

## All Art is with the Crowd or the Police

Heath Schultz<sup>1</sup>

Partisan in tone, “All art is with the crowd or the police” draws clear battle lines. This piece of experimental writing collages texts from anti-capitalist activists, corporate news, critical theorists, poets, and press releases to form a quasi-unified voice “from the crowd” that works toward a position against representation. This hybridized voice is juxtaposed with excerpts from a police manual on riot control. The crowd contradicts itself as it grapples with what is possible to produce in struggle; the authoritarian voice of the police outlines methods for containment. Meandering through various events—the blockade, the protest march, the occupation—the conflicted voice weaves together conversations about art, gentrification, violence, whiteness, representation, community, and capitalism. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2021 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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With others, you move together, approaching something choreographed yet still improvised. There are signs blocking your view but they are inconsequential. You can see as part of the crowd, or better, you can feel as part of the crowd. Collective energy sees for everyone. You feel titillated by this collective vision and movement, but you look around and not everyone is on the same page. To your left the sign blocking your view says “Love conquers Hate.” You think this phrase is ahistorical and you don’t know what it means unless it means we are not

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supposed to be angry, but you are angry. To your right are several people covered in black without signs and the absence of language is clearer to you. You notice details on the person in black that make them more identifiable, but you try to forget the details as an act of solidarity. A person from the press is intent on photographing the anonymous in black and the macho anarchist guy is intent on swatting cameras and yelling at those only there for the spectacle, but he is performing, too. When the cops in riot gear move between the crowd and the fascists to protect the fascists, you start chanting with the crowd and it keeps the hairs on your arm raised for a few seconds longer. You know stopping the fascists is a concrete struggle, but this assembling is not a concrete struggle, it is performance. You know that stopping the fascists and stopping capitalism is not the same, but it is the same. You are scared at the thought, but you hope the crowd spontaneously combusts. Stopping the fascists means stopping the fascists, not “showing up with a larger crowd than the fascists.” In this case, stopping the fascists means stopping the police, too. You wonder how those in black can open space and time for revolution, then wonder why you’ve given them that responsibility. You know it is not the revolution until it is the revolution.

A crowd is not a mob, but it can become one! Each crowd constitutes a police problem, and each, even the most casual, has latent potential for widespread civil disturbance. What is the distinction between a crowd and a mob?; the mob takes the law into its own hands. The difference in many cases is borderline. So long as it is controlled, it remains a crowd, but if control is lost, it will evolve into a mob. The aggressive crowd is, at the same time, expressive and cohesive. Thus we can see that the above classification of Aggressive Crowd provides a progression in which the police problems increase as each step is reached.

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You know that an influx of white people is an indication of an influx of wealth and increasing property values. You know this increases displacement. You know that art serves capitalist development and speculative investment. You know that art from the university serves capitalism, too, but you don’t concern yourself much with this seeming inevitability. You know that Capital creates nothing on its own, that it relies on the movement of ideas and creativity in networks of social relations, cooperation, and communication. You know that Capital needs the creativity that is circulating among us and a process to harvest it and

put it to work. This is one kind of production of surplus value in a city full of once empty factories, now brimming with “creatives,” tech workers, and entrepreneurs. This is how the pleasure of being in common becomes the labor of living together. You know this is a form of management and that this, too, is a police action.

You ask: what is the space between capitalism and the police and fascism and gentrification? What is the difference between these white productions of obliteration, of removal, and of maintenance? You ask: where do anarchists’ “*A-Anti-Anticapitalista!*” and Ferguson activists’ “*Hands Up! Don’t Shoot!*” and anti-fascists’ “*¡No Pasarán!*” and long-time residents’ “*¡Fuera!*” converge? You will look for friends there. You ask: what vacuum in the space-time continuum will crumble these productions and how do we make that vacuum? You know that these crises are opportunities to build alliances for struggle, but they are also opportunities for capitalists, cops, fascists, and developers.

You notice someone spray-painted the galleries with “Fuck White Art” and you read online that the cops are investigating it as a hate crime. There are a dozen galleries in the gentrifying neighborhood and you overhear one gallery owner say that only a *few* owners met with police. She and the other owners respect the right to *legally* protest. You know that what she meant was she is okay with a conversation about the possibility of a possible conflict, but conflict is not okay. She wants the police to absorb the conflict, which is to say protect her property and her body no matter the cost her property and her body have on other people. You know that what she meant was she loves her property and the police and her community and thinks you should, too.

