



“Whenever I meet someone who is radicalizing, who is looking for a way to understand the world we live in and inspire hope that we can live in a fundamentally different and liberating society, OFS’s writing are some of the first pieces I share along with “Wretched of the Earth,” “Sister Outsider,” “This Bridge Called My Back” and models of change from Mexico to Spain.”

*Uruj Sheikh
Campaign Manager,
The Real News Network*



“[OFS is] an organization of organizers, a revolutionary organization involved in mass struggles... serious, smart...OFS liked to think long term...[with] no qualms about calling itself revolutionary...the radicalism of the core of the [Occupy] Movement is what baffled so many observers. ”

*Todd Gitlin, from “Occupy Nation” (pg 130)
Professor of Journalism and Sociology, Columbia University
Founding member of SDS and third president*



“Sounds benign and non threatening; however a closer look reveals an organization that is bent on the destruction of America... Their beautifully written mission statement and other language on their web site, boiled down to basics, shows that the organization wants to replace our capitalist system with socialism at best.”

Milton Reid, Retired Corporate Executive

AUTONOMY FREEDOM SOLIDARITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR A FREE SOCIETY (OFS)



www.afreesociety.org
organizationforafreesociety@riseup.net
www.facebook.com/afreesociety
Twitter: @afreesociety
Signal: 973-346-2793

PGP fingerprint: A60B FBD9 73B1 785C 3689 DD57 931E E6B2 41BA 8FD7

AUTONOMY, FREEDOM, SOLIDARITY

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
ORGANIZATION FOR A FREE SOCIETY (OFS)**



The original version of this document was collectively written by our members in May, 2013. It has been updated and edited by a committee in February, 2017. Its purpose is to give a broad overview of our perspective: what we see, what we stand for, and how we do what needs to get done.

organizationforafreesociety@riseup.net

empowers imperialism's right-wing, and places their people in positions of massive influence. Combined with a demagogue president, a cabinet full of generals and executives, and a Republican Party that has been sliding into religious extremism and fascism for years, we face the gravest threat to our bodies, communities, movements, and planet. The façade of liberalism is being shattered – it is their ideology has led us to this point. We cannot afford to pretend that someone in a position of institutional power will come to save us. We cannot count on them to protect us or show us mercy. It is clearer than ever where our only hope lies: within ourselves, our communities, our barrios and neighborhoods, our workplaces and farms organized democratically to defend humanity and our ability to live a free life. It is now or never.

We need coherent radical ideas and revolutionary organizations that can fight for freedom in the real world. We need cadres in the movement who have clear values, analysis, and training. If we can't fuse emancipatory ideology with practice, we will not be able to confront the fascist threat. We have a responsibility to get involved.

We are building an organization based on participatory socialist values, analysis, vision, and strategy. We are forming partnerships with other revolutionaries around the country and world, and we are committed to victory. We are dedicated to building an organization that reflects the realities of our society, so we actively prioritize the perspectives of oppressed communities condemned to the peripheries of this system, including women, queer and trans people, people of color, people with disabilities, youth, elders, and the global working class among our members.

We want to work with you, whether you are new to the struggle and looking for guidance, or experienced and looking for comrades, whether you are a revolutionary looking for an organization to join, an organization seeking partnership, or a movement veteran with wisdom to share.

The time is now.



“The uprising against Trump is a welcome development but for it to have legs it will have to be based on the understanding that Trump is a continuation and inevitable escalation of a cruel, greedy, and violent global system – U.S.-based capitalism/white supremacy/patriarchy/imperialism. Defeating it requires not a four-year strategy but a fight from one generation to the next. Morally and strategically, we cannot win this fight without a major transformation of our justice movements from their internal U.S. focus to solidarity with the people of the world whose suffering under the military and economic brutality of that system already far exceeds the worst of what we are afraid will happen to us under Trump. We are Fallujah – and Yemen, Somalia, Guantanamo – or we are nothing. “When they came for the Jews, I did not resist because I was not a Jew... and when they came for me there was no one left to resist.” This lesson applies to the targets of U.S. global aggression or it does not apply at all. Bringing that awareness into the anti-Trump movement is the historic task of the organized progressive forces in this period.”

