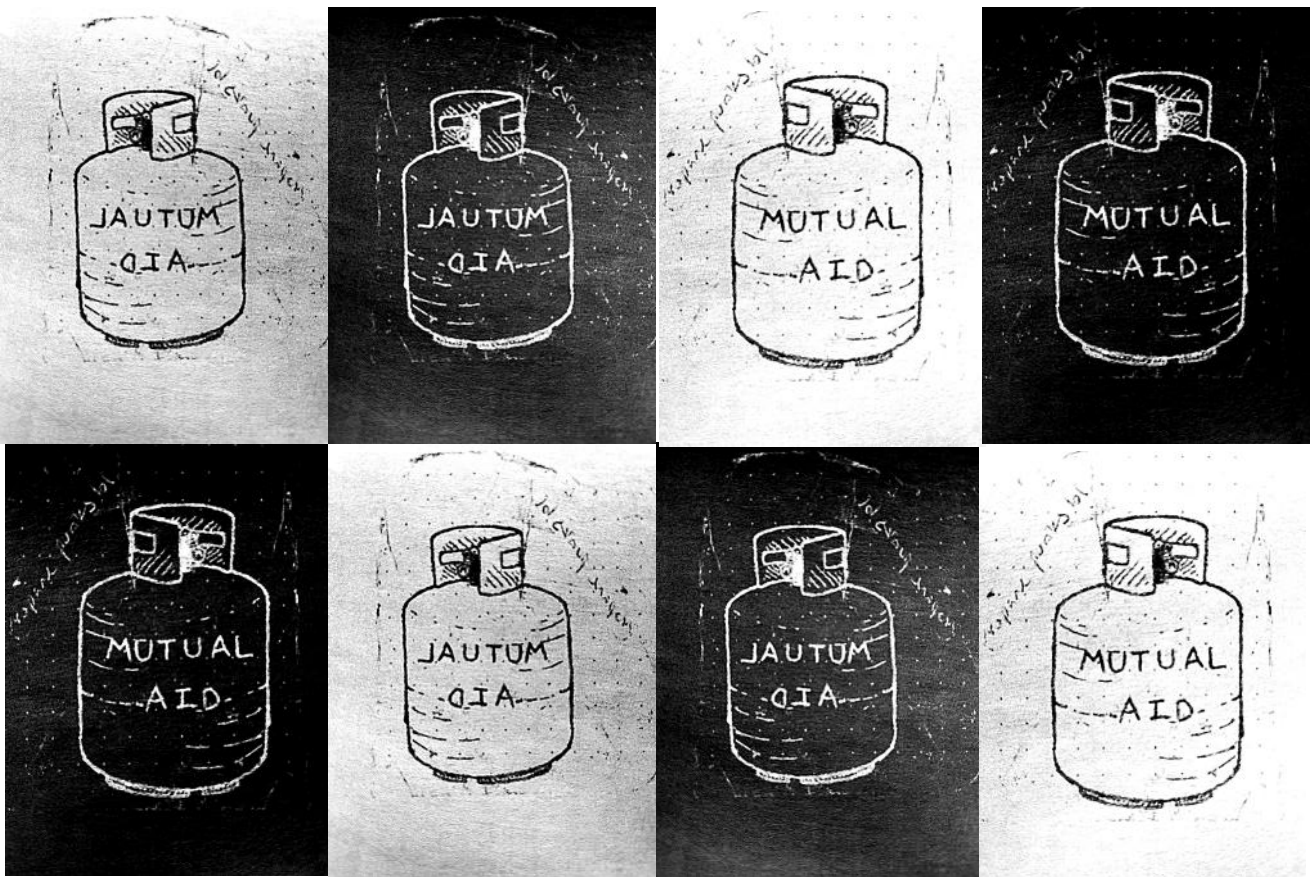


# The Pro(pains) of Unity

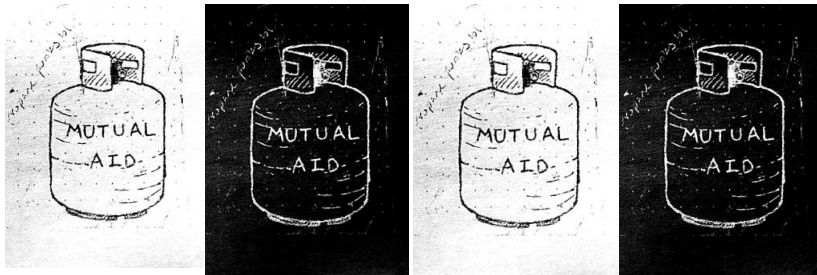


Thanks for picking up this zine! In the following pages, you will find an in-depth analysis of each of Des Moines Mutual Aid's Points of Unity. Each explanation was written by an individual member of the collective and does not necessarily represent the entire group's interpretation of each point.

Please also utilize the "Glossary of Terms" at the end of the zine to familiarize yourself with ideas mentioned throughout, as well as other concepts often used in political/ideological discussion among comrades.

Our intention is to encourage each other to reflect deeply on these points as we go about our organizing and open a space to continue discussion towards understanding, if not ideological unity.

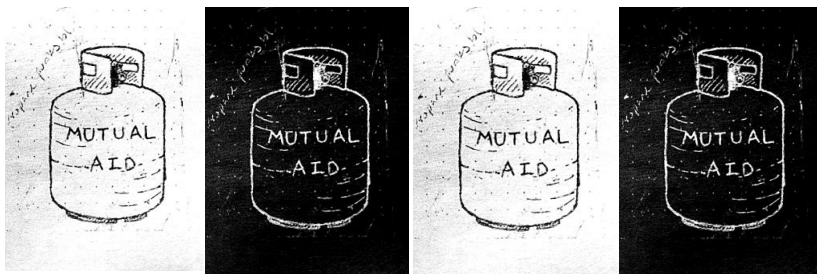
Solidarity Forever,  
Des Moines Mutual Aid



■ ■ ■

**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 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.



We do not seek to either re-create or reform the capitalist state in our actions or goals. We seek to abolish the capitalist state completely and build a world where communities can determine their own futures.

We know from firsthand experience that the state does not prioritize human survival, but rather will do anything to continue making profits for the ruling capitalist class via the exploitation of the majority of the world's people and natural resources. This exploitation includes, but is not limited to, genocide, enslavement, incarceration, and the wage system. In order for profit to exist, a lot the majority of people must suffer. Where there is capitalism, there is poverty. The Indigenous activist group, Red Nation, explains further that "Capitalists look to the state to manage the poor, because capitalist prosperity is impossible without poverty. After all, there is no wealth to accumulate without a laboring poor forced to sell its labor to survive."<sup>1</sup> Wealth never trickles down to those who need it because capitalism necessitates poverty both as a means to exploitation and profit, and also as a disciplinary mechanism: work, or be reduced to living in a tent and flying a sign at intersections.

This exploitation is coerced through the threat of state violence that comes along with failure to conform to the capitalist's rules, a threat which is ever more present with new technology and surveillance strategies. Cameras on every street corner, microphones attached to every individual with a phone, and relentless police surveillance and violence in our communities enables the state to collect information on every person while instilling fear in our minds. Fear of incarceration and losing access to what few government services are available further encourages people to stay in line with capitalist state propaganda (if they're not already buying into the propaganda in the first place). Somewhat ironically, while the capitalist state fails to show up with services necessary to human survival, it violently intrudes in our lives when we try to make do without it. We strive to live in a world free from the overwhelming shadow of state surveillance and the propaganda that reinforces state hegemony. William C. Anderson addresses the path to this autonomy in *The Nation on No Map*. "Amid our everyday struggle to live and get closer to a freedom we've never known, much of what we have known will have to be uprooted. The violence we've grown accustomed to, which many would rather accept than challenge, out of a fear of the unknown, can and must be obliterated."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Melanie K. Yazzie, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, David Correia, Nick Estes, *Red Nation Rising: From Bordertown Violence to Native Liberation* (Oakland: PM Press, 2021), 70.

<sup>2</sup> William C. Anderson, *The Nation on No Map* (Chico/Edinburgh: AK Press), 38.

