# Freedom Club Revival and a Response

How the Unabomber Became Relevant Again

Jake Hanrahan and Redux

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A graphic made by the pine tree community.

## Freedom Club Revival

A TV drama has rekindled interest in anti-technology terrorist Ted Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber. Ironically enough, his followers now congregate online



The TV series Manhunt: Unabomber premiered on the Discovery Channel in the US before being picked up by Netflix for global distribution TINA ROWDEN/DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS

In 1978 Ted Kaczynski began building letter bombs designed to kill. They were made out of smokeless powder, match heads, nails, potassium nitrate, razor blades, and various other caustic substances. Kaczynski, a former academic and an alumnus of Harvard University, killed three people with these bombs and injured 23 others. His targets were airliners, university professors, and academics. Some of the bombs missed their targets and blew shrapnel into the bodies of postal workers and receptionists. The attacks were unscrupulous and vicious. Kaczynski, dubbed the Unabomber by the FBI and the media, evaded capture for almost 18 years. He'd been hiding out in a self-contained wood cabin in the forests of Montana, writing a manifesto under the pseudonym "Freedom Club" (or FC) on a portable typewriter. After releasing his 35,000 word manifesto titled "Industrial Society and its Future" to the media in 1995, it became apparent that Kaczynski was fighting, in his mind at least, against the rise of technology and the perceived sickness it had infected the world with. The Unabomber was a militant neo-luddite.

Twenty-two years after Kaczynski's bombing campaign and imprisonment, he now has a new following. Ironically enough, they all congregate on the internet.

Often characterised by putting pine tree emojis in their names on social media, the new Kaczynski inspired community of self-defined primitivists and neo-luddites is flourishing. They spend hours sharing memes that call for the destruction of modern civilisation, and discuss fringe politics in Twitter group chats or on messaging app Discord. This year they even sent Kaczynski a birthday card. On the face of it, Kaczynski's new followers are angry, bored, and sick of the modern world.

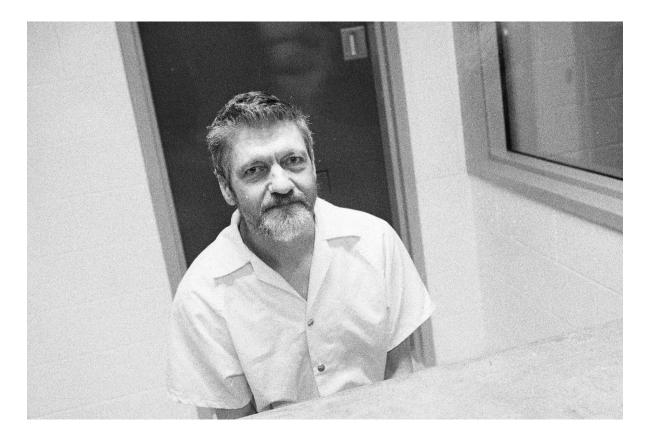
It's all been growing rapidly since a TV drama series called *Manhunt: Unabomber* aired in August 2017. The series tells a fictionalised version of the Unabomber investigation. In the process of catching the elusive felon, the main character, Agent Fitz, pores over Kaczynski's manifesto until he develops an affinity with it. He comes to the conclusion that while the brutal bombing campaign was wrong, Kaczynski's theories were actually right. The detective ends up moving into a log cabin in the woods. Kaczynski ends up moving into prison with eight life sentences.

Large parts of the series are factually inaccurate – for example the portrayal of Kaczynski as some kind of CIA experiment gone wrong, and the insinuation that he was mentally ill — but, overall, *Manhunt: Unabomber* seems to have provided an easily consumable entryway to Kaczynski's politics for the pine tree community.

Like Agent Fitz in *Manhunt*, the new Kaczynski followers are drawn to his theories. In this sense, there is somewhat of a Freedom Club revival happening — hundreds of young men seeking to reconnect with nature, as an act of rebellion against the state of Western civilisation, all couched in Ted Kaczynski's anti-tech ideas.

