

is anyone fucking listening? **a mini anthology of desperate political acts**

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INTRODUCTION

With this zine we attempt to do two things: one, articulate a history of dissent that perhaps is not as well known as it should be, and two, acknowledge how people have responded when they are put in dire situations of militarism, violence, racism, sexism or any other form of oppression. These actions shouldn't provide a template for dissent today, but should provide some footing to build off of. Obviously, all of these events were a specific response relevant to the position the activists were put in, and today is no different. Specific contexts call for specific actions and these should serve as acts to learn from and study. However, we must remain aware that new and strategic responses to the state we find ourselves in are necessary.

These acts also illustrate a level of commitment, sacrifice and courage that arguably seem lacking from today's resistance, despite possibly being in one of the most precarious moments in American history. There are several possible reasons why we may not find ourselves committing to such extreme acts as those included in the pages to follow—everything from working too many hours, the Patriot Act aimed at destroying radicals and subversives, and a government that seems so detached from us we no longer have faith in traditional forms of protest. Though these reasons are a frightening reality, we must take responsibility in resisting unjust wars and oppressive systems. Our lack of opposition, due to fear or apathy or exhaustion, isn't saving any lives, or even making our own lives better. Instead, we're backsliding into less and less freedom, more and more work, and more and more death for selfish and greedy reasons.

In this zine we've included a variety of political acts, attempting to avoid falling into traditional perceptions of what is relevant activism. We have tried to remain aware of the heroicization of bravado or the martyrization of specific individuals that often comes with the territory of the history of resistance. We may not have been entirely successful in avoiding these generalizations often tied to activism, but we have found some value in everything included in this zine. At times, that value may move between successful moments of opposition, to the realization of how nasty and oppressive certain circumstances can be. Thus there are actions included we do not agree with but sympathize with, for we are of the opinion that the circumstance was desperate and called for an extreme response, even if that response was misguided. We also recognize that the acts chosen are limited in terms of geography, point in history and identity of those resisting. In offering these examples up, we do not attempt to suggest that our list is by any means comprehensive, or even representative of the incredible number of people who have courageously rebelled in the face of dreadful situations. Rather, we offer these as a step toward a collection of actions, groups and movements that broaden our understanding of what it means to be "desperate" and what it means to "resist." It is our hope that these investigations might aid in an ongoing discourse and pursuit in articulating a strategy of resistance relevant for today's complex struggle; because revolution isn't easy, and every little bit helps.

EMMETT TILL

On August 20, 1955, 14 year-old Emmett Till got on a train to Mississippi with some family members. A few relatives were in Chicago where Emmett and his mother were living, and convinced Till and his cousin to return to Money, Mississippi with them for a visit. A week or so went by, with nothing out of the ordinary happening. Emmett mostly worked in his uncle's cotton field during the day with his cousins, and played at night. The infamous story begins when Emmett went into town with his family. There are several versions of this part, but Emmett allegedly whistled at a white woman and she stormed off into her car and left. For a day or two it seemed as though it was not a big deal, but on August 28 the Wright house (where Emmett was staying) heard a knock on the door around 2 am. It was two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, and they had come for "the Chicago boy" who whistled at the white girl. Despite the family's efforts, Emmett was taken from their home. His fate was unknown until a fisherman found his body in the Tallahatchie River, with a cotton gin fan tied around his neck with barbed wire in an effort to keep him from floating.

There were attempts to bury Till's body in Mississippi, but Mamie Till, Emmett's mother, wouldn't have it. She pleaded and eventually found a lawyer and funeral director to make sure Till's body arrived back in Chicago. When it did, it arrived in a huge pine box ready to be buried. The funeral director, Till's family in Mississippi, and the state of Mississippi all signed documents saying that the casket would remain closed, but again, Mamie refused. After pleading and Mamie threatening to open it herself, the funeral director relented and Emmett's mother was allowed to see her murdered son for the first time. Upon seeing his brutally disfigured face she decided insisted on having an open casket funeral, so that everyone could see what had been done to her child.

At this point the media was covering the murder thoroughly and there was outrage and compassion

"...There was an eyeball hanging down, resting on that cheek. It looked like it was still attached by the optic nerve, but it was just suspended there. I don't know how I could keep it together enough to do this, but I do recall looking closely enough to see the color of the eye. It was that light hazel brown everyone always thought was so pretty. Right away, I look to the other eye. But it wasn't there. It seemed like someone had taken a nut picker and plucked that one out. Then I glanced down at the mouth...Emmett always had the most beautiful teeth. Even as a little baby, his teeth were very unusual. And I recall how much I had hoped that his permanent set would be as perfect as his baby teeth...Dear God, there were only two now, but they were definitely his. I looked at the bridge of his nose, at the point right between his eyebrows. It had been chopped, maybe with a meat cleaver. It looked as if someone had tenderized his nose.

With everything I had seen and touched, I still could not identify this body as Emmett. So I looked for his ear, I believe it was his right ear. The little curled-up part at the tip of the lobe. And that's when I found out that the right ear had been cut almost in half. The part I was looking for wasn't even there anymore...I saw that someone — Milam or Bryant — had taken a hatchet and had cut through the top of his head, from ear to ear.

within the black community. During the first public viewing of Emmett Till, five thousand people came to see his body and the Chapel stayed open until two in the morning. It was decided to delay his burial, and over the course of four days, an estimated one hundred thousand people came to see Till's body. Jet Magazine and the Chicago Defender would run photographs of Emmett's body, further publicizing the event and catalyze a sense of urgency for a larger movement of civil rights.

