



DON'T STOP CONTINUING THE FIGHT AGAINST COP CITY

Comparing the movement that began in 2021 to the struggle as it exists at the close of 2023 feels nearly impossible. Many of the horizons that were open to the movement when it began have been definitively blocked. It has become impossible to defend the forest by occupying it; construction of the facility is underway, though it has been repeatedly delayed. Yet the movement to stop Cop City and defend the Weelaunee Forest has continued to evolve despite the attacks of the Attorney General, federal agencies, and local police. **In this chapter, we will explore how the movement has managed to maintain a participatory and confrontational character, even under tremendous pressure.**

At the time of publishing, more information about the movement can be found at defendtheatlantaforest.com or on social media under the names “Defend the Atlanta Forest” and “Stop Cop City.”

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**SIX MORE MONTHS IN THE
MOVEMENT TO DEFEND THE FOREST**

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crimethinc.com/StopCopCity2023

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CRIMETHINC. EX-WORKERS COLLECTIVE

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Thanksgiving.” Some speculate that this was Brent Scarborough Company. The method of sabotage, the specific date, and the exact target of the action are all left out of the report.

November 27: Georgia deputy attorney general John Fowler files a motion to include Tortuguita’s 150-page personal diary as evidence in the RICO case. The motion is rejected, but not before right-wing outlets publish false and exaggerated narratives about the contents.

November 30: Communications between the Chief of Atlanta police, Brasfield & Gorrie executives, Department of Homeland Security, Georgia Bureau of Investigations, and police forces across the country are made public thanks to a Freedom of Information Act request on the movement. The document proves that authorities are colluding on legal matters with corporate backers in encrypted chats.

December 7: Another Nationwide subsidiary is vandalized. At the San Francisco office, “every window” is smashed. This communiqué references the November 22 Walnut Creek action as inspiration. Both statements drive attention to uncovercopolcity.blackblogs.org, where Nationwide and Accident Fund locations are listed.

INTRODUCTION THE HOUR IS DRAWING LATE

Three and a half years ago, twenty million people rose up to fight police and the structural white supremacy that they exist to impose. For a short time, it appeared that police abolition could become a realistic possibility in the United States; but politicians, universally dependent upon the police, ultimately blocked any attempts to so much as defund or reform police departments. Afterwards, people in Atlanta, Georgia set out to use direct action to block the flow of public resources to police by preventing the construction of Cop City.

A great deal has changed in those three and a half years.

On September 27, a Philadelphia judge dismissed all charges against the police officers who murdered Eddie Irizarry. In response, people organizing via social media began vandalizing businesses, looting stores, and setting fires in various part of the city. This mobilization built on social tensions that have been percolating since the protests in response to the murder of Walter Wallace by local police in 2020. Yet this time, the activist left largely stayed home. Those who are already on the receiving end of most of the violence of the police were left to go it alone, as they were in the days before the George Floyd rebellion.

The following month, protesters returned to the streets in response to the ethnic cleansing of Gaza, blockading transportation infrastructure and stopping work at arms manufacturers like Raytheon. As early as October 19, a poll showed that most US voters (including 55% from the Republican party and 80% of Democrats) supported a ceasefire.

Undeterred, the United States government is sending tens of billions of dollars of military aid to the Israeli military. This is essentially a gift card, in that most of the aid must be spent on weapons supplied by US-based firms. This war stimulus to the US economy enables Washington to channel a secret budget into the pockets of arms manufactur-

ers such as Elbit Systems, Raytheon, and Lockheed Martin that is not included in the annual Congressional allocation. War is making a small number of people extremely wealthy.

Some large firms, including Wells Fargo, worry that the war is creating an atmosphere of “deglobalization” that could hurt their profits in the long run. But this has not shifted US foreign policy any more than the mass murder of thousands of Palestinian children has. It appears that some elements of the ruling class anticipate a future in which it will be more profitable to bank on war than on peace.

This has serious implications for us all. If we don’t organize accordingly now, our future may be bleak indeed.

Fall of 2023 was the first time since the beginning of the movement to stop Cop City that large numbers of protesters mobilized around any issue in the United States. The movement in Atlanta emerged after the 2020 George Floyd rebellion, during the period of social peace and political disorganization that typically follows large protest movements. If the echoes of the 2020 uprising were never entirely suppressed, we owe that to the initiative of the movement in Atlanta and those who acted in solidarity with it elsewhere, as well as the persistence of young Black and Brown people who continue to resist state terror in places like Philadelphia.

To overcome the obstacles confronting the movement in Atlanta will require long-term, large-scale mobilization. The actions of individuals and small dedicated groups have created a context in which a mass outbreak of revolt could have the most radical content currently imaginable, possibly paving the way for a more serious movement against carceral infrastructure all over the country. But such an outcome is by no means guaranteed. The movement has already experienced several flashpoints, including the murder of Tortuguita; these have given it greater visibility without mobilizing massive numbers of new participants.

Nonetheless, the story is not over, and the stakes are high. Now is not the time for backing down.

tution Road. Carrying puppets, marching band instruments, reinforced banners, and umbrellas, the demonstrators push through three lines of riot police before police standing in the back tear gas their own officers as well as the demonstrators. In the confrontation, Dekalb Police employ tear gas, pepper spray, flashbang grenades, pepper balls, rubber bullets, beanbag rounds, and body-length shields against self-described nonviolent protesters. No one is arrested during the action. Construction is halted, but the group does not make it onto the site. Afterwards, 150 people gather outside the Dekalb County Jail to support those inside, including one person who was arrested earlier in the day during a traffic stop, accused of being connected to the protest. Inmates break five windows of the jail and throw debris at the police below; they also drop a line and a bag to the ground level, which protesters on the ground fill with cigarettes, slices of pizza, and bottles of water. Twice, bags of goods are pulled into the jail this way from the street below. Meanwhile, in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, Michigan, activists drop banners on campuses in solidarity with the protesters. Sixteen trucks belonging to Ernst Concrete are burned in Lawrenceville, Georgia, allegedly with the use of “incendiary devices and kindling.” Activists claim to have burned six, but authorities report that the fire spread to ten more vehicles.

November 17: Ernst Concrete confirms that they have dropped out of the project.

November 18: During a demonstration in New York City in solidarity with Palestine, someone adds graffiti reading “Chase funds Cop City” to a Chase bank and locks its doors shut.

November 19: Windows are smashed and trucks vandalized at Thomas Concrete work site in Raleigh, North Carolina. Thomas Concrete is a frequent subcontractor of Brasfield & Gorrie.

November 22: Seven windows are broken at a Nationwide Insurance subsidiary, PCF Insurance Services office in Walnut Creek, California. Back in Georgia, local news claims that 23 machines belonging to an unnamed Cop City contractor were vandalized somehow “just before

fundraiser. The home of Wendy Stewart, a member of the Buckhead Coalition, is vandalized with messages opposing Cop City.

November 6: A Week of Action begins, organized by Black Atlanta residents for the purpose of connecting with other Black Atlantans. Many of the events draw crowds of a variety of ethnicities, but the organizers are unambiguous about their aim of coordinating with and mobilizing Black people.

November 6: 57 of the 61 RICO defendants turn themselves in for arraignment while nearly 200 supporters gather outside the courthouse. Most of the defendants are quickly released from jail after booking.

November 9: As a part of the Week of Action, students march to the office of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) program on Georgia State University campus. They demand an end to the bombing of Gaza and the suspension of the GILEE program, which could be expanded with the construction of Cop City.

November 10: The Black Family March brings together activists with the families of Black people who have been killed by police. Shamefully, at least a dozen Atlanta police officers riding motorcycles intimidate the march. At the same time, several hundred people are gathering across Atlanta for the Block Cop City weekend, meeting at Brownwood Park and at a warehouse in East Point where hardcore punk bands and rappers share the stage for a kick-off party.

November 11: An open letter entitled “Anarchism Must Not be Criminalized” appears online. It is said to come from an anonymous group of 12 of the 61 RICO defendants.

November 12: An herbalist clinic and workshop occurs in the context of the Week of Action.

November 13: Under the banner of “Block Cop City,” 400 people march from Gresham Park toward the Cop City construction site on Consti-



THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU

On June 6, 2023, the Atlanta City Council voted to approve an additional \$67 million for Cop City after more than thirteen hours of public comment against the project—the largest participation in a City Hall meeting in Atlanta history. After the vote, the names and addresses of the councilmembers who voted “yes” appeared online. Various local outlets subsequently published articles platforming the councilmembers. Councilmembers Bakhtiari and Westmoreland, the former who voted “no” and the latter who voted “yes,” met at a local restaurant and posed for pictures together, reasserting their alliance as gay councilmembers, denouncing radical politics, and calling for “calm” in the face of angry responses to the charade that the City Council had choreographed on June 5 and 6. The next day, June 7, Mayor Andre Dickens was doxxed.

These doxxings appear to have been conducted by the same group that had published the names and addresses of the Atlanta Police Foundation and the Buckhead Coalition. The documents were signed by a group calling itself the “Free & Rowdy Party,” a reference to one of the early political organizations in Atlanta history, colloquially known as the “party of militant disorder.” The Rowdies frequently clashed with the other major party, known as the Moral Party.

The following Monday, on July 8, a group of protesters associated with the Stop Cop City Coalition announced the formation of a new organizing group called Cop City Vote. The idea was to collect signatures for a petition demanding a referendum. If successful, this would compel the City to place the land-lease contract between the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Police Foundation on a popular ballot, enabling Atlanta voters to decide the future of the project.

do, Mark Jonathan Lamb, Ronaldo Kegel, and Royce Zah. A new Open Records Request reveals extensive commentary about the movement from the Department of Homeland Security in the two weeks leading up to the murder of Tortuguita.

October 10: The Malaya Movement of Georgia denounces the repression of activists, likening it to state terrorism in the Phillipines. An army recruitment center in Daly City, California loses nine windows in an act of solidarity with Palestinian resistance, anti-colonial resistance in Haiti, and Weelaunee forest defenders.

October 26: Approximately 150 Emory University students gather on campus to denounce administration support for Cop City, membership in the Atlanta Police Foundation, and the Atlanta Committee for Progress. The students chant slogans connecting Cop City to the ongoing airstrikes and war crimes that the Israeli military is committing against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The crowd marches into the administration building chanting to deliver a demand letter.

October 27: A dozen protesters gather for a “People’s Stop Work Order” on Constitution Road outside of the Prison Farm.

October 31: Vandalism at LS3P, Cadence Bank, and Nationwide Insurance in Savannah, Georgia.

November 3: Another group gathers outside of the Prison Farm to picket construction.

November 4: A group called the “Bay Rage Brigade” breaks windows at HSBC bank, Starbucks, and a US military recruiting office and dumps paint on vehicles belonging to a subsidiary of General Motors. The action calls attention to each institution’s connection to the Israeli apartheid system. The saboteurs dedicate their action to the memory of Tortuguita. Elsewhere, 25 pounds of rotten fish viscera is dumped into the rooftop HVAC access panel of the Buckhead Theater the night before the venue planned to host the annual Atlanta Police Foundation

September 25: The Weelaunee Defense Society of New York City disrupts an event by the Korea Society honoring Georgia Governor Brian Kemp. The Korea Society was founded by former United States General James Van Fleet, who helped to coordinate US ground troops in the Korean War. He worked alongside the fascist “Republic of Korea” dictator Syngman Rhee before forming the Korean Society in the US to assist in ongoing support for the Rhee administration globally.

September 29: The Atlanta City Clerk uploads 116,000 signed petitions demanding a referendum to the Atlanta Government Website. Despite a legal order from the City Council to redact the names of the signatories, the City legal department argues they do not have to, and the government doxxes 116,000 civilians. Fascists immediately begin sharing the information online. In response, the board of the Atlanta Committee for Progress is doxxed.