Terrorist Ted Kaczynski, aka the Unabomber, sits for an interview in a visiting room at the Federal ADX Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado in August 1999

For a year now I've been chatting with various members of the pine tree community. They're a mixed bag: some seem to actually want the total destruction of modern civilisation, and long for some kind of apocalyptic future; some are sick of the mainstream's political correctness; some are, of course, just shit-posting. But all of them are disgusted with modernity. In an age of hyper-consumerism and ecological destruction, the pine trees don't see a place for themselves anywhere within the current system. They long for something radical. "Modernity crushes your soul," says Regi, who's been part of the pine tree community from the beginning. "We see our jobs as soul crushing.



Modern life is safe and boring and lacking cohesion. Many strive for a more simple and practical existence."

Regi, 18, became aware of Kaczynski's crimes and manifesto in December 2017 after seeing *Manhunt: Unabomber* memes posted online. He got hold of a copy of the manifesto and was immediately converted. "I read the manifesto and it blew my mind," he said. "I thought it was a work of genius."

In the six months I've been speaking to Regi, he's gone from meme-posting daily about how much he wants the modern world to collapse, to actually going out and spending time immersed in nature, hiking through the forests where he lives in Canada. He's seen online less and less.

But Kaczynski's terrorism hasn't influenced Regi. He doesn't agree with his brutal murders and doesn't believe that they were justified, as some pine trees do. "Killing innocents isn't a good thing and I find his justification for it shitty," said Regi. "If he wanted to kill someone, why not assassinate like, Steve Jobs, or one of those corporate assholes?"

Like Regi, most of the new young Kaczynskites don't actually want to set the world on fire. They're probably not about to start building bombs in their kitchens or ditching their smartphones to live in the woods. But they do feel something is wrong. Between the memes you see these young men putting on their timelines – often anything that mocks "society" or a semi-ironic wish for a war they can die in — you'll see a genuine fury at the seemingly endless cycle of nature being destroyed in pursuit of profit. That's not to say they side with environmentalists though — in fact, they laugh in the face of organisations like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund. Their argument is that these people all work within "the system", so how can they really change anything? The pine trees feel it's all a little too late.

To quote the Dark Mountain Project, a group of former ecologists who went rogue and came around to a similar way of thinking as Kaczynski, "We were disillusioned with the state of environmentalism. It seemed that sustainability had come to mean sustaining the Western way of living at all costs." Through their crass shit-posting and memes about militant groups like the Animal Liberation Front, the pine trees are often trying to say the same thing, albeit through the haze of a 21st century internet subculture.

But war and conflict are a constant presence on pine trees' timelines. They spread their message through tweeting things like "SHUT THE FUCK UP URBANITE!" at tech-bros, "normies", or basically anyone who doesn't agree with them. Instead of engaging others in public debate, they'd rather trash them. They don't want allies. And the aesthetics of war plays a big part too. Photos of the Provisional IRA, the EZLN, and even Russian-backed separatists in east Ukraine are often posted alongside joking messages such as "I wish that were me". One user, Ecoretard, recently tweeted: "Can I get [an] urban conflict with a faction I support so I can die for something I believe in?"

The glorification of war is perhaps another way of expressing their frustration at feeling trapped. As Regi says, "Modern life is safe and boring". War, or at least the glorification of it, is not.

In September 1995, The Washington Post published Kaczynski's unedited, 35,000 word manifesto at the request of the US attorney general and the FBI in the hopes of ending his 17-year bombing campaign EVAN AGOSTINI/LIAISON

Now, this community of Kaczynski adherents, misfits, and so-called political extremists, is less a cohesive movement than a loosely connected online subculture. For a while though, there was a pine tree leader of sorts. He was less concerned with the shit-posting and more seriously occupied with the Kaczynski worldview. His name is Rin. He wanted to build an "organisation" of "dedicated people". He indexed Kaczynski's prison letters, memorised paragraph numbers of the manifesto, and corralled the first new wave of Kaczynskites into a community. Rin, 24, also ran the most extensive online Kaczynski archive that has probably ever existed. That is until he pulled it all down in disgust last month.