Bryant and Milam, Till's killers, were tried in Mississippi beginning on September 19, and by September 23, 1955, they were acquitted of murder by an all white, all male jury.

MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are a group of activists originally formed on the common ground that their children were "disappeared" by the Argentinean government sponsored Dirty War in 1976–1983. The military junta took power in 1976 and began a pursuit to destroy all left-wing dissent. The result was the disappearance of an unknown number of people in the thousands (some estimates are around 30,000) who were secretly kidnapped and placed in concentration camps, most of which are assumed to have been killed. One of the mothers describes her son's kidnapping: "They stormed his apartment and beat him up in front of his wife and children and then they took him away. He never returned."

A few of the mothers began to cross paths while searching for their children. As they began to notice and recognize one another, they started comparing notes and sharing their situations with one another. Quickly they formed a group and began marching and demonstrating at the Plaza de Mayo, located in front of the presidential palace. Their presence every Thursday became a staple of the group along with their signature white scarves. The mothers began a vocal and persistent campaign to not only educate the public about the dirty war, but most importantly to hold those accountable for committing the acts. They strategically used both national and international media outlets while committing to more traditional forms of protests like their marches on the Plaza, and eventually a monthly newspaper publication of their own featuring information most journalists were either scared to print or were unaware of, including one page profiling someone involved in the execution of the military's Dirty War. As the mothers began gaining international

The back of his head was loose from the front part of his face. As I moved around, I saw a bullet hole slightly back from the temple area. And I could see light shining through the hole on the other side, where the bullet left the skull."

– Mamie Till describing first seeing her son's mutilated body

recognition, the oppressive government dismissed them as “las locas” (crazy ones) or said their sons and daughters were killed in a battle with authorities due to their subversive activities.

Finally in 1983 due to their unpopularity and their failure in the Falklands War, the junta collapsed and a new government was established with national elections. As the new government began its rule, the mothers persisted that they know what happened to their children. The government eventually began to admit and reveal many atrocities of the Dirty War such as founding mass graves, and thus attempted to move forward and past the dark history. But the mothers refused to accept the death of their children until the government revealed what was done to them and those responsible were held accountable. The mothers refused to embrace any effort to simply move on without justice.

Throughout the course of their activism, the Mothers have adopted various interesting beliefs, including “socialized” motherhood—believing they are the mother of all who have disappeared. They have also developed anarchist tendencies, including their collective approach in their group organization, their refusal to align with any political party, and their radical stance on the military, believing that it will always be a tool of oppression and should be destroyed.

Though many are in their 70s and 80s, the mothers continue to pursue their activism and goals, both of human rights, anti-militarization and the remembrance and recovery of their children’s stories.

WHITE ROSE

The White Rose, quite simply, was a group of students and one philosophy professor who drafted six leaflets and secretly distributed them across the campus of the University of Munich and several other major German cities. The leaflets are written beautifully and often poetic, citing Goethe, Aristotle, Lao-Tzu, and others, calling for passive resistance, sabotage, and a political consciousness and courage that will allow for Germans to act against the Nazi machine.

In the summer of 1942, the leaflets began to appear under the title *Leaflets of the White Rose* along with some graffiti—“Down with Hitler”, “Hitler is a Mass Murderer”—at the University of Munich. The first few leaflets were primarily written and distributed secretly by Hans Scholl and Alex Schmorell with

“...Now the end is at hand. Now it is our task to find one another again, to spread information from person to person, to keep a steady purpose, and to allow ourselves no rest until the last man is persuaded of the urgent need of his struggle against this system. When thus a wave of unrest goes through the land, when ‘it is in the air,’ when many join the cause, then in a great final effort this system can be shaken off. After all, an end in terror is preferable to terror without end.”

– from *Leaflet of the White Rose* #2

some help from Cristoph Probst and advice from beloved professor Kurt Huber. They strategically flied Munich but also sent hundreds of copies to other major cities, specifically to academics and restaurant owners whom they thought would sympathize and help spread the message of the White Rose. It was not long after the first leaflet appeared that the campus, including Sophie Scholl (Hans’ sister), was buzzing about them. Quickly Sophie and a few others realized that Hans was behind the White Rose and convinced him that such a small group could not complete this task alone. Sophie, along with others, notably Willi Graf and Kurt Huber, formed an unofficial organization early in 1943 dedicated to the clandestine activity of distributing anti-Nazi messages in hopes of instigating a “wave of unrest” throughout major cities in Germany. Now that the war had progressed, the leaflets began to take a more aggressive tone and they switched their title to *Leaflet of the Resistance*. These were the last two of the six leaflets calling on students to act, noting specific moments in the war, and attempting to address the problem with Nationalist Socialism that seemed to indoctrinate the majority of Germans. “Dissociate yourselves from National Socialist gangsterism...for us there is but one slogan: fight against the party!”

