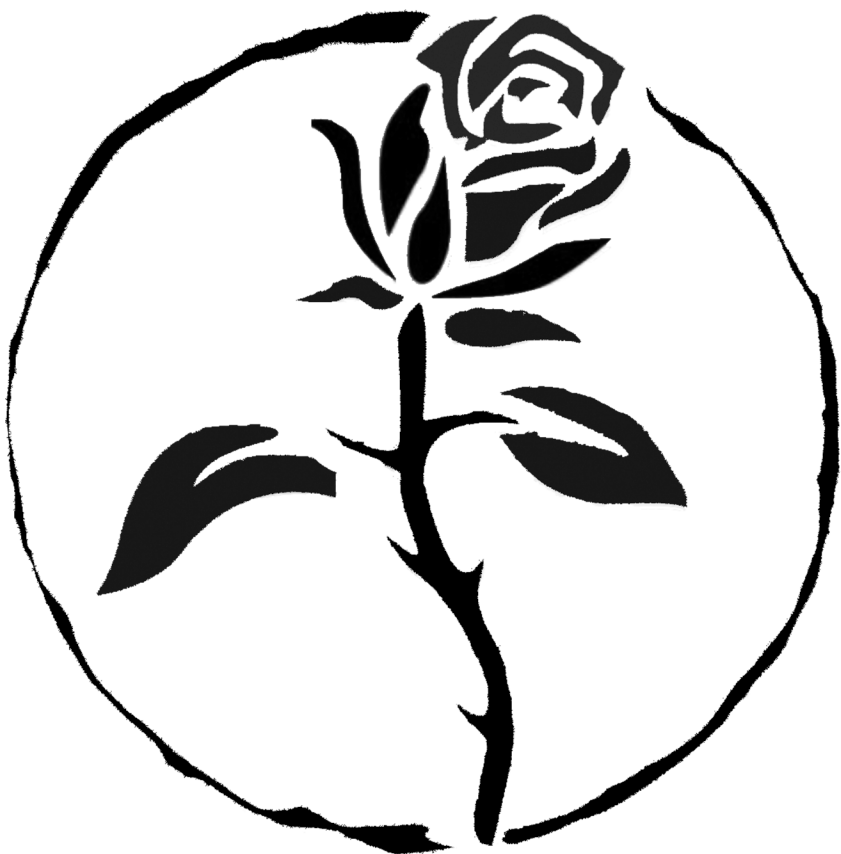


JOEL OLSON ON CADRE ORGANIZING



WHAT IS A CADRE ORGANIZATION?



MOVEMENT, CADRE, AND DUAL POWER



THE GOAL OF A CADRE GROUP IS CLASS WAR



*“What is the most damage I can do,
given my biography, abilities, and
commitments, to the racial order and
rule of capital?”*

-Joel Olson (1967-2012)

Joel Olson was a revolutionary taken before his time. Joel was a member of Bring the Ruckus Organization as well as a writer, musician, father, partner and more. These three pieces in this pamphlet reflect Joel’s conceptions of cadre organizing, which at the time of writing, particularly for an anarchist, it was re-newed territory to explore. You can find more of Joel’s writings (highly recommended) at the Joel Olson Archive: <https://joelolson.net/>

Articles in this pamphlet:

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WHAT IS A CADRE ORGANIZATION?

by Joel Olson

The purpose of an organization like Bring the Ruckus might be unclear to some observers or readers of our website. This article is intended to explain what the purpose and function of Ruckus is in the struggle to build a free society. I originally wrote it for Ruckus's 2005 national conference.

What is a cadre group?

A cadre organization is a group of committed, active, revolutionary intellectuals who share a common politics and who come together to develop revolutionary thought and practice and test it out in struggle. By "active" I mean one who is involved in political struggle, not merely a book reader. By "intellectual" I don't mean someone with a college degree but one who makes a serious, ongoing commitment to understanding the world in order to better agitate within it.

