

# Act/React

a collection of writings  
by grand rapids  
anarchists

issue #2 June 2011



“fear is inevitable,  
I have to accept  
that, but I cannot  
allow it to  
paralyze me.”

- Isabel Allende (non-partisan chilean novelist)



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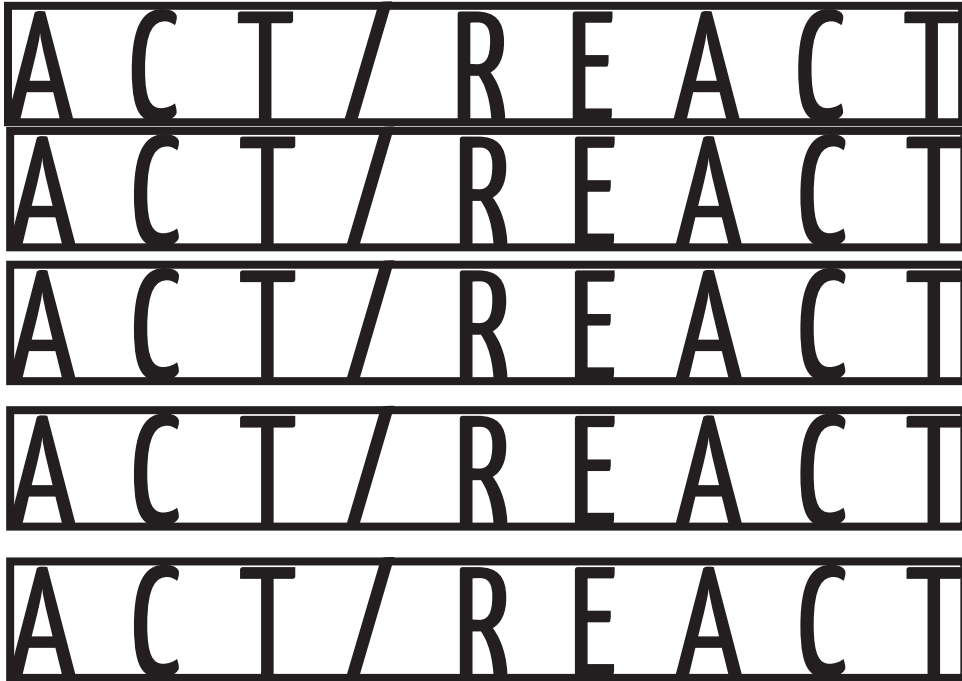
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## disclaimer:

Act/React and it's facilitators are not responsible for the ideas or opinions expressed within it's pages, nor does it reflect the views of every anarchist in Grand Rapids.

# A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

- send submissions, feedback, questions, etc. to  
**actreactgr@gmail.com.**
- all topics welcome, as well as art, fiction, poetry, recipes, how-to's, stories, call(s)-to-action, skillshares, project proposals, and anything else you think needs to be in here!
- submissions are due by the 25th of june, and are ready for distribution the 1st of july.
- send files as .rtf (rich text format) or .jpg (JPEG).
- we do not share authorship information
- there is no word limit
- no political affiliation, but this is an anarcho-centric publication. if you're article calls for blatant oppression, it will not be printed (we will not print facist writings, political office campaigning articles, or bullshit like that)
- if youre interested in editing, include email address, nickname, and amount of articles you want to proofread in an email or submission.
- if youre interested in designing, include email address, nickname, and either .indd files (we use cs3) or design ideas in an email or submission.
- obviously, email is not the most secure way of sharing information, so please keep this in mind while you are submitting/editing articles.



act/react is back with issue two! we are excited that even more people were able to contribute this time around. the purpose of this zine has been, and continues to be, to allow rad folks to write anonomously about whatever is important to them. certainly we don't all agree, and that's fine, but at least we can create some dialogue.

we also want to stress that this is not "our" zine- as in, the editors do not dictate what is included in the zine. we are merely facilitators of the project. if you send it in, it will be printed. if there is something you feel should have been written about in the zine that wasn't, then write it. this zine is a collaborative effort and is the creation of any anarchist/anti-authoritarian folk who choose to be involved.



**Imagine waking up  
in a hospital gown  
in a strange room.**

You have no idea what day it is, or where you are, or how you got there. The smell of urine fills the room. You're sent to see a medical doctor. This doctor, someone you've never met before, tells you after a 15-minute consultation, that you have bipolar disorder.

This is what happened to me on my 24th birthday. I was put on several meds, including a controlled substance and an anti-psychotic. These meds ruined my life. The side effects were awful and they destroyed several relationships.