Then, on February 18, 1943, Hans and Sophie were seen throwing leaflets from the upper level of a university building into the atrium below that was filled with students exiting their lectures and classes. Jakob Schmid, a handyman of the building and, unfortunately, a Nazi-member, noticed the action. Not surprisingly, he turned them in. The doors of the building were locked and the Gestapo captured Hans and Sophie. This was the beginning of the end for the group and led to the capture of Probst. Schmorell, Huber and Graf were quickly tried, found guilty of high treason and executed.

“But our present “state” is the dictatorship of evil. “Oh, we’ve known that for a long time,” I hear you object, “and it isn’t necessary to bring that to our attention again.” But, I ask you, if you know that, why do you not bestir yourselves, why do you allow these men who are in power to rob you step by step, openly and in secret, of one domain of your rights after another, until one day nothing, nothing at all will be left but a mechanized state system presided over by criminals and drunks? Is your spirit already so crushed by abuse that you forget it is your right—or rather, your moral duty—to eliminate this system? But if a man can no longer summon the strength to demand his right, then it is absolutely certain that he will perish. We would deserve to be dispersed through the earth like dust before the wind if we do not muster our powers at this late hour and finally find the courage, which up to now we have lacked. Do not hide your cowardice behind a cloak of expediency, for with every new day that you hesitate, failing to oppose this offspring of Hell, your guilt, as in a parabolic curve, grows higher and higher.”

– From *Leaflet of the White Rose* #3

SOWETO RIOTS

During apartheid, young blacks in South Africa were forced to deal with substandard education. This was particularly true in Soweto, where only one in five young people were enrolled in school and the pass rate for students was quite low. Already facing challenges, the situation got worse in 1974 when the *Afrikaans Medium Decree* was established, which forced all black schools to teach half in English and half in Afrikaans. Most black teachers and students did not speak Afrikaans, so the decree thwarted an already struggling education system. In addition, the language was closely connected to the apartheid system and viewed as the “language of the oppressor.”



Hector Pieterse

A protest was planned for June 16, 1976, with thousands of students demonstrating against the government forcing them to learn in the language of apartheid. After leaving their schools for a rally, as many as 20,000 students marched through the streets of Soweto. Police blocked them from marching further, but the young people refused to disperse. The police released dogs on the crowd, shot tear gas canisters and began firing on the crowd with live ammunition. One of the first students killed was a 12 year-old boy named Hector Pieterse. His limp body was carried by an older student, which was captured in an iconic photograph that became an international symbol of the brutality of apartheid.

As the police shot into the crowd, some students fled, while others clashed with the police. The police violence ignited anger and resentment that had been building up among the young people and they began setting fire to symbols of apartheid, including government buildings, vehicles of white-owned businesses and liquor stores (which were viewed as an attempt to pacify the black community). Students filled the streets the following day, as the uprising continued and spread to other parts of the country, as well. The official death toll for the riots was twenty-three, with some estimates as high as several hundred, with thousands injured. Following the riots, national and international attention was directed toward the violence of the police in Soweto. The riots are now viewed as having renewed an anti-apartheid movement that had been becoming less active and today, June 16 is officially recognized as Youth Day in South Africa.

YOUNG LORDS GARBAGE OFFENSIVE

In July 26, 1969, at a demonstration commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the newly formed Young Lords Organization (still primarily only a couple of college radicals) took the microphone and announced that they “were the Young Lords Party and were here to serve and protect the best interests of the Puerto Rican community.”

With a newfound energy and interest in Puerto Rican Nationalism and radical theorists and activists like Che Guevara, Marx, Mao, Ho Chi Minh etc., the NYC Young Lords decided to join the revolutionary struggle and start with one of their own neighborhoods, *El Barrio*, a poor Puerto Rican neighborhood in Spanish Harlem. Staying true to their word, they hit the streets of El Barrio, talking to community members, asking them what the first thing they would like to change in their community would be. The YLO found several community members talked ardently about their garbage problem. Not surprisingly after a small amount of research the YLO found their community to be getting much poorer service from the city in garbage removal than several upper class neighborhoods. Planning their first action and in desperate need of the community’s trust, the Young Lords began plans for the “Garbage Offensive.”

First the YLO and a few community volunteers decided to visit the NYC Sanitation office. They asked a man working at the desk if they could have a few brooms to clean up the streets of their community. Confused, the city official responded with something along the lines of “...uh, we can’t do that,” so a couple Young Lords jumped over the desk and “misappropriated” about ten brooms and took them back to the YLO office. With their new brooms, they swept up as best they could the garbage in the neighborhood. As expected, the sanitation truck rarely came and when it did, it left a mess with garbage scattered everywhere.

They decided to take the action to the next level and, joined by some community members one afternoon in June, they began to sweep all the garbage into the street. They pushed the garbage into a pile about five feet high across six lanes of Third Ave, creating a traffic jam. They directed the traffic away from the pile, and collectively tossed matches and spread lighter fluid, and the garbage was set aflame.

The action was a success, made headlines, and the YLO even got word that the Mayor wanted to negotiate with them. He sent a city official to talk with the Young Lords and it ultimately resulted in much more regular visits to El Barrio by the sanitation truck.

STONEWALL

Stonewall was a sleazy and gritty gay bar in Greenwich Village. It had no running water; they cleaned their glasses by running them through a vat of “sterilized water” behind the bar, and served them up again. The bar was established and run by Mobsters who were paying off the cops to keep their raid to a minimum, let the management of Stonewall know when they were coming, and raid early in the night when business was slow.

