

“Those in power have made it so we have to pay simply to exist on the planet. We have to pay for a place to sleep, and we have to pay for food. If we don't, people with guns will come and force us to pay. That's violent.”

- Derrick Jensen  
(radical environmentalist  
and author)



# Act/React



a collection of writings



by grand rapids anarchists

## Disclaimer:

The advice, opinions and views discussed in this publication are that of the author(s), who, because of non-freedom of speech, choose to stay anonymous. Act/React is not responsible for any illegal actions or thoughts advocated by the author(s).

All articles are for informational purposes only, and do not reflect the opinions of all grand rapids anarchists. Obviously, we wouldn't encourage people to create any real change by directly impacting their lives and their world.

- Act/React organization committee

so, you think you're an anarchist?  
or you've just got something to say?



and we'll publish it in the next issue.

we do not share authorship information.

there is not a word limit.

you do not have to be an anarchist to write for act/react,

but there is a running theme of radical politics.

submissions for june are due by the 25th of may.

all topics are welcome, as are fiction and poetry.

# Why ACT/REACT?

In a world where decisions that affect millions are made by less than a thousand of the most privileged of citizens, very few actions matter. You can write all day about what kind of society you'd like to see and people could read it, but nothing will come of it. You can approach a boss or CEO and ask them to pay you more, but nothing will come of it. Real change arises from people who take matters into their own hands. Whether its stealing the food you and your family need to eat or slashing the tires of the bosses car so they won't be there to tell you to work feverishly from open to close, action must be taken and it's up to the actor to change the lives of themselves and the people around them.

Consider this zine a call to action. Resist workplace bullying. Resist police repression. Resist government intervention. Resist the economic and social conditions that lead you to believe you aren't worth it. Because you are, and it's about damn time you started acting like it.

*"But hey! What about the law?"*

With every revolutionary act there is a reactionary act waiting to happen. The key is to react, whatever that may mean. As for the law, they still haven't caught the brick throwers, have they?

## Write/Rewrite: *why these words exist and why they're in your hands*

It's a scary time for Grand Rapids anarchists. With recent acts of property destruction, and it's alleged "anarchist" culprits, both the mainstream media and GRPD are denouncing, following, suspecting, and surveilling local radical-left folks. Even within the radical community, people are pointing fingers and speaking in hushed tones about their views. This culture of paranoia makes it extremely unnerving to speak out against things like gentrification and police repression, let alone show support of the "urban terrorist". But behind closed doors, under the cloak of whispering voices, we still discuss these things with one another. Everyday resistance is a basic function for us, whether it's a vocal anti-capitalist sentiment, or simply flipping off a cop or two, we are scared, and it's time for that to end.

The notion of radicalism comes from a literal term "radical", which means, "root". Politically, my interpretation of this is "to get to the root problem of". Often in daily conversation with people who don't identify as 'radical', my politics are seen as resentful, overwhelming, and most notably, utopian. While these things may be true, it can be hard to explain to the mainstream public why I am against almost everything. Capitalism means more than an economic system. It roots in years of imperialism, white supremacy, male-domination, and slavery. Radicalism seeks to not just to adjust the way we use a machine, but to replace the machine itself.

The process of change is an ugly one. The state and the elite have set strict guidelines for this process. Change can only happen within the narrow confines of the law and where the economy provides necessary. These limitations do not supplement change, they only enforce preexisting conditions until the

elite see use in it. Radicals exist outside these boundaries. We seek to change the system directly, at its root, with a variety of tactics. Where there are those against low-wages, we are against capitalism. Where there are those against police brutality, we are against authority. Where people protest with signs and petitions, we sneak in during the dead of night and rewrite the laws ourselves.

What channels carry the message of radical-anarchists? Certainly not the corporate-owned media, who mediate the connection between you and the spaces around you! Of course you're not going to hear any anti-capitalist opinion on a capitalist-owned website or television show. When the rule of law sets aside a sector of society for "independents" and "free speech", it does so with caution. What you say with this freedom does have consequences. Although it's not inherently illegal to write/say things about the rise of the working/lower classes, it does not help when trying to find work. When you yell about police repression and what police are doing to our families and neighbors, you've done nothing wrong, but that won't stop the cops from following you home and tapping your phone. So where does the message penetrate and how did it get to you?

### *Independent Media vs.. Independent Publication*

During the 7 a.m. newscast, while Wood TV 8 is covering the latest murder case, thousands watch in utter awe. These thousands of people, or rather, 'viewers', are one way or another, a form of profit for Wood 8. Their message, political or not, is edited, screened and altered to gain more viewers, more ratings, and ultimately, more profit. The mediation between the public and the news is governed by a profit motive. No wonder they show no sympathy for the brick-throwers!

