

Issue 10
February 2013

The **PORTLAND RADICLE**

Sowing the Seeds of Liberation & Community

*We take on the
gun control
debate:*

Fascism Is a Cold Gun

by Däv

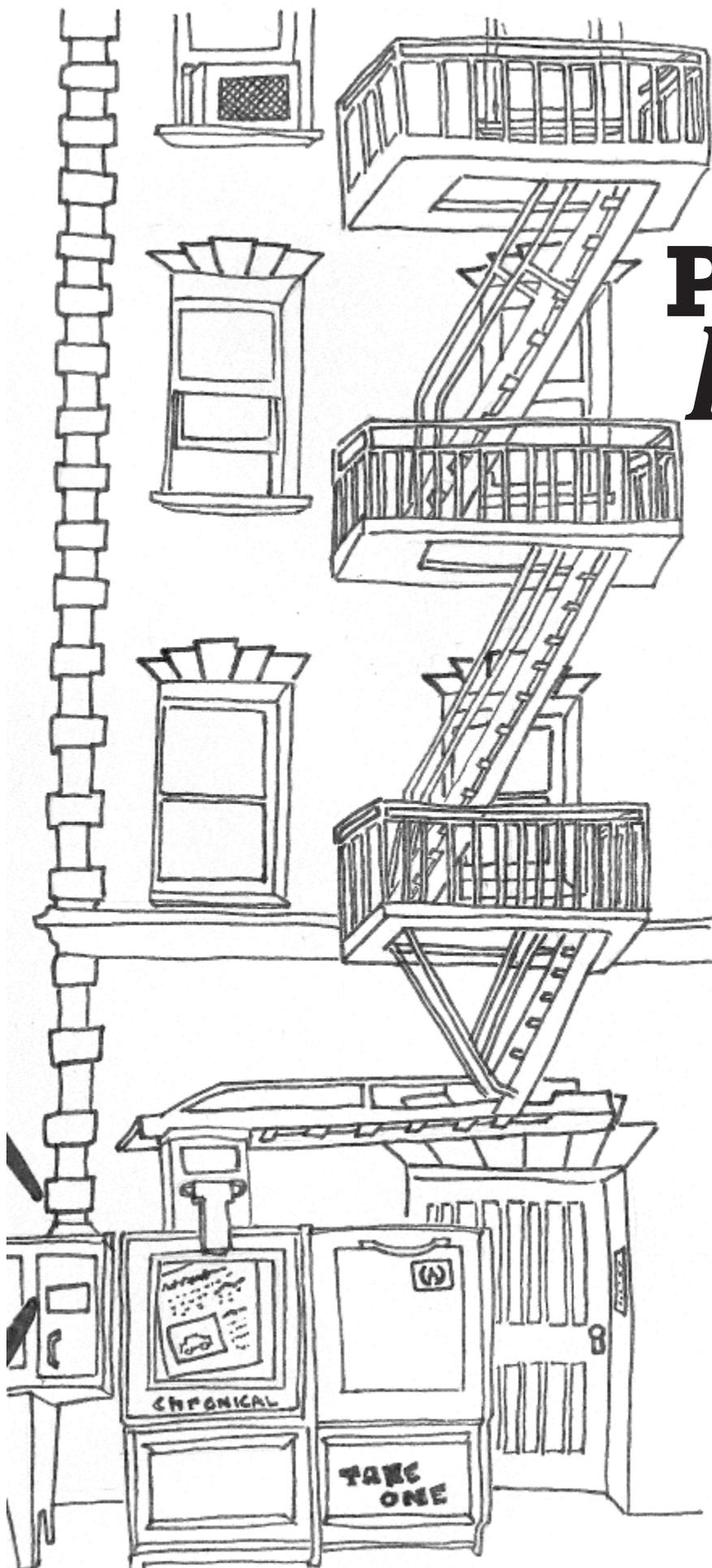
**Mental Health, Dual
Power and the State**

