

# A text dump of reactions to Ted K's bombings

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# Unjustified

## Wayne Price

Source

Like most people, I am not a pacifist. The existence of widespread police brutality and the growth of the fascist “militias” show that popular movements will have to defend themselves. The state will never allow a non-violent, democratic revolution.

However, the use of violence exacts a price. It makes revolutionaries less sensitive, less morally keen, less like people of the new world. Violence is only justifiable in a revolutionary situation or in defense of a popular struggle (for example, the Black Panther Party at its height). When revolutionaries, isolated from most people, set out to strike at even the most vicious oppressors, the results are invariably bad. Bystanders get injured, the revolutionaries become more isolated from the people, they get killed or jailed, and the state gets a popular excuse for greater repression.

As a general rule, I would give political and legal support to such revolutionaries when arrested by the state, despite my disagreements. In the case of the Unabomber, he is a murderer dragging noble ideas through the mud.

### **His Authoritarianism**

Anarchism has a popular image of bomb-throwing, based on a real trend in anarchist history. But there are other historical trends in anarchism, including organizing mass labor struggles (anarcho-syndicalist, the IWW), mass military forces (Makhno, Durruti), and even a pacifist trend (Tolstoy, Goodman). There is nothing inevitably “terrorist” about anarchism.

In our time most, “terrorism” has been carried out by Marxist-Leninists, nationalists, and other statists, not anarchists. (Of course, such violence has always been small potatoes compared to the massive terror used by the military and police forces of the states.) For example, the Weatherpeople of the ‘60s were admirers of Stalin and Charles Manson.

This sort of small group “terrorism” is inevitably authoritarian. The Unabomber, who admits to having no strategy for popular struggle, seeks to overthrow industrial society virtually single-handedly. He will force people to live in non-industrial, totally decentralized society? What if they do not want to live in such a society? And they do not; the vast majority support the existing system, more or less. Rather than trying to persuade them, he intends to blow up their society.

Anarchists are against the vanguardism of the Leninists but they are often unclear about just what vanguardism is. Many think that they avoid vanguardism by being against the self-organization of anarchists. In my opinion, vanguardism is not the belief that a small group may be right and the majority wrong. Few believe in revolutionary anarchism while the vast majority supports statist capitalism; we have every right to organize ourselves to try to persuade the majority of our viewpoint, always acknowledging that we have much to learn from others.

No, vanguardism is the belief that the correct minority has the right to impose its views on the majority. When the minority seeks to rule over the people, to act for them, to be political in their place, then it is vanguardist and authoritarian, no matter how “anti-authoritarian” is its ideology — as is the case of the Unabomber.

### **The Unabomber and Anarchism**

To return to the original question: are the Unabomber’s murders connected to the politics of anarchism? First, I answer “No.” His views have nothing in common with my views on anarchism. And even the most misguided anarchist bomb-throwers and assassins of the past would not have killed professors and students.

But I also say “Maybe.” His views are similar to those of many anarchists: the lack of interest in developing a strategy for popular revolution; the belief that the enemy is industrial technology; not building an organization; not participating in popular struggles, but acting as an elite above the people; the worship of violence, abstracted from popular struggle; a willingness to impose their views on the people, even while denouncing as vanguardist those who try to persuade people. Perhaps I could add: an ambiguity about democracy, seeing anarchism as for freedom versus democracy, rather than as the most extreme form of democracy. All these concepts are reflected in the Unabomber’s letters and actions and are also held by various trends within the anti-authoritarian movements. No doubt the Unabomber will be used as an excuse for denouncing anarchism. The movement would be wise to prepare by having open discussion about him and his methods.

## **Theo Slade**

### **Source**

As a professor at Berkeley during the height of the Vietnam war protests, Kaczynski was very aware of militant campaigns against the draft that even involved bombs going off at universities. He romanticized the anti-hero in Joseph Conrad’s novel *The Secret Agent*. So, I think he desired to outcompete leftist rebellion with a more all-encompassing ultra-conservative rebellion of needing to return to a medieval era traditional relationship with technology.