A cadre group is not a mass group like Janitors for Justice, Critical Resistance, Copwatch, or Communities United, although its members should be active in such groups. Nor does it presume to be leaders of these groups, although its members may assume leadership roles if they deserve them. It does not seek to co-opt or use these groups for its own ends (that's called a front group), although it definitely participates democratically in struggles over their purpose and direction. Rather, a cadre group seeks to participate in those mass struggles that have the best chance to blow the lid off this society, and it seeks to make those struggles as radical and democratic as possible.

What is a cadre group for?

The purpose of a cadre group is to encourage the development of a revolutionary working class in the United States. A cadre group seeks to understand the world it lives in, identify the forces in it that

are struggling in radical ways, and develop those forces in a way that is consistent with the cadre's politics.

Marx argues in the Communist Manifesto that the purpose of a cadre group is to radicalize and internationalize working class struggles. That is, a cadre should help the working class in one area connect its struggle to struggles in other areas, as well as overcome religious, ethnic, and other distinctions that prevent working class unity. A cadre group should also help show the working class the inherently radical nature of their actions, which might otherwise seem reformist (such as the struggle to reduce the length of the working day to ten hours).

For C.L.R. James, the purpose of a cadre organization is to "observe and record." That is, it should observe working-class struggles and record them (via a newspaper) so that the working class can see for itself what it is doing and the radical nature of its struggle.

I think Marx and James are essentially correct, except I would add that a cadre group should also participate in those struggles that we think have the most revolutionary potential. Thus, the function of a cadre group like BTR is to observe, record, and participate in working class struggles that have the potential to bring about a free world.

What is the role of political analysis in a cadre group?

A cadre exists first and foremost for the benefit of revolutionaries. It seeks to organize the revolutionaries, not the masses. (Organizing mass movements is the job of larger grassroots organizations, of which cadre members should participate in.) Its benefit to ordinary folks and non-revolutionary activists is at best indirect—at least up until the barricades go up and people are actively looking for new ideas and new ways to organize the world. Thus, a cadre group seeks to develop a political line and the politics of its members in the service of revolutionary struggle. The politics of a cadre group today should imply the expansion of democracy to all aspects of a person's life and a radical rejection of capitalism and the state. The state is not a path to a classless society but an obstacle to be smashed. This

politics is spelled out, more or less, in our statement, “Bring the Ruckus.”

What strategies does a cadre group develop?

A friend of mine, when giving talks, tells people to imagine that capitalism is the death star and we are the rebels. We are hopelessly outgunned and outnumbered, and so we can’t take on the death star directly. Given this, what do we do? We have to find the system’s weakest point and concentrate our attack there, she argues. This is exactly what a cadre group needs to do. A cadre group, then, seeks to develop a strategy that can best take advantage of a crisis in capitalism.

The cadre group tries to find and exploit cracks in the system, and to fill in those cracks with the seeds of a new society. In other words, a cadre group should try to devise and implement strategies that can build a dual power.

As the “Bring the Ruckus” statement puts it, dual power strategies are “those forms of agitation that undermine the rule of official society and that in some way prefigure the new society.” Put more simply, dual power is a situation in which two (or more) social forces assert power over the same territory and are capable of fighting for it. Such a situation is obviously unstable and quickly leads to conflict. When this conflict becomes protracted, it leads to civil war—revolution.

Ruckus’s Six Criteria guide our dual power strategies. We work to build a dual power by attacking white supremacy and thereby breaking up the cross-class alliance and its “wages of whiteness” that presents the central obstacle to working class unity in the United States.

How does a cadre relate to grassroots movements?

A cadre organization seeks to participate in those grassroots (or “mass”) struggles that it believes has the most revolutionary

potential, based on the cadre's political analysis. At the national level, a cadre organization develops and implements dual power strategies for its members nationwide to participate in. At a local level, the local cadre participates in grassroots struggles that fit within the national strategy, debates their effectiveness in local meetings, reports back to the national organization, and seeks to move the grassroots struggle in a radical direction according to these discussions. Let me give two examples, one at the national level and one at the local.

The Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, which existed from 1992 to 1998, defined three areas of work with revolutionary potential. One of these was anti-fascist political work. L&R created an Anti-Fascist Working Group at the national level to engage in this struggle. This WG determined that the best place to do anti-fascist work was within a grassroots organization called Anti-Racist Action. Thus, the WG called for Love and Rage members to join ARA and do anti-fascist work within it. L&R's role was to participate in this work and try to lead it in radical directions. L&R members did not assume leadership in ARA unless they had earned it, and they did not seek to "control" ARA. The commitment to doing the work of the grassroots organization and to participating in a democratic manner distinguishes a cadre from a front group.