While we acknowledge our current entrenchment and inevitable participation in the capitalist economy (as individuals who need to earn money to access basic needs, and as an organization dependent on monetary funds to sustain mutual aid projects), we aim to no longer be reliant on capitalist institutions (either directly or indirectly) to do our work. We are witness to the waste and disparity of resources created by the capitalist economy. While many are left scrambling to access basic needs on account of lack of funds, overproduction of every product is prevalent for profits and marketing. The excess often only reaches those who need it by means of a tax write-off or a publicity stunt to gain more profit, and even this requires the receiver to be registered with the state.<sup>3</sup>

We know we have the capacity to produce everything for everyone, and we work towards a future where the entirety of our labor directly benefits ourselves and our community. We must ensure that everyone is able to access all that they need to live and grow without having to appeal to a higher authority, navigate the bureaucracy of pre-recorded phone lines and inaccessible office hours, or meet the certain criteria (such as having a government ID, falling into an income bracket, qualifying for government services, the list goes on...).

This is not a call for more (or more accessible) government services, it's a call for everyone to be able to live free of dependency on the capitalist state in all aspects of life. Lucy Parsons, a black anarchist organizer emphasized this point in a lecture from the early 1900s. "We look away from government for relief, because we know that legalized force invades the personal liberty of man, seizes upon the natural elements and intervenes between man and natural laws; from the exercise of force through governments flows nearly all the misery, poverty, crime, and confusion existing in society."<sup>4</sup> It's also important to note that while the theory of "autonomism," more academically speaking, was popularized in the 1970s and 80s by European leftists widening the scope of what is considered "labor" to include collective work not done for a wage (for example, reproductive and domestic labor), black and indigenous people, as well as many other marginalized communities across the globe, have practiced community autonomy for centuries.<sup>5</sup> Community autonomy is not just something we seek out of necessity, it is a means of destroying the systems that oppress us and building a society that will provide fulfillment and liberation for all.

The pathway to this future is not through representation, diversity, and "new perspectives" in the current state apparatus and elite ruling class circles. We refuse to recreate the system we fight to abolish so that it works to our own benefit, as this would inevitably be to the detriment of others. So long as the current system stands, oppression and exploitation will endure, though perhaps with friendlier faces calling the shots. Well-meaning individuals are powerless within a system created to wage violence. As William C. Anderson elaborates,

---

<sup>3</sup> For more on the co-optative power of modern nonprofits and their resistance to community autonomy, see *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* by INCITE!

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Parsons, "The Principles of Anarchism," (Chicago: 1905-1910).

<sup>5</sup> For examples of this, read Anderson's *The Nation on No Map* and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*. For further reading on European theories of autonomism, read Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri, Sergio Bologna, Paolo Virno, Mariarose Dalla Costa, and Silvia Federici.



“Abolition demands that we not sit by hoping for a chosen few to make it inside any institution that will ultimately change them and not be fundamentally changed by them, as history has shown us countless times before.”<sup>6</sup> It’s not an issue of bad actors or selfish individuals that need to be voted out, but an inherent rottenness at the core of every function of the system. If the state is functioning, capitalism and white supremacy will continue to thrive. The change we seek necessitates a complete overhaul of the capitalist state apparatus itself. In the words of Fanon, “You do not disorganize a society...if you are not determined from the very start to smash every obstacle encountered.”<sup>7</sup>

Upon destruction of the capitalist state, the opportunity for community autonomy to make decisions that impact our lives and material circumstances will flourish, but we must not forget that even in the current moment, we don’t need a state or elected “representatives” to know what is best for ourselves and our communities. We demand the autonomy to address issues as our community sees fit, where everyone is given not just a seat at the table to determine our future, but also the tools and resources necessary to meet our own needs. Of course, this will come with its own challenges, namely the aforementioned state repression that is eager to smash any element that may pose a threat to its power. The communities we build must be prepared for this repression and be able to resist it, always keeping in mind that our goal is not to gain control over the capitalist state, but rather to abolish it entirely. “This is much bigger than us living and existing more ethically. It’s about building communities that actively challenge capital and the state every single day.”<sup>8</sup>