The mental health industry is just that, an industry. Hospitals have beds to fill. Doctors have too many patients to spend more than 10 minutes a day with each one. Meds are given out like candy – and this can have serious consequences. Like prison, like school, the mental hospital is just a way to subdue the masses. In my experience, most patients are suffering from more than their mental illness – they've had struggles with abuse, homelessness, drugs, etc. But the industry puts a single label on them, then they're given meds that fit the label. Of course, no single person reacts the same way to a particular med and it can be a

long, grueling road to discover the right cocktail. Not taking meds is rarely considered an option.

The rest of the time is spent in a very small space, with other folks who are struggling. I had a chair thrown at me by a male patient, and I witnessed a female patient so desperate she punched a wall until her hand was swollen. Every day we would get about 10 minutes to go outside, in a small courtyard with a high fence. Otherwise, our days were filled with meaningless activities, like coloring.

There needs to be better options out there. Within radical communities we should build networks of support so that folks can learn to manage their “illnesses” without being locked up for weeks at a time. There should be more information about herbal supplements, and less emphasis on drugs. There needs to be an alternative to becoming just another statistic in the mental health industry.

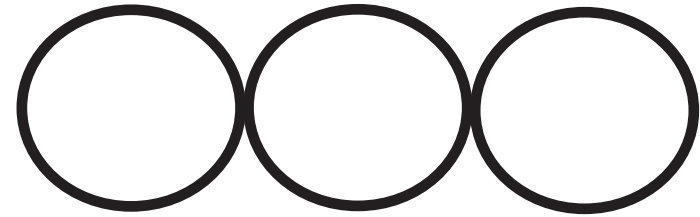


In my experience, most patients are suffering from more than their mental illness – they’ve had struggles with abuse, homelessness, drugs, etc.



But the industry puts a single label on them, then they’re given meds that fit the label.

So Not Vegan. (Except The Shitting Your Pants Part.)



It’s Labor Day,  
My Grandpa just ate SEVEN fucking hotdogs.  
Labor Day...  
And My Grandpa just ate SEVEN...Fucking...hotdogs.  
And he shit...shit...shit his pants.

He is always fucking shitting his pants.

But I will, **never**, talk to you again.

this poem is dedicated to the deceased: John Wilkes Booth

she had gotten breast implants a week earlier. I was disgusted and angry. Fucking sellout. How could she give in like that, with all that she knows? In retrospect I can see that we're not that different. Sure, I don't shop at H & M, or pay money to alter the insecurities I have about my body. But I also have yet to reconcile what I know with the way I feel, and the way I react to how I feel. Like many anarchist struggling with these problems, I've learned how to be discreet about the love-hate relationship I have with my body.

When I started writing this, I had no intention whatsoever of letting it be printed. how fucking embarrassing. I'm supposed to have my shit together. Then I got to thinking that I've known a lot of folks in the radical community who have struggled with body image issues. For the most part, we don't talk about it. I think that has a lot to do with the sense that because we are radical folks, and thus have already rejected most mainstream standards, it would make seem that we would be impervious to all of the "ideal body" bullshit we are inundated with. Obviously this is not the case. We are no more immune to it than we are immune to the many other toxic aspects of the culture we have been socialized in. And like all that other shit, we have to create spaces in which to talk about it.

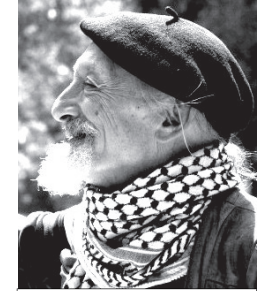


"I know they want us preoccupied with feeling like shit about ourselves."

## *A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR JOHN ROSS.*

*HELL NO.*

*SPEAK UP.  
YELL OUT.  
SHOUT OVER.  
PROCLAIM.  
DEMAND.  
INSIST.  
MAKE SOME KIND OF/ANY KIND OF  
NOISE.*



3/11/1938 – 1/17/ 2011

*MAKE IT LOUD.*

*BLAST JOHN'S WORDS OF REVOLUTION  
WITH A BULLHORN.  
WRITE THEM BIG IN BLACK INK.*

*TYPE THEM BOLD ON YOUR KEYBOARD.*

*SPRAY THEM ON CITY WALLS IN BLOOD-RED PAINT.  
ROCK'EM ON THE FUCKIN' MIC.*

*LIVE THEM LOUDLY  
IN YOUR EVERY DAY.  
PUSH, KEEP PUSHING.  
STAND, KEEP STANDING.  
RESIST, KEEP RESISTING.  
KEEP HIS DREAM ALIVE.  
WITH EVERY DREAM YOU DREAM,*