Do not avoid contact with the demonstration leadership. Seek out the leaders of the group sponsoring the demonstration and confer with them. Discuss the proposed event, potential problems, and possible tactics of control. Resolve problems that are likely to cause discontentment. Explain the position of the police and impress upon them the following: 1) The police recognize and respect their right to protest or demonstrate against a social custom or condition. 2) Their demonstration must be conducted within the limits of the law with respect for the rights of the rest of the community. 3) Impress the leaders with their responsibility to society to respect its laws and maintain peace in the community. 4) The groups should be encouraged to enforce discipline in their own organizations.

You pull down a white supremacist poster that reads “It is your duty to report any and all illegal aliens” and post it on Instagram to encourage friends to also take them down if they see them on campus. Your friends discuss this at length, but many did not notice. You ask if there is a need to initiate another argument about what gentrification is. Why was there funding for a non-profit to run a gallery to attract new people but no funding for services for the community that is already there? You heard someone yell: “Your art is not more important than this community’s right to exist!” At this moment you know the community means the Latinx community, but the community is also the fascist who hung that poster. You know that you are the community, one marked body in a pile of compressed and collapsed and asymmetrical histories that are expressed in yuppie cocktail bars and black barber shops and taquerias rubbing shoulders. You know your white friends are lining up behind the woman who yelled “[white] art is not more important than the community’s right to exist” forgets they, too, are the community and its violence. You know the police’s choice to pursue a hate crime committed against white gallery owners is both desperate and strategic; you know that the graffiti both spectacularized and concretized a struggle against white violence. ‘Fuck White Art’ states the obvious from the perspective of “the community,” if that community excludes the fascists and the gallerists and the cocktail bar owners and its patrons that live in the same community. You know that community is a slow-motion war. You know the cops are making both a PR move and creating the conditions to charge militants with a violation of the Civil Rights Act with no irony because the graffiti was but a small part of a campaign that sits on the threshold of leaning away from representation toward production of a neighborhood that does not ask a politician’s help to stop the movement of whiteness because it is the movement of whiteness.

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It is your first occupation so you read the zine that gives detailed instructions on securing the door. Loop one end of the cable lock around the door handle. Tie the other end to a structural support. When working with doors with push bars, secure a c-clamp to the bar to create a space. Loop one end of the cable lock through the space and tie the other end to a structural support. Once secure, build barricades inside with heavy furniture and distribute it along the doors. On the outside, use dumpsters, trees, wood pallets, chain link fences, picnic tables, etc. Hold the building.

The occupiers take up two sides. The social democrats and some Communists want to issue demands; the anarchists and some communists want to refuse to issue demands. What will the respective tactics *produce*? Those who would issue demands insist on the importance of material gains for the poor and working class. Those who would refuse to issue demands say this occupation is but a site in a series of sites and moments that seek not acknowledgement but the blockage of the circulation of capitalist productivity and the short circuiting of the conceptual links between labor power and its representations. They say it is not what the occupation gains from the capitalists, but what the occupation enables the anarchists and communists to do. At this moment the practical knowledge of past occupations both coalesces and collides with the ideological imaginings of the occupiers.

At the scene of a mass civil disobedience, such as a lawfully operated business establishment or government office, the complete cooperation of the management is necessary. The manager of the premises must notify the demonstrators that they are trespassing and disturbing the peace. This is done by reading to the group a prepared statement: “I am \_\_\_\_\_. I represent the management of these premises. Your actions are causing a disturbance and interfering with our business. You are not welcome here and are here against our wishes. I request and order you to leave immediately, and if you do not, I shall request the police to arrest each of you.”

The purpose of this announcement is to allow management to rescind any implied invitation to enter and to form the *corpus delicti* for trespass and disturbing the peace. This is followed by a police announcement read by an officer immediately following the prior announcement: “I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I represent the Police Department of the City of \_\_\_\_\_. I hereby notify you that your actions constitute violation of \_\_\_\_\_ [state code section violated and general nature of law violated]. I therefore command you in the name of the People of the State of \_\_\_\_\_ to disperse, and if you do not disperse, you shall be arrested for violation of the following offenses: [state code sections violated and general nature of the law violated].”

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You open your browser and google “activists defend against gentrification.” You see a news clip archived on YouTube and open it.

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You know it will not be useful because you know popular media can only see activists as terrorists or spokespeople for the Democratic Party. You click play because you're hungry for content—how can you stop an occupying force?

*There's a fierce battle over gentrification in \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood. People worry they will be priced out of their homes. Protesters were out today with a strong message for their new neighbors.*

"The community has asked the galleries to leave."