-Naomi Jaffe
Friend of OFS
Former Weather Underground Member
Co-Founder of NYS Prisoner Justice Network

fundamentalism, NATO imperialism, patriarchy, and authoritarianism. In North America in 2011, we saw resistance in Madison, Wisconsin to defend collective bargaining rights, worker and student occupations, and the rise of the Occupy Movement in cities and towns across the U.S. Throughout 2012, we saw the rise of the Idle No More campaign led by Indigenous First Nations, and in the past year the courageous Sioux-led resistance at Standing Rock shook the country to its colonial core. From Ferguson to Baltimore, we have seen rebellions against police terrorism and the revival of a movement for Black self-determination. Through intense organizing, massive protests, and powerful messaging, the Movement for Black Lives, which comprises dozens of powerful and committed groups, has made the struggle against white supremacy central, just as Occupy highlighted the struggle against capitalism. We've seen workers striking, homeowners resisting foreclosure, women and queer people confronting rape culture, communities resisting disaster capitalism, and countless other examples of a movement rising. The far right is taking its final shot at control through violent social divisions and rigid power hierarchies, but all over the world people are declaring that amidst the crisis, another world is possible.

IX. MOVING FORWARD

We must confront the acute crises before us and build a movement united by common values, with action guided by a common analysis, vision, and strategy – a movement that can overcome the present crises and push forward, through the deepest layers of oppression in our society and ourselves, for a free society. Our task is to help build this movement. We must popularize the stories of people struggling throughout history and the stories of the people struggling today. We must educate ourselves and those around us, deepen our politics and sharpen our skills. We must engage in collective action in order to win tangible, significant gains today, so that we can grow together to fight for more tomorrow. We must build alternative institutions that belong to us, enable us to struggle over the long-term, and embody the basic features of the world we are fighting for.

We are in a “do or die” moment. Resistance movements are rising all around us and are beginning to link up. The reactionary backlash speaks to the potential our movements hold – our enemies take us seriously. And our enemies are organized to win. The election of Donald Trump validates and

surveillance, suspicion, and outright violence against Muslim communities. Under our racist criminal (in)justice system militarized police murder Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples with legal impunity and the U.S. prison population has swelled to an unprecedented size, subjecting those inside to cruel and inhuman treatment and denying them full participation in society if they are released. This system further exploits and polices people on the basis of immigration status, and we have seen constantly increasing threats, harassment, and mass deportation in undocumented and immigrant communities.

We see a dangerous shift towards fascism in our dysfunctional political system. For years now we have faced a rising proto-fascist conservative movement that hypocritically uses the Constitution to promote division and deny rights to immigrants, people of color, women, queer and trans people, and the working class. The New Right and Alt-Right use white supremacist, antisemitic, and increasingly nationalistic rhetoric, eerily reminiscent of 20th century fascist movements across the globe, to divide poor and working class white people from oppressed communities to promote an ultra-conservative agenda. Meanwhile, their liberal counterparts remain wed to the imperialist paradigm that fails to present a compelling alternative and has proven ineffectual in stemming this ultra-conservative tide. A fascist demagogue occupies the White House, his party controls both houses of Congress, and a conservative majority rules the Supreme Court. This power grab by imperialism's right-wing is a global trend, with elites exploiting widespread anger and frustration caused by neoliberal capitalism, and drawing on the underlying racism and sexism of our society.

“ From reproductive justice...to community self-defense, our work has spanned a diverse range of social issues. “

Fascism has shown to be a more powerful ideology than liberalism, but socialism – participatory socialism for the 21st century – is more powerful than fascism. While this oppressive system works to keep us down, there are moments of heightened crisis that open possibilities for revolutionaries to rally humanity to the cause of freedom. We are entering one of these historic moments. Only a few years ago, we saw uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Mexico, India, Greece, Spain, Nepal, and countless other countries around the world. The Kurdish Freedom Movement is in the midst of a democratic revolution that can provide a vibrant alternative to religious

I. AN ORGANIZATION OF REVOLUTIONARIES

From climate change to mass incarceration, extreme poverty to endless war, we are living in the new world disorder. It's time for humanity to rise up, to rediscover our creative potential, and to build a free society based on democracy, justice, and sustainability for all and future generations to come. From Ferguson to Baltimore, Chiapas to Rojava, the seeds of the social revolution have been planted: let's continue the work to ensure an abundant harvest. This world-historic task will require a powerful movement of movements, bringing together millions of people in the process of reclaiming our lives and communities. Only an organization of revolutionaries, providing a center for study, reflection, coordination, and action, will ensure that this project succeeds against all odds.