by Natasha Stoudt

**The Revolution of
Everyday Life**

a review by Andrew

**Worker Solidarity
Wins Back-pay at
Yaw's Top Notch**



Rebellion and Repression from around the world

EGYPTIAN BLACK BLOC: Anarchists emerged in militant protests in Egypt, marking the second anniversary of the revolution which ousted former dictator Hosni Mubarak. On January 24, the night before the anniversary of the beginning of the revolt, black-clad militants set fire to an office of the website of the unpopular ruling party, the Muslim Brotherhood, destroyed protests barricades near Tahrir Square and fought with police. The next day, in Suez, protesters at the Interior Ministry building lobbed stones and Molotov cocktails over security barriers at police, who returned volleys of tear gas canisters. The provincial capital building in Suez was set on fire and protesters in Cairo and Alexandria also blocked subway trains. In Cairo, protesters in black fought police and were joined by the Ultras, Cairo's militant football fans.



The black-clad protesters have referred to themselves as "the black bloc," apparently inspired by the use of that tactic, in which protesters conceal their identities with black clothing and masks to evade identification by authorities. Many press observers struggled to make sense of the anarchist affiliations of these groups. However, street fighting against government security forces and attacks on government property by the Ultras were an integral part of the beginning of Egypt's revolution. Another important faction during the 2011 revolt, the April 6 Youth League, emerged in an act of solidarity with striking factory workers in 2008. Both have members who have stated an affinity for anarchist politics.

Dozens have been killed in riots and protests since January 25. On January 28, President Muhammed Morsi declared a week-long state of emergency in Suez, Port Said and Ismalia. On January 28, The head of the army, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has stated that the state may collapse.

KIKI: Sergey Turzhanskiy, a Portland anarchist better known as Kiki, has been released from custody after their charges were moved to federal court. A number of conditions were set for their release, most notably that they are to have no contact with anarchists while they await trial, specifically those working to resist the federal grand jury in Seattle targeting Pacific Northwest anarchists.

Kiki is under house arrest while they await their trial. They are accused of throwing a Molotov cocktail at a parked police cruiser at the precinct on Northeast Emerson Street. They stand accused of attempted arson and possession of a destructive device. They had been held in state custody with bail set at \$1 million. Their trial is set to begin on March 5.

PNW GRAND JURY: Information has emerged that Portland anarchist Kerry Cunneen has been subpoenaed to appear before the federal grand jury in Seattle that is targeting Pacific Northwest anarchists. However, Cunneen is refusing to appear before the grand jury.

In a statement released January 9, Cunneen said: "I will not cooperate with this grand jury nor will I in any way aid the state in its efforts to imprison people. I stand firmly in solidarity with the actions taken against the Nakamura Federal court house during the May Day demonstration and all action taken against the state and capital towards the goal of a more liberated society."

It is believed that the grand jury is investigating property destruction that took place during May 1 protests in Seattle last year. Four anarchists have been sent to federal prison for their refusal to testify before the grand jury. Three remain: Katherine "Kteeo" Olejnik, Maddy Pfeiffer and Matt Duran, all of whom hail from Olympia.



A black bloc smashes windows on May 1, 2012 in Seattle

CA GRAND JURY: A Portland resident has been subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury in California, ostensibly relating to animal rights actions carried out in Santa Cruz, in 2008. Priyesh Patel, of Portland, joins two other Californians in being called before the secretive prosecutorial body convened in San Francisco.

The US attorney leading this grand jury, Elise Becker, prosecuted the 2010 case against the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act 4, four activists tried and acquitted as terrorists for chalking slogans on a sidewalk and distributing fliers in support of actions against the abuse of laboratory animals by the University of California.