Mutual aid provides an avenue through which we can build and create some semblance of community autonomy. For example, in the immediate moment, we can work to fill the gaps where the state fails to provide basic needs (think gardens, free clinics, educational workshops, redistribution of any type of goods and services already held by people in our community), thus eliminating dependency on the state in different areas of our lives. Mutual aid also has the benefit of undermining the legitimacy of the state and increasing the people’s support for revolutionaries. We can support and organize actions that directly target the state and learn how to resist repression in the process. As a part of this process, we must educate ourselves and our community about the false narratives and propaganda that is fed to us by the capitalist state and encourage people to imagine the world they’d like to live in and brainstorm how to make it a reality. The possibilities are endless, but ultimately the path to community autonomy is ours to decide collectively.



---

<sup>6</sup> William C. Anderson , *The Nation on No Map* (Chico/Edinburgh: AK Press), 61.

<sup>7</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Presence Africaine: 1963), 3.

<sup>8</sup> William C. Anderson , *The Nation on No Map* (Chico/Edinburgh: AK Press), 116.

**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.**



By abolition we do not mean to defund or reform the carceral system and their agents. Our end goal is the complete eradication of the carceral system. This is nonnegotiable.

Abolitionists understand that the carceral system does not protect us, it is instead a system whose singular purpose is to protect capital from those whose exploitation it requires to function properly. We understand that the first police forces in what is currently known as the united states were created to clear the land by attempted genocide of the Indigenous Peoples for the purpose of occupying and exploiting the land and to capture enslaved Africans to work the stolen land. We understand this origin of intent for policing and prisons to continue to this day to look like criminalizing whole communities that capitalism has historically exploited and warehousing them for modern enslavement, i.e. prison labor. We understand that the vast majority of "punishable crimes" are offenses against capital, actions that would be impossible in a society post-capitalism.

To support the carceral systems is to believe that those outside of our communities know better than us by virtue of their ability to inflict violence to enforce their decisions about our lives. To support prisons and policing is to have no faith in ourselves and our neighbors to work out our disagreements in ways that benefit those that are affected by the conflict. As noted by Abolitionist Scholar Angela Davis, "This is the ideological work that the prison performs—it relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism."

We understand the role of modern mutual aid is to strengthen our communities to be resilient in the midst of crumbling capitalism and climate disaster. To strengthen a community is to continually work towards minimizing its reliance on, and protect us from, state and capitalist systems. It is to draw on our infinite amount of skills to ensure we have what we need to survive and thrive, together.

Further reading:

(all are available freely online)

*Are Prisons Obsolete?* - Angela Y. Davis

*What is Abolition?* - Critical Resistance

*What is an Abolition Futurist?* - Afrofuturist Abolitionists of the Americas

*What the Prison-Abolition Movement Wants* - Kim Kelly

*Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists* - Prison Research Education Action Project

*The End is The Beginning* - Eric Fleischmann

*Against Carceral Communism, For Abolition Communism!* - Simoun Magalin

**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.**

■ ■ ■

There's a lot here, but we should certainly ask a question about the most potentially loaded term in this point: what are "our communities," anyway?

First, let's state what a community isn't: it is not the people we like and get along with - or our imaginary versions of these people - plus their extended families. It is easy, on the left, to think mostly about certain cookie-cut or idealized versions of the groups of people we admire, or want to help, whose conditions of life we want to improve, and who we want to see freed from exploitation and oppression.

Our communities include people who we see and spend time with, and they also include people we never interact with or know exist. They include people who are sympathetic to our aims, people who are outright hostile to them, and people who do not have time to think about any of this. A person isn't excluded from community X because they don't share our perspectives on the nature of X, or because they don't come to community events, or because they don't even know that they happen, or because their ability to care about anything in the world has completely atrophied. The only way the phrase "working class" matters, as an enormous, global community is because it captures something real about people's circumstances that they may or may not be aware of and certainly don't all feel the same way about. The same is true of the LGBT "community," the black "community," and so on. These communities are internally complex and contradictory. We can't throw that away to make "community" a feel-good notion that is easy to think about and manipulate rhetorically, and most people who talk about having the "support of the community" are leaving that reality out of the picture.

