminders that black people can just be killed for any reason and nothing happens could paralyze people...”

-“I just hope people are safe; this one is just really terrible.”

-“Those cops murdered him!”

-“I know I know this one seems very cut and dry, it should be manslaughter that video is horrible. But I really just hope people can be peaceful.”

-“What why mom? Why? Like I cannot imagine having to know that my kids could just get killed whenever. Like our family members are black mom, my cousins could just get killed, or their kids. Nick or Telvin, like imagine Nela having to know her children’s lives aren’t worth as much as my life is to them. I just can’t take this shit.” My voice starts cracking; in fact I’m tearing up thinking of my cousin’s kids as I write this.

-“Oh honey you’re too negative.”

-“No mom actually right now I’m so glad people burned Ferguson, they can’t just keep doing this its not okay.”

-“I know it’s not, please stay away from the police. I love you.”



ried to the back of the crowd, and people held the street. A larger or more confident crowd might have been able to push into DPAC itself, or surround the arresting officers to force the release of our arrested friends, but the crowd did hold its own. Even at this point there was inconsistency and disorganization in the police line: several camo-ed officers had already put on their gas masks, while the vast majority of cops had no gas masks immediately available.

Honestly, the LRAD sound cannon used to disperse us at this point was a joke. It enraged, but hardly dispersed. We reflected with several others who’ve encountered the sound cannon at other demonstrations, and the effect then was similar. It was vaguely annoying, but more exciting than anything else. In Pittsburgh 2010, the sound cannon was casually met with a few fast rolling dumpsters and a spate of laughter. For the future, a couple earplugs in our pockets might make

sense next time, but the real reason for the march moving on was not the LRAD but a sensed need to not get surrounded.

DPD’s choice not to gas us at this time seems significant, and reminds us of the massive public backlash they received after gassing downtown during a Chuy march last winter. In our experience, tear gas creates an uncontrollable environment for both protesters and police alike, though generally in favor of the former rather than the latter, as it obscures movement and literally provides protesters with projectiles that they have an invested interest in throwing back at police. As such it’s typically an unpopular, last-ditch effort at dispersal by a police force that has realized its losing control. More often than not, we’ve seen tear gas cause demonstrations to expand into other areas and become more aggressive, rather than more contained. Their use of the LRAD as an alternative, however, is slightly laughable. If these demonstrations continue in

“ When riot cops surrounded us on one side and bike cops on the other the crowd sort of faltered for a few minutes, giving the cops the opportunity to extend their lines. A friend was convincing a large crew of kids to charge through the bike cops, “Those cops up there are covered in body armor, these ones are just wearing bike helmets. Do you want to go against the hard cops or the soft ones.” “Let’s go through the bike cops!” We turned down the hill and surged toward the line of yellow-jacketed bike cops. I saw that they had a gap to the right and pushed past a cop who was trying to close the space. I quickly ducked behind a building and de-blocked and came around in time to see most of the crowd breaking through the line of cops, a scraggly drummer leading the charge. When on the other side we punched, pushed, shoved and kicked at the cops who were grabbing friends trying to break through. Fuck it im just out here in my normal clothes tussling with cops while some assholes are probably filming. Our group pulled maybe 4 or 5 people through but sadly 25 people were captured at that point, who now face minor misdemeanors.

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we are reacting in real time to the different melodies others are playing, seeking to build off of their expression rather than stifle it. Those more accustomed to permitted and tightly scripted protests may have to adapt to this.

At the end of the day, we would encourage those who are troubled by such acts to keep in mind that, at least in the eyes of our enemies, blocking highways is no different than blockading streets with physical objects: Both are illegal, cost capitalists and city officials time and money, and generally disrupt the social peace these authorities so dearly wish to preserve. It might be that barricades meet more resistance from the authorities, but this is hardly a reason in itself not to build them.

Others might argue that the property destruction implied by such acts is a distraction from the struggle against racist police, or “alienates the people.” Sacrificing the security and disruptive power of a demonstration, however, on the altar of lowest-common-denominator platitudes that seek to appeal to “the masses” is a way to contain our movement rather than expand it. This struggle has already put such objections to rest, bringing more people into the streets by far than the much more less militant struggles that preceded it.³ The looting and arson of stores that happened in Ferguson already established a clear wisdom that speaks to both the economic nature of this struggle as well as the lengths to which many people are willing to go. Attacks on business and disruption of commerce is fair game.

