



Reflections^{on the} Setting Sun

Strategic Impasse in the Phoenix Valley

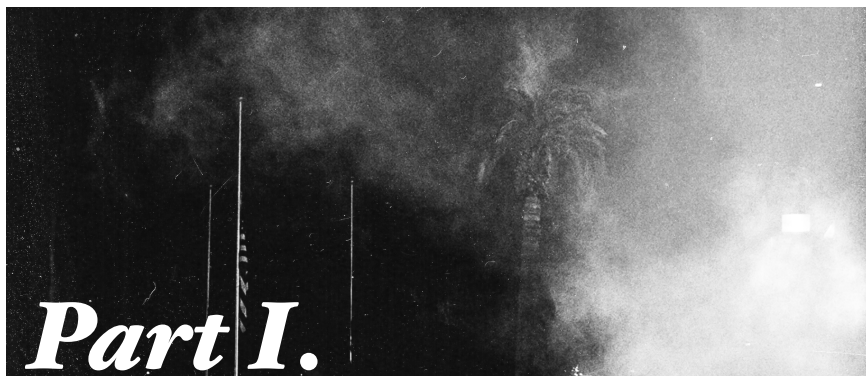
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Table of Contents



<i>Part I.</i>	6
<i>This is Only the Beginning</i>	
 <i>Part II.</i>	 14
<i>Social Peace, Anti-Social War: (Aspirationally)</i>	
<i>Refusing the Management of Revolt</i>	
 <i>Further Reading</i>	 26



This is Only the Beginning



Abortion access long been a major flashpoint of American politics, providing a certain rhetorical terrain to “legitimately” debate and call into question the validity of a certain expressions of bodily autonomy, thinly veiling the true intentions at hand behind notions of morality, ethics, and the ostensible sanctity of life. From 1973 until it was overturned in the early summer days of 2022, *Roe v. Wade* federally protected abortion access on some level, though the efficacy of such “protections” have long been demonstrated as feeble at best; the Christian Right has whittled away at abortion access in numerous states over the years, making abortion access functionally none existent throughout a number of states prior to *Roe*’s reversal. Since its inception, the Supreme Court ruling has offered fertile ground for the political machinations of Democrats and Republicans alike. Regarding the former, this took the form of a reliable cash-cow particularly during election season, calling every year for donations and votes in order to “protect *Roe*” and to “protect women’s rights.” Even in the immediate aftermath of *Roe*’s reversal, the Democratic charlatans couldn’t resist the urge to immediately exploit this moment of crisis. Soon after the decision was announced, the calls for donations and votes followed, both assuring that the party would profit politically and monetarily, as well as providing an early start in assimilating would-be dissidents of this decaying Leviathan back into the artificial animation of its corpse. What’s more is that this manner of past and present calls for support hide the reality that across the half century that *Roe v. Wade* was on

the books, the Democratic Party failed at every possible moment to codify the decision into law. This most recently occurred during the period of unified control of all three governing branches during the Obama-era.

For the Right — and particularly for the religious Right — *Roe v. Wade* and the abortion access it sought to protect provided the terrain by which a wide range of issues of bodily autonomy could be called into question under a “legitimizing” veneer; the coding of anti-abortion rhetoric in moralistic terms about “the sanctity of life” and “protecting the rights of the unborn” has nothing to do with either of those ideas, regardless of meaningless both phrases to begin with. The rhetoric of the anti-abortion sentiment pushed by the Right isn’t meant to provide a genuine, robust argument; they are instead meant to put forward a vague and agreeable assertion that is difficult to argue against without seeming morally suspect. The consequence, then, is that the opposition is put into a defensive posture, wasting time arguing against completely vacant assertions instead of engaging in what is truly being said. Consider, for example, how overwhelmingly stale it has become to rebuttal the framing of being “pro-life” by remarking on the Right’s support for imperialist wars, privatized healthcare, and so on. It has become a verbal tick amongst liberals and certain leftists that, while perhaps true on some level, leaves the real assertion unaddressed.