Phil Neel says the following in his book *Hinterland*:

"The things that unite us are precisely the things that keep us separate from everyone else. It's what the French ultra-left communist Jacques Camatte called "The Material Community of Capital." When the entirety of the world has been subsumed by capitalist production, the only connection we have with others is our increasing shared dependence on the obscure machinations of the economy. Rather than some ideal identity of blood or nation or shared urban life, we are really closest in the way that we are yoked together in our myriad separations of country, subculture, and employment tier. In such a situation, allegiances can be sorted only by one's level of antagonism towards this material community of separation, rather than one's position within it. I am united with the migrant worker by our shared class, age, and rural background—but in each the specifics differ so wildly that they seem to prevent any direct connection based on simple life experience.



This is the unity of separation that is not yet the unity of any subjective orientation toward revolutionary potentials."

As a result, when we say we want to raise the political consciousness of our communities, hopefully we're not talking about only the layers of those communities that are ready to adopt a more radical *conscious* outlook on life in a racist, violent, misogynistic, and generally cruel system. Maybe we're talking about the people who we can reach with radical ideas today and tomorrow, and who will give our ideas a fair hearing. People whose lived experiences are such that they can be generalized into politics that resemble ours. Maybe we're talking about people who want to work together on the same projects and share our more humble, immediate aims. If that's who we mean here, we need to keep our eyes on the reality: nobody's ideas have "community" support in the meaningful sense of the word "community". They have, at best, the support of segments of a community.

Lived experience isn't politics. I have the lived experience of having a stomach. It doesn't mean I understand anything about stomachs, and it doesn't even mean I understand much about my own experience of my stomach, (even if I'm more likely than a jellyfish to understand stomachs). The goal of DMMA is to put forward a certain political view about the world - about the nature of oppression and exploitation - and to hope that in our interactions with all of the different kinds of people we run into, we can convince them that those views explain their lived experience pretty well. Obviously, some people will identify with those political ideas quickly. Others won't. To us, they are part of the community regardless. Politics asserts an explanation along with a course of action.

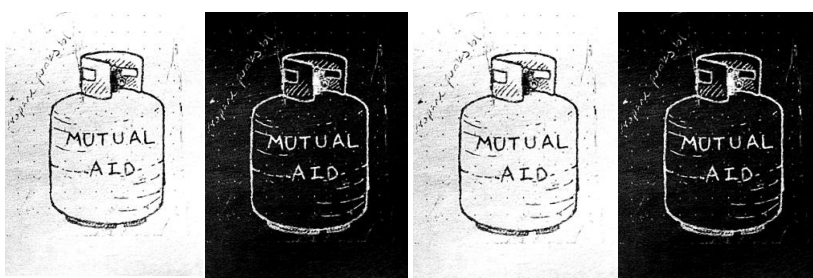
Part of the problem behind the instinct to equate one's lived experience with politics is the simple lack of time, for almost everyone on earth, required to reflect on one's life and put it into a broader context beyond their private experience. To the extent that we want to *convince* others of a *political* view, they need to have the luxury of time for some reflection - that means part of our activity has to be helping others meet their basic needs. There is a basic desire to help others and alleviate their suffering, and it is compatible with the commonplace idea that people are more willing to listen to those who work to improve their lives in substance, and have demonstrated a commitment to doing so.

Like the Neel quote might suggest - it's hard to get a real community - based on more than our shared alienation - "back" if there ever was one to begin with. We think we can get started on this task by trying to pull the loose threads of human life back together, without a middle-man - without commodity society. Not by charity or generosity, or even by trying to ameliorate people's worsening conditions - as worthwhile as that is - but by coming to see how pieces of our city, country, and world - and the people who live in it - are arranged (even if they were arranged by capital) to make "all this" run and exist from one week to the next. And, in doing that, we can come to understand how we might steal these pieces back from capital and fuse them together in productive ways that allow people to 1. fight for their liberation from the capitalist community 2. become part of a real community for the first time.