*DREAM OF REVOLUTION.  
DREAM THAT THIS NIGHTMARE OF A WORLD  
WAKES UP,  
RUBS ITS FORMERLY-BLINDED EYES  
AND SEES TO CELEBRATE ALL  
LIFE AND  
ONE LIFE,  
THE LIFE  
OF JOHN ROSS.*



## Caught Yellow Handed



It all started with that yellow marker. I hate that fuckin color and the marker itself didn't write well, but it fit so nicely in my pocket as I walked out of the store with one more tool for my obsession for writing on shit. We all got our vices.

The store front was already bombed - I mean stickers everywhere, tags from people who no longer were around, and none of it even looked buffed. You would think it'd be an easy in and out.

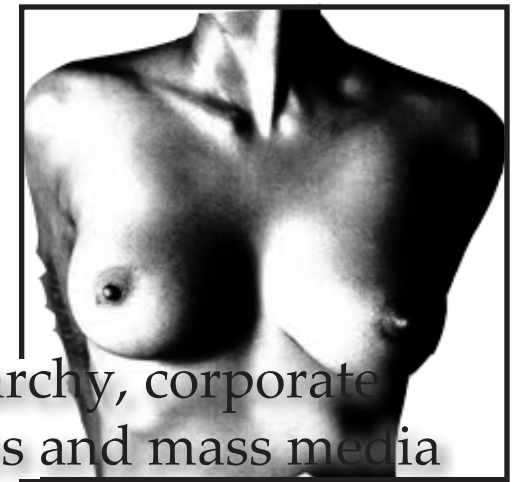
So I had a few beers. I know, rule number one "don't go out bombing while drinking" already out the window. A toy move. But by that time I was already cocky and could give a shit about anyone seeing me. It was a dead street, especially at midnight.

Kneeling down in the doorway, making my mark, taking my time. I had already gotten the moniker down but decided to write out a nice, witty message of something that I can no longer remember/forgot. Suddenly it got bright.

How the fuck do they have lights that bright? I couldn't see shit, looking directly in front of the cop's flashlight. At this point I'm fucked. All the shit I've read about "my rights" is forgotten as I'm cornered between a wall and a cop. Cuffs go on. In the back of the car. Phone vibrates in my pocket. I know who it is.

I hope she bales me out. She knows I've been gone too long and you can see the cops from the party we were at a few minutes before. Put two and two together! Don't go home and pass out!

Eventually I made it out after spending a few hours in the cell with some drunks waiting for their phone call that will never



## I know how patriarchy, corporate marketing schemes and mass media

have resulted in unrealistic beauty standards and poor body image, especially for female-assigned folk. I know it's all bullshit. And yet I fall into the same fucking trap every goddamn day. I go back and forth- wrestling with body image versus every rational pro-body ideal that, at least in theory, I have.

I've pretty much run the gamut in body loathing. On any given day I've avoided going swimming, worn a sweatshirt in 70 degree weather, plucked the hairs from my face, skipped meals, worn pants to cover my legs, made myself throw up after eating, cut myself; pretty much I've managed to quietly teeter on the line of near-constant insecurity. I hate myself for doing that shit. but if I didn't, I would have felt ashamed.

I know what they want. I know they want us preoccupied with feeling like shit about ourselves- buying their products and spending all of our time using them. capitalism and patriarchy win again.

Corporations intentionally market products by getting us to hate our bodies. Freckles, pale skin, dark skin, acne, body hair; they tell us it's disgusting. But don't worry- there's a cream for that. Bleach your teeth and hair, paint your face and nails, enlarge your breasts and your butt, slim down your abdomen and thighs; the list goes on. they've got pills too. Pills for thicker fingernails, oily skin, weight loss, and hair growth, and of course there's always cosmetic surgery.

A couple of months ago, I ran into an old friend I hadn't spoken with in over a year. She had shed her radical politics, and along with them, many of her radical friends. She informed that

(in a weak anarchist community, can you really expect people to respond appropriately to repression?). If people don't "know their rights" and talk to the police, that's because we have failed. We can talk about building a culture of resistance, but it's pretty hard to do that after the fact – so we've got a long way to go. Anarchists have largely failed to create the necessary ground work to sustain an ongoing conflict and/or respond to a prolonged period of repression. We lack infrastructure in many ways: we don't have legal collectives, for the most part we don't have our own publications, we don't have visibility (ex: no posters on the walls), we don't have our own spaces, we don't have a nurturing anarchist community (or maybe even a community of any kind), we don't have functioning examples of anarchism in practice/action, etc. The ramifications of this have been painfully obvious, whether it is people letting the police into their homes, "anarchists" appearing on the media to denounce other anarchists/actions, and or people speculating about who is responsible.