On the other hand, there is independent media. Independent media is largely the mode of communicating ideas that may not be reflected in mainstream politics, and more specifically, may not be profitable to the source at all. This kind of media is governed by the community, for the community. The expressed ideas of independent media are purported to be a

OIL  
SOILS SOILS  
FOULS WATERS.  
CLIMATES BROIL.  
SEE THEM BLEED HER.  
• MOTHER EARTH.  
FROM ALL HER PORES.  
OIL POURS.  
WARS WAR OILS WHORES  
EMPIRES PIRATES SETTLE  
SCORES FOR THE RICH.  
DAMN THE POOR  
TO SOILED SOILS  
FOUL WATERS  
RISING  
BROILING DROWNING  
OIL.

ing that as an insult to those workers. It just seems to me that THAT fight wasn't mine; it was the unions. Why fight for a bureaucratic organization that doesn't give two damns about me? Working class people may join unions if they have the chance, but with the expansion of the service industry, the decline of manufacturing, and the obvious level of incompetence that the unions exhibit in their failed attempts to bring any real range to society, unions are not likely to be something people are excited about.

These protests and rallies are tactics of the Left. As anarchists, we need to step it up and open up an offensive front against austerity, inspiring and enabling ordinary folks to fight for their own lives, and take control of the struggle away from the unions. How do we do that? I don't know. I'm open to ideas and suggestions. But taking cues from the Left isn't going to get us anywhere.

direct reflection of the people it represents: working class, student, and affluent populations. It's only motivation is releasing the people's voice, right?

Wrong.

When an 'independent' outlet like The Rapiidian challenges ideas of mainstream culture, it is really only dissecting an evil with the tools of another. While there may not be a profit-motive, there is a need to be friendly with those who have one. The Rapiidian could not survive without grants from the government, support of local businesses, and the positive affirmation of thousands of 'readers'. While this may be good news to people with alternative messages, it is not for radicals. Were The Rapiidian to publish an article supporting the "Urban Terrorist", they would lose all sources of support. This is not democracy. Voices heard from channels like this are not the voice of the people. If someone without a degree in writing, and without the time to brainstorm ideas for a solid, community-positive essay wanted to say something they felt was important, independent media would turn its back.

Such independent sources like The Rapiidian (who's existence is owed to gentrification) can't be bothered to publish an essay by an unemployed woman of color raising 3 kids alone about how she was forced to move out of 2 different houses and back to her parents house because she couldn't afford the raised rent and couldn't find a job in a dominantly white service sector.

However, some media is not all bad. While 'independent media' may be a misleading term for what it's used for, 'independent publication' is not. Independent publications arise out of the necessity felt by the author(s). Instead of asking for their story to be published, the author publishes it their self. This inherit freedom is what makes this zine, and all other publications like it, radically important to democratic expression. For a voice to be heard, no voice should be interrupting it, regardless of how popular or wealthy the interrupting voice is.

But, in a political situation, even independent publications may have to be silenced for the benefit of those in power. That interrupting voice is why this zine will not be circulating

for very long. Anarchist voices are not given the chance to speak out while the police are hunting them down. Our words carry to you by our efforts, but for the sake of repression, we choose to remain anonymous. While you may not have a face to look at while you read this, please know that we are out there. We are everywhere, and we have quite a lot of things to say. And even more to do.

unions doing more to fight against austerity? Just as quickly as I ask it I see the answer pretty easily- because the unions are bureaucracies. They are slow, centralized, and useless in anything besides maintaining their own existence. The fact that Walker wants to get rid of collective bargaining (the union's primary function), is why we're seeing these protests. The unions couldn't care less about the austerity measures beyond that; their role is to mediate between capital and labor.

As someone who works and is not in a union, it's unfortunate to see that the only visible "anarchist" resistance to these measures was the IWW preparing for, and calling for a general strike. Don't get me wrong, I'd love a general strike, and I'm generally supportive of the IWW. When I first saw the poster of the Wobbly black cat with the words "general strike" I got more excited about the prospects of resistance in the Midwest than I have in a while. But the more I got to thinking about it, the less it appealed to me. And now I think that's why the whispers fizzled out completely. The general strike that was being talked about was a UNION general strike. I can't walk out of the job with assurances that I'll be able to come back without being fired. And I need my job. I'm sure my sentiments were felt by anyone else who saw that poster.