October 1: For the third time, machines belonging to Brent Scarborough Company are burned at a construction site located at the corner of Sawtell and McDonough near the Federal Penitentiary.

October 2: Over 200 people gather at Atlanta City Hall to demand that the government release body camera footage showing the extrajudicial killing of Johnny Hollman during a traffic stop in late August. The government asserts its supposed “right” to not release the footage by citing its decision to withhold aerial footage of the January 18 killing of Tortuguita as precedent.

October 3: An Open Records Request reveals that Mayor Dickens has been communicating with the White House about Cop City.

October 6: District Attorney George R. Christian of the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit rules that it was “objectively reasonable” for the Georgia State Patrol to kill Tortuguita on January 18. No charges will be brought against officers for the killing. The names of the killers have still not been released by the government, although the movement has already published them: Bryland Myers, Jerry Parrish, Jonathan Salce-

THE REFERENDUM

The new group got to work with great haste, establishing online platforms, writing statements, and building an organizational model that would enable a large number of people to volunteer to canvass the public. The referendum process only allows for registered City of Atlanta voters to participate—excluding most of those who live closest to the forest, which is just outside city limits. The participants had to cover a large area in short time: according to Georgia law, from the day a petition is filed, the petitioner has only 60 days to turn in signatures in order to initiate a referendum. In this case, the petitioners would have to submit 70,330 signatures (15% of the city population), collected in less than two months. By comparison, only 97,000 voters altogether participated in the 2021 mayoral election. Collecting so many signatures was a bold ambition, and it faced illegal obstruction from the beginning.

On June 7, Cop City Vote delivered a referendum petition to City of Atlanta Clerk Vanessa Waldron. This legal document initiates the process of signature collection upon approval, thus starting the 60-day countdown. In order to place Cop City on the November ballot, organizers would have to submit the signatures they collected by no later than August 15. If the signatures were turned in after that date, the referendum would go on the March ballot. Clerk Waldron denied the petition, citing obscure legal technicalities. A week later, on July 14, Waldron denied the second petition, again on obscure clerical premises.



es. This second denial prompted popular outcry.

By denying the petition on July 14, the city government hoped to make it impossible for the organizers to deliver the signatures by the August 15 deadline. This was a pre-emptive attack on the referendum—the first stage of a long campaign targeting the initiative. It’s worth noting that while in times of social peace, the authorities would presumably have welcomed the opportunity to channel a combative movement into electoral reformism, in this case, they were not prepared to make any compromises, not even permitting citizens to utilize their legal rights.

In response, organizers filed a lawsuit against the Clerk. Public figures such as Senator Raphael Warnock called on the city government to permit the process to move forward. On July 21, Waldron approved the petition. Signature collection could finally begin.

On July 27, a US District Court ruled in favor of the canvassers. This was one of the first legal rulings in favor of the movement since it began in April 2021. The court ruled that the illegal restrictions placed on the petition-collection process, specifically the clause that disqualifies non-residents from so much as knocking on doors to collect signatures, violates the First Amendment. Consequently, the judge gave organizers an additional 60 days to collect signatures.

WHAT MASS ORGANIZING MAKES POSSIBLE

Organizing efforts around the City Hall protests and the referendum enabled the movement to overcome a few barriers. Nearly 800 people volunteered to collect signatures for the referendum process. Dozens of abolitionists and radical organizers composed a curriculum to train those volunteers and strategized about how to best distribute their energies across the city. From mid-June to mid-September, these volunteers could be seen everywhere. Posters, stickers, signs, and memorabilia filled coffee shops, bars, local grocery stores, tattoo parlors, bookshops, farmers markets, and art galleries. On busy avenues, volunteers walked up and down the sidewalks, speaking with all passersby. In just a few months, hundreds of thousands of residents spoke with canvassers; this gave them a chance to ask them questions, learn about

dozens of pages on the history and theory of anarchism, mutual aid, and solidarity. It paints a broad and speculative picture of the ideology of the movement, referencing Kurdish and Zapatista liberation movements. According to the indictment, the “conspiracy” began on May 25, 2020—the day that Minneapolis Police murdered George Floyd. Meanwhile, the City of Atlanta hires a company called the Great Lakes Project Solution to begin counting signatures for the referendum.

September 6: In Savannah, Georgia, dozens of protesters visit the office of the Cop City architecture firm LS3P, dumping rotten food into their elevator.

September 8: This has been announced as a Day of Solidarity against the RICO charges. Local religious leaders and others invade the Cop City construction site and lock themselves to equipment, halting work and compelling the police to arrest them. They are not charged with terrorism. Other actions take place at the Georgia State Capitol and the University of Michigan, as well as in Kingston, New York; Carbondale, Illinois; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Phoenix, Arizona; and Elliston, Virginia. An anonymous group claims responsibility for sabotaging multiple signal boxes belonging to Norfolk Southern during the sixth Week of Action.

September 10: In Chicago, streets are blocked and windows are broken at a Chase Bank. Elsewhere, a group rallies outside a Bank of America in Charlotte, North Carolina to denounce the RICO charges and demand that Bank of America drop their contract with APF.

September 11: The Inspire Brands subsidiary Arby’s is vandalized in Olympia, Washington. The Inspire Brands CEO sits on the board of the APF. Meanwhile, the referendum organizers present 116,000 signatures to the Clerk’s office.

September 12: A new organization named Block Cop City announces a mass demonstration in November targeting the Cop City construction site. Organizers visit over 70 cities and towns in a nationwide speaking tour to promote the event.

July 27: The July 14th injunction succeeds, giving the referendum organizers an additional 60 days to collect signatures on the premise that Clerk Waldron had illegally violated their first amendment rights.

July 28: Mongo Holdings LLC is exposed as an APF event sponsor for 2023. The Chief Investment Officer is doxxed.

July 29: A complete list of Atlanta Police Department officers as of July 21, 2023 is posted online, including their full names, social media accounts, wages, and positions.

August 3: The GBI, APD, ATF, and Mayor Dickens hold a joint press conference about the July 4th attacks. They post images of the alleged incendiary devices online and in televised statements.

August 9: Dr. Bernice King, the daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., denounces Cop City.

August 15: Days after the Asheville Police Department advertises a recruiting event on behalf of the Atlanta Police Department, two Asheville PD cruisers are burned outside of a precinct.

August 26: In New York City, several dozen people march to the Hilton Hotel in midtown, where the Atlanta Police Department is hosting a police recruitment event. Protesters chant slogans and hold banners, blockading the event. New York Police push and shove protesters but fail to evict the crowd. Someone smuggles rotten shrimp into the building, filling the atrium with a putrid stench.

August 30: A time-delayed incendiary device burns a machine belonging to Vertiv Corporation in Milwaukie, Oregon. Vertiv is a technical supplier for the Atlanta Police Department. The “March 5th Movement” claims the action.

September 5: 61 people are indicted under the Racketeering-influenced Criminal Organization (RICO) Act of Georgia. The indictment includes

Cop City, and discuss the resistance to it, generating a new level of mass sympathy with the movement.

In the canvasser trainings, aspiring canvassers were explicitly instructed not to denounce sabotage, vandalism, or clashes with law enforcement. If they did not feel comfortable explaining those phenomena, they could simply change the subject, or they could humbly listen, then find a way to reassert the purpose of the petition. The referendum organizers themselves asserted continuously that the strength of the movement derived in no small part from sabotage, vandalism, and other combative tactics. They published written statements affirming the validity of “all tactics.” Contrary to the anxieties of some internet commentators, the referendum campaign was not intended to suppress or compete with direct action. Most participants in the effort simply wanted to establish a path for the movement that could involve a large number of metro Atlanta residents.

The movement has had many strengths, but mass participation has never been among them. Despite continuous attempts to foster a creative and contagious movement, despite robust media coverage locally, nationally, and globally, no more than 2000 people have ever participated in any one event opposing Cop City. Despite the accessible action framework demonstrated by the groups targeting contractors and funders, only ideologically driven and risk-tolerant groups have participated in those actions, usually using a clandestine approach. The largest event by far was the South River Music Festival, which drew in a couple thousand people over two days in March 2023. Most protests, rallies, and marches have drawn between ten and two hundred people. When Tortuguita was killed, only 300 people showed up downtown in response, two thirds of them hooded militants in black masks. This has consequences for what those who do participate can actually do, because some kinds of action are only possible in large crowds.

The movement has made considerable headway nonetheless. It has found ways to turn its small size to its advantage. Centering a small, dedicated core has enabled the participants to advance revolutionary discourse throughout the movement and to conduct militant actions with greater tactical agility.

Yet countless historical examples suggest that this pattern cannot

be maintained forever. If frontline fighters cannot keep supply lines open, take breaks, receive new assistance, and rely on the resources and security provided by sympathizers and newly radicalized people, they will eventually lose. This concern is not derived from abstract political concepts or folded-and-stapled booklets; it has been proven time and again across centuries and continents. For example, the legendary *focoista* campaigns of the 20th century drew together some of the most dedicated, audacious, and extreme sectors of the Latin American revolutionary left in clashes with the armies and paramilitaries of various CIA-backed dictatorships. Aside from exceptions in Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, and El Salvador, these campaigns resulted in the near-complete decimation of an entire generation of revolutionaries. An isolated vanguard—however dedicated or secretive—is doomed to defeat.

Counterinsurgency strategy explicitly seeks to create a gulf between dedicated militants and the rest of society in order to target the former and immobilize the latter. Acknowledging this does not oblige committed militants to pursue populist strategies to appeal to an imagined mass of people, but it does open the question of what the alternatives might be.

Some participants in the movement insist that all strategies oriented towards “society” in general are naïve and “liberal.” A few go further, asserting without any measurable criteria that only clandestine sabotage “works.” But without widespread participation, even the fiercest vanguard cannot move beyond hit-and-run actions. They will never be able to advance to open confrontations (which the historic proponents of guerrilla warfare understood as a necessary step in their strategies). Without more participants, actions such as the march in downtown Atlanta on January 21 or the march to the construction site on March 5 will remain the high points of combativity from the movement. Those actions did not succeed in bringing about the cancellation of Cop City. In order to move from clandestine attacks to winnable confrontations, the movement needs a more robust way of understanding the relationship between the actions of anonymous saboteurs and more accessible, participatory forms of widespread self-organized activity.

If a few thousand more people dedicated themselves to the fight, that would increase the capacity of the fighters by an order of magni-

are smashed and a time-delayed incendiary device burns eight APD motorcycles in the parking garage beneath the current police training center. A group calling itself the March 5th Movement takes responsibility for the actions and claims that they are in retaliation for violent suppression of peaceful protests at Cadence Bank and elsewhere.

July 2: Atlanta police officer Andrew Strutt is doxxed in retaliation for his actions at a protest outside of Cadence Bank during the sixth Week of Action. The private homes of Cop City architect Anthony Kenney and APF Board of Trustees member Ambrish Baisiwala are vandalized with paint and their car tires are slashed. Elsewhere, protesters gather outside the Minnesota home of the Atlas Technical Project Manager. He yells at the protesters to leave his property, claiming that Atlas has dropped the project. Asked why, he answers “you guys are fucking nightmares” and “you broke all of our fucking windows.” Apparently, two years of actions against that contract have had an effect.

July 3: A golf course in New Orleans is vandalized in solidarity with the movement against Cop City. The home of Keith Johnson, Brasfield & Gorrie Director of Preconstruction, is also vandalized. His driveway and house are painted, fake blood is dumped around his back door, and motor oil and fish heads are poured into his pool. On-site security apparently does not notice the saboteurs.

July 4: Two machines belonging to Brent Scarborough are burned in broad daylight at a location where machines have already been sabotaged before. A Chase Bank in southeast Michigan is vandalized.

