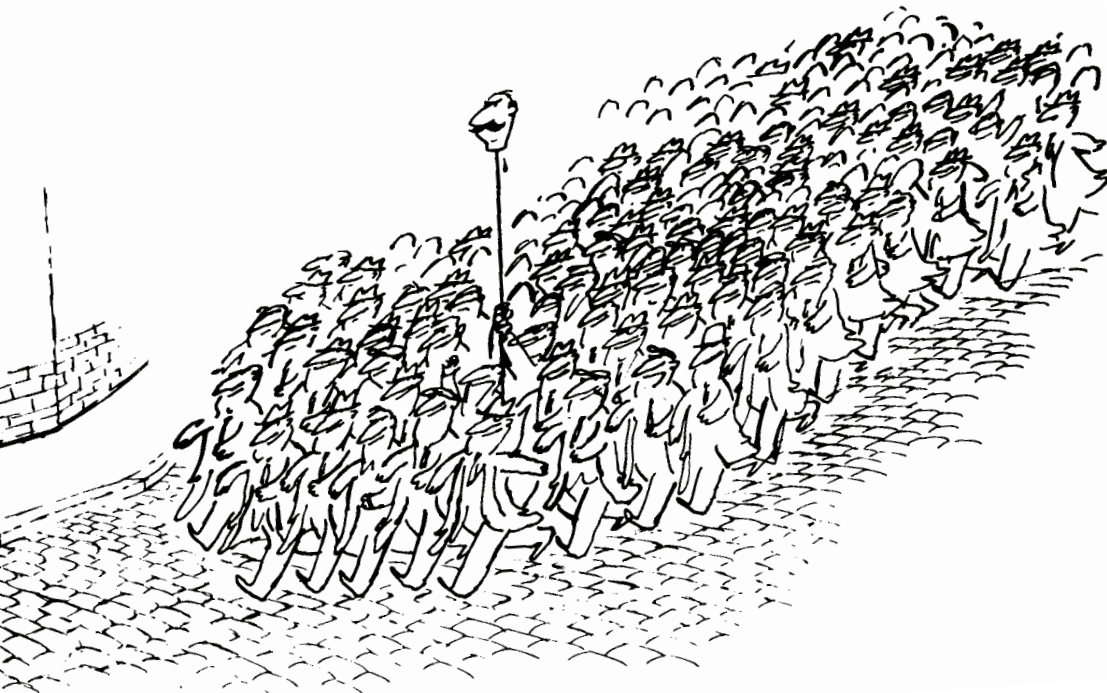


St. Louis

*Against the drudgery of everyday life, and for a holiday without beginning or end.*

# WAR ON MISERY #4

*"No thanks to the treadmill. No thanks to the grindstone.  
There's plenty of dissent from these rungs below."*



**CLASS WAR**

**RAT IZMEĐU KLASA**

**ةيقبطلا برحلا**

**GUERRA DE CLASES**

**CHIẾN TRANH GIẢI CẤP**



Summer, 2013

Hello! It's been a while...

The publication you hold in your hands is a letter, we wrote it just for you. Really, it's more an invitation, a show of our friendship. And it's an offer that we, the editors of this rag, first had to extend to each other to rekindle our friendship.

You see, years ago we worked on War on Misery, chronicling and analyzing collective revolt and subversive activity around St. Louis. But slowly things subsided, as they do from time to time, and our friendship strained.

As the lull continued, we each found different ways to fill our time - relationships, children, music, books, alcohol, drugs, solitude, traveling to places where the lull wasn't so bad - but even at their best, something lacked, and as time went on, the void opened more. We waited and sharpened our knives on theory and history, but our coping only became more common.

In the early Fall of 2011, a weight lifted. At first we didn't realize it, and balked and made fun, as we'd become quite good at. But then slowly we saw there was something more. As we overcame years of cynicism and heartbreak, we found many others couldn't. Knee-jerk writing off of anything that might resemble activism - abundant in the anecdotes that follow - it seems the knife-sharpening can prove disastrous if we fear the transition from ideas to actions, from images to our actual lives.

Hopefully, our experiences in this organ will sync with your own:

- how hard it is to see the difference between recuperation and little victories
- that we make revolt as we go - a playful experiment where no one has "the answers"
- the importance of space and meeting physically in the real world, and how hard the powers-that-be will try and stop us, even for things as simple as a child's birthday in the park
- how hard it is to work with such a jumble of people - that (at times uncomfortable) motley crew
- and, perhaps most importantly, the therapeutic effect revolt has on us

With renewed vigor, dear friend, we beseech you: we cannot escape this mess, we must destroy it. Anywhere we go, sooner or later, race, gender, police, priest, and money will rear its ugly head. Though it goes by many other names and acts on us daily, this force is not inevitable. The waste, scarcity, and broken lives it leaves in its wake are not either..

To all of you who refuse the drudgery, who stumble in revolt but humbly refuse to feel ashamed and learn how to move all the better for it, whether we're yet to meet, or sadly never will, or if you're one of the many faces we see daily, we thank you. You inspire us, and these words are for you..

Won't you help us make the feast? Won't you help us tear this nightmare asunder?

After all this time, sure to excite, sure to disappoint: Long live the War on Misery!

war\_on\_misery@riseup.net



# Man slain in jail was disabled

Family wants to see the surveillance video of attack in Cahokia.

BY NICHOLAS J.C. PISTOR • npistor@post-dispatch.com • 314-340-8265  
AND JESSE BOGAN • jboagan@post-dispatch.com • 314-340-8255

**CAHOKIA** • The man who was strangled at the Cahokia jail by another inmate over the weekend had cerebral palsy and got around on crutches, according to family members. They said he was in the jail for trying to steal a motorized cart from a Walmart.

Mike Glisson, an Alton attorney representing Timothy E. Johnson's family, said that "they are concerned because he was physically disabled, that maybe the incident could have been prevented."

He said the family had requested video surveillance of the incident.

Mark E. Luster, 41, of Cahokia, was charged on Monday with Johnson's murder. Court documents allege Luster used a knife to choke Johnson. Luster has a lengthy criminal case history in St. Clair County, including a "not guilty by reason of insanity" verdict in 2007 on a charge of using a battery to a peace officer. The charge was dropped because Luster didn't want it released.

Officials have been quiet about how long he was at the jail. Cahokia Police declined to release the date on Wednesday, saying Chief Luster didn't want it released.

Luster, the St. Clair County sheriff, didn't return messages on Wednesday.

Luster was issued on Monday a cell with Luster and death was discovered during a semi-

hourly safety check. Glisson said Johnson hadn't been in any major trouble. According to St. Clair County court records, Johnson was charged twice in 2011 with failure to appear in court for unpaid Metro tickets. One of the charges was dismissed for time served, one day in jail. He was wanted for the second violation.

Glisson said Johnson drove off in an electric cart from the Walmart in Cahokia and was stopped by police. Johnson was living with his girlfriend in Granite City. His grandmother lives in Cahokia and he may have been headed to her home, Glisson said.

Police said Johnson was arrested Saturday about 6 p.m. and put in one of three holding cells. Each cell has two beds. It's unclear how many other people were held in the jail Saturday night. Police have 48 hours to transfer inmates to the St. Clair County jail.

Glisson said Johnson didn't have his crutches in the holding cell. "He couldn't move without crutches," he said. "It was obvious that he was physically disabled, so whoever did this to him knew this."

Johnson was born in the Metro East and lived in Memphis, Tenn., until he was 16. He then moved to Belleville and lived in several group homes.



Johnson

MISSOURI SUICIDES 2005-2009			TRAUMATIC DEATHS LOCALLY, 2007-2011		
	Total	*Rate		Homicide	Traffic accident
Statewide	3,971	13.5	St. Louis	236	368
Male	3,152	21.9	St. Louis County	22	104
Female	819	5.4	St. Charles County	20	119
White	3,724	14.7	Jefferson County	13	109
Black	210	6.0	Lincoln County	11	41
Age 0-15	38	0.6	Madison County	197	105
Age 15-24	489	11.6		65	114
Age 25-44	1,406	18.0			
Age 45-64	1,431	18.8			
Age 65+	607	15.2			
Gunshot	2,208				
Other means	1,763				

\* per 100,000 people

Source: Medical examiner and coroner offices

## Two sisters are found abandoned at store

Two sisters, 7 and 13, were found abandoned Monday afternoon at the Schnucks store at South Grand Boulevard and Gravois Avenue after their mother had notified authorities that she could no longer care for them, St. Louis police said.

The girls were placed in emergency foster care, and police were looking for their mother, who may be charged with child abandonment.

## Woman survives leap from I-44 overpass

A woman, 23, was in serious condition at a hospital with numerous broken bones and other injuries after jumping about 12:30 p.m. Tuesday from the Jamieson Avenue overpass onto eastbound Interstate 44, St. Louis police said.

The woman, who lives in the neighborhood, apparently was trying to take her life, police said. She did not hit any vehicles nor was she struck by any, officials said.

## TOWN AND COUNTRY > Robberies may be linked

Detectives investigating Tuesday's armed robbery of a pharmacy in Town and Country by an apologetic, rifle-wielding gunman are studying whether a similar crime in Des Peres in 2009 might be connected. Tuesday's robber at the Goldsmith Pharmacy, 777 South New Ballas Road, asked for a bottle of morphine. When an employee said the store didn't stock it, the robber said, "Yes, you do. It's in the safe." Police said the robber apologized several times and reportedly said, "I am not a bad person and no one will get hurt, but I need morphine for a friend who is really sick." An employee handed over a bottle containing 22 morphine tablets. Anyone with information is asked to call police Sgt. Chip Unterberg at 314-432-4697.

## ST. LOUIS > Hungry man with ax gets probation

A homeless man who caused pandemonium in a crowded restaurant 2½ years ago when he held up an ax was sentenced Thursday to probation. "I'm ill, call 911," Terry L. Madlock Jr. told the employees at the Jack in the Box at 4201 South Kingshighway on July 21, 2010. "Give me everything you have because I'm (expletive) hungry." Madlock, 35, was convicted in November of unlawful use of a weapon. Circuit Court Judge Dennis Schaumann put Madlock on three years of probation, and ordered that he be placed on the mental health caseload, meaning his probation officer will be someone experienced with handling mental problems. No one was injured in the incident, which ended when St. Louis police Officer Luther Tyus confronted Madlock with

## ST. LOUIS > Man's death by train called likely suicide

Police say a pedestrian who was killed by a train in Belleville early Friday was a homeless man likely committing suicide. The man, 44, was sitting on the side of the tracks leaning into the path of the train, police said. He was struck and killed by a Norfolk Southern Railroad train near South 44th Street and Citizens Park at 12:29 a.m.

## BELLEVILLE > Train kills man lying on tracks

A man lay down on Norfolk Southern railroad tracks that cross Illinois 159 near North Douglas Avenue in Belleville about 6:15 a.m. Friday and allowed a northbound train to run over him, police said. Officials were trying to reach relatives of the man, 53, who was killed. Police Capt. Don Sax said witnesses saw the man walk south, then lie down on the northeast side of 159, which is also Illinois Street. Sax said the crossing signals appeared to be working. Norfolk Southern representative Robin Chapman said, "The crew said the person laid down on the tracks as the train approached."

## BELLEVILLE > Pedestrian is killed by MetroLink train

Eric Byrd, 22, of Belleville, died from massive injuries when he lunged in front of a MetroLink train near East B Street in Belleville on Sunday evening, authorities said. He was pronounced dead at 9:40 p.m.

Family members told the St. Clair County coroner's office that Byrd had been suffering from depression. Police believe the death was a suicide.

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Madlock

1 A PLAGUE OF LONELINESS INFECTS THE LAND. 2 PANGS OF EMPTINESS HAUNT US DAILY. 3 THE RAT RACE OF ECONOMIC SURVIVAL GRINDS US DOWN.

# Introduction (Take #2)

That call that comes over the radio of a fellow delivery driver in a bad accident... Watching an evicted neighbor cry over money stolen from her mattress by the sheriff's moving thugs... Under the Poplar Street Bridge by the droughted Mississippi, remnants of someone's life found weeks after reports of a man had walked into the river and disappeared... God, how many minutes of some days we almost breakdown. How many times do we think about leaving work halfway through a shift? Or not waking up to even go to work? Then not knowing what to do on our days off - sometimes drinking ourselves into a stupor. And finally, feeling worthless when we find ourselves jobless.

Everywhere the misery is present... the loneliness, the alienation, the poverty, the devalued self-worth, the cancer, the threat of rape or robbery, the degrading job hunts, and when one takes a moment to look at their life... the depression, oh god, the depression, and the fucking heartbreak. And what we do to cope... the T.V., the pills, the alcohol, the porn, the weed, the sports obsessions, the hollow sex (if one is lucky), the psychologists, the internet...

A people who have endured a lifetime of such horrid, "normal" things will inevitably do fucked-up things to each other - even in the course of trying to break free and find their voice. *The scars run deep* and the contradictions that arise from them must be considered and engaged, not shamed or ignored.



# Man found hanged in Jennings jail

BY DENISE HOLLINSHED  
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**JENNINGS** - A man held in jail in Jennings pending posting of bail on traffic warrants hanged himself Friday morning, officials and his mother said. Charles Anthony Chatman Jr., 24, of the 2200 block of Ibis Court, in Jennings, was found about 8:30 a.m. Joe Zlotopolski, the Jennings public safety director, said a video recording shows Chatman Jr. hanging himself at 7:42 a.m., but no one was watching when it happened. That was a little more than an hour after he was moved to a one-man cell in the Jennings Correctional Center because he was agitated, and about 30 minutes after being served breakfast.

He was transferred there Thursday night. "It's sad," Zlotopolski said. "I watched the video and I wondered how can someone do that. It's horrible and sad." Zlotopolski said Chatman was in a cell with other inmates but became combative. Inmates were concerned he would attack them, so jailers moved him to a one-person cell at 6:30 a.m. "He hadn't been here that long," Zlotopolski said. Chatman hanged himself with a piece torn from a sheet. Kathy Schmidt, 46, said she received a call about 9 a.m. to say her son was dead. She said he was arrested on bench warrants for traffic violations in St. Louis County and was at one jail or another since March 16. She said he

had multiple fines from several jurisdictions and some were paid before he was transferred to Jennings. Schmidt said she did not believe he killed himself. "My son did not commit suicide over no traffic ticket," she said. Her ex-husband, Charles Chatman Sr., said he last spoke to his son early Thursday, by phone, and was told he had paid \$750 in bail to two municipalities but needed \$850 more. The younger Chatman was arrested during a traffic stop in Moline Acres, his father said. "He was not a bad kid," Charles Chatman Sr. said, choking back tears. "He called me and said, 'Dad, get me out of here.' I asked him how he was holding up and he said he was good."

# Silent, rising tide swallows more lives

**DIVERSE VICTIMS** Suicide affects people of all ages and situations - and their families and friends. **INCREASING RATE** It has become the leading cause of injury mortality nationwide, topping traffic w

# Leap off bridge becomes woman's second chance

BY JESSE BOGAN - jboagan@post-dispatch.com - 314-340-8222

Several surgeries and mounting hospital bills weighed heavily on the woman's rail-thin frame. She couldn't work and struggled to get out of bed to do laundry. She didn't feel like a good mother for her children. She'd been on antidepressants before, but she scoffed at the idea of paying \$90 or \$150 for pills.

Her husband took her to a counseling clinic. Asked in the screening interview if she had ever considered killing herself, she lied and said she hadn't. Her first appointment was set for a later date.

She snapped before then. She was too fed up with finances, infections and continued fallout from a previous marriage. "I didn't know how to fix what was wrong," said the woman, from southeastern Missouri. One morning in July, she drove to the middle of the Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge in Cape Girardeau, a towering cable-stayed span between Missouri and Illinois, and climbed over the rail. The Mississippi River flowed several stories below. She hung from the side. Then she had second thoughts. "I didn't want to do it, but I couldn't pull myself back up," she said. Somehow, she survived after smacking against the brown water. But her leg was mangled. She had bro-



Richard Stone, police fatally shot Stone Wednesday. His daughter said he'd discussed committing "suicide by cop."

# Fighter asks if police had to kill her father

understand why there's over 13 bullet holes on the side of the trailer. "Did they really have to shoot that much?"

his brother about committing a robbery and then getting police to shoot him, a phenomenon known as "suicide by cop." Police say Stone was slow to answer the door of his home in the Mark Twain Mobile Home Park on Wednesday when four St. Charles detectives came to question him about an armed robbery. When Stone finally opened the door, he pointed what police said

they thought was a real firearm at them. Officers fired, and Stone retreated into the mobile home. A few seconds later, he opened the door and pointed the gun a second time toward police. Officers fired again, killing Stone. Fontana says she initially backed the actions of officers because she thought her father had fired at them. But on Thursday she said police

should have wounded her father instead of killing him. "I don't understand why there's over 13 bullet holes on the side of the trailer. I mean, did they really have to shoot that much?" she said. Fontana also expressed concern for the other occupants of the mobile home park, saying the bullets had gone through the trailer.

**CHARLES** - Fired worker threatened to blow up office - A man who threatened to blow up her office after she got fired has charged with making a terrorist threat, police said. Ashley Lamora, 27, of St. John, was being held in the St. Charles Jail on \$50,000 cash-only bail. Monday, police said Lamora got into an argument with her supervisor when she showed up late for her job at Reliant Repair Station, 2510 South Old Highway 94. She subsequently was fired, said, and then she made the threat.

**JENNINGS** - Man is accused of terrorist threats - Krystain Washington, 18, of the 8700 block of Granada Place in Jennings, was charged last week with two counts of making a terrorist threat after Jennings police said he made two threatening 911 calls. On one call, he said that some people were going "to shoot up" the Jennings police department, and in the other call, he said that Jennings City Hall was going to be blown up, according to authorities. The calls were made Jan. 18.

**ST. LOUIS** - Man found dead in Tower Grove park; suicide suspected - A man whose body was found Wednesday morning in Tower Grove Park had been shot in the head, police say. Early indications are that the death is a suicide. The man, in his early 20s, had one gunshot wound to the head; two guns were found at the scene, said St. Louis Police Department spokesman David Marzullo. The body was discovered about 6:30 a.m. in the park near Kingshighway.