Here in Michigan it looks like the only tactics that spread from Wisconsin are the ones that didn't work: protesting at the Capitol, and protesting republican politicians known for their anti-union policies. There was a rather decent sized protest against Michigan Governor, Rick Snyder, during one of his visits to Grand Rapids. According to GRIID, "there were people representing the teachers unions, firefighters, environmental groups, UAW, SEIU, government employees, the Kent-Ionia Labor Council, students and faculty from GVSU and the IWW."

I didn't go. The reason why I didn't go is because I had to work. That's probably why nobody but college students and unionized workers went. They either had better things to do, or they weren't going to risk their livelihood so an already privileged class of workers- skilled unionized public sector workers- can continue to possess that privilege. I'm not say-

# Thoughts on unions, labor uprisings, and the response to austerity:

On February 14 of this year, a series of protests began in Madison, Wisconsin against the proposed budget cuts and weakening collective bargaining rights for public sector unions. This was one more step in the continuing process of austerity being imposed on the poor and working class since the financial crisis of 2008. At the same time, unemployment and foreclosures have been on the rise while corporate profits and bonuses have been going through the roof.

What is different about the Wisconsin austerity; what prompted such a large response in the form of protests, is that it is an attack on a somewhat organized body- the unions. Austerity has been going on for 3 years. In terms of militant organized resistance, some folks have been fighting back: the Longshoreman's solidarity strike along the Atlantic coast, the Republic Windows and Doors occupation in Chicago; but none have been as resource intensive and politically powerful as the unions.

What have they been doing to fight back? Well, so far they've been staging protests, and there were whispers of a general strike for May 1st. That's really it so far. Ordinary people, however, were fighting back more promisingly. High school students were walking out of classes and marching around town. University buildings were being occupied by students and staff. Even Capitol Hill and other government facilities were briefly occupied by working class people. They took it a step further than the unions and acted to disrupt the norm. So the question that comes to mind for me is: why aren't the

## What does gentrification look like?

It begins in an urban neighborhood comprised mainly of people of color and working class folks, where rent is relatively affordable and property values and taxes are low. The people there are demonized- the neighborhoods often referred to as "bad" neighborhoods, thereby justifying increased police presence. Cheap rent makes the neighborhood appealing to college students and artsy types. Students and young adults who grew up in middle-class families begin to migrate to these neighborhoods.

More often than not, the new residents are white. The neo-colonialist practices of these new residents are marked by the inherently white supremacist and classist nature of gentrification. That is to say, when working class neighborhoods of color are met with an influx of middle-class white folks, race and class become more clearly delineated. It is also a direct result of white privilege that the new residents do not take into consideration how their presence in a particular neighborhood will eventually displace the original residents.

Property is also cheap, making it a prime target for developers and new entrepreneurs in the area. Restaurants and coffee shops begin to pop up under the guise of "urban renewal." Of course, these businesses strive for a high-paying (read: middle- and upper- class) clientele. Thus, their prices reflect this and consequently long-standing residents are not only often financially unable to patron these businesses, they are also unwelcome. These new businesses market themselves as "hip", "fresh", and "exotic" to further attract people from more affluent areas. Middle-class families move to newly la-

beled “up and coming” neighborhoods.

Soon, rent and property taxes increase. Police patrols in the area continue to rise, so as to protect the property of new landholders while putting pressure on the poorer residents. Through the criminalization of poverty and racial profiling, the members of the pre-gentrification community are routinely targeted and harassed by the police. Because often times these communities are non-white, their run-ins with the racist judicial system result in harsher treatment and sentencing. It is such that the process of gentrification strengthens the prison industrial complex and relies on institutionalized white supremacy. Non-white, undocumented populations are further affected by this because the “whitening” of a neighborhood makes non-citizens easier targets for law enforcement officials. Any interactions with the police could potentially result in their deportation. Essentially, long-time residents must either live under a constant state of occupation, or be displaced from their homes.

This is how gentrification takes shape; seemingly overnight. It is the newest front of neocolonialism in the United States; a war waged on the poor and people of color. People are losing their communities, their homes, and their lives. It’s not enough to just talk about gentrification. Now that we know what gentrification looks like, we must stop it. The violence of gentrification necessitates action. So what do we do now? Hand out fliers? Protest on the corner? Write zines and manifestos? Paint and wheatpaste on buildings? Smash windows? Burn it down? Maybe it all needs to get done. Maybe there is nothing we can do. At the very least, take a look at where you live, the businesses you frequent, and examine your role in the process of gentrification. If you come to the conclusion that you need to attack the problem more directly, good luck.

