

A COMMUNIQUE

**From and To
The People of
the Inland Empire**



We share these words with those who are fed up. It's meant for the marginalized, for the quiet radical, for the loud rebel - for the feminist and the non-conformist. It's meant for those who are depressed and anxious, the queer and trans., the over-worked and exhausted. It's meant for the disgruntled union worker, the discouraged non-profit worker, the exploited farm and warehouse workers, the unheard, the overlooked. We have had enough.

The System Was Never Meant To Work...

Ever since we were old enough to read, we're told that we can trust the political process, that for our voice to be heard, we should go through the right channels, to vote, and "trust the process." We're told numerous times that Gandhi, MLK Jr, and Cesar Chavez were the most perfect examples of political change. But they lied. For every Ghandi, there was a Bhagat Sing. For every MLK Jr., there was a Malcolm X. For every Cesar Chavez, there was a Reies Lopez Tijerina. And even though these examples of radical action are erased, the examples of how much of a failure the system is not - and especially so right at home.

In 2021, community got together to protest the plight of San Bernardino's Pro Swap-Meet. For a while, in a location directly across San Bernardino Valley College, people did more than commerce - it was a place of community. Regional food was available, music blasted across the place, and people exchanged with or without money. Whether it was the inability to control the flow of money without the State, or whether it was just plain prejudice and classicism, the SBVC management decided it needed to go. Petitions and City Hall comments did nothing. Developers were in cahoots bed with the college management and San Bernardinian officials. It was a done deal even before it was announced, and no amount of community commentary or petitions changed that.

In 2021 and 2022, we saw our Bloomington neighbors stand up against a new warehouse development project that is destined to take over the entire town's last plots of land. We saw as our neighbors did door-to-door outreach to inform the town of the

highly negative social impacts this development would bring. We saw their persistence as they engaged the community through questionnaires, petitions, city council meetings, and even through Mexican equestrian-style marches on the streets. Despite all these efforts, local politicians did not bat an eyelash in approving the project, and thus continuing the cycle of land-grabs and exploitation of our communities by the warehouse industries. Even mild, positive reforms such as warehouse moratoriums are doomed to fail because they are run on a capitalist hourglass.

Transportation workers fared no better. In September 2022, workers in the Metrolink railroads, among others, entered in negotiations to acquire more sick pay. Realizing that management had excluded this request, workers readied for a strike. “The-most-labor friendly-President” Joe Biden asked Congress to deny them their rights. In a matter of hours, the fight was over before it began. Both Democrats and Republicans in both Congress and Senate ensured the strike was crushed for the sake of the economy. Of those who voted to impoverish the standard of life of workers included everyone’s favorite “radical” politician of color, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The very same politicians that unions campaigned and voted-in were the same politicians that threw them under the train.

Despite these losses, defeat is an illusion: our communities can still win in the long term struggle against the exploiters. As the lessons of generations of older and recent social movements have demonstrated, the electoral and voting process has always been doomed to fail. We can win, but it will never be through a ballot box.

Change Beyond the Ballot Box...

The folks in this collective were born and raised in what we call the Inland Empire. At first, we believed that we could change the system through elections, non-profits, or the usual channels for “change”. One of us even tried going into political campaigns professionally, but quickly became disappointed. We explored Chicano nationalism, sympathized with Bernie Sanders DSA politics, flirted with Marxism

a la Lenin or Mao... but we could not find the right approach to change our realities. Until we all came across autonomy.*

***Autonomy: Collective and community practice of social projects without hierarchy, state or corporate power. It is unique by region and situation, and it is done without permission of governments.**

The direct action approach of autonomous movements struck a deep chord within each of us. Instead of campaigning for someone on the loose promise of immigration reform, we found ourselves at the forefront of fighting ICE and jails. Instead of re-living our anxiety in the middle of fire disasters and environmental destruction, we calmed ourselves when we joined mutual aid networks, sending support to our community members directly. Instead of going to work or school for just the check, we helped ourselves and others to improve working conditions and fight for a more equal system. That is direct action.*

***Direct Action (D.A.): Tackling a social problem with community power, approaching the problem head-on, without the need for approval from government or authorities.**

We are one collective – one among many worldwide – who seek a better standard of life for everyone. We speak from these autonomous possibilities, and believe that they hold strong potential here in the Inland Empire. As a collective, we have traveled all over the world and have experienced firsthand what it means to fight for and live within an autonomous community. We have participated in autonomous projects in Chiapas, Kurdistan, Wallmapu, and other places that are living proof that another world is possible. It is from these revolutionary examples that we draw our offerings and inspiration from.