Things will get worse before they get better. Most people understand this on some level, as uncomfortable as it may be. In the process, we'll come to see that we *\*could\** depend on each other and we might - for the first time - come to depend on each other in ways we actually *\*want\** to - in ways that form a genuine community - rather than the ways in which capitalism has established for us. I might share an apartment complex with a number of other people, but we are not a community (except according to the flier that the landlord puts on the front door), even if we all believed we were. I don't depend on them. I pay my rent to my landlord every month, and *that* is why I have shelter - *not* my relationships with others in this building. If this housing were ours, if we were responsible for it directly and together, we'd have a chance at being a real community of people who share a stake in a common project - having a roof to live under.

Political education is the task of helping others see our relationships, within the material community of separation, for what they are: relationships mediated by market society and private property. Anything human in these relationships exists, at most, as 1. the leftover scraps between 10 hour work days and Netflix (and, sometimes, between the 'activism' we do that has the same psychological purpose as leaving pennies at the McDonald's tip jar), and 2. our conscious or unconscious opposition to the only community we really have right now - that of all being separated from each other.

Humanity can (and will) be free from capital and the various forms of oppression that grow like bacteria in the petri dish of class society, and the point of mutual aid is not merely to help, but to show - whether through conscious political engagement, or by creative forms of practical activity - that the dignity this system has taken from individuals can only be won back in the formation of real communities. Such communities aren't the conscious achievement of some organizers or activists, they're the organic byproducts of actual revolution, by normal people, against capitalism. Communities are not small enclaves of resistance - even if one could say resistance brings people together in some way. Communities are the result of humanity taking control of its destiny for the first time in communism. The job of communists is to foster this spirit of uncompromising dignity and the task of mutual aid is to facilitate these dignified acts.



**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.



Mutual aid, in the form we envision it, is not merely the act of making marginal improvements to peoples' lives as a matter of principle, but is one small component of the wider class struggle. We strive not only to shelter people from the unending wrath of capital, but to usher in a society which breaks its chains, a communist society. This means our collective is, first and foremost, a political one. Disagreement on all manner of things is inevitable and also generally desirable, presuming we are not destroyed by its fallout.

Disagreements over practical issues may at times feel divorced from ideology. Our stances may have as much to do with how we would like to spend our free time as with our political convictions. We cannot give every moment of our lives to the struggle for communism, no matter how much we would like to. In such cases, we should seek to understand and acknowledge what exactly it is that is causing the disagreement. Even among people who are in complete ideological agreement, analyzing the pros and cons of real-world decisions can be difficult when they do not neatly line up with our expectations. This will be further complicated by the fact that it is unlikely that any two people would actually be in total agreement about everything, let alone a whole ideologically diverse collective. Whatever we are discussing, debating, and deciding, we should be resolute in principle and flexible in action.

When it comes to actually resolving disagreements, it is easy to assume that in a collective with a commitment to its own political education, merely having correct ideas and explaining them well will be enough to convince others and resolve the disagreement. This is not always the case. We are conditioned to perceive criticism of what we feel are a part of our core beliefs as an attack on ourselves. Nobody is immune to this conditioning. In the United States, political differences are presented as a matter of opinion. These opinions are seen as a sacred form of self-expression, with everybody being entitled to theirs regardless of whether they know what they are talking about. In 1930, in the opening paragraph of *Oppose Book Worship*, Mao Zedong said,

“Unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it. Isn't that too harsh? Not in the least. When you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense. Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows, so why is it unjust to deprive you of the right to speak? Quite a few comrades always keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense, and for a Communist that is disgraceful. How can a Communist keep his eyes shut and talk nonsense?”

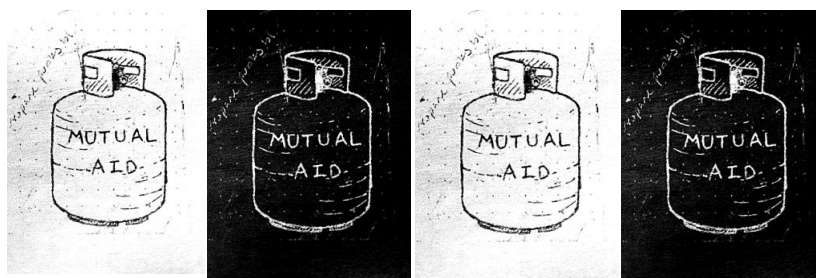
This section is entitled “No Investigation, No Right to Speak.” As far as our collective is concerned, we will certainly not be forcibly censoring anybody.

