

JANUARY 18 DAY OF THE FOREST DEFENDER

On January 18, 2023, Georgia State Patrol officers entered the Weelaunee Forest alongside police from other agencies in the region. They sought to clear the encampments re-established there in the weeks prior. A month earlier, on December 13, a similar operation cleared encampments after a year of struggle, and culminated in the arrest of 6 forest defenders on obscene and fraudulent charges of Domestic Terrorism.

When Patrolmen entered the forest in January, they entered into a long confrontation they had little or no experience with, a confrontation pitting free people, local residents, environmentalists, aspiring revolutionaries, and itinerant insurrectionalists against the Atlanta Police Foundation, the Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens and his submissive City Council, Michael Thurmond and the DeKalb County government, Ryan Millsap and Shadowbox Studios, and all of the contractors hoping to devastate the land, displace its life forms, and replace them with a police training facility and soundstage complex.

This struggle has been something of a burning torch for class confrontation and subversive cultural innovation in the United States for nearly 3 years. It would not be an exaggeration to say this has been the sharpest struggle in North America during the entirety of the Biden-Harris administration.

The nature of this confrontation was altered permanently by the hasty and poorly-made decisions of Jerry Parrish, Bryland Myers, Jonathan Salcedo, Ronaldo Kegel, Royce Zah, and Mark Jonathan Lamb. These officers ambushed and killed Tortuguita, the *nom de guerre* with which we knew a 26 year old anarchist living in the forest.

For a month following the murder, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, and actions took place across the country and abroad. On January 21st, a few hundred people rioted in downtown Atlanta, setting multiple police cruisers alight and breaking windows at the Atlanta Police Foundation headquarters. In some instances, incendiary attacks against financiers and subcontractors of Cop City reduced assets and infrastructure to rubble and ash. Religious leaders, civic organizations, and elected officials made comment publicly on the escalatory actions of the local government against the movement.

Rather than extinguishing the movement, the killers dumped gasoline on it. In the following months, thousands of people took part in actions against the project, including a courageous raid on the site on March 5th, the clandestine burning of several dozen machines supporting the project throughout the summer and fall (including, at times, the use of time-delayed devices), and a popular referendum initiative challenging the right of the government to build the project whatsoever.

In November 2023, the killers working from prosecutor John Fowler's office coordinated a public leak of Tortuguita's diary. This diary belongs with the family of the deceased, but is still in the hands of the executioners. Fowler, who is obsessed with the political dynamics of the movement and has worked hard to introduce terms and frameworks which appear nowhere in the penal code (including his inane commentary on anarchism in the indictment), initiated a motion to include scans of the diary into evidence. He pretends to believe that the document contains incriminating information for other defendants still among the living. His actual motivation is clear enough for those who study him: John Fowler is a right wing fanatic who believes that the contents of the diary will somehow demoralize the movement, or deprive it of a martyr. The motion his office filed made the document public record just long enough for reactionary thugs and brainless rightist commentators to publish a rash of

hyperbolic and stupefying articles. Why? Why do they do this?

MEMORY IS OUR WEAPON

If the authorities can deny the public the right to remember the brutality and cruelty they unleash on those who take action, they can erode the coherence of our theories of struggle. They can lead us to wrong conclusions, by providing us with wrong histories. If they can induce a mindset of amnesia, they can disconnect serious militancy from intermediate struggles, thus depriving subversive groups of a medium for their interventions, and oppressed classes of combative methods. If they can keep us in a state of generalized forgetting, they can abuse communities and groups one after another without ever confronting a unified and sophisticated oppositional movement in turn.

This is why they compell us to move from one "emergency" to the next, scandal to scandal, always forgetting, never developing the power necessary to actually alter the course of events or to wreck the system for good.

In order to build forces capable of doing so, we need time. In order to seize the time, we need the focus and thus the memory.

THE DAY OF THE FOREST DEFENDER

To commemorate the heroic actions of Jonathan and George Jackson, Black liberationists across the United States hold events of collective memory in the month of August, known as Black August. To commemorate the killing of Rafael and Eduardo Vergara Toledo, two young MIRistas fighting against the fascist dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, dignified Chileans observe March 29 as the Day of the Young Combatant, often clashing with police and holding community events simultaneously. To remember the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising in Athens, a revolt which precipitated the demise of the hated military dictatorship, annual events and guerrilla actions are held on November 17 across Greece. More still, in memory of the December 6, 2008 murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos by Greek special police and the subsequent insurrection, thousands of people converge in Athens every year, making the early winter something of a season of subversion for the angry and exploited classes of Greek society.