On June 27, 1969, the cops again raided Stonewall, this time with no prior warning. Usually when the cops raided a bar, the only ones arrested were those without IDs, or those dressed in clothes of the “opposite gender” (which was illegal in NYC at the time). Not unlike other clashes with the police, a crowd began to form around Stonewall, and the police began arresting people inside the bar for various but typical reasons at the beginning of the raid. When the paddy wagon pulled up, an unexpected rebellious opposition began to form, unlike any other of the raids that had happened at Stonewall. The crowd usually dispersed cooperatively and went along their way, with a somewhat typical night of annoyance caused by another police raid on their bar.

The queens who were confronted or arrested were mouthing off, while others threw their coins at them, but the cops still began to shove some arrestees into the paddywagon. Some consider the most explosive moment to be when one lesbian was arrested and thrown in the wagon, and began to rock it. Around this point in the night, some accounts speak of several spontaneous flashes of anger, a mass opposition and militant refusal to accept the police’s harrassment. One queen took off her high heel, smashed a police officer and knocked him down, grabbed his handcuff keys and freed herself. She then passed along the keys to her comrades, while others started to yell “Pigs!” “Faggot Cops!” and “Gay Power!” All of this led to the crowd transforming and growing into a mob, which began throwing everything possible at the police; bricks, coins, bottles, garbage cans, even dog shit.

The police, who seriously underestimated a bunch of cowering “queers” and “gays,” only sent eight police officers to perform the raid, and when the unexpected near riot broke out, the police were ordered by their commander to retreat into the bar. They barricaded themselves in, which of course led to attacks on the bar from the resistance in the street. Eventually the crowd partially breached the barrier between them and the police, and one rioter successfully tossed a match and some lighter fluid into the bar, setting it aflame. The cops, with pistols pulled, were ready for another clash, and one yelled, “We’ll shoot the first motherfucker that comes through the door!”

Finally the riot police came, armed with clubs, helmets and tear gas. Upon their arrival, the crowd scattered, but did not leave the scene. The mob decentralized

and began attempting attacks on the riot police from all directions. At one point, the cops turned around to find a mob of queens had formed at their rear, and they began kicking their high heels in the air Rockettes’ style, shouting:

*“We are the Stonewall Girls
We wear our hair in curls
We wear no underwear
We show our pubic hair...
We wear our dungarees
Above our nelly knees!”*

Eventually the cops cleared the streets. The night had resulted in several rioters beaten and injured, four cops injured, and thirteen arrested. The night was violent and surprising, and led to more confrontations with the police—one the next night at Stonewall, which was almost as violent. Stonewall is often cited as a moment that galvanized the gay liberation movement and took it in a more radical direction. It is frequently considered an important moment in queer history and an international pride celebration that happens annually is celebrated on the anniversary of Stonewall.

NAT TURNER’S SLAVE REBELLION

Partly motivated by what he would later call “misread” signs from God, possibly encouraged by the abolitionist propaganda circulating at the time, and certainly due in large part to the desire to free himself from slavery, Nat Turner led a vicious slave revolt that resulted in the killing of around 55 white slave owners and their families.

The revolt started with only Nat and a handful of other slaves, and on August 22, 1831, at around 3 am, the men arrived at the house of Joseph Travis, Nat’s owner. In the beginning the slaves were armed only with hatchets and hoes, tools they had access to from their work. Nat and Will Francis began the revolt and snuck into the Travis’ window and murdered him and his wife, Sally, with a blow to the head from a hatchet. The rest of the family was killed, including their children, and the house was raided for guns and other things that may be useful for the revolt. They found a few guns and left the Travis house to move onto another slave-owner’s property in an attempt to liberate themselves and others from their white owners. The rebels went house to house, murdering all whites that came in their path, while recruiting several slaves from the houses they attacked in an attempt to build their resistance.

It is estimated that Nat’s group reached somewhere between 40 and 60 slave participants, though estimates have varied greatly with different accounts. By the time they had acquired a fairly large group (probably not nearly as large as Nat assumed would join his struggle), white resistance had mounted

making it more and more difficult for the slaves to continue with their plans. The news inevitably spread, and led to an anti-black hysteria, causing approximately 100 African-Americans (a low estimate) to be murdered, not to mention the countless number who were harassed—regardless of their involvement in the rebellion. Some vigilante groups took extreme measures in an attempt to reassert their position of power, like one group who put the head of murdered blacks “...up on poles, warning all who should undertake in a similar plot [as Turner’s].”

By the end of August, most of the participants in the rebellion had been killed or captured, but Nat Turner would remain at large until October 30 when he was found hiding in a brush cave and surrendered. Nat was tried and convicted quickly, sentenced to hanging on November 11, 1831.

JANE

Prior to *Roe v. Wade*, laws regulating abortion in the U.S. differed by state, with most states prohibiting it and some making exceptions for instances where the woman’s life was threatened. Even in these limited circumstances, the abortions would have to be approved by a medical panel, made up entirely of men.

When women were forced to procure an abortion through illegal, underground means, they often had to deal with men who had little medical knowledge and little concern for the health and safety of the women. Many abortionists were connected to the mob and frequently exploited women both financially and sexually, demanding sexual favors in exchange for the abortion.