An example of how a local cadre works can be found in the relationship between Phoenix Ruckus and Phoenix Copwatch. Phoenix BTR started up Copwatch in 1998 but once Copwatch was up and running, BTR relinquished control and Copwatch became an independent organization. BTR members now participate in Copwatch as Copwatch members, and any leadership positions come from that participation, not from being in Ruckus. Phoenix Ruckus frequently discusses Copwatch at its meetings, trying to devise ways to improve Copwatch's work and revolutionary potential. Phoenix Ruckus also reports back to the national organization. Phoenix Ruckus should also regularly communicate with other anti-cop agitators in Bring the Ruckus nationwide, exchanging ideas on tactics and strategies. Based on these discussions, if Phoenix BTR has an idea for how to move Copwatch

in a more effective and radical direction, they take it to a Copwatch meeting and put it up for debate and a vote.

Phoenix BTR participates in Copwatch instead of, say, Food Not Bombs, because it thinks that Copwatch has the best potential to lead to a situation of dual power than any other form of political work in Phoenix. Copwatch challenges the authority of the state, obstructs the function of the police (to maintain color and class lines), and prefigures a society in which ordinary people take responsibility for ensuring the safety of their communities. Phoenix BTR (at its most hopeful moments, at least) believes that given the right confluence of social forces (and a good bit of luck), Copwatch has the potential to develop into the kind of wedge that could create and generalize anti-police rebellions like Los Angeles '92.

Many members in Love and Rage did not have a clear sense of the purpose of a cadre organization, and therefore the purpose of L&R. This contributed to the collapse of L&R, particularly in Minneapolis. Given this, it is essential that Ruckus members have a solid grasp of the purpose of our organization.

The cadre and the revolution

A cadre group should not try to “lead the revolution.” Its task is to bring out the revolutionary tendencies that already exist in society. A cadre group will not start a revolution. It will rarely lead one, either. But even if its members never live to see revolutionary times (e.g. Love and Rage) and even if its members labor in relative obscurity (e.g. Sojourner Truth Organization), it can still play an indispensable role in preparing people for protracted struggle against the state.

To steal a metaphor, the role of a group like Ruckus in non-revolutionary times (which I believe we live in today) is to be a crouching tiger, laying in wait for a social crisis (such as a depression or a new civil rights movement) to break out that challenges the legitimacy and stability of the state. If and when an

event occurs, the cadre pounces, seeking to exploit this instability for revolutionary ends.

As the “Bring the Ruckus” statement puts it, a revolutionary organization “does not seek to control any organization or movement, nor does it pretend that it is the most advanced section of a struggle and thus has the right to act in the interests of the masses. Instead, it assumes that the masses are typically the most advanced section of a struggle and that the cadre perpetually strives to learn from and identify with the masses. At the same time, a cadre organization does not pretend it doesn’t provide leadership for larger movements, nor does it pretend that leadership is inherently authoritarian. A cadre organization does not seek to control any organization or movement, it aims to help lead it by providing it with a radical perspective and committed members dedicated to developing its autonomous revolutionary potential.”

Joel Olson is a member of Bring the Ruckus.

MOVEMENT, CADRE, AND DUAL POWER

by Joel Olson

Global capital has weak spots. I want to hit them.

I do not believe, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri assert in *Empire*, that there is no “center” to global capital and that any strike at the beast is equally effective. Nor do I believe, as many anarchists do, that attacking any mode of oppression is equally effective. While I firmly believe that all forms of oppression are evil and must be abolished, I do not believe we can or should try to fight them all simultaneously, or that we even need to. Because global capital has weak spots, and we should hit them first.

The task of anarchists and other radicals is to find and exploit those weak spots. That means we must think and act strategically: we must carefully choose the kinds of political organizing we do, and we

must perform that organizing in the most effective way possible. Cadre organizations are an important way of doing this.