July 9: Three Bank of America ATMs are smashed in Berkeley, California. At the same time, another group throws a brick through the front window of a UPS office. In Williston, Vermont, work trucks and an office of Atlas Technical Consultants are vandalized. Although the Project Manager had told activists that they had dropped the contract, no official statement had yet appeared. After this action, Atlas confirmed to an independent journalist that they were no longer involved in the project.

Creek Park. Scouts report a massive police mobilization further ahead in the tunnel beneath Bouldercrest Road, possibly as many officers as demonstrators. The crowd holds a short ceremony for Tortuguita led by Belkis Terán, before returning to Gresham Park and dispersing without incident. Downtown, outside of Cadence Bank (which funds the Atlanta Police Foundation), a crowd gathers in an unannounced demonstration. After 20 minutes, protesters throw bacon at the facility and disperse. Cops attack people in the vicinity and arrest two people, charging one with Felony Obstruction.

June 29: Protesters assemble near a Home Depot on Ponce de Leon in Midtown; Home Depot has donated to the APF. The establishment closes early for the day as a consequence. A nearby Starbucks also closes because of the small protest. Several dozen Atlanta Police officers assemble in the strip mall parking lot. An elderly woman—a member of the National Lawyers Guild previously involved in the Gay liberation organization Act Up!—is arrested for holding a sign on the sidewalk. At the same time, in Columbus, Ohio, protesters storm the headquarters of Nationwide Insurance, demanding that they cut their contract with the Atlanta Police Foundation. That same day, protesters confront Mayor Andre Dickens as he attempts to hold a press conference at Fire Station 10 in Grant Park. City Councilman Matt Westmoreland refuses to tell Belkis Terán that he condemns the killing of her child, Tortuguita.

Protesters confront Mayor Andre Dickens as he attempts to hold a press conference at Fire Station 10 in Grant Park.

June 30: The Weelaunee Coalition hosts a Youth Rally in Brownwood Park, bringing over 100 people together to participate in events and to chant for the forest and against Cop City. Four Bank of America offices have windows broken in the Bay Area, and four ATMs are vandalized. Three ATMs in Concord, California are broken. A single statement claims responsibility for these actions.

July 1: The windows of three Atlanta police cruisers on Memorial Drive

tude. There are worthwhile and necessary tasks to conduct in clandestinity, in public organizing, and in fundraising. The relatively small size and ferocity of the movement so far has contributed to a kind of mythologizing of the protagonists, so that the most dedicated participants are seen as heroes (or demons, depending on who you ask) while most of the supporters and public remain passive spectators. When a movement is structured as a small, sharp, edge passively observed by spectators, the latter, as a consequence of their inactivity, will tend to oscillate wildly between sympathy and skepticism. To succeed, movements must inspire the self-organized activity, theoretical development, and participation of as many people as possible. **Real militancy is not showing people bold actions; it is enabling them to act for themselves.**

Those who are skeptical of the value of mobilizing people to speak at City Hall or organizing people to petition for a referendum must accept that they will remain a marginal force in the movement unless they themselves take on the burden of organizing alternative strategies to engage large numbers of people. So far, the proponents of no other strategy have succeeded in doing so, and few have even tried.



THE SIXTH WEEK OF ACTION

Not everyone pursued the referendum strategy, although everyone was affected by the shifting landscape of repression. On June 23, Dekalb County District Attorney Sherri Boston announced that her office would no longer participate in the terrorism cases against the movement. In a televised press conference, she referred to the “fundamentally different” philosophies of prosecution that distinguished her office from the office of Chris Carr, Attorney General of Georgia. She also cited pressure applied against her by the public in the form of incessant phone calls and letters as a factor in her decision. This shifted all legal responsibilities and initiative into the hands of the most reactionary forces in the state, signaling that the Dekalb County Government hoped to wash its hands of the ongoing public relations disaster that they have helped to create by participating in the lethal raid on January 18 and closing Intrenchment Creek Park (a part of the Weelaunee Forest).

The following day, June 24, the sixth Week of Action began. It shared almost no common features with the previous four, though it was somewhat reminiscent of the first such week, held in October 2021. Rather than Weelaunee Forest, workshops and talks took place in Brownwood Park, located in East Atlanta Village. Rather than centering the capacities of the movement to leverage nationwide support with concentrated militancy, the sixth Week of Action involved very few protests, no mass encampment, and few cultural events. It was so different from previous Weeks that it was as if an altogether different constellation of groups had organized it.

On the first day, over 100 people gathered in Brownwood Park. By late afternoon, they were surrounded by police vehicles and surveilled by drones and helicopters. At 8:30 pm, Belkis Teran, the mother of Tortuguita, gathered people in the park to host a vigil and ceremony for her deceased child. At that point, dozens of officers entered the area, barking orders and pointing at people, instructing those assembled that if they were not gone when the park closed (three hours later), they would be subject to arrest. The crowd did not hesitate to confront the

June 23: Dekalb County District Attorney Sherri Boston announces that she is withdrawing her office and all of their resources from the 42 terrorism cases against the movement that are being pressed in Dekalb County (out of a total of 43 such cases associated with the movement). Boston cites “fundamentally different prosecution philosophies” with Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr in her statement. She also hints that pressure from the movement has influenced her decision.

June 24: The sixth Week of Action begins.

June 25: Protesters and community groups assemble at Brownwood Park. Police drones and helicopters circle overhead. Law enforcement drive around the area continuously. Belkis Terán, mother of Tortuguita, hosts a vigil for their slain child in the park around 8:30 pm. Dozens of Atlanta Police officers enter the park and threaten to arrest everyone if they aren’t gone by 11. Protesters yell at the cops and surround them. Elsewhere, hundreds of people gather deep in Weelaunee for an underground party. Meanwhile, an APD lieutenant who has been active in repressing the movement of forest encampments is doxxed. At the same time, the initiative Cop City Vote declares solidarity with the Week of Action, explicitly recognizing the value of “all tactics on this road to collective liberation.”

June 26: Over 100 people gather in Brownwood park to host presentations, talks, and community outreach events. Elsewhere, multiple machines belonging to Brent Scarborough Company are sabotaged with muriatic acid, apparently despite security protection.

June 27: Film screenings and cultural events continue daily in Brownwood Park, usually under police surveillance. At Intrenchment Creek Park and the Old Atlanta Prison Farm, dozens of police vehicles are stationed at every known entrance and exit.

June 28: Around 200 people gather in Gresham Park with a mobile altar. Many don masks. They march most of the way to Intrenchment

APPENDIX: TIMELINE OF EVENTS

ASSEMBLED FROM PUBLICLY AVAILABLE REPORTS

June 7: Mayor Andre Dickens is doxxed. At the same time, people file a petition to initiate a popular referendum on the land-lease contract between City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Police Foundation, effectively placing Cop City on the ballot.

June 8: The Executive Board of Atlas Technical Consultants, a subcontractor for Brasfield & Gorrie, is doxxed. A group of activists announce a public campaign to collect signatures for a popular referendum.

June 9: A March 5 arrestee presses charges against Charlotte NC Police Major Brad Koch for defamation of character in response to public statements alleging that the accused would “one million percent” commit another crime if given bail. Dekalb County Judge Anna Davis, spouse of an APF accountant, had denied the defendant bail after those statements.

June 10: An anonymous statement appears calling for more digital actions against Cop City.

June 14: City of Atlanta Clerk Vanessa Waldron refuses to approve the petition to referendum on legal technicality.

June 19: Graffiti appears in Minneapolis in solidarity with the movement.

June 20: City Clerk Waldron once again refuses to approve the petition for a referendum, prompting outrage.

June 21: Organizers sue City Clerk Waldron, forcing her to approve the petition.

June 22: The signature collection begins demanding a referendum.

officers, yelling at them and telling them to leave the premises. When a few people with tactical experience began encircling police and calling for others to do the same, the officers quickly withdrew. This brief confrontation was cathartic for participants, but nonetheless had the intended chilling effect. After the vigil, everyone left the park. Later in the evening, deep in the Weelaunee Forest, hundreds of people gathered for an illegal dance party. Music blared late into the night as forest defenders and ravers shared the comforting embrace of the trees. However, this was not the section of the forest slated for demolition. No encampment was established there, nor in the park, nor anywhere else.

The following day, June 25, over 100 people re-assembled in the park. The atmosphere was jubilant and friendly. Participants shared food and assembled beneath a gazebo for a presentation on the limits of referendum strategies, conducted in a comradely and good-faith tone. Elsewhere in town, activists passed out fliers for forthcoming events. For the most part, the day was uneventful—with one exception.

That night, anonymous activists ventured onto the headquarters of the Brent Scarborough Company. Brent Scarborough, located almost an hour south of Atlanta in the suburb of Newnan, is the subcontractor that Brasfield & Gorrie hired to cut down trees and grade the land at the Prison Farm. Their facility is surrounded by trees and barbed wire fencing. They hired on-site security to park overnight at the office. This did not stop a few dedicated people from sabotaging their machines. According to an online communiqué, the activists hiked through the woods and scaled the fences using a cut-out square of carpet, as seen in the Hollywood film *Fight Club*. Sneaking past the security guards, they poured muriatic acid into the engines of multiple trucks and machines before escaping into the night.

Aside from a few movie screenings and workshops, no events were planned for the following days. Several were planned for June 28.

THE NEW BALANCE OF FORCES

At midday, a small crowd gathered outside of Cadence Bank in downtown Atlanta. The bank was slated to offer a multimillion-dollar loan to the Atlanta Police Foundation; activists wanted to give them cause

to reconsider. After a few minutes, police chased and dispersed the crowd. In the skirmish, a few people were pulled free of the police, but two were arrested. One person was ultimately charged with Felony Obstruction. Between harassing the vigil for Tortuguita and this, police sought to establish a new balance of force in which they could control the streets, so that activists would be reduced to knocking on doors.

A few hours later, around 4 pm, two hundred people gathered in Gresham Park. Belkis Teran joined them. The crowd held reinforced banners. Scouts observed several dozen police vehicles in the parking lot of Intrenchment Creek Park and dozens of officers in riot gear. The crowd marched down the same bicycle path that another crowd had during the fifth Week of Action in order to re-occupy the park on March 4, 2023. Morale was high.

Approaching the wooden bridge passing over Snow Creek just east of Intrenchment Creek Park, the crowd encountered multiple police cruisers stationed next to the path, near Cottonwood Drive. Helicopters circled overhead. At the tunnel beneath Bouldercrest Road, which marks the true entrance to Intrenchment Creek Park, police had erected cement barriers and formed a skirmish line. The crowd stopped before encountering any of this directly. Belkis took a megaphone and delivered an impassioned speech to the crowd. Others spoke as well, including demonstrators wearing balaclavas and gloves. Had the crowd been a few hundred more, this demonstration might have confronted the police and retaken the forest.

The crowd turned back, without losing morale, soberly assessing the situation. There were nearly as many police as protesters, and it was better to only fight when success was plausible. Any further advance would likely have provoked a dramatic clash in which police would have had the upper hand. If the movement had been in a phase in which it was necessary to assert its militancy, this might have been worthwhile. On the contrary, however, the movement had already demonstrated its militancy; what was necessary at this point was to show that it could win confrontations while minimizing losses.

At that point, the preparedness of the police could still be ascribed to the proximity to the forest. The authorities were clearly committed to preventing new encampments from being established there. But the

this can take the form of justifying bold actions by putting them in their proper context. Even well-designed graphics can play a part; the movement has been very skilled in this regard already, but it can do more. Posters, graffiti, and stickers celebrating the movement should be everywhere, especially in areas highly trafficked by the proponents of Cop City.

