

The Defender

'zine of the Workers Defense Alliance • Twin Cities • Winter 2020/21

AFTER THE ELECTION, THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES



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We Build Solidarity, Not Pipelines

Jessica Garraway - Educator - Environmental Justice work

Ned Flowers - Barista and Former Metalworker - Line 3 Resistance Logistics and Mutual Aid

Plotnikov - Carpenter - Solidarity Network



What does Line 3 pipeline resistance have to do with class struggle? Everything. With the harms that this project inflicts on land and water, treaty rights, workers, women, and rural communities, it's clear that we are being sold out for Enbridge profits. Rural workers and Indigenous people have to take our future into our own hands.

This pipeline violates the treaty rights of the Native people of Minnesota, crossing the 1855, 1854, and 1842 treaty areas that cover most of the northern half of the state. The Stopline3.org website calls this “modern-day colonialism for the purposes of resource extraction and corporate profit.” The land and water indigenous people depend on for fishing and wild rice are threatened by this project, which is a direct violation of the rights enshrined in the treaties.

Line 3 would cross more than 800 of the lakes and rivers that provide clean drinking water to Minnesotans and those downstream of us, including two crossings of the Mississippi River. As we have seen in Flint, Michigan, clean drinking water is not to be taken for granted. The project is also poised to set off a carbon bomb that will impact the lives of billions of people. Line 3 is intended to carry up to 915,000 barrels per day of tar sands crude oil from Canada. At \$7.5 billion, the project is the largest in Enbridge's history. Especially with projects like Keystone XL on the ropes, Enbridge's Line 3 is that much more pivotal to the continuation of tar sands extraction. If it gets built, it is game over for the climate. If we stop it, it is game over for the tar sands.

Politicians in both parties are in the pocket of Enbridge, and would have us believe that the tar sands in Canada are crucial for working people here. They have no care for rural communities, the Indigenous people whose land they are violating or the millions of people that depend on the drinking water this project could contaminate. The boom and bust cycle promises jobs that will never materialize. As the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers highlighted in their statement in support of the pipeline struggle,

“Line 3 will provide nowhere near the number of permanent union jobs the the project's promoters promise they will (Enbridge itself estimates the number at around 25; its marketing and lobbying campaigns are designed to obscure this fact) and the Minnesota Department of Commerce has indicated that more local and long term jobs would actually be created by decommissioning the existing pipeline.”

The Line 3 project, by Enbridge's own admission, will bring around two dozen permanent union jobs to Minnesota. The thousands of construction jobs they dangled in front of the trade unions like LIUNA and the Operating Engineers are temporary and mostly being filled by workers from out of state. Once again, the industry makes a “Hardhats vs Indians and Hippies” narrative, trying to pit white and Native workers against each other, promising temporary jobs to permanently harm the land and treaty rights.

But did we mention the pandemic? Healthcare workers in Aitkin county wrote an open letter to the Walz administration and the Minnesota Department of Health in November demanding Line 3 construction be

delayed. Between one and four thousand out-of-state contract workers roaming the countryside spreading the virus when their ICU capacity is already maxed out? Nurses say no thank you. It is clear that the construction industry has not taken necessary health and safety measures for COVID. According to a study of 730,000 COVID tests conducted by research firm Curative this summer, construction workers have the highest rate of positive tests, with 5.7% of asymptomatic workers and 10.1% of those with symptoms testing positive. The pipeline “man camps” housing workers threaten to be major vectors of infection.

That is not the only lethal danger that man camps bring. It has been established by independent studies by Indigenous scholars and researchers such as the Urban Indian Health Institute that cases of human trafficking, sexual assault, rape, and murder jump by over a fifth (22%) in areas hosting man camps. These statistics are already disproportionately high among the Indigenous populations that these colonial resource extraction projects target. One in three Indigenous women in the United States are raped in their lifetime, many before the age of fifteen; 85% of these rapes are committed by non-Indigenous offenders, many of them the very workers that Enbridge exploits. This hard truth must be said plainly and tackled head on if we are going to build the robust intersectional movement we need to address the environmental crisis. White workers must be challenged to embrace a working class solidarity that includes the entire working class. That means a refusal to participate in sex trafficking that targets Native women. Enbridge revels in these divisions in the working class. They have everything to gain while we have everything to lose if we stay divided.

The industry’s casual disregard for safety has also already resulted in a fatality. Jorge Villafuerte III, a union pipefitter and father of nine children, was killed by a telehandler forklift in a Line 3 construction yard in Aitkin County. Jorge was working for Precision Pipeline out of Eau Claire, WI. He was the fourth worker to die on a Precision Pipeline job since 2010. Of the four deaths, only the fatal crushing of a worker in 2010 resulted in any OSHA fine--settled for only \$14,000. Enbridge is so desperate to barrel ahead with the project at any human cost that work resumed at the site of Jorge’s death within hours. When two Enbridge workers were killed in an explosion and fire at the Clearbrook terminal in 2007, the company fought the bereaved families’ workers comp claims for years in court. Just as this company throws away our communities, it throws away the lives of workers.

We can’t let Enbridge and other companies use our communities for a quick buck and dictate our futures for us. Minnesota’s own Department of Commerce has argued that more local and long term jobs would be created by decommissioning the existing Line 3 and repairing the land than by expanding the pipeline.

Instead of continuing to support fossil fuel, we can fight for jobs that create infrastructure we actually need, such as mass public transit, affordable housing, and clean water. Our energy system needs to be overhauled. Millions of houses and apartments need to be repaired, weatherized, and improved. Infrastructure everywhere is crumbling, and curing our fossil fuel addiction means both massive expansion of public transit and changing the face of cities built around the car. All of these projects would expand work in strongly unionized construction sectors. But it is not enough to lobby for jobs where we already have union density. The green energy industry is growing, and we workers need to pull our unions to organize it--or we will see non-union contractors take that work and further drive down standards across the industry. Instead of waiting for our unions, we rank and file need to build a revitalized union movement--one that not only defends our safety and livelihoods, but that gives us the strength to make the most revolutionary demand: our own control over our work, to build the world we want to live in.

All of us need to unite behind the Indigenous struggle, as Native people fight to save the land and water we all live on. Against corporate exploitation of the land, we support the sovereignty of the Native nations and learn from their stewardship. All of our liberation and survival is bound up in the fight of Indigenous fellow workers, whose liberation struggle against colonialism strikes at the heart of capitalism.

The fight against Line 3 and by extension the entire tar sands industry is part of the fight for Native sovereignty and worker power. What would a world with worker and community self-management, and without oil pipelines, look like? That world, which already is growing in our hearts, can only be brought about through fighting alongside each other. Let’s get to work.