**SPRINGFIELD CITY** - Worker is killed on James Gentilello Jr., 43, was killed Monday while operating machinery at Food, 2901 Missouri Avenue, said. Gentilello, of Belleville, was pinned at 5:14 a.m., pinned between an unattended, automated vehicle that is used to lift and load pallets and a metal lifting unit. He oversaw the operation of unattended vehicles in the warehouse, officials said. He was pronounced dead at the scene at 6:25 a.m. by Madison County coroner's investigator Shane P. Gandy. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration will investigate.

**ST. CHARLES** - Man jumps to death from parking garage, police say - A 51-year-old south St. Louis County man jumped to his death Monday night from the top level of a parking garage at the Ameristar Casino, police said. The man leapt from the sixth level of the south parking garage, falling 75 feet to pavement below. St. Charles police Lt. Don Thurman said. The man had just left the casino, but Thurman said it appeared nongambling related personal issues led to his actions. The man, whose name was not released, left his wife inside the casino while he went to get the car. The man then sideswiped four cars on the way to the top of the garage, where he left the car, ran to the edge and jumped. A casino security guard in the area witnessed the man's actions. Police will review the medical examiner's report but are considering the death a suicide.

**MISSOURI** - Man jumps to death from parking garage, police say - A 51-year-old south St. Louis County man jumped to his death Monday night from the top level of a parking garage at the Ameristar Casino, police said. The man leapt from the sixth level of the south parking garage, falling 75 feet to pavement below. St. Charles police Lt. Don Thurman said. The man had just left the casino, but Thurman said it appeared nongambling related personal issues led to his actions. The man, whose name was not released, left his wife inside the casino while he went to get the car. The man then sideswiped four cars on the way to the top of the garage, where he left the car, ran to the edge and jumped. A casino security guard in the area witnessed the man's actions. Police will review the medical examiner's report but are considering the death a suicide.

# For us, these three conditions are but the one heartbeat of this poisonous world.

We're just some people who got together to relay our common experiences and critiques of the world. This is no script, dogma, or bible. *We just want the constant backdrop of pain and misery to stop, and we want the happiness we sometimes feel to be the normal state of things.* We've come to the conclusion that this pain is not an individual psychological condition, but mostly a universal, deliberately imposed social condition that can be confronted. **Something is wrong with the world, and the only thing wrong with us, is that we, more often than not, tolerate and even justify it.**

Not only does confronting those responsible for this loneliness and depression (instead of blaming ourselves) hit the problem at its source, but that simple *process* of confrontation all but eliminates the depression and loneliness. We have seen it, and we have felt it. The blossoming of the human spirit that accompanies this confrontation is the healthiest, most authentic sociality that we have possibly experienced. It is a solution not offered when you google: "How do you cure a broken heart?" (yes, someone you know has probably done that).

There are no heroes, there's only the best in all of us. People themselves cannot be revolutionaries or reactionaries, but people can do revolutionary things, people can do bigoted things, and people can defend their own exploitation - chances are each of us has done all of those things. And what is it that brings out the best? We believe it's these episodes of popular struggle and collective action... In this light, we aim to speak to the best in you, the reader, and somehow provoke you to be an actor in freedom-loving activities and not the voice screaming out to "calm down and negotiate."

Not just in the urban areas where police are at war with residents, or in those enclaves of bohemia that expose the sham of straight society, or in those workplaces of stomach-turning hyper-exploitation, but everywhere, the conditions that beg revolution exist. Everywhere - the city, the suburbs, the countryside - a common misery is present.

Let's all join the toast: "Laughter and rebellion against the suicide machine we live in!"



# Introduction (Take #3)

“Caged birds accept each other  
but flight is what they long for.”

-Tennessee Williams







## Occu-POW!: *The Jolt of Occupy St. Louis*

There are periods of time in recent history when revolutionary energy consumes the globe: 1917-1919, 1968, and (on a smaller scale) the anti-globalization and anti-war movements of a decade ago. The sudden revolution in Tunisia triggered a similar global wave of discontent in 2011 that eventually washed ashore here as “Occupy St. Louis.” “Bigger and better than the ‘60s!” shouted some Occupy participants around the country. But what actually took place during this “global social revolution” here in the U.S. (and particularly the Midwest) hardly compares with the ruptures in the social, political, and cultural fabric of the 1960s. Arguably, it is still mighty quiet. But that’s all a bit silly to dwell on. Because for all of us who tolerated the bleakness of the ‘80s or ‘90s and the accelerated alienation of the 2000s, it undoubtedly signified a shift – an awakening of glassy-eyed America.

For the thousands who at any point in time considered themselves a part of what was going on at the Occupy St. Louis encampment in Kiener Plaza, there are thousands of different experiences and perspectives. What follows is ours (a combination of just a few of those). It is a collection of those memories and reflections that continue to stick with us a year or so later, and for that reason, seem to offer the most profound lessons. And it is a perspective which prioritizes the glimpses of beauty each person sometimes showed during those warm Fall weeks against a cold, gray world dominated by representation, money, routine, despair, and obedience...

At the risk of sounding optimistic(!)... This is no reminiscence of those weeks as a golden age, rather a reminiscence for an opening that could have led us to one.





ply unbelievable. Almost overnight, we created a space where most authority – city officials, police, union officials, etc. – seemed out of place and could be safely confronted. It was obvious it wasn't *their* space, they came as visitors. This mere setup made it difficult, if not impossible for any of them to smoothly move in and crush the occupation or slyly take it over. *This setup also made such critical calls of 'the police as counter-occupy forces' seem, not unnecessary, but rhetorical or even paranoid.*

A carnival of music erupted every Friday. And who now would imagine calling for a free amplified concert in the plaza without the city's permission?! Some people, exhausted from a day at work, instead of sleeping, would inexplicably rush downtown to immerse themselves in the cauldron of discussion and activity. Others called it a drug (with all the side effects too!). Some who were heavy drinkers stopped drinking altogether for those weeks. Still others stopped certain OCD behavior or were able to focus and read books again. Some felt a deep-seated heartbreak all but dissolve, while others found the strength to confront abusive boyfriends. Some of those who worked became recklessly emboldened – stealing more and more valuable stuff from their bosses (donating much of it to the camp), fudging hours, refusing to do dangerous tasks, insisting on breaks, talking with co-workers about Occupy or about not tolerating the management's workplace abuse...

But most profound of all, was the transformation of

### Occupy as... Magical Electricity

"Rarely have I been around so many people – so diverse – strangers – *breaking laws in a brash way.*"  
*-memories of an Occupy participant*

Two days after the start of the Occupy encampment, something indescribable happened. Some call it electricity, some an "eros effect," some "moments of excess," some revolutionary magic. Throughout recent history it rarely happens (not seen here since the anti-war mobilizations 8 long years before Occupy), but when it does, everyone in the city is talking about it – people take a break from daily life, sports, the weather, and other bullshit, and they are not the least bit surprised to run into a demonstration that in normal times would be puzzling. (Such is life in small-town St. Louis – it's no D.C., Paris, or Mexico City where traffic reports casually mention street blockages due to angry people.)

This time, the new normal was fantastical and free, but also unnerving and ulcer-causing, and in retrospect sim-



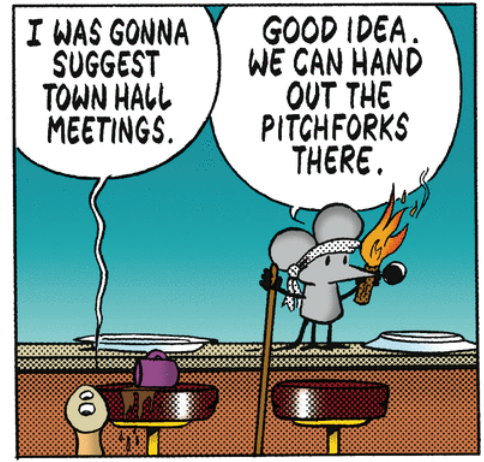
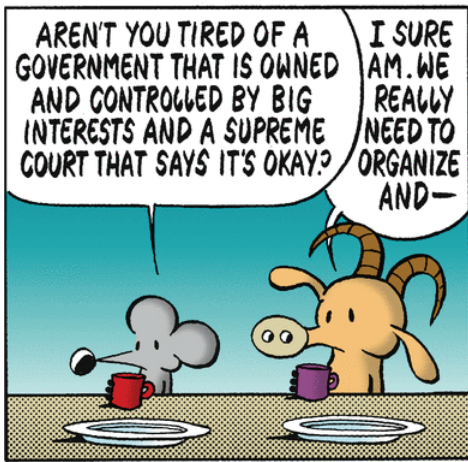
### Scratching the Surface of the Kiener Chaos and Its Wake: An Incomplete Timeline of Occupy St. Louis

**October 1** - Inspired by the 2-week-old Occupy Wall Street encampment in New York City, the occupation of Kiener Plaza begins after a short march to the Federal Reserve Bank.

**October 4-6** - Several days, peppered with chaotic discussions, dozens of overnight campers, and impromptu small rallies and marches to the doorsteps and lobbies of various banks, is topped off with threats of a police eviction. Around 200-300 show up to flood the plaza in protest of the threats the night of the 4<sup>th</sup>. Police back off but return the night of the 5<sup>th</sup>, making arrests and evicting the camp. On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, people return and the occupation continues.

**October 7-21** - A semi-spontaneous Friday (the 7<sup>th</sup>) night march of around 150-200 leaves the plaza after an evening of music. The joyful march winds its way through Washington Ave. and Laclede's Landing before returning to Kiener Plaza. The next week sees demonstrations at U.S. Bank, Peabody Coal, and the Federal Reserve among others. People continue to camp overnight, free movies and concerts are hosted, heavy debates carry on (as does lounging), and leaderless general assemblies of all who are present pass various declarations ranging from commitments to join any striking workplace, to ridding the camp of any racist and sexist behavior, to forbidding censorship, to demanding the dropping of all police charges against occupiers, to broadcasting solidarity to encampments around the country facing police repression... A second lively

Friday evening march on the 14<sup>th</sup> fills the streets, this time visiting the downtown jail and the Cardinal's playoff game at



all who ventured into the pit of Kiener. Some people appeared to be idiots, or just shallow, or reformists, or anti-social misfits. But when angry and when engaged in some sense of movement with others, they developed into free, and frankly quite beautiful, human beings. Because no one was in control in the stewing pot of the occupied plaza, many of us were able to realize ourselves as actors in the destiny of things, which of course, negated whatever need for authority we had burned in our head since youth. Most everyone participated on the basis, not of some ideological unity, but of a simple radical willingness to struggle together, often contradicting whatever plea to authority they had written on the signs.

Or so is one attempt to explain the frog-prince magic.

And many people extended the magical spirit beyond the plaza itself (and into other people's lives and our own daily lives) as demonstrations marked the downtown streets, bank lobbies, baseball games, disgruntled social service workers' offices, the city jail, a hotel lobby, MetroLink trains, Washington Ave. nightlife, a picket line, downtown Clayton, a Walmart, the MLK Bridge, the Loop, the old Municipal Courts Building, and even a threatened Lone Elk State Park. And beyond that Fall and ultimately beyond the Occupy moniker itself, emboldened participants carried a wave of energy deep into the new year through anti-foreclosure activity, demonstrations against police violence and the deaths in city jails, the hosting of a Midwest Occupy conference, a May Day celebration, an attempted takeover of KDHX's studio, a disruption in solidarity with Whole Foods' irritated workers, and more.

The electricity created during Occupy amplified everything in its wake, making much more possible than had been just a year before.

But now, as one participant explains, "Many of us have gone back to our old (good and bad) habits, but with – how torturous! – the wonderful true-to-life dreams we had at Kiener imprisoned in our heads."

### Occupy as... Class War

*"Ahhhh... the Friday marches that aimed to echo the frenzy in the Arab world."*

*-memories of another participant*

When we initially saw an announcement for Occupy St. Louis, we thought 'the class struggle sweeping the world has finally reared its head in St. Louis!' And though it was more complicated than this, we found this to be refreshingly true. The general mood was one of a collective 'enough is enough' concerning our economic poverty, that of those around us, and even that of those across the world.

Some loud people say the Occupy "movement" was cross-class, but anyone who went down to Kiener would hardly see a middle class morality through all the grittiness. In a sense you were walking into a politicized makeshift homeless encampment. If wealthy people were there, they were there to reject their role in this world, and if not, the mere atmosphere, and sometimes hostility, of the camp forced them to question it. For the

Busch Stadium. Prior to this march, the afternoon sees a union-organized downtown march that takes a sloppy life of its own despite the wishes of its "organizers." Demonstrations begin to wind down the next week and a significantly smaller Friday evening march uses the Metrolink to visit the Delmar Loop to protest the curfew there as well.

**November 2** - A day after a sick-out by state Social Services workers, people from Kiener Plaza occupy the lobby area of the Social Services building on Chouteau Ave., reading a statement of strike support to cheering workers and chanting before being ushered out. Afterwards, participants march to beef up a striking mechanics' picket line at Chouteau Ave. and Jefferson Ave.

**November 8** - In response to the city's growing threats of eviction, 'Anonymous' hacks Mayor Slay's website, declaring "WE WILL NOT SURRENDER... WE WILL NOT SLEEP UNTIL FREEDOM IS OURS."

**November 12** - Police evict Kiener Plaza once and for all, despite around 100 people shouting objections amidst a couple dozen arrests.

**November 17** - A large union-led march from Kiener Plaza ends in symbolic arrests near the MLK bridge. Remnants from this march parade to the old, and now empty, Municipal Courts building on Market St. and take over the building for an hour-long dance party.



### A Note on the Use of the Term "Class War"

To us, the leaflet advocating a "joyous class war" was slightly redundant. But some *do* hear "class war" and think Russia, or War, or factory workers, or People's Armies, or boring professors, or socialist politicians, or schoolchildren fighting – hardly joyous thoughts. So, it's worth saying here, that when we use the term, we mean it in its most inherently joyous sense... i.e., this American Nightmare based on class divisions can be turned upside down and a party of social experimentation can dance upon its sleepy head.

most part, the occupation, the general assemblies, and the marches were no place for the ruling class – middle management, sure, but that hardly made it a middle class movement.

With little faith in the normal channels – media, voting, organizations, politicians – the attitudes of the occupation arose from a deeply radical and *subjective* viewpoint. People brought their stories and their struggles. Simply put, we were here because of our own misery. Sure some didn't know what all the fuss was about, but most, it seemed, did. We were all identifying that common experience of jumping through hoops and slowly trying to say that there are bastards holding those hoops. The numbers were too generous (the 99% vs. 1%), but the power relationship, for the most part, was clear.

Activism – the career of acting for others – made little sense because so many had chosen to act for themselves. In this same light, the rhetoric of "Banks should behave!" or "Campaign finance reform now!" gained little traction since many were there *because* all their prior pleas had been futile. Furthermore, certain people just looked foolish as they spoke abstractly of "the poor" in a meeting made up of many homeless folks.

And whenever one became worried about the direction things were heading, there was plenty of room to define the happening for what it mostly was: an outburst of class war. Early signs and chants like "What do we want? Class war! When do we want it? Now!," "XAX THE RICH," and "Gimmie your wallet!" (directed at some wealthy Cardinals fans) typified these attempts – as well as being

genuine expressions themselves.

### Occupy as... Ugly and Rife with Contradictions

"This world has destroyed so many of us (mentally and socially, especially) and I think the movement can only be understood if that is understood."

-an Occupy participant in the first week

History books and Hollywood have a way with flattening revolutionary moments. And for a generation who only understands them through this representation, the world of Occupy was more of a cuckoo's nest. What is one to expect when a city of lonely people becomes angry together? There is no choice but to embrace our own madness and roll with the unpredictability and disorganization that follows when we assemble. For, more often than not, it is the hoops we must jump through year after year (that is, the *real* madness) that sets off our cuckoo. In a sense, our mental and social, not *just* economic, poverty is the root of our rebellion. And when people who live in this world – characterized by that isolation, the disease of the internet, the ostracized schizophrenia, the racial segregation, and the teetering over the abyss of mental breakdown that we all do – gather in search of something altogether new, it is indeed a revolutionary moment.

And so no, there's no need to present a collective respectable face to "outsiders" when everyone's rough around the edges.<sup>1</sup>

1. One obviously hideous example of this was a proposal to "clean up the camp" – an underhanded way of saying, "purge the homeless" – to attract more people (one must ask of course, what kind of people?), but at this point thousands had already come through the camp seemingly unfazed. Furthermore, those who pushed for "looking better" hardly looked "good" themselves when screaming at passing baseball fans. And we cannot help but recall the complicated relationship Occupy had with the baseball playoffs. Some took it upon themselves to hoist a glossy banner proclaiming Occupy (St. Louis, of course) support for the Cardinals through their tough times ahead. Several blocks away, the Federal Reserve Bank, what many considered Occupy's arch-nemesis, hung a banner that word-for-word matched the one at Kiener. The dynamic was the same in Fall 2012 when an Arnold bank robber yelled "Go cards!" on his way out. Except, well, the bank robber had a sense of humor.

**November 30** - Super-wealthy Portland Place in Frontenac is hit with Occupy graffiti.

**December 14** - A march leaves from Kiener Plaza and ends inside the lobby of the Mayfair Hotel, broadcasting anger that workers there haven't been paid in 5 weeks.

**December 31** - In concert with dozens of cities nation- and worldwide, a march goes from Kiener Plaza to the downtown jail ringing in the new year with a noise demonstration for those trapped inside.

**January 1** - Graffiti reading "We never forgive – Occupy" is left at the home of Eddie Roth, one of the city officials seen as responsible for the Kiener Plaza eviction.

**January 29** - In solidarity with the repression against Occupy Oakland, another march leaves Kiener Plaza, visits the jail, Washington Ave., and the Mayfair Hotel. Along the way, marchers spray-paint, "From Oakland to STL - FUCK DA POLICE."