What the Right is seeking in earnest isn’t so much the elimination of abortion access *per se* (although it should be painfully obvious that this is part of it) but rather the total denial of bodily autonomy and the expressions of self-sovereignty that it demands; what is sought is the imposition of a certain totalizing system of relation to ourselves, each other and our environments articulated by the most narrowly reactionary elements of white civil society. It should come as no surprise that those in alignment with this most recent reactionary turn have now taken to expressing that their work isn’t over yet and that “this is only the beginning.” In the Supreme Court’s concurring opinion written by Clarence Thomas, court decisions protecting contraception access and same-sex marriage, as well as a case striking down the validity of anti-sodomy laws, were all called into question.

The same logic that pushed legal abortion access into uncertainty now seeks to do the same to a growing list of other expressions of self-creation that fall outside of a certain totalizing worldview.

None of this should suggest that the state exists for whatever “us” that could be articulated, that it would do so if the “right” people were in power, or that the present state of affairs is the result of the state apparatus being hijacked by “corruption” and “greed.” What has been hitherto articulated is the normal functioning of this stinking leviathan, for it – like every state and civilization before it – is necessarily premised upon the denial of self-creation and bodily autonomy for its very existence. Since the days of the Kings of Sumer, this way of life that has long become a unified totality across the globe has been dependent of the expropriation of life. It should be understood that what is being debated in the halls of power is not whether or not abortion — or any of the other hot button issues — should be protected or denied. Rather, what is being debated is the precise shape that the expropriation of life will take in a specific territory within the monstrous system that devours our bodies. In the end, there is no place within this mode of relation that would allow for self-determination in any meaningful capacity.

The reality of this collective expropriation of our lives and its subsequent immiseration is felt on a generalized scale by the captives of mass society. This recognition of a shared immiseration demonstrates itself in moments of unrest triggered by yet another humiliation suddenly dropped upon the excluded multitude of this world. In the lead up and subsequent aftermath of this most recent humiliating gesture, the insult has galvanized indomitable hearts that align themselves with the ever-present entropy that threatens the order of domination. The more decisive and confrontational ones have opted for campaigns of nocturnal infernos aimed at the numerous patriarchal institutions determined to deny us our bodies. As these actions have replicated and spread rapidly across this settler state, “Jane’s Revenge” has become a credible threat against the existent in a matter of weeks. Other clandestine actions to assert the sovereignty of our bodies have taken the form of grey market importation and DIY manufacture

of common abortifacients like misoprostol and the proliferation of ancestral abortion techniques.

Yet, most people trapped alongside us within the spectacle of this mass society have yet to fully realize their capacity and potential for self-creation, and subsequently maintain a passive spectator relationship to the unfolding disaster of this way of life. In turn, despite visceral feelings of anger and existential dread in the face of the dominant reality violently forced upon the world, the avenues of action are unclear and the horizons towards something different are obscured by an impenetrable fog. Often, anxieties about and against the existent manifest in mass demonstrations symptomatic of a desperate collective expression of a desire for something else and an attempt to alleviate an extant nagging tension with no obvious resolution. More often than not, these confused attempts to influence the conditions of existence do little more than physically exhaust its participants with little else to show for the effort. However, within a demonstration — regardless of how otherwise impotent — a disruption of the normal flows of capitalism occurs alongside the concentration of kinetic energy. In the newly opened terrain following this assemblage of frustrated people, the possibility for this kinetic force to escape the confines of the dominant reality, ushering in the opening of all possibilities within the space of the rupture. This rupture, in all of its beauty and terror, presents within itself the potential to develop into the generalized revolt of an insurrection and the destruction of all existing social relations. Unfortunately, the types of ruptures necessary for the generalization of revolt and to threaten the continued existence of the techno-industrial nightmare that holds us hostage are far from the normal or even occasional result of reactive mass demonstrations.

Instead, the far more familiar results is that the various forms of mass demonstration create fertile ground for the machinery of recuperation and assimilation. Endless sidewalk marches, die-ins, and a litany of other sometimes creative but otherwise universally ineffectual and meaningless tactics grind down the less resilient participants, pushing them to retreat back to the mundanity of daily life, disappointed and exhausted. The ones who take well to the

mind-numbing regimentation of activity demanded by the movement managers are assimilated into the operation of this counterinsurgency operation; they are ushered into the “legitimate avenues for change” and offered social and sometimes even monetary compensation for their good work. These are the activists, the specialists of both the assimilation of rebellious attitudes and the fine-tuning of the dominant system’s repressive efficiency. These individuals — almost always hyper-socialized and overly well-adjusted to the dominant order — are the foot soldiers of recuperation that ensure the flattening of any rebellious attitudes that may grow to offer a way out of this mode of existence. Finally, in the ideal functioning of this dynamic, those who remain determined enough to survive the grinding regimentation of activity yet also remain resolute enough to refuse the assimilationist temptations, those who have managed to keep the insurrectionary fire alight within their hearts, determined to find something beyond the immiseration of our lives that is offered to us at every turn — these individuals that refuse assimilation are isolated, brutalized, and disappeared into the carceral system.