I will use my experience as a member of Bring the Ruckus (www.bringtheruckus.org) to explain the role of a cadre organization in political struggle; and how being in a cadre informs my work in the Repeal Coalition, a grassroots, all-volunteer, organization that seeks the repeal of all anti-immigrant laws in Arizona, including the notorious, racist law known as SB 1070. The purpose of a cadre, I argue, is not to lead the revolution but to seek out and participate in those struggles—such as the immigrant rights struggle in Arizona—that have the most potential to bring about a dual power.

Ruckus as a Cadre Organization

A cadre organization is not necessarily a vanguard organization, as some anarchists mistakenly assume. It is simply a group of committed, active, revolutionary intellectuals who share a common politics and who come together to develop revolutionary thought and practice and test it out in struggle. By “active” I mean one who is involved in political struggle, not merely a book reader. By “intellectual” I don’t mean someone with a college degree but one who makes a serious, ongoing commitment to understanding the world in order to better agitate within it. A cadre group is not a mass organization like Anti-Racist Action, Janitors for Justice, the Wobblies, or the Repeal Coalition, i.e. a political group that involves a (potentially) large amount of people fighting for specific demands. Nor does a cadre assume leadership of mass organizations (i.e. it doesn’t create “front groups”), although its members may play leadership roles if they have earned the respect of others in the organization. Nor does it try to co-opt or use these organizations for its own ends, although it certainly participates democratically in struggles over their purpose and direction.

Rather, a cadre group seeks to participate in those mass (or potentially mass) struggles that have the best chance to blow the lid off this society and build a free one, and to work within them to make them as radical and as democratic as possible.

Bring the Ruckus, for example, believes that it will take revolutionary changes to create a free society. But we do not believe that we will lead the revolution. Rather, the purpose of Ruckus is to create a place where revolutionaries with similar politics can debate theory, history, and strategy, and seek to put ideas into practice.

The system of global capitalism, we believe, is the root source of exploitation, oppression, and alienation in this society. It must be abolished and replaced with a free society in which people are able to fully develop their capacities without hurting others to do so. But how to do this? Ruckus believes that in the United States, the key to abolishing capitalism is to attack white supremacy. In a nation whose economic and social structure has depended on slavery, segregation, genocide, and reservation, to attack whiteness is strike a blow at the pillars of American capitalism and the state.

White supremacy, as our founding statement puts it, “is a system that grants those defined as ‘white’ special privileges in American society, such as preferred access to the best schools, neighborhoods, jobs, and health care; greater advantages in accumulating wealth; a lesser likelihood of imprisonment; and better treatment by the police and the criminal justice system. In exchange for these privileges, whites agree to police the rest of the population through such means as slavery and segregation in the past and through formally ‘colorblind’ policies and practices today that still serve to maintain white advantage. White supremacy, then, unites one section of the working class with the ruling class against the rest of the working class.” The task of revolutionaries, we believe, is to break up this unholy alliance between capital and middle and working class whites, so that whites begin to think of themselves as workers rather than whites and begin to act in solidarity with working peoples of color throughout the nation and the planet.

We are not arguing that white supremacy is the "worst" form of oppression. Nor are we claiming that if white supremacy is abolished then all other forms of oppression will immediately disappear. Rather, ours is a strategic argument, based on a theory of

U.S. history, that argues that the “public and psychological wages” of whiteness, as W.E.B. Du Bois terms them, have been the principle obstacle preventing the development of radical movements in the United States. Thus, attacking these wages creates opportunities to challenge all forms of oppression, just as what happened with abolitionism (which gave rise to the first wave of the feminist movement and unionization struggles) and the civil rights movement (which gave rise to a host of social movements).

Ruckus cadre seeks to develop this analysis within our organization. This means regularly critiquing it. In fact, we begin our annual meetings by challenging our most fundamental concepts and assumptions. (Like Marx, we strongly believe in a “ruthless criticism of everything existing,” including ourselves.) We also try to apply this analysis in the mass organizations and struggles we participate in. Our analysis of white supremacy helps us choose which forms of struggle to participate in. This is why Ruckus members are active in struggles around the police and immigration, but not really around vegetarianism or “anarchism.” (1)

Revolutionaries have neither the time nor the resources to get involved in every moral evil. The existence of a moral evil, or even evidence that lots of people are “on the move” fighting such an evil, are not sufficient criteria for us for participating in a struggle. If fighting such an evil does not challenge the wages of whiteness, we will not participate actively in it, because we don’t regard it as strategic.