**Autonomy Around the World... and to the IE
(finally)**



Zapatista community in Chiapas, Mexico



Kurdish community in Rojava, Kurdistan

As capitalism continues to globally loot and plunder Indigenous lands for “resources,” new forms of resistance have developed by Indigenous and traditional communities. The Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico and the Kurdish struggle in Rojava (West Kurdistan) both have been at the forefront of these developments in the search for autonomy.

In the dawn of January 1st, 1994, the EZLN (*Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional*, or Zapatistas for short) rebelled against capitalist intrusions into their communities in response to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). They retook stolen land and declared open war on the Mexican State. Led by Mayan people in democratic communities, the Zapatistas have not ceded territory to this day. They continue to improve their autonomous experiment, meeting their own community needs and refusing to return to the negotiating table with the Mexican state after a series of bad faith maneuvers.

In 2012, the Islamic fundamentalist far-right took advantage of the Syrian Civil War and subdued parts of the country into slavery and genocide. With the Syrian state in shambles, ISIS seemed unstoppable until - until they reached the Rojava. Without the government, the Kurdish feminist revolution re-arranged power into radical equality, gender equality and a diverse set of tactics unseen in the region. The equality borne from newly transformed households conflicted directly with the brutal patriarchal traditionalism ISIS enforced. Women defense units, community militias, and international support together pushed them back, ending in the liberation of the region.

Both the Zapatistas and Kurdish forces teach us one thing: by directly fighting back against the state and capital, and by collectively building alternatives to them, we can save countless lives.

With or without organized alternatives, people *will* rebel and *will* attempt to liberate themselves. In 2014, residents in Ferguson,



May 2020 protest in San Bernardino, CA



June 2020 protest in Riverside, CA

Missouri, predominantly Black and brown, working-class area, rendered their city ungovernable. The Ferguson Uprising is a preview of future rebellion as it is similar to other neo-colonized regions of the so-called US - including the Inland Empire. Enter the 2020 George Floyd Rebellion. The IE was unexpectedly shaken to its core. Warehouses were burnt down and their stuff taken directly to people in need; banks were attacked, and the streets, for a few precious moments, were ours. For those of us there, it felt like the revolution was here. The loud music, cheers, chants, and a solidarity never seen before in the IE crossed gender, race, and class lines. Our community found itself and began to see each other for the first time. Our empowerment had crushed the daily alienation we experienced. The rebellions did not last long, but the uprising in 2020 is just the beginning of a new potential emerging here in the IE.

With climate change and inequality intensifying by the day, we do not see this system halting its operations through an election, petition, flash-mob dance party, Tik-tok trend, or any actions that appeal to a conscience our exploiters don't have. In place of failed reformist strategies, what we are providing below are proposed actions based on the lessons offered by autonomous movements. These proposals are not the final word, but may be a starting point. We hope this helps.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

1. Organize Your House. The Personal is Political

The economy is out of our control, but the way we live our lives is not. Instead of taking control of the government, the Rojava and Zapatista revolutions have demonstrated that we can implement positive change in our communities by first working on our social relationships. As you organize outside of your household, continually check in with yourselves with trusted friends. Devote time and energy to your relationships, collective healing & interpersonal skills as you do to any other kind of movement infrastructure.

- Live your ideals in your house, your parents, family, partner, or roomies.

The people you grew up with or are closest to you are the best starting points for organizing.

- Actively use the historical lessons passed down to us by generations of radical feminism actively in your life. A revolution in our most immediate relationships can function as an example for the rest of our community as we grow our power.
- Ask your friends if they'd be down to offer emotional or material support; assign these roles informally with each other and lean on them when you need to – this is also known as the practice of mutual aid.

2. Find a Passion, Find a Need

Organizing outside or through your immediate relationships means trying your best to organize where you are. This way, you can avoid stress and burnout by not over-committing to other struggles that might not immediately be your own.