Recognizing the dangers these women faced, a group of feminists in Chicago founded Jane in 1969. Officially known as the Abortion Counseling Service of the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union, Jane was a clandestine group dedicated to providing women with safe and accessible abortions.

Initially, they provided counseling and referred women to doctors who would perform abortions. Since their primary interest was the well-being of the women they worked with, if they received complaints that an abortionist was risking a woman’s health or behaving in an unfavorable way, Jane would cease to refer anyone to the doctor. Similarly, if an abortionist was competent and respectful, the group would refer to him more often.

Jane began working regularly with one abortionist who they respected for his medical knowledge and professionalism. He provided abortions for the group every Friday and Saturday and even began allowing members of Jane to be present during the procedures and assist in limited ways. When it was discovered that he was not actually a doctor, a number of women from Jane came to the realization that performing an abortion was a skill they could also learn, if trained.

One of the women who had been assisting the male abortionist convinced him that he should teach them how to do it. Eventually he agreed, recognizing that the group was providing him with a high number of abortions and that he could use the help.

Initially when he worked with the group, he was performing about 30 procedures every week and charging \$500 per abortion. With the help of Jane members also performing abortions, the number grew to between 60 and 90 every week. The women negotiated a deal with him where he would receive a flat fee for the two days a week he worked, as opposed to receiving payment for each abortion. This allowed the group to lower the price of an abortion to \$100, or lower if women couldn’t afford that. Eventually, he stopped working for the group altogether and Jane members were performing all the abortions themselves. They had rented an apartment to use exclusively to perform the abortions, while members used their apartments for counseling and as “fronts” where they would meet women before driving them to where the abortions took place.

The group continued until *Roe v. Wade* decriminalized abortion in 1973. In the four years Jane existed, over 100 women were members of the group and they provided over 11,000 abortions. Members included students, housewives and mothers. Some of the members used the service themselves when they needed an abortion and a number of women joined after having an abortion through Jane. The group ran a serious legal risk, and there was a raid in 1972 where seven of the members were arrested. They faced significant jail time but the charges were dropped after *Roe v. Wade* the following year.

1968 BLACK POWER SALUTE

In the fall of 2007, a group of black athletes in the U.S. began organizing to oppose racism within sports and to use their visibility to make a statement about racial injustices nationally and internationally. With the help of sociologist Dr. Harry Edwards, amateur athletes founded the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) with the intention to boycott the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City if their demands weren’t met. The demands included restoring Muhammad Ali’s title, adding African-American coaches to the U.S. team, disinviting apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia from the games, and removing Nazi-sympathizer Avery Brundage as president of the International Olympic Committee.

Just ten days before the opening of the Games in Mexico City, during a peaceful demonstration, hundreds of students and workers were massacred by the Mexican military. With this event following months of international social unrest in 1968, the energy of resistance and repression was alive at the Olympics. For a number of reasons, the members of OPHR decided not to

boycott, but agreed that athletes would protest individually. On October 16, 1968, the second day of the Games, Tommie Smith won the gold medal in the 200 meter race, setting a new world record and teammate John Carlos took the bronze.

The two OPHR members were determined to make a collective statement, sharing a pair of black leather gloves Smith had in his bag. While they stood on the medal stand and *The Star-Spangled Banner* played, the two men bowed their heads and raised their glove-clad fists in the air as a proclamation of Black Power. What is often overlooked in this iconic image is the fact that both athletes stood shoeless, wearing black socks to symbolize black poverty, Carlos wore beads around his neck in reference to the lives lost to lynching, and Smith wore a black scarf as a statement of Black Power. Carlos has also said that he wore his jacket unzipped to represent the underdogs, the blue-collar shift-workers who contribute to society and are not recognized. Also, both were wearing OPHR buttons on their jackets, as was silver medalist Peter Norman, a white Australian. Once Norman realized what was happening, he offered his support to the two and decided to wear an OPHR button in an act of silent solidarity.

The backlash was intense, with Brundage demanding that the two athletes be suspended from the U.S. team and barred from the Olympic grounds. The U.S. Olympic Committee refused, but Brundage threatened to have the entire U.S. track team banned, at which point, the Committee relented. Carlos and Smith were forced to go home, where they faced much hostility from the media and racist whites. While the Los Angeles Times accused them of making a “Nazi-like” salute, they received death threats from white supremacists. The sporting community in the United States ostracized them and Norman faced similar hostility in Australia for refusing to denounce his act of support, which earned him the life-long respect of Carlos and Smith. All three athletes continued the struggle, with both Carlos and Smith still outspoken about issues of human rights. In October 2006, Norman died of a heart attack and the two men were pallbearers at his funeral.



“We must no longer allow this country to use a few so called Negroes to point out to the world how much progress she has made in solving her racial problems when the oppression of Afro-Americans is greater than it ever was. We must no longer allow the sports world to pat itself on the back as a citadel of racial justice when the racial injustices of the sports world are infamously legendary...[A]ny black person who allows himself to be used in the above matter is a traitor because he allows racist whites the luxury of resting assured that those black people in the ghettos are there because that is where they want to be. So we ask why should we run in Mexico only to crawl home?”