Once the police realized we were not going to answer their questions, let them in our house, or implicate anyone, they left. There was nothing else they could do. In an effort to speak out against police repression and create a culture of resistance, we began contacting other folks in the community to tell them about what happened. We wanted to make it clear that we will not be intimidated and we will not cooperate with the police. It is times like these when it is imperative that folks act cohesively to protect ourselves, our friends, and our communities from the cops.



resistance, the police effectively silenced any discussion of the events surrounding the investigation. Not only were these kids talking to the cops, but some of them even went so far as to make assumptions about who might be involved. Pressuring individuals to cast suspicion upon other folks was a tactically divisive move by the police and our “friends” just let it happen. Divide and conquer.

The folks at my house had already discussed the possibility of getting harassed by the police, so we already knew how it was going to go down. First, we don’t ever talk to cops. EVER. Even saying something as simple as, “I don’t know anyone who talks about gentrification” is problematic. All they have to do is go on Facebook, find one of your “friends” who posted the GR Press article about anti-gentrification vandalism, and you just lied to the police. That’s a felony. Not to mention that even casual conversation with cops has the potential to inadvertently implicate people, as well as making it more difficult for those of us who don’t comply with the police. If other innocent folks answer their questions and we don’t, it must be because we have something to hide, right? And of course they would want to see if we would give up additional names of people they could fuck with. But we had already established that we were not about to engage in finger-pointing or gossip regarding any illegal actions. That’s just fucked up. We’re not fucking cops and we’re not about to police our community.

Besides refusing to answer any questions, we never let the cops into our house (unless they have a search warrant, complete with the correct date, address, and judge’s signature). Doing so can be argued as a legal equivalent to consenting to a search, and even if they won’t find anything incriminating, again, it sets a bad precedent. Also, you never know what lines the cops will draw- the can of red spray paint you used to touch-up the kitchen chair and that old IWW flyer your friend gave you three years ago are suddenly “evidence” that you are involved in graffiti and down with “social war.” People have been convicted with less. The police do not have a right to invade our homes, so why concede more power to them?

## “BANG BANG BANG”

There are six of them. Not in blues, but they are definitely cops. Well, detectives and feds. But they’re all on the same team. I step outside and close the door behind me.

*Can we come in and talk to you?*

*Do you have a warrant?*

*We just want to ask you a few questions.*

*You can’t come in without a warrant.*

They are all around me. I know they are trying to intimidate me so I make a conscious effort to look them in the eye and keep my voice even.

*Where are the other people who live here?*

*I’m not going to answer any questions without a lawyer.  
Do you want to call your lawyer?*

*Not unless I’m being arrested.*

*We just want to ask you a few questions about where you and your roommates were at certain times.*

*The only thing I’m legally obligated to tell you is my name, birth date, and address.*

They take down my personal information.

*Why don't you want to answer any questions? You got something to hide?*

*I don't even know why you're here.*

*You know why we're here.*

*No I don't.*

*You've heard about what has been going on in the neighborhood?*

*We're not here by accident. A lot of people have pointed their fingers at this house. I'm with the ATF and we take burning down buildings very seriously.*

I laugh. Of course burning down buildings is serious. Is there anyone who doesn't think that?

*Other people let us inside and answered questions.*

*Well I know my rights.*

*So did they, but they didn't have anything to hide.*

One of the detectives steps in close. Good cop routine?

*Look, why don't we just step over here and have a private conversation? Just talk for a bit?*

*I'm not going to answer any questions.*

*We're using up a lot of resources being here. If you just tell us where you were and what you were doing we can cross you off the list. Then we can get to finding who is responsible for this. We just want to be able to rule you out.*

*I understand where you're coming from, but I'm still not answering any questions.*

He steps back. Another cop speaks up.

*Can you just tell us if there is someone that you think might be involved?*

*No. I'm not answering any questions.*

*The reward is up to \$20,000. Anyone who could possibly- I'm not going to answer any questions.*

One of the feds looks particularly agitated.

*This is just the "meet and greet." We'll be back. We can get investigative subpoenas and you will have to answer questions and if you lie, you will be charged with felony perjury.*

*I'll deal with it if it comes to that.*

*Oh, it will come to that.*

That was Thursday morning, April 21. Nearly two months after the arson in question, and several months after the spree of anti-gentrification vandalism the police were saying it was connected to.

The cops who came to our house simultaneously accused us of being involved with recent vandalism, while saying they just wanted to "cross us off the list." Clearly this is still some half-assed fishing expedition, and had they had any evidence any of us were involved, they would arrest us. However, two months after the fact and they're still asking us who did it.

By this point, we had heard of a lot of folks who had been visited by, or stopped by the police. Anyone who looked "alternative," like a punk, or anarchist was targeted for questioning. They had been to a couple other houses several times. But no one wanted to talk about it within the punk community. This was particularly frustrating because instead growing police repression in our community serving as a catalyst for