In the hours and days following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, this dynamic played itself out in an almost comically predictable fashion. In the time leading up to the official reversal, the perceived tensions concerning the issue seemed to threaten to reignite the smoldering embers of the George Floyd Uprising that still hangs fresh upon the popular consciousness only a mere two years later. With the tensions underlying the insurrections of 2020 still going unresolved, paired with the ongoing albeit ignored immiseration of the COVID-19 pandemic, circumstance encourage the assumption by many within the constellation of radical milieus that the final revocation of abortion protections and subsequent criminalization would reignite the insurrectionary fire. This hope, however, did not come to pass. As these words are laid onto paper, there has yet to be a collective firestorm in response to this most recent humiliation, and any suggestion that it might still happen has since faded. The ritual of demonstrations that are endlessly and fruitlessly paraded around by movement managers like some form of miserable circus show was the unfortunate rule rather

than exception. In limited capacities, a certain resolve to get beyond this miserabilist reality that denies us life manifested in the actions of certain individuals; one notable instance includes the considerable vandalism delivered during a march in Atlanta, Georgia brought some excitement to the day. Likewise, the usual suspects in the Pacific Northwest similarly redecorated the dull artificiality of their urban environments. This, however, is almost mundanely common in much of the Pacific Northwest and indicates the possible limits of such tactics. Outside of this, there were two other more surprising cities that found themselves amongst the outliers.

The first of these two cities is Los Angeles, where demonstrators confronted police and, at various points, were successful in subverting and exceeding the logistical capacities of the police. Los Angeles has a well-known and storied history of riot and rebellion — not the least of which being the '92 Rodney King riots — and against this historical context and its living memory, the notion of contemporary conflictuality against the police in the city does not feel so unfamiliar, even if such occurrences are less common now than in previous generations. The other city that found itself amongst the outliers of social rebellion in the wake of Roe's reversal, however, is one that truly feels unfamiliar in such a position: Phoenix, Arizona.

The sprawling metropole that suffocates the Northern reaches of the Sonoran Desert — a blight premised upon poisoning and bleeding dry the fertile river valley that once thrived beneath this monument of colonial terror — is one location of many in the colorful history of rebellion in the Southwestern borderlands. This history largely reflects the desert ecology it is staged within, with subversive acts tending towards the dispersed and solitary, while the types of mass action and rioting that are beloved and fetishized by anarchists the world over are far and few between. Certainly, there are a number of more isolated and still comparatively small scale moments of rupture in the Salt River Valley, including but not limited to: the confrontation to shut down an NSM demonstration in 2011 (an account of which is written in *I Saw Fire: Reflections on Riots, Revolt, and the Black Bloc*); Trump's 2017 visit to the city, drawing a massive crowd and a subsequently heavy-

handed police response; and lastly, in the moment of rupture during the summer of 2020, several nights of rioting and the looting a major mall in one of the wealthiest parts of the Phoenix metro was only stopped by ruthless, indiscriminate police repression in regards to the former, and triggered a Homeland Security investigation in regards to the latter (a brief reflection on Phoenix's participation in the uprisings can be found in *Phoenix Rising: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Valley of the Sun*).

While each of these moments (and particularly, that long, beautiful and tragic weekend in the summer of 2020 where so many long standing limits were finally surpassed) deserve our recognition and memory alongside dozens of other instances of expressive action and bravery towards the realization of freedom that went unmentioned here, the contemporary history of mass unrest in Phoenix seems to lack any instance that matches what might be expected from a city of its size (much less, what would be needed to meaningfully subvert a city of its size). There is a seemingly endless supply of factors and excuses — some more valid or satisfying than others — to explain the impasse in which the city festers. In all likelihood, it's probably that there will never be a succinct and satisfying answer for why Phoenix has such an incredible capacity to disappoint. Yet, between the innumerable failures that Phoenix has delivered upon generations of subversive hearts, there have been moments that glimmered of success, pointing to the horizon obscured from view for so long, proving that our failures are not and never have been inevitable. While we may never fully articulate the truth at the heart of this sprawling parking lot of a city, the suggestions of something more and the overwhelming sense that our answers — no matter how imperceptible and intangible they feel right now — do indeed exist somewhere fuels an (admittedly, annoying) sense of obligation to write, speak, and think about this place whenever the social peace is disrupted in any notable manner.