- Founding Statement of Olympic Project for Human Rights

RAID ON HARPERS FERRY

John Brown, arguably the most militant white Abolitionist in U.S. history, was born in 1800 and raised by a deeply religious father who held anti-slavery views. Brown, too, developed an intense opposition to slavery that was based on his Biblical understanding of justice. His lifetime commitment to the cause of Abolition was sparked by a specific encounter when he was quite young. At the age of twelve, he worked for a man who owned a young slave who Brown respected and considered his equal. The young white boy witnessed the brutality of slavery first hand, as he saw the man beat the slave with a shovel.

Throughout his life, Brown raised a large family, moved around the country and held numerous jobs. He always maintained his anti-slavery beliefs, and in 1837, when the Abolitionist minister Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in Illinois, Brown declared that he would dedicate the rest of his life to the destruction of slavery. After many years he became convinced that moral persuasion would not convince slave owners to free their slaves, and he lost faith that politicians would challenge the institution of slavery.

After taking up arms to fight pro-slavery forces in Kansas, Brown was to take his most audacious act in 1859 when he planned a raid on the federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. He spent the summer of 1859 in Harpers Ferry, preparing for the raid, gathering weapons and recruits. On October 16 the raid began with Brown leading twenty-two men, including three of his sons, other whites, free blacks, a freed slave and a fugitive slave. Harriet Tubman had helped recruit members and intended to participate, but was ill at the time of the raid.

Brown’s plan was to seize thousands of weapons, which he and his men would use to liberate slaves throughout the south and arm them to protect themselves as they escaped. It was also hoped that some of the freed slaves would join them as they proceeded with their plan. The intention was to minimize bloodshed and only resort to force in cases of self-defense.

“My name is John Brown; I have been well known as old John Brown of Kansas. Two of my sons were killed here today, and I’m dying too. I came here to liberate slaves and was to receive no reward. I have acted from a sense of duty, and am content to await my fate... Yesterday I could have killed whom I chose; but I had no desire to kill any person, and would not have killed a man had they not tried to kill me and my men. I could have sacked and burned the town, but did not; I have treated the persons whom I took hostages kindly, and I appeal to them for the truth of what I say. If I had succeeded in running off slaves this time, I could have raised twenty times as many as I have now, for a similar expedition. But I have failed.”

- Statement to governor of Virginia, as Brown lay wounded and bloodstained on October 18, 1859

“His zeal in the cause of my race was far greater than mine—it was as the burning sun to my taper light-mine was bounded by time, his stretched away to the boundless shores of eternity. I could live for the slave, but he could die for him.”

- Escaped slave and Abolitionist Frederick Douglass on John Brown

The raid was initially successful. They cut telegraph lines to prevent locals from contacting Washington and took over a number of buildings, including a rifle factory and federal arsenal. Around 60 locals were taken hostage and a number of liberated slaves joined Brown and his men. However, as they were in the process of gathering munitions, a number of locals were shot. The local militia became aware of the raid and cut off their escape routes. Unable to retreat, they held their ground until October 18 when over 100 marines, led by Robert E. Lee, descended on Harpers Ferry. Refusing to surrender, Brown was attacked, stabbed repeatedly with a sword and captured. Of Brown's men, ten were killed, six escaped and seven, including Brown, were captured. The number of slaves who participated and escaped is unknown.

John Brown was put on trial, and was convicted and hanged on December 2, 1859. He was the first American citizen to be executed for treason. Reactions to Brown himself, his actions and his execution have varied drastically, but it's clear that his life and death galvanized the Abolitionist movement, and the Harpers Ferry Raid is often cited as a precursor to the U.S. Civil War.

CATONSVILLE 9

On the heels of an action in Baltimore where four activists, the "Baltimore Four," poured blood over draft cards to symbolize the blood of the Vietnamese and American troops, the activists were ready to repeat the action for fear of being silenced by their trial. Philip Berrigan and Tom Lewis recruited Dan Berrigan (Philip's brother) and several other activists, mostly from a religious background, who saw the injustice in Vietnam to be in contradiction with the Bible. This new group would become known as the Catonsville Nine.

On May 17, 1968, the nine activists walked into the draft office in Catonsville, Maryland (a suburb of Baltimore), passed the employees, and removed several hundred A-1 draft records. They took them into the parking lot, put them into incinerator baskets, doused them with homemade Napalm (a recipe they found in the Green Beret handbook), and set them on fire. A few members of the press had been notified of the action and reported the story. Their actions would later directly influence other efforts like the burning of draft cards in Milwaukee by the "Milwaukee 14."

"We just wanted for the judge to see that our government was dousing Vietnamese children with the same terrible stuff we poured over these draft files. We were cooking Vietnamese in white phosphorus, poisoning their food and water with herbicides, burning down their homes, violated international treaties, and showing contempt for God's Law."

- Philip Berrigan
from his autobiography

"It was only after the Catonsville action that I came on a precious insight. The knowledge thus came hardly, as perhaps real knowledge does. Something like this: presupposing integrity and discipline, one is justified in entering upon a large risk; not indeed because the outcome is assured,

The action led to prison sentences for all of the participants, 3–3.5 for the "leaders" and two years for the others. A few cooperated with authority, but five decided to not turn themselves in and go underground. All were eventually caught and served at least part of the sentencing, except for Mary Moyland who remained at large until 1978 and then turned herself in.

but because the integrity and value of the act have spoken loud.