Perhaps we should take this time to reflect and ask questions of ourselves. What are our goals as anarchists? What are our needs? How do we realize them? What is our capacity? What are the struggles in Grand Rapids and what are the opportunities? What needs to be attacked and what needs to be built? All of them are equally important, inter-twined, and can't be separated. More questions could and should be asked.



Just as our masks need to be donned; our arms need to be linked. Where seeds are planted; this community will begin to grow. When the bricks are flying; it will be understood. And when the cops come a-knocking; we won't have to worry.

come. From this point on I'm in the "system" and I quickly start to realize how fucked up it all is. Designed to keep the poor people down in a labyrinth of laws and fines that are impossible to fight.

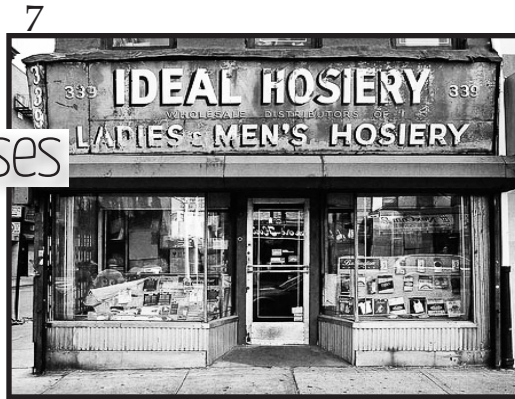
Me - I got lucky. A slap on the wrist, a punch to my wallet. Judges hate graffiti and it's a waste of their time anyway. I stopped for a long time. Actually threw everything graffiti related away, swore it off and disowned the whole culture that I rapidly became obsessed with.

But it creeps back, it always does. Because the feeling of making that line on that street post feels so fucking good. It's a high. And once you get away with it and look back, you tell yourself "I could have done that better, I could have done more." It's a vicious cycle that I can't let go.

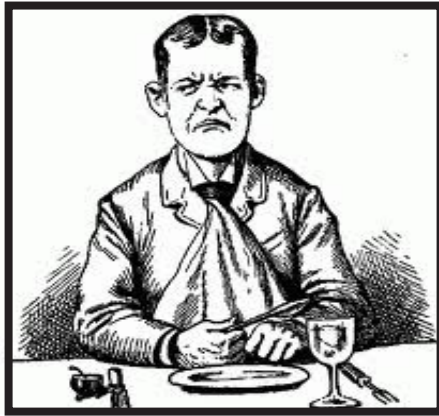


"Judges hate graffiti and it's a waste of their time anyway."

# Reflections on Worker-run businesses and Revolutionary Potential



A new, IWW-unionized worker-run restaurant called Bartertown is about to open in Grand Rapids. Collective businesses are usually formed by people who are fed up with bosses or realize that they can do the work themselves. There are obvious benefits to working without a boss, and anyone who's worked for a boss can come up with their own long list of grievances. However, I'm going to look at the concept of a worker-run restaurant in a critical light, using it to criticize a current in anarchist thinking. I'm going to ignore the fact that the restaurant is owned by one of the workers,



and the obvious informal hierarchy that springs from that. In fact, I'm going to ignore everything about the individuals who work there and who they are because ultimately, what makes the difference is how the system makes people act, not the other way around. I hope that people don't take too much offense to what I have to say, and instead realize that criticism comes from a sort of camaraderie.

My primary beef is that a lot of anarchists, usually folks who identify with the left, think that flattening a system's hierarchy is how you fix all its problems. Kick the boss out and we're all good—that kind of mentality. But the idea that organizations simply don't need rulers only looks at the institution by itself, not how it works with the rest of society. From this thinking we can believe that things like collective businesses, unions, non-profits, non-

their threats.