January 26 solidarity march, Herkalion, Greece

GREEK SQUATS RAIDED: Anarchists in Greece are battling authorities in an attempt to resist coordinated efforts by Greek police to attack anarchist social spaces and communities. Greek police forcibly evicted Villa Amalias, a squatted social center, and ASOEE, another anarchist space on December 20 of last year. However, Greek anarchists successfully combated police presence and regained the squat on January 9. The police sent heavy reinforcements and some 100 anarchists were arrested at the scene. Anarchists conducted occupations of the headquarters of DIMAR, a center-left party in Greek's coalition government, where 40 more people were arrested. That day, police also conducted a raid on the Skarmanga squat in Athens and made an incursion into Exarchia, an anarchist stronghold and semi-autonomous neighborhood in Athens. Another raid evicted the oldest squat in Athens, Lelas Karigianni, on January 15, when 14 more people were arrested. An estimated 10,000 anarchists in Athens marched in solidarity with their arrested comrades on January 12.

ANONYMOUS: The clandestine hacker group Anonymous, in an act of solidarity, has released personal details of the judge and prosecutor involved in the grand jury investigating anarchists in the Pacific Northwest. The group published a cache of data, including home addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses for numerous government employees working in agencies such as the FBI, the Bureau of Prisons and federal courts. Details can be found on the web at pugetsoundanarchists.org.

Anonymous also announced it had hacked the servers of the Justice Department in retaliation for the death of internet activist Aaron Swartz. Anonymous has threatened to release agency documents after Swartz took his own life in January. Swartz was facing a possible sentence of 35 years for hacking the academic database JSTOR, using a concealed computer on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Swartz planned on making the papers freely available online.

This is your paper!

The Portland Radicle aims to stimulate discussion of anarchist thought in our communities. We seek to disseminate diverse ideas of autonomy, self-determination, and mutual aid in order to encourage constructive resistance against political, economic, and social forms of domination in our lives. The Portland Radicle is an anarchist-without-adjectives project that is looking for articles from anarchists of all backgrounds for consideration. We like writing that is accessible, but not simplistic. We are looking for articles between 500 and 1500 words. To submit please go to our website: portlandradicle.wordpress.com and click "Write for us."

ANTIFASCISM: The Tinley Park 5, a group of Indiana and Illinois anti-facists have been sentenced after taking a non-cooperating plea agreement on January 4 for three felony counts of armed violence, each. They were accused of violently disrupting a white supremacist gathering at a restaurant in a Chicago suburb on May 19, last year. Jason Sutherlin was sentenced to six years in prison. Cody Lee Sutherlin and Dylan Sutherlin were sentenced to five years. Alex Stuck and John Tucker were sentenced to three and a half years. Their sentencing includes credit for seven months time served and "day-for-day" reduction for behavior, which could cut their sentences in half.

CLIMATE CHANGE: On January 8, US climate scientists declared 2012 as the hottest year on record for the US, with temperatures averaging 55.3F, a full degree hotter than the previous record year, 1998. The year saw the catastrophic forest fires in the west and persistent drought in the midwest. In October, the East Coast was hit with the largest tropical storm to ever hit New York and New Jersey. While grassroots efforts to combat climate change, such as efforts to block the Keystone XL pipeline in Texas, or respond to its symptoms with critical mutual aid, such as Occupy Sandy Relief, are inspiring, there is currently no concerted international response to combat climate change. Scientific consensus supports conclusions that weather events such as those seen in the US this year will increase and become more severe.

EARTH LIBERATION: Rebecca Rubin, who is accused of numerous acts of property destruction attributed to the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front, has been transferred to Portland. After a decade underground, she surrendered to federal authorities at the Canadian border in Washington on November 29. She is accused of taking part in ELF and ALF actions in Oregon, Colorado and California, from 1997 until 2001. She will be tried in Oregon.

PORTLAND POLICE: The Portland police have chosen not to place a police officer disciplined for on-the-job sexual harassment in charge of their division overseeing sex crimes and human trafficking.

After mounting criticism, Portland police Chief Mike Reese released a statement on January 28 saying he would not place Wyatt in those assignments, where he would have contact with one person he was found to have harassed. Wyatt was found to have sexually harassed several female co-workers in 2011 and to have brandished his gun in a road rage incident in Idaho.