2) **Sowing doubt, confusion, anxiety.** By continuously frustrating the progress of construction, disrupting public events, monopolizing the phone lines to offices, highlighting and exacerbating tensions between agencies, undermining state narratives, doxxing hostile forces, and inducing paranoia and uncertainty in the firms and agencies responsible for the project, activists undermine their will to fight. Civil disobedience, clandestine action, noise demonstrations, fliering campaigns, pranks, and creatively-timed actions can exhaust the resources of the institutions that support Cop City.

3) **Diverting hostility.** Wherever the authorities seek to direct their hostility—whether against a perceived group, a place, an institution, or an individual—they are compelled to build up morale and internal consensus in order to do so. If the movement can continuously redirect this frustration away from the stated targets of repression or control, this will compel the Atlanta Police Foundation to change discourses and strategies over and over again, disrupting their focus and unity. This strategy necessitates remaining flexible and creative while pulling in as many forces and discourses as possible. Everyone who is not mobilized by the movement will be tokenized by the state. The government should not know who they are fighting, why, where, when, or by what means. In compelling officials to drum up paranoia about “outside agitators,” the movement has already achieved a victory, in that this opens up space for locals to act with comparative legitimacy.

Over the coming months, the situation will continue changing. In the wake of the Black Week of Action and Block Cop City, it remains an open question how to continue to create participatory spaces for the struggle. Organization derives from action, not vice versa. Keep pushing.

march in the streets, gather outside press conferences and fundraisers, and mobilize against insurance providers, construction companies, corporate executives, and their supporters.

WINNING BY ATTRITION

So far, the movement has not been able to reestablish an advantageous balance of force with law enforcement since the murder of Tortuguita and the destruction of the forest encampments. It has lost the element of surprise, while state and federal institutions have increasingly focused resources on attacking it.

At the same time, these institutions are gambling with their own legitimacy. As they pull out the stops to go after the movement, their thin veneer of democratic credibility is peeling away. In the long run, this could have consequences for them, provided that those who lose faith in them encounter practical options for how to enter into resistance against them.

In general, the offensive capacity of a movement tends to plateau or diminish over time, while defense becomes the principle method of fighting. At first, it might appear that the movement to defend Weelaunee and stop Cop City has ended up in a bind in which it has to invert this trend if it hopes to win. This is probably the wrong way to think about the situation. In fact, it is impressive that the movement has persisted this long already. Rather than pursuing “decisive” battles with authorities, which could result in incapacitating defeats, it may be wiser to seek sustainable levels of conflict on the existing fronts while attempting to open up new theaters of conflict where the authorities are not yet prepared.

If the movement can keep going, it will encounter new opportunities. Morale is essential to struggle; grassroots movements must maintain momentum while demoralizing their adversaries and eroding their will to fight. There are a few ways to do this.

1) **Preserving a positive image of the movement.** Any event, poster, sticker, film, article, coverage, or intervention that uplifts and celebrates the movement will hurt the morale of the Atlanta Police Foundation, the contractors, the Mayor’s office, and police officers. Sometimes



protests the following day showed that this was not simply a question of the securing the forest, but of seeking to crush the whole movement.

On June 29, a small number of people assembled on Ponce de Leon, intending to picket Home Depot, a sponsor of the APF. They met a massive police mobilization. Police cruisers filled the parking lot, perhaps 100 yards long. The construction and hardware retailer closed for the day pre-emptively. A few dozen people stood on the sidewalk chanting slogans and holding signs for passing traffic. This did not appear to be a militant group; they were ostensibly not prepared to engage in confrontations with the authorities or their corporate sponsors. That did not protect them, however. Abruptly, Atlanta Police grabbed an elderly protester and handcuffed her. The demonstration was aggressively dispersed by officers barking orders and grabbing signs.

ESCALATING TACTICS

The following day, June 30, over 100 people gathered again in Brownwood Park. Once again, the Weelaunee Coalition hosted a youth-led rally in defense of the forest and against Cop City. This may have been the only event of the week that was not harassed by law enforcement, including the movie screenings and talks. Thankfully, these children were not subjected to the direct intimidation that the rest of the movement experienced.

In the three days following the sixth Week of Action, clandestine

groups claimed responsibility for several attacks against Cop City.

The first took place in California. Activists released a statement claiming credit for smashing the windows of four banks and the screens of three ATMs in San Francisco, Oakland, and Concord. Over the preceding two and a half years, several dozen offices and institutions had suffered broken windows due to their support for the Atlanta Police Foundation, but this was the largest number of locations targeted simultaneously—implying that the saboteurs were scaling up their numbers and coordination.

Anonymous saboteurs struck multiple targets in Atlanta on July 1 as well. A clandestine group calling itself the March 5th Movement—a reference to the March 5, 2023 attack on the Cop City construction site—vandalized police infrastructure in two locations. Tagging “M5M” on the hood of a police cruiser, they smashed the windows out of three cop cars on Memorial Drive and unsuccessfully attempted to set them on fire. Simultaneously, improvised incendiary devices appeared in the parking garage beneath the current Atlanta Police training facility located in an industrial area at the southern boundary of Atlanta. This second action resulted in the burning of eight police motorcycles. According to government press conferences, an additional improvised device failed to detonate. Police claim that if it had, it would have assured the burning of 40 additional vehicles. The Chief of Police and the Atlanta Journal Constitution published photographs of the device. Officials claim that the entire facility could have been destroyed if an off-duty officer had not been randomly driving by at the time. Apparently, no one was inside the building at the time of the action.

On July 2, protesters visited the residence of Cop City architect Anthony Kenny, vandalizing it with paint and slashing the tires of his car. Ambrish Baisiwala, who sits on the Atlanta Police Foundation Board of Trustees, received the same treatment that night.

ATLAS TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS DROPS OUT

The same day, July 2, protesters gathered outside the suburban home of a regional manager for Atlas Technical Consultants in Minnesota, chanting slogans and banging on drums in his yard. The regional man-

them, because they have an existential stake in the project. Some sub-contractors, such as Ernst, remain vulnerable to direct pressure. But pressuring insurance providers could provide the movement with a set of achievable goals even as the stakes of the conflict escalate.

Uncover Cop City has already announced a “nationwide summit” in Arizona from February 23-26. This will be the first time that such an event has taken place outside of Georgia. Considering how much force has been brought to bear inside Atlanta itself, expanding the zone of conflict and experimenting with the strategy of convergence elsewhere in the country seems promising.

COMBATTING REPRESSION

The struggle against repression will also continue to provide opportunities to put action in a context in which it can be powerful. A number of acts of sabotage, including the coordinated vandalism of police cars and motorcycles over the summer, were ostensibly carried out in response to police attacks on protesters. The doxxing of the Atlanta City Council and the Atlanta Committee for Progress both occurred in retaliation for repression targeting the movement. With over a hundred people facing charges, there will be many chances to take action against the local authorities, to conduct fundraisers, to host rallies.

If anti-repression efforts continue to precipitate action rather than panic and paranoia, the movement could redirect the momentum of the prosecution to generate its own momentum.

EVOLVING PROTEST TACTICS

The Block Cop City event showed that some activists are learning to respond to police aggression. Moving forward, protesters will need to innovate technical and creative methods of dealing with police snatch squads, munitions, and intimidation. Reinforced banners and shields, masks, goggles, helmets, umbrellas, linking arms, carrying laser pointers, deploying bicycle scouts, car caravans, flash mobs, communications teams, and other yet-to-be developed innovations could enable crowds to assemble once again. With renewed confidence, these crowds could

more than simple sidewalk paving. They also appeared to have very few previous contracts with Brasfield & Gorrie in Georgia, suggesting that Brasfield & Gorrie might be having difficulty securing the contractors they prefer to work with.

CONTINUING FORWARD

An array of injunction hearings and court cases continue to play out in the background. The South River Watershed Alliance and others are in court against the DeKalb County Government for the illegal closure of Intrenchment Creek Park, and the contamination of the South River, which is occurring in quantities that violate the Clean Water Act. Lawyers assisting the Cop City Vote initiative to launch a referendum continue to file motions and lawsuits against the undemocratic denial of the process by the city government and the clerk's office. Appearances and hearings will continue to drag the 100+ defendants of the movement into courtrooms for months or years to come.

But despite the proliferation of court cases, lawyers are not the only protagonists in this struggle. Here, we will spell out some of the paths that remain open to the movement.

TARGETING THE INSURERS

A new campaign called Uncover Cop City aims to draw attention to the insurance providers of the Atlanta Police Foundation: Accident Fund and Nationwide. This represents a refinement of a familiar strategy. Instead of targeting contractors and subcontractors, as previous campaigns have done, this effort takes aim at institutions with hundreds of offices across the country—institutions that represent a legal bottleneck for the project. Without coverage of their assets, the Atlanta Police Foundation is legally forbidden from maintaining contracts or holding assets in the state of Georgia.

Because of the effectiveness of campaigns like Stop Reeves Young, the Cop City project has been reduced to a hardcore group of contractors, nearly all of whom sit on the Board of Trustees for the Atlanta Police Foundation. This makes it more difficult to exert pressure on

ager stormed out his front door screaming and cursing at the demonstrators. He told those assembled that Atlas had already dropped the contract. When someone in the crowd asked him why, he answered “Because you guys are a fucking nightmare” and “You broke all of our fucking windows.”

After this news spread online, some people in Williston, Vermont visited the offices of Atlas on July 9, painting slogans on the work trucks and front doors of the facility. The next day, Atlas Technical confirmed with an independent journalist that they had backed out of the project. The following week, asked about Atlas' decision at a press conference about Cop City, Atlanta Police chief Darin Shierbaum said “Well, if people were coming to your home, what would you do?”

Later, documents released on November 30 indicated that Atlas had apparently withdrawn from the project the preceding March. The company expressed the desire to withdraw from the project on March 4. By the 7, they were already off the contract. The document reveals much about the internal status of the project and its investigations into the movement, including the potentially illegal collusion of various agencies with Magnus Miller Gorrie over encrypted Signal chats. It also catalogues a number of actions for which no public claim of responsibility was ever made, such as February 21, 2023 burning of an Atlas Technical office and vehicle in Brecksville, Ohio.

The departure of Atlas represented a significant victory for the movement. In the winter of 2021, as detailed in *The City in the Forest*, 50 forest defenders had marched to the prison farm to resist the soil-boring and sampling conducted by Long Engineering, a subsidiary of Atlas Technical Consultants. Finally, after over two years of home visits, call-ins, letter writing, marches, rallies, vandalism, and clashes, a major Brasfield & Gorrie subcontractor had backed out of the project. Despite this success, the news did not catalyze a significant uptick in the pressure campaign against other subcontractors of Brasfield & Gorrie, other clients of the Atlanta Police Foundation, or the project itself. It did not give people the sense that greater resistance to Cop City was possible.

In view of this, it is worth reevaluating that campaign. More on that below.

SCOOPING THE MID-RANGE: REPRESSING PUBLIC RESISTANCE

In audio engineering, “equalization” (EQ) means adjusting the frequencies to produce the ideal sound and tone. Broadly speaking, these frequencies are divided into bass, mid-range, and treble. Insofar as taste is completely subjective, there is no “correct” way to EQ a song. In general, however, it is agreed that any EQ that completely obscures a frequency is undesirable, because that means that a given instrument or sound will be covered up by other sounds. For instance, there are many high-end frequencies in the snare drum and cymbals; without proper equalization, high-end frequencies in vocals, guitar, or keyboard can be completely covered up by the drum sounds, or all of them can bleed together in an unintelligible cacophony.

In music parlance, to “scoop the mids” is to turn down the mid-range frequencies below the bass or treble frequencies. In heavy metal, people often “scoop the mids” to produce an aggressive guitar tone, imitating the recordings of Metallica or Pantera. Unfortunately, if the mid-range of the guitars is “scooped” too much, a live audience will not be able to hear them over the drums and bass. Experienced bands know that to deliver a crisp, hard-hitting, intelligible sound, you need to include a certain amount of mid-range frequencies in the guitar EQ.

