OPENING ACTS



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S. W. & L. S.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

As a collective, our involvement in social struggles has not been indiscriminate. We recognize that in a deeply and consistently evil world, there are many, many opportunities to act—and that there aren't enough of us to respond to every one of them. We direct our limited resources strategically, understanding that the task of a revolutionary minority in the movement is to analyze and target this society's fault lines, paying attention to objective crises that might spur the subjective recomposition of a revolutionary movement.[1] The two texts below—and an anonymous press release from January 18th's rally against deportations at the Gary Airport, sent to us last night—are attempts to reflect theoretically on our involvement in Chicago's incipient struggle against deportations. We're hopeful that they clarify the conditions and stakes of this political moment for fellow radicals.

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GET RIGHTEOUS, GET RIGHT

> *After the defeat of the Commune, when the butchery of Paris workers, in both legal and extra-legal forms, was pursued to such an enormous degree that tens of thousands of proletarians including the best and most capable, the elite of the working class, were murdered, the satisfied use of revenge on the part of the entrepreneurs was punctuated by an unease that a shortage of reserve 'hands' might soon be painfully felt; it was precisely at this time, after the end of the war, that industry was experiencing a vigorous upswing. Several Paris entrepreneurs accordingly applied to the courts to have the persecution of Commune fighters moderated and thus save workers from military butchers for the arm of capital.*[2]

It is difficult to imagine the kind of violence necessary to depopulate an entire labor market of its dispossessed—but soon, it won't be. In Gaza, this depopulation is carried out by brute genocidal force; we're promised by the incoming administration that the National Guard will help ICE expel twenty million undocumented migrants by the end of Trump's second term. Different methods of ethnic cleansing are applied at various points

in the world-system, to different ends: Gaza, surplus to Israeli labor markets, is marked for annihilation for the crime of continuing to exist; migrants in the United States, responsible for the most precarious, physically dangerous and low-paying labor in the country, will be made surplus to the same American labor markets that currently rely on them to keep wages depressed in key agricultural and industrial sectors of the domestic economy. There, in the difference between the two situations, we can find room to act. Palestinian labor was only severed from Israeli labor markets once other sources were found for artificially lowered wages: in the Israeli case, migrant laborers from Southeast Asia. No similar solutions present themselves for the United States. In the Israeli case, the integration of the state's military and the organs of civil society—the media, schools, religious institutions and so on, not to mention universal conscription—guaranteed the warehousing of Gaza and the continued occupation of the West Bank met with no resistance; in the American case, the disunity of the military, federal government, and local jurisdictions will create spectacular blunders, inefficiencies and failures that we may be able to exploit.

Our commitment to class struggle is not a fetishistic attachment to the 20th-century coal unions or the leadership of the UAW, and we've learned in practice that the old organizations, with their outmoded, paternalistic thinking and one-size-fits-all activist campaigning, have given up on the goal they claim to be marching towards with every new recruitment drive. The 'working class' is a composite category, with various strata that form blocs aligned against each other as often as they're pitted against other classes. In the United States, what divides the middle and upper rungs of the working class from the proletariat and lumpenproletariat is that the latter are more often than not racialized: it's not as clear-cut as in Fanon's portrait of the colony, where you're rich because you're white and white because you're rich, but that's closer to true than the fiction that middle-class and petty bourgeois whites will someday recognize their natural class solidarity with their poor Black and brown neighbors.