The lesson we should take from this quotation is that it is fine to remain silent and learn, and to admit we do not know. We should not expect everyone to have an opinion on everything right away, and we should seek to understand the nature of political questions to some extent before we fully develop our stance. To attempt to come to a consensus on a political or practical question, without first ensuring that everyone involved in the decision has an opportunity to reach a good understanding of what is being discussed, would be unprincipled. We must collectively prioritize political education, though it is ultimately the responsibility of each individual to actually engage in educating themselves.

We all must learn to take good-faith, comradely criticism as a gift. Criticism is a tool of revolutionary analysis and a necessary corrective to mistaken ideas and political naïveté. The process of disagreeing, criticizing, being criticized, learning, self-criticizing, and decision making can nevertheless be very emotionally draining. While this is no excuse for unprincipled unity or holding back on necessary discussion, it is important to be kind to ourselves and each other. We should hold ourselves to a high standard of comradely behavior. Personal differences will inevitably arise, whether as a result of political differences or just from human interaction, but care should be taken to ensure that personal differences do not hinder our ability to be good comrades.

When disagreements cannot be resolved, we ought to do our best to move on with our mutual aid work to the degree that it is not inhibited by the nature of the disagreement. There is no reason to expect that everyone in the collective will agree on everything, and as long as the disagreements are not fundamental enough to prevent the collective from working together towards our common goals, it is not the end of the world if we maintain our opposing stances and continue to work together and respect each other. When compromise is possible in such a situation, it may be beneficial for the collective. It may be that experience and education lead us to a point where the disagreement can be resolved at a later date, or it may be that we have to simply leave some questions unanswered.

*For further reading, see "How Critical Should Revolutionaries be of Each Other" by Scott H. on [massline.org](http://massline.org)*



# Glossary of Terms

Abolitionism - today, a movement dedicated to the immediate dismantling - abolition - of all police, prisons, and jails.

Anti-fascism - literally, against fascism. Broadly defined, this movement includes a spectrum from liberals to communists, but is generally used today to refer to left-wing youth street movements who confront neonazis physically.

Autonomy - the ability of individuals and communities to make decisions about their material circumstances without coercion or interference from the state, market forces, bureaucracies. This freedom is derived from the actor's self-sufficiency and willingness to take direct action in its own interest. Derived from the autonomismo movement of workers in 1970's Italy.

Capitalism - an economic system in which goods and services are produced primarily in order to exchange for money, and secondarily to meet needs. It is based on wage labor, markets, and private property. It is the relationship of two classes: those who purchase labor power in exchange for wages (capitalists), and those who have to sell their labor power in exchange for wages (workers).

Class - a social distinction based on one's relation to the means of production, which determine collective interests and strongly influence ideological development. Roughly, in capitalist society, the owners of the means of production are capitalists, while those without ownership of the means of production are forced to produce value in exchange for wages (the working class).

Colonialism - a form of inter-community or inter-state economic exploitation, by which one group claims control of, and extracts value from, the land of another group. This is only possible through means of extreme violence, forced labor, and the fostering of internal divisions. The initial surplus which spurred capitalist development in the 16 and 1700s was squeezed from the colonized people of Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

(Settler) Colonialism - a particular form of colonization practiced in much of the Americas where the colonizer tried (and failed) to ethnically cleanse the indigenous populations often replacing the labor that would have been forced out of them in conventional colonial arrangements with the importation of enslaved populations from other colonized lands (like sub-saharan Africa, India, and China). Rhodesia, apartheid South Africa, and modern-day Israel are other examples of settler colonies with varying characteristics.

Communism - (1) a classless, moneyless, stateless society in which property is held in common, where labor is worked 'by each according to their ability', and goods divided 'by each according to their need', often thought of as the horizon or endpoint of revolutionary left-wing projects. (2) communist, anyone who advocates such a system, particularly (in the 20th century) applied to and used by adherents of Marxism-Leninism.