Since 2007, the Organization for a Free Society (OFS) has worked to forge such an organization. We are a home for revolutionaries to develop unity around a common analysis, vision, and strategy, to strive to embody the values of a free society within the present, and to build a united front inclusive of the grassroots social movements and alternative institutions created by the oppressed. When we come together, the multitude of women, LGBTQ2GNC (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two spirit, and gender nonconforming) peoples, people of color, people with disabilities, youth, elders, students, and the global working class are an unstoppable force.

II. OUR WORK

To be a revolutionary is to live a life of action, to participate in grassroots struggles that challenge injustice and expand the realm of freedom, to work tirelessly to build and defend democracy in all areas of social life, and to always uphold the leadership of frontline communities facing the most brutal forms of oppression at the hands of the imperialist system.

In our work at the grassroots level, we've fought back against police occupation and violence in our streets, against foreclosures and evictions in defense of our homes, against budget cuts and tuition hikes at our schools, against injustice and humiliation in our workplaces, and against the imperialist war machine that has spread its reach to every corner of the world. From reproductive justice to socialized healthcare, workers' power to community self-defense, our work has spanned a diverse range of social issues. From Palestine to NYC, Detroit to Brazil, we have worked to build autonomous movements united by the bond of solidarity.

Working together, we played an important role in the Occupy movement and provided vital services in the fields of relief, recovery, and reconstruction in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. In addition to our grassroots organizing, we agitate and educate to popularize our revolutionary perspective through alternative media, including writings, film, radio, music, poetry, and visual art.

Following the collective leadership of frontline communities, and drawing inspiration from the experience of movement veterans, our goal is to work with all progressive forces to grow and deepen a movement of movements, and to organically develop a participatory socialist tendency from below. In the service of these goals, we study together to deepen our ideological and programmatic unity, strategize to use our collective energies effectively, and hone our ability to rally people to freedom's banner during moments of crisis. We understand that we are one small part of a growing movement that will be capable of transforming our world in the direction of greater freedom, beauty, and sustainability.

III. UNDERSTANDING A COMPLEX WORLD

As humans are a social species, we are shaped and limited by the dominant institutions within our society. At the same time, we are the ones who perpetuate these very institutions, and have the collective power to transform them. In order to create a free society, we must use the weapon of theory to determine how to overcome the oppressive institutions at the root of the imperialist system, and the forms of oppression we have internalized within ourselves.

It's important to understand the many faces of the system that

exists. It is not enough to create our own alternatives within a corrupt world, nor is it enough to exclusively fight against the institutions of that corrupt world without creating alternatives. We need to simultaneously fight this oppressive system and prefigure the free society we envision.

We understand that the ruling elite will never give up their power without a fight, and that revolution will require a popular uprising. At crucial moments throughout the course of a struggle, people's movements must confront elites and take power from them, decentralize it, and defend themselves in the process of achieving power. Such moments of insurrection are not "the revolution," but part of the enormous process of social transformation, which will encompass several lifetimes. While necessary, we do not glorify this phase of struggle more than any other.

At the foundation of our conception of the revolutionary process is a radical transformation of the institutions that govern our lives and of the values that drive them. As we work to build a movement of movements, develop counterpower, and topple the institutions of the status quo, we must also work to transform ourselves, so that what we build will not replicate exploitative, oppressive, hierarchical values. Revolutionary communities must engage in the process of collective healing from the forms of oppressions we seek to overturn, as they inevitably arise within our very own circles of comrades and friends, and in our relationships. OFS seeks diverse methods of overcoming internalized oppression and its manifestations within our organization through internal group work and community self-care. By doing so, we do not only seek to make our lives within the imperialist system more livable: we also work to make ourselves more effective revolutionaries.

VIII. OUR MOMENT

We are in a unique period of human history – a time of incredible turmoil and immense possibility. We are in the midst of an ecological crisis that threatens all biological life on the planet through climate change, pollution, corporate agriculture, water shortages, and the extinction of diverse species of plants and animals. We are deep in an economic crisis that takes our homes and jobs from the people while forcing working families and students further into debt. We see Islamophobia justifying

The vision we advance is based on our assessment of history, and the present needs and potential of humanity. We are committed to an open and ongoing process of discovery and deliberation focused on collectively determining the essence of the free society we must struggle to create. Our vision is not dogmatic, but grounded in the revolutionary praxis of hundreds of millions of people spanning many generations of struggle. We cannot predict the future, and we acknowledge that our vision will transform itself through new experiences of grassroots struggle and experimentation.