I'm very critical of how he thought he could use violence to at first satisfy an internal pain to enact his suffering on others, and then later how he imagined himself a revolutionary.

I think Ted's difficulty relating to people blinded him to the way a coalition could be built to remediate aspects to the world he grew up in which had harmed him. I think his critique of his wayward followers should also be applied back on him, given his lack of optimism about the possibility of achieving a more ideal society without mass killing and starvation:<sup>1</sup>

Kaczynski condemns ITS and accuses the group of misappropriating his ideas. He hurls the charge of leftism right back at them, along with a diagnosis of learned helplessness: 'The most important error that ITS commits is that they express, and therefore promote, an attitude of hopelessness about the possibility of eliminating the technological system'. This attitude of hopelessness gives ITS a more vengeful and nihilistic character than Kaczynski himself.

Kaczynski didn't like mass movements; he had a disgust for the university elite's ideological disconnect from the world. Had the desire to share with the world some useful philosophical theory and some not so useful action i.e. killing various people identified with technology. Because his childhood was about being forced to conform to an ideal of academic success at the expense of mental health and community, he thought he was only one of few people who had woken up to the downside of this conformity, such that any revolution would need to be carried out by a small vanguard playing off many parties against each other.

But, I think that idea reveals a naivety about human potential and a naive optimism about an elite underclass who will always be willing enough to risk their lives to tear down industrial society, to even stop it re-emerging if it ever could be destroyed.

To an extent, social movement membership is tied to events which are hard to predict, like the children who grew up in the formerly fascist countries after WW2 formed the most active left wing militant movements, which can be understood to be in part an anger at their parents generation for buying into fascism. But that's not necessarily a bad thing, it's just about learning those lessons, to counsel people to take only the actions which are ethical and the consequences they are comfortable living with, to make the movement as sustainable as possible.

And obviously sometimes getting caught isn't a total loss to the movement, the publicity received for a worthwhile act of civil disobedience can be a net gain, but it does have to be a struggle people can sympathize with. So, I just don't see people being inspired by primitivist terror attacks ever catching on as this even minor movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Sean Fleming. The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism [Essay]. Taylor & Francis. May 7, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

# lumpy

Source

does [Ted K] pass any reasonable standard of actually being an anarchist? fuck no. not even close.

What does this mean, and how does he fail to fulfill it?

well there's probably a dozen ways but arguably the biggest one?

randomly attempting to maim or murder people (or succeeding at it) because of arbitrary value judgements isn't anarchist, by my values as an anarchist OR a reasonable estimation of the values of a coherent anarchist position that doesn't arrogate to itself the right to deal out death just because reasons... to somebody who isn't immediately fuking with you in a literal way.

anyone who crosses this line obviously invites a lot of scrutiny, only moreso if they claim to be needing to use lethal force from an anti-authoritarian position.

I will cheerfully die on that theoretically hill but more importantly, propaganda of the deed up to the threshold of murder (not in combat of any kind) is a very old and contested theoretical leap, many smarter people than myself have been debating it for centuries.

the anarchist tradition has a rich history of this but i can simplify all that by just pointing out that whoever makes this wild, large claim that they definitely need to use lethal violence, they would need to prove it's worthwhile, i don't have to disprove their conjecture.

better still, these are almost always the same psyche profiles that will say they never have to justify anything to anyone, which starts to sound a lot like the "divine right of kings" ... so yeah. that's the opposite of anarchy.

the sound of the circle, squaring itself in the mind of a raving lunatic. what about you anon, you think he was an anarchist?

# Justified

## John Zerzan

Source

... I think the targets were relatively more appropriate as he went along, as they became more lethal, on that level anyway, I think you could argue that that's the case.

And where is the effectiveness? I mean what success are you having or not having? I mean that can tell you something about what things to do or what things to avoid."