The purpose of a cadre organization is to help distinguish those struggles that seem to have more revolutionary potential than others. A cadre seeks to determine which mass struggles have the best chance to build a dual power.

Dual Power

Dual power is a situation in which two or more social forces assert power over the same territory and fight for it outside of the official political institutions (elections, parties, etc.). A dual power struggle

poses a revolutionary or potentially revolutionary challenge to state power and it prefigures a new society in some way. It does not aim to create alternative institutions that live alongside the existing state, but to replace the existing institutions, through a great clash if necessary. Dual power implies civil war between the haves and the have-nots. The most famous example of a dual power situation is the conflict between the Provisional Government versus the Soviets in Russia in 1917 (Lenin's description of that struggle is where the term comes from). However, there have been numerous examples of dual power situations in the U.S., including the American Revolution, "Bleeding Kansas" in 1854, the Civil War, and Birmingham in 1963 in the midst of the civil rights demonstrations.

A dual power strategy works by participation in those mass struggles and organizations that a cadre believes can bring about a dual power situation. No revolutionary organization can create a dual power situation; to believe one can is vanguardism. Dual power comes about through the struggles of the great masses of people to overthrow their rulers, like in Tunisia or Egypt. The task of a cadre organization is to determine, through study and debate, which struggles have the best potential to create a dual power situation, and then to participate in them to try to strengthen them and make them as radical as possible.

In trying to decide which struggles have the most revolutionary potential, Ruckus members evaluate them according to our Six Criteria. The political work we engage in 1) must address systems that attack working class people of color, 2) must attack white supremacy, 3) must have the potential to further the development of revolutionary consciousness among the working class, 4) must have the potential to build a dual power, 5) must actively push the development of a feminist praxis, and 6) should stretch the boundaries of political organizing. If a struggle does not meet these criteria, members will have a difficult time persuading other members that they should be involved in it.

For example, in 2007 Ruckus comrades in Arizona, after much debate and discussion, decided that immigration struggles have the

most potential to create a dual power in the state. In our study of the Arizona immigrant rights movement, we judged that the fundamental demand of undocumented people and their allies is not citizenship but the freedom to live, love, and work wherever they pleased, and that this demand cannot be co-opted by global capital. Global capital needs borders to control labor flows, even as goods and services flow freely across them. Without borders workers can organize internationally against their exploitation. Merely by crossing the border illegally to support their families, undocumented workers express their belief that borders are or should be irrelevant. They suggest a world without borders, and a willingness to clash with those who depend on them. Immigrant rights struggles in Arizona thus have the potential to build a dual power between a world that insists on walls and fences and one that is indifferent or hostile to them. Based on that analysis, we became determined to join with undocumented workers in their struggle.

Repeal and Dual Power

We began by looking for existing organizations to join to do this work. Finding none in Flagstaff, we decided to create our own. (We also found that no organizations in Phoenix fully acknowledged the radical potential of immigration struggles, so we also built a Repeal chapter there.)

The Repeal Coalition is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization that seeks the repeal of all anti-immigrant legislation in Arizona. We demand the freedom of all people to live, love, and work wherever they please, and for the right for all people to have a say in those affairs that affect their daily life. The organization, founded in 2008, has fought the notoriously racist law known as SB 1070 and dozens of other anti-immigrant laws in the state through grassroots organizing. Repeal's organizing strategy has two parts. The first is our noncompliance campaign, in which we urge individuals and businesses to publicly refuse to abide by SB 1070 and all other anti-immigrant laws. The second is to develop the radical potential of young people by creating "Freedom Schools" that teach them how to create grassroots campaigns of their own, such as demanding ethnic

studies programs at their school. (Ethnic studies programs were banned in Arizona in 2010.) These campaigns, we hope, will pit young radicals against the powers that be in a struggle they can win and build on.