**January 31** - While Occupy Oakland faces brutal police repression and St. Louis City police kill an alarming number of residents in January, enraged leftover 'occupiers' here march in the streets down the South Grand business corridor. To the cheers of motorists and pedestrians, they hand out and wheatpaste leaflets and also splash paint on a police substation. Later, in response to the march's one arrest, unknown people pelt two police substations with rocks and paint.

**February 3** - A large banner reading "RESISTANCE LIVES ON! STRIKE! OCCUPY!" is somehow dropped from atop the old





And yes, it's hard to make sense of such madness when hardly anyone knows how to talk honestly with people different than themselves. But it was absolutely possible to have a no-holds-barred debate during those weeks at Kiener compared to the rigged (and inconsequential) environments of a town hall meeting, a city bus, a jobsite, or a high school classroom. What better place to (re)learn how to talk to each other (without a snideness or know-it-all-ness) than the tense freedom of Kiener. You had to really understand the context of the city you were living in and start the moves toward utopia from there – not from late-night conversations with people who've grown to hate “stupid” or “apathetic” people. These “stupid” and “apathetic” people were finally giving you a chance.

And yes, past week 3, the campsite became increasingly seedy (particularly in regard to sexual harassment) once the sun went down. But not because of the intrinsic “madness” of the people. Rather it was because the discussions had stopped, the *activity* had stopped, and it simply began to emulate, what it at one time had been an escape from: a normal St. Louis City dog-eat-dog, sexual-harassment-plagued neighborhood. Normal life seeped into the occupation instead of the occupation seeping out into normal life. The lesson here for those who crave another world should be obvious: Don't fold in on ourselves! Let that magic and glorious madness radiate from the place of initial experimentation! Spread or die!<sup>2</sup>

The November 12<sup>th</sup> eviction, though ugly and despite

2. same as capitalism :)

its tragedy, galvanized the spirit one last time – proof enough (as if one can't feel it in their gut and needs a scientific logic) that activity drove it. Attempts to deepen critiques and call out contradictions only got so far through discussions. Engaging in action brought the contradictions out, forcing all of us to come face to face with the crushing role of the police, the union officials, and activist groups. To simply rationally explain this truth was to compete with all the noise of society – the State, the economy, the church, the culture of patriarchy, the media... We can't compete. For many, the conflict had to be *experienced* for minds to open up – like when a homophobic's brother comes out as gay or a racist country bumpkin is actually around friendly black people for the first time, their bigotry sounds foolish even to them.

Here, Marty Glaberman, an autoworker from the 1940s, describes a similar phenomenon: “Some guy sitting in his own living room listening to the casualties and the war reports, votes to reaffirm the no-strike pledge. The next day, going in to work, the foreman cusses him out, and he says, ‘To hell with you,’ and out he goes. And you say, ‘I thought you were for the no-strike pledge.’ And he says, ‘Yeah, sure, but look at that son of a bitch.’”

In other words, an elaboration of the earlier frog-prince magic theory.

### **Occupy as... a Product of No One But Ourselves**

“As individuals we are all responsible for thinking, planning, and acting.”

*-part of a failed, last-ditch proposal to rescue Occupy*

Can people witnessing an event become the event in itself? Or, why so many cameras? Or, better yet, what's so scary about putting the camera away? These are all literal questions, but the camera is also an idea that lives in our head. The problem with everyone taking photos at Kiener wasn't so much that authorities might one day learn who was at this gathering against the system (sure, this is a problem, but just a one-dimensional one), but it was that people chose to be spectators rather than participants in this thing that they clearly thought was interesting. And it wasn't just camera people, but also those accustomed to a routine life of submission were paralyzed by this rare opportunity. Still others partially

Municipal Courts building, site of the Nov. 17 occupation.

**March 15-17** - St. Louis plays host to an “Occupy the Midwest” conference. Compton Hill Reservoir Park is taken over for a few hours to host the gathering. After city official Eddie Roth and his police escort are shouted out of the park, police brutally suppress the gathering, sending three to the hospital with severe head wounds. Windows of a police car and a substation are broken in response. In solidarity, a medical building in Berkeley, CA that ‘treats’ arrestees has its windows smashed and locks glued. A mobile street party takes over Manchester Ave.'s Grove bar district the following night. Large rallies are held against Monsanto and Wells Fargo, among other giant corporations, and an attempt is made to join the downtown St. Patrick's Day parade. A small, but passionate group semi-successfully occupies KDHX radio studios, coaxing the DJ to read a pro-Occupy, anti-police statement on the air. Several days later, Compton Hill Reservoir Park and Eddie Roth's home (again) are heavily graffitied in outrage.

**May 24** - A demonstration, in solidarity with police repression at the G8 Summit in Chicago days earlier, winds its way from Kiener Plaza to Washington Ave. and back, with a couple banks getting spray-painted. Police arrest 10, punching one during interrogation and holding knives to the throats of others. In response, ATMs are disabled in Oakland, CA, police substation windows are smashed in Olympia, WA, and a Chase Bank is vandalized in Milwaukee, WI.

cloaked their paralysis with an aura of intentionality – a desire to keep their hands clean: right-wingers, people too ‘cool’ to dabble in rebellion (but not too cool to mock it), ‘revolutionaries’ who had a warped idea of how pure and homogenous the working class was supposed to be, and ‘revolutionaries’ who heard a few disturbing opinions and inscribed them as immovable reformist truths of the *leaderless* occupation.

The occupation of the old Municipal Courts building on Market St. (what some hailed as the glory moment of Occupy St. Louis), though clever and valiant, unavoidably signalled the Occupy fever (the unpredictable, participatory, revolutionary spirit) had been broken. Helped along by the eviction, the “occupation” had devolved into a specialized affair where a dwindling number of people now were no longer surprised by themselves, but by a well-planned activity of just a few people.

Though we could argue that the withdrawal of many’s participation let the sinister police and savvy Mayor’s office relegate Occupy to history, we’ll not bore you with enlightening insights into its demise!<sup>3</sup> Goddamnit, next time just seize the ugly, magical, mad moment of class conflict, protect its contagious and participatory nature, and push it so far so that we never, ever have to return to this terrifying banality again.<sup>4</sup>

*“I don’t want to forget walking through the streets with hundreds of strangers screaming “revolution!” over and over.”<sup>5</sup>*

*-memories of yet another participant*

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3. For all you gloomy people, go on a treasure hunt and see if you can find the obscure and obsolete pamphlet, “Half-Fizzle, Half-Sabotage,” which explores (albeit, half-assedly) the crash of Occupy St. Louis.

4. But remember, as the too-wise and too-warlike, Sun Tzu once said, “Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.”

5. A week before everything was normal. Then this. And in the moment, it really was unclear what the next week would bring: Thousands? More? Revolution itself?



**The two halves of Occupy St. Louis.**

# Chronicles

This is the city we live in. It is the face of struggle – for humanity, for freedom, for control over one’s life. It is the backdrop to our lives – the place that we come from. This is not a cheerleading of particular people, but a legitimization of the particularly beautiful impulses here that lie within all of us. (Episodes related to Occupy and its subsequent wave of activity can be found separately on page 6. For episodes dealing with resistance to the St. Louis City jail system, see page 11.)

## 2011

**February 26, St. Louis City** – An alderwoman’s much-lauded hi-tech mobile surveillance camera unit is destroyed 3 days after it was placed at the “crime hot-spot” intersection of Magnolia and Michigan Avenues. Vandals use the dark of night to tip it over and smash out each of the unit’s four camera lenses.

**February 26, Park Hills** – Along Main St., a dozen residents protest hooded Ku Klux Klan members leafletting there a week earlier.

**March 8, St. Louis City** - Authorities break into a house on the 3100 block of Osage to arrest Carlos Boles, but instead are met with bullets. In the shootout, Boles and a U.S. Marshal die and a St. Louis City cop and another U.S. Marshal lie wounded. Outside the home, 100 neighbors and family members congregate, grieving and yelling angrily at police, and chasing down a woman who had cooperated with police earlier. The following night Alderman Shane Cohn’s nearby office suffers a broken window and “graphic” anti-police graffiti, and

“One Bullet, One Cop” is spray-painted in Marquette Park, just across the street from Boles’ home.

**March 14, Ladue** - After Ladue High School suddenly announces the end-of-the-school-year lay-off of 7 teachers and staff, 400 students protest outside the school on the following school day.

**April 9, Cameron** - Convicted cop shooter Troy Fenton repeatedly stabs notorious child kidnapper Michael Devlin during breakfast at Crossroads Correctional Center. Fenton says he fash-

**CHRONICLES, continued on page 19**



*It's fucking hard to live in a world where people lock other people in cages*, or to live knowing that one wrong step might get us locked in one as well. Friends and neighbors get snatched away by cops and sent away by judges, all with the veneer of official respectability... like that's just how it is, we should just accept it.

But it doesn't have to be this way. No one should have the power to jail us or to steal our friends away. And working toward nicer cops or more comfortable cages only ensures that we'll never be entirely free of either.

Instead, we settle for participation in an ongoing war against those who keep the world this way: the cops who arrest us, the judges who sentence us, the so-called "Corrections Officers" who make sure we don't escape, anyone and everyone who makes a penny off our incarceration.

Below are a few dispatches from this war *in the city's jail system*, which in the last couple years has seen escalations on both ends. Escape attempts, attacks on guards, a brave family unwilling to forget their brother—these are the stories, amidst the pages of bad news (115° temperatures inside the Workhouse, guards using drugs, the denial of medical care leading to 6 recent inmate deaths, and guards forcing inmates to fight each other gladiator-style), that remind us that their cages are not unbreakable.

## **Workhouse, Justice Center**

### ***A cage, by any other name, is still a cage.***

2011

**April 22** - Two prisoners at the downtown jail work together to escape by crawling through an access panel in the ceiling of the infirmary, breaking through a window, and shimmying down the front of the building with tied-together bed-sheets.

**June 8** - Family and friends of Scott Perry, who died in the St.

Louis Justice Center 5 days earlier from the medical

neglect of the guards, stage

the first of a series

of weekly

noisy protest vigils

outside the jail. One week,

inmates inside flicker their

lights in solidarity with the protest

outside. Also, larger noise demonstrations

are held in his memory on the 1<sup>st</sup>

and 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversaries of his death. One

year, demonstrators force their way

into the jail lobby before guards evict

them. The next year, shouting matches erupt with guards on break.

**July 6** - A prisoner at the St. Louis Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center at 5300 Arsenal St., being led from his room to an activity in the main facility, stops to tie his shoe, then takes off running through a parking lot and out of sight to freedom.

**July 21** - Outside the downtown "Justice Center," 30 people use music, air horns, pots and pans, drums, and whistles in a noise demonstration to support California prisoners on hunger strike. On July 8, a similar demonstration (but at night, and with fireworks) occurred outside the Hogan St. Regional Youth Center (Jail).

**July 27** - Inmate Allen Brown takes a restroom break from an

educational program, casually walks through an open gate at the city's Workhouse jail, and scales two 10-foot razor-wire fences to successfully escape the facility.

**August 12** - Guards at the downtown jail catch a prisoner trying to escape through the ceiling of a janitor's closet.

**September 16** - Inmate Lorenzo Pollard partakes in a legendary escape from the city's Workhouse jail on Hall St. After guards lead him to the shower, Lorenzo unveils his new pair of homemade nunchucks fashioned from bed sheets and a chair from his cell. Fending off more than a dozen guards, he climbs to the second tier and uses the nunchucks to shatter through a wall of glass blocks. He jumps through the hole he created to the pavement below, scales two razor wire perimeter fences, and disappears into the surrounding neighborhood.

**September 27** - Firefighters arrive to extinguish a mattress fire set by a prisoner in a 5<sup>th</sup> floor cell.

**October 10** - A man imprisoned at the St. Louis Community Release Center escapes from the SLU Hospital after being transported there for emergency medical care.

**October 12** - Hundreds of inmates erupt in protest as a group of aldermen and media tour the City's Workhouse jail. Chanting "Shut it down! Shut it down!" they also desperately yell complaints about food, clothing, and overcrowding. The tour was prompted by the recent escapes. Instead of seeing the obvious reasons for wanting to escape being laid out by the prisoners themselves, dumbfounded officials erect more razor wire and claim most of the chanting prisoners have "mental issues." Alderman Fred Wessels goes so far as to call them "crack babies."

2012

**February 26** - Recaptured nunchuck escapee Lorenzo Pollard and recaptured bed-sheet escapee Vernon Collins, housed in separate cells at the downtown jail, simultaneously damage the stool, ceiling, and light fixtures in their cells. Three days later, Pollard squirts an unknown liquid from a water bottle into a guard's eye through the food slot and then jams his cell door shut with two metal brackets.

**March 12** - An inmate at the downtown jail who had fashioned a knife from a bit of sheet metal in a light fixture instead chooses to use his fists to attack a guard forcing him into his cell.

**May 20** - An inmate at the Downtown Justice Center attempts to escape after a guard forgets to lock his cell. He sneaks out and takes the elevator down to the lower level, runs past a clerk waiting for the elevator, removes a ceiling tile, and climbs into the ceiling near the prisoner processing area. Police then pepper spray the cornered man and subdue him.

**September 27** - An inmate is discovered to have removed insulation from one of the building's exterior windows and unhinged the toilet and sink behind his fifth-floor cell and begun chipping away at the closet-sized plumbing space behind the wall, where he was storing a bundle of clothing and bed-sheets. Some days later, the inmate is found in possession of a handcuff key that had been smuggled into him.

**November 17** - A prisoner on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor at the downtown jail sets her mattress on fire with a lighter she had smuggled in.



# FOOD HOLE

## Socially Responsible Cages Meet Worker Experimentation in Free-Range Subversion!

For six months the working conditions at the Whole Foods Market Galleria location in Brentwood got so shitty that, by late June 2012, usually blasphemous words like *strike* and *union* were being whispered in the aisles, bathrooms, and the loading dock. Over the years the store had gained notoriety within the company for the tremendous profit they made (management's "million dollar store" their "Mighty Gal"). Of course, in capitalism, profit doesn't come from thin air; it must be squeezed from workers one hour at a time. The increased squeezing, as it were, came in the form of cut backs in wages and benefits, open availability requirements, and the whip crack of a couple notably despicable managers. Whole Foods' usual anti-union posters (instruction guides on how to deal with union reps), mandatory anti-union meetings, and the Orwellian terms used to sanitize exploitation, blur class relationships, and instill a rah-rah team spirit<sup>1</sup> were losing their potency. In short, *the ridiculous Whole Foods spell was being broken* unbeknownst to the spell-casters themselves.

In the first outward sign of the growing discontent, an individual, possibly with the least to lose, potentially the bravest, or maybe with the weakest stomach for bullshit, decided to quit in spectacular fashion. He traded his two-week notice for an insulting letter to the company and management forwarded to every employee in the store. This caused a small stir amongst sympathetic co-workers, and as the spell faded the whispers grew louder. People telling their bosses to "shove-it" is rare and announcing it to co-workers far more rare, but what happened next is exceptional. Rather than turning to the UCFW, OSHA, NLRB (or any other alphabet soup of bureaucracy) a handful of workers looked to themselves and their friends to devise how to get back at Whole Foods *collec-*

*tively.*<sup>2</sup>

When it began, it was only six people, six very different people. After two meetings of sharing stories and grievances and brainstorming possibilities, the group opened up to an ex-worker and a couple friends who never worked at the store. It must be said that this group of employees and friends did not share an ideology, a strategy, or even agree on where they would like the actions to lead. Those who would wait until such conditions of unity exist, as more than a few radicals did<sup>3</sup>, should get comfortable in their ivory towers and/or armchairs. The only thing this motley crew held in common was the desire to take the initiative and shift the power dynamics of the store. The path forward was hazy and uncharted but there was a determination to walk it together, at least as long as the situation stayed the same.

Before long a few initiatives were outlined (with the people most interested and capable taking them on) and a plan was sketched out. A blog was prepared ([truemag.wordpress.com](http://truemag.wordpress.com) – a mockery of Whole Food's internal mechanism for addressing grievances, the Team Member Awareness Group) to both communicate ideas

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2. We have nearly zero experience in what works. Anyone who claims otherwise is a fool. These days, seldom do strikes occur, and when they do, they are directed from union officials above (a play management is well-equipped to deal with). When was the last time you heard about a worker initiated labor struggle, let alone an effective one? This was an experiment in new ways to fight back on the job in a world of corrupt and impotent unions, the pervasiveness of the internet, and workplaces which increasingly try to look like they are a force of good and hide their exploitation.

3. Some cried "this isn't our struggle," others "we must wait for workers to act," but both amount to ceding the situation to those in power, both amount to inaction and maintaining the status quo. Both claim the actions planned and initiatives taken were not the correct ones albeit for different reasons. Consider this critique an invitation to overcome contradictions and differences in perspectives, rather than being ruled by them and remaining stunted and powerless.

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1. Does the company's utopian rhetoric affect the situation? Are WF workers' expectations so high that their inevitable let down is greater than that of typical grocery workers? Does it encourage people to work subversively together? Does it do the opposite and encourage loyalty to the company?

from the group and to spark discussion amongst workers in an anonymous and open fashion. This was to be the low flame under the simmering conflict. A sick-out was planned for a Saturday just over a week away, the most profitable day of the week, and the day with the most shifts to infect. News of the sick-out was carefully communicated by word-of-mouth around the store to as many pissed-off or sympathetic workers as possible. On the day of the sick-out an email would be sent to workers in the two St. Louis stores and local and regional managers with the intention of airing grievances, calling out the hypocrisies of Whole Foods, and gaining legitimacy amongst workers. Then on Sunday, with questions in the air about how to move forward (maybe an all-out strike or similar bold action) and how to deal with company retaliation, friends and allies would flood the store with leaflets, chants, and banners of support. Planning beyond the weekend seemed premature.

The projects mutated and grew as the group gained more confidence. A careful balancing act characterized those early days in which employees had to be informed about the subversive initiatives and given confidence that these were more than mere rumors, while at the same time protecting the anonymity of the conspirators and mitigating the risk of a pre-mature leak to management by their loyal stooges, backstabbers, and ladder-climbers - aka snitches, rats, and class traitors.