We take a cue from W.E.B. DuBois's description of the wages of whiteness: both the real wage and the civic-psychological wage. In our "Reflections" on the encampments, we briefly outlined a global crisis in which, as profit rates dwindle, scores of proletarians have been ejected from regular access to work, and capital has moved to less-competitive labor markets in the global periphery. With the neo-colonial misrule, climate shocks, and domestic instability this moment brings comes a drastic increase in migration flows, with migrants deported and selectively incorporated—whether documented or not—to maintain middle class consumption standards while holding the (white) middle class apart from the 'dirty' work carried out by immigrants. The populations held at the border, warehoused in redlined neighborhoods and in many cases constantly under threat of de-

portation serve as "floating labor reserves for increasingly predatory individual capitals" in these 'dirty' sectors of production that are nonetheless crucial to the daily operation of the North American economy.[3]

In this political context, the divisions internal to the working class are decisive. Class war is war on the bourgeois class—but also on its junior partners: the homeowners, landlords, middle-class professional-managerial workers, and all of the other people who end up shoulder to shoulder with the police. Not all of these citizens are white, but they are all allowed to make use of the privileges and powers historically granted to white people—by calling the cops, snitching on an undocumented coworker, or otherwise leveraging their class position or legality against their systematically dispossessed neighbors. The Latinos who voted for Trump and against 'illegals' were not betraying some pre-existing revolutionary essence inherent to their community or culture, they were voting on class lines—against proletarianized, undocumented, poor immigrants. One segment of the class lines up with national capitals against their competitors on the labor market, whose undocumented status and poverty make them employable at lower wages and on more precarious terms—which becomes an easy wedge to drive between poor Latinos and their poorer co-workers.

Per DuBois, the "public and psychological wage" of whiteness was (and is) foundational to American civil society:

> *[Whites] were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule.*[4]

Meanwhile, as the real economic standing and security of middle-class whites continues to decline and the global crisis drags on, the 'psychological wage' of whiteness is activated. It does not serve an equilibrium-restoring function, but instead expresses the contradiction at the heart of American society: that the class relation here was and continues to be hashed out in racial terms, and that as a result, falls in the bourgeois consumption standards of the white middle class will immediately provoke calls for a return to older and more direct forms of that racial class rule. 'Econom-

ic anxiety' is racial paranoia; bourgeois class rule is white-supremacist dictatorship. The mass deportations that the Trump administration has promised may not be economically rational, but their economic irrationality matches that of the American economy and white civil society for its entire history.

Chicago will be 'ground zero' for the new administration's mass deportations. Tom Homan wants to bus thousands of people to the Gary airport—to tear families apart and destroy peoples' lives for the preservation of the white race—and he wants to do so not just with ICE or CBP but with the help of the local police, the national guard, and whichever deputized whites choose to pitch in. Class struggle is attacking this plan with everything at our disposal.

L. S.

BRAVE HEARTS TO THE FRONT!

Throughout the week preceding Trump's inauguration, people across the United States gathered for "Festivals of Resistance" to set the tone and the pace of our fight against the new administration's white terror for the years to come.[5] The week concluded on the 18th of January, the second anniversary of the execution of Tortuguita by Georgia State Patrol officers in a raid on the Weelaunee forest.[6] The struggle against Atlanta's proposed 'cop city'—a gigantic police training facility in the Atlanta forest, complete with a mock city designed to simulate the city's poor, Black neighborhoods—was an extension of 2020's nationwide uprising against the police, which orients our politics and leaves us with an afterimage of what a revolutionary event might someday look like here, in the belly of the beast.[7] Its martyrs—chief among them Tort—are our martyrs, and we chose to honor them practically, by continuing their struggle against the racist, imperialist American state.

This took us to the Gary/Chicago International Airport, a private airfield where five states' worth of deportation flights take off, bound for the southern border. The airport has been a site of intense, prolonged, and brave struggle, reaching its peak between 2017 and 2018, with demonstrators and militants directly, materially impeding deportation flights and the daily operation of the airport. Our aim was less ambitious on the morning of the 18th: the crowd, composed of seasoned militants and first-time protesters in equal parts, set off from a nearby South Shore Line stop to make a thirty-minute trek—in the bitter cold—to the gates of the airport, in the first of what one participant hoped would be "many actions against this region's deportation infrastructure, with the goal of shutting this shit down." But no deportations were stopped, and no airfields were invaded,

during the march or the brief moment of rest at the Gary Airport's gates. The demonstration was intended to signal popular discontent with the new administration's plans, if with a radical bent: common chants were "no borders / no nations / stop deportations" and "fuck the border, fuck the wall / we won't stop until they fall." A banner was dropped, decorated with the latter chant, on a fence surrounding the airport's hangars.