Imagine that civic efforts such as canvassing for the referendum and speaking at City Hall represent the “treble” of resistance, while nocturnal sabotage, vandalism, fire-setting, and clandestine attacks represent the “bass.” In this metaphor, the “mid-range” is comprised of public demonstrations, marches, forest encampments, walk-outs, and riotous protests—actions that are both combative and participatory. The police strategy since December 13, 2022 has been to “scoop” the mid-range of the movement, pushing down the middle frequency as much as possible.

This has created a situation that intensifies the contrast between underground and civic actions. Those who imagine that some forms of resistance are more intrinsically worthy than others welcome this situation, because it makes it easier to center their preferred approaches

involves a diverse array of participants; debate about the alleged effectiveness of one strategy versus another is often just a coded form of sectarian competition for approval. The most important question is not which participants in the movement are right and which are wrong, but how the different participants can ensure that their combined efforts will inspire others to participate and expand the number of fronts on which the struggle takes place. Certainly, the proponents of Cop City already perceive every effort to stop them—be it legal or autonomous, violent or nonviolent, symbolic or direct, defensive or offensive, local or international—as part of a combined assault.

Mutual suspicion, destructive competition, scarcity thinking, paranoia, conformity, nostalgia—these are all pitfalls.

FIGHTING WITHOUT ASSURANCES

Soon after the Block Cop City march, an anonymous group burned sixteen large work trucks belonging to Ernst Concrete. This took place in Lawrenceville, Georgia, roughly half an hour northeast of Atlanta. In an online statement, the participants claimed to have placed incendiary devices and kindling beneath the hoods of the vehicles.

Ernst Concrete was seen in the Old Atlanta Prison Farm on November 3. They were contracted to pour concrete and to build sidewalks and roads inside of the perimeter fence. In the first week of November, activists from across the country launched a call-in campaign to their offices, urging them to boycott the Atlanta Police Foundation. After the stoppage of work for the Block Cop City action and the subsequent torching of their machinery, they dropped from the project. This was confirmed by dozens of people who called the company the days after the action, and was confirmed by the company itself in a statement sent to local news. Eventually, Ernst took down their website. The statement they released to the news was framed in the most confusing way imaginable, claiming that Ernst “is not involved in Cop City” in the headline, while clarifying that they had in fact been contracted for it, and were no longer going to continue working on it.

This was the quickest victory against a contractor the movement had sustained yet. Ernst Concrete is a large company that does far

VICTORY AND DEFEAT: A CHIMERA

Victory and defeat always arrive together, mixed up in the same vessel. It is not possible to taste one without the other, even if on a given day it is the bitterness that overpowers the sweetness or vice versa.

This does not mean that there is no difference between the two. If you have clearly defined goals, it is possible to determine whether or not you have achieved them.

Some of the Block Cop City organizers feel that they achieved their goals of organizing a convergence to shut down construction in a context of unprecedented repression, and that it was a victory that they were able to do so without any arrests. They are correct about that. The Atlanta Police Foundation and its supporters presumably consider it a victory that they were able to stop the crowd from reaching the construction site and from damaging property. They, too, are correct in this regard. Some commentators who watched from the sidelines are pleased to declare that the march was a failure because it did not reach the job site. In a sense, they are also correct.

If all of these groups believe that their expectations have been confirmed and their decisions vindicated, what does that tell us? Probably, that they are all selectively recalling what their ambitions were before the mobilization, selectively interpreting the events of the day, and misunderstanding crucial elements of each other's strategies. Participants in the movement should set concrete goals, in order to be able to evaluate their efforts critically. They should also think critically about what their adversaries unstated goals might be and how to thwart them.

No single set of tactics can be judged in isolation. The movement



while deriding the others. The forcible suppression of space for participatory action protects participants from testing the viability of their concepts in open dialogue with alternative viewpoints. Prosecutors and police like this situation for the same reason: it makes the line very clear between those engaging in legal protest activity and those engaging in clandestine direct action.

But it is precisely the middle frequencies of a movement that give it its punch—making its rhythms infectious, enabling it to move people and draw them into a process of transformation. Without these frequencies, the results will be muddy and indistinct.

If activists cannot re-assert their right to gather publicly for “mid-range” activities, nocturnal sabotage and civic actions will drift further and further apart, becoming mutually unintelligible and incapable of reaching those outside the movement. Regardless of individual preferences, everyone must recognize the importance of participatory, confrontational activity.

THE STORM BEFORE THE STORM

On July 2, Governor Kemp released a statement describing the March 5th Movement attacks as “the tactics of organized criminals,” while avoiding using the name of the group. On July 3, activists visited the private residence of Keith Johnson, the pre-construction regional director for Brasfield & Gorrie. Protesters had visited his house repeatedly over the preceding two and a half years. As a result, his multi-house estate had hired full-time security to park in his driveway. This did not stop activists from climbing over the fence into his yard.

According to an online statement, saboteurs entered the Johnson estate and dumped paint on the main house, spray-painted slogans on his cars, and painted messages on his driveway next to the vehicle of the security guard. They also dumped motor oil into his swimming pool. Finally, they unloaded buckets of rotten fish into the pool and backyard. This may be among the most serious actions targeting an executive in recent US history.

The next day, on the Fourth of July, anonymous forest defenders torched two machines belonging to Brent Scarborough Company

in broad daylight. This action took place at the same site where other machines belonging to the Brasfield & Gorrie subcontractor had been sabotaged after the fifth Week of Action in spring 2023. Since the action in the spring, the site had been guarded nearly around the clock by private security. Activists targeted the location on the holiday, correctly predicting a lapse in security coverage.

These actions sent the Atlanta and Georgia administrations into a panic.

A month later, on August 2, Atlanta Police, Georgia Bureau of Investigations, Department of Homeland Security, the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms (ATF) department, and the Fire Marshal held a joint press conference in which they publicized technical details of the previous months' actions, including how and why they took place. The Police Chief announced an increase in the cash reward for the parties behind these actions; this suggests that the authorities did not have adequate information to go on. That did not stop them from baselessly claiming that the saboteurs did not represent the broader movement opposed to Cop City or committed to the defense of Weelaunee, alleging that they were a "very small" group. More likely, the anonymous saboteurs were not a "group" at all.

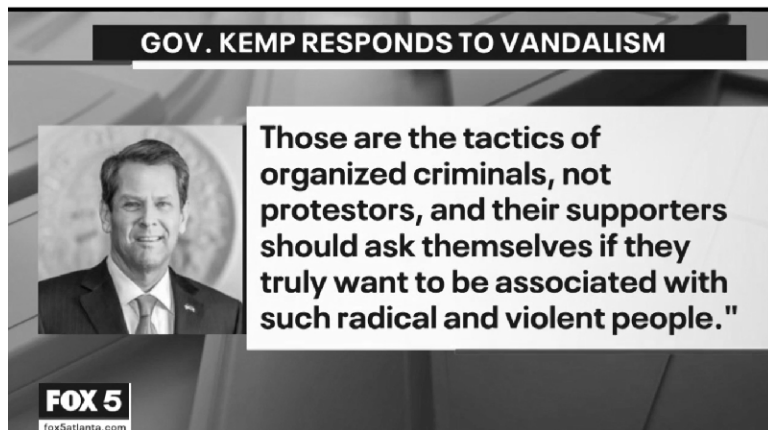
As the actions in Atlanta slowed and canvassers continued fanning out to talk with residents and acquire signatures, bold actions continued elsewhere, including the burning of multiple Asheville police cruisers just after Atlanta police announced they would host recruitment

tion agreements for Block Cop City in themselves provide no justification for stepping away from the fight against Cop City, nor for sitting out the events of November 13. Hopefully, those who were critical of the mobilization simply focused their efforts elsewhere.

Surely all the repression in Atlanta played a central role in limiting attendance. Many participants were afraid to be close to the front of the march, and many potential participants surely stayed home on account of similar fears. But the old adage proved true once again: it's safer in the front. The sole arrest on November 13 was of a person who opted for a support role; they were arrested in a vehicle in the vicinity of Gresham Park. When the police deployed tear gas canisters, they threw them over the front line, targeting the people in the middle of the march. Those in the front line could count on the comrades at their sides to act boldly to defend them, whereas those behind them scattered when the clashes ensued. Counterintuitive as it seems, it can be safer in the front.

The same goes for the Block Cop City mobilization itself. Although organizing any kind of confrontational protest was a risky proposition with scores of people already facing RICO charges, it was actually safer than doing nothing would have been. Permitting the state to crush the movement would have set a precedent that would threaten other movements, emboldening the authorities to use the same tactics elsewhere. It would also have left over a hundred defendants facing charges in a movement without a public face. One way to ensure that there is energy for defendant and prisoner support is to keep a movement vibrant, drawing in new people and new energy.

As it turned out, the authorities had their own reasons not to escalate on November 13. If they had arrested more people, they would have had to decide whether to dole out even more RICO charges, stretching prosecutor resources even thinner, or to put prosecutors in the position of having to explain why some accused Stop Cop City protesters deserved RICO charges while others did not. Video footage shows officers brandishing zip ties with which to carry out arrests, but either they had their hands full dealing with the charge of the Blue cluster, or they preferred not to try to in the first place.



in a location that was not otherwise thickly populated. This made sense if the mobilization was understood as a direct action determined above all by the necessities of interrupting work at the construction site, but not if the goal was to involve as many people as possible. The largest number of people have participated in the social and cultural events that the movement has hosted, such as the South River Music Festival.

Did the action agreement keep some people from attending the action? It definitely generated distracting controversy. But it's not clear how many of those who criticized the nonviolence protocol stayed home only on account of it. The number of people in that category is probably dozens, not hundreds.

At best, action agreements can be understood as a way for people to get on the same page about what to expect from each other. Ideally, such agreements should be co-created on a horizontal basis, but there are always uneven dynamics around power, leverage, and initiative in group decision-making. The same goes for spontaneous crowd decision-making, in which there is less opportunity for group deliberation. Of course, different formats lend themselves to certain outcomes: a mobilization coordinated by a visible organizing group or planned in open public meetings is more likely to adopt conservative mutual expectations, whereas planning on an invitational basis or acting spontaneously can lend itself to a wider tactical repertoire.

As the authors of "Don't Panic, Stay Tight" put it, "the organization of the weekend was gratuitously, painfully, democratic." One way to interpret this quality of the mobilization is as a response to the events of March 5, 2023, when—without any formal decision-making whatsoever—hundreds of people marched to the construction site and engaged in confrontational action that had significant repercussions. By contrast, the Block Cop City mobilization centered two days of hours-long facilitated decision-making processes and a march that was almost performatively inclusive. Each of these approaches involves advantages and disadvantages.

We all have a responsibility to push back against agreements that we consider unacceptable, even if doing so could precipitate conflict. It is also our responsibility to deliver our critiques in a way that could change others' minds, rather than simply establishing cliques. The ac-

events in that city. A week and a half later, a raucous crowd disrupted another Atlanta police recruitment event in New York City, blocking the doors of the event despite the efforts of the NYPD. At the end of the month, on August 30, the March 5th Movement claimed credit for placing an incendiary device on the truck of Vertiv Corporation in Milwaukie, Oregon. Vertiv is a logistics and technology company providing technical aid to the Atlanta Police Department.

ESCALATING REPRESSION: RICO AND THE FURTHERANCE OF THE CONSPIRACY

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the "tactics of organized criminals" language Governor Kemp used on July 2 was not just boilerplate copy drafted by an intern, nor was the August 2 press conference simply propaganda to assure backers that the state could still protect their investments. These phrases and statements were shaping operations, carefully crafted interventions designed to position the government for their next operation: the blanket criminalization of the entire movement.