VII. A STRATEGY TO WIN

Revolution is not a singular event, but a process made up of overlapping phases: laying the groundwork for future developments by building strong movements today, cultivating a counterpower based on alternative institutions, a popular uprising led by a movement of movements that topples the old order, and the radical transformation of society on a global scale towards greater autonomy, solidarity, and freedom. We call this strategic framework protracted revolutionary struggle.

In the groundwork phase, the task of revolutionaries is to raise consciousness among large groups of people, challenge the dominant narrative, create channels through which people can join the movement and develop as revolutionaries, and lay the groundwork for collective long-term struggle. To build a movement, we encourage people to grow and transform from allies and supporters to movement leaders and revolutionaries, both through collective action and self-education. We fight for concrete victories that meet people's needs and change the narrative about what is possible, and for long-term victories that demonstrate the power of collective action and position us to achieve even more.

We work to build a movement that can eventually become a counterpower, a network of institutions that are popularly regarded as viable, functional, and legitimate alternatives to the oppressive institutions of the system, and which actively fight to replace them. This process culminates in the building of what we call a counterstate, a dynamic federation of revolutionary alternative institutions and grassroots social movements organized in accordance with principle of autonomy within solidarity, which can grow to challenge the legitimacy of the state as it

oppresses us in different areas of our lives. In assessing the historical development of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, authoritarianism, and the ecological rift, we see that each of these social structures have distinct characteristics, yet all share a common factor: a hierarchal relationship between oppressor and oppressed formed on the basis of exploitation, alienation, and dependency. These various forms of institutionalized oppression are interwoven, and are able to recreate, reinforce and defend one another.



Many of us have arrived at this analysis by growing and developing within different ideological tendencies, such as queer feminism, social anarchism, indigenism, environmentalism, national liberation, and marxism, and we bring these diverse paths with us into this project. We can focus on confronting one form of oppression at a particular moment – for example, we focus on overthrowing and abolishing white supremacy when we take the streets to protest the police murder of young Black lives. However, during these critical moments of crisis in which one form of oppression takes precedence and must be directly confronted, we always remember that other oppressive structures are present as well, and we recognize that the pursuit of collective liberation implies the complete dismantling of all forms of institutional oppression.

We do not subscribe to a perspective that holds one particular form of institutional oppression to be at the root of all others. Though we can identify particular aspects of oppression in different areas of social life, from the rule of the boss in our workplace to the occupation of our communities by the police, we see these various aspects come together into a coherent social system, forming a totality of oppressions. We call the method of analysis that recognizes this reality complementary holism. If intersectionality helps a person locate their position within the matrix of oppression, complementary holism helps us analyze the systemic source of this matrix: the interdependent and co-reproducing social institutions that are dominant within our society.

It is not sufficient to move past reductionism by understanding that one form of oppression is not historically more important than others. Nor

is an eclectic perspective that identifies multiple sources of oppression but approaches them in isolation from one another adequate to the task at hand. Instead, we must take an approach that recognizes the many aspects of our social system, taking account of the various forms of oppression that manifest within our society, understanding that different types of oppression can accommodate, reproduce, reinforce, and from the rest of society, analyzing it in a vacuum, and then conclude that we've arrived at a strategy sufficient to dismantle capitalism and all forms of class society. Capitalism cannot be understood apart from its historical development with heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, authoritarianism, and the ecological rift. Ultimately, we must confront the totality of oppressions if we are to build a movement of movements capable of achieving a free society.

IV. THE TOTALITY OF OPPRESSIONS

The dominant social system in which we live comprises a tapestry of oppressive institutions that function differently in a variety of contexts, occasionally bending to the will of grassroots struggles, but ultimately coming together to maintain what we experience as the status quo. We call this system imperialism to convey its global, expansionary, and parasitic character. It is built upon the institutions of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and authoritarianism, and it has accelerated the ecological rift between humanity and our biological environment.

Within the U.S. empire, white supremacy has manifested itself in many complex forms, beginning with the arrival of European settler-colonialism to the Americas in 1492. In North America, these settlers waged genocidal wars against Indigenous First Nations, stealing and privatizing the land, and building a continental empire through the extensive use of African slave labor, the super-exploitation of immigrant workers, and the annexation of northern Mexico, the Pacific Islands, and Alaska.

Today, people of color are still ruthlessly exploited, policed, incarcerated, and murdered by white supremacy, devastating whole communities. Many communities of color suffer from displacement through gentrification, policing on the basis of immigration status, lack of health insurance and denial of care, and poverty wages. Entire groups of people are invisibilized and exploited based on immigration status, facing constant

people towards deconstructing and replacing the oppressive institutions that prevent us from actualizing a free life for all people.