Passing traffic slowed down to honk in support of the slogans on display, or just to gawk at the demonstration—this was possibly the most exciting thing that'd happened in Gary in some time—but we eventually attracted the ire of airport security, who sent an employee out to remove the banner. He stepped out of his pickup truck ready for a fight and tore down the banner (though we convinced him to give it back). When told he was protecting deportation infrastructure he paused and replied, incredulous: "I'm just protecting my job, man." (Not for the last time in this story, the executor and representative of all-American, white supremacist politics was not, in fact, white.)

As we began to march back to the train stop where we'd started, a couple police cars trailed along, honking and reprimanding us, in a uniquely Midwestern fashion, for marching in the street. One pig, apparently not used to making demands, got on the loudspeaker attached to his car and told us: "We're trying to be nice and asking you to get out of the street. If you don't listen to us, we'll be forced to…"—he trailed off before completing the sentence. No one was too worried—there were fifty of us and just a couple squad cars' worth of them. In hindsight, the security guard who removed the banner likely tipped them off, and they picked up harassing us where he left off. Another car came down the road and joined the two behind us… then another, and another, and soon upwards of twelve or fifteen squad cars had descended upon us, physically forcing us off the road. (A police cruiser drove into protestors as they walked off the street.) This was, we think, the entirety of the Gary Police Department, along with at least one Gary conservation officer and some other stragglers from the County Sheriff who came to get in on the chance to attack protestors.

At this point, we had all left the road without much protest. But several of Gary PD's best and brightest weren't about to let us leave without, as one pig put it, "teaching us a lesson." One protestor was thrown five feet down a hill and into the fence; another who had just left the street was tackled and arrested for 'obstructing traffic' as GPD cruisers clogged the four-lane road. Others were threatened with serious injury. One old, white cop was quick to open up his scoped baton and wade into the crowd, eager to crack skulls. Another cop (younger than Officer Baton, and, like most of the Gary police present, not white) took out a taser and swung it around at eye level, holding the crowd at bay while his coworkers dragged the second ar-

restee towards the cars on the street. At this point, we clustered around the two arrestees and demanded their release. Instead, GPD pinned a member of the press to the ground and arrested them as well. Observers with the National Lawyers' Guild collected the names of arrestees and followed the squad cars to the station.

The three arrests could have demoralized us, and it was hard to adapt to an unprecedented level of violence doled out in response to a tame action, but morale remained high as we plodded back to the train station. Gary police followed us there, but no one else was arrested. New and old protestors remembered what we'd all learned in 2020: we all hate the police.

This action was part of a more expansive regional campaign against deportations between Chicago and Northwest Indiana. Different moments in this regional deportation machine require different tactics be applied to slow and shut it down—in Chicago, present emphasis is on preventative and ameliorative measures to interrupt, delay, and crowd out ICE and DHS raids. Gary's airport—like detention centers and processing hubs elsewhere—offers us a different opportunity, to sever the process at one of its vulnerable chokepoints. It will take bold and concerted action against every segment of the process to bring mass deportations to a halt and stop the new administration's plans in the first place they'll be tested.

Over the next few years, we will be challenged to "outmaneuver, exhaust, demoralize, confuse, and overpower the repressive might of the state."[8] GPD's gleeful recourse to fascist violence brought us face to face with the first instance of the incoming Trump administration's political repression—two days before he entered office. But as always, we learn by doing, and the protestors who gathered after the 18th began to build the relationships and trust necessary to fight the fights to come. Brave hearts to the front!

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PRESS RELEASE

More than 75 people gathered outside the Gary/Chicago International Airport on January 18th to protest deportations regularly carried out at the airport by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Demonstrators said they also gathered to protest ahead of Trump's inaguration on the 20th as part of a nationwide call for "festivals of resistance."