Ready to join the fight to stop Line 3? There is a wide assortment of radical people and projects devoting themselves to different aspects of the struggle. Inquire with the Workers Defense Alliance to find out more!

Interested in what a distributed direct action strategy against Line 3 could look like? Anonymous comrades from the Killer Bee Syndicate made a zine thinking through some of this in 2019. This “Swarm” zine and other articles related to Indigenous resistance to Line 3 and the MMIWR epidemic can be found at [antidotezine\[dot\]com](http://antidotezine[dot]com).

Politics Without Proud Boys

S.T. - Jobless - Community Defender

The Proud Boys were officially started by Gavin McInnes in late 2016, right around the time the Trump campaign for president was officially underway and already causing lots of political turmoil in the streets. Minnesota had a small number of Proud Boys in the initial grouping back then. They had a Facebook group of about 40 or 50 until Facebook decided to delete the Proud Boy groups entirely (there is currently 90 throughout MN and part of WI). Being a member of the Facebook group didn't necessarily mean one was a member, though. Becoming a "proud boy" only happens when one makes a public declaration that the "west is the best" and that one "will not apologize for creating the western world". This grouping appeared to mostly be comprised of extremely-online basement dwellers, and their activities in the Twin Cities didn't really begin in earnest until this year. The November presidential election, and the emergence of the Stop The Steal / Hold The Line protests rekindled the ire of the local Twin Cities Proud Boys, who were present from the very first demonstration outside the governors mansion. Leo Dantona, one of the local leaders, was photographed holding up the "OK" hand sign with other organizers, which included Bikers For Trump's Emily Hartigan and

Becky Strohmeier. According to their own Facebook posts and comments, the objective of the Proud Boys was/is to help provide security for the rest of the Trump supporters. They teamed up with other fascists from local 3% militias, Bikers for Trump and others to accomplish this goal. I say this because it is a rather unique development, for the "moderate" Trump crowd to fully embrace and organize alongside Proud Boys and other fascist groupings may not be a surprise to some, but to others it was. In previous years, at least in MN, there was always something of a demarcation between the Trump supporters and the "alt-right". At this point in time, that distinction is no longer visible from an outside observers point of view.



After a week or two of these rallies, many in the Workers Defense Alliance and other working class antifascists began to organize counter demonstrations in areas nearby to the Stop The Steal rallies. Utilizing a model of mass-organization and marching to directly confront the fascist rallies, the fascists had some rough, if not downright demoralizing afternoons out there in the cold. However, the model of mass street actions hit a snag, as soon the police presence soon began to outnumber both the fascists and the antifascists (I think we all know which side the police prefers). Turns out, it's hard to directly chase fascists out of town when they are given FULL protection from the local law enforcement agencies! We want our people to remain as free as possible to remain in the long-haul fight against the capitalist system of american empire, so that more or





less means not inviting state repression upon ourselves. We cannot become a one trick pony. Our tactics need to grow and evolve. We propose a two-pronged strategy of mass antifascist space-taking with positive political demands on the one hand, and pressure on the day to day lives of far right organizers on the other. We invite others to join us in this fight in whatever capacity they have to participate. There are folks who feel they cannot participate due to criminal record, warrants, age, infirmity, disability, immigration status, etc. While it may be true that front-line work carries the greatest risk of physical injury or arrest, we can assure our readers, that front-line work is not the only role out there. There is a role for everyone in this fight.

The Proud Boys represent a unique threat in the american political landscape. In a short period of time, Gavin McInnes managed to create and spell out the political program of this group, all the while avoiding any semblance of accountability for his words or actions. In my opinion, it is critical to understand the failure of the neoliberal ideology, and the shortcomings of free speech, in order to understand the blindspot that McInnes/Tarrio and the Proud Boy's are taking advantage of. Gavin's explicit endorsement of violence toward what they view as the intolerant left, or toward trans people, or toward multiculturalism, or feminism, is a critical element of their makeup. These are views that are shared by the broad majority of their membership.

Sure some members might be on the fringe right, including men's rights activists, neo-traditionalists and anti-vaxxers, but the Proud Boys offer a big tent for all those groups to come together and plot violence against their political enemies. That is the biggest thing the proud boys are selling, fraternal belonging, and violent adventurism. In order to combat them effectively, those opposed to fascist paramilitaries running around in their streets need to understand the Proud Boy's inception and unique development. We need to know what they are selling, and who they are selling it to. Because as economic conditions worsen, and political gridlock continues, the Proud boys will only grow in number and resolve. We need to match and exceed their organizational efforts. We need to expand popular support for ANTIFA, or antifascist political activism. Breaking down the stigmas and myths that revolve around antifascism is crucial. Little old grannies and grandpas used to be antifascist. Perhaps for different reasons then, yes. But the time has come to update our understanding of the fascist threat and how it attempts to present itself as a populist working class answer to all of our complex socio-economic problems. Once you understand the hipster nazi, you can defeat it. And once your neighborhood/school/workplace knows about the hipster nazis, well, the bastards won't stand a chance then, will they?

Reflections on Action Tactics

Wes - Cybersecurity - Alliance Infosec/Tech

Though the charred remains of the Third Precinct are now covered in snow, the echoes of the hot summer days of the early Uprising are still reverberating among the working class. At the same time, they are reverberating through the state. Having seen what large groups of working-class people can do when they've been pushed too far, those in power are on high alert, ready to beat back radical action wherever they see it. As police repression mounts, we must think critically about our goals and tactics, be mindful of how we marshal the crowd, and accept criticism that helps us build better actions in the future.

While demonstrating on the freeway has long been effective for drawing the public eye, the limited number of places to exit makes it easy for the police to form a kettle - as we saw on November 4, 2020, when 646 protesters were kettled on I-94 in the largest mass arrest in Minnesota history. Similarly, this year's annual New Year's Eve noise demo in downtown Minneapolis experienced unprecedented repression, with a mass arrest that left five attendees facing felony charges. Though similar protests have occurred for years, largely without such disastrous consequences, fear of another Uprising pushes the state to bring the boot down harder and faster than it used to.

Before the Action

Deciding on specific goals is the first step for planning an action. What is it we want to accomplish? What are our demands? Once our goals have been decided, we can discuss tactics that fit our goals. If our goal is to drive out a large right-wing demonstration, a large, confrontational march will be more effective than a banner drop off a nearby bridge. When deciding on tactics, we must also keep in mind that our past ones may no longer be viable, due to changing conditions like increased repression. We can draw new, more effective tactics from the successes and failures of recent actions around the world, whether it be the Hong Kong protests or actions planned by local working-class BIPOC organizers.