This is particularly true when such a disruption finds attention beyond our immediate region and even when (perhaps *especially when*) that moment of rupture still ultimately brings us back to the all too familiar fallow pastures of defeat. Thus, on the first night that Roe

v. Wade was overturned and the tensions on the ground erupted, we were surprised to find in the aftermath that, for once, our miserable hometown was among the outliers of conflict against the state. So, we returned once again to our solemn duty to think about this place and attempt to describe its intricacies, its character, and the ways the miles of concrete and asphalt expanse influence how we relate to one another and the world around us, necessarily determining the possibilities that lay before us. It is our naïve hope that in this practice, we can begin to articulate possible ways through the impenetrable fog created by our longstanding impasse and begin to find the infinite possibilities of life that have been hidden from us.



Social Peace, Anti-Social War: (Aspirationally) Refusing the Management of Revolt



Things move quickly in moments of crisis. When the decision was made to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and roll back yet another of the meager “protections” offered to us by the rotting corpse that constitutes this settler-colonial project, it was still the early morning hours in Arizona. Only the early-birds would have seen the news when it initially broke. Before long, as the day’s momentum continued to grow, the news found its way to the various networks scattered across this festering wound of urban sprawl and by mid-day, the first call for a demonstration had been made. The charlatans that succeeded in seizing upon the morning’s momentum constituted a coalition of local socialist and communist groups that, without a doubt, possessed the final analysis and were uniquely positioned to deliver it to the miserable proles of Phoenix. These three groups in question are the PSL, the DSA, and — in a refreshing break from the alphabet soup naming convention of leftist formations — Radical Women Phoenix. Other groups collaborated on the organization of this demonstration outside of this coalition, chief among them being BLM Metro Phoenix and Planned Parenthood. Taken together, these groups represent an eclectic mix of ideological positions, with the PSL proselytizing their confused brand of Marcyite Marxist-Leninism, the DSA naturally pulling weight for democratic socialism and likely pinning their hopes on Bernie Sander’s post-mortem 2024 or perhaps 2028 presidential victory, while Radical Women Phoenix was borne from the International Marxist Tendency,

whom they split from presumably because selling Trotskyist newspapers to uninterested people wasn't cutting it anymore. Of course, BLM Phoenix Metro is the official chapter of Black Lives Matter, while Planned Parenthood is the well-known nationwide reproductive rights non-profit. Between somewhat odd mix of groupings, a common cause was found through which differences could be put aside: *the management of revolt*.

In the face of another humiliation by the settler regime and the possibility of a subsequent rupture, it seems only natural that state communists, reformist socialists, and non-profits alike — each with their own investments in the present state of things, seeking only to tweak the precise action of its functioning — would come together into a shared position of managing and assimilating any and all energy that might threaten to spread into generalized social war and open the possibility of genuine freedom. For the task at hand, there is an obvious choice for the terrain of engagement; the space in question is the most reliable of the typical protest sites in the Phoenix area in terms of social management and counter-insurgent means: the Arizona State Capitol complex.

The Capitol complex in Central Phoenix is a type of juggernaut for would-be social ruptures, crushing promising moment after promising moment each time there is a call to convene on the site. Geographically, it is designed specifically for repressive means, as is the rest of the city; it sits in an odd part of the city, away from the primary economic arteries that might risk disruption during an insurrectionary moment. The front of the Capitol, where the courtyard is located and where any demonstration at the complex would naturally be inclined to position itself, faces a side street that generally sees little motorized traffic and functionally zero foot traffic. Additionally, the courtyard is not visible from any other place besides that sleepy street that runs by it, meaning that every protest that convenes upon the Capitol complex will, in all likelihood, be completely isolated, allowing even fairly large and well attended demonstrations to come and go entirely ignored and otherwise unacknowledged by the city at large. To add to the strategic misery for anyone that gets drawn into yet another demonstration