The Gary/Chicago International Airport has been used since at least 2013 to fly deportees out of the region. GlobalX, an airline company based in Miami, FL, subcontracts with ICE to deport people every Friday from

Gary/Chicago airport to Kansas City, MO before taking them out of the country. More than 19,000 people were deported out of Gary between 2013 and 2017 according to public records obtained through a Freedom of Information request by a local organizer.

Demonstrators were leaving the airport on foot Saturday morning when around two dozen Gary police officers descended on them. Officers grabbed and arrested two protestors who were in the process of complying with police instructions. A photojournalist was also seized and arrested by the officers while documenting the other arrests, in what amounts to a violent attack on the freedom of the press.

The march, held two days before Donald Trump takes power for a second time, represents the Gary community's commitment to their immigrant neighbors in the face of state violence, but builds on the diligent work of community organizers over the years. Since 2017, interfaith groups, immigrant rights activists, and rank-and-file union workers from East Chicago and elsewhere in northwest Indiana regularly held prayer circles and other peaceful protests, but had not been met with significant repression.

"This is an unprecedented escalation in police violence against immigrant solidarity protests in Northwest Indiana. This makes sense, though, in the context of rising Trumpism, as well as the pattern of violence in the Region against our Black neighbors and striking workers," said an organizer of the demonstration.

"In order to protect ICE operations separating Chicagoland families, Gary police carried out the first arrests of the second Trump administration, even before the inauguration. This is a crucial reminder that the police do not keep our communities safe, we do" said a local resident in attendance.

On Friday, Beatriz Ponce de Leon, deputy mayor for immigrant, migrant and refugee rights, publicly announced that ICE is planning to conduct street sweeps for undocumented people in the coming weeks. ICE contractors use the Gary airport to evade sanctuary regulations and widespread opposition in Chicago.

NOTES

1. See Joel Olson's "Movement, Cadre and Dual Power" on **libcom.org**.

2. Rosa Luxemburg, "An Introduction to Political Economy," in the Complete Works vol. 1, p. 278

3. Many of us began taking the notes that would become "Reflections on the UChicago Popular University for Gaza Encampment" during the course of the encampment itself. Eventually we all found each other, coalesced into this collective, and put out the essay, which you can find tabled sometimes, or on **lakeeffect.noblogs.org**.

4. W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America, p. 700-701

5. An ad hoc collective of anarchist and autonomist information clearinghouses released a call for "festivals of resistance" in early December. Between the 11th and 18th, dozens of cities saw gatherings, which included trainings, assemblies, community events, direct actions, and so on. You can find the call and roundup on **itsgoingdown.org**.

6. You can find the testimonies of their friends on a dedicated webpage: **stopcop.city/memories-of-tort**. The Atlanta Community Press Collective has done extensive reporting on Tort's life and legacy, including an interview with their mother, Belkis Terán, conducted in Jan. 2025.

7. Late last year the LA Review of Books published "Cop Cities Mock Cities", an exhaustive history of the model village, now mock city, used to train counterinsurgency forces to conduct raids and suppress nascent efforts at collective liberation. The piece rightly situates Cop City (and projects like it across the United States) in the aftermath of the George Floyd Uprising.

8. Quoting a 2024 essay titled "States of Siege", written in the aftermath of a series of raids on the homes of alleged forest defenders in Atlanta, and the 61 outstanding RICO cases leveled against the movement. It is published on **illwill.com**. The full paragraph reads:

> *If organizers do not articulate frameworks or build groups capable of subverting and confronting repressive forces and reactionaries, social movements can only survive by preserving the umbilical cord linking them to the progressive sections of the ruling elites. If movements aim to challenge the core principles of our society, they cannot only rely on humanitarian and constitutionalist outrage to restrain the forces of violent reaction. Rebellious movements must also prepare to defend themselves from repression, and also to outmaneuver, exhaust, demoralize, confuse, and overpower the repressive might of the state. Those who do not believe this is possible do not believe that the revolution is possible.*

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