By mid-week, energy, expectations, and hopes were high. Buzzing with activity, the blog had, at its peak, upwards of 3,000 views and dozens of comments daily. Two notorious assholes, store manager Shannon Chronister and his assistant Jake Flachs (under whose reign workers faced sexual harassment, routine firings, and increased surveillance and workloads) became lightning-rods for negative comments. Moreover, there were no signs that the plans were leaked to management, and news of the sick-out was actually being relayed back to the very people who had planned it. It was estimated that 40% of the workers scheduled for a shift on Saturday were planning on calling-in sick (including a couple low level managers), and many more knew of the plans.

With only four days to go before the sick-out, the tide turned. Midwest Regional Management, called in from Chicago, arrived at the store for damage control. They communicated explicitly and implicitly that they were here for the weekend, and anyone participating in the sick-out would be fired. A search began for the rebellious workers. Those couple days were touch-and-go, with rumors swirling about who was being blamed and who was snitching. All sides attempted to figure out how best to swim in the changing waters. Blog posts attempted to counter the fear that was quickly spreading. Then... management shifted gears and slipped on the velvet glove. In a brilliant maneuver they suspended the two store managers that were garnering the most ire and held multiple meetings (including a "town hall" where the President of

the WF Midwest played the role of the concerned parent) to distance themselves and the company from the practices of the two. Comments on the blog began to change showing either the new tactic was working or management and their stooges had found the comment button (a combination surely). People began to guess as to who was behind the blog and sick-out in their comments. The sick-out was called off as workers were either scared or placated by the suspensions. The aforementioned email went out on Friday, and management responded by replacing the two suspended managers with friendlier counterparts. Saturday all was quiet in the store. Sunday around thirty sympathetic "outsiders" passed out fliers, chanted, and held a banner encouraging more action and offering their support. But it was too late. The anger had been recuperated. Monday the two suspended managers were fired.

No negotiations and no union reps, just like Whole Foods likes it! Okay then, we prefer direct action as well! In short, the *threat* of collective and disruptive action in a non-unionized workplace was enough to force concessions, something unprecedented in this era. Workers figured out a way to push back safely and win some breathing room. Giving up the fight was hard, and the anger felt towards those most ready to give in was real. Stripping away our narrative, our power, Whole Foods will undoubtedly rewrite the episode as they caring so much about their employees that they fired two of their higher level managers, who in fact workers had complained about for *years*. In reality, they were willing to take a small hit to avoid a bigger one. How will this go down?

Will workers be fooled into thinking their superiors are altruistic - they, the same ones who put the policies into place and scrambled to have their managers remain in power by shifting them from store to store and position to position as needed, who held a sham meeting about their appointment in which many complaints were leveled but ignored? Will these same shit-heads get the credit for the new bigger-cage, longer-leash era of Whole Foods or will it be seen as it actually was?

We have taken away some simple but profound ideas from this experience:

- Those who will not be fooled by management and by their version of the events are the workers who participated. Had the sick-out occurred (as we wished it had) or a strike or picket, more would have participated and less would have been fooled.
- People who engage in subversion learn more about the possibilities of subversion. We change what is possible by pushing situations. We learn by doing.
- Our only power within capitalism is our labor. A taste of that power causes the bosses to react. (Of course the real task is negating that class relationship altogether!)



# Responding to a Rapist

## Reflections on a Confrontation at Saint Louis University

We dream of a world where we as human beings are safe and free to interact with each other amid a social context in which those interactions are based on respect and mutuality. Yet, we do not live in the world we envision. Along with many enemies to our dreams, rape culture abounds, and as such, it seems that direct conflict against rapists is necessary no matter the given circumstance.

In April of 2012, a group of people heard of a serial rapist on the campus of St. Louis University and sought to disrupt the life of this known rapist. They planned a march and produced a flyer, which they distributed after a speak-out at the 'Take Back the Night' event on SLU's campus. Stickers with a photo of the rapist appeared around campus that said 'Josh Pucheta is a rapist' and 'Watch your back' with information about where he lived and worked. Like most ruptures of the normal, a lot went well, and a lot of big questions remain.

Around forty people gathered for the march, but very few actual students joined. Even as one student read aloud a poem fierce with revenge at the speak-out, the passion with which the student read the poem did not translate into any actions on campus or in the streets. Rather, as soon as the march began, several students involved with the feminist organization on campus noticed some stickers and ran over to try and take them down.

It was clear that the feminist organization cared more about keeping their funding than actually conflicting with a known rapist on their campus. One participant said the students tried taking the stickers down because the survivor was "freaking out."

Some people who put the stickers up began to question their actions. Others were frustrated in the moment that people questioned the stickers and did not care if the survivor was upset. Did it matter if the survivor was

indeed "freaking out?" What if the survivor said they wanted something to happen? What if the survivor is scared and upset when something does?

The survivor did not want to remain silent. And she also got scared. It made sense that she held both rage and fear. Those who responded to take action against the rapist should have realized that the survivor would not have the support she needed to affirm calling out the rapist when her fears arose. There could have been less fluctuating feelings among us after the events if people more clearly expected this. In understanding the likely situation that the survivor would lack support, people could have better decided whether or not they wanted to respond with certain actions.

Considering the survivor's support system was more of an afterthought. There was a mentality that all rapists must be dealt with in a similar manner, regardless of the situation. That night and for the next couple of days, a roller-coaster of second-hand messages about the survivor's feelings came in. Several weeks after the march, a rumor made it back around that she liked the stickers after all and wanted more of them to appear.

Had the assault occurred among people closer to us, things would have looked different. But the information was coming from students, and thus those of us that were not students wanted to create a scenario for students to express their rage along with ours. We tried to create momentum, but it was mostly non-students that marched to the fraternity house. As we pushed a sound cart through the campus and on the sidewalk without students around us, it was easy to wonder what the point was. We actually stopped on the corner of an intersection during the march to decide whether or not we should keep marching. It was not immediately obvious that more energy was being built upon ours. But we marched to the frat house anyway and conflict ensued. We approached holding banners that read, "Touch me and I'll fucking kill you" and "Rapists: Out of our schools and out of our lives." Eggs were thrown. Later, someone spray-painted "Rape happens here" on the property. Even as there seemed to be only one student present in the march, people seemed to feel good about what happened overall.



**BE SILENT.  
BE A BILLIKEN.**





Rape is not an anomaly nor the rapist a deviant. Rape culture is the norm. The subtleties of rape culture are reinforced all around us and seep into our daily interactions. Rapists can be strangers hiding in a dark alley waiting to attack us. Too, many rapists hide behind charm and social pressure. They hide in the normalization of sexual violence, and yet they are all around us – at a party, next to us in line at the grocery store, in the mirror. Many are friends, exes, boyfriends and acquaintances. The serial rapist on SLU's campus was somebody's boyfriend, and soon he will graduate to become somebody's boss.

Although it didn't seem so complicated at the time, figuring out how to respond to the knowledge of a rapist when it is gained through several degrees of separation has its complexities. There simply isn't a universal response for dealing with a rapist, one that is applicable no matter the situation.

The major factor in determining how to respond to a rapist is whether or not the person or persons harmed have the support they need should there be blow-back from any confrontation. Thus, one's response to a rapist can be severely limited by the inability to ensure a survivor's physical safety and emotional support. Whether a survivor wants conflict or not is a consideration, but it may veer from what another deems necessary. As long as a survivor has the support they need, people can feel validated in whatever action they take against a rapist – even with the possibility that the survivor may feel nervous or upset.

Those who care about responding to rape must inherently care whether or not survivors are vulnerable to further violence, harassment, or social ostracism and need to be able to ensure their support. Doing so takes work and can be an intense commitment. Seldom is credit or significance given to those who do the labor of physically and emotionally supporting those harmed by rape. A dynamic can occur wherein the main focus is the thrill of confronting the rapist while disregarding the importance of the emotional labor of caring for the survivor. This vital aspect can often go overlooked. Such was the case with the group of people that responded to the rapist on SLU campus. People did not have a direct connection to the survivor, and thus that care was left to someone else, separate from the events.

There is little distinction between the rapists and the

institutions that hide the same methods behind a cloak of legitimacy. The institutional forces – police, college conduct review boards, campus security, judges, courts and prisons – uphold and encourage the norms of rape culture. They victim-blame, silence and cover-up instances of rape and sexual assault, as well as, in some cases, undoubtedly inflict the harm themselves. At SLU, once a survivor reports an incident of sexual assault he or she is required to sign a confidentiality contract which only serves to further silence the person harmed. In April 2012, the St. Louis University 'Committee on Student Conduct' found this particular serial rapist "not responsible," and we repeatedly see this sort of occurrence.

Conflict with rapists and rape culture can shift contextually and look differently depending upon one's connection to the violence, and yet, existentially, none of us are safe as long as one person is raped.

We want the destruction of this society in which we constantly live amid a rape culture. We want to actively make our neighborhoods unlivable for rapists and those who defend them. We see glimpses of our dreams wherein all sorts of people rise up to disrupt the horrors of our culture and create spaces in which rape is less likely. Over the course of the past eight months, hundreds of people gathered in Steubenville, Ohio on multiple occasions, outraged at the rape of a young teen by several of their small-town football stars. In early 2013 in New Delhi, India, masses of protesters took to the streets, throwing rocks and overturning buses, to disrupt the silence and confront the state so that another incident of rape could not go unnoticed. In Egypt today, anti-harassment squads spray-paint rapists in the face so others know to watch out for them. Popular struggles against rapists and rape culture can create the potential for a culture where less people might rape, and the world we dream of feels more possible.

To disrupt societal scripts and norms is to begin to make it safer for everyone. For every frat-boy who thinks bodies are for the taking, every professional patriarch who thinks he owns his wife, every rapist with a charming smile – we want the world to be so uncomfortable for them to live in that they cannot survive. It is through the destruction of every social role that permits domination over another that we will realize our dreams.



Steubenville, Ohio  
Anytown, USA

# Your Existence is Your Claim: A

*You need water to live. Your body craves it.*

*You need it to drink, to cook, to keep clean, to cool down and warm up, and most importantly, to relax and indulge. Anyone trying to shame you for getting water has likely never had to live without it.*

*If that wasn't enough, the slaves and desperate immigrants that dug the trenches, laid the waterlines, and built the pump houses and treatment centers are our ancestors.*

*And we need only look just south of us to see the effects of that legacy of abuse and exploitation today. Stripped of lead and other materials vital in bringing us water, many towns of southern Missouri have been left with high cancer rates and poisoned groundwater.*

*Yet those who sell us water like to think of the family that has turned their water back on as criminals stealing from the rest of us and themselves as providing a human resource.*

*Water. You need it, you want it. And damn anyone that stands between you and a cold glass of water in July or tries to charge you and your lover for a hot bath in January.*

*And so, it is with great pleasure, we present you with this guide...*

Most homes in the city have two shut off valves for the water. One, underground half-way between the street and your basement<sup>1</sup>, and another, shortly after the water line first enters your home. The first we'll consider the business end and the second the friendly end.

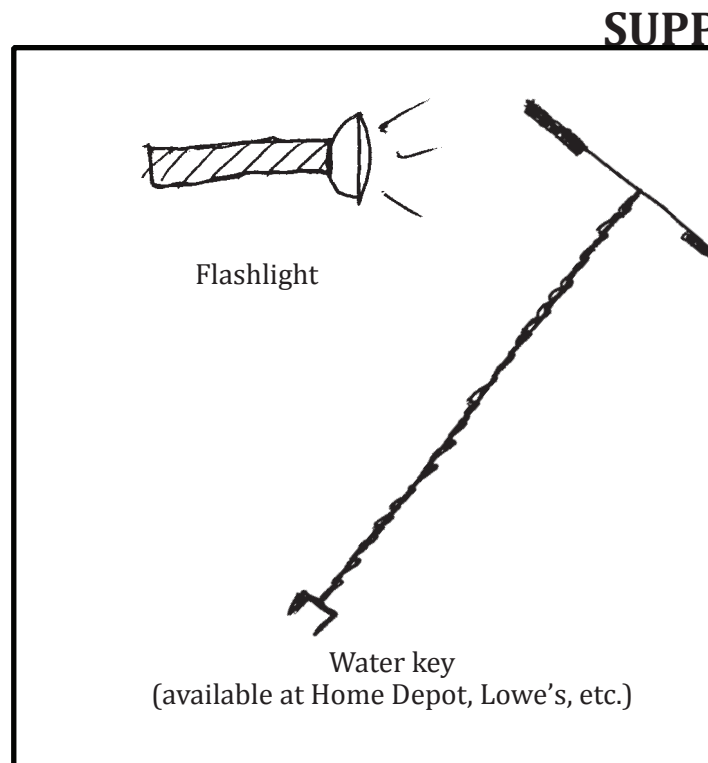
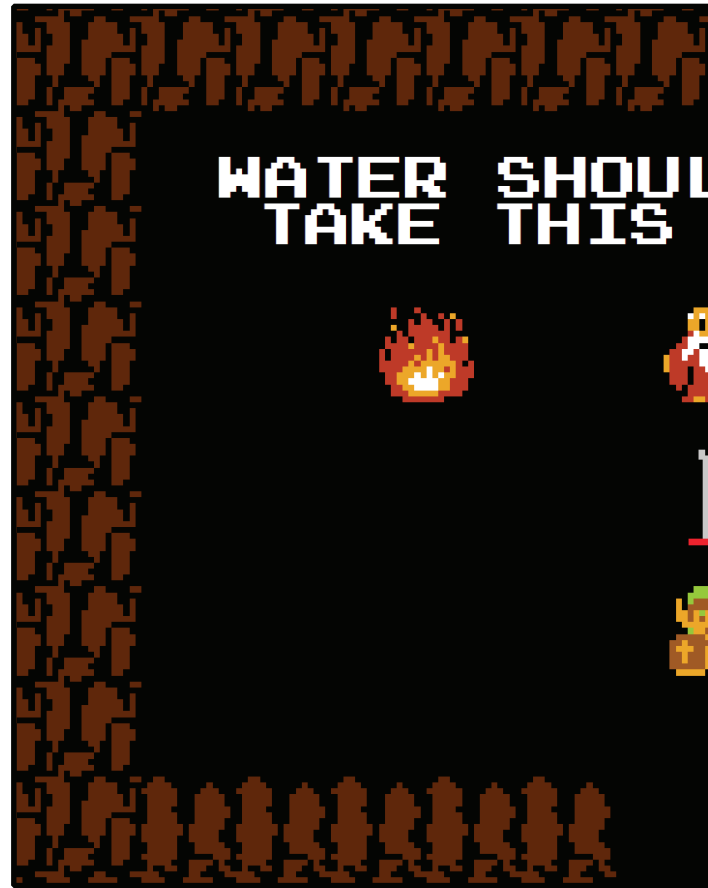
The friendly end is usually a standard water valve (one you're used to seeing on a spigot for a garden hose) located a few feet off the front basement wall.<sup>2</sup> The business end is harder to find and more complicated to use. But don't worry, you can do it, and it's difficulty can be used to our advantage.

Ideally, there would only be a friendly end. Apart from rare times that work needs to be done on the outside line, the only reason there is a business end is to deprive people of water when the city can't bleed any more money from them. Since there is a business end, though, we're going to have to put it back into friendly hands.

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1. This is the where the main water line branches off to supply each house with water. The main water line usually runs along the street, though occasionally they go down alleys or other odd places.

2. If you're having a hard time finding where the water line enters your house, simply find a pipe going to a sink or toilet and trace it backwards until it leaves the house.



# guide to turning on your water



**1. Finding the waterline:** Go out in front out of your house and look for a slightly-larger than palm-sized metal lid. There's likely two - one that says gas and is/was painted yellow, and one that says "water" and is/was painted blue. The lid should pop off or pivot to the side.

**2. Finding the valve:** Look down the shaft with a flashlight. Can you see anything? You might be able to see figure A (the view looking down onto valve). You probably can't though. You should try the key anyway. If the key can't latch on to anything or if the valve is clearly blocked/covered by debris, go to step 3. If the valve is accessible proceed to step 4.

**3. Cleaning out debris:** You probably can't get the key into place because rocks, mud, leaves, and other debris has slowly filled the shaft. Get the Shop-vac (designed to suck up liquids, mud, rocks, etc.). Using the hose, suck up the debris. If you have a second person, one of you can cup your hands around the hose and the top of the hole to increase suction. You can also put water in the hole to loosen thick mud. Once clear, proceed to step 4.

**4. Positioning the key:** Get a good look at which way the prongs are facing. Ideally, when the water is off, the valve is perpendicular to pipe (figure A), and when the water is on, the valve is parallel (figure B). Try and position the prongs on the key so they'll come down onto the perpendicular valve. *NOTE: Getting the prongs of the key to line up with the valve can be incredibly frustrating. Stay with it and you should be able to do it.*

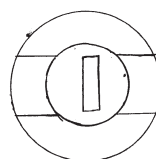


figure A

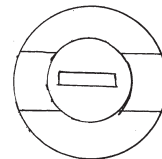
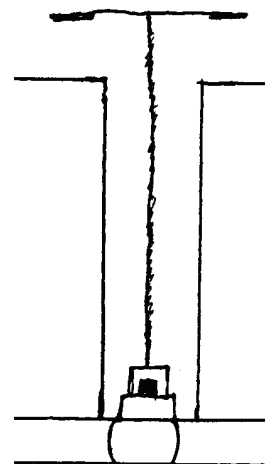


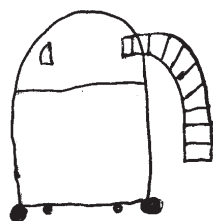
figure B

**5. Turning the key:** Move the key a little - once in place, it should resist being turned. Turn it 90 degrees (or a  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn) counter-clockwise. Some valves are really old and will keep turning more than they should. If the water is on but the pressure low, try turning the valve a little at a time. One person can turn, while the other watches how fast water comes out of a faucet.

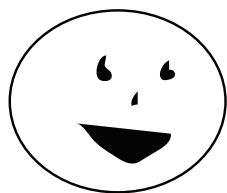


**6. Defending the new friendly valve:** Now that you've seen how to clear debris out of the hole, your head is probably full of ways to put it back in. Remember: the less obvious the tampering, the less suspicious you look and the less likely if you're found out that they'll investigate.