Just this year, thousands gathered in the Lacandon jungle in Chiapas, Mexico to commemorate the 30 year anniversary of the Zapatista insurrection in 1994, which inaugurated a new period of class conflict and subversion in the post Cold War era.

Let January 18th be remembered, from here on, as the Day of the Forest Defender.

Combative anarchists, New Afrikans/Black liberationists, Indigenous land defenders, socialists, nihilists, abolitionists, anti-imperialists, and all other independent and aspiring forces: let's organize encounters, events, actions, interventions, and deeds to honor those killed, kidnapped, disappeared, and abused in defense of our shared planet and its life forms. Let us make recourse to all methods as suit our specific capacities and needs as guerrillas, organizers, activists, rebels, and creative people operating within our respective contexts and constraints.

Do not hesitate to organize media, to coordinate speaking events, film screenings, prayer circles, concerts, dinners, or community events in memory of the fallen defenders of the Earth, and of Tortuguita in particular.

These events are necessary but must be complimented by additional framing in order to do justice to those who have been taken from us.

BEYOND SELF DEFENSE: POINTS ON COUNTER-REPRESSION

In order to advance from a combative campaign into a revolutionary crisis, it will be necessary for

the liberation forces to address the repression of the stop Cop City protesters, and other movements as well.

Aside from anti-repression strategies, including material, legal, emotional, and public support for the accused, it is necessary to construct a pole capable and willing to break the repressive momentum, and ultimately to dissuade it. For this, counter-repressive measures are needed.

What is counter-repression? Put simply, it means we fight back. We do not only defend ourselves, lay low, run away, or treat our wounds. We do not only practice patience and humility with our comrades and those we disagree with. We also hit the authorities where they are vulnerable. Counter-repression is not a form of grudge match and it is not a qualitative "balancing the scales." Rather, it is a form of tactical orientation committed to hijacking the repressive process for our own propaganda and combative purposes.

When there are arrests, when there are detentions, or raids; when they harrass us, when they follow us, when the doxx us; when bond is revoked, when conditions are tightened, when false narratives are deployed, we should respond quickly. This is the essence of counter-repression.

The best we can do to disrupt the repressive momentum, which is likely to continue accumulating in the coming year now that federal authorities are more involved, is to expand participation in the movement, to inoculate broader layers of the public to the need for physical resistance, and to play to all the strengths of the movement and weaknesses of the government. Our main priority should be to increase the scale of our organization as well as the intellect and comprehension of students, service workers, leftists, poor people, prisoners, etc. of the actual need for a social revolution to topple the state, break the armed forces, expropriate large tracts of land and housing from the super-rich, and to reorganize society for common luxury and well-being.

In order to remain focused on our shared objectives, and so that society continues to authorize and applaud the deeds of militants, we could consider the following targets for our interventions:

1. The Atlanta Police Foundation, their leader (David Wilkinson), board of trustees, events, and assets
2. Brasfield & Gorrie, their executives, assets, job sites, contracts etc
3. Atlanta Paving and Concrete or other subcontractors provably conducting work on the project at this time
4. Nationwide Insurance, Accident Fund General, their subsidiaries, executives, assets, or contracts, since they are propping up the relationships listed above.
5. Atlanta Police and government officials, vehicles, offices, assets, events, etc

A proper counter-repressive measure addresses the largest possible audience but is also comprehensible to those facing repression, i.e. not just a random target. Statements or claims of responsibility should disclaim, alongside whatever else must be said, that the action was taken in response to such and such repressive operation by the state or corporate interests.

Counter-repression is not a euphemism for clandestine attacks, although clandestine attacks can be a form of counter-repression.

Counter-repression can include poster and flier campaigns, marches, pranks, home demonstrations, rallies, doxxing, vigils, and more. If the focus of the effort is supporting the accused, it is anti-repression. If the focus of the effort is to pivot and re-apply pressure to the adversary, it is counter-repression. One does not replace the other. They compliment one another.

On January 18, let's expand on the counter-repressive efforts of the March 5th Movement comrades, the so-called Free & Rowdy Party, the Vengeance for Tortuguita cell, and the dozens of anonymous and courageous fighters who have hit back in the face of repression.

Let's remember those who gave everything, who lost their lives, in defense of the sacred.

**Long live all of the martyrs!
Viva Tortuguita!
Memory, dignity, action!**

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