

## **Anarchism in the United States, 1946–present**

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In the first decades after World War II, anarchism did not play a significant role in US politics. One notable organization emerging in the 1950s was the Libertarian League (dissolved in the late 1960s) around anarchosyndicalist Sam Dolgoff (aka Sam Weiner, 1902–90), but the immigrant

communities that anarchists like Dolgoff came from were rapidly integrating, leaving African Americans as the largest pariah group – a community in which anarchists had almost no presence. The pacifism espoused by some anarchists during World War II, in contrast to communists' support for the war after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, further marginalized the movement, though endearing them to a segment of bohemia on both coasts. In this countercultural milieu, the writings of Paul Goodman (1911–72) proved influential.

### Partial Revival of Anarchism in the 1960s and 1970s

Anarchism, although rarely in an ideologically pure or traditional form, regained popularity in the late 1960s in the context of the decade's social protest movements. Anarchist elements were present amongst the Yippies, or in Situationist groups like San Francisco's Point Blank or New York's Black Mask, and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) harbored a number of anarchists. It was one of these, decrying the seduction of SDS by authoritarian and vanguardist tendencies, who would come to have the strongest impact on the US anarchist movement and its development: Murray Bookchin (1921–2006).

The emergence of radical feminism, with its anti-hierarchical ethos, afforded another opportunity for the rediscovery of anarchism. Throughout the 1970s, Peggy Kornegger and others contributed to a growing body of anarcho-feminist theory. Meanwhile, although black radicals tended to take Third World Marxist movements as their model, some looked back to anarchism; the Black Panthers reprinted Nechaev's *Catechism of the Revolutionary*, and in 1979, a former Panther disenchanted with communism, Lorenzo Kombo Ervin (b. 1947), published his seminal pamphlet, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, introducing the concept of a "Black Anarchism" to radical debate. Another ex-Panther, Ashanti Alston Omowali (b. 1954), began publishing a zine titled *Anarchist Panther* in 1999.

The anarchist press was also recovering. In Tucson, Fred Woodworth founded the oldest still publishing anarchist journal in the US, *The Match!*, in 1969. In 1975, the underground journal *Fifth Estate*, founded 1965 in Detroit, turned into an influential anarchist journal. In 1980,

the individualistic *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* was founded in Columbia, Missouri. One of the most influential anarchist books of the 1980s was Fredy Perlman's (1934–85) *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* (1983), which is widely regarded as a precursor to the anarcho-primitivist movement that developed in the 1990s. Several books published between 1978 and 1995 by historian Paul Avrich (1931–2006) provided essential contributions to the study of anarchist history in the US.

Other forms of anarchist movement infrastructure were slower to emerge. In 1971, Bookchin founded the Institute of Social Ecology, an important center for the development of anarchist thought in the US for the next three decades. Activists involved in the Clamshell Alliance, wedding anti-authoritarian organization to the newly emerged anti-nuclear movement in the late 1970s, inspired the creation of Food Not Bombs. None of these institutions drew much participation from blue-collar workers or communities of color, however, and the cultural identification of anarchism with youth and whiteness would be reinforced by the emergence of the predominantly young and white punk subculture at the end of the 1970s.

### Second Revival: The 1980s and 1990s

Punk, while politically ambiguous, espoused an anti-authoritarian, "Do-It-Yourself" ethos that fostered a renewed interest in the anarchist tradition among the young, and by the 1980s punks were anarchism's most visible representatives. In Minneapolis, the Profane Existence collective, founded in 1989, functioned as a focus for the anarcho-punk movement. Meanwhile, links between anarchism and the radical segments of the environmentalist movement continued to deepen, as groups like Earth First! turned to anarchist direct action tactics such as eco-sabotage, while Bookchin's philosophy influenced the emerging Green movement.

Various developments characterized the anarchist movement in the 1990s. While anarcho-syndicalist Noam Chomsky (b. 1928) became US anarchism's most prominent author, Hakim Bey's 1991 essay collection, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, propounding a non-ideological, artistic, and spiritual understanding of anarchy, was also highly influential. In the same

year, the Love & Rage Federation was founded as a North American anarchist organization. It split in 1999 over disagreements about principles of organization. An anarcho-primitivist movement emerged around author John Zerzan (b. 1943), whose popular essay collection *Future Primitive* (1994) featured radical anti-technology and anti-civilization sentiments. Murray Bookchin caused much debate with his booklet *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (1995), a critique of what he condemned as individualistic “lifestylist” tendencies within the anarchist scene. The booklet proved divisive in anarchist circles and marked the end of Bookchin’s dominant influence on anarchist discourse. The reaction against Bookchin peaked in Bob Black’s polemic *Anarchy After Leftism* (1997), a text that also marked the beginning of the post-anarchy movement, most prominently advocated by *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, editor Jason McQuinn (b. 1952). In 2002, Bookchin announced his “break” with anarchism.

The opening of a US branch of British-founded AK Press in 1994 and the foundation of the Institute of Anarchist Studies as a forum for theoretical debate and research in 1996 were both major contributions to the country’s anarchist infrastructure. Throughout the decade, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Earth Liberation Front (ELF), both with strong anarchist leanings and support, conducted sabotage actions against alleged perpetrators of animal exploitation and environmental destruction.

Anarchists were strongly involved in the 1999 anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle, receiving media attention unknown in decades. A rapid growth of the anarchist movement followed, and numerous anarchist collectives, journals, and projects emerged. While a lot of the media attention after Seattle focused on the militant anarcho-primitivist movement centered in Eugene, Oregon, contemporary US anarchism is remarkably diverse and includes projects like the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers’ Collective, organizations like the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC), networks like Anarchist People of Color, and a revitalized Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Moreover, anarchism’s influence now extends well beyond explicitly anarchist groups, as anti-authoritarian organizing methods have become widely adopted by radicals of all stripes.

SEE ALSO: Anarchism; Anarchism and Sabotage; Anarchism in the United States to 1945; Anarchosyndicalism; Earth First!; Food Not Bombs, United States; Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); Nechaev, Sergei (1847–1882); Punk Movement; Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)

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