PLIES

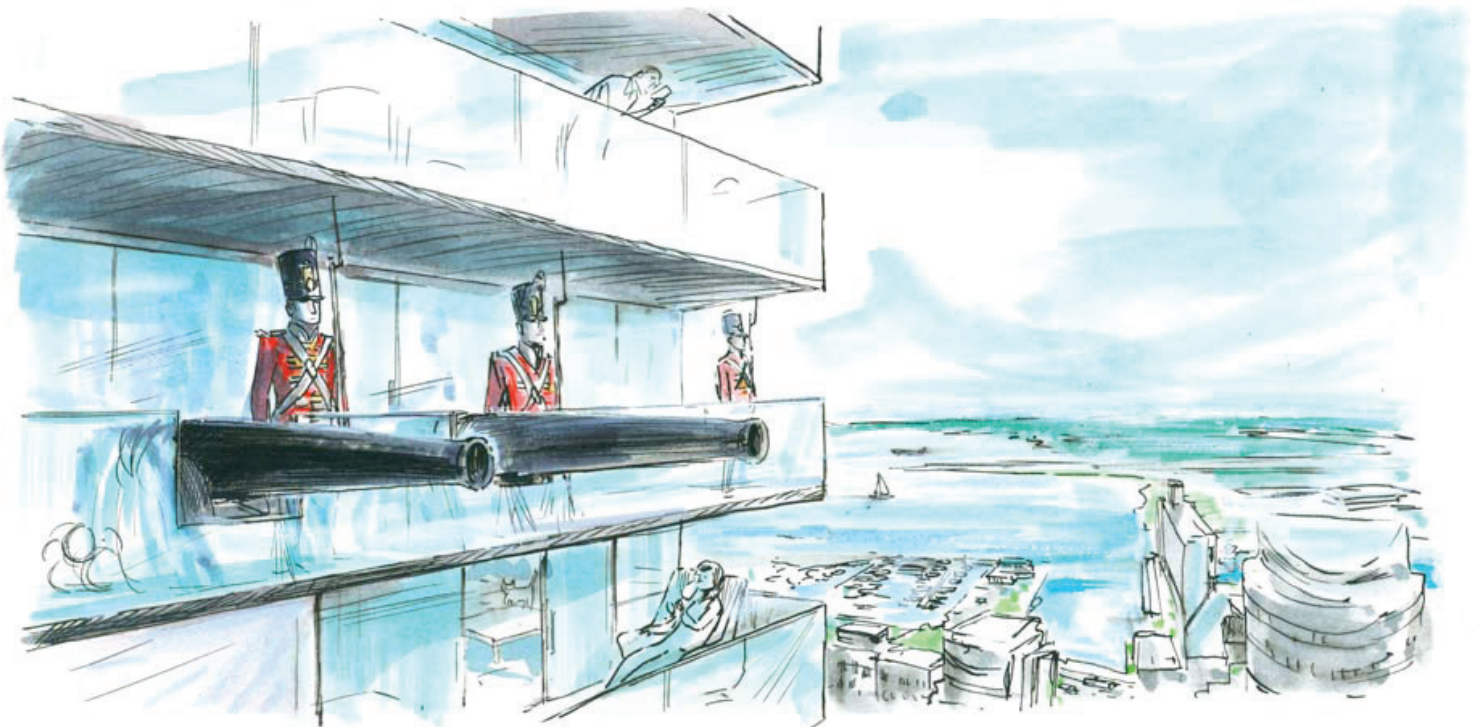


Shop-vac (industrial vacuum)



A friend  
(you can do this with one person,  
but better with friendship!)





# The New Downtown St. Louis

**“This thoughtless abyss  
of endless phantasmagoric urban sprawl  
back against the wall.”**

-A very angry local poet after one of the city’s latest moves to eliminate homelessness by eliminating the homeless.

## **Some History or**

### ***They paved over people and put up a parking lot***

Downtown St. Louis used to be a city. No, not a glistening desert fortress like today. But a place where poor and working people actually lived and congregated. In a 25-year period, city officials systematically devoured the downtown area’s distinctive, lively working-class neighborhoods:

On the eastern edge, the Gateway Arch project along the riverfront cleared the oldest 91 acres of St. Louis in 1939. Demolished were the tight streets packed with a hodgepodge of immigrants and descendants of slaves, the scandalous Almond Street, and the rough-and-tumble culture of the levy workers.

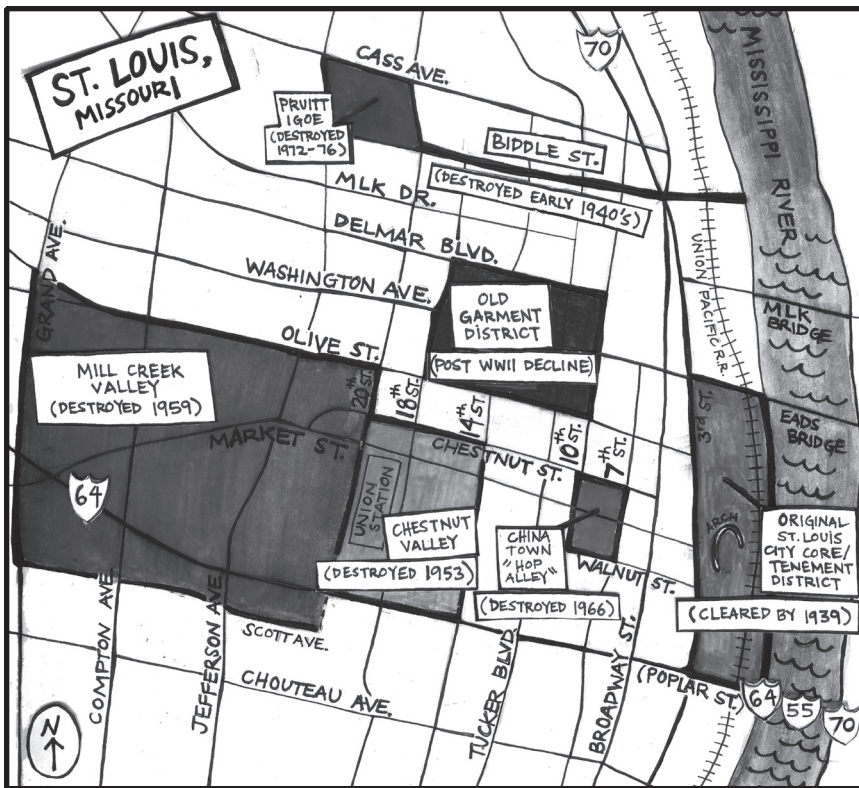
To the north a couple years later, the sheer poverty of Biddle Street (made worse by the influx of slumlords, the city’s ban on residential burning of coal – the cheapest heating source, and intensified housing discrimination practices) coupled with a boost of federal housing project money prompted the city to raze the street

for the construction of a smaller, contained Carr Square Village housing project. Gone were most of the residents and the crowded thoroughfare of dance halls, markets, taverns, meeting halls, and blues music, where German, Irish, Jewish, Italian and black folks lived side-by-side for over 100 years.

To the west, the post-World War II decline of domestic garment production emptied the sweatshops and warehouses along bustling Washington Ave. Still farther west, the densely populated cradle of multi-racial, working-class ragtime music, Chestnut Valley, was “cleaned up” and destroyed in 1953. A short time later, in 1959, the enormous and total clear-cutting of the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood commenced, forcing black residents to flee to North City or to the new Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex doomed to meet a similar fate ten years later.

And finally, on the southern edge, by 1966, a new Busch Stadium eliminated all traces of a Chinatown (or “Hop Alley”) once crowded with hand laundries, groceries, tea shops, and opium dens.

The city conveniently placed the new mid-century federally-funded housing projects just far enough to the



north and to the south to alleviate concerns about a “safe” downtown. (And even two of those projects, Pruitt-Igoe to the north and Darste-Webb to the south, met the wrecking ball of the city fairly early on and no longer exist.)

Until the late '90s, only a handful of people, those without much money, lived downtown – mostly clustered in small high-rises west of Tucker. For an entire generation, downtown became a spooky, vacant wasteland with the occasional corporate office, court building, hotel, or sports game.

### What's Left Today

or

### *They paved over a parking lot and put up a “Paradise”*

With the physical and temporal slate now clean, the city’s elite saw a chance to sculpt the city how they pleased with the help of a special brand of amnesia concerning the city’s nauseating mid-century forced relocations...

But one large class of downtown residents was largely unaffected by the removal of thousands of homes: the homeless. In the late '90s, it became clear the homeless were one of the elite’s chief roadblocks to downtown “revitalization.” The other: convincing their own class it was safe to move in and invest after decades of bad rap. From there, it’s been an uneasy 15 years of struggle over space between the most and least destitute.

With time though, new residents – dubbed “yuppies” by most – have gradually gained the confidence to call it *their* neighborhood (even calling it *a* neighborhood was a stretch for a while) while semi-honestly declaring “We’ve been here longer!” to the (ever-present, but transient) homeless when conflicts arise. But how fucking insidious they’ve become in their growing confidence! Ten years ago they would sheepishly make peace with the homeless knowing damn well they had encroached on their land. Now, their pea-size brains feel they’ve lived in the city long enough, and they know they have the guns of the

### **CHRONICLES, continued from page 10**

ioned two “ice picks” from the metal guide bars on his typewriter, naming one “Shawn” and the other “Ben.” Family members of the now-free boys had earlier objected to officials’ desire to send the now-wounded Devlin out of state for his own safety.

**April 13, Clayton** - A judge sentences Todd Shepard to life in prison for killing U. City cop Michael King in 2008 with a gun he named after his girlfriend who police had shot dead in 2001. In a trial filled with his outbursts, Shepard “bickers” with the judge one last time about the sinister role of police in today’s society. Earlier, Shepard defends his deadly actions, designed to “start a revolution,” as a David killing a Goliath and said it felt good and if he had another hundred rounds he would have kept shooting. He frequently yells obscenities at prosecutor Bob McCulloch, including referring to him as a “cracker” and ordering him to “Stop pointing at me you motherfucker!”

**April 20, St. Louis City** - Dozens of outraged residents gather to speak out against racism and publicly tear down a billboard advertisement already defaced with paint the night before. At the corner of Cass Ave. and 25<sup>th</sup> St., children joyfully jump on the shreds of the ‘pro-life’ billboard that had proclaimed the “Most dangerous place for African-Americans is in the womb.” A message is mounted to the billboard reading: “The African-American womb is safe & loving!”

**April 30, Macomb (IL)** - Over 3000 Western Illinois University students gather for the annual end of the semester block party along a 3 block stretch of Wheeler St. Police create a tense atmosphere since the city had earlier denied the party a permit. When police withdraw, students erupt in celebration, filling the streets and setting a bonfire. Police return in full riot gear, hundreds-strong and marching in formation toward the partiers. A riot ensues as police use batons, pepper spray, and an ear-splitting “LRAD” siren to disband the party, and partiers respond by chanting “Fuck the po-lice!” and hurling trash and beer bottles at the cops.

**May 1, St. Louis City** - The month of April sees a string of anarchist graffiti along Cherokee St. accompanying the theft of at least three private security cameras (one belonging to the president of the local business association) and clipped wires on at least one other. The most prominent graffiti reads simply “No Cameras on Cherokee.” Dozens march in an evening May Day demonstration, replete with fireworks and messages against a culture of surveillance.

**May 2, Kansas City** - Police arrest 52 anti-nuclear protestors for blocking traffic at the gates of the under-construction billion-dollar Honeywell plant set to manufacture parts for nuclear weapons. A protest months earlier made it onto the construction grounds blocking the movement of heavy machinery.

**May 4, Clayton** - Someone in the passen-



ger seat of a car uses a slingshot to shatter windows at 12 downtown businesses.

**May 4, Bethalto (IL)** - A small group of teenagers break the window of a parked squad car and abduct a dummy dressed as a police officer from the driver's seat placed there to intimidate passing motorists.

**May 6, Clayton** - Some 250 to 300 students walk out of morning classes at Clayton High School and march ten blocks to the football field to protest the firing of their football coach/P.E. teacher the day before.

**May 25, Imperial** - Overnight, unknown kids deflate the tires of 20 of the Windsor C-1 School District's school buses, thus pushing back the start-time of classes.

**June 3, Town and Country** - Around 9pm, two men dressed as joggers in ski masks surprise the owner of S&H Parking and the much-hated Metropolitan Towing (of Mokwa-police scandal fame) as he gets out of his car in the driveway of his home. They show him a gun, knock him to the ground, grab a bank bag from inside of his car, and run off into the nearby woods.

**June 8, Berkeley** - Two teenage girls spray-paint "Die Cop" on the home of a police officer.

**June 10, St. Louis City** - Someone breaks the window of a new police substation along the 14<sup>th</sup> St. Mall in Old North St. Louis.

**June 15, St. Louis City** - A 79-year-old man shoots and hits a repo man driving off with his car near Delmar and Union Boulevards. Four months later a young woman on the 8200 block of S. Broadway uses her car to "run over" a repo man trying to seize it.

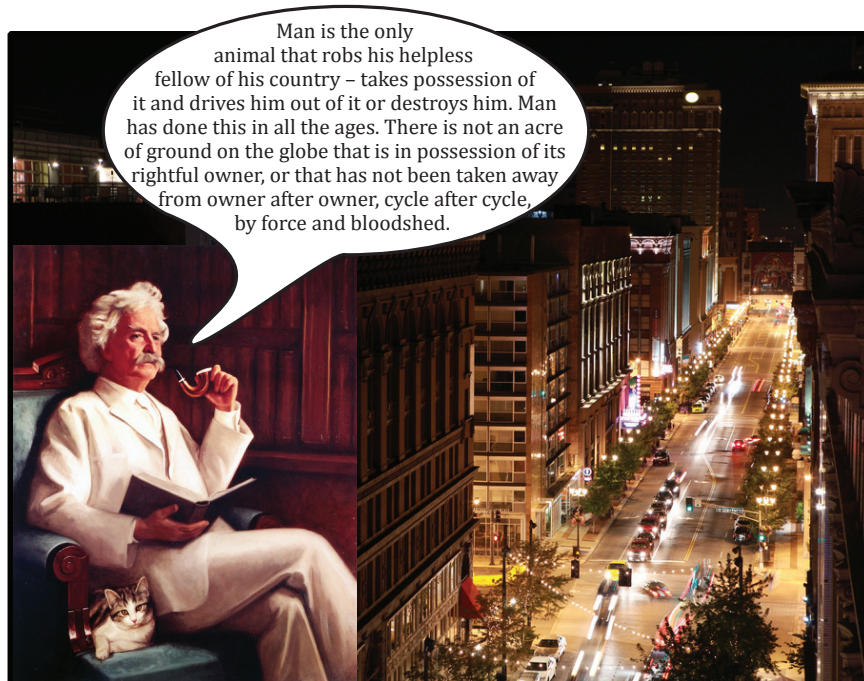
**June 16, O'Fallon** - A billboard on the Knights of Columbus private land reading, "Give Life a Chance. No Abortion," is cleverly repainted to read: "Give life a CHOICE. FREE Abortion."

**June 20, St. Louis City** - Anti-militarists use paint-bombs to deface a towering "Marine Week" billboard at I-64 and Newstead Ave. and a similar nearby bus-stop ad.

**June 22, St. Louis City** - Expressing frustration that APOP Records on Cherokee St. continues to refuse to remove white power music and books from its shelves, someone splashes gobs of paint along its storefront.

**July 3, Kansas City** - Dressed as a clown, renegade anti-nuclear priest Carl Kabat, 77, breaks into the under-construction Honeywell armament plant, spends the night among the heavy machinery, and at dawn, shatters the windows of a backhoe with a sledgehammer. Irked by his short jail sentence, Carl returns the next 4<sup>th</sup> of July to do the same, but security stops him first. This however, is not enough to stop the plant from terminating the security firm's contract. Carl instructs, "Anything that helps make nuclear weapons should be damaged, should be destroyed."

**August 1, Statewide** - Hackers under the name AntiSec release a slew of stolen data from hacks of nationwide law enforcement websites, including 1 sheriff's department



law and the reactionary media at their disposal, so they spit words of war.<sup>1</sup> Devoid of a recent cultural past like the north or south-side or the central corridor residents, the yuppies live an ahistorical existence, not only because of the continual bulldozing of this or that and the erection of this stadium or that parking garage or interstate, but also because of the wholesale transplant nature of those moving to the loft district from West County, WashU, Chicago, St. Charles, and who knows where else.

### **A Laboratory of Brutality or Knuckleheads for the airheads**

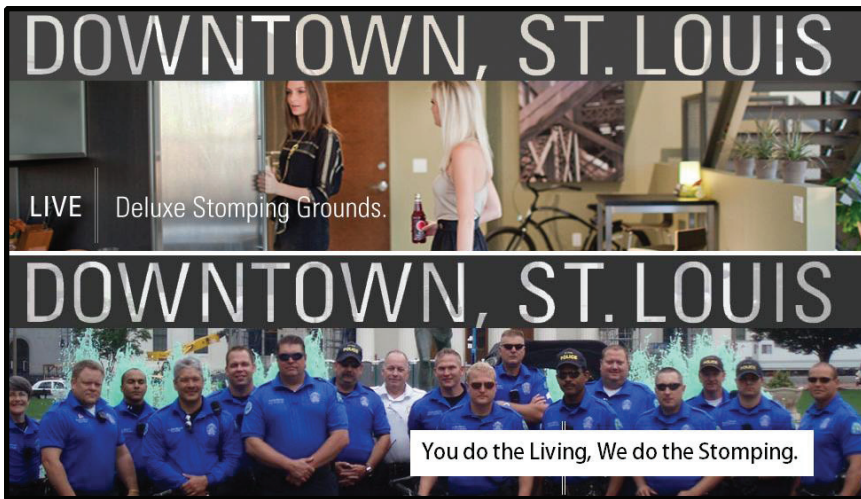
This creation of a highly concentrated zone of wealth – with very little penetration from surrounding neighborhoods and no recently displaced people<sup>2</sup> aside from the humble homeless – is an ideal scenario for policing experiments in social control. In the early stages of downtown's re-development, the police systematically told the homeless that downtown was "off-limits," repeatedly arresting without charges, hurling racist abuse, stealing IDs, food, and medication, throwing firecrackers at them in Lucas Park, taking them to remote areas and dumping them, confiscating and crushing tents when its occupants weren't around, and even arresting them and (instead of taking them to jail) forcing them to clean up a park. As of late we are starting to see more organized forms of experimentation.