One final point we would make, addressed to those who *have* been engaging

³ Compare, for example, the incredible expansion and militancy of this movement to the totally ineffective, lukewarm wet blanket that was the anti-war movement of the mid-2000's.

in this activity: don't physically divide the march! When fencing and the like is pulled into the street in the middle of a march, it can divide us into two groups, the second of which is now sandwiched between an awkward (though usually permeable) physical barrier on one side and trailing police cruisers on the other. That's a dangerous situation to be in. Much better to wait until the last of the march is passing by, then pull the objects in front of the police cruisers and promptly run to catch up with the crowd. It's true that we're more likely to be seen by the cops this way (wear a mask if you like), but more importantly, we won't unnecessarily divide ourselves or bust up people's shins on some metal newspaper box they failed to see on the ground in front of them.

Dearrests and the Supposed Terror of the Sound Cannon

When the crowd reached DPAC for the second time, we were probably larger, more powerful, and more confident than at any other point before or after. Coming off the highway to scream at the apathetic, bourgeois event-goers, and the pigs who were protecting their event, was cathartic and energizing. So much felt possible. Speaking subjectively, the police appeared scared. Cops in Durham don't wear riot gear en masse very often, and this was the second time they had had to suit up in 10 days, and the crowd was bigger.

The snatch arrests that occurred when a segment of the line charged us were not surprising in retrospect, and it was awful to see our friends brutalized. We were excited, though, to see that the crowd pushed back and managed to de-arrest multiple comrades in the mix. Medics stepped up to care for several people who were struck by batons and had been car-

The March

The demonstration on December 5th was, by Durham standards, large, diverse, and fierce. Probably over four hundred people participated throughout the over three hours of marching. It traveled from CCB plaza to the downtown jail and Durham Performing Arts Center, from the die-in at DPAC to skirmishes and successfully pushing onto the highway at the 147 off-ramp, and then marched over a mile down the highway through traffic, returned back down Chapel Hill St. to pass DPD headquarters, and eventually returned to DPAC to confront the police again. After confrontations and a small number of arrests there, the march retreated back through downtown and made it all the way to the gentrifying bar district of Geer and Corporation Street, near where Chuy was arrested, before be-

ing kettled. Those who pushed through the kettle managed to continue marching to a nearby park, where plans were made for future gatherings.

The march on the 5th lasted three times as long and was easily a hundred people stronger than the one that preceded it ten days earlier, though some also have said it felt more middle-class and student-based. These feelings aside, the march had to deal with a much higher level of policing than ten days earlier—it felt at times like the entire Durham police force was assigned to us, and some have reported directly overhearing as much from cops at headquarters—and yet it still managed to accomplish gridlocking the city for hours, multiple dearrests, repeatedly breaking through police lines, and a prolonged takeover over of both sides of NC-147.

I reluctantly attended the impromptu “People of Color” assembly that was supposed to determine what action the hundreds of people gathered at the plaza would take that Friday night. I was reluctant because it felt like the person who announced it had disregarded the fact that several non-white people had already made impassioned speeches about how we needed to fucking march, or to shut down the highway again or to shut down DPAC. In fact the person who spoke directly before this assembly proposal was made was a woman of color who was trying to get the crowd to start marching. Several of our other non-white friends were mad about the idea of an assembly and left to wait and see if things would kick off, saying something like, “There’s no way I’m going to that, I don’t want to sit and talk with a hundred people. What the fuck lets just fucking go already!”

At the POC assembly a kid jumped up on a wall so he could be heard above everyone and excitedly yelled, “We should burn shit!” and once again the crowd cheered. I had a mix of fear for that one kid and the electric excitement that it was going to go down tonight and most people out wanted to do something significant to show this city and the cops that we were not afraid of them. But then someone got up and proposed that we should have a die in right here, in front of the Christmas tree because Christmas no longer represented anything to do with Jesus and was just a capitalism and materialism, and that we could all die in here then march to the other die in and this was the one proposal that seemed to really stick. People cheered and for a few seconds it felt like all hope was lost for a march.

I huddled with a new friend from last week who was livid; he wanted to block the highways and to fuck the city up. People around us

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started to agree—fuck dying! He got up and said something like, “I don’t know about all of you but I don’t want to die! Do you want to die? They are killing us all the time that feels totally disempowering. Plus there’s no one here, who cares if we lie down in a park?! I think we should march and shut the highway down again!”