Lt. Todd Wyatt

Fascism Is a Cold Gun

by Däv

It's morning in the mountains of Pakistan. One-hundred and sixty kilometers east of Peshawar, Northwest Frontier Province, the sun rises over the mountains, bringing in a new day for tradesmen and merchants of Darra Adam Khel. For over 120 years, this town has been dedicated primarily to one business, the manufacture and sale of firearms. Without high-tech machinery and without first-world wages, men and boys toil away with attention and skill at building guns and ammunition of every variety. Meanwhile, the ever-present threat of American Predator drones hovers as much in the imaginations of these villagers as the weapons of indiscriminate destruction do sixty thousand feet above. Nevertheless, this town stands as a testament to the crude simplicity of the manufacture of weapons, which has never been halted by the use of force.

Meanwhile, 11,000 kilometers to the west, it's Tuesday. The president of the most militarily powerful nation in the world is convening a meeting to decide who will be targeted in air strikes to be conducted throughout the following week and who will be spared. This same president has just recently proposed that new legislation be put forward to restrict access to various implements of a magnitude roughly equal to that of those manufactured in the mountains of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. This proposal was put forward under the pretense of providing for the defense of the American people against the threat of their own neighbors, whose access to these implements is unrivaled in the industrialized world.

Should these proposals be added to the ever-expanding doctrine of state will, they will be enforced by the same mechanisms of social compulsion whereby the rest of this will is exacted. Should this be the case, the very same cops who disproportionately target the poor and people of color for drug and other offenses against the will of the state will have a new tool in their arsenal which will allow them to feed the ever-expanding prison-industrial complex with new slaves for the plantations of the present and future. There will be new assaults as occurred at Ruby Ridge (all schadenfreude aside), at Waco, at both MOVE organization headquarters in Philadelphia, at the Black Panther office in Los Angeles, at Fred Hampton's house in Chicago, and at the scene of a thousand slave hunts of the 1850s. These assaults will mirror the thousands of unnoticed and unreported incidents which have occurred before and since, that have put free people into state-sanctioned dungeons due to the perception of a threat to the monopoly which the state assumes over the "legitimate" use of violence. Should these proposals be put into law, they will only serve to increase the power of the very same state which doesn't bat an eye at firing hellfire missiles at villagers armed primarily with home-made guns 11,000 kilometers away with complete and total impunity.

The events leading up to the recent surge in discourse around the imposition of restrictions on the possession of weapons by non-state actors has by no means come in a vacuum.

Mass shootings have been prevalent in the media over the past several years and, regardless of their anomalous

nature and relative infrequency as compared with America's normally high rate of homicide and/or murders committed by police (you are vastly more likely to get murdered by a cop than by a mass shooter), are still indicative of a social problem in the United States. This is a social problem which must be realistically and actively addressed. No one can deny that the deaths of the children of Sandy Hook were tragic and unacceptable for any society. That said, the increased empowerment of the state relative to those who live subject to its violence will do little to nothing to curb the social and economic dislocation which socializes those who would perpetrate such atrocities into their will to do so. Regardless of the abuse of the memory of these atrocities to strengthen the power of the US security apparatus, it is important to recognize that the debate is being framed entirely on this basis.

“The increased empowerment of the state relative to those who live subject to its violence will do little to nothing to curb the social and economic dislocation which socializes those who would perpetrate such atrocities into their will to do so.”

The leading thrust of the political argument is that the government must step in to impose restrictions on the owners of firearms for the good of the public. The primary oppositional thrust of the political discourse (as put forward by the National Rifle Association), is that the government must increase the presence of the security apparatus around the places where these atrocities are most likely to happen. In each case, no attempt is made to look at the underlying material structure of weapons in the United States or the material roots of less anomalous violence. The question that you will not hear asked by state operatives Senator Dianne Feinstein, President Barack Obama and fascist enablers within the leadership of the NRA is this: Why are so many Americans armed?