We must also make sure both our goals and our tactics are in line with our own political values and long-term goals. A rally to demand Trump be impeached may not be in line with your goals if you know kicking him out will not solve the larger problems of colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism. We must be true to our values and make sure our work builds towards a world we want to live in. If we are going to risk arrest, it should be for a goal we believe in.

During the Action

At the action itself, it is important to remember that, as organizers, it is not our job to keep the crowd under control. Our job is to help avoid problems that can be avoided, not to police the crowd's behavior. We can do this by marshalling facing out: keeping watch for threats outside the crowd and working to avoid them. Marshalling out can look like having security deescalate an angry right-winger, or stalling the police by giving them useless information.

Some actions will pick up steam and grow out of our control - and that's okay. The Uprising started as a "peaceful protest" and grew into a nationwide, multi-day attack on the state and capital. The working class is willing to take militant action, sometimes when we least expect it. We shouldn't stand in our own way.

After the Action

One of the most important parts of the action is the after-action debrief. This meeting is a place to analyze how the action went and give/receive constructive criticism. Talk about what went well and what needs to be improved. Give everyone space and time to say their piece. This process of identifying successes and failures is how we make our future actions better. The debrief meeting also gives us a place to decompress and emotionally support each other - something that's important after the stress of an action (even one that goes well).

We must also be willing to accept feedback from people outside the organizing team. This could be from comrades, other groups we work with, or from your average attendee. It can hurt to hear people criticize the action you poured your blood, sweat, and tears into, but it is important to listen to the criticism without becoming defensive. It is okay to take a step back before you respond to a critical message, or to process a difficult conversation with a trusted comrade.

The changing conditions we've seen over the past year have made it more complicated to put actions together. We've adapted, and we will keep adapting as the world around us keeps changing. The more we can learn from each other - from both our successes and our mistakes - the better we can choose our strategies, achieve our goals, and build working-class power. Our strength is in our solidarity.

Copwatch in the Twin Cities

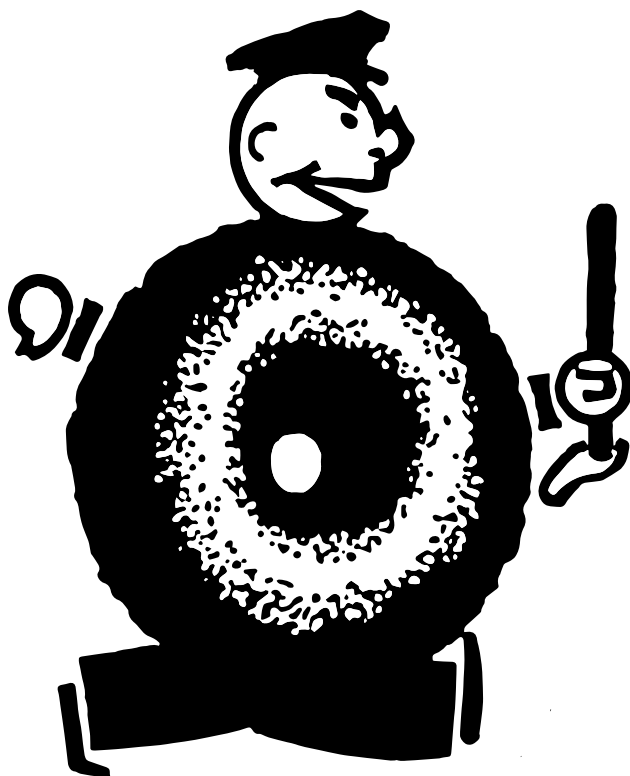
Comrade Cloudy - Freelancer - Whittier Copwatch

Copwatch is a form of direct action, in which members of a community organize to observe and record police interaction as a means of holding police accountable for misconduct, as well as advocating for people's legal rights, particularly those who are more vulnerable to police repression due to their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or housing status.

Copwatch has existed in the Twin Cities under varying circumstances since the 60's.

It ballooned in size in early July of 2020, as a result of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the MPD and the uprising that followed. Community members in Whittier recognized a need for on the ground community defense that stood apart from the proliferation of "concerned homeowners" and community watch groups stoking paranoia and collaborating with or acting as a replacement for the police.

Whittier Copwatch quickly increased its capacity through a combination of conducting public training and cross pollination between the constellation of mutual aid and defense projects that appeared as a result of the uprising. Soon, it was able to teach more participants how to give the training itself, spreading the institutional and street based knowledge further amongst it's networks and beyond.



Practices

Copwatch typically consists of 3 or more people, this is both for safety reasons and to comfortably delegate roles. These roles are Police Liaison, Camera Person, and Note Taker. Occasionally, if members have access to a scanner radio, a person can act as dispatch, informing those out on patrol of nearby police activity.

The Police Liaison interacts directly with police on the scene, asking questions and advocating for the rights of the detainee. The Camera Person records police interactions on video with a focus on police actions. The Note Taker writes down all the details of a particular event that they can, as thoroughly as they can: time, date, and location, squad car numbers, police names and badge numbers, events in as much detail as possible, and any witness testimony that they can collect. The information recorded during copwatch can be used as supportive evidence if someone wants to file a complaint or take legal action against the police for misconduct.

In 2019, 4 neighbors in uptown were conducting copwatch when they came across a traffic stop. The driver of the vehicle had already been taken into custody, and the vehicle was being searched by two police officers. Two of them stood by filming on the other side of the street, while the other two stood on the sidewalk directly in front of the police searching the parked car. These two informed the officer who was trawling through the passenger side of the vehicle that we were only there to observe. He allowed this. (So long as they stayed on the sidewalk.) Upon asking for his name and badge number, he turned his face towards traffic before he would speak it. The officers turned the vehicle practically upside down, but could find nothing within it to justify their detention of the young black man who was the driver. Copwatch video taped this entire process, watched as a deputy held a small scrap of paper close to his face, as if, by concentrating hard enough, he could transform it into some kind of contraband.

Eventually, the police had no choice but to release the driver from custody, and did so, returning his wallet and serving him with a citation. He and his friend had been on their way home from work when they were pulled over. The police told him they had stopped him due to an "illegal lane change", then had proceeded to detain him and unlawfully search his vehicle. Copwatch exchanged contact info with the man in order to send their video and notes. While the group talked, the same police circled back, eyed them, and drove away. The man and his friend said their goodbyes, got in their car, and drove home.

Recuperation, Collaborators, and Informants: Reflections on the Three Way Fight Post Trump

Juliett - Electronic Security Worker - Alliance Infosec/Tech

As the seasons turn and the heads of state shuffle, we are once again caught in a moment of observation, reflection, and planning. Being radicals, we have a duty to meditate on our successes and failures, but also of those who came before us. Not to be prescriptive about theory, but to find similar contexts and draw practical lessons from past struggles. Of all the recent conservative to liberal transitions of power, one thing stands out to me: the trap of recuperation, state legitimacy, and collaboration.