We talk to people in their homes, hold mass meetings, organize protests, teach people about their rights, and hold open meetings every week. Our goal is to repeal SB 1070 and other nativist legislation. Even more, we seek to create a third pole in the immigration debate. Right now the debate is limited to nativists who scream, “Kick them all out!” and liberals who want to exploit people first and then kick most of them out, providing a path of citizenship for a few. (This is sometimes called “comprehensive immigration reform.”) Repeal is trying to inject a third, radical, and common-sense position: In a world in which TVs, t-shirts, and technical support recognize no borders, humans shouldn’t have to either. Everyone deserves the freedom to live, love, and work where they please. (This is the slogan of the Repeal Coalition.) If we can change the debate in Arizona, we think, we can change it nationwide.

One could argue that Repeal is a “reformist” group, in that we seek the repeal of laws (though we don’t go to the courts or legislatures to do so, but to the streets). But this criticism fails to see the radical potential of this struggle, a potential that a dual power strategy recognizes. The repeal of nativist laws, like the supposedly “reformist” struggle for the ten-hour working day in nineteenth century England or the voting registration drives during the civil rights movement in the U.S., is a reform that challenges the pillars of the capitalist system itself. Repeal is a strategy to defeat nativism, break up whites’ distorted class consciousness, and organize Arizona workers on a class basis rather than a racial one. It seeks to bring workers who are white and of color together to fight their bosses. It seeks to improve the organizing capabilities of the worldwide working class by struggling against the borders among them (literal and otherwise), and to get more and more whites to recognize that their interests lie with undocumented workers and other workers of color, not with white democracy.

As David Bacon notes in his book *Illegal People*, the goal of nativism is to depoliticize undocumented workers. Nativist laws like SB 1070 are designed to silence undocumented people, their families, and their allies. “Comprehensive immigration reform” is designed to exploit their labor while denying them political power. The antidote is to politicize undocumented people and their allies by getting them involved in grassroots politics. For the active participation of the working class always portends the possibility of open class struggle. The dual power.

Ruckus members see Repeal as a mass organization that has a better chance to bring about a dual power situation in Arizona than any other current struggle. Yet Repeal is not a Ruckus front group. Non-BTR members also helped found Repeal, and Ruckus has always been a minority presence in Repeal. Some BTR members have taken on leadership roles, but that is a result of our commitment to the group (and, to be honest, to our privileged status as documented people), not vanguardism. If we lead in Repeal it is because we earned leadership, not because we presumed it.

Ruckus members discuss Repeal at BTR meetings in order to discuss strategy and tactics. We help keep Repeal alive during lulls in the struggle. We encourage political discussion in Repeal meetings. In particular, we try to help Repeal members see the international nature of their struggle (i.e. the immigration struggle is not limited to Arizona or even the U.S.) and its radical nature (i.e. it goes beyond the quest for citizenship or just taking care of one’s family but toward transforming society).

The task of revolutionaries is to develop this “praxis,” this combination of cadre work and mass organizing. Revolutionaries need both kinds of organizations. That way, when a crisis hits and people take to the streets, they will be experienced, they will have the respect of important sectors of the working class, and they will be able to show to the working class the truly international and radical nature of their struggle. When the weak spots of global capital are exposed, in other words, radicals need to be ready to hit them—hard.

Notes

1. Some members of Ruckus identify as anarchists, others as communists, some as both, and some as neither. We believe that the old arguments between communists and anarchists are largely irrelevant today—though as an anarchist, let me just say that our side was right in those old debates.

Joel Olson died on March 29th, 2012. Joel was a close friend and comrade to several of us at the IAS. We mourn his loss, but maintain his life as an example for us all.

Joel Olson was a member of the Repeal Coalition, a grassroots group seeking the repeal of all anti-immigrant laws in Arizona and that fights for the freedom of all people to live, love, and work wherever they please. He was a member of two cadre organizations over the past twenty years, the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation and Bring the Ruckus. He is also the author of *The Abolition of White Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press) and at the time of his death was writing a book on fanaticism in the American political tradition.