here, the three buildings that constitute the complex form three sides of a square. As a result, once a mass of people find themselves inside of the Capitol courtyard, there is only one clear direction back out of the area; the other two exits, formed by the spaces at the corners that the three buildings meet at, are narrow gaps that are easily bottlenecked and turned into choke-points by the police. The fourth side of the square that serves as both the entrance and exit is easily monitored and secured by the police. Functionally, drawing a protest into the State Capitol's courtyard is to place them in a kettle already three-quarters complete. As a possible terrain of engagement, this place is a strategic nightmare from start to finish. Yet, despite its glaring tactical disadvantages, the years of defeat within and because of this space, and the exasperated sighs that make themselves heard with every call to convene at the Capitol, it still occupies a space on the shortlist of every self-described organizer in the Valley.

While the more humorous conclusion might be to assume this is due to a unique lack of creativity amongst Phoenix residents or perhaps a widespread affliction of heat-induced amnesia (this still might be the case), it seems that the answer closer to the truth is far more mundane. For social managers of all kinds, this ugly assemblage of Classical Revival architecture simultaneously resolves two problems at once: firstly, it provides a power symbol of state-power that offers the indignant souls — misled by one failed party of electoralists and not one but two groupings that each decided Trotskyism wasn't irrelevant enough for their liking — without providing the real threat to state power that would require a fundamental change in the dominant mode of existence. Secondly, while the repressive terrain of the Capitol complex was originally designed for the policing operations of our old friends in blue, geography tends to be blind in many regards, and so a space manufactured for the ease of social management by the regime's official police can also be utilized to similar ends by police of another type. As such, through the simple act of convening in this pitiful little courtyard that no one has a reason to go to otherwise, the entire stage is set for another public display of rebellious dreams being smashed upon the ground. However, all tactics and theories have their limits, and those limits can be and inevitably will be overcome.

As the hour to convene came to pass, our Marxist friends in charge for the evening, alongside their non-profit compatriots, had few pretensions about the type of passivity they wished to maintain. Behind all of the rhetoric about fighting back, class warfare, and revolution hides the far more pragmatic concerns in the heart of every party politician and party member; these are the concerns often forgotten by anarchists and we would do well to finally take them to heart. In the final analysis forged and perfected by our fraternal rivals, the focus of every action, regardless of its publicly stated intention, is to exploit the miserable sods that unwittingly showed up as a source for new memberships, as a canvassing opportunity, and to otherwise grow the party and suck its members dry with monthly membership dues. This was the strategic genius that our commissars for the evening bestowed upon us.

The night's events began some distance away from the Capitol complex due to the police perimeter that limited access to the Capitol complex. As such, before the ritual display of ineffectuality upon the Capitol's steps could begin, a march through the city was first in order. Attendance on the first night was impressively large, but despite the clear numerical advantage of the moment, the party chaperons worked dutifully to ensure that the palpable tension and desire for something more interesting and dignified would not express itself. The march made its subdued journey up to the Capitol and around its perimeter before dutifully filing into the courtyard, successfully forfeiting any strategic advantages that might've been found up to this point. Throughout the planned portion of evening, various speakers from each of the organizing groups lectured the largely captive audience, speaking in the language of meaningless truisms and a shallow analysis distilled into soundbites ready-made for consumer society. As the legitimate right to speak endowed by the evening's managers changed hands again and again, each speaker with their own refreshing take concerning the corpses spilling from their mouths, the restless tensions within the crowd continued to multiply.

All the while, the police kept a watchful eye upon the studious captives inside of this odd choice for a lecture hall. In the air above,

a police drone provided additional aerial surveillance on behalf of the existent regime. The usage of this type of aerial surveillance is a seemingly novel occurrence. While it's unclear whether or not this is truly a new utilization of technology, it is — at the very least — an unfamiliar site prior to this point. In years prior and as recently as the city's participation in the revolts of 2020, the far more familiar surveillance techniques chosen by Phoenix's policing agencies included helicopters, roof-top reconnaissance teams, the more old school red squads (rebranded to the effect of "community liaisons"), and the infamous mobile facial recognition camera operated by the voyeuristic perverts with the Arizona Counter-Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC). Whether or not this is genuinely the first utilization of an aerial surveillance drone by Phoenix police is beside the point; what is important here is the increased normalcy and proliferation of new technologies of control.