Right wing governments can sometimes mask the reality that we are in a three way fight. As agents of change, we must fight the force of reaction (as seen in fascist and conservative movements), but also forces of stasis and capital (represented by the liberal establishment). Law and Order is the tool of the day, and as winter turns to spring, we can again expect to see the softer side of repression. The state is always attempting to pull struggle into its sphere of influence and limit it. It is our job to build power outside of their control and legitimacy. Some have described this relationship as counter-power or dual-power. We see it as key in our daily work.

This past moment revealed the true face of America – mask off – and has brought many of our friends, family, and communities into the struggle. Building this core

understanding is important to keeping them with us and protecting them from harm. It's no secret that often we have better insight and active intelligence than the state does. With the state's arms wide open, our new comrades might be tempted to collaborate or try to use law enforcement against the fascists in retreat. Not only does this strengthen our enemy, a confidential informant is one of the very worst positions you could ever be in. This goes double for a state obsessed with destroying anti-fascist and revolutionary movements.

It's important to recognize the power dynamic of confidential informants for what it is: the state is extracting information from you. Some agents of the state may even seem cool – using leftist critiques and language, or they may be marginalized in some way. Perhaps this exchange is voluntary and seems like "harm reduction" at first, but very quickly and unknowingly it can become much more. Questions about your motives, your network and contacts, and your resources can slip in by someone skilled in the art of elicitation. Your comrades will be angry with you for giving intelligence to the state, interrupting their actions and alerting authorities. They will be emotionally devastated and put into a crisis of trust. They may also distance themselves from you despite how much they might care for you personally.



The state often pressures vulnerable people deeper into these positions and uses divisions to create larger wedges in movements. We have seen this recently with leaders from the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone in Seattle, where those who supported the city council efforts for reform were rightfully distrusted by many in the zone. The Philando Castile protests in the Twin Cities had several financially struggling leaders ejected for police collaboration. In 2017 in Portland, police famously pressured a young woman with mental health issues into revealing plans with the false promise of a less violent response. As we've seen, all these state promises fall short.



A generation ago, building confidential informants was a major part of police strategy during Occupy. Police often used drug/alcohol addictions of participants to pressure them into conflict, or to get them to inform. We can also learn from the vast movements of the 60s and 70s. The assassination of Fred Hampton was orchestrated by William O'Neal, an informant first turned for bail money. There are many more historical examples, but we'll leave those for another day.

Finally, while it is important to collaborate, it is also very important to not accuse others of collaborating without very solid proof. This is called badjacketing, and has led to the destruction of many movements in the past. It is oftentimes a favorite technique of those wishing to do harm to collective organization.

What can we learn from these situations? We need to recognize the three way fight we are in, and focus on building power outside of institutions we do not control. We need to learn from revolutionary movements of the past, and see how the state has used informants to destroy them. We need to draw a line against collaboration, and protect our vulnerable people. We need to recognize elicitation and predation in our groups, and not badjacket. This is our coming task. It is not impossible.

Forget the state, we hold the real power anyway. Who needs their help when we bring the system screeching to a halt? In 2020, we saw Minneapolis, Atlanta, Seattle, Portland, Milwaukee, Louisville, and more. Winter may be thawing soon, but spring can be deceiving in its own right. Keep your eyes on the prize.



Sanctuary: How I Came To Find a Home

Secret - Sales, DJ, Event Promo - ALL, A.T.P. Crew



I am an unhoused member of the Minneapolis community. I am what is commonly called HOMELESS. I have crashed couches, lived under bridges, slept in bushes, squatted in buildings downtown, camped at Powderhorn East camp, Powderhorn West camp, Minnehaha falls encampment.

A series of unfortunate life traumas led me down the path to where I'm at today. I woke up in Portland without wallet, identification, eyeglasses, and only 5% on my cell phone. A friend loved me enough to fly out there and drive back cross country.

That's the short story of how I came to be homeless, but this story isn't about me. It's about Sanctuary.

When I arrived in Minneapolis, a friend told me the story of the Sheraton and what was happening at Powderhorn Park. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, so I asked him to walk with me to the Sanctuary encampments. As we investigated, we came across a volunteer shed where I found the principles of the Sanctuary Movement taped to the side.

I couldn't believe what I was reading.

Abolition. Autonomy. Mutual Aid. Radical Empathy. Personal and Communal self defense.

An individual working security explained the basic set up and expectations of camp life later that night. Here's where food and water was, here's where supplies can be obtained, here's the medical tent. The security person helped me set up my tent while talking with me, and there was no judgement present. Only kindness and soft words.

My first night in the camp, I was a little scared. There were an awful lot of tents and people! But there were little kids doing flips by the tipi, so I figured I'd be safe too. Sure, things happen at encampments, but as Big Zach from Kanser says, "living on the Southside aint

always easy".

Over the next few weeks I realized that the camps made leaders out of people and empowered people who had not been empowered before. I saw people stepping up and putting in work without being asked. Even in the hot sun when your brain is hazy and you can't think straight. I saw people offer ideas and take on leadership from moment to moment as it was needed. I saw people working together and forming trust. I saw people deescalating situations and increasing the peace. I saw people eating clean healthy food provided by F12 kitchen and other kitchens. I saw drinking water, and a shower thanks to NECHAMA.

The nightly news won't tell you about that. Their only focus is the trauma and crime.. Being homeless is about so much more than facing trauma and daring to survive another day by any means necessary. It's about learning that we need to start truly SEEING each other as fellow humans.

Living in the camps taught me that anarchism isn't about violence at all. As anarchists, we are always willing and prepared to defend autonomy by any means necessary. But we are nothing if we don't care for our community starting with the most vulnerable, unloved, and unwanted.

I arrived at powderhorn as a man who was very angry at the world and ready to fight. I am still angry and ready to fight, but I have learned through living in homeless camps that the true war on fascism and the state starts with feeding and sheltering the people you were taught to fear and learning to love those who have suffered the most.

Sorrow, anger, grief, and unimaginable suffering lives within each one of us. Much of that has been at the hands of an apathetic society and a monstrously

inhumane state that preys on human beings for profit.

Each one of us has a long and complex story that led to us living in a tent or a car or a bench. Each one of us carries massive repeated traumas within us. You don't just wake up homeless one day.

Homelessness is by design. It's a part of the pyramid we participate in. The working poor can say to themselves, "at least I'm not on the streets like he is". Dividing us from our neighbors and fellow humans is a favorite tactic of the ruling elite.

Charity offers some relief, but ultimately it is just a way to keep the wheels of the economy turning. It's not designed to actually SOLVE the problem.

Homelessness could have been solved a long time ago.