"I decided to dedicate myself to the Ted Kaczynski project because everyone was talking about the Unabomber, but nobody was talking about Ted Kaczynski's ideas," Rin says.



Rin has been involved in post-leftist and green-anarchist politics since he was 18. He lives in "a Spanish speaking country", considers himself a neo-luddite, and tries to follow the teachings of Kaczynski wherever possible. I've spent a lot of time in the last six months debating Rin and discussing his radical ideology with him. He's intelligent and well-read. Despite his preoccupation with Kaczynski, I never got the impression that Rin is actually dangerous, although he can most definitely be considered a Kaczynski sympathiser. He used to run three different Twitter accounts, two of which were the Ted Kaczynski Archive and Ted Was Right. Kaczynski's victims are never a focus of his discussion and simply shrugged off as a consequence of war.

When Rin noticed the emergence of a small online community of young men interested in all things Unabomber at the start of 2018, he began to round them up. He formed a group chat on Twitter and a radical book club where he would suggest new political literature for the pine trees. He and the rest of them embraced edgy irony and warlike aesthetics as a means to draw the youth in further. It was all very deliberate.

"Manhunt: Unabomber was the perfect breeding ground to introduce the ideology to suitable people," Rin says. "The people attracted to the ideas began interacting with each other and formed themselves [into] a social base. They were able to form a community and slowly develop a culture. This is what eventually became Prim Twitter [Primitivist Twitter being another name for the pine tree community]." Whilst the pine tree members were from a variety of different political milieus, they were all united by Rin under a popular front that "embraced collapse" and "loved nature".

But Rin's place at the head of the community didn't last. His own creation began to morph into something unforgivably ugly, when some members began drifting from edgy luddite memes and the embrace of wild nature, to outright far-right ideologies. "Some in the community began flirting with fascism," Rin says. "And not the left-wing type where everything they dislike is labelled 'fascism' — but actual genuine fascism. That was the final drop in the bucket for me. Totalitarian ideologies like fascism and communism are something I'm extremely hostile against."

Rin is quick to emphasise that despite many on the left considering Kaczynski a fascist (mostly due to the fact he attacked them constantly in his manifesto), he actually describes fascism as "kook ideology" ("page 150 of his book Technological Slavery!") and says Nazi ideology is "evil" in one of his letters. Rin also points out that Kaczynski has never tried to align himself with fascists, he was in favour of radical black liberation groups, and always saw green anarchist types as his natural comrades. This doesn't change the fact that many fascist groups today use Kaczynski as an icon. Even Atomwaffen Division, the esoteric neo-Nazi militant group in the US, have made graphics using his face.

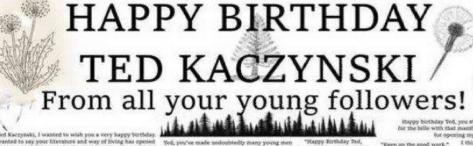
A birthday card the Pine Tree Community sent to Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber.

Some of the pine tree community are now splintering off into different groups, deviating from Kaczynski's work to that of Pentti Linkola, who is a self-described eco-fascist. This coincides with new ecologically-focused Neo-Nazi groups that are now cropping up. Green fringe politics is all very much in vogue on the internet, as is the resurgence of neo-fascism. The two are starting to merge.

Rin scrapped his online Kaczynski archive in June due to the creep of fascism amongst the pine trees. But he still believes that a new generation of neo-luddism is coming.

"There is very much an interest in Ted Kaczynski growing deep down," he says. "It's in its infancy, but it seems Ted being in prison has finally paid off. He's gotten some extremely dedicated neo-luddites ready to contribute to the collapse of technological society."

Rin may sound militant, but the likelihood of a major neo-luddite terror attack remains pretty low. The Freedom Club revival is still mostly spreading via memes online, not via letter bombs. The idea that our