On August 29, the Attorney General of Georgia, Christopher M. Carr, filed an indictment with the Fulton County Superior Court, bringing charges against 61 people under Georgia's version of the Racketeer-Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act O.C.G.A. § 16-14-4. The indictment became public on September 5. The document, which is over 100 pages long and very poorly written, claims that the "conspiracy" (which it names "Defend the Atlanta Forest") was "founded" on May 25, 2020—the day that Minneapolis Police officers murdered George Floyd, precipitating a nationwide uprising.

This was a serious escalation. It did not catch everyone by surprise: the Atlanta Solidarity Fund has been braced for such charges since February. The authorities and their extreme-right proxies had been demanding a full-scale crackdown on the movement for over a year, spreading a conspiracy theory that the movement was a mafia controlled by a shadowy and well-connected group (a narrative some activists also reproduced, apparently with no sense of irony). According to one version of this conspiracy theory, circulated by far-right trolls, the

Network for Stronger Communities (a Georgia-based nonprofit organization) operates a number of financial enterprises, including the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, that coordinate acts of terrorism in order to accumulate wealth and influence. Of the 61 accused, three were members of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund. The 42 people already facing Domestic Terrorism charges were also indicted, as well as a number of other people whose connection to the movement was unclear. The indictment alleged that some people had committed acts in “overt furtherance of the conspiracy” such as buying glue sticks for sign-making.

The RICO indictment was not a legal procedure but a political act. It was not a judicial intervention to suppress criminal activity but a government measure to crush what the text describes as “anarchism,” “collectivism,” “social solidarity,” “mutual aid.”

It is not simply 61 people who are on trial. By dating the case to the murder of George Floyd, the prosecution showed that their real target was the entire population of millions that participated in the consequent revolt. This is not an unusual court case, but a new chapter in the fight between those who seek to preserve the hierarchies of a structurally white supremacist society and those fighting to destroy it root and branch. The indictment does not present a list of crimes. It describes the contours and values of a rival society emerging within the movement to stop Cop City, aspiring to reinvent the world according to a different logic.

The Fulton County Judge assigned to the RICO case immediately recused himself. Until then, judges had not recused themselves from cases related to the movement even when they possessed obvious ties to the Atlanta Police Foundation.

RICO IN GEORGIA

RICO cases are becoming a generic strategy of prosecution in Georgia. The local statutes are conveniently vague, allowing the government to bring conspiracy charges against people who do not even know one another, as in the case against the movement. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis uses RICO charges for a wide range of purposes, including sending teachers to prison for doctoring test answers in a

in 2022, when the movement had a foothold in the forest.

Likewise, imagining that a nonviolence agreement would enable formal organizations to participate, finally drawing out massive numbers, may get the causality backwards. More often, an initiative draws massive numbers and then formal organizations show up to take advantage of them. If the action agreement had succeeded in creating a situation in which dozens of student organizations, religious groups, and environmentalist groups had participated in the mobilization without trying to curtail its ambitions, that would have been a good thing, but from this vantage point, it is clear that that would have taken considerably more than an action agreement to make that possible.

It is possible that more people might have turned out for Block Cop City if demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinians had not been taking place all around the country at the same time. On the other hand, these demonstrations may have galvanized some people who would otherwise have stayed home. The absent are the most difficult demographic to understand.

Arguably, if drawing massive numbers of people to the Block Cop City action had been the top priority, the most effective way to do so would have been to broadcast the time and place of the demonstration far and wide—rather than publicizing the spokescouncil meetings, as occurred, and only announcing the location and time of the action that weekend. The march was scheduled early in the morning on a work day



Did the nonviolence framework fulfill its express purpose of enabling more people to participate in the action? Again, let's consult the authors of "Don't Panic, Stay Tight":

In general, we disagree with the setting of nonviolent parameters. Frankly, we disagree with tactical parameters in general and with the minutely "organized" coordination of events, although we recognize that this type of attention to detail makes some people feel more confident and brave. We believe that the march would have been more successful at breaking through police lines and potentially breaching the site had it been able to use projectiles. We also recognize that it is impossible to know if this crowd could have even materialized without the parameters. We do not believe that it is possible to know if the "nonviolence" language in the promotion helped or hindered attendance without conducting a thorough interview with attendees before the action occurred. It is our unprovable suspicion that it did not increase participation much, and that it only shifted it from one segment of the population to another.

It seems plausible that, remembering how "nonviolent" actions used to draw more participants than confrontational actions many years ago, the organizers hoped that defining the mobilization as "non-violent" would serve as a shortcut to draw mass participation. Indeed, "nonviolent direct action" does seem to occupy an intermediate zone between canvassing and open confrontation. But a lot has changed since the turn of the century. Following the George Floyd rebellion, millions of people have participated in confrontational street activity that did not involve action agreements; likewise, millions have experienced firsthand that police tactics are not necessarily determined by how "violent" a demonstration is.

Hundreds of people undoubtedly showed up for the Block Cop City mobilization who would not have showed up without the months of touring and promotion that preceded it. But it may not have been the action agreements that drew them so much as the care that was put into outreach and hospitality, spelling out to activists around the country that there were concrete roles they could fill even if they lacked experience in autonomous organizing models. In retrospect, it was a missed opportunity not to do this kind of outreach more systematically

low-income area.

In May 2022, Atlanta-based rapper Young Thug was indicted alongside 27 others under the Georgia RICO statute. In August 2023, former US President Donald Trump was indicted alongside 18 others on the same charges. Although the RICO cases currently in progress represent rival factions of the political class, the same grand jury that indicted Donald Trump is responsible for indicting those accused of "racketeering" for protesting Cop City.

The court system is the central infrastructure for directing state violence. Though naïve Democrats may imagine it to be a check on the aspirations of autocrats, it naturally lends itself to all forms of repression targeting the oppressed, and that is the chief role that it will always play.

YOU CAN'T BREAK US

The movement swiftly responded to the charges. The language of the indictment was specifically phrased to imply that any protest or action in the forest by nature of being in the forest constitutes an act of terrorism in "overt furtherance of the conspiracy," i.e., racketeering. To challenge this framing, on September 8, clergy associated with the "Faith Coalition" rushed the construction site at the Old Atlanta Prison Farm and chained themselves to heavy machinery, stopping work for the day. Officers eventually arrived to arrest them, but only charged them with simple misdemeanors. Journalists captured this courageous action on video. In only three days, the movement had broken the state of shock that the charges had created. Nothing was finished.

In the following days, over 100 people marched to the Georgia State Capitol building, denouncing the charges. Sunrise Movement Ann Arbor marched in Michigan, demanding that Accident Fund drop its insurance coverage for the Police Foundation. In Kingston, New York, people held a vigil for those killed by state terrorism or charged with RICO. A crowd rallied outside the local "Safety Center" in Carbondale, Illinois. Graffiti denouncing the charges appeared throughout Minneapolis. In Phoenix, activists blocked entrances to the offices of Nationwide Insurance, which provides coverage for the APF. Two



activists in Elliston, Virginia locked down to construction equipment for the Mountain Valley Pipeline in solidarity with the lock-downs in Atlanta. On September 10, protesters in Chicago blocked streets and broke windows at a Chase Bank. The next day, anarchists in Olympia, Washington broke windows at an Arby's, citing the connection that their parent company, Inspire Brands, had to the APF.

The RICO charges offered new clarity to the stakes of the struggle. The summer of 2023 had seen a lull for the combative part of the movement after the sixth Week of Action; the repression immediately catalyzed a response.

On September 11, the referendum organizers turned in 116,000 signatures demanding a popular vote on the future of Cop City—more than twice the number of votes Andre Dickens had received in the runoff election that made him Mayor.

THE SCOPE OF REPRESSION BROADENS

The referendum initiative terrified the local administration and the Cop City funders. The specter of a popular vote unsettled the confidence of the pro-Cop City coalition because it called all the reassurances of the Police Foundation into question. If the contract was not a sure

extremely online—shows that the responsible party or parties understand how shamefully they behaved.

Whatever the case, both the authors of the aforementioned screed and those who have circulated it bear some responsibility for this farcical episode. It is the material consequence of their efforts; it expresses the spirit of their project. In the final analysis, they have not sought to contribute to the fight against the police so much as to hinder at least some of those in open struggle against Cop City.

GAUGING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The march did not reach the construction site. It was not a “mass mobilization,” either, in that it didn’t bring together a larger number of people than had gathered for earlier mobilizations to defend the forest. Nor did it succeed in connecting the more radical sections of the movement with less risk-tolerant groups, formal organizations, or large numbers of locals.

It did shut down construction for the day, and for several days afterwards. It also brought together hundreds of people for a bold action in a context of unprecedented repression, including many who had never participated in protests and many more who had never faced tear gas or riot police. It took months of considerable effort to accomplish this, however.

But that effort may not have been wasted. In a debrief meeting afterwards, activists who had come from around the country to participate in the mobilization unanimously agreed that they would leave feeling more prepared to act boldly in their home communities. That, if nothing else, counts as a victory. In that regard, we can credit the Block Cop City organizers with giving the movement another lease on life.

If two thousand people had showed up to the departure point on November 13, multiple marches could have departed for the construction site, stretching police thinner and opening space for a wider array of tactics. Then, there might have been an open horizon of possibility. Rather than looking for minor technical improvements in what the participants could have done differently, it makes more sense to consider why more people did not come.

tution, the way they had come.

After a long, slow procession, the group returned to the bicycle path near Gresham Park, far from the construction site and the lines of police. Helicopters and police drones continued to circle overhead. Still several hundred strong, the demonstrators broke into smaller breakout groups to process and deliberate. Medics set up a check-in station for anyone in need of assistance.

Eventually, people returned to the park and dispersed. That night, a vigil took place at Dekalb County Jail during which inmates broke windows and lowered plastic bags to ground level, which protesters filled with cigarettes, lighters, and pizza.

A SUPPORTER OF THE POLICE?

At the very moment that the blue cluster was driving back the police line, one individual wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and reflective orange ski goggles physically assaulted the person who was pushing the sound system immediately behind the front of the march. As the individual in the orange ski goggles did so, they yelled epithets referencing an online post criticizing the mobilization. Then they ran away towards the back of the crowd, fleeing from the confrontation with police.

This individual may not have been working on police payroll, but by timing their attack to coincide with the clash, they were engaging in joint action with law enforcement. They could have performed this stunt at any time, but they timed it to maximize the effectiveness of the police attack.

It is very difficult to imagine that this was an earnest participant who suddenly panicked and, recalling an obscure online post, spontaneously threw a tantrum. Likewise, it seems unlikely that they were simply a police agent seeking to stoke internal tensions—for such a stunt would discredit critics of the mobilization, not the mobilization itself. Either they were carrying out the wishes of the authors of the screed, and their action turned out to be so contemptible that even the authors disclaimed it, or they hoped to impress the authors but failed. The fact that no one has claimed credit for the assault online—when the critics of the Block Cop City movement have been nothing if not

thing, what kind of institution would lend or donate millions of dollars to it? This question surely haunted the offices of the Police Foundation and Mayor’s office. They must have felt they needed to do something definitive to silence internal skepticism.

On September 29, 2023, Interim Municipal Clerk Vanessa Waldon published the full legal names, phone numbers, and home addresses of the 116,000 Atlanta residents who had signed the petition for a referendum, posting them on the website of the Atlanta government. Taking her cue, fascist groups began sharing this list online. Many on the list feared that stalkers and abusers would hunt them down.