**Ishkah:** And what would be the measurements of success for you do you think?

**Zerzan:** Well, I would say advancing the dialogue. I think that if your thing is mainly critique, it's a question of the conversation in society, is there some resonance? Is there some interest? Is there some development going on there? In other words, I'm not afraid of certain tactics that people commonly shrink from. and they say well, 'you're just turning everybody off', but sometimes I think you have to go through that stage if you will, I mean sometimes that comes with the territory, in other words, people will be defensive and horrified or whatever at first and then they won't be. You know? Then it becomes part of the dialogue, you know then things change, they don't remain the same. In other words, there can be shock at the beginning with some tactics, but that wears off, I think, I would assert that's likely to be the case. ...

The concept of justice should not be overlooked in considering the Unabomber phenomenon. In fact, except for his targets, when have the many little Eichmanns who are preparing the Brave New World ever been called to account? ... Is it unethical to try to stop those whose contributions are bringing an unprecedented assault on life? ...

They ain't innocent. Which isn't to say that I'm totally at ease with blowing them into pieces. Part of me is. And part of me isn't. ...

I ended the speech with the suggestion that there might be a parallel between Kaczynski and John Brown. Brown made an anti-slavery attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia in 1859. Like Kaczynski, Brown was considered deranged, but he was tried and hung. Not long afterward he became a kind of American saint of the abolitionist movement. I offered the hope, if not the prediction, that T.K. might at some point also be considered in a more positive light for his resistance to industrial civilization. ...

# Wolfi Landstreicher

## Source

While there has been little response at all to FC's essay, the reaction to their violence has come from nearly all sides. Even Tad Kepley's mostly sympathetic article in *Anarchy. A Journal of Desire Armed* #42 was tainted with moralisms regarding violence, in spite of Tad's claim to the contrary Tad says:

The anti-authoritarian who makes use of violence ... must be aware of the contradictions in destroying to create, in using violence in the hopes of creating a world without violence.

There are no contradictions in destroying to create — Every act of creation involves destruction When one makes a meal, one directly or indirectly kills or mutilates other living things making a shelter will involve destruction of one form of thing to make another But it is Tad's second phrase that is more relevant to this question. There certainly would be contradictions in using violence *if* what one wanted was a world without violence, but FC never claims to want a world without violence FC want a world without a huge global system that destroys the autonomy of individuals and small groups I also do not want a world without violence I want a world in which individuals can create their own lives and interactions in accordance with their desires — and, in such a world, conflict and therefore, violence is inevitable It is the state's monopoly on violence that I oppose, and when individuals use violence against the state (or any other aspect of the system of social control) and its tools, they are breaking that monopoly.

Tad Kepley and the critics of violence are wrong; Taking a life is *not* the ultimate act of domination. Forcing someone — or hundreds, thousands, millions, billions — into dependency on a social system that bleeds their lives away to reproduce itself and in exchange for survival (in the worst cases, not even that) and possibly also a few trinkets and glass beads — *that* is the ultimate act of domination. The killer lays no claim to the life of the victim until they kill them, and even then they lay no claim to the *life* but only to the ending of that life. Domination consists of forcing people to give away their life energy while they are living. Certainly, dominators (or dominating institutions) sometimes kill to enforce their power, but as the cliché says "the living envy the dead".

FC's targets are precisely people who choose, by their research or other work activities, to uphold and increase domination The "absolute irrevocable removal" of such a person takes nothing away from me that I would want to keep Because I am selfish. I will never willingly sacrifice myself, but I will gladly sacrifice anything or anyone that interferes with my ability to create my own life and interactions as I choose 'Human community' is an abstraction. Real interactions and associations are those experienced by individuals — either as self-determined creations or as impositions — not the mystical connections which spring from such abstractions as 'humanity' or 'species being'.