*Folks in \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood have had enough, standing at the steps of this art gallery.*

"What are you doing? What the fuck are you doing?"

*Angry when someone came to open. The gate was lifted and the protest continued. All in response to a possible hate crime investigation after someone vandalized the gallery door.*

"The community has a right to resist its displacement by any means necessary."

"Even illegal means?"

" ... "

*Although the symbol of this fight may be the art galleries, getting rid of them wouldn't fix the problem.*

"It's not wrong to be scared, to be afraid, to be emotional about losing your home."

*But just like art, the way some are expressing that fear may not be liked by all.*

You click on the article at the bottom of the page labeled *you might also be interested in* entitled "A Puzzling Number of Men Tied to the Ferguson Protests Have Since Died." *The Chicago Tribune*, hardly a leftist newspaper, reports on six violent deaths of participants in the Ferguson Uprising. The details are gruesome and you find the author's writing callous and insensitive but nonetheless specific in illustrating violence against those who resist channels of representation that recuperate radical black energies. You caution yourself against conspiratorial thinking but find no reason not to see the FBI or CIA or PD's residue left behind. You know history will prove their murders as part of an unfolding of COINTELPRO if by another name. You also know that your white radicality is safe and that your critique of racism fails to explain or comprehend this news story. You acknowledge a collective failure to comprehend antiblackness, and despite this failure, suspect that the world no longer needs explaining, critiquing, denouncing. The commentaries on commentaries and critiques of

critiques demonstrate only that the exchange value of language is worthless. If violence materializes this world and its social relations, you know that the materiality of social relations are antiblack and that what will be produced is white supremacist violence in one form or another, recognizable or not, “puzzling” or not.

The police baton is probably the most useful force which may be employed against disorderly persons. The baton can be used as both an offensive and defensive weapon. However, it is primarily an offensive weapon. Officers should remember that the baton, when carried in a military manner, is an emblem of law and order and adds to the officer’s appearance as an agent of his department. Chemical irritants are not a solution to all disturbance control problems, but they are useful weapons. They are effective means of achieving the greatest temporary incapacitation of a riotous group with the least permanent injury to its members and to the police. Not only do they cause the mob to flee and temporarily render its members helpless, they also shock the majority into a clearer perspective of the consequence of their acts, for the majority of any hostile crowd is usually composed of people who, although temporarily angry and dangerous, are generally law abiding.

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With many, you shut down a highway to protest the murder of black people by the cops. At first, the crowd spills onto the street chaotically, but soon everything falls into place because everyone can see as part of the crowd. Collective energy sees for everyone. An onlooker takes a photo from a bridge above. The photograph shows four symmetrically distinct squares within the frame. The top left shows an endless line of halted headlights. The top right, no cars at all. The bottom left, no cars at all. The bottom right, endless line of halted brake lights. The photo was taken at night, making the thin line of people cutting through the center of the frame, those who have broken the circulation of the city, difficult to see. With many, you are a pixel abstracted in that line of people cutting through the center of the frame and highway that halted the circulation of the city. This is a site in a series of sites and moments that seek not acknowledgement but the disruption of a social order. The cops quickly arrive and you are scared at the thought, but hope the crowd spontaneously combusts. You wonder how the crowd can open space and

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time for revolution. You know it is not the revolution until it is the revolution.

Riot control training is combat training. Police must be impressed with the need for this type of training and the importance of riot control duty. They must realize the necessity for absolute lack of partisanship and for perfect discipline, and that their strength lies in the face of the most aggravating circumstances. Their training, including practical field experience, should give them a feeling of familiarity with their duty, the formation weapons, and tactics they will be using. The police must be ready to act and must realize their importance to the maintenance of our society and our way of life. They must be convinced that they are right and that they can and will prevail.

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You know there will be a before and after Seattle, a before and after Oakland, a before and after Ferguson, Baltimore, and Charleston. There will be a before and after Charlottesville. You move together, but it is not choreographed. There are discarded signs strewn along the street and you can feel as part of the crowd. What is produced for the future demands your simultaneous attention to the present and past. There are several people covered in black, but many more, moving in concert, are less committed to a uniform. There is little speech between us because the only ones left are the police and the ones who know concessions from this world can no longer buy social peace; those who feel the past seize it and use it. When the cops in riot gear move between the crowd and \_\_\_\_\_, you know this is a site in a series of sites and moments that seek not acknowledgement but production that exceeds the imaginary of law and order of this world. You know it is not the revolution until it is the revolution.

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