

MUTUAL AID MONTHLY

A Production of Des Moines Mutual Aid

March 2024



Anarchy and Relationships

BB Crow

Relationship anarchy (RA) applies anarchist principles to relationships. Anarchism focuses on a set of practices and theories based around the rejection of hierarchy and the embrace of horizontal cooperative organization. When we apply anarchism to our relationships, we can form relationships based on our own wants and needs rather than automatically assuming traditional societal roles and rules. It's a "build your own adventure" for relationships!

With RA, we have the freedom to co-create customizable, intentional relationships with each individual we have a relationship with. Practitioners value individual autonomy, community interdependence and an emphasis on open and direct communication. Notably, this philosophy acknowledges that romantic relationships are not necessarily more important than platonic relationships.

Relationship anarchists often practice some form of non-monogamy, meaning they have multiple romantic and/or sexual partners. This is not cheating, which involves deceit and lies, but consensual non-monogamy, which implies that everyone has agreed to the non-monogamous relationship structure and is fully aware of their partner's other relationships.

RA differs from more generic forms of non-monogamy in its emphasis on non-hierarchical structures. While not every relationship you have will look exactly the same - and shouldn't! - relationship anarchists focus on exploring each relationship individually and developing them organically over time.

Relationship anarchy provides us with a model of approaching relationships without a predetermined set of rules and an opportunity to practice anarchist political values in one's personal relationships.

We Mourn Our Lost Elders

But are we dishonoring their legacies?

Subcomandante Ronnie

Many of our elders have passed on recently, finally finding rest after a lifetime in battle.



We lost Klee Benally on December 30th. Klee was a Diné (Navajo) anarchist theorist, traditional dancer, musician, mutual aid organizer, and front-line activist who took action in defense of sacred lands and against liberal co-optation of radical struggle. Klee is remembered for his sharp analysis rooted in Indigenous knowledge. He provided guidance to radicals of color disillusioned or for-

gotten by 'democratic socialists' and left liberals who tokenized Natives where it suited them and turned decolonization into a toothless hashtag. He was only 49 when he passed, but he was unquestionably an elder. Klee, we will dedicate the end of arizona to you.

On January 12th, we lost Sekou Odinga, a cofounder of the Bronx Black Panther Party and later a guerrilla with the Black Liberation Army. Sekou went underground in 1969 after fellow Panthers were murdered and he was wanted for a pig that found himself dead. During his decade-plus underground, Sekou and his comrades expropriated stolen wealth from the state and took part in the prison escape of Assata Shakur, who made her way to Cuba and is living there to this day. Sekou was captured in 1981 and was imprisoned for his bold actions until his release in 2014. He was 79 when he passed. Rest in Power.

It is always a tragedy when we lose our elders to the grave or to the prisons. Just as tragic, I fear we are not replacing them. We must honor them, not as untouchable heroic historical events, but as the shoulders we stand on as we further the liberation work they handed down to us.





Knapp Didn't Kill Himself

What "pristine" bodies in burned cars tell us about politics
Comrade Pat

On March 29th, 2014, a fire started in the Younkers building in downtown Des Moines. It quickly turned into a massive blaze which destroyed the building. That same night, in a remote part of rural Guthrie County, another fire was consuming a car. The next day, police found a body in the wreckage.

It belonged to Bob Knapp, a local developer, power broker, and criminal who owned properties surrounding the Younkers building. Inexplicably, his remains have been described as "not severely burned" or "pristine" by the Des Moines Register. Knapp's death was ruled a suicide, caused by "cuts of the upper and lower extremities complicated by smoke and soot inhalation."

Before the bizarre determination that the death was self-inflicted, the State Fire Marshal's office had considered foul play. Said one employee about the death's timing with the Younker's fire: "something is weird here." No shit. People don't generally kill themselves by cutting their ankles and wrists and then stepping into burning vehicles.

The servile local media's lack of questioning of the eminently-questionable official narrative is astounding. One might reasonably suspect that Knapp didn't kill himself, but was murdered because of something related to his development dealings or the Younkers blaze. I will submit some FOIA requests around his death, but don't expect some grand conspiracy to reveal itself.

Instead, what we should take from this incident is that the machinations of the local political economy, the intrigue between developers like Knapp and his rivals, takes place on a level deeper than city council meetings. Decisions are made far from the public eye by rich men in smoky back rooms or Eyes Wide Shut-style parties; policy affected not by votes, but raw economic imperative, consecrated not in meeting minutes, but in blood.

This flyer is a production of Des Moines Mutual Aid, which is a local network of anarchists, communists, and socialists building community autonomy from capitalism and the state. Below are our points of unity - basically, the political and social outlook which binds us together.

0. We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1. We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people's needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2. We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don't rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3. We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people's lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4. We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

If you want to get involved, let a collective member know. For more information, including how to donate, visit iowamutualaid.org.