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As for a larger "anarchist community", we've all been responsible for a fair bit of the "confusion". For example, this publication bills itself as "a collection of writings by Grand Rapids anarchists" and aims to give voice to anarchists who have been silenced by recent repression. That's a laudable goal and a step in the right direction, however it's unfortunate that the first statement from anarchists since the vandalism says nothing about what anarchism actually is. Instead, it presents a series of writings that focus almost exclusively on the vandalism (and unfortunately still doesn't really explain how gentrification works in Grand Rapids) accompanied by unexplained and out of context images that present anarchists masked and wearing entirely black. Politically, there seems to be some real confusion too: are we "anarchists" or are we part of the "radical-left" (one presents a liberatory view of a new world while the other recycles failed mumbo-jumbo from the past two centuries)? Looking elsewhere, "the Grand Rapids Anarchists" blog adds to the confusion by giving the impression that it speaks for anarchists and then being practically silent on the vandalism and the ensuing repression. It also seemed unable to take advantage of the increased attention on anarchists to present an accessible and clear picture of what anarchism is. The same could also be said of the two other visible anarchist groups in town, The Bloom Collective and the Grand Rapids Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Figuring out how to speak in times of repression is difficult, but it's hard to believe that the best response could be to say nothing.

**in a weak anarchist community, can you really expect people to respond appropriately to repression?**

All of this is a product of a weak anarchist community.

Lots of the confusion and mistakes that have been experienced since the vandalism are due to the weakness of anarchists in Grand Rapids. There have been unrealistic expectations placed on people



Sadly, the image of anarchists and anarchism circulating in the public conscience aren't all the fault of the media, some of the responsibility lies with anarchists.

In the case of the vandalism and arson, there were several elements that lent themselves to confusion (let's just go with the assumption that the people who did the action(s) are anarchists, not "alleged", because of the usage of circle-A's). The lack of communiqués explaining the actions made them difficult to understand. While the first round of vandalism had graffiti reading, "Yuppie Scum Yer Time Has Come" (pretty clear), a communiqué explaining the selection of targets would have gone a long way. Unfortunately a "progressive" blog (GRIID.org) framed the action as a "protest" rather than an attack or offensive action. Even worse, GRIID became the voice of anti-gentrification and



when they tried to make the case that gentrification was/is happening on Wealthy St. their primary example (the Bayard Art Gallery closed due to a rent increase) crumbled under legitimate scrutiny (embarrassingly, they were debunked by the pro-devel-

opment Rapid Growth Media). It seems fair to assume that those doing the vandalism could have made a far better case. When Brick Road Pizza Co. was vandalized a month later, a cryptic slogan reading "Refuse, Resist, Reclaim" was all that was present. By the time of the arson, "The Old Neighbors" letter with its hyperbole and empty threats of "destruction of vehicles and houses, muggings, burglary, and kidnapping" left many anarchists scratching their heads. Casting aside ongoing debates about the nature of physical threats in the animal/earth liberation movements (relevant as they use arson as a tactic), it was clear from the moment the letter appeared that the letter writer(s) lacked the capacity to enforce

governmental organizations, and even the concept of work itself are beneficial to capitalism only BECAUSE they are hierarchical. It's an easy mistake to make, but it's not the case at all. Unions, non-profits, NGO's, and yes even collective businesses are inherently beneficial to capital. It just turns out the most efficient structure for them to serve capitalism is always hierarchical. There's been plenty of experiments in reclaiming these organizations and trying to get them to work in a revolutionary capacity; all of which have failed.

Unions for example. The function of a union is to negotiate with capital on behalf of labor. The first thing promised in those negotiations is an agreement to play by the game, to keep order. The easiest way to maintain that order that is through a centralized, mass-based, hierarchical structure. From when trade unions

started in the UK & Ireland in 1842 they've openly opposed all forms of struggle apart from the peaceful strike, even though traditional tactics of the British proletariat were



much more diverse and effective. They went on strike on their own initiative, sabotaged, rioted, committed arson, stole, freed prisoners, and attacked the rich. Contrast this to trade unions. A union will scab its own wildcat strikers and turn in workers who steal or sabotage to the police. It has to keep its workers under civil control so it can more easily negotiate with the bosses and stay friendly with politicians. Just because the vantage point most suited to maintaining order is on top of the system doesn't mean being horizontally structured makes the need for order to go away. An institution that exists solely to negotiate with capital will need to have mechanisms to make sure order is maintained among labor, or else it will fail. (note 1)

I wouldn't say that collective businesses serve the interests of capital as much as they are simply not revolutionary. It does nothing to excite or incite its workers or patrons, and in the end it's just another space occupied by private property. A restaurant is a business, it makes money by selling pre-customized meals on customer demand, while providing a pleasant experience in the meantime. The boss makes sure things go smoothly, that meals are coming