THE GOAL OF A CADRE GROUP IS CLASS WAR

by Mike Kramer and Joel Olson, Ruckus

[Note: This essay was written in response to various debates over the "Bring the Ruckus" document on an email list, particularly over the meaning of September 11 and the nature of white supremacy in the United States.]

There have been two main discussions on the list recently. One has been over the September 11 events, the other over race traitor vs. settler analyses of white supremacy. Although these discussions have been independent of each other, for the most part, we would like to suggest that there is a common thread to them. Specifically, the argument that the September 11 events were justifiable attacks on an imperialist state and the argument that colonialism is the key to understanding race in the U.S. both lack a class analysis. We believe, however, that a class analysis is central to understanding the significance of the September events as well as the American racial order—and therefore to the building of a revolutionary cadre group. Further, we believe it is our position on class rather than on

terrorism or white supremacy that fundamentally distinguishes our (Ruckus's) politics from other positions taken on this list.

Terror and class war

The American left has shown a surprising lack of attention to class in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. This is evident in two common left responses to 9-11 and the war on Afghanistan. The first response is to denounce the United States government and detail its crimes against the Afghan people and Third World nations. These analyses are generally true; some of them are even useful (see <http://www.counterpunch.org> for the best of them). But ticking off a list of imperialist atrocities committed by the U.S. is not a class analysis, nor does it provide any insight on how to end this war-and begin the class war. This is evident in that this approach has failed to provide any alternative to current American antiterrorist policy other than to call for some vague and toothless international tribunal to indict Osama bin Laden and bring him to "justice."

The second position, expressed by several people on this list, is to assert that terrorism against the U.S. is a justifiable tactic against an imperialist state. As J- wrote on this list, "When the 3rd world attacks the 1st world I will always support the 3rd world. When the poor attack the rich I will always support the poor. I will accept even the excesses of these attacks."

J-'s post prompted a heated exchange on the list. Much of the debate focused on political violence and posturing, whether terrorism is a legitimate tactic, and whether the attacks killed elites or working people. We don't think these are the fundamental issues. Generally, there is no "pacifism as pathology" problem on this list. Political posturing is also not what's at stake here. Nor is the debate about the class composition of who was killed. Poor people always die disproportionately in wars, even just ones.

Instead, we believe the key issue is class. Specifically, those who see the September 11 attacks as justifiable aggression against an imperialist state lack a class analysis of the forces attacking the U.S.

and express a deep skepticism that the American working class will ever have revolutionary potential.

Terrorism is random attacks on civilians with no intention to achieve power or gain a military advantage. Its function is precisely to terrorize. It may or may not be performed by a state; thus it includes Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip and the U.S. bombing of Iraq as well as Al Qaeda's recent attacks. The problem with terrorism from our perspective is that it usually stems from either the lack of a mass base by the organization carrying it out or an anti-humanitarian impulse that reflects the organization's reactionary politics. The Symbionese Liberation Army launched attacks and kidnappings in the U.S. with the intent of promoting class struggle, but they were driven to engage in terrorism because they completely lacked a mass base for their politics. Al Qaeda, on the other hand, clearly represents a mass base, but their politics are more akin to fascism than to revolutionary struggle. This is evident not only in their politics but in the source of their support: lower-middle and working class Muslims in the Middle East and Western Asia who face uncertain futures and/or a shaky class status. In other words, precisely the strata Hitler recruited from.

Support for terrorism reflects an all-too-easy belief that any attack on imperialism is progressive. But we revolutionaries don't face a battle between rich and poor or imperialist and anti-imperialist. Instead, we face a three-cornered fight: neoliberalism vs. a fascist/fundamentalist resistance to it (Al Qaeda, Pat Buchanan, etc.) vs. a revolutionary response (the Zapatistas, etc.). We have to fight on two fronts, just like the Spanish anarchists (against Franco and liberals/Communists) and the Russian communists (against Germans and the Czarists).

Support for terrorism also reflects a deep pessimism regarding the American working class. It implicitly assumes that Americans are inherently imperialist, therefore any sort of attack against them is justified. This sounds radical, but what this position really does is avoid the difficult work of building a movement. It positions American revolutionaries as cheerleaders for heinous acts rather

than agitators whose goal is to organize a revolutionary American proletariat.