We are currently at a crossroads, with the so-called "Fourth Industrial Revolution" (4IR) rapidly shaping the socio-technological terrain of tomorrow. This trajectory has existed for some time now, but intensified dramatically during the initial wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns. Through the course of those early pandemic days, 4IR technological roll-out accelerated, particularly in the realm of the 5G telecommunication technologies that will enable the creation of the planned society of technological control. The innocuous face of this project of a completely manufactured, digitized, and measured existence takes the form of (but is not limited to) "smart cities," "smart homes," various work-from-home and distance learning technologies, autonomous delivery robots and autonomous vehicles — each of which invite a greater dependence upon the burgeoning technological panopticon. While each of these ostensibly "neutral" technologies invites its own type of impoverishment of life, it is better for our purposes here to illustrate that our current miserabilist reality inextricably ties these "neutral" technologies back into a vast array of undeniably repressive technologies — the increasing utilization of aerial police drones being but one manifestation. Other manifestations include the nightmarish robot police dogs designed by Boston Dynamics and the autonomous security robots that have begun to make

increasing appearances particularly on college campuses (alongside the aforementioned delivery robots). While the former technology is still relatively limited in its current adoption and the latter, in its current form, is relatively easy to subvert (perhaps even providing good fun in the form of this shitty robocop getting pushed over into traffic or a body of water), each still demonstrate planned trajectories for technologies of control. Alongside aerial surveillance drones, these technologies seek to intensify and increase police capacities to project force and presence into all moments in space and time. As such, the time is now to study these technologies and implications they carry, to find new tactics of subversion before the next repressive totality begins.

Even within this burgeoning repressive technological nightmare, though, sometimes the best techniques are still of the analogue variety. Towards the end of the planned portion of the night's events, the right to speak was passed to a representative from BLM Phoenix Metro. In the middle of their speaking time, however, the power was cut by the police, effectively silencing the BLM speaker. In response to such a clear affront, the tensions that the movement managers had so adeptly kept in check began to gain in kinetic energy. After being denied the catharsis and release of revolt for hours and after being sufficiently humiliated by the police and the evening's organizers alike, control over the crowd began to slip away from the tender-palmed grasp of our brave vanguard party of graduate students. No longer would they guide the terrible, undisciplined masses to victory, for under the cover of a growing darkness, the leading light of this confusing mix of socialist tendencies would be extinguished. In a betrayal of the imminent global proletarian revolution, the undisciplined masses assembled here would fall victim to their individualistic, petty bourgeois base instincts; the stale chants pre-approved by the failed movement managers were quickly discarded in favor of far more crude and explicit chants. Chief among those chants was "Fuck Doug Ducey" — our long time pudgy fascist and former ice-cream salesman of a governor.

Before long, the more confrontational elements of the crowd began banging on the Capitol windows and doors. As intensity and anger grew at this vacant symbol of power and the empty suits present

inside, the simple banging of windows and doors became a more earnest and directed effort at a forced entry. Under the pressure of the crowd, the targets of these blows visibly bowed and wobbled, denying the satisfaction of structural failure by oh-so-slight of a margin. In the end, this inverted reenactment of January 6th would unfortunately not come to pass, and while the doors of the Capitol would certainly be subject to repair the following morning, entry would ultimately be denied. With the cowering politicians still inside escorted to the safety of the Capitol's basement, it was time for the police to finally let loose in an attempt to exceed the crowd's capacity for escalation. In a scene reminiscent of old legends and media about the Wild West, police began firing tear gas into the crowd from inside the upper levels of the Capitol building. Other units were already staged to flank the unruly mass, should it find the capacity to meet this escalation. While brave and determined individuals and crews managed to hold on for some time, redecorating various surfaces of the Capitol complex in the process, it became quickly apparent that those in attendance that evening were not prepared to meet the police's gambit. As such, the night drifted out into a disappointing and anti-climactic resolution, the previous potentials and kinetic energy of the assembled mass left unrealized yet again. The following two nights of actions saw increased repressive capacities and declining combative potential with each setting sun. By the following Sunday, all genuine confrontational capacity that had been seen on Friday had either been vacated or paled in comparison to the limits that the police came prepared to meet. The two demonstrations that followed Friday night's spontaneous near-rupture largely yielded uninteresting dynamics far too familiar in the world of performative, manufactured spectacles of faux-dissent. However, a few threads — whether simply humorous or genuinely informative — are identifiable amongst the otherwise unremarkable events.