**“I wouldn't say that collective businesses serve the interests of capital as much as they are simply not revolutionary.”**

out fast enough, servers are friendly enough to customers, etc. The need for discipline, a division of labor, pampering the customers, and the repetition of tasks all make for a pretty miserable time for restaurant workers. Whether it's flirting, laughing at their jokes, or even being friendly when in a bad mood, the server's relationship with the customers is

based on servitude and hierarchy. For cooks either nothing's going on or there are ten tickets during the dinner rush. Dishwashers spend an entire shift in the heat cleaning other people's messes. Hostesses are always being yelled at by servers for not seating them enough, or too much. All this stress and boredom exists for the workers so that customers have the best experience possible. If customers don't like the restaurant, then chances are it'll go out of business. Taking the boss factor out doesn't do anything to change this. Restaurant workers have to boss themselves to fit into market needs as opposed to one person above them do it. Sure they all are involved in the decision-making process, but that doesn't take away how miserable working in a restaurant makes people. (note 2)

Restaurants are private businesses. As with all property, they who own call the shots over what goes on. People who don't buy anything are kicked out, and homeless people generally aren't allowed in. This commodification of the commons has been going on for decades; leaving us fewer spaces to come together that don't



## A Perspective on the Times and the Challenges Ahead

In the last issue of Act/React, a writer says “It's a scary time for Grand Rapids anarchists.” The fear that comes with repression is certainly understandable and real, but “interesting” might be a more accurate way to describe the moment at hand. Maybe it could even be said it's a “confusing” and “frustrating” time as well. Obviously other anarchists might use additional words (or none of these) to describe the time, but these seem to resound rather loudly.

It's no doubt strange to see mention of “anarchists” in the local media or to hear a faint buzz about them when you walk down the street. Following the anti-gentrification vandalism and arson in the East Hills neighborhood, people in the media (and not to mention the police) were scrambling to find anarchists of any form to talk to. Not surprisingly, they weren't too interested in talking or learning about anarchism (or gentrification either). Despite all the attention, the substance of anarchist ideas probably aren't any more visible than they were before the vandalism. Interestingly, “anarchists” are more visible than ever before, but we've ultimately been divorced from our ideas and sought out for our so-called “crimes.”

Clearly we could never rely on the media for they're not our friends (this includes both the corporate media and at times, leftist/independent media). The media was all too willing to present caricatures of anarchists and anarchy as violent and disorganized punk kids. Somehow, they missed the stereotype that anarchists always wear black and always wear masks, but perhaps that comes with the turf of being a reporter in a mid-sized town.

sort of utilitarian hipster collectible. Where this becomes a distress is when bands go through a company to press the vinyls, and then turn around and sell it for more than it's pressing cost to cover expenses like gas and equipment.

Where there are high-profile punks, there will be their accompanying 12". Usually, bands that boast some other form of capital (social, or otherwise) are the ones getting their records pressed and getting more attention than the lower-status bands in the scene. The dynamic this creates within our communities is unsettling. It not only applies class to our bands, but reallocates social-capital (in this case, personal friendships and distant networks) toward the higher classes.

I'm not going to get to in depth to the ecological travesties of PVC, but I will say they are worth looking into. Especially if you're in a band pressing vinyls and talking about how we need to protect our earth.

### Do it ourselves?

Okay, so I'm contemplating all of these scattered-critiques, but not offering any kind of alternatives. What can a punk do to relish in their ideals without contradiction? What are we to build upon when everything we hold on to is corrupted? The horizons look bleak, my friends, and I, in no way, expect an immediate transformation into a utopian punk movement. However, I do believe it is time for conversations to happen in neutral spaces between friends and band-mates. If we all play music the same way entrepreneurs start businesses, then we have made no progress toward a community free of socio-economical oppression.



require spending money. Radical workers at a collective may decide to allow homeless people in, but when paying customers start going elsewhere to avoid dining next to them, the market forces them to choose their livelihoods or their principles.

We experience oppression from those above us in the hierarchy, but we don't understand that they are simply performing their role in the institution. The forces of capitalism create our oppression, not those above us. Restaurants are stressful, boring, and shitty places to work because of the need to please customers, which is a condition of a somewhat market-based economy. The easiest way to make sure customers are being pleased and order is being maintained is by having a boss do it. We can get rid of the boss, but that will only mean we all have to boss ourselves. Either that, or go out of business.

To clarify, I'm NOT saying that Bartertown is my enemy, or that I have some kind of vendetta against those who work there. To be honest I'll probably go there and get food when it opens. I've just been thinking about the "no rulers" idea and how it may be misinterpreted, and took this issue as a platform for me to put out my critique. I'm also not saying that we should not fight back against the bosses or those above us in the hierarchies. People should take initiative for their own lives and fight for themselves against their oppressors. We should do the exact same and hope it inspires other people.