Quickly people were out of the plaza marching. It was crazy—the decision happened so fast that after what felt like forever the rest of the crowd who was not at the assembly had to catch up as we marched down to DPAC. As the crowds filled the streets and a chorus of “No Justice, No Peace, Fuck the Police” rang out, I slipped into my hoody and mask, transforming into what some people probably assumed was a “white chapel hill anarchist.”

Police and Media Narratives of Control

After both marches, Police Chief Lopez, Mayor Bill Bell, the City Manager and their media orchestrated a self-congratulatory narrative of police restraint, professionalism, and the maintenance of control. For reasons of PR or job security, and in light of the bafoonish handling of the Chuy protests and the multiple scandals that have struck the department since, this narrative should come as no surprise. The first march in particular, in which few police were present and there was a serious hesitation on the part of cops to even engage protesters, suggests that the emphasis on more uncontrollable forms of protest a year ago is still paying certain dividends. The police needed desperately to appear in control, even if it meant allowing low-level lawlessness and disruption so they could avoid the nighttime news cycle of arrests, streetfighting, and smashed substations.

Of course, the police were hardly in control at all, despite massive numbers at the second march. On Friday, they were disorganized, repeatedly choreographed crowd control very poorly, were awkward with their equipment, and until the end of the night seemed hampered by an inability to make more arrests for fear of galvanizing crowd anger further. The

lines of riot police and bike cops that lined the on- and off-ramps of 147 made it more than clear that we were not supposed to be allowed on the highway; it was only through a combined pushing at police lines, the agile scampering of fence-climbers, a well timed rolling dumpster, and a generally persistent crowd that together made that highway takeover possible. Quotes in the news that night made it sound as if the cops let us on the highway for reasons of safety, which is a bald-faced lie. Their narrative of control and omnipotence is a false one, that we should feel proud of debunking in our own accounts about what went down that night.

In doing so, we should also be aware of the other police narratives being parroted by the media, both locally and nationally. The most obvious of these, with a particularly pernicious history in the South, is that of the outside agitator. Within days, and despite massive photo and video evidence to the contrary, the police chief of Ferguson sought to blame the massive unrest on “a few white anarchists” from other cities. This line was parroted by national and local figures in Left circles, from liberal church leaders to the New Black Panther Party and Nation of Islam¹, all of whom sought to contain

¹ These two groups in particular also used blatant sexism to corral “their people” out of the streets, urging women to leave protests because it wasn’t their place or was too dangerous, despite the fact that women have been on the frontlines in Ferguson from the beginning.

Inanimate Objects and Human Bodies

The final example of dragging objects into roadways deserves its own brief discussion, as both marches featured this activity, and it repeatedly resulted in both enthusiasm and controversy. At one point in the first march, for example, an older white woman screaming “Peace!” futilely pulled backwards on a piece of fencing as several others dragged it into the highway to, in the interest of actual safety, slow down speeding traffic. Of course, there’s nothing particularly violent about moving a physical object from one part of a city to another—perhaps what she really meant to scream was “Order!”

It goes without saying that demonstrations, riots, and strikes have been pulling things into the streets for centuries, from the barricades of the Paris Commune in 1871 to the burning highway fires of Oakland last week. Blocking the flows of goods and people, and in particular state forces, has been an intuitive feature of social struggle for time immemorial, and it’s a lot easier (and safer) to do so with inanimate objects than human bodies.² Often it is an absolute practical necessity. That most of these protests across the country have been blocking major thoroughfares with only large groups of people rather than physical barricades is a testament to the numbers of people invested in this struggle, but it is also a testament to our current inability or lack of commitment to hold space for longer periods of time. A group of people eventually has to move or leave, whereas a neighborhood or city center or rural highway can be blocked and defended with a series of physical barricades somewhat permanently, and

² George Orwell once noted in his chronicle of fighting in the Spanish Revolution that workers in Barcelona built and deconstructed barricades so often that they could have numbered the paving stones to save time.

often with far fewer people.