- **Think of a Community Need.** Is there an intervention around food and water? What skills and materials are needed for a collective intervention?
- **Build a Project to Meet that Need.** Projects can range from community defense, food distribution, or other ventures. Do your best to align your life goals with your political projects. Draw from your passion!
- **Try to Create New Connections for Personal Fulfillment and Community Growth.** Remember lifelong passions that you have not been able to do: is there a way you can intersect your strengths, interests, and passions with a community need? Are there certain kinds of community events in your area that many people may be missing that can bring people together (i.e. holiday festivities such as Dia de Los Muertos, backyard shows, car meets, etc.)? List it out.

3. Join or Create an Affinity Group*

***Affinity group is a small group of 3 to 10 people who conspire together on direct actions or other projects.**

Your life is already filled with many people that you have affinity with, and that's the point. An affinity group doesn't even have to be formal: reading groups, the people you kick it with, and art circles are examples of everyday affinity groups. It could be about hitting up old friends, new

friends, family, neighbors, or people you've met at school or the gym.

- Experiment with small but meaningful actions. Outreach, petitions or flyering might be some ways to test and define each other's roles. Practice the habit of group consensus.
- Don't limit your affinity group to just protests! Engage with direct action (D.A.) tactics such as strikes, sabotage and occupations. When planning D.A., have contingency plans and each other's contact info in case.
- You do not have to join the nearest organization or follow its direction if it does not match you or your affinity groups' interests or needs. Make your own if needed.

4. When Affinities Aren't Enough: Make an Association*!

***Associations enact change through numbers and mass organizing.**

There comes a time when you and your friends aren't enough to counter a crisis. In these moments, it's necessary to build the numerical advantage on a given situation - in other words, associations. They also help in re-shaping communities along autonomous lines, easing the process of making collective goals and strategies happen around an issue.

- Examples include affinity hubs, coalitions, assemblies etc. - any grouping that specifically aims to gain or increase the numerical advantage.
- Ensure associations have solid protocols to abide by non-authoritarian decision-making & diversity of tactics (St. Paul's Principles)
- Devote time to build trust between diverse group hubs for the long-term coordination of struggles.

5. Build Infrastructure*

***Infrastructure is the "underlying base & foundation for the functioning of a community or society; the basic facilities, services, & installations needed for an area or organization."**

Revolutionary change will never be achievable if we fight against a system that we still depend on. Infrastructure is essential for communities to survive. Riots and attacks itself will not make us materially autonomous enough to sustain an offensive attack on this system. Alternatives are made possible by the work that we do outside protesting and voting.

- Examples include neighborhood self-defense associations, physical and

mental health cooperatives, decision-making assemblies, etc.

- Take an inventory of our collective skills, capacities, and connections, and pool resources together. Where can we pool together and provide for each other to not become over-reliant on a job or money?
- Spread capacity and know-how of survival so communities can self-determine - as opposed to being “the leaders” that everyone depends on.

6. Be Strategic. Wait Until The Time Is Right

Direct action and insurrection alone will not win us the day. It will take a mix of immediate and gradual efforts to effectively build autonomy in the IE. There will be moments where the state might become overwhelmed as in a disaster or insurgency - that will be our opportunity. Meanwhile, we wait. Keep in communication, help others find autonomy, and do not give up. Moments to a radical future will open up, and we must have all the pieces in play to seize it.

- Do your best to challenge your comfort zone, and create bonds of trust and alliances with other locals.
- While organizing, think about openings and maneuvers that help expand our reach and power in this area and push ourselves into a revolutionary situation.
- Anything that you build will also have to be readily defended by any means necessary – take all precautions.

Be in Community, Stay in Touch.

As people getting organized in the Inland Empire, let's find and support each other. Building autonomy means that we must build trust - get in touch with us, as we hope to cultivate brave spaces both online and in person. If you have any feedback on this document and would like to contribute, let us know! Lastly, keep an eye out for future meetings, events, and calls for assemblies. By striving toward autonomy, we hope that our local communities can become more than what society has assigned us. Peace!

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The Insurgents Emerging project is an Inland Empire based autonomous media collective. We are a local grassroots crew dedicated to documenting and boosting social movements in the SoCal IE region and beyond.

GET CONNECTED!

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