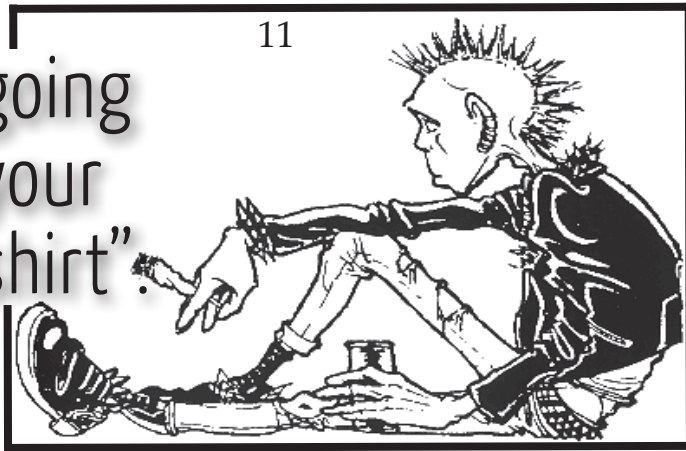
*Note 1: A lot of these ideas and info was lifted from Wildcat's pamphlets "Outside and Against the Unions" and "Good, Old-Fashioned Trade Unionism." I highly recommend both.*

*Note 2: I started looking at restaurants in this way because of my own experience working in one and the prole.info zine "Abolish Restaurants." The zine is highly recommended, working at a restaurant is not.*



“I’m not going to wear your bands t-shirt”

ramblings of an isolated youth



Punk has been in and out of my life since I was turned on to it about 4 years ago. It’s honestly what drew me into radical politics and lifestyles. I’ve dyed my hair, ripped my jeans, and played in bands that talked a lot about how the world we live in is a fucked up place. Actually, that has always been my favorite part, the music. Making music that said something and connecting with others who do the same. You can go to almost any punk show and see a definite community of shit-talkers with dirty clothes playing noisy music to a drummer going way too fast. It’s part of the lifestyle. But within these relationships to one another, we have our contradictions, and that is what I would like to shit-talk with this article.

### Expressing what you can’t express

I’d like to set a personal context. Asking yourself why you play music is a loaded question for sure, but is definitely important for understanding music as an art form. Day-to-day we feel these intense emotions that cannot be explained. We can try, but these less-tangible ideas are only more bewildering when you’re assigning words and emotions to them. Things like passion, sorrow, and blatant rage are verbally expressed because of a specific experience or feeling the expresser had. While on the other end, the listener receives a message based on their own experiences or feelings. So an emotion heard in a sentence means nothing close to the actual experience of having that emotion.

While music is limited in its own capacities, its splendor resides in the innate ability to express the emotions we feel with

and the performers.

Spaces can become a very hostile place when someone doesn’t have a donation, isn’t in with the organizers crowd, or isn’t into the idea of smashing into one another in appreciation of the band. I see it all the time, and I feel the need to say we are isolating a group of our friends and comrades for nothing more than another capitalist institution. As a member of this isolated group, I feel extremely uncomfortable going to shows at the thunderdome while donation-collectors are hunting people down, while kids in with the thunderdome crowd are excused and exception for more than just donations, and knowing that my being there is another tally on the scoreboard for Cappalletti and his crew.

I do realize, however, that for these spaces to exist within a ‘reasonable’ framework of capitalist society, oppressive solutions are either necessary, or supposed to be so. While I wish I could include alternatives here, I am a victim to apathy these days and don’t have any idea what can be done other than to begin a dialogue.

### No, we don’t have any vinyl

I’ve never been in a band that had more merch than a couple t-shirts and a maybe a CD-R style EP. So maybe I’m way off by saying this, but I have been seeing more and more bands pressing vinyls, as well as more and more punks buying them up. I am no market analyst, and have no clue which came first, supply or demand, but I do know that the continued pressing of people’s music onto 7 or 12” PVC disks is directly a producer meeting the demands of consumers. It reduces both parties, the band and the listener, to actors in a free market.

Vinyl has been around since the early twentieth century. Recorded music has moved a lot since then, and has become more efficient, more eco-friendly, and more convenient. In fact it seems like the only reason to keep vinyl around is for the novelty of it. A



“a sort of utilitarian hipster collectable.”

tions are used to pay touring bands, for the benefit of the space, or for some other charity declared by the organizing body. Usually, in my experience, the donations are either required by the threat of rejection from the show, or are implied as “pay up or fuck off”. While I do believe donating to causes like show spaces and touring bands is important, sometimes people just don’t have the 5 dollars to fork over. This further divides a supposed “anti-capitalist” scene, as well as alienates comrades that feel uncomfortable by the psychological aspect of enforcing donation.