In response, within 24 hours, the Free & Rowdy Party doxxed the members of the Atlanta Committee for Progress, using Vanessa Waldon’s act of repression as an opportunity to catalyze further actions against Cop City. The Atlanta Committee for Progress is a coalition of powerful industrial and bourgeois delegates who collude to maintain the clientelist system known as the Atlanta Way, described in *The City in the Forest*. These delegates include the CEOs of many international corporations, universities, and institutions. No previous doxxes had targeted figures of such stature and influence.

A few days later, on October 1, an excavator belonging to Brent Scarborough Company caught fire. This was the third attack against the company at the location of Sawtell and McDonough, near the Federal Penitentiary. While this action did not address the 116,000 people who had been doxxed by the government, perhaps missing a chance to communicate with a huge number of people, it did demonstrate that the fighting spirit of the movement had not been extinguished by the RICO charges, nor the repression of the referendum petitioning process.

THIS IS NOT A LOCAL REPRESSION STRATEGY

On October 3, a Georgia Open Records Act (GORA) request revealed that the office of Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens had been speaking with the White House since at least June 2023. City officials had been communicating with White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs representative Julie Rodriguez. Rodriguez believes, according to these notes, that Cop City is “exemplary” of what President Biden “would

like to see other municipalities emulate.” Finally, the White House offered to send “an official of your choice” to visit the site.

Another document made available through the GORA request revealed that the Department of Homeland Security published an overview analysis of the movement on January 3, 2023, two weeks before the killing of Tortuguita. Their report included a map of specifically destructive actions across the country, arguing that the movement would continue to inspire acts of “domestic violent extremism” if it was able to persist.

The picture is becoming clearer. Local authorities, unable to mitigate the effects of the movement against their project, have been drawing in greater and greater forces to assist them. This began with the coordination of interdepartmental raids (“security sweeps,” in the official doublespeak) on the forest in May 2022. This interdepartmental coordination slowly pulled in more agencies from across the metropolitan area, eventually culminating in a statewide raid on the forest in December followed by the infamous lethal raid led by Georgia State Patrol in January 2023. In March, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation cooperated with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in interrogating music festival attendees detained in or near Intrenchment Creek Park. Statements from the Governor’s office have become increasingly common, while Congresspeople like Marjorie Taylor Green have denounced the movement and demanded a clampdown.

It is now clear that some attention is being given to the fight to stop Cop City from the highest echelons of official government. In order to defeat the awkward coalition being built against it, the movement will have to combine at least as many forces and strategies.

ATTRITION AND CONFLICT

In the six months that have passed since the previous chapter of this story appeared, some of the forces described therein have disappeared. For instance, the “South River Forest Public Safety Training Center Task Force,” established by the Mayor’s office to rubberstamp Cop City

I knew that we stood no chance of making it into the construction site when I saw the crowd at the meet-up point. I was worried that all of these people would have come to Atlanta for nothing. The lines of police showed me my concerns were unfounded. While many people prefer to evade the clash, to move around the danger, to stick to the shadows, I have always preferred the front lines, the exploding canisters, the sour smell of the tear gas, the wild crush of the crowd. Real knowledge lives in the body, not the mind. The experience of the mob howling in unison, linking arms, rushing headlong into lines of police, is worth years of speculation and theorizing. If we were more numerous, we would have doubtlessly split into multiple corridors to spread the police response thin. [...] To my left and right, my friends were showing umbrellas upward, pushing ahead in the dense throng. For a few moments, it was dark and almost silent. The veil of the umbrellas, the silent heaving, and incredible pressure of the comrades packed together behind the banners is an experience you can’t describe easily for those who have never felt it. Eventually, I couldn’t breathe anymore and I grabbed someone as I retreated. Thankfully we didn’t make it past the fourth line of officers. We would have all been arrested.

RE-GROUPING

After a few minutes, Indigenous activists within the Purple cluster convened a drum circle in the middle of the road. This had a calming effect. Protesters took time to check in with their affinity groups and anyone else in distress. The crowd chanted “All of us or none of us,” expressing the determination to defend each another from police snatch squads and the targeting of vulnerable or risk-tolerant protesters. In the final spokescouncil meeting the day before, the assembly had agreed that risk-takers from Blue cluster or other clusters would be welcomed into the other sections of the crowd and that nobody would feel “used” by this kind of tactical retreat. Over a loudspeaker, police began issuing dispersal orders. Slowly, the crowd made their way back down Consti-



in the front were not wearing gas masks or goggles, so they were not prepared for the officers behind them to deploy tear gas. Consequently, the tear gas impacted them as badly as it affected the activists who were charging them. Abruptly, the two groups backed apart as protesters and police alike fell back coughing, vomiting, and calling for help.

Video footage shows the majority of police retreating with their backs to the crowd. This illustrates the extent to which order broke down on their side during the clash.

The demonstrators fell back several yards down Constitution Road. Police fired a few flashbang grenades at them to preserve the gap between the two forces. Someone threw another tear gas canister back toward the riot police whence it had come. Technically, this was outside the agreed parameters of the action framework, but no one objected, then or afterwards.

The people from the front of the Purple cluster who had withdrawn down West Park Place and towards the tree line rejoined the rest of the march. Medics in the Orange cluster provided medical treatment to militants from Blue while other steadfast Orange participants held their ground.

The unity of the Blue cluster had provided the cool-headed courage they needed to defend and de-arrest each other throughout the clash. As a result, no one had been grievously harmed or arrested.

For a more detailed account of the events of the morning, we recommend “Don’t Panic, Stay Tight: Frontline Reflections on Block Cop City.” One account offers a lucid enough appraisal of the prospects of the march, given its numbers:

blueprints and reforms, has either moved to illegal encrypted channels or vanished completely. The movement has paid no attention to Michael Thurmond, the CEO of Dekalb County, despite his decision to shut down Intrenchment Creek Park. Ryan Millsap, one of the movement’s chief antagonists in 2022, has also receded from view.

After the RICO charges became public, many participants stepped back from the movement, as well. As of October 2023, 108 people accused of participating in the struggle to stop Cop City faced charges of some kind. Presumably, the stress of awaiting trial and dealing with bond conditions has negatively impacted both the defendants and their various supporters. Hundreds of people were living with the stress of looming court cases and possible incarceration, not to mention those who did not know anyone facing charges but were emotionally impacted nonetheless. The challenges of constantly fighting, organizing, attending meetings, conducting research, deliberating, and thinking about the movement must have worn on the resolve of all participants.

One way to avoid burnout is to find a specific, concrete role to play, then change that role over time, taking breaks or periodically moving into less intensive roles before fatigue can take too much of a toll.

Not everyone who withdrew from the movement did so because of burnout. Some stepped back for other reasons. Some simply vanished, abandoning others in their time of need—neither engaging in public organizing, nor conducting clandestine activity, nor securing materials, resources, or funds for the movement or those facing charges.

At the same time, a small number of people strained the solidarity of the movement by launching public denunciations and political attacks on other participants, violating the movement’s longstanding principles of discretion and private debate. It’s interesting to note that the timeline of these denunciations roughly matches the timeline of police escalation. Public denunciations appeared online in January, in March, and then again shortly after the announcement of the RICO case.

This is not all that unusual. Internal conflict often emerges as a consequence of repression. Those who study counterinsurgency understand that the chief effect of repression is usually not the direct impact of the blow, but the fault lines it opens up.

Some of those who have published denunciations may have sought to give themselves political cover for withdrawing from the movement, falling back on a narrative of “betrayal,” the only persuasive justification for leaving the movement in what otherwise might itself be understood as a betrayal. In the end, it was neither liberals nor pacifists—neither ecologists nor lawyers, students, canvassers, academics, socialists, abolitionists, Black nationalists, Marxists, or musicians—who drafted public condemnations of other participants in the movement to stop Cop City. It was anarchists targeting other anarchists.

Some of the other critics were apparently never involved in the movement to defend the forest at all, or only peripherally connected to it. Some do not even live in the United States. Conflict among participants in the movement is one thing, but it is sheer opportunism for those who only experience the movement as a distant projection screen for their own fixations to seek to capitalize on friction within it.

When analyzing the end of the forest encampments and the heartbreaking death of Tortuguita, we could well blame the billions of people who were not living in the forest in the winter of 2022—including most of the people making public denunciations in the first place. We would also have cause to criticize those in the forest who drove others out with their polarizing attitudes, behavior, and words. But apportioning blame and name-calling are for those who have given up on changing the world. The rest of us have to find ways to resolve our differences if we are to continue fighting our chief adversaries.

Despite the tensions among a few anarchists and their friends, many people have continued to push ahead courageously. What comes next will be determined by those who persevere.

FROM ATLANTA TO GAZA, NO COP CITY ANYWHERE

On October 6, District Attorney George R. Christian of the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit ruled that it was “objectively reasonable” for police to kill Tortuguita. While disturbing, this news did not shock many people. Perhaps because of the widespread cynicism around the investigation, which many considered a mockery from the outset, nobody mobilized in response to the ruling. At the same time, students

that a line of riot police would position themselves at the intersection of West Park Place and Constitution, just outside of the Fire station.

As the crowd approached West Park Place, police cruisers rushed ahead around the march. An armored vehicle was parked next to the fire station. Further ahead, multiple armored vehicles and a water cannon were parked inside the barbed-wire fencing of the construction site itself. When the Blue cluster was about 60 yards from the fire station, officers parked their vehicles in the middle of the road. They formed a solid line, wearing helmets and carrying shields.

The Blue cluster had already resolved to keep moving in the face of obstacles. If police blocked the path, they would advance through or around them. If they were physically incapable of moving forward, they would shift direction. As they drew within 20 yards of the police line, participants in the Blue cluster reminded themselves that they had already decided together what to do—they didn’t have to worry about improvising an individual response to the line of armored cops ahead.

When the Blue cluster drew within ten yards of the first row of police, they picked up their pace. Without pausing, the front of the march charged directly into the shields of the skirmish line, forming a V-shaped wedge with their reinforced banners and moving their umbrellas forward to block the view of the police as well as their pepper spray and other munitions. The first line of cops fell back and was reinforced by a second line. This line was also pushed back. Cops began striking protesters with their shields, and then with batons. They began shooting pepper balls and pepper spray at the front of the crowd.

As a third line of police formed, officers threw tear gas over the heads of the Blue cluster towards the Purple group, who were lagging a little behind. Most of the front of the Purple group withdrew down West Park Place and into the tree line. A bicyclist wearing heat-resistant gloves nonchalantly picked up a tear gas canister and lobbed it out of the crowd.

While the Purple and Orange groups drew back, the Blue cluster continued to rush ahead, now facing officers shooting tear gas, pepper balls, beanbag rounds, and rubber bullets directly at them. The police were apparently employing a graduated response, rapidly escalating their tactics as the Blue cluster pressed forward. However, the officers

ment gave impassioned speeches and led chants. Speakers emphasized the intentions of the march and reiterated the action framework agreements. Nearly everyone present had attended the spokescouncil meetings at some point.

Neither the massive numbers nor the formal organizations that some had hoped would participate in the march had turned out. Few Atlanta residents were in attendance, and many participants in the previous two years of local activity did not attend. Much of the crowd was comprised of anarchists and radicals from around the country. Despite the dismayingly low numbers, the beautiful puppetry and marching band gave the gathering a festive appearance.

At 10 am, the crowd began marching down the bike path in the direction of Intrenchment Creek Park. This was the same route taken by a slightly larger crowd on March 4, at the beginning of the fifth Week of Action, and by a smaller crowd on June 28, during the sixth Week of Action.

People in the Blue cluster carried reinforced banners and a large number of umbrellas. Many of them wore balaclavas, gloves, helmets, respirators, goggles, or masks.