We envision a social system in which people's political participation is not limited to periodically casting a ballot for a representative that fails to represent, but a democratic polity in which federations of popular assemblies or councils enable us to directly participate in the decisions that affect our lives. We envision a classless economy in which workers and consumers cooperatively and democratically plan their activities to meet our needs and desires. In such an economy, the means of production are collectively owned and administered by society, jobs are balanced so empowering and undesirable types of labor are distributed fairly, and workers are compensated for effort, sacrifice, and need.

We envision liberated and egalitarian kinship relations in which women, youth, and queer, trans, and gender nonconforming peoples have control over their own bodies, are free from violence and exploitation, are free to follow their own path in life, and all people have the freedom to define their gender, sexuality, and familial relations in ways that are democratic, consensual, and healthy. We envision intercommunal relations based on self-determination, in which communities historically oppressed by colonialism have the territory and resources to restore and further develop their cultural autonomy, and disputes and conflicts within and between communities are resolved through restorative justice.



We envision a dynamic in which human society synchronizes with nature's diversity, fertility, and creativity. We believe that humans are capable of utilizing the wealth of the earth in a way that leaves intact more than what is needed for generations to come. With all this in mind, we envision a society that draws on the wisdom and sensible practices of our ancestors who were the original organic farmers, who invented sustainable fishing, and who used creativity to maximize natural resources. At the same time, we understand that it is crucial to continually integrate useful science and technology that improves our quality of life and reduces undesirable work. We envision sustainable cities and rural communities that rely upon smart design that includes free public transportation, green infrastructure, subsistence gardening, and a cooperative urban-rural partnership.

schools, and our parents and friends.

With the weapon of theory, we can distill the truth from the lies, analyzing the system's various forms of institutional oppression and social control mechanisms. Race is one of the ways in which class is expressed and experienced in our country, and the state not only enforces heteropatriarchy but is directly shaped by it. Ultimately, we won't win freedom unless we take on the system as a whole, in all its manifestations, which means we need a vision of an alternative and a strategy to win.

VI. ENVISIONING A FREE SOCIETY

Vision guides our work and informs the projects we build: it inspires us to continue working together against all odds, providing a standard against which we can measure the progress of our work. In the words of the great Mexican revolutionary Ricardo Flores Magon, "If the revolutionary lacks the guiding idea of their action, they will not be anything other than a ship without a compass."

The participatory socialist vision is our compass. For us, socialism is more than a new economy – it is an entirely new social system, premised on the expansion of democracy to all areas of social life. We qualify socialism with the term participatory to indicate a rejection of hierarchical forms of society that have called themselves "socialist." The socialism we envision – the only form of society worthy of the name – involves the direct engagement of individuals and communities in the democratic self-administration of society at all levels.

When we imagine a free society, we think of values such as autonomy, solidarity, diversity, justice, and sustainability. Based on these values and our vision, we work to build alternative institutions to prefigure and establish the basis of a free society to the greatest extent possible – people's assemblies or councils in neighborhoods and workplaces, communal dwellings, free schools, decentralized economic planning, community self-defense groups, and more. We work to build these alternative institutions within the shell of the old society because they can directly improve our lives and teach us how to become active participants in the self-administration of a free society. In addition to the immediate benefits, the goal of alternative institutions is to build the power of the

harassment and the threat of incarceration and deportation. All of this exists within a systemic framework that gives better treatment to people with light skin, who comprise a fictional "white race," created in order to facilitate the domination of the vast majority of humanity by imperialism.

The logic of white supremacy bends and twists to accommodate any situation, always with the goal of maintaining an unequal power structure. Within and across communities of color there also exists discrimination on the basis of skin color, from colorism to outright exclusion of one group by another group, due to false notions of superiority among people of different nationalities, regions within countries, and so on. Imperialism often conspires to exacerbate these conflicts to spread disunity among oppressed communities as part of its strategy of divide and rule. Meanwhile, the impoverishment of many white working class communities reveals that capitalism remains loyal to no one, and will discard those it no longer needs.