Outside of Soulard, downtown was the first neighborhood to implement police-controlled public surveillance cameras – and with no apparent opposition. The area also saw the first police bicycle patrols, the introduction of "Downtown Guides" as the chipper eyes and ears

1. In a recent Fox2 news segment, property manager Brett Waldrop dropped some jaws when he advocated not just the removal of the homeless from the sidewalks, but also from the shelter where they sleep, because "We're given an unfair burden down here in downtown." It's obvious who is not included in his "We." It's also not unusual to drop into a downtown coffee-shop and overhear yuppies refer to the homeless as an "infestation." And a few doors down, club owners complain of homeless drug addicts, while behind them, young professionals snort coke off their toilet seats.

2. At least a generation had passed since the last large-scale demolition of a working-class downtown neighborhood.





of the police, the outlawing of panhandling on the interstate ramps, the disarming, novel style of “community policing” that Occupy demonstrators at Kiener faced, and, taking the gloves off... the draconian 21-and-up ID checkpoints on busy night-time Washington Ave., and finally, the shameful controls of the homeless, including the notorious organized “sweep” of the homeless from the streets into the jails before the 2004 Fair St. Louis July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations. The police activity on a normal Washington Ave. Friday night these days would be considered a hostile occupation in almost any other St. Louis neighborhood, but because of the unique “blank slate” scenario of downtown, police can say with a straight face that they are protecting the neighborhood from “outsiders” – which through *their* eyes, includes the homeless. And like clockwork, every criminal act becomes justification for the next series of police control experiments...

And when smiles or guns don't work in keeping the poor far enough away from the rich, public health and sanitation suddenly becomes the almighty God, and thus reason enough to prevent otherwise peaceful gatherings. We saw it during the Occupy encampment in Kiener Plaza, at food servings in Lucas Park for years, at various homeless encampments, and last of all on the *sidewalk* outside Larry Rice's New Life Evangelical Church shelter in 2012. What a farce that the State's Red Bull-fueled, donut-bloated force can disband your assembly “for your own health!” If only the reverse was true!

**The Sadness, the Outrage**  
or  
**Washington Avenue Massacre, Part II<sup>3</sup>**

In a news segment on the closure of the sidewalk outside New Life, Charles Jaco, taking a reporting break from cigarette smoking, interviewed a homeless family in tears. Even watching the conservative dogmatists at Fox, it doesn't take a social scientist to see through the heartless lies of the city. You simply cannot hide the harsh economic realities that for decades have pushed millions to live on downtown streets across the country. Atop the economic hardships, the conditions of abuse, isolation, brokenness, betrayal, mental breakdown, and general social misery that we all (homeless and non-homeless alike) experience remind us that these pressures could easily push us or

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3. Part I took place on June 10, 1900, when striking streetcar workers, returning from a picnic in East St. Louis, were ambushed on Washington Ave. between Broadway and 6<sup>th</sup> St. by a strikebreaking posse. The upper-class posse, made up of prominent judges, realtors, bankers, and attorneys, opened fire on the unarmed crowd, killing 3 and wounding 14.

in Illinois, 9 in Missouri, and the website of the Missouri Sheriffs Association. They post the names, phone numbers, social security numbers, emails, and usernames and passwords of about 7000 law enforcement officers from across the state of Missouri. The wave of hacks is in retaliation for the arrests of dozens of suspected members of the “Anonymous” hacking outfit in the U.S. and Great Britain. The hackers hope the data will “demonstrate the inherently corrupt nature of law enforcement using their own words” and “disrupt and sabotage their ability to communicate and terrorize communities.” They end with: “In our fight for a world free from police, prisons, and politicians... remember there are more of us than there are of them.”

**August 3, University City** - Youth gather at a forum in Heman Park claiming “The police are driving everyone out [of the Loop].” Referencing the boredom of summer and wanting to be with their friends, a group of high-school students propose a “teen center” where police won't harass them or kick them out.

**August 6, Cedar Hill** - Days before being forced back into the grey world of school, some kids sneak into Northwest High School and fling colorful paint “everywhere, floor to ceiling” in classrooms, stairwells, hallways, and the cafeteria and on textbooks, computers, televisions, and even a model skeleton. An astounded student says: “I don't understand it at all... even if you hate [school] and don't want to be here... what goes through your mind: ‘Let's just go smear paint on the school!’”

**August 6, O'Fallon** - For the second time in the past three months, someone fires bullets hitting the exterior walls and windows of the offices of a local defense contractor, Herndon Products.

**August 21, Ste. Genevieve** - A dozen Klansmen, two in full robes, are hounded relentlessly by residents of Ste. Genevieve when they show up to leaflet there. Residents rip up their leaflets and repeatedly yell “This is our town!” and “You're not wanted here. Get Out!” at the racists.

**August 22, Collinsville (IL)** - Vandals slash the tires of a Collinsville police speed radar trailer on Sycamore St. and spray-paint “PIGS” over the department seal.

**September 1, Sunset Hills** - In the basement of a recently foreclosed home, a bank representative discovers 10 sticks of (fake) dynamite and a detonator, a parting gift from the pissed-off ex-homeowner.

**September 14, Carbondale (IL)** - Prompted by late-night power outage, 1200 Southern Illinois University-Carbondale students spill out of their dormitories and party and socialize in the streets rowdily setting off fireworks, playing loud music, and even damaging some campus buildings and a car trying to force its way through the crowd. State police in riot gear contain the students until the crowd

fizzles out.

**October 11, Cape Girardeau** - Someone uses spray-paint to deface an 80-year-old monument to the Confederacy with the command, "Go south. We are in the Union. Shit. Remove to [illegible] cemetery in the south."

**October 18, Chillicothe** - Inmates at the Livingston County Jail riot in the early morning hours. Chillicothe Police are called in to suppress the prisoners after they scream profanities, beat on jail property, trash cell areas 1 and 2 and the security hallway, attempt to flood the cell areas, and start a small fire. When breakfast is served a few hours later, many inmates throw their food to the ground.

**November 1, St. Louis City** - Seventy of the 110 workers at the Missouri Social Services office on Chouteau Ave. stage a "sick-out," failing to show up for work. Workers say they can no longer keep up with the rising demand from people needing state assistance, as they face job cuts themselves as well. The next day, Occupy-inspired, outside supporters barge into the lobby and convey a message of solidarity to cheering workers.

**November 3, Carbondale (IL)** - Unionized-faculty at Southern Illinois University walk out on strike, and students march in support through the campus and busy student center before beefing up the picket lines. As the strike continues, the following days see non-Faculty Association teachers also walk-out of classrooms and join the picket lines. Town residents hold a solidarity rally and some students organize spontaneous demonstrations when they learn class is cancelled. Five days into the strike, students launch a one-day strike and 500 students march excitedly through campus. A later noisy demonstration calling for the chancellor's ouster rattles the inside of the Board of Trustees meeting.

**November 11, Springfield** - Inspired by the nationwide "Occupy" movement, night-time vandals spray-paint two banks with the messages, "I'd like my bailout now," "We do not forgive," and circle-V's.

**November 14, Kennet** - Someone sets fire to the swanky Kennet Country Club, causing \$2 million in damages as the clubhouse, restaurant, and pro shop burn to the ground.

**November 16, St. Charles** - Vandals write graffiti on St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's Church anti-abortion billboard. They tell the church to "GET BENT LIKE A CLOTHES HANGER! GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY OVARIES!"

**November 21, Cape Girardeau** - A worker at RGIS Inventory Services, upset over a recent pay cut, sets the company office building on fire.

**November 25, Charleston (IL)** - In a case of "extreme vandalism directed against the chemistry department" of Eastern Illinois University, unknown individuals spend their Thanksgiving break devastating a classroom and several labs, including a \$367,000

someone we know to resort to the streets... where there's no one to hold us at night and assure us everything will be alright, no doctor for our pains, no recourse when we get chased from park to park like dogs, no amber alerts when we go missing, no city-wide outrage when we freeze to death beneath heated empty skyscrapers, and no funerals after we die.

If you're homeless, or even if you're not, you can't help but be angry – be furious. After we watch the news reports we scream in our heads, "Where the fuck are the homeless supposed to go??!!!" With these provocations, some serve food in parks or donate clothes to the shelters or directly to the homeless. Some homeless snap and physically attack racist yuppies,<sup>4</sup> while some even rob downtown banks. Some go on marches and yell to express themselves and some go on camera to show the outrageous poverty they find themselves in. Some self-organize squatted tent encampments. And some hang posters encouraging others to band together and fight back. The spray-paint on the wall reads, "Just because you live in a loft doesn't mean you're God." The anger and sadness at the David and Goliath situation is broadly understood. *But the city must go on.* And to do so, to carry on the cleansing process and polish its facade, it must criminalize and *dehumanize* the most destitute. Loft-dwellers and stadium and convention-goers are a ruthless bunch. They are important. And they must be safe. They enjoy things like efficient businesses, fancy galas, and wars. Getting rid of some fleas downtown is hardly a cruel act by their standards.

### The Thread of Resistance

or

### Arrows against bullets (sound familiar?)

But as alluded to above, there has been a thread – a tradition, if you will – of *collective* struggle that marks downtown as a two-side battleground of class warfare more so than anywhere else in the city. In 2002, the controversial Reverend Larry Rice initiated rambunctious homeless marches down the not-so-developed Washington Ave. against the increasing police harassment of the homeless at the behest of the first wave of brave(!) loft-dwellers. A rolling battle over Lucas Park has flared up over the years with fightin' words from the rich threatening to privatize and fence off the historic homeless hang-out (hence the mid-'70s origin of its street name, "Hobo Park") located between Rice's New Life Evangelical Center shelter, the Central Library, and the burgeoning loft district. Those serving food in the park have repeatedly defied public health orders to cease and desist, and in Summer 2005 a picnic/rally was held there insisting that "this city's progress must stop." The eastern end was lost to a private dog park in 2008 and the rest now remains fenced off for architectural renovations designed to make it less conducive to homeless lounging.

Elsewhere, coinciding with the economic crash of 2008, concentrated, semi-public homeless encampments sprang up. The first notable one was "Hopeville," under the Tucker viaduct near Cass Ave., which blossomed in numbers after the city shook its finger at it. Ultimately under threat of a May 2010 eviction, the entire camp moved

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4. If there is one incident that could symbolize the state of downtown, it would be this one from June 2012: A yuppie was walking his dog in Hobo Park. The dog pooped near a sleeping girl. The man with the dog walked away and the girl's father confronted the man. The yuppie responded with racial slurs to the (presumably homeless) black father. Four other homeless people took offense and joined the father. One of those four hit the yuppie with a piece of rebar. When police came, they arrested the girl's father. Homeless people are forbidden to shit almost anywhere, but the yuppie's dog can shit absolutely anywhere.





If you play the video in reverse, the bulldozer is actually building houses. It's all a matter of perspective.

to the riverfront floodwall north of downtown alongside a couple existing smaller camps (Sparta and Dignity Harbor). But enough stink had been raised in its defense that an era of “permitted” (read: city looks the other way) homeless encampments had begun. Hundreds of residents filled the tents and shacks of the floodwall encampments until the city began its callous campaign to prevent outdoor gatherings of the homeless altogether with a literal bulldozing of everything in the area in May 2012.<sup>5</sup> The only reminder that anything had ever been there was some graffiti on the wall: “We do not forgive. We do not forget.” Half a year prior, the Kiener Plaza Occupy encampment became home to many homeless as well until its early November eviction. The city followed up these evictions with the immediate evictions of a homeless camp at Vandeventer Ave. and I-44 and a similar encampment attempt in North County, the fencing off of Hobo Park for construction, the public health decree authorizing barricades to be placed on the entire 1400 block of Locust preventing amassing there, and the inevitable anti-loitering laws to come in the downtown’s sparkling new showcase library.

Despite the recent outrage and marches over the death of homeless woman Anna Brown in Richmond Heights police custody, the shouting down of eviction mastermind Bill Siedhoff after a documentary film showing of “Dignity Harbor” at the St. Louis International Film Fest, and a Christmas Eve sit-in at County executive Charles Dooley’s office over empty promises<sup>6</sup>... We have entered an era of organized city

5. The St. Patrick Center, always unconditionally in bed with the City, joined the twisted logic chorus: “There are pockets of people who would like to live in their own little outdoor society with what they perceive to be their own government, their own form of rules, or their own brotherhood. We don’t really feel that’s a life of dignity.”

6. Dooley’s top aide even had the gumption to say “We’re not going to get into the business of caring for the homeless.” There’s two ways to be shocked by this. One, that County officials don’t care about people, and two, that he admitted that caring for the homeless is in fact a business for many. In the documentary film “Dignity Harbor,” one homeless man lucidly explains the dynamic of how city and shelter officials live off the homeless (not the other way around) – how their livelihood depends on the continued dispossession of the homeless: “All I’m saying is that they got all that money allocated to them. They’re livin’ off of it and we get squat, man. We get nothin’. They’re drivin’ around in their fancy rides, they come down here, and they blow smoke up our butt and tell us, ‘Oh we’re gonna give you a house, we’re gonna do all this.’ But we receive squat... a bus pass, and then they take it back too. That’s how much they care. Why should they care? They’re gettin’ their little salary off of us. The head of that place wouldn’t even shake my hand. Act like he didn’t even know I existed. Ohhhhh, you don’t know, I was gonna beat him down. Ha ha ha ha... It’s the truth brother.”

high-performance digital nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer.

**December 16, Belleville (IL)** - Thirteen prisoners at the St. Clair County jail form a line to protect a fellow prisoner from guards trying to transfer him to solitary confinement. Two of these prisoners, in particular, actively strike the officers trying to extract the prisoner.

**December 19, St. Louis City** - Residents respond to the police killing of an unarmed man near Riverview Blvd. and W. Florissant Ave. with “fuzzy animals and warm words” for the victim, Anthony Smith, and ominous graffiti threats for the police painted on a nearby Church’s Chicken: “Fuck da Police” and “YALL NEXT POLICE.” Mayor Slay comments, “It looks like the thugs are feeling the pressure,” and police patrols are ordered to double up.

## 2012

**February 17, Springfield** - As part of #OpPiggyBank (a worldwide cyber-payback for police brutality at demonstrations around the world), hackers, under the ‘Anonymous’ moniker, steal sensitive police department data from the Springfield city’s website. Two days earlier, hackers deface the state of Missouri’s official website by placing images of victims from the Iraq War with messages opposing U.S. intervention there and in Syria.

**February 27, Centralia (IL)** - The whole town is up in arms over Democratic Governor Pat Quinn’s proposal to close the Murray Center, a state home for the disabled. Hundreds of residents demonstrate both inside and outside city hall, forcing the city council to issue a proclamation against the closure. The following weeks see the town’s roadways plastered with signs in every direction and enormous rallies... that ultimately do not stop the closure.

**March 8, Greenville (IL)** - Three prisoners at Bond County Jail overpower a guard and beeline it for freedom through an open maintenance door. A short bit later, two of them find that the mayor of Carlyle’s car makes for a fast getaway.

**March 23, St. Louis City** - Days after police beat and hospitalize Occupy protesters several blocks away, Mayor Slay faces chaotic heckling after he dares show his face in Tower Grove Park to speak at a vigil for murdered Florida teen Trayvon Martin.

**March 31, St. Louis City** - A group of 200-300 youth, allowed to gather nowhere in this city, choose to do so at the intersection of Delmar and Skinker Boulevards. The evening of friends and warm weather is quickly spoiled by 50 police officers set upon the crowd, who moves a block north before someone fires gunshots into the air and everyone scatters. Last April, youths welcomed the Spring in similar fashion at the Loop MetroLink Station, where a cop was lucky enough to be hurt trying to break up that festivity.



**April 5, St. Louis City** - Days after Metro announces an increase in fares, someone downtown throws an object through the window of an unoccupied, but moving, MetroLink train.

**April 6, Richmond Heights** - 75 people gather outside St. Mary's Health Center after marching from the St. Louis County administration building in downtown Clayton in outrage over the death of homeless woman Anna Brown. She died 6 months earlier on the floor of a Richmond Heights jail cell following a denial of medical care at St. Mary's. The hospital had her arrested for trespassing for stubbornly demanding medical treatment and later the arresting officers ignored her pleas, dragged her into jail, and left her to die in their custody.

**April 15, Knob Noster** - An anti-drone protest outside Whiteman Air Force Base is cut short when military police in full riot gear, banging their shields, drive them back and arrest two.

**April 23, St. Louis City** - Someone lobs a Molotov cocktail at the base of the Federal Building, igniting a small fire along one of the walls.

**April 27, St. Louis City** - Residents and supporters march from the homeless camps along the north riverfront to City Hall in opposition to the city's plan to bulldoze the encampments.

**April 28, St. Louis City** - Following the annual St. Louis Univ. "Take Back the Night" rally, dozens of attendees march to the Sigma Chi fraternity house to confront a serial rapist. Amidst verbal sparring with the 'brothers,' someone throws eggs at the house, while another paints "Rape happens here" on their fence. In addition, stickers appear on campus with the rapist's personal info.

**May 1, St. Louis City** - Following a large picnic in Tower Grove Park, dozens of demonstrators celebrate May Day with an evening march down Cherokee St. with fireworks.

**May 4, Clayton** - Vandals slash the tires of 13 cars on posh Polo Drive.

**May 5, Chillicothe** - A weekend riot erupts at the Livingston County Jail, as inmates seize control of cell block 3, threaten guards, flood the cell block, noisily beat on their bunks, and throw wads of wet toilet paper to cover up security cameras. The following morning, they refuse their breakfast by throwing the cereal back at the guards. "Some of the detainees even made it known they were going to physically assault the sheriff and urinate on him at the first opportunity." Inmates, who staged a similar riot here in October 2011, are particularly furious after months of water backing up in the shower and the staff torturing them with the smell of sewer gas. Seven months later, the sheriff tells inmates the jail is permanently closing. A group of inmates bids farewell to the sheriff by exchanging "choice" words with him and trashing their cells.