To begin, Saturday's demonstration was called by a different mix of organizers, who were largely unfamiliar — at least to the authorship of this piece. In response to a new set of organizers attempting to manage this moment of precarity, Friday's "Coalition of the Confused"

denounced these unknown upstarts. In a statement released on social media, it was stated that since these organizers were unknown to our ever reliable vanguard, this somehow necessarily implied that attending this next action on the Capitol's steps could be "dangerous." True to fashion, no specific indications of a disproportionate threat of danger beyond what is implied by any other protest was articulated. In spite of this statement, the action went forward and was reasonably well attended, albeit smaller than the previous night. Again, it would be situated at the Capitol, but this time outside of the courtyard instead, for the police had set up additional fencing around the perimeter to prevent entry. This strategic decision is interesting, since the courtyard is a more easily controlled terrain, but presumably, the police wished to avoid a repeat of the bad optics that yesterday had yielded. Little of interest happened through the majority of the night, the unsurprising result of a protest characterized by the crowd simply sitting in front of a chain link fence, chanting. This trajectory momentarily changed — again towards the end of the night, in the cover of darkness — when the sudden arrest of a medic triggered a spontaneous subversive spark that culminated in one of the two layers of fencing being torn down. This, unfortunately, was the high point for revolutionary aspirations and was followed quickly by a number of indiscriminate detentions and arrests. Thankfully, because of their indiscriminate nature, the handful of charges handed down would be dropped the following afternoon due to a lack of probable cause.

One unexpected moment of this second night offers possible questions regarding broader rhetorical strategies. In a moment of unfortunate internal conflict, a dispute arose over the presence of an open-carrying demonstrator, whose weapon made a group of youths uncomfortable. In the following confrontation, the demonstrator in question was subsequently ejected from the space. While it should go without saying that this confrontation and ejection is perhaps questionable in regards to an ethic of respecting a diversity of tactics, it raises a potentially instructive question about how messaging around the relationship between firearms and revolutionary (or insurrectionary, if you prefer) possibilities should be communicated to the inbound

generation. From what could be ascertained, the concerns raised by the youths in question relied upon the familiar rhetoric of progressive gun-control advocacy and was bolstered by the presence of armed right-wing counter-protestors on the peripheries of the action. Of course, this limited thinking regarding firearms transcends demographics and is not limited to the younger generation, and it is naturally not an inevitable mode of thinking for them. Instead, what is interesting here is to consider more broadly what it means for this generation — who has been so undeniably brutalized by a seemingly unstoppable wave of mass violence in schools and public gathering spaces alike — to have a relationship to firearms that neither reproduces the rhetoric of and realities implied by liberal gun-control strategies, nor falls into the type of fetishization and specialization of armed struggle that has been the unfortunate result of the proliferation of radical gun clubs and gun ownership.

In the final day of this post-Roe weekend, yet another increase in force capacity occurred, with the Arizona National Guard mobilizing to construct defensive perimeters around the Capitol complex and assist with the overall logistics of control for the evening; a drop in both attendance and militancy accompanied this increase in force capacity. As a result, the only aspect of this final day worth noting here is that, in stark contrast to two days prior — which, while disappointing in its ultimate resolution, was inarguably brimming with imminent potential — by Sunday, all subversive desires had left the room. In their place, a truly remarkably pathetic display of impotence manifested; the window through which a moment of rupture could pass had long been closed by the repressive capacities of both the state and the movement managers who stifled possibility from the outset.