**Demonstration** - a form of political action which attempts to influence decision-makers, the media, and/or the general population by demonstrating a movement's strength: in numbers, as in a big street march; in moral superiority, as in a 'die-in' or symbolic protest; in public support, as in a media-focused event. Can include direct action as a component, but the terms should not be confused.

**Direct action** - a form of political action in which the action itself affects the target of the action, usually by withholding something material or using physical force. Crucially, the mechanism of power is contained in the action, rather than in the decision of a higher authority, eg, a labor strike as opposed to a petition for higher wages. Examples include looting, strikes, insurrections, boycotts..

**Electoral politics** - any attempt to advance a political program or movement by means of voting in elections.

**Fascism** - a right wing ideology or movement. Best characterized as either the employment of colonial means of social control upon people in countries of the global north ("imperialism turned inward"), or as the capitalist class's reaction to an ascendant left.

**Imperialism** - for Marxists, a stage of capitalism in which industrial and finance capital dominates advanced capitalist states and demands new markets, raw materials, investment opportunities, and forms of labor discipline. These states search every corner of the planet for less developed nations to dominate and exploit. This necessarily draws advanced capitalist states into conflict over a limited number of colonial possessions.

**(The) Left** - a broad term for political movements oriented towards liberation, the destruction of inequalities, the breaking down of social divisions and taking the side of the less powerful against the more powerful. The term is derived from seating arrangements of the National Convention during the French Revolution.

**Liberal** - politically, liberalism is the ideology of the "progressive" wing of the capitalist class, and liberal capitalists did play a revolutionary role in uprooting feudalism in Europe. Marked by a support of capitalist economics and formal equality before the law (individual negative rights), modern liberals generally attempt to co-opt liberatory movements by opening avenues for individual advancement and reducing revolutionary demands to electoral slogans and nonprofit grants.

**Marxism-Leninism** - a set of theoretical socialist traditions, marked by the belief that the most class conscious workers must lead the working class to revolution in a vanguard party, and that the existing capitalist state must be smashed and replaced with a workers' state in order to implement communist policies and defend the revolution.

**Means of Production** - any objects used to create tradeable value; in the capitalist system: factories, shops, land, material inputs.



Mutual aid - two definitions, closely related: (1) a universal tendency among humans of assisting others of their group, considered to be an evolutionary advantage for the species; (2) a political and social practice of assisting other oppressed people as a means to one's own liberation, either to promote a society based on this type of cooperation, or as means of supporting working class movements and providing the material solidarity needed in the class war.

Neocolonialism - a form of colonialism which became dominant after 1945 in which nominal sovereignty is granted to colonies and direct colonial rule is phased out and replaced with financial domination, often in the form of debt burdens and unfavorable trade arrangements. The new governments of former colonies find that development is impossible without taking on loans which re-entrench colonial power arrangements and capital flows (outward), and anti-imperialist leaders find themselves the victims of Western-backed assassinations or coups. This form is preferable to the capitalist class of colonizing powers because it is cheaper to administer, reduces violent competition among capitalist states for colonies, and avoids the obvious cruelty of 19th-century colonialism.

Revolution - the violent overthrow of a society's ruling class by another class. For Marxists, the crucial element is the change in the social relations of production. The trading of one capitalist government for another, where the ownership of the means of production remain in the hands of that class (and the ruling economic order is maintained), is so much palace intrigue (ie, Ukraine's Maidan coup of 2014).

Social democracy - since 1917 a reformist type of socialism. Social democrats believe the working class can gain political dominance - or at least political gains - without smashing the capitalist state. They thus advocate voting in elections and participating in capitalist "democracy" alongside direct action as a means of gaining power.

Socialism - (1) an umbrella term that can include everyone from anarchists (libertarian socialism) to Bernie Sanders (milquetoast social democracy). A defining characteristic is the desire for economic and social equality, beyond the mere equality before the law which formally exists in capitalist society. (2) for most Marxists, a transition state between capitalism and communism.

State - at a minimum, "special bodies of armed men" (police, military, courts, prisons, clandestine services) formed by the ruling class of a given society to ensure the domination of all other classes and society generally. Modern definitions usually include more functions of government, including the provision of welfare, bureaucracies, and propaganda outlets.