The reason they will not be asking this question is very simple: it is, in part, their fault. The fact of the matter is that the United States has so many guns as a result of being the world's number one contributor to the international manufacture and sale of weapons. Comprising 1.1% of world GDP, the United States sells around 41% of all weapons sold around the world every year. The fact of the matter is that the arms manufacture industry could not survive in the United States at the scale at which it does if it were not subsidized by the state through military and police purchases as well as the sale of American weapons to military and police forces around the world. The fact of the matter is that if the agents of the state really wanted to get rid of weapons which they felt negatively impacted the well-being of the people, they'd simply stop buying and selling them. That the argument is not framed in this manner should be indicative of

their true intentions.

I want to end this on a personal note. I own guns. I don't own them because I think that some dead old white men gave me the right to do so two centuries ago. The 2nd amendment of the constitution is not relevant to why I feel that people have an intrinsic right to defend themselves from the violence of other people using what implements are available to them. I don't own them because I think that they will somehow magically allow me to overthrow tyranny if or when it comes in the form of, say, a Multiple Launch Rocket System leveling my home and the five kilometers around it in seconds. As it is clear that the state has far and away more guns and butter than I could ever hope to afford, the idea that political power flows from the barrel of small munitions is outmoded. I don't own them because I am afraid some broke rogue thief is going to invade my home and take my non-existent valuable things. Using lethal force in the defense of

possessions or property is and always will be murder and is, as such, wrong. I own them because of the recognition that there may be a time and place in which these tools become essential to the preservation of my own survival that of and my friends. I don't know when this will be or what nature this situation might look like, but I know that it is possible and empirically probable, given human history. I own them because of the recognition that safety is a privilege which presently exists relative to social hierarchies in our society. As a person of color, I don't feel safe unarmed in parts of Portland and the police certainly don't make me feel any safer. I own them because we have not yet created the necessary social preconditions which would convince me that I shouldn't or wouldn't. The absence of an institution which thinks it's OK to kill kids on the other side of the world is just one of those preconditions. If we want to make the world a safer place for all, increasing the depth and scope of state power is not the answer. The only answer is revolution. 🌐

Mental Health, Dual Power and the State

by Natasha Stoudt

Amidst the storm of media coverage on the recent mass shootings have been many calls for changes to the American mental health care system. While I have found a rare point of agreement with President Obama that we need a "national dialogue on mental health," much of the content of this dialogue has been deeply troubling. Many have advocated for greater leeway on the part of mental health professionals to institutionalize those they deem a potential harm to others, as well as for greater state monitoring and restriction of those diagnosed with mental illnesses. Were these policies enacted, not only would they likely have little effect on stemming the violent expressions of poor mental health, the repercussions on targeted individuals could be dire. The answer to addressing our nation's mental health crisis - and it is certainly that - lies not in tighter state control but in community structures that support healthy mental and emotional functioning throughout the lifespan.

Advocates of giving mental health professionals increased latitude to institutionalize people forget that the current set of circumstances under which a person can be legally committed—that they present risk of imminent danger to themselves or others—are the legacy of the work of activists who fought to

change a system in which people were regularly institutionalized on the basis of such characteristics as not conforming to one's assigned gender, being disruptive in school, or having some delusional beliefs. In the 1970s, the US Supreme Court established the guideline of imminent danger in response to these abuses, which theretofore had left hundreds of thousands of nonviolent

people languishing in mental health institutions indefinitely. Subsequently, the paradigm shifted towards a more community-based model with an emphasis on outpatient care. Although abuses are unfortunately still common under the current model, they are far less so today than fifty years ago, and expanding the abilities of mental health practitioners to institutionalize patients would be a step backwards towards an era of rampant psychiatric abuse. Additionally, increasing state control of those with mental health diagnoses would likely discourage people from seeking

help. The valid fear of unnecessary institutionalization and related psychiatric abuses combined with our culture's stigma towards receiving psychological help already constitute a barrier between individuals and mental health care; adding to this barrier would prevent mental health care from reaching many of those who

(HEALTH, cont. page 6) ➡

(HEALTH, cont, page 5) need it most, including those who may become violent.