Capitalism is a profit-driven, market-based economic system premised on the division of society into hostile classes based on private ownership of the means of production and a hierarchal division of labor. In order to maximize profit, the capitalist class must maintain a large, exploitable mass of laborers – the working class – who are relegated to conditions of physical and psychological subjugation in order to keep them dependent on their capitalist masters. As capitalism evolved amid rapid technological developments and changes within the division of labor, the economy developed a professional-managerial sector, out of which arose a coordinator class responsible for administering the production process on behalf of the capitalist class. Capitalism is highly flexible and has evolved historically, most recently in the form of neoliberalism. At its core capitalism always relies upon the exploitation of labor and resources, with giant corporations competing against one another for profits, fostering a culture of competition and incentivizing anti-social behavior that undermines democracy, justice, and sustainability.

Today, this system is exported and enforced through neocolonial international relations and global power structures inherited from an earlier era of imperialism. The states of the imperialist centers are able to exploit the labor and resources of their internal and external neocolonies via capital, international banking systems, and the threat of military force. Further enriching themselves, the wealthier states attempt to pacify larger portions of their citizenry through self-serving consumerism and notions of cultural superiority, and fostering unrest throughout the Global South to

justify ongoing imperialist interventions.

This system's ongoing accumulation of capital is depleting the natural wealth of our planet and rapidly destroying the ecosystems of our biosphere, making it increasingly uninhabitable. We are living in a time of unprecedented climate change, the loss of numerous species and habitat diversity, and the deterioration of vital resources such as breathable air, potable water, and fertile soil. As we experience these ecological crises, the wisdom of indigenous peoples that helped to sustain humanity for so long continues to be silenced through the marginalization and destruction of indigenous communities and their land. As ecological crises worsen, existing social tensions will intensify, the poor will become more vulnerable, and resource wars between states and corporations will propel racism and xenophobia.

Through the instruments of heteropatriarchy, we are bound to a rigid sex, gender, and sexual binary. This binary is an institutionalized ideology that creates a strict division of female/male, woman/man, gay/straight, etc. This binary is reinforced through "common sense" assumptions about nature and biology. Heteropatriarchy treats sex, gender, and sexuality as fixed categories, inflicting shame and violence onto those whose bodies, gender performance, and sexuality escape this binary. It restricts their access to resources as well as social recognition and affirmation. In turn, it upholds heterosexual, cisgender, monogamous identities and relationships as natural, legitimate, and the only viable option for society. Cisgender masculinity is affirmed and privileged, while women, children, and queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people are punished by the threat of rape, violence, shame, and social subordination. These effects are further intensified for people of color.

“ Many of us have arrived at this analysis by growing and developing within different ideological tendencies...we bring these diverse paths with us into this project. “

The state – broadly understood as the institutions of organized coercive power of the ruling elite, acting in the interest of preserving the oppressive system from which they benefit – enforces the mentality of obedience to authority in many aspects of our lives, from the family and school to police and prisons. State power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites – primarily rich, white, straight, Christian men –

while most people have little say in the decisions that affect our lives. This network of power is managed by agents drawn from various classes and communities to perform a variety of repressive functions (police officers, court officials, prison guards, politicians, bureaucrats, etc.), maintaining the dominance of a tiny ruling elite, forever distant from social accountability.

We experience these oppressive structures intersectionally, as part of a whole or totality, woven together through society's multiple institutions. Social systems are built upon complex and dynamic interconnections, and our analysis, vision, and strategy must meet the challenges posed by this complexity and dynamism.

V. THE LIES WE'RE TOLD

We are taught by society to not identify oppression as historical, systemic, or interconnected. We are taught that we live in a merit-based society, that rewards and punishments are distributed fairly as the direct result of individual behavior. This means that oppressed people are blamed for their oppression. We are all told fables about the lazy, stupid, dangerous, or crazy behaviors inherent in certain groups of people, and that these are the cause of their ongoing impoverishment, rape, incarceration, pillaging, and marginalization. A person's position in a social system based on oppression and privilege is erased behind the façade of a meritocracy, in which "anyone can achieve anything if they try hard enough." We are provided with individual examples of success by people from marginalized backgrounds to prove that the oppression of their communities are a thing of the past.

Likewise, liberation movements do not go unnoticed by the system. The system attempts to co-opt the language and symbols of our struggles, empties them of meaning, incorporates and regurgitates them as consumer goods for the profit of "progressive" corporations, liberal politicians, and non-profits. This phenomenon colonizes dissent and is used to teach us that the system is flexible and open to change, so long as the underlying power dynamics and dominant institutions are never challenged. We learn these lies to psychologically justify the forms of oppression we experience and observe. These lies are delivered to us daily through our online news feed, sitcoms on television, popular songs on the radio, our places of worship and