We need real change. We need affordable low income housing. We need the eviction moratorium to continue until the jobs return and the economy approaches something close to normal again. It's ridiculous that many of us can no longer afford to live in the city we all grew up in together. We need public housing for the unhoused, and we need it right now.

Short term, intermediate, and long term plans must be made in order to save lives and help our city cope with the economic devastation caused by the global pandemic. There were over 500 tents at powderhorn alone. And I saw unhoused people all over st paul as well. The problem isn't going to go away. It's going to get significantly worse and it's happening fast.

To assist the most vulnerable, the unloved, the unwanted, the unheard is one of the greatest things you can do to fight back against the boot on our collective necks.

The People of Minneapolis sent tents and food and water. They did it with love in their heart and it made me indescribably happy to see people come together as a community to assist each other.

The city of mpls sent bulldozers, police, and pepper spray. They did it with contempt for suffering human beings and the arrogance of the state. The inability of Frey or Walz to lead effectively has them repeatedly leaning on the boot of their murderous enforcers.

This madness has to end.

Police abolition is the only path forward on our march to liberation.

We need public housing for the unhoused and we need it right now. What's happening is inhumane, and absolutely unnecessary.

Shout out to PV defense crew, Sanctuary volunteers, activists, everyone living in a refugee camp worldwide, all the political prisoners, and all workers of the world. Never give up. Never stop fighting. Remember, we are many! They are few!

A Powderhorn Neighbor On Solidarity With Sanctuary

Carla Crabgrass - Longtime Clerical, Grocery, and Warehouse Worker, Currently Unemployed

After the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis cops and the Uprising that followed, unhoused Minneapolis residents and supporters moved into Powderhorn Park, declaring all parkland to be sanctuaries for those without housing. Housed neighbors defended the camps from eviction by the Park Board and engaged in a massive mutual aid effort to secure food, healthcare, mental health services, showers, bathrooms, and security/maintenance for encampment residents.

But all along, some Powderhorn homeowners wrung their hands about "crime, drugs, and property values." Uses of that divisive rhetoric were shut down by others who could sense the transformative way that the Minneapolis Uprising had shifted the fight around addressing human needs and dismantling oppressive systems of policing. After being challenged in public spaces, these neighbors moved their discussions to messaging apps and private meetings. Most elected officials refused to participate in public meetings to address the immediate needs for housing, but they did meet privately multiple times with neighbors who opposed the encampments.

These neighbors engaged in open ridicule and public harassment of folks living in the camps, and of their supporters in the neighborhood. There were threats and forced eviction actions against individual encampment residents who "dared" to set up tents in other areas of the park. The Powderhorn Neighborhood Organization, who viewed the encampments as tied to the affordable housing crisis, was attacked for their "support" of the encampments. These neighbors were also frustrated and confused by a leaderless movement that operated completely outside of the acceptable world of tidy non-profits.

The backlash from white Minneapolis progressives to radical demands/actions like the encampments, the George Floyd Autonomous Zone, and abolishing the police has taught me a lot about how a lack of real solidarity makes it easy to abandon radical ideas when comfort, control, and security are threatened.

For Tenants, Housing and Racial Justice Are One Fight

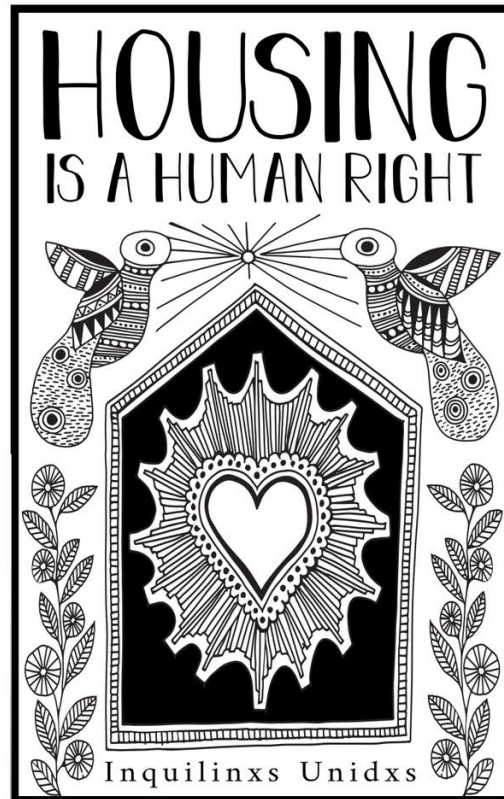
Plotnikov - Carpenter - Solidarity Network

With the economy spiraling in the pandemic, we face a looming evictions crisis, with not enough aid for the thousands already houseless. Somewhere between 20-50% of Minnesota households are facing potential eviction from missed rents - held back only by emergency protections that Walz has kept in place, for now.

Housing organization Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia has been calling for rent forgiveness throughout the pandemic, and to stop evictions. With their experience fighting alongside tenants under slumlord Steve Frenz buy out their apartments from him, Inquilinxs has been setting an example of organizing that other tenants have looked to.

Tenants have organized the Whisslthe Tenant Council in Whittier, Stevens Square, and Lowry Hill East. Formed by renter committees from Hornig, Mint, and Kleinman for mutual support, Whisslthe soon helped form more company committees. They aim to back up people who have problems with their landlords, and help tenants learn organizing and direct action. Whisslthe is working on tenant organizing trainings.

Emmett D, a Kleinman tenant, says that Whisslthe grew out of the Whittier Copwatch. “We walked and talked about how much police violence directed at the working class and communities of color is driven by



developers, trying to clear the way for gentrification”, he said. “Then, there’s the harassment directed at the unhoused- and evictions are police violence. So we decided we needed to organize at the root.”

That connection between housing and anti-racism has informed Whisslthe’s work. Their latest mass meeting was about a lawsuit landlords are pushing against the city to repeal tenant screening protections passed last year. These protections stop landlords from looking up evictions over three years old, checking credit scores, or looking up misdemeanor over three years ago or felonies over seven years ago. These protections were a victory for renters who’ve struggled with poverty or a record- especially former prisoners. Whisslthe wants the lawsuit dropped.

Houseless people have also led the fight. As Unicorn Riot reported on November 11, residents at the Extended Stay Hotel in Bloomington have formed a union. The hotel was slated to be bought by Hennepin County with CARES Act funds, but the county backpedaled on the plan. Instead, the Hennepin County Board put money towards renovating buildings at Fort Snelling into 191 multi-room apartments for \$908,000 a unit, with the work going to Plymouth-based contractor Dominion.