If one chooses to lobby the state for structural changes to the mental health care system, a far better tack would be to advocate for single-payer health care, state-subsidized higher education, and increased funding for social programs like Head Start. Under a single-payer system, not only would those without mental health insurance coverage be able to receive care, those who do currently have insurance would be able to access services without the endless shuffle between providers due to coverage changes and fights with insurance companies to continue receiving therapy. Subsidized higher education would allow a larger, more diverse group of people to enter the mental health care professions, redistributing some of the strain from overburdened community mental health practitioners whose unreasonable caseload undermines the effectiveness of their work, and bringing therapeutic interventions to a wider range of people. Finally, funding programs that foster healthy early childhood development would address the prevalence of mental health issues on a preventive level. Given their likely effectiveness, why do we see so little advocacy of these particular changes in our “national dialogue” on mental health care? There are likely a few reasons, such as these policies seeming implausible due to government corruption and bureaucratic gridlock, or that they would take too long to create noticeable effects. However, there is a more insidious reason underlying the advocacy of state control of people with mental health diagnoses: our society’s adoption of a reductive medical-biological model of mental illness.

The medical-biological model of mental illness is the idea that mental health difficulties are organic medical illnesses akin to physical disease. The concept of mental illness as “a matter of brain chemistry” and psychiatric drugs being similar to “insulin for diabetes” has reached a level of social saturation as to become cliché. The cultural narrative around so-called mental illness is a kind of pseudo-scientific storytelling in which we accept biological explanations with little evidentiary support - for example, no study has ever shown anything approaching a consistent correlation between low serotonin levels and depression, but the average American could probably repeat the idea that diminished serotonin is the “cause” of depression. While it would be foolish to claim that biological predisposition plays no role in the development of mental illness - some more than others - the medical-biological model obscures the reality of the relational, societal, and other environmental factors that affect brain functioning and cause mental health to deteriorate. It locates the origin of mental health difficulties within the individual, rather than in the interplay between the individual and their environment. When mental illness is conceived of as a problem of individuals, the emphasis shifts towards managing the problem through domination and control, rather than solving the problem by restructuring our social environments to support mental health. Pharmaceutical companies capitalize on the

medical-biological model by subsidizing poorly designed, biased research to support it; forming unethically intimate relationships with powerful psychiatrists who then disseminate inaccurate information along with their drugs; and of course, by peddling marginally effective medications to those who are desperate for relief from their suffering. Insurance companies also benefit because it enables them to pay for relatively inexpensive pharmaceuticals and/or short-term therapies rather than the longer term psychotherapy that many people need in order to recover from their emotional difficulties. Ultimately, the medical-biological model serves the entirety of capitalist society because it conceals the role of capitalist social structures in damaging our collective

and individual emotional health.

As anarchists and radicals, we know if we sit back and wait for the state to fulfill our needs, we will be waiting for the rest of our lives. In addition to demanding change and advocating for the rights of those with mental health diagnoses, we must create dual power structures to support emotional health within our communities. One starting point is to center the health of ourselves and our comrades as we build our organizations and movements. In our zeal to effect change, radical

communities often expect an unsustainably high degree of time commitment and activity, leading to emotional and physical burnout, and shaming, both implicit and explicit, of those who are unable to keep up. We need to investigate how to better support each other through our individual and collective struggles, to resist the tendency, programmed into us by a capitalist society, to remain isolated, to keep our relationships on a superficial level, and to run ourselves ragged with work. Study after study has confirmed what we all know intuitively: that community and strong social relationships have a protective effect on emotional health, even and especially for those most at risk. To protect those relationships, we must prioritize improving our skills at conflict resolution and compassionate communication. We also need to educate ourselves about how to recognize and best support those going through a mental health crisis, without minimizing or stigmatizing. We need to enthusiastically and creatively establish collective care models and celebrate each other’s self-care. And we need to actively undermine the cultural stigma that prevents people from seeking psychological help.