**May 11, Shiloh (IL)** - An angry medical employee at Scott Air Force Base who had just been fired makes a bomb threat, causing

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a cluster of buildings at the base to be

terror through fragmentation of poor people. Even the crumbs of free apartment vouchers offered to the riverfront land squatters (when they are not outright bullshit) move to isolate and break the spirit and sense of community discovered at the encampments. That same sense of community found at the first Hopeville that gave way to marches, growth, lively conversations, experimental living, and even talk of serious eviction resistance has been crushed. The pride in community that caused one squatter, worried about the pending police eviction of the camp, to point to the billboard looking out from the only entrance to the Hopeville tunnel and say "If you want to post up, I'll post up with you. I'll get my crossbow and sit up there," is nowhere to be found any more.

### A Downtown Staple

or

### Sticky Rice

With all this talk of Larry Rice, we don't mean to endorse the Reverend. He's just undeniably woven into the fabric of downtown's class tensions and no talk of the social situation of downtown St. Louis could omit him. Larry Rice's service to god through class warfare on behalf of the poor simply mirrors the City's service to their god (Mr. Progress) through class warfare on behalf of the rich. When anyone slaves away for an imaginary man we *should* be weary. But when he gets up in front of a hanging effigy labelled "Racist City Officials," as he did in 2004, and tells a crowd that "The city has launched a class war and we need to choose sides!" he does speak a truth that very few others say aloud. But we also join the critics<sup>7</sup> who experience his manipulation, his bible thumping of the most vulnerable, his PR stunts, and his personal money grabs. Like the media-loving civil rights leaders who marched to City Hall to demand jobs in 1968 with a placard reading: "Idle hands, empty stomachs, hot summer = RIOTS," he wants loads of crumbs and is willing to *threaten* holy hellfire to get them. But it gives him too much credit to say he has a homeless army. Armies require discipline, obedience, and respectability – hardly adjectives to describe those who live on the street. Most who've been to his downtown marches know there's plenty of space for anger and creativity, spontaneity and outright rudeness, and never a request to stop, behave, or look good. Sure maybe he's just using it as his ammunition to threaten the city – as he probably doesn't want riots, rebellion, or revolution, but he hardly seems capable or willing to stop them.

### Servant Workers

or

### The ones they pay to be invisible

And it's important to remember that not just the homeless get treated like shit – it's everyone these downtown capitalists expect to serve them or work for them. The surveillance cameras that monitor rabble in streets also spy on workers inside downtown businesses. And the restaurant owner who stiffes his workers is also the chief proponent of fencing off Hobo Park. With an endless pool of workers ("If they let us go, they'll just hire someone else the next day," said a scared Mayfair Hotel worker) who have no memory of downtown as a past venue for militant workplace struggles,<sup>8</sup> this *new* downtown offers its busi-

7. For a particularly uncompromising critique of Larry Rice and his short-lived homeless encampment at Vandeventer Ave. and I-44, see the online text, "Between a rock and a hard place: Thoughts on Larry Rice's new homeless camp and following eviction."

8. In the years between the 1877 general strike, which used the old Lucas



*Copia Urban Winery owner, Eyad Tammas, ponders the age-old slave-master question: "Why would a slave burn down his own source of livelihood?" Never thinking for too long about other people's misery, he quickly answers: "Off to prison, you ungrateful, mentally-ill basket-case!"*

ness owners an opportunity to thrive off of a subservient, slave-like workforce. The businesses *generally* can afford to be more cutthroat than their liberal counterparts in the nearby job hubs of the city's south-side, Grand Center, or the Central West End. Restaurant and hotel workers, who run themselves ragged for an increasingly wealthy customer base, frequently cope with late or missing pay-checks atop being shorted wages. The stories are endless: a dishwasher fired from Bailey's Range for asking for their correct pay, a laundry attendant at the Mayfair Hotel owed \$450 in back pay, a server at Shula's 347 Grill not paid for 5 weeks (days later the restaurant suddenly closes), an immigrant cab driver working 14-hour days for well-rested convention-goers fined by the Taxicab Commission for an untucked shirt, and the now-imprisoned busboy who burned Copia Wine Bar to the ground in 2007 after they refused him a paycheck.

For now, the ruling class can mostly laugh at its imported downtown servants: "Be thankful. You have nowhere else to work you carless imbeciles! Talk back and you might find yourself in the company of our other eyesores – the homeless!"

But then, how stable is their urban utopia/Disneyland/Green Zone monstrosity when it's been hastily built on the foundations of our weary backs?

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Market (Tucker & Chestnut) as a rallying point, and the 1940 Century Electric (18<sup>th</sup> and Pine) community-supported strike, downtown workers steadily found themselves in striking picket lines, factory and city hall occupations, pitched battles with police and scabs, mass lootings of food shops, blockades of striking streetcar lines, and in 5,000-person tent cities. Seventy years of physical and mental bulldozing of the downtown landscape make it difficult to imagine a present that evokes the rebellious spirit of the past.

shut down.

**May 16, St. Louis City** - Amidst the ongoing evictions of the heavily populated tent cities along the north riverfront, a group of homeless people and some advocates establish a tent city on vacant land near I-44 and Vandeventer Ave. Police quickly break up the new camp and arrest 4.

**May 18, St. Louis City** - Bulldozers destroy the last of three neighboring homeless encampments along the north riverfront at Mullanphy St. Over its couple years in existence, the squatted camps of Sparta, Dignity Harbor, and Hopeville, were home to countless tents, more than 50 permanent structures, and hundreds of people refusing to assimilate into the restrictive world of the shelters or the isolation of the streets.

**May 18, Regionwide** - Worried Schnucks executives announce a "non-stop" rise in fake coupons being successfully used by customers at area stores.

**May 20, Florissant** - For the second straight night (and coinciding with Armed Forces Day), a group of youths write graffiti on and throw Molotov cocktails at the Air Force fighter jet on display outside the Eagan Civic Center, leaving scorch marks and damaging the cockpit.

**May 20, Regionwide** - Honoring a fellow biker killed on the highway, 150 motorcyclists cruise area interstates together shutting down on-ramps, slowing traffic, and performing tricks (wheelies, handstands, etc.).

**May 27, Columbia** - A suspected arson fire destroys the swanky and controversial under-construction Brookside Apartments. Neighbors had continually spoken out against the monster development that now suffers \$7 million in fire damages.

**May 30, Chesterfield** - A fired worker at Axis Worldwide Supply Chain & Logistics is revealed to have later hacked into the company's computers, deleted shipping records, changed shipping rate tables, and accessed the company president's email account.

**June 3, Chester (IL)** - Two prisoners attack a guard at Menard Correctional Center. Authorities place the prison on lockdown, search all cells, and recover 21 homemade weapons, the most confiscated since the '90s.

**June 6, St. Ann** - A man on St. Anthony Lane barricades himself inside his foreclosed home as officers converge there to carry out the eviction. Police fire tear gas inside the home, and the man responds with gunshots, before later being shot in the arm and taken into custody.

**June 11, St. Louis City** - In solidarity with "long-term anarchist prisoners," saboteurs disable 4 ATMs and 50 parking meters with "glue, paint, and hammers."

**June 19, St. Louis City** - By pouring gasoline through the mail slot and igniting it, someone sets fire to the building housing the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward community office and a police substa-





## **THINGS WILL ONLY GET STRANGER**

a clunky black typewriter  
winter's dull frigid bone  
muffler shop crime spree  
hacking the technocracy  
riots in the supermarkets,  
burlesque streetside vendors  
agroculture  
monoculture  
whoretoculture,  
arabesques of neon visage  
housewife revolt,  
casinotown luck on gargantuan gambling ferry fleets.  
the collapse of the social  
-amidst chattering screens,  
rickety pirate oldsmobiles  
banging bass down clandestine alleyways,  
arena-hairmetal-slushies  
myriad gleaming chain stores  
a gold wristwatch and a quadruple big mac for the 'burbs  
contestation amidst scrunched eager faces on delmar,  
a floating cellphone powered island in the mississippi,  
love in a hopeless place.

but barges sink  
things collapse  
multitudes insurrect  
winters whither into dogwood spring  
clunky black typewriters do their job.



# Annie's House



## Eviction Resistance Slowly Struggles To Find Its Feet

While Occupy St. Louis hibernated for the winter, foreclosed homeowners and occupiers were invited to a meeting to discuss home defense. One of the homeowners, Annie Quain, successfully stalled her eviction long enough for the property to be put back in her hands. This is the story of that process...

### ANNIE'S STORY

Annie could be anyone her age. She lived in her house for almost 20 years, raised her kids in it, and slowly paid off her mortgage through her work as a house painter. A few years ago, when all of us started feeling the effects of the economy going to shit, work became harder to find, and Annie fell behind on her payments. She then proceeded to enter the bureaucratic hell of foreclosure.

Wave after wave of confusing bank notices, her debt switching from one set of scum hands to another, letters from banks telling her to do this, demanding that she do that... Annie made an effort to track down clear answers and got nothing but the run-around. And all the while, Annie didn't know which, if any, of the threats had legal weight behind them. Finally... a letter telling her she had 30 days to leave. Like many people in her situation, Annie simply figured she'd stay in her house as long as she could. The eviction date came and went, and after 4-6

months, she was still there.<sup>1</sup>

### OUR STORY

Around this time in December, Annie (an occupier herself) attended a foreclosure meeting called for by the dormant remnants of Occupy St. Louis. The movement of occupations that finally reached North America in the late summer, had peaked in most places by November. Luckily, though, most participants were still riding their high of collective defiance and were looking for ways to expand beyond taking over public parks. Toward the end of Autumn, this had taken the form of attempting to blockade bridges, ports, and other places that keep society going from one day to the next. There was also a push to occupy abandoned buildings – ones that better met the needs of sustaining an occupation.

With a couple strikes and threats of strikes around town, there was also the hope of workplace or university occupations, and in that, the desire to take over space that would more immediately disrupt the flow of everyday life. Finally, there was the push to help move people

<sup>1</sup> Annie's foreclosure story up until this point follows almost every foreclosure story. If you can stomach the uncertainty, stick it out. Start talking to neighbors and friends. Don't give up your home!



## **CHRONICLES, continued from page 25**

tion in the early morning hours.

**June 19, St. Louis City** - A yuppie walking his dog through Lucas Park, allows his dog to poop next to a girl lying on the ground and fails to clean it up. The girl's father confronts the dog-walker, who responds to the black father with racial slurs. At least four others come to the aid of the father, one of which beats the dog-walker with a piece of rebar when he fails to stop hurling racist insults.

**June 20, Springfield** - Dozens of homeless people have set up camp, occupying private land in the woods. The years-old camp is evicted in a sudden night-time raid by police, who arrest 18.

**June 21, Chesterfield** - Crowds of around 500 teens with nowhere to gather continue taking over the Sonic parking lot to socialize every Thursday night, throwing the police and nearby business owners into a frenzy.

**July 13, Cahokia (IL)** - The fourth bank robbery in the last two years forces Scott Credit Union to permanently close its doors.

**July 15, Brentwood** - Demonstrators interrupt a busy day inside Whole Foods declaring solidarity with disgruntled workers there who have been threatening to strike. "Sick-in, Strike, Unionize!" their statement screams.

**July 17, St. Louis City** - Director of Human Services, Bill Siedhoff, reports that several of the 25 new anti-panhandling signs have been torn down. Four months later, moviegoers at the St. Louis International Film Festival shout down Siedhoff who tries to speak after a showing of the documentary "Dignity Harbor."

**July 31, Belleville (IL)** - A multi-racial group of teens heavily vandalize the interior of New Freedom Baptist Church. In addition to anti-police graffiti, they leave behind this message: "I Love Church... Just Kidding."

**August 4, Des Peres** - Weeks after the ultra-conservative CEO of Chick-fil-A goes public in opposition to gay marriage, demonstrators around the country stage a "Kiss-In" at their restaurants. Furthermore, a restaurant here in Des Peres (and also in L.A., San Antonio, and Maryland) is vandalized with spray-paint proclaiming "Don't Hate," and "Tastes Like Hate."

**August 5, St. Louis City & Edwardsville (IL)** - A string of vandalism in the Metro area is claimed in response to the formation of a federal Grand Jury in Washington State investigating property damages at a May 1<sup>st</sup> anti-capitalist demonstration in Seattle. ATMs in St. Louis are "disabled" and the Madison County Courthouse and a police probation van in Edwardsville are spray-painted.

**August 9, St. Louis City** - Triumphant vandals slice the head off the life-size statue of the Virgin Mary at St. Mary of Victories church just south of downtown. They quietly return the kidnapped head four days later, having drawn (alongside "Satanic inscriptions") blood dripping from the corners of her mouth

back into their foreclosed homes or through direct defense, prevent eviction from happening in the first place.

Annie explained her situation and folks decided to help. What followed was a series of meetings and potlucks every couple of months at Annie's house off South Kingshighway Blvd. and Chippewa St. They helped us establish an emotional attachment to her home, as well as get to know each other better. We were also able to meet neighbors and get updates about Annie's changing situation.

At their worst, they were everything one hates about meetings: the conversation being unfocused and going in circles; having to reach the same conclusion at every meeting because of the fluctuation of people present; people making speeches or being unaware of how long they were rambling or how off topic their comment was.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, we realized we could begin the meeting with a brief update on Annie's situation and summary of the defense plan. That way, people could just accept it and we didn't have to keep arguing about why it made the most sense.

At their best, one was shocked at how commonplace radical ideas were discussed and casually accepted as the most practical. The get-togethers reflected people and collective power at their best, displaying a willingness to call the motherfuckers that run our lives (banks, the sheriff's department, police, politicians, and the media) on their bullshit.<sup>3</sup> Riding the high of the occupied Fall, the group also understood (to varying degrees) the power we have when we push things further than we think we're capable of. It had also learned that the more we look upon ourselves and act as protagonists, the more we take back power from those that run our lives.

## **THE DIGNITY BEHIND THE BARRICADE**

When people want to defend a building against eviction, often the first impulse is to barricade the doors and hole up inside. If this is all that numbers allow for, great, but if it's possible to expand farther out into the street (ideally, the whole block or neighborhood), then conflict can become more diffuse and expand from a single point or two to an entire zone. Instead of a house defending itself in isolation, the appearance is now a block or community shooing the buzzards from a wounded member.

While the barricaded house often plays out as the police slowly but surely finding a way in and those inside counting the minutes until they're arrested, the barricaded block allows for defenders to stay mobile. There's more space to move: to fall back or (if lucky enough) push forward, and also to evade arrest. Instead of a door or window being the only point of conflict, the street can allow for multiple, consecutive blockades and other points of conflict. If folks can't agree about what they're comfortable with, it allows one group to do something at one end and another to do something different at the other, inside the house itself, etc.

The barricaded block also allows for neighbors to come and go from their homes on one side to normality on the other. They must pass

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2. In terms of tactics, strategy, and ideas about the world, the meetings were all over the place. As soon as someone would get done making a speech about the need to picket the bank, someone else would try and focus back on ways to materially defend the home, then someone else would suggest putting pressure on the Alderwoman, then another speech, then a new idea about pressure, trying to focus, speech, pressure, focus pressuring, ideas about focusing our speeches...

3. Not only are individuals in positions of power helpless to do anything, they often don't want to because they profit off systems of debt slavery, enforce it, campaign for it, and make it seem natural and those opposing it extremists.



**Top:** Meeting sheriff deputies in the street during an early morning eviction at the Cruz family home, Minneapolis, MN, 2012. **Middle:** Holding down the fort at the Hernandez family home (aka “Fort Hernandez”), Los Angeles, 2012. **Bottom left:** After a golf course expansion threatened to take even more uncultivated Mohawk land, felled trees and flipped cop-cars compose the barricades of the Kanehsatake stand-off, Quebec, Canada, 1990. **Bottom right:** Netting and scaffolding erected to move between barricaded houses and stay out of reach of bailiffs and cops while resisting the M11 road expansion, London, UK, 1994.

through the zone of conflict, naturally forming an opinion and taking a side.<sup>4</sup> In this case, Annie had already gone door-to-door telling her neighbors that she was going to stick it out, and it might involve barricading the street. Neighbors responded sympathetically (with a few attending potlucks and discussions) or with indifference but willing to

4. Think of commuters that pass a sabotaged ticket dispenser during a fare strike. They need to get somewhere, they can't pay, and by simply commuting that day, they participate. Similar to how the commuter now has to think about the situation – do they prefer not having to pay, “why the fuck do we have to pay to begin with,” “thank god I got a break today,” etc. – neighbors passing in and out of the barricaded street have to think about all the roles and dynamics going into the situation. Perhaps they even find the reality on our side of the barricades – decentralization, direct participation, a willingness to actually talk about the problems we face – more healthy and enjoyable than the abomination lurking on the other side.

like a vampire.

**August 15, Springfield (IL)** - Angry over wage and pension cuts, Illinois state workers and retirees boo Governor Pat Quinn off the stage during Governor's Day at the Illinois State Fair. They taunted him earlier in the day as he went to breakfast and again as he was enjoying a pork chop lunch. Throughout the day, the workers also howl at other prominent Democrats, whose entourage responds by turning up the country music playing in the background.

**August 24, St. Louis City** - A crowd of curious neighborhood youths begin to gather outside 21<sup>st</sup> Ward Alderman Antonio French's office as Mayor Slay visits it to promote more city surveillance cameras. One says, “At the end of the day everybody got to eat whether the camera going to be there or not. There's a camera in Walmart but it ain't going to stop the person from coming in taking what they want... If y'all ain't out here helping us provide to eat, what we supposed to do? We can't do nothing but go out and rob, steal, and take what we want because we ain't got no way else to eat... Why we need cameras? Why don't you invest in something that's going to prosper for us? Ya'll trying to lessen the crime rate in the community, open up a community center or something.”