When such has occurred, matters of success or efficiency are placed where they belong: in the background. They are not irrelevant, but they are far from central."

- Daniel Berrigan from his autobiography

MALACHI RITSCHER

During rush-hour on November 3, 2006, Malachi Ritscher draped an American Flag over his body, covered himself with gasoline and set himself on fire next to the *Flame of the Millennium*, a sculpture located off of a main expressway in downtown Chicago. When the police and fire department arrived after commuters' reports that "a statue was on fire" they found a charred body, a video camera and a sign that simply read "Thou Shall Not Kill." Thus far, Ritscher's family has kept the tape of Malachi's self-immolation private.

There have been disputes about the action amongst family, friends, media, activists and bloggers, most of which are not without worth or validity. However, here we will abstain from any speculation, analysis or projections as to how we should perceive Ritscher's self-immolation. Instead we point to the one thing we know for sure—how Ritscher *wanted* us to perceive his action. He posted on his website a mission statement, describing his disgust with the Iraq war, clarifying that his action was very much a political gesture. So we cautiously relay the story as a desperate response and another loss due to, at least in part, a desperate political situation. Ritscher's statement can be read in full here: <http://www.savagesound.com/gallery99.htm>

"When I hear about our young men and women who are sent off to war in the name of God and Country, and who give up their lives for no rational cause at all, my heart is crushed. What has happened to my country? we have become worse than the imagined enemy - killing civilians and calling it 'collateral damage', torturing and trampling human rights inside and outside our own borders, violating our own Constitution whenever it seems convenient, lying and stealing right and left, more concerned with sports on television and ring-tones on cell-phones than the future of the world.... half the population is taking medication because they cannot face the daily stress of living in the richest nation in the world.

My position is that I only get one death, I want it to be a good one. Wouldn't it be better to stand for something or make a statement, rather than a fiery collision with some drunk driver? [...] Here is the statement I want to make: if I am required to pay for your barbaric war, I choose not to live in your world. I refuse to finance the mass murder of innocent civilians, who did nothing to threaten our country. I will not participate in your charade - my conscience will not allow me to be a part of your crusade. There might be some who say 'it's a coward's way out' - that opinion is so idiotic that it requires no response. From my point of view, I am opening a new door."

HUGO BALL

After volunteering for the German military at the start of World War I, Hugo Ball was refused on medical grounds and quickly became disillusioned and disgusted with the War. Influenced by radical philosophers, particularly the anarchist theorist Mikhail Bakunin, Ball became a conscientious objector and in 1915 moved with his wife Emmy Hemmings to Zurich, Switzerland. Since Switzerland was officially neutral throughout the War, it attracted a number of young artists opposed to the militarism growing throughout Europe.

On February 6, 1916, he opened Cabaret Voltaire as a venue for creative artistic entertainment, including spoken word, music and dancing. On the opening night, he read the first Dada Manifesto, declaring the birth of an art movement that challenged artistic and social conventions. The Dada movement became an outlet for radical and experimental artists such as Hemmings, Tristan Tzara, Hans Harp and Richard Huelsenbeck. These artists, who experimented in a number of mediums, shared Ball's loathing of a culture that could create a World War in the 20th Century. Having lost faith in existing political structures, Ball also began questioning all aspects of culture, particularly language. To Ball, language itself was tainted by war; the logic and rationality that led governments to justify World War I was rooted in the structures of language. His response was the creation of "sound poems," or "poems without words."

At one particular performance at Cabaret Voltaire on June 16, 1916, Ball was dressed in a costume made out of cardboard, including a two-foot tall hat. His hands were covered with fake claws and his costume included wings covering his arms. With different poems set up on separate music stands, he began flapping his arms like a bird and chanting the nonsensical words in a tone that resembled a religious cadence.



Hugo Ball at Cabaret Voltaire

"I shall be reading poems that are meant to dispense with conventional language, no less, and to have done with it. Dada Johann Fuchsgang Goethe. Dada Stendhal. Dada Dalai Lama, Buddha, Bible, and Nietzsche. Dada m'dada. Dada mhm dada da. It's a question of connections, and of loosening them up a bit to start with. I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own. If this pulsation is seven yards long, I want words for it that are seven yards long. Mr Schulz's words are only two and a half centimetres long.

It will serve to show how articulated language comes into being. I let the vowels fool around. I let the vowels quite simply occur, as a cat miaows ... Words emerge, shoulders of words, legs, arms, hands of words. Au, oi, uh. One shouldn't let too many words out. A line of poetry is a chance to get rid of all the filth

Hugo Ball spent less than two years participating in the movement, leaving in 1917. By the end of World War I in 1918, the Dada community in Zurich had dissipated, with many participants returning to their home countries. However, Dada became an international phenomenon, with dadaists becoming active in a number of different cities, including New York, Berlin and Paris.

UPRISINGS IN NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Operation Reinhard was the Nazi plan to exterminate Jews in occupied Poland. It relied on the death camps in Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor, all located in Poland. At two of these camps, Sobibor and Treblinka, prisoners organized underground resistance groups and eventually led uprisings at each camp.