In response, community organizer Sam Pree-Stinson launched a sustained protest outside of County Commissioner Marion Greene’s house on Tuesday November 3rd, attracting the support, protection, and aid of organizers across housing and racial justice networks. Pree says the \$171.9 deal to Dominion could provide vitally needed housing, and resources for groups like ZACAH, a charity in the Muslim community that is suing the city to stop the MPD from evicting homeless camps from the parks.

Whisslthe can be reached at whisslhetenantscouncil@gmail.com. Inquilinxs Unidxs can be found at www.inquilinxsunidxs.org.



Reflection on a Summer of Militant Action for Housing Justice

Huck - Working Artist - The Alliance

If you've been in the city of Minneapolis for any period of time, you probably know that finding a place to live is becoming increasingly difficult for working class people. The COVID-19 pandemic made the brutal reality of gentrification even more obvious, closing the few public spaces our unhoused relatives could access to use the bathroom, freshen up, or find some protection from the brutal Minnesota elements.

There is no justification for a city being full of half empty luxury housing developments while hundreds of people are without homes. It is a crime for apartment buildings and hotels to be full of vacant units while parks and strips of land on the side of highways are full of families in tents.

During the Spring months I participated in mutual aid efforts at Peavey Park and was deeply moved by the generosity and toughness of the community that gathered daily. I met many people struggling with houselessness who made the afternoon trip to the park in order to connect with friends and family, to pick up supplies and food for their neighbors in the camps, to provide crucial information or an encouraging word to lift each other up. Fresh, hot, medicinal, delicious tea was brought to the park everyday by volunteers along with coffee, meals, clothes and supplies. While government officials made excuses and empty promises over zoom and email, working class neighbors showed up day in and day out with real support and a listening ear. I saw the relationships cultivated in the Spring months feed the powerful response to the murder of George Floyd.

When the ruling class imposed the curfew and national guard occupation to squash the rebellion, they also destroyed encampment communities in South Minneapolis. The growing networks of unsheltered activists and supporters again took matters into their own hands and occupied the Midtown Sheraton hotel, creating a sanctuary space for hundreds of people locked out of our capitalist housing system. The outpouring of solidarity that followed was incredible. For several hard fought weeks the midtown Sheraton was transformed into an autonomous emergency shelter with hundreds of people taking action and helping in a variety of ways. A full account of the successes and short-comings of the "Share-a ton" sanctuary is too complex for this short article but we can be sure the experience of those weeks had a far reaching impact on the movement for housing justice.

When the Sheraton was cleared the revolutionary spark was carried to Powderhorn Park, where an unprecedented encampment took root and spread to parks throughout the city. The Sheraton Sanctuary hotel and the park encampments that followed are direct challenges to the regime of private property and real estate profits represented by Jacob Frey, Lisa Bender and the proponents of gentrification.



The most clear lesson I learned (or re-learned) this summer is that If we wait for policy change or permission from capitalists and politicians we will never end houselessness. On the other hand, If we continue to assert our human right to housing through occupations and direct actions we can make sure every person in our region has a warm home.

I am deeply inspired by the commitment, compassion and resilience I witnessed over and over again at the Sheraton and at Peavey Park in 2020. The fight to win dignified housing for every member of our society continues into 2021 and I believe the experience we gained this year will serve us well.

Behind the Barricades at 18th Avenue

Mac, Truck, Slick - Members of the Rock Steady Alliance

In the wake of George Floyd's murder and the resulting Uprising in the summer of 2020, neighborhoods in South Minneapolis were thrust into a world without state imposed policing. While this in some respects was a welcome change of life with less fear of police violence, it did, however, come with its own challenges. When communities are forced to not only imagine a world without police, but begin living one in the span of a couple of days, problems can arise given the nuanced nature of various community members' interests and the lack of a structure to mediate amongst these groups.

A prime example of such a conflict occurred on the 2900 block of 18th Avenue in the Powderhorn neighborhood. This block has been a frequently



used area for the use and sale of drugs for years, and in the absence of police and their "War on Drugs", drug sellers and users saw an opportunity to stake a claim on the block, but in this pursuit, threatened the residents' well-being. When events turned violent and residents, including children, were openly threatened with physical violence and firearms, the block realized they had to band together in order to protect their community. A few folks began organizing and taking a stand against the violence, including a resident arming himself and firing into the air above the perpetrators. When this confrontation brought a more concerted effort to control the block on the part of the harm-doers, the block called a meeting and invited two future founding members of Rock Steady Alliance (RSA) to consult on the situation given their backgrounds in security and their role in protecting their community from the white supremacist incursion during the Uprising. Barricades were constructed at each end of the block and a 24 hour security detail composed of block residents and future RSA members was instituted to monitor the escalating threats and activity. Following the formation of RSA in the ensuing weeks, RSA

members became more actively involved, at the request of the residents. After speaking with several folks living on the block and assisting with their security detail, RSA asked how they could be of use in the long-term, as the toll exacted on many of the families from the day-in, day-out security was proving unsustainable. Seeing as these events were symptoms of a greater systemic problem of racism, poverty, and the criminalization of substance use imposed by a largely apathetic city government, there were limited prospects for a solution, but after RSA members assisted with overnight security and began observing the activity, they realized that much of the appeal of the block was that it provided a direct route from the Greenway to the the corner store. After investigating the store, RSA members noticed that all the gear needed to use or sell narcotics: torches, baggies, glass pipes, scales, screens, etc. were being sold. Two RSA members with experience working with those with substance use issues and those involved in the urban survival economy determined that this corner store may have a prominent role in the unwanted activity.

This discovery was a crucial turning point in RSA's involvement with the situation on 18th Ave. The fact that a local business owner was shamelessly profiting off of both the opportunism of drug sellers and the struggle of some drug users, was illuminating and seemed to be a logical target to help resolve this conflict. While harm reduction is an important aspect of community health and dealing with substance use, the corner store made a conscious decision to benefit from the situation without taking any responsibility for the peripheral violence and exploitation that can occur with this culture. After informing the residents of their observations at the corner store, the block decided that they would write a letter to the station owner and request that they cease offering these items to discourage the associated activity on 18th. While this letter did not come to fruition, a chance did appear to confront the store owners, but the circumstances were not ideal. Before delving into what unfolded, it is important to examine what role the city of Minneapolis government played throughout this ordeal.