My interactions with cops, high-tech researchers in social control, stale bureaucrats, capitalists, religious leaders or any other authority figure, no matter how indirect the interaction is one in which I am imposed upon, one aimed at making my life alien from me. Such an interaction can only impoverish me. The death of any such a figure of authority therefore does not impoverish me and may well enrich me. Indeed, it can add a little brightness to my life, knowing that I have successfully managed to attack, in however small a way, the structures of authority – even if that involves killing someone who has willingly chosen to be a bully-boy for authority. Certainly, it makes more sense tactically to attack targets of more significance than any individual can ever be in maintaining authority — but such attacks on property also get condemned by those in power as “mindless terrorism”. And they are equally condemned by those who prefer to do nothing but continually beg the state to, please, abolish itself and, in the meantime, be nicer to poor, sweet, harmless little anarchists.

I am not meaning to be overly harsh to Tad. His article at least shows some sympathy for FC’s hatred of the technological system and avoids the reactionary hysteria found in *Slingshot* and numerous other anarchist periodicals. But in his assessment of violence, Tad seems to be kissing a bit too much pacifist ass. Destruction of a global social system will involve violence, and that violence would not be ironic or contradictory with its goal, it would be the unconstrained expression of the passion that those who are taking their lives back feel against the system that keeps them alienated.

## John Jacobi

### Source

In regards to the man’s actions, I find myself in a tough spot. I absolutely do not condone indiscriminate violence like the kind practised by radical Islamists, and I tend to agree with Lenin that even highly targeted acts of individual violence are a terrible tactic for a revolutionary movement. A primary role of revolutionaries is to spread social values, and terroristic acts of violence are usually a sign of weakness on this front. Furthermore, while those supporting growth and progress are indeed ‘criminals of the worst kind’, I have a hunch that Kaczynski overestimated how responsible some individuals are for our current predicament.

Nevertheless, it’s hard to overstate how successful Kaczynski was, and the man has a tendency to be right about things, mostly because he is (almost overly) meticulous about every detail. No doubt he applied the same attention to detail to his 17-year campaign. So as incompatible as it is with my views generally, it’s hard to say that Kaczynski could have done something else and achieved his goals as successfully. Still, even he is quick to tell those writing him letters that he does not think another Unabomber would be helpful for a revolutionary effort. The primary work to be done now, he says, is building cores of committed individuals who can sustain a revolution-

ary movement. And as I said already, I agree. In any case, I ultimately still defend my initial statement about Kaczynski's violence: the ideas stand and fall on their own, and right now they're still standing.

## qpooqpoo

Source

For someone so smart and with valid points you can really see when crazy sets in and you start bombing people, like thats going to change anything.

...

You're completely wrong about this. History will judge his actions to have been instrumental in inspiring a serious revolutionary movement against the technological system. For any serious revolutionary movement, you WANT to alienate the kind of people who will be offended by violence. Those people make moderate reformer types—not the kind of rabid, fanatical, willing to die for the cause extremists you need for the core of a revolutionary movement. There are other important reasons you're wrong: The people he killed were criminal promoters of the technological system and it's a shame there might not be a hell for them to go to. If you find this statement bizarre, offensive, or hard to relate to, great! You and your ideas will stay away from people who are inspired by that statement and people like you won't threaten to co-opt the revolutionary movement into a useless reform movement.

I suggest you need a more thorough study on the dynamics of successful revolutions. Read about the Russian, Chinese, American, and Cuban revolutions, especially the importance on placing a clear distinction between the uncompromising rabidly radical minority revolutionary movement and the compromising, wishy-washy, reform-minded movements.

## Anonymous

Source

He said very clearly why he had to kill people. Because nobody with enough reach to reach a mass audience would have published his manifesto.

It's the fault of society suppressing vital information that justifies these things. I'm glad he did it, otherwise I would have never been able to hear his message. Which was far more important than the couple of people he killed, which are just a drop in an ocean of meaningless NPCs.

A society that suppresses a genius like Ted, while putting literal low-IQ talking heads front and centre and publishing outrageously stupid drivel to mass audiences instead, is a society filled with people who barely deserve to live in the first place.

Maybe in a society where obvious geniuses like Ted are being taken into consideration, the death of people would move me to care a little bit, but in that society it would have never happened anyway. In that society a lot of things wouldn't have to happen.

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## The Ted K Archive

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**[www.thetedkarchive.com](http://www.thetedkarchive.com)**