What makes a performance good often depends on the connection between audience and performer, but, is subjective to the performer and the audience. The “success” of a performance usually is characterized by movement, praise and “I’d come back to see that band again!” These feelings of excitement are dependent on the people around you, and therefore are heavily influenced by social-capital, and further it’s affliction on our community. For example, if I were to play a show and no one moved the entire time, but I felt like I got out what I needed to get out, it was a good performance. However, this is not good for the shows success and leaves me little promise of sharing myself again.

The success of shows, according to punks like Cappelletti, is a business of exploitation and objectification of both the audience,



out the frustration that is intangibility. I can tell you how sad I feel about the misogynist kids going to shows to get laid, or I could scream at them through a microphone, so loud you can’t understand the words I’m saying.

I do understand this is not the most productive way of handling a situation like that, but in that moment, what matters is that you, the musician, are feeling those things and doing what you love to express and share them.

Music, for me, should not be about who is listening to whom, and what they are playing, it’s about the creation of an audible sense of self. Your music should be what you want it to be, the only audience is yourself.

In my opinion, sharing your sense of self is just as important as having it. That’s why I play shows, to share my feelings with friends in a setting where folks come together to share. But, as I get older and more aware of what is happening to me and the people around me, I am becoming ever more dissatisfied not just with the world, but with the alternative community that has fostered me since I first listened to Orchid and Pageninety-nine.



### **Shows, shows, shows, and community**

I’ve been to my fair share of shows, and have met most of the grand rapids punk scene. I do admit that I find myself more attracted to certain corners of the scene than others (due to things like veganism and alcohol) but I see a good sense of “we are all in this together”.

What encircles punks, GR and elsewhere, isn’t what we are eating or what we’re doing after the show, it’s the common form ex

pression we have. When enough people start feeling similar things, and someone decides to write music for those feelings, that's when a community can be built around that music. And when enough people are playing music about those feelings, then they become tangible. It's like a new language for those emotions that only a small part of the population can understand.

This directly emotional understanding shared by punks all over the world is what gives punk its flame. In a setting like grand rapids, where the scene consists of numerous social cliques that form a movement, that sense of comradery needs to be celebrated and expanded upon.

### Where we ruin ourselves

Punk and capitalism have always been mortal enemies. The lines have been blurred from time to time, but the internalized resistance has always rest at the heart of every kid who listened to music their parents hated. I would argue punk is a natural reaction of alienated youth trying to find meaning in something outside of the boundaries the society that isolates them offers. It is a chance to be thought of in your own terms, by people who respect you for who you choose to be, not who your parents told you you were.

However, the line between "us and them" is becoming more and more smudged by things like patriarchy, capital, racism, and apathy. The clean hand of mainstream society is slowly but surely breaching the walls we've created to protect ourselves.

What we need to be thinking about now more than ever is how we are relating to one another, and I, for one, think it needs a brutal transformation.

### Socio-economic capitalism at the thunderdome

Firstly, there is the idea of social capital. This can mean a variety of things, but can be encapsulated by saying that connections and relationships people have with one another can be productive in the same sense as physical or human capital, and is frequently necessary to be productive at all. How many people you know,

how often you see them, their opinion of you, and how close you are to them are all factors to account for when measure the social capital of an individual or organization.

This, applied to the punk scene here in GR, is imperative to recognize it as an institution of capitalism. For example, Ryan Cappelletti has been active in this scene for years, and holds a great amount of social, as well as physical, capital. He operates and organizes a lot of shows and has the support base and a venue to make these shows a "success".

Usually, in my experience, the donations are either required by the threat of rejection from the show, or are implied as "pay up or fuck off".

What defines success? What I've observed is that the success of a show is measured by the turn-out (amount of people attending), the flow of money from the door and the performances. I will address each one separately.

The turn-out is bluntly a head-count during the show. People come to shows because their friends are going, and rarely go alone. Networks of friends of friends of friends who are in a band or like a band decide who is going to be at any show. Promotion only accounts for the infiltration of these networks. If a flyer is made, it gets talked about between friends. This concept, although roughly a grassroots organizational technique, is mediated by the few individuals and organizations that throw shows. Therefore, when a person that does not have a strong social-capital, they cannot get folks out to their show.

Most shows at the thunderdome and other venues that host punk or hardcore shows have a cover charge. For those venues without a license to accept money at the door, they call it a "donation" (legally bypassing licensing issues). The dona