In August of 1942, the extermination camp at Treblinka (intended to be the most "perfected" death camp of Operation Reinhard) began receiving transports from the ghettos. The average life span of the prisoners was only a few months, and the only work they had to do was related to the handling of new deportees and upkeep of the camp. In early 1943, the number of transports coming to Treblinka slowed down, which caused fears that the camp would soon be liquidated. In February or March of that year, a small group of prisoners began to meet clandestinely to establish a resistance group. Organized in cells of 12, the Underground consisted of around 50 prisoners.

Shortly after a decision had been made to obtain weapons, a coincidental event took place to the Underground's benefit. A lock on the armory door had broken and one of the Jewish locksmiths was asked to repair it. As he fixed the lock, a duplicate of the key was made and passed on to members of the resistance. The summer of 1943 was spent secretly meeting, organizing and debating about the plans for an uprising. Work continued to slow down,

that clings to this accursed language, as if put there by stockbrokers' hands, hands worn smooth by coins. I want the word where it ends and begins. Dada is the heart of words."

- Excerpt from the Dada Manifesto

jolifanto bambla ô falli
bambla
grossiga m'pfa habla
horem
égiga goramen
higo bloiko russula huju
hollaka hollala
anlogo bung
blago bung
blago bung
bosso fataka
ü üü ü
schampa wulla wussa
ólobo
hej tatta görem
eschige zunbada
wulubu ssubudu uluw
ssubudu
tumba ba-umf
kusagauma
ba-umf
- Karavane

"We knew our fate. We knew that we were in an extermination camp and death was our destiny. We knew that even a sudden end to the war might spare the inmates of the "normal" concentration camps, but never us. Only desperate actions could shorten our suffering and maybe afford us a chance of escape. And the will to resist had grown and ripened. We had no dreams of liberation; we hoped merely to destroy the camp and to die from bullets rather than from gas. We would not make it easy for the Germans."

- Thomas Toivi Blatt, survivor of the Sobibor Uprising

leading to the feeling that their opportunity to revolt was running short. Also, news of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising spread, as survivors of Warsaw were sent to Treblinka, which galvanized members of the resistance.

The decision was made and the revolt began on Monday, August 2, 1943. In preparation that day, some members of the Underground sharpened axes and knives, while the prisoner in charge of spraying disinfectant covertly filled his container with gasoline and sprayed it on the buildings of camp. As prisoners met to pick up their weapons, they uttered the password, "Death," to which the response was, "Life." Chants of "Death! Life! Death! Life!" intensified the overwhelming feeling that these people were fighting for their own survival.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, an SS man approached the prisoners' barracks and was shot by a member of the Underground. The shooting of the guard marked the beginning of the uprising, with prisoners throwing grenades at the buildings that had been sprayed with gasoline. The gunshot also alerted the other SS guards, who barricaded themselves from the revolting prisoners. Some members of the resistance groups continued to fight with the guards, while many other prisoners attempted to escape. Out of the 700 prisoners at Treblinka, the uprising allowed as many as 400 to escape, a number of them were eventually tracked down by Nazi guards, with an estimated 100 surviving the war. Shortly after the rebellion, the prison at Treblinka was shut down.

Sobibor began exterminations on March 17, 1942. Similar to the prisoners at Treblinka, they started to feel the work was coming to an end in early 1943. In early summer, an organized resistance group began to form. One of the core members of the resistance began handing new prisoners pieces of paper which read, "this is a death camp; let us revolt." The group was loosely organized until September when a new arrival, Alexander "Sasha" Pechersky, arrived. Pechersky, a Russian prisoner of war, impressed the other prisoners and resistance members with his knowledge and courage.

The Underground reached out to Pechersky for help and he became an essential member of the resistance. They felt they were running out of time, as transports to the camp continued to slow down and winter was approaching. If a successful escape took place, it could be jeopardized if the prisoners left behind footprints in the snow. Also, any survivors would face additional challenges as a result of the inclement weather. As a result of this urgency and the knowledge of the uprising at Treblinka, the Underground chose to take action.

On October 14, 1943, each member of the group was sent to a shop at the camp with an axe. The plan commenced when an SS man arrived at the tailor shop to be fit for his new uniform. As the tailor distracted him, another prisoner came from behind and hacked him to death with an axe. His gun was taken and his

body hidden from view. This same trap was successfully used against a number of guards at different parts throughout the camp. The whistle was blown to indicate the end of the workday and unsuspecting prisoners began lining up for coffee and bread. News of the attacks spread and Pechersky jumped up on top of a table, telling the prisoners that most of the Germans at the camp had been killed. He declared that whoever did survive should tell the world about the atrocities they witnessed and experienced at Sobibor. As a final rallying cry, he called out, "Forward Comrades! Death to the fascist!"

The rebellion killed eleven SS men and four Ukrainian guards. There were around 600 prisoners in the camp and 300 of them escaped, with 100 captured or shot shortly after the escape. Of the remaining 200, some were eventually captured by the Nazis and some died fighting as partisans, with an estimate of around 50 prisoners surviving the Sobibor revolt.

Although in both these instances where only a minority of the prisoners survived, it is almost certain that they all would have been killed had they chosen not to resist. Also, these uprisings delivered significant blows to the Nazi regime. These resistant moments manifested themselves symbolically by showing that the regime was susceptible to resistance, but also institutionally since the Nazis were forced to send hundreds of agents out to track down the escaped prisoners.