When the residents initially reached out to the police and city government, the response was less than enthusiastic. The city became increasingly hostile towards the barricades that were providing a legitimate means of defense for the residents. In addition, the city officials later offered to provide garbage bags with which the residents could "clean up their block", as if a "clean block" is in any way relevant in this scenario. They also provided a spotlight with a generator that was nonfunctional during the most tumultuous times of this affair. This trend of tone deafness and offers of half measures continued throughout the meetings convened

by the city to discuss possible solutions; scheduled only after the consistent requests of both block residents and RSA members. The first meeting was held in a lot on the block, but no interpreters were offered for the meeting despite the fact that much of the block either does not speak English or speaks English as a second language. Luckily, the Crime Prevention Specialist present at the meeting happened to speak Spanish and was able to fill this role after the residents spoke up about this egregious oversight on the officials' part. Following this meeting, the city officials promised to look into possible solutions which were eventually proposed at a second meeting. It was at this second meeting that the wife of the owner of the corner store was confronted. While the initial plan had been to send a letter outlining the residents' concerns, city officials, namely Alondra Cano, chose to invite the store owner to the meeting unbeknownst to the residents and RSA members. When the RSA member chosen by the block to help represent their cause objected to this and explained the potential for the residents to become victims of the owner's retaliation, the concern was dismissed and the invitation was not rescinded. Given that there was a fear of reprisal for speaking out against a corner store that in many ways helped support the community, while at the same time exploiting it, such an action was just another in a string of thoughtless measures taken by the city in its effort to "help" the occupants of 18th Ave. One of the RSA members most involved in assisting the residents, at the request of the block, confronted the store owner's wife, acting as the owner's representative at this meeting, and informed Councilperson Cano of the store's role in the situation. While she initially claimed ignorance and maintained that the store's inventory included only tobacco products, the RSA member countered with a list of the products actually sold and their sole use for the distribution and consumption of narcotics. Cano initially seemed concerned with these findings and discussed possible intervention, but as of yet, no actions have been taken on the part of the city and the store owner has not removed these items from the inventory.

Following this exchange, the city outlined its proposal, consisting mainly of changing the way of traffic on 18th Ave. and the blocks east and west. Given that much of the threats came by way of drive-bys, this seemed like a logical first step; however, this change was offered contingent upon the removal of the barricades and denial of the block's request for speed bumps in the center of 18th Ave. After residents refused to remove the barricades that had offered them some modicum of safety throughout this ordeal, the city came through some days later and removed them, without warning, in the early morning hours. Additionally, the block member acting as the main RSA liaison was later approached by the store owner and threatened with reprisal for his role in highlighting their unethical business practices. While the measures put forward by the city of changing the flow of traffic and installing speed bumps in the alleys frequented by the harm-doers have helped stem the threat, the tone-deaf and often apathetic undertones present in every exchange proves that the well-being of communities such as that on 18th Ave. are not prioritized by city leadership. When the State offered no help, the residents employed their own agency and relied on mutual aid to meet the danger. With more community resources and support, and by reaching out to those perpetrating the harm, this conflict could have likely been resolved without intervention from the city. In addition, before judgements are made about the events that unfolded, we must examine the conditions that allowed for this to happen, namely the criminalization of drug use by the State and a lack of access to: affordable housing, easily accessible routine mental healthcare, liveable wages, and employment opportunities. Without these realities, much of the harm and trauma incurred by not only this one block, but of blocks like it around the city, would have been nonexistent.

RSA members remain in contact with the block residents and it seems as though the situation has improved. Throughout this experience, RSA has learned much from the residents and how to approach problems with tact and from a position of mutual aid and respect. Community can and will thrive in the absence of police repression, but it will take consistent efforts to rework how we view "community". There will be challenges, but the alternative of relying upon the apathetic and optics-centered city government has proven time and again to be unfruitful, and often counter-productive.



Frontline Fight Against Allina Workplace Retaliation

TBerrell - Frontliners United

During the opening months of the COVID 19 pandemic, frontline healthcare workers at St Paul's United Hospital (part of the Allina Health system) took measures to protect themselves, their families and the public they serve. These efforts were vehemently opposed by management. Among other positions they took, management insisted workers use their personal scrubs instead of the scrubs readily available at the hospital and used by doctors, physician assistants and some nurses.

United nurses dealing with Covid-positive and suspected-Covid-positive patients had to bring the scrubs they worked in all day home to be washed, posing a potential source of infection to their families. Dozens of nurses refused to do this, and their stand drove media attention to the conflict. Management responded with disciplinary measures, violation of union rights, and intimidation of the frontline workforce. Cliff Willmeng, a union steward, husband, father of two, and nurse of 13 years was fired during these efforts for workplace and patient safety. The firing happened despite the fact that he has had zero patient care incidents or attendance issues over the course of his nursing career. He was fired for *violating uniform policy*.

The termination was also accompanied by a charge to the MN Board of Nursing threatening Willmeng's nursing license and ability to support his family. In the 8 months since his dismissal, with more than a dozen years' experience and mid-pandemic nursing shortages, Willmeng has been unable to gain an interview for the more than 20 positions he has applied for in the Twin Cities metro. It is clear that Allina is engaged in workplace retaliation to ruin Willmeng's professional prospects and send a message that those who fight for safer conditions will be severely punished.

Although Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) leadership declined requests to launch a public campaign on his behalf, a grievance was filed and will be heard on January 28-29th, 2021.

Willmeng himself has filed a state whistleblower lawsuit against Allina which will be heard August 2021. Prior to his termination in May 2020, Willmeng was running for a seat on the MNA executive board. He continued those campaign efforts even though he was no longer employed as an RN and his reinstatement to his position via legal processes was uncertain. In a stunning show of member support for the actions of Willmeng and his coworkers at United Hospital, he won that board seat in November. This show of support from MNA membership, the support of the general public, and the local media coverage pointed to an opportunity for a more public fight with Allina.



In late November, a group of local and national supporters began a campaign to publicize Allina's vindictive retaliation and to demand reinstatement of Willmeng to the United Hospital ER. The Committee to #BringBackCliff and #DefendFrontlineWorkers is composed of a core group of frontline workers and labor activists with the support of We Do The Work, a worker-run media group. The specific goals of the campaign are:

- Build Pressure on Allina Health
- Build a network of frontline workers for mutual defense
- Show support for Cliff as a steward and RN
- Demonstrate what a frontliner campaign can look like
- Encourage MNA RNs to speak out

In the first week of the campaign, the Committee launched a petition demanding Willmeng's reinstatement and an end to all workplace intimidation and retaliation. The preliminary goal was to collect 1000 signatures to send to Allina ahead of the January 7 arbitration date and to create a network of contacts to activate in direct action. The launch coincided with a publication in MedPage Today that told Willmeng's story in detail and that was widely circulated nationally, becoming its most popular story of 2020.

As a result, within 7 days of launching the petition, 2,000 signatures were collected, exponentially increasing the number of supporters willing to take on Allina and connecting the campaign to countless similar stories from across the county. The majority of petition signers are frontline workers and over 30% are members of unions. Calls to Action in the petition resulted in direct communications to Allina executives and social media traffic to all Allina's platforms throughout the month of December. Willmeng has been invited to multiple podcasts to tell his story. Local unions have promoted the petition and campaign over social media and in some cases even passed resolutions supporting the Bring Back Cliff campaign. Allina has indicated they are aware of the campaign and the support from MNA membership has grown over the short campaign period.