Of course, nothing like such barricades have been attempted in Durham in the last two weeks, and the relatively disorganized and haphazard attempts to drag objects into the street—dumpsters, newspaper boxes, trash cans, construction fencing—might appear juvenile by comparison. By itself, though, this observation is not so much an argument against using physical objects as it is an argument for us to do it better. A real barricade is not built by two or three bodies running along with torn fencing while trying to keep up with a march, but rather by an entire crowd with the confidence and patience to do so. Such a barricade can open up space—for assemblies, meals, rest, medical care, making art, fighting back—within a zone of conflict in ways that are difficult to currently imagine in the American context. If we want to establish and spread zones of social life that are temporarily or (one day) permanently autonomous from the police, this is a part of that puzzle, and practicing now will pay off later.

It should also be said that even small efforts to bring objects into streets, within the context of a quickly moving march, can hold a tactical wisdom: They can be an excellent way to delay police vehicles that are following the march. A series of heavy dumpsters dragged into lanes of traffic, for example, can disrupt police attempts to transport and set up lines of riot cops, like the ones that were beating and arresting people on Friday night. It’s also worth pointing out the fact that sometimes large and impressive and tactically significant barricades start out with just a few youth pulling shit into the street because they’re pissed off. Disruptive protest tends to resemble an improvisational jazz band more than a tightly conducted symphony. Together we may have a broadly understood plan, but beyond this

go next. Masked people hung out casually with non-masked folks. When we marched underneath overpasses, the walls and columns were quickly painted with anti-police slogans or the names of those murdered by the police. Unlike ten days ago, this time it was not just a few masked folks but many more who had brought paint to the party. In general, more suddenly felt possible.

The relationship between the tactical aggression of the first march and the “open spaces” of the second also became more clear on the highway. That the tactic of highway takeover was recently accomplished in the same place made it feel within the realm of possibility Friday night—had others not taken that first step ten days earlier, the openly declared proposal at DPAC to “take the highway” might have sounded totally insane. It’s important to note that the entire group of marchers made this takeover possible, but certain actions helped facilitate it in specific ways: some brought flares to help light the way, others distracted the police line from behind, others climbed fences, others left large objects in the march’s wake to slow down or hamper police cruisers. Sometimes a kind of collective intelligence emerges in these moments, one that breaks through the sheep-like mentality of most protests to seize oppor-

tunities in ways not previously thought possible.

The march on the highway was spectacular, hundreds of people together feeling our power, both full of rage and excitement. We had managed to take this thing a second time but now we had both lanes of traffic halted for miles. We marched on the highway between parked cars for a goddamn mile. We switched between sides of the highways, people were able to occupy the space and make it their own for awhile, tagging the shit out of everything with RIP CHUY and Free so and so; doing mini die-ins in front of backed up traffic, shooting fire works. I ran up and down the march just to be able to experience it all. One guy recognized me from the prior highway takeover and asked if I would cover him and hold his bag as he tagged the pylons of the underpass.

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the rioting and install their own version of political organization and control. The incredible condescension and racism of this perspective, based in the idea that Black people are naturally nonviolent or passive protesters, who would only rebel when tricked into doing so by professional white agitators, need to be put to rest. Unsurprisingly, in both the Chuy demonstrations and these recent protests, Mayor Bill Bell and Chief Lopez have used the same strategy, blaming the disruption on white anarchists from Chapel Hill. Some on the Left, frustrated with protests that occurred outside their sphere of influence and appeared to them to be “irresponsible” or “alienating,” have either naively or maliciously echoed this narrative. The racialization of the outside agitator as white serves a particular purpose for

As we began to march toward the exact same highway on-ramp we had taken earlier, I saw the line of 15 bike cops that were lining the march make a rookie mistake. They had evaluated the situation and were determined to head off the front of the march, so they all sped up to get to the highway before we could. At that point there were cops in front of the march and behind it but they left a huge section completely uncovered. Just as they sped up my section of the march was passing the loading dock of DPAC and I noticed that there were several rolling dumpsters and metal fencing just sitting there in the loading area. I excitedly grabbed a friend and pointed to the resources.

We sprinted to the building and up onto the area where the materials were there just waiting for someone to take them. At first my comrade grabbed for a metal barrier but he quickly saw me pulling the rolling dumpster and we took it out into the street and made our way into the crowd. When someone would hear the loud noise of the wheels near them and turn our way I would try to friendly wave. Surprisingly we were received very well, people gave me conspiratorial head nods and even some high fives. If anyone was mad about the dumpster being pushed by what was now 3 hooded figures they kept it to themselves.

Soon a small crew of folks was around us tossing all sorts of barricade materials into our dumpster. I was elated that we were really doing this, that our friends had come mentally prepared and that it felt like the crowds as a whole understood that if we were to get onto the highway it was not going to be entirely peaceful.