Settlerism and class

In a Sept. 19 message, H- asked whether political unity for the cadre organization we propose needs to be based strictly on a race traitor or settler analysis of white supremacy. This is an excellent question. Our answer is that differences between the race traitor and settler analyses of race are not nearly as significant as are their differences over class. Basically, settlerism is deeply skeptical that an American working class exists or can ever be revolutionary. For example, here's what M- wrote in a September 13 post:

"The BTR statement is predicated on two fundamental political errors. First, it situates 'whiteness' exclusively in relation/opposition to Blackness and racial slavery. Second, it proposes a strategy based around the notion of an 'American working class' as an agent of revolutionary change. These positions discount the central importance of land and of settler colonialism in the creation of capitalism and of white supremacy. Whiteness developed, (and not only in America or the US), not only out of race-based chattel slavery, but out of the conquest and settlement of a vast land mass and the genocidal annihilation of its people. Empire was a project not solely of the ruling class but of other classes whose relationship to the means of production was and is mediated not only by white skin privilege but by a social relationship among people and between people and nature based on private ownership of land, and particularly of the private expropriation of commonly held land and of OTHER PEOPLE'S LAND."

The task of a revolutionary organization, according to this perspective, is to create a movement against colonialism that will return "other people's land" to them. It does so by demonstrating solidarity with indigenous peoples, defending their sovereignty over ancestral lands, and fighting against "settlerism, colonialism, and imperialism/ capitalism," to again quote M-.

We agree that colonialism and imperialism have been devastating forces throughout the globe. We also agree that indigenous sovereignty must be respected and, where possible, reestablished. But the central difficulty with his argument is that it doesn't know what to do with the white working class specifically and the American working class generally. According to settlerism, the white working class is inherently reactionary: as settlers, their primary interest is in seizing land and exploiting the labor of colonized peoples. As such, it will never be a revolutionary force. To the extent that peoples of color in the U.S. consent to and profit from the global system of colonialism/imperialism, they are part of the problem, too.

The purpose of a cadre group given this analysis is to act in solidarity with colonized peoples, not to build a working class movement. In fact, settler ideology sets itself firmly against building what Marx calls a "class-for-itself" (i.e. a working class that understands its oppression and is united in fighting against it) because white workers are irredeemable settlers who will only act in the interests of colonialism and never in the interests of humanity. A few "exceptional" whites may decide to join the fight against colonialism, but the white working class cannot be won over as a class. They are inherently reactionary: once a settler, always a settler.

This is the heart of our disagreement with M-. Simply put, we believe that white workers in particular and the American working class in general can be won over to revolutionary politics, while he doesn't. Granted, the white working class has been a reactionary force historically, but it's not inevitable that they will always act this way. That's one of our tasks as revolutionaries: to convince whites to surrender their privileges and fight for freedom.

We believe it is not in the long-term interests of the white working class to be white. Our goal is not to win over a few "exceptional" whites to anti-fascist or national liberation struggles. We want to crack the white monolith and blow it open, not because "whiteness" explains how race functions every where in the world (it doesn't) nor

because the white working class is the "most important" section of the working class (it isn't). We want to blow it open because it's the central obstacle preventing the creation of a unified revolutionary proletariat in the United States. Whiteness is like having the emergency brake on when you're in first gear. It's hard to move forward, but when you turn it off you can do 75 in no time.

We want to build a revolutionary working class in the United States. We believe that the purpose of a cadre group is to encourage the development of such a movement. This requires a belief that working class whites and Americans generally are not inherently reactionary, that they can be won over to the cause of freedom if they surrender their privileges, and that doing so is vital to the world's freedom, given the U.S.'s central position in global capitalism. Those who are skeptical of the possibilities of class politics in the U.S. don't think this kind of movement is possible. We share many of the antiimperialist and settler-based criticisms of this society, but we absolutely do not share their pessimism in organizing a revolutionary class-for-itself in the U.S. We wish those who believe "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" or in the settler analysis luck in their efforts, but these are not our politics. Nor are they the kind of politics that can lead a successful revolutionary movement.



*Joel Olson November 4, 1967 - March 29, 2012
rest in power*

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