In the final week before the arbitration hearing, the campaign will continue its social media presence and continue circulating the petition. A judgment in the arbitration may take up to 30 days. During that time the campaign will remain active, keep supporters informed, and shift the focus to building opportunities for solidarity among the growing network of frontline workers and supporters.

Contact the Committee to #BringBackCliff:

defendfrontliners@gmail.com

Learn More About the Campaign:

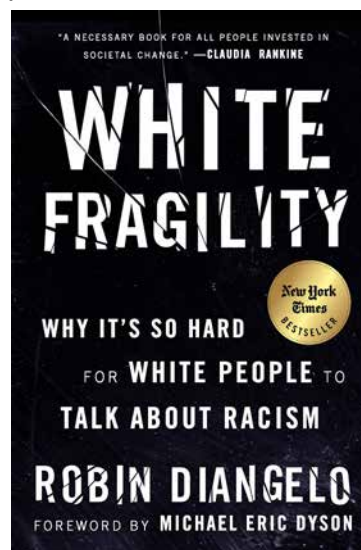
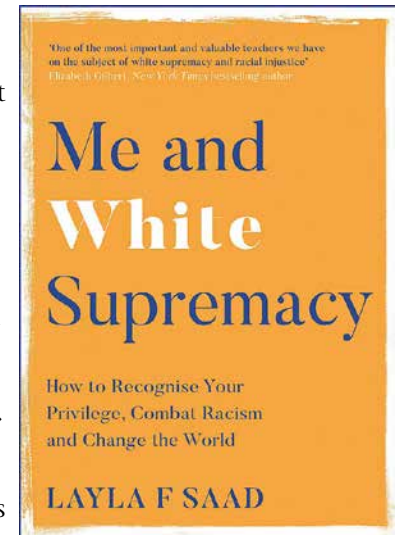
frontlinersunited.net

When The Man Tries to Tell You About Racism

Ben Widit - Paraprofessional - Action MC

Is your boss reading *Me and White Supremacy*, *White Fragility*, or *insert book about whiteness here*? Have you had to sit through a meeting designed to promote diversity and inclusion on the job? Are you sick of spinning your wheels in struggle sessions and guilt parades with your boss? If you are genuinely interested in combating white supremacy and have ever felt a little off-put by these workplace diversity training, it's because they are mostly whack.

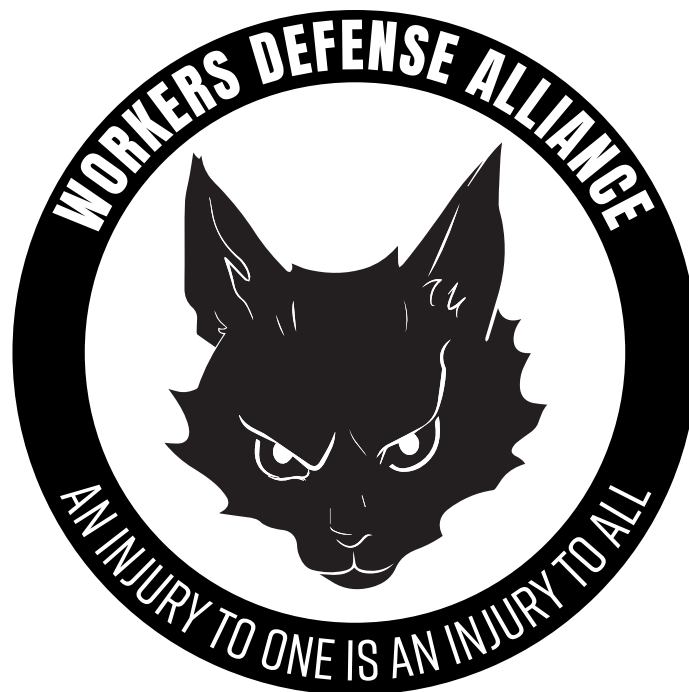
The equity models proposed by management and "expert contractors" are always congruent with the oppressive economic order and cannot conceive of collective political action because their business model and profit is dependent on the continued reality of exploitation and poverty. The most damaging aspect of these pro-business equity programs is the way they stifle workers' imaginations by setting an intentionally low bar and deepen our despair by presenting no real alternative. It honestly takes a certain kind of insanity-inducing cognitive dissonance to be forced to sit through sanitized racial justice trainings by professional class liberals while a militant youth-led rebellion for a livable future rages on right outside our Zoom screens.



Fellow educators and I encountered many former and current students in the street at the end of May fighting for justice, and now our workplaces are bringing in so-called experts from everywhere but Minneapolis to introduce us to the ABC's of identity and privilege. These paid hacks are not the leaders we should be turning to. Instead of spending thousands of dollars to bring in corporate equity

companies, we as workers can educate ourselves by reading the history of this country, uncovering the numerous inspirational examples of revolutionary multiracial solidarity, and articulating visions of the future free from racism and capitalist exploitation.

What we are seeing in workplaces across the country is the mass marketing of diversity and equity training sessions that are created and implemented by the capitalist class as a way to outflank the revolutionary activist energy bubbling in the streets. When we are faced with compulsory work related social justice training and mandated professional development we have to ask ourselves: *Who created (and funds) this program and what vision do they have for the future?* It becomes clear that oftentimes these are explicitly capitalist programs that completely erase class consciousness and any notion of solidarity (which is especially ironic when we are literally at work and directly experiencing the reality of class power working against us). They also inadvertently work to exacerbate racial division by failing to highlight the socially constructed nature of race and our ability to self determine and work toward abolition. We need to keep developing a revolutionary abolitionist framework to hold the work of combating white supremacy and we need to uniformly reject any attempt by the owning class to co-opt the struggle and define the terms of engagement.



Introduction to the Workers Defense Alliance

The Workers Defense Alliance is a revolutionary network of working class people and autonomous councils. We organize on the job and in the streets to practice militant rank and file labor struggle and community self defense. Our roots are in the Twin Cities GDC and historical union defense guards, the labor movement, Anti-Racist Action, and various mutual aid and survival programs.

The Alliance is an abolitionist, anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-prison organization. We are committed to building and maintaining autonomous worker and tenant councils, defense bodies, and mutual aid projects. Our network fights against racism, sexism, queerphobia, and ableism in order to recognize that an injury to one is an injury to all. From this, we see that the liberation of each is bound up in the liberation of all.

We set out to unmake this nightmare world we're inheriting, and make a new one in the ashes of the old.

Website: <https://workersdefensealliance.org/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/TC_WDA

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/TC.WorkersDefense>