We all quickly walked by the cops on bikes and motorcycles that were blocking the north on ramp to the highway with out much event; I think

those trying to contain these protests: while at once invisibilizing Black and Brown radicals, it also allows authorities to paint the protests as illegitimate, and therefore unworthy of sympathy or active support from the larger population.

We should be clear: anarchists, who are by no means all white and only a minority of whom are from Chapel Hill, are present at these demonstrations in Durham. They were intrinsically involved in not just combative street protest but also vigils, legal support, communication with the family, and outreach during the Chuy protests, and have been involved more recently in calling for solidarity protests, spreading word online, bringing drums and banners to protests, and doing legal support and fundraising. But anarchists

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they were surprised we didn't head straight into them. Then we crossed over the overpass and made a sharp right onto the off ramp. I could see that there were cop cars blocking our path and riot cops standing in the road blocking us. People began to pull the materials from our dumpster and started to litter the streets with them.

At the same time the crowd mostly began to head up on the hill, which lead up to the highway. As people were fighting with the cops to break through their lines on the hill, our crew acted quickly. We rolled the dumpster up to the cars, flipped it and I began throwing the trash bags and traffic cones at the cars. A friend shot fire works at the cops attempting to stop us, someone light a flare, trying to light the dumpster on fire. Sticks and fire works were thrown at the cops and I saw a handful of cops rush us in an attempt to grab someone.

Quickly I realized that we were the only ones left in the immediate area, and I scampered up the hill where the entire march had successfully made it onto the highway and was now blocking both north and south bound traffic! I embraced non black bloc friends, people were cheering, it was great to feel our power.

are only one of the many groups of angry and militant individuals who have been showing up—they are not professional agitators or riot tourists, but simply one aspect of these protests who bring a sincere hatred and deep critique of police in this society. The fact that aggressive and combative activity has expanded beyond any one political identity or aesthetic, including the anarchists, is part of this movement's power.

Combative Tactics as Invitation

The advantage of the highway takeover, the reason for its recent national resonance as a both combative and inviting tactic, again became apparent on Friday: after we made it on the highway, the police could do little to stop the crowd or regain control. Miles of gridlocked traffic in both the south and northbound lanes made transporting large numbers of armored cops difficult, and that stretch of 147 specifically has multiple avenues of dispersal should we have needed them. Another intuitive reason for this tactic

should be made clear here. The vast majority of American commodities are transported at some point by Interstate, and blocking those arteries is a real threat to the capitalists who have so expertly designed this awful racist world we live in. Developing this as a tactical reflex, one that broad and diverse kinds of crowds know they can accomplish, is a hugely important step. To some of us who have been taking to the streets for many years, the very idea of taking over a highway or bridge was only recently almost unthinkable, an elusive dream. Now, in a matter of weeks it appears to have become the tactic of our time.

There on the highway, some of the more general reasons for combative tactics also became clear: by pushing through police lines and taking over the highway, we opened up space for new kinds of protest and interaction. Some stood in front of the only police cruisers left on the highway. Others milled about shooting fireworks or having conversations about where to



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We headed past the line of motorcycle cops guarding the highway on ramp past DPAC and cut to the right onto the next off ramp going against traffic. There were a handful of squad cars blocking the road ahead so we cut up the hill to access the highway faster. Ahead of us a line of riot cops and bike cops cut us off. I was surprised at how quickly and intensely people reacted to the riot cops, the crowd pushed up against them, attempting to break through their ranks. I saw scuffles break out between signs and saw one protester block a baton blow with their #blacklivesmatter sign's wooden post. We quickly pushed through their lines and began to stream onto the highway. Other people simply maneuvered around them. The police were entirely unprepared to deal with such a tactically diverse and chaotic crowd.

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The march on the highway was spectacular, hundreds of people together feeling our power, both full of rage and excitement. We had managed to take this thing a second time but now we had both lanes of traffic halted for miles. We marched on the highway between parked cars for a goddamn mile. We switched between sides of the highways, people were able to occupy the space and make it their own for awhile, tagging the shit out of everything with RIP CHUY and Free so and so; doing mini die-ins in front of backed up traffic, shooting fire works. I ran up and down the march just to be able to experience it all. One guy recognized me from the prior highway takeover and asked if I would cover him and hold his bag as he tagged the pylons of the underpass.