The healthier and stronger we are, as individuals and as collectives, the more empowered we will be to take action and change our world in the myriad ways that we envision. And the more we experiment and find effective ways to support each other’s healing and wholeness, the more we will be able to demonstrate to our larger communities that another world is possible: a world in which no one need rely on state control to carry the weight of our collective mental and emotional difficulties, because we have rebuilt our ability to shoulder that responsibility ourselves. ●

“The answer to addressing our nation’s mental health crisis lies not in tighter state control but in community structures that support healthy mental and emotional functioning.”

The Revolution of Everyday Life

by Andrew



At the barricades, Paris 1968

The back cover of my own tattered copy of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* holds a foreboding quote from the author, "This work is part of a subversive current of which the last has not yet been heard." Apparently the prediction has held true, as Raoul Vaneigem's classic situationist text has been republished with a new preface by PM Press. For a book that first gained notoriety through the vandalized walls of Paris during the May 1968 uprising, this longevity is no small task.

In my personal estimation, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* has been one of the liveliest outpourings of post-war European radicalism. Where many French intellectuals have left philosophical tomes that skirt around the edges of their political convictions, Vaneigem attacks consumer capitalism head on, with an aphoristic writing style that clearly lends itself more to graffiti than professorial theses. Make no mistake, *The Revolution* is dense, and the sheer number of ideas can be intimidating, but it is a book where one should shamelessly skip, pause, or jump ahead. Vaneigem makes it clear; a book's order should come from the spirit of the reader, not the orthodox interpretations of some leftist scholar.

At its center this book is about the gulf between the survival consumer society provides and the dignity and passion required for true living. As Vaneigem succinctly notes "Who wants a world in which the guarantee that we shall not die of starvation entails the risk of dying of boredom?" Despite pushing 45 years of age, the book's grasp on the minutiae of life under consumer capitalism is deft. The false roles we play, the mediated experience, the isolation, the despairing destruction as rebellion and life finds perverted outlets against technocratic society, it all translates across eras and rings just as true today. But the author's most caustic attacks are reserved for those supposedly progressive forces that act as a safety valve when Power's boiler is about to explode. Against this tradition he traces a line of insurrectionist worker revolts and rebel poets who fought against such

co-optation and gave spontaneity, creativity, and love brief but glorious life. Such subjectivity is constantly pushing through, and ensuring we are living more and not dying slower.

While *The Revolution's* critique continues to find meaning in present life, at the same time its assessment of the battlefield seems almost too rosy. Written by a European man on the cusp of a burgeoning consumer society, its argument against the boredom and sickness of consumerism is (still) accompanied by the global cries of those who have not been guaranteed survival and who are still fighting the deprivation and violence of capitalism. While I don't believe this blunts Vaneigem's critique, it is an oversight that would be fatal to overlook going forward. The synchronicity of all our demands often leads me to an old Jean Grave quote: "It is not alone to those who are dying of want that anarchy addresses itself. To satisfy one's hunger is a primordial right which takes precedence over all other rights and stands at the head of the claims of a human being. But anarchy embraces all the aspirations and neglects no need. The list of its demands includes all the demands of humanity."

What is clear is that capitalism and Power are not meeting any of these needs, while our movement is adapting and blending the demands of both dignified existence and spontaneous exuberance in new ways. *The Revolution of Everyday Life* strongly grasps one strand of this struggle, and when a friend asks, I always recommend a reading. But what is perhaps more important than just understanding the book's ideas, is to now surpass them with our lived experience. As Vaneigem himself notes of the work: "out of this confusion will one day come formulations capable of firing point-blank on our enemies." 🍀

Review

Worker Solidarity Wins Back-pay

On January 18th, a group of workers from Yaw's Top Notch Restaurant took a stand. Leading the delegation into the restaurant, the group of 10 workers were accompanied by 30 community members from We Are Oregon and the Industrial Workers of the World. To the shock of bosses and customers (and to the smiles of kitchen staff), a worker publicly read a letter addressed to the owners and management demanding over \$1200 in back wages that Yaw's has refused to pay. Less than a week later, with signed checks in hand, these same 10 individuals celebrated victory won through solidarity.