**August 25, Columbia** - Protesters picket outside a Goodwill store over the company's practice of paying its mentally disabled workers at its sheltered workshop a mere 22 ¢/hr, while its president earns \$522,000 per year.

**August 27, St. Charles** - A woman at Reliant Repair Protection shows up to work late and is fired immediately for “insubordination.” Refusing to go down quietly, she yells at her two supervisors, eventually threatening, “I'm gonna blow this shit up!” She is booked later that day on terrorism charges.

**September 1, Fenton** - A group of swingers in a hotel room at the Stratford Inn kick out one of the participants who repeatedly complains the others don't match his unrealistic expectations of “attractiveness” and skinniness. He returns to collect his belongings and a fight erupts before police are called.

**September 15, Regionwide** - For the second straight year, the annual motorcycle “Ride of the Century” swamps police and takes over much of the region's highways. The thousands of riders stick together, performing stunts on highways and streets and brazenly running police roadblocks en masse.

**September 18, St. Louis City, Brentwood, & Creve Coeur** - On the first anniversary of Occupy Wall Street, 3 separate demonstrations against genetically-modified food crops occur throughout the region – one at Whole Foods Market in Brentwood, another at Monsanto's headquarters in Creve Coeur, and a last at the Millennium Hotel downtown.

**September 21, St. Louis City** - A foreclosed homeowner stands alongside dozens of people vowing to interfere with the



sheriff's eviction of her home on the 4600 block of Penrose St. The crowd's presence outside her home deters the sheriffs, who cancel that day's eviction. Four weeks later, sheriff's deputies and police return and wade through a stubborn crowd to enter the home and carry out the eviction.

**October 22, St. Louis City** - In the evening, a heavily-policed anti-police brutality march winds its way from Kiener Plaza through downtown streets.

**October 30, St. Louis City** - Hundreds of St. Louis University students and faculty march through the campus in a demonstration for the ouster of the vice president and president of the school, Lawrence Biondi. The long-standing discontent under Biondi's iron-fist approach finally boils to the surface after a proposal emerges to effectively end faculty tenure. The day before sees no-confidence votes by both the student and faculty associations. In the months to come, protesters hound Biondi at a Christmas dinner, picket a Board of Trustees meeting, march to his home, and disrupt a Billikens' basketball game, before suddenly in May, at his protested 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala, Biondi announces he will retire.

**November 12, St. Louis City** - Workers at the Hostess Plant on N. Broadway arrive at work to the sight of striking workers from a different Hostess plant in Columbus, IN. Instead of working, they join the picketers and effectively shut down production.

**November 21, University City** - Around 100 demonstrators, outraged at the continued Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip, march noisily up and down the Delmar Loop. In the outraged cyber world, Anonymous launches a campaign to take down pro-Israeli State websites. A St. Louis man, under the name "\_AnonymouSTL\_" later admits to stealing data and causing \$180,000 in damage to an Israeli group's computer systems.

**December 14, Webster Groves** - Public outcry causes a cafeteria worker at Hudson Elementary to be reinstated after she was fired days earlier for sneaking a needy schoolboy warm lunch for two months. Language barriers prevented the boy's mother from applying for the free lunch program. To protect the 4<sup>th</sup>-grader from bullying, the worker served him hot meals instead of the default cheese sandwich given to kids without lunch money. "I don't think any kid should be hungry," she says.

**December 30, St. Louis County** - Making the best of an unexpected layover, a man breaks into the closed Pasta House restaurant at Lambert Airport overnight and spends five hours hiding behind the bar consuming bottle after bottle of free booze.

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**30 January 1, Belleville (IL)** - Five "embarrassed" plainclothes police detec-

accept the barricades – an overall, pretty ideal situation.<sup>5</sup>

With a larger zone of conflict, police are forced to try and cordon off an even bigger area – perhaps beyond what they're materially or socially capable of maintaining.<sup>6</sup>

That was how the arguments went in support of barricading the street. And surprisingly, people agreed. And why shouldn't they, they're brilliant ideas which have proved successful around the world with people who have traditions of physically defending space – Native communities in Canada and New England, squatter communities in Europe, and peasants in South America. Perhaps as society fulfills less and less of its promises, ideas, tactics, and strategies thought too radical five or ten years ago will become good ol' fashion common sense.<sup>7</sup>

## THE PLAN

A rough plan formed. A sympathetic lawyer was going to stall the bank in court as long as possible.<sup>8</sup> At whatever point we thought a real eviction was imminent, we'd start a 24-hour presence at Annie's house and have barricade material and a phone tree at the ready for when the sheriff arrived. The size of the barricaded area would depend on the number of people present to defend it. If people didn't show up in time, we'd march around the neighborhood with banners and leaflets explaining what was happening and possibly block a major street nearby. If everything failed, we'd help Annie move back in as soon as possible.

## DEUS EX MACHINA AND ITS FALL OUT

As legal maneuvers ran out, a meeting was called for people to commit to specific times and barricade material they'd be able to provide. The meeting was forestalled by a chance event. A childhood friend had found out about Annie's situation, looked up what her house was being sold for (now only \$14,000, 20% the amount Annie owed the bank) and offered to buy it back.

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5. The world is a fucked-up place, and not just because a handful of people do fucked-up things, but also because when others try and stop them, some goodie-two-shoes calls the fucking cops. It's like, why can't people just stand by and do nothing instead?

6. How long or often will neighbors tolerate police road blockades? How bad do they look using such force to drive someone from their home? Are they willing to use so many materials, resources, and money for every eviction? Do they have that many?

7. SPOILER ALERT: Barricades still haven't reared their misshapen heads, but their acceptance is a step forward from years past, and the logic behind them is worth spreading to others interested in home defense.

8. In response to Annie refusing to leave, U.S. Bank hired Millsap and Singer, LLC, to "defend" them. In recent years, Millsap and Singer have made a name for themselves dealing with foreclosure cases. These individuals have chosen to use their creative energy to figure out the prettiest way to make the death machine look and sound.

For months they sent Annie letters threatening 'pay this fine or you're getting evicted.' Among their favorite fees is the "drive-by inspection," in which they claim to inspect your home by driving by it – if they even do that – and then mail you a bill for \$265. They've extorted thousands of dollars from Annie and others in this way. By the end of Annie's story, they had advised U.S. Bank to sue Annie for 8 months of "back rent" for the time she refused to leave her home.

Their offices are located at 612 Spirit Dr., St. Louis, MO, 63005. Phones: 636-489-0273, 636-537-0110, 816-421-2712, and 816-421-2712. Fax: 636-537-0067.

Through the shock of the announcement people tried to talk about where to go next. Other people had approached the group wanting to resist being foreclosed on. Sadly, instead of seeing the re-buying of the house for what it was (potentially humiliating and a defeat), people began brainstorming ways to raise money for other people to buy-back their homes. Others tried to figure out the best way to spin things to give good PR to their group or ideological current. But the most important lessons, of course, were hard to see and express in the moment. Overall, though, people felt good for Annie and felt resolved to keep fighting the other foreclosures.

It seems clear now that what made the group unique was its willingness to defend Annie's home physically, no matter what. And though there may be strong differences in ideas and tactics, pressure and threats can be delivered from many angles and work together. This strategy works as long as everyone knows that we need to approach those in power by threatening them, taking from them without asking, and knowing anything they "give" us is something we've wrested away from them.

We run the risk of repairing the image of *this* bank or getting *that* politician re-elected, or in some other fashion reenforcing their power, if we fail to articulate these points. Thus, anything that is done to stall or resolve the situation makes sense, as long as we always appear as though we're taking the upper hand, and there remains a very real threat of something like barricades behind them.

## YOUR HOME IS YOUR HOME, NO MATTER WHAT

Picture your home. What do you see? You see your bed and you feel the visceral sensation of resting there. Your home is where you eat, where you keep your favorite things – books you've read over and over, cherished letters, pictures of loved ones. It's where you've had some of your favorite sex and worst fights. You've painted and patched it, crafted it uniquely (consciously or not) so it's an extension of yourself, so it can be a refuge for friends – a place to celebrate and mourn. What does it mean to own a home? Only in the nightmare of private property would it have anything to do with a piece of paper with a name on it. Those of us defending Annie's house understood this. The degree to which we were willing to make it our point of refusal varied.<sup>9</sup>

If we've had a taste of what it means to stand our ground and look out for each other (and liked it!), perhaps the next step forward is a solidarity network. This could be a group comprised of people who keep society functioning from day-to-day, but still get stuck holding the short end of the stick. A group that friends, neighbors, family, and eventually strangers could call on to amplify their struggle. Whether that's resisting eviction, getting paid back-wages, telling a rapist to fuck off, tearing down anti-panhandling signs, etc.

No experts, no professionals. Just us.

Annie, may your home always be yours.

To the rest of us and Annie too, our strength rests in our willingness to remain unbowed to those that try and control us.

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9. Initially, some sympathized with Annie because of how long she'd been there or that she'd made an effort to pay and simply couldn't and was being driven away. At a meeting though, it was asked if the group could agree to help others fight eviction, regardless if it was someone just being behind on rent somewhere they hadn't lived very long. Once again, to our surprise and without hesitation, the group immediately agreed.

tives leave Denny's without paying after a worker tells them that their guns are making other diners uncomfortable and that guns are prohibited inside the restaurant.

**January 22, Creve Coeur & St. Louis City** - Police arrest 7 people, chained together, inside Arch Coal's corporate office while others demonstrate outside demanding the termination of the company's environmentally devastating mountaintop removal coal strip-mining operations in Appalachia. Three days later, police arrest 12 protestors trying to enter Peabody Coal's downtown headquarters as part of a larger demonstration against climate change and Peabody's mine on Navajo land in Arizona. A large banner reads: "StL stop subsidizing the climate crisis." Last May, a Peabody shareholder meeting downtown was plagued with internal protestor disruptions and a large demonstration outside.

**January 27, Troy (IL)** - Arsonists torch an excavator and backhoe at a road-widening construction site on Lebanon Rd. causing \$300,000 in damages.

**January 29, St. Louis City** - A server at Applebee's in south city posts to the internet a degrading no-tip receipt given to her by a co-worker. The receipt exposes Pastor Alois Bell's name and her message of "I give God 10%, why do you get 18?" Applebee's fires the server after the image goes viral. She responds by penning a scathing indictment of the tip-based service industry. In it, she says, "I am trying to stand up for all of us who work for just a few dollars an hour at places like Applebee's."

**February 12, Alton (IL)** - Someone throws a landscaping rock through the door of mayoral candidate Brant Walker's home while he is away at work.

**February 14, Columbia** - Two weeks of campus protests successfully block the University of Missouri's College of Education from hiring Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib psychiatrist and torturer, Larry James.

**February 20, Farmington** - Family and friends of Cal "Smoke" Hamblin rally against police brutality outside the St. Francois County Courthouse, a year after Farmington police and a bail bondsmen shot him 6 times in the back, killing him as he was fleeing.

**March 1, St. Louis City** - Dozens of squatters and sympathizers openly defy an order by big-time developer Paul McKee to vacate his buildings. They block off the dead-end north city street where they live and spend the day handing out leaflets to passing cars, playing games, and partying. Anti-McKee graffiti peppers the neighborhood. Four weeks later, a dozen city residents heckle McKee as he tries to speak at a city housing forum.

**April 8, St. Jacob (IL)** - Residents receive anonymous mail-outs depicting this small town's mayor and his family in crosshairs with the words "Let's pull the trigger... and rid our community of Ray Muniz and his



Family of Goones!" The flyer reveals the mayor is a "bully and supervises village workers with threats and intimidation."

**April 8, St. Louis City** - Two dozen cab drivers demonstrate outside City Hall after the arrest of a fellow cabbie at the airport the day before for wearing religious clothing while picking up a fare. In addition to this, protestors decry the Taxicab Commission's continued unchecked authority and arbitrary fees and fines.

**April 10, Regionwide** - Frustrated Jefferson County authorities report having to shut down their ineffective checkpoints mere minutes after setting them up due to drastic decreases in traffic as word spreads via Facebook and Twitter. St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Alton, and St. Charles authorities report similar frustrations.

**April 29, St. Louis City** - Thousands of retired coal miners and sympathizers march through the streets of downtown before police arrest 16 in a highly-orchestrated fashion outside Peabody's world headquarters. This is the fifth in a series of similar demonstrations this year organized by the United Mine Workers and attended by miners from throughout the country against the denial of health care benefits to unionized retirees.

**May 9, Regionwide** - Dozens of fast food workers from around the city walk out of work to join large numbers of sympathetic picketers outside. This is the second, and final day of these rolling lightning "strikes" that hit 30 area restaurants including a McDonald's in Ferguson, a Hardee's, Jimmy John's, and Church's Chicken in the City, and a Wendy's in Rock Hill.

**May 22, St. Louis City** - Infuriated family and friends of Cary Ball, Jr. picket outside downtown police headquarters. Police shot Ball 25 times after he surrendered his gun on April 24 near the Edward Jones Dome.

**May 30, St. Louis City** - Sweet-toothed thieves raid an ice cream truck company lot, breaking windows on 6 fleet vans, and making off with hundreds of dollars in ice cream and popsicles on this hot spring night.

**May 31, St. Louis City** - After a year of weekly protests, Washington Univ. School of Medicine announces the closure of part of its archaic 'Cat Lab' where outside medical professionals were trained how to intubate babies by stuffing tubes down the throats of live cats.

**June 4, St. Louis City** - Grand Center Arts Academy students and their parents line the streets near the Fox Theater protesting the replacement of their principal with Clayton High School's "stalker" ex-principal who had spied on students there with a fake Facebook account.

**June 14, St. Louis City** - The city evicts Camp Plum. At the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Plum Streets, this year-old, self-organized homeless camp of tents and makeshift structures had grown to be home to a few dozen determined residents.

## A FINAL NOTE: THIS SHIT IS DAUNTING, and REFUSAL

1.

Foreclosure exists because we live in a world where our ability to take care of ourselves has been stripped from us. Abundance exists all around us, but we're denied it and reduced to living moment to moment – just trying to stay afloat in a sea of survival.<sup>10</sup> Even if you want to live independently – providing for yourself and your friends (Annie herself offered a supporter, who had an uncertain living situation, a room in her house if they should ever need it)– it's been made impossible; Annie's 20-year residency is case-in-point.

2.

Banks, through the logic of property, have flipped reality on its head. Banks have made themselves seem like they're helping to provide a human necessity, when in reality they exploit this need (and simultaneously make people less self-sufficient). They go even further by making it seem as though Annie is in the wrong. That by being unable or refusing to pay them money she's taken advantage of a communal resource – not doing her part to keep society afloat.

3.

Foreclosures are a natural result of being forced to play this sick game – a game which many of us are refusing to play any longer. In opposing foreclosures we need to remain steadfast in our critique of property, banks, money, etc. At the same time we realize that capitalism will likely not be destroyed tomorrow (though it is possible and we do want it). In this light, how do we find a balance without being entirely unpractical or spineless?

4.

Annie stayed in her house as long as she did because she felt some safety in our offer to help. If nothing else, emboldening her, ourselves, and others resisting foreclosure is a victory in itself.

5.

The more we stress these bottom lines<sup>11</sup> (one, your home is your home no matter what, and two, we need to look out for each other because it's the politicians, banks, and police who've gotten us into this mess), the more powerful our home defense becomes. Any step away from this (i.e., getting bogged down in the bureaucratic details of foreclosures or trying to get people with societal power – politicians, union reps, clergy, media, police – to endorse us) is a shot in the foot. It becomes defeat if we walk away thinking banks or people better off than us just need to cut us a break – or if we create a public façade with the same message. Annie's story inspires and can help us build momentum only if we see *ourselves* as the protagonists. And in *our* story we refused to budge to power, we resolved to help each other out!

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10. The thousands of abandoned properties around St. Louis alone should make this point clear.

11. By insisting that foreclosures, evictions (not simply certain kinds of them), and the system that produces them are what we are against, we were able to open up other possibilities. And by dragging out the eviction process, further opportunities arose. If Annie had decided to tell the bank to fuck off and that she would never buy back her own home (perhaps more principled), we would have continued supporting her, but no one deserves to live in that sort of uncertainty.





## Advance Praise for *War on Misery* #4

"[*War on Misery*] is graffiti that some fervent knucklehead has scrawled."  
-*Town & Style Magazine*

"Disappointing. And we think it's counterproductive to any message that any group is trying to deliver."  
-*St. Louis Police Chief Sam Dotson*

"A very, very few bad apples... Knuckleheads... trying to disrupt the fun and enjoyment that people have here."  
-*St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay*

"What it boils down to it this. Those kids don't know what they are talking about. They write up some clever signs like "Fuck You" and yell Nazi and think they sound intelligent. You don't. You're the type of trash the world needs to get rid of... One more thing: Anarchy is the lamest philosophical idea anyone has ever come up with, if you can even call it that. It would never work, everyone knows that. And anyway if they are anarchists why should they care about what we think anyway since they are all into having no rules and blah blah blah? Cuz they're losers who REALLY need to get a life and go join the Army. Maybe then they'll get shipped to Iraq and step on a landmine. Ha, that'd be funny. See ya!"  
-*St. Louis Council of Conservative Citizens*

"We got [the streets] all cleaned, and then these knuckleheads come and do this."  
-*St. Louis Police Sgt. Ron Hasty*

"[*War on Misery*] makes me sick. It literally makes me sick."  
-*Jan Seifert, retired millionaire St. Louis healthcare executive*

"The sad reality is there were likely a number of adults who participated or were spectators. They're just showing their kids 'this is the way we have fun.'"  
-*Alton Police Chief David Hayes*

"It reflects a portion of every society that is not happy unless they can pull everything down in the gutter in which they reside."  
-*Kirkwood Police Chief Jack Plummer*

"I'm going, 'this looks terrible!'... I look at it as trash. It's garbage. It needs to be cleaned up."  
-*Nick Ridenour, St. Louis Wrestling Hall of Fame*

"Of course we do believe in the devil, ha! We do believe in an evil spirit that influences people, and certainly that has something to do with it."  
-*Belleville Pastor George Szabolcsi*

"Senseless and destructive... It's as if an unwritten contract has been broken."  
-*Bill McClellan, St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