This broad, lengthy and somewhat hastily written narrative of the weekend's events does not seek to articulate every aspect of what occurred, despite what its length might otherwise suggest. Necessarily and accidentally, certain things were omitted, to which those who feel remiss should readily take up writing about. Instead, what is sought here is a broad articulation of the more interesting occurrences to which we were privy, and to put those observations into conversation

with the ideas borne from the experiences and conversations of the authorship. We hope, in turn, that enough threads to pull on have been provided — explicitly or implicitly — to find a way out of the strategic impasse that Phoenix has festered in. This city particularly must be approached with intention, for its very geography and urban planning seeks to repress. Its wide avenues placed on a near-perfect grid allow for the maximization of police line-of-sight and force projection; the economic flows and arteries are dispersed and obscured, preventing would-be insurgents from finding targets that would be meaningfully disruptive; even the vacant symbols of power are designed with intention, creating their own strategic impasses, in addition to isolating them from view. All the while, the grifters at the core of every party formation and non-profit maintain an iron grip on the city, seizing the narrative and exploiting every moment of heightened intensity for all that its worth.

Nothing is inevitable, however. Every time the dominant reality within this city breaks down, a glimmer towards the horizon can be faintly seen. To follow that small beacon towards the horizon requires a total reevaluation of the over-familiar and long stagnant approaches that the various subversive impulses of Phoenix continue to reach for. This does not necessarily mean that everything will be thrown out (although it seems likely that nearly everything will be), but at the very least, the relationships to these approaches will need to change.

Take, for example, the location that the actions described here center upon: the Arizona State Capitol. Hopefully, the strategic impasse it creates has been made clear. While the space presents overwhelming disadvantages, it is not without limits; every approach necessarily has limits, and those limits can be overcome. While that limit was felt but decisively left unmatched during the final weekend of June 2022, a possible avenue to overcome it was revealed almost exactly two years prior in May 2020, with a similar set of contextual dynamics at play. The first demonstration in solidarity with the insurgents of Minneapolis in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder eventually found itself descending upon the Capitol's courtyard. Once there, the usual repressive dynamics began to take shape. Baited

into the courtyard, the crowd faced down officers at one of the two aforementioned bottlenecks. Meanwhile, more police staged for flanking maneuvers, echoing much of what was described earlier. Similarly, tensions hung in precarity for some time before the hammer of repression fell. Instead of the familiar collapse of subversive intent, however, what happened instead is that those present dispersed back into the city, evading entirely the overwhelming concentration of force present at the Capitol. As the police sluggishly attempted to coordinate a response, the far more spontaneous and fast-moving crowd had already escaped their control, the sound of spray paint and shattering glass accompanying their movements. What materialized in this opening was several nights of rioting on a scale largely novel to the city and the looting of one of the wealthiest malls in the region. Thus, in a maneuver that calls to mind the subtle push-and-pull of judo which erupts suddenly into a singular dramatic gesture, when the limits presented by the Capitol's hostile geography had been met alongside an overwhelming concentration of force into a singular area, those limits were suddenly overcome — not by attempting to hold that space in the face of a much stronger opponent, but by using the strength of that opponent against them, pushing into the voids created by their own movements. In the wake of this maneuver, the terrain of possibility had been opened for the partisans of the riot, inviting anarchy into the world as a lived reality.

This is but one example of many possible openings for play and experimentation to break the long standing limits present in Phoenix. Finding a way to the horizons presently hidden from us and into the lives that were stolen from us will necessarily take time; what is asked of the insurgent hearts of this vast Sonoran Desert is a practice of experimentation, intentionality, play and imagination. It is a practice of self-creation aimed at subverting the metropolis that keeps us imprisoned, that endlessly fuels itself with the corpses of the immiserated. The ways we relate to ourselves, each other and the world around us must be overturned on the most fundamental level; our approaches and aspirations must reflect that fact. We are — collectively and individually — in a state of always-becoming, unfixed at any given

moment by the very necessity of what it means to be alive, and so our approaches must be as well; we need to be engaged in a constant practice of experimentation, evaluation and reevaluation towards a life truly worth living, towards things we never thought possible. In the simple, resonant phrasing of the late Fredy Perlman: *anything can happen*.

Further Reading



I. *Phoenix Rising: Insurgency & Counterinsurgency in the Valley of the Sun* by anonymous

II. *Blood on the Sand: The Department of Justice Investigates Phoenix PD* by anonymous

III. *The Master's Tools* by tom nomad

IV. *Towards an Army of Ghosts* by tom nomad

V. *Short Circuit: A Counterlogistics Primer*

This text was originally published anonymously on It's Going Down at itsgoingdown.org on July 15th, 2022. This zine was designed and published independently by the Counterflow Collective without relation to either the writer(s) or publisher.

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Counterflow Distro

2022