Yaw's Top Notch Restaurant was an East Portland staple for over 50 years. Three decades after they closed their doors, Yaw's is now back and wants you to believe that it's still the landmark it once was; a place where you can experience what it was like in the "good old days" when customers and employees were treated like members of the family.

The new Yaw's claims to be, "looking for people who want more than just a job," something that, "goes beyond just making money." But Yaw's management has failed. To go "beyond just making money," you must first be making money. Now, Yaw's employees are demanded what was rightfully theirs and weren't going to take no for an answer.

The workers were supported by members of Food & Retail Workers United (FRWU), an IWW coalition of the union's food, retail, and distribution workers committed to workplace democracy and global solidarity. They received additional support from We Are Oregon (a project of SEIU locals 49 and 503), which organizes against wage theft in the Portland metro area. The Yaw's workers, who took the lead in coordinating the campaign, made a commitment to each other to not give up until all 10 workers demands were met.

Each worker involved demanded a different amount which was owed to them due to unpaid but mandatory meetings, trainings, and "soft opening" shifts. Yaw's also charged some workers uniform laundry fees which resulted in being paid less than the required minimum wage. Standing together on Friday, the workers made their demand collectively because of Yaw's repeated refusal to pay them individually.

"This is the first step," said one worker. "Let's make sure what has happened to us doesn't happen to anyone else."

On January 18th, the worker-led delegation of community members filed into the restaurant and requested to speak to the owner. Management's reaction? Workers were mockingly condescended to, the owner refused to come out of his office and workers were told they had to leave and were not welcome. The pictures of smiling employees that line the walls fail to hide the truth: If Yaw's is a family, it would seem that support only goes one way, and any attempt to be heard is met with passive-aggressive animosity. The talk of community and values means nothing if behind close doors theft, abuse and mismanagement

are business as usual.

On the triumphant walk after the action, the sense of empowerment was evident as workers openly shared stories of being fired when they protested unfair conditions or refused to crumble in the face of the owner's chaotic, abusive behavior. Cheers abounded as workers testified about their accomplishment and vowed to return if their demands were paid by Thursday, January 24.

"We didn't let them scare us!" said Sabrina, one of the workers.

They didn't have to wait long, as the owners and management immediately attempted damage control. Management began contacting workers individually in order to avoid paying all those involved. But solidarity won out and workers held firm to their "all or nothing" agreement. By midweek, it looked like Yaw's had caved as the group was told that they could come pick up their checks on Thursday. However, as they insisted on coming together, they would have to be there before the restaurant opened. Management claimed that the group was "a mob" and "scary." Was it this group of parents and community members that were threatening, or was it the truth that the Yaw's management was hiding from?

Sitting around the table of a nearby diner the group discussed how this meeting with management might play out. If management was going to change something, or leave anyone out, the workers weren't going to stand for it.

"We're in this together all the way!" said a member of the organizing team as someone brought out the wage theft fliers that were to be passed out to the community if all didn't go as promised.

As the Yaw's workers walked toward their former place of employment, the mood was tense. But moments later: smiles, triumphant cheers! As the workers filed out of the restaurant and gathered to take a photo with what they had earned, suddenly there were shouts and threats.

"No pictures!" yelled the general manager who had overseen the settlement. As he threatened to call the police for trespassing if they didn't leave immediately, the workers happily walked away, checks triumphantly raised in the air. They had won. Yaw's had no power over their lives anymore.

"There are still people working there who have been stolen from," observed one of the workers. "Younger folks have kids. Older folks are scared they won't find another job. They take advantage of this."

Continuing on, another worker shared how they felt when their former co-workers saw the delegation enter the restaurant, "It was scary at first, but I saw the smiles on the faces of other workers. I hope we gave them courage to fight, too."

Acting together as one, the employees have shown that they will not stand for being stolen from. But it wasn't just about the money. Workers' solidarity had won the day, but the fight is never over. As one worker said, "I have a very strong feeling that this is just the beginning." 🍀