About fifteen minutes into the march, scouts reported a considerable number of riot police positioned at the tunnel beneath Bouldercrest Road, in the entrance to Intrenchment Creek Park. Lines of cops were assembled behind concrete barriers erected inside of the tunnel. They had taken the bait.

Reaching Cherry Valley Road, about halfway down the bicycle path, the crowd unexpectedly turned left, taking a route intended to outmaneuver the police checkpoints on the busy roads surrounding the forest. Every 500 meters or so, communications teams in the different clusters arranged for the procession to stop for two or three minutes in order to keep the march together. At the top of Cherry Valley Road, the crowd turned left onto Bouldercrest and then right onto Constitution Road. Finally, police vehicles appeared behind the march, blasting their sirens and attempting to intimidate the participants.

The crowd was now approaching the construction site. In the months leading up to the mobilization, some locals with experience in the forest and previous clashes with police had correctly predicted

and organizers on Emory University Campus were hosting meetings about Cop City and the attacks on the Gaza strip that the Israeli military was preparing.

After threats and intimidation on Morehouse, Spelman, Carter, Georgia State, and Georgia Tech campuses, it seemed that the prospect of campus resistance to Cop City had receded. On October 26, around 150 students and faculty rallied on campus. The group listened to speeches and chanted slogans. After an hour, the crowd began marching toward the Quad, where Atlanta police had forcibly dispersed an encampment in April 2023. Outside the administration building, the group stopped and organizers read out a list of demands. Those demands included the renunciation of Cop City by the Emory administration, the cessation of membership in the Atlanta Police Foundation and Atlanta Committee for Progress, and a number of specific demands relevant to the student body and their ability to organize on campus.

After reading the demands aloud, the larger part of the assembled crowd marched into the administration building to deliver them to the campus authorities directly. As they filled the atrium and stairwell, administration staff locked the doors to the office and hid from view. Eventually, a representative of the university came out to meet the students. Having accomplished their goals, the crowd dispersed onto the Quad and established a temporary information point there, distributing t-shirts and literature about the movement as well as free food and conversation.

In the days following this action, Zionists doxxed campus organiz-



ers. Across the country, academics, journalists, and workers in many industries have faced reprisals for objecting to the bombing and ethnic cleansing targeting the Gaza strip. Emory University has been no different. The administration released a statement denouncing student action, likening it to “anti-Semitism.” Jewish activists have not been spared this slander or the accompanying harassment.

BLACK SELF-ORGANIZATION

In this context, a group of Black activists and organizers announced a Week of Action. Ostensibly, this was the first time an all-Black group had organized a series of events like this during the movement. Black activists felt that this was an important moment to mobilize Black residents and bring more into the struggle. Toward this end, they promoted a calendar of events.

Throughout this Week of Action, activists conducted workshops and presentations on a range of topics. Classes on herbalism and somatic care drew local participants. Students attended talks on Palestine solidarity and the colonial capitalism. Some of these events were ethnically mixed; many were intended to be majority-Black.

Canvassing took place every day of the week across the city. Outside of grocery stores and libraries, at shopping malls and low-income housing developments canvassers met up and passed out fliers, started conversations, and collected phone numbers. After months of canvassing for the referendum petition, some may have felt that it was urgent to continue reaching out to people, or that some communities had not been adequately canvassed. The results of this approach are seldom visible in the short term and require more durable and far-looking organizational structures to make use of the feedback and contacts arising from door-knocking and walking around with a clipboard. Some of the groups spearheading the Black Week of Action are organized into structures that are well-equipped to do this kind of outreach.

On November 9, a crowd assembled on Georgia State campus. After speeches denouncing the Israeli military and its US sponsors for the ongoing assault on civilians in the Gaza strip, the crowd marched to the location of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange

saplings with the intention of planting them; others would bear puppets or musical instruments. A marching band chose to participate in this cluster. Many people joined this group because they were hesitant to be in the front or back, believing that the middle would be safest.

The Orange cluster was to begin at the back of the march. If retreat was called for, it would lead the march away. Towards this end, the Orange cluster was responsible for maintaining a strong rear section and making sure that the crowd was not caught unawares from behind. If the crowd was attacked or forced to turn around, the Orange cluster would bear responsibility for leading the march out of harm’s way. Many medics were in this cluster, prepared to treat injuries.

In all of the clusters, there were people prepared to push sound systems. Communications teams would also move between the clusters.

Participants in the mobilization distributed loose-fitting white coveralls dotted with paint. The idea was to enable protesters to blend in with one another, protecting vulnerable people and risk-takers from police harassment while fostering a sense of togetherness between the different sections. The front and back of the crowd were to be protected with banners framed with PVC pipe.

For the benefit of future demonstrators, it’s important to know that PVC pipe can break under the blows of police batons if it is not reinforced with spray insulation. Green bamboo can be both lighter and more resilient. Reinforced banners should have handles on the back, so that protesters don’t have to hold the edge of the frame, as this can result in broken hands and fingers if the police decide to hit them. To our knowledge, nobody suffered injuries of this nature during the Block Cop City march.

FORWARD, ARM IN ARM

At 8 am on Monday, November 13, nearly 500 people gathered at Gresham Park. Helicopters and police drones were already circling overhead. Many of the assembled were journalists or support personnel who did not themselves intend to participate in the march. Cooks delivered hundreds of burritos. Organizers from different groups in the move-

the burning of machinery in the forest. The assembly cheered; many chanted “If you build it, we will burn it.” It was important to the organizers to emphasize that the nonviolence proposal for the Block Cop City action was intended to complement the other forms of action associated with the movement, including sabotage and combative protest tactics.

ANATOMY OF A MARCH

In the course of two days of deliberation, the spokescouncil agreed to form three “clusters” in the march. The clusters arranged themselves by color. Those colors were not intended to denote risk level, but to indicate relative position within the march; this was clearer than referring to “front, middle, and back,” since it was possible that the crowd would be compelled to change direction without being able to rearrange the locations of groups within the mass. The colors also represented different responsibilities.

The Blue cluster was to lead the march at the beginning. It would be responsible for setting the pace and direction. After much deliberation, the spokescouncil also agreed that the Blue cluster was responsible for maneuvering around or through the police and any other barriers to the site, concluding that the notion of nonviolence developed by the spokescouncil did not prevent the Blue cluster from attempting to push through lines of riot police using banners or inanimate objects. They also agreed that the nonviolence agreement did not prohibit the Blue cluster from cutting the perimeter fencing to the construction site, should the crowd get that far, provided that they did not throw objects or set things on fire. Item by item, the blue cluster reached consensus that they would not flee in response to non-lethal munitions including tear gas, flashbang grenades, pepper balls, rubber bullets, beanbag rounds, water cannons, long-range acoustic devices, mace, police dogs, and baton charges. They would only stop moving forward if it became physically impossible.

The Purple cluster would start in the middle of the march. This was the largest cluster. The Purple cluster was responsible for filling whatever space the Blue cluster opened up. Some of them would carry

(GILEE) program. The banners and signs of the procession connected the struggle against Cop City with the fight to end Israeli apartheid. The GILEE program, which is funded by GSU tuition, enables Georgia police to cross-train with military personnel in Tel Aviv, and to host them for counterinsurgency trainings in the United States as well. A delegation of Atlanta police was supposed to go to Tel Aviv on the week of October 10 to receive training from the apartheid regime, but the training was cancelled as a result of the unfolding crisis. This did not stop officers from conducting a “mock” raid on an abandoned hotel in downtown Atlanta, role-playing the invasion of a “ Hamas stronghold,” according to police radio communications.

The next day, November 10, dozens of people gathered on Metropolitan Parkway, just southwest of downtown, for a “Black Family March.” The group included Black residents and activists as well as some whose family members had been killed by police. Protesters chanted slogans and listened to speeches. Police officers on motorcycles gathered on the road with their lights on, hoping to intimidate the assembly. It appeared that the authorities were still strongly invested in preserving the balance of forces that they had worked so hard to establish over the summer, denying crowds the ability to take the streets.

During the Black week of action, activists marched to the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) office on Georgia State campus. If Cop City is completed, Israeli soldiers will use it to train police from the United States. Activists left shoes at the doorstep of GILEE, representing the thousands of Palestinian children that soldiers in Gaza have murdered.

BLOCK COP CITY

The Black Week of Action ended just before another mobilization: Block Cop City.

Over the preceding summer, some participants in the movement had concluded that in order to prevent the forces of repression from reducing the movement to the segments focused on the referendum or clandestine sabotage, it was necessary to try a new approach. In hopes of reassuring those who were not prepared for the level of confronta-

tion that the movement had engaged in on March 5 and building bridges with organizations that had remained aloof from the movement, they decided to employ a model of “nonviolent tactics,” a framework that had the movement had never previously utilized for mass actions.

A website was ready by early September. Across the following two months, organizers across the country conducted nearly 80 public speaking events promoting the mobilization and seeking feedback on the proposal. A total of thousands of people attended these talks.

The basic idea—coming out of the RICO case, the stagnation of the referendum process, and the sharp downturn in clandestine actions following the fifth Week of Action—was to bring together a large enough group to march onto the construction site to stop work. The larger goal was to carve out space for public demonstrations and challenge the state’s strategy of openly criminalizing out-of-state protesters.

Some opposed this proposal. The most vocal antagonists were in the City Government and police department. They claimed loudly and frequently that the event would not really be nonviolent, suggesting that a secretive group aimed to use the public mobilization to create chaos and violence.

Some activists agreed with them. We can divide these into two broad categories. On one side, there were people who did not believe in combative protests in the first place; some of them did not trust the anarchist and anti-authoritarian organizers behind Block Cop City. On the other side, there were people who did not believe in mass protests and did not trust the radical credentials of the Block Cop City organizers. The two forms of grassroots consensus with the government worked in tandem to obscure the details of the proposal. At some presentations, people passed out fliers attempting to dissuade others from attending the event, arguing that it was dangerous, ineffective, and disingenuous—the same arguments that the city government was making. They also challenged the right of groups to forms agreements about what kinds of actions they wanted to do, claiming that doing so would inhibit the freedom of individuals and was thus a form of “policing.”

Block Cop City organizers felt that with scores of people facing RICO charges, publicly coordinating a large event necessitated publicly arriving at a shared vision of the action. While critics claimed that

it was “authoritarian” to propose action agreements, the organizers countered that it was specifically their anti-authoritarian politics that motivated them to take this approach. Below, we’ll return to the question of whether the framework of “nonviolence” served to achieve their objectives.

BUILDING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Hundreds of people arrived in Atlanta on November 10, gathering at parks and a local Quaker community center. They were received with food, literature, and sign-up sheets. On the first night, more than 500 people attended a kick-off party at a warehouse in East Point. Some people set up tables to distribute schedules and pamphlets about the coming days. Others distributed zines and posters on the history of the movement, instructional guides on direct action, and reflections drawn from various struggles around the world. Hardcore punk bands and rappers shared the stage while attendees crashed into one another and danced late into the night.

Such events play a role in cultivating the most fundamental factor in all movements and struggles: the will to fight. As long as movement protagonists feel that fighting Cop City is worthwhile, they stand a chance of winning. The more they can engender despair in their antagonists, the better off they will be.

The kick-off events prepared activists for the meetings scheduled for the next two days. Aside from direct action trainings, medic workshops, and legal aid assemblies, more than 400 people intended to gather two days in a row for a spokescouncil meeting involving representatives of affinity groups from around the country. The goal was to reconcile the concerns, aspirations, and capacities of the different participants in order that they could cooperate harmoniously during the march. Thanks to the venue hosts, the cooks, the dishwashers, the welcome tables, the facilitators, the drivers, those who cleaned up after, and everyone who provided emotional support for all of the aforementioned, the meetings were fairly focused and efficient.

At the beginning of the spokescouncil, facilitators reminded attendees that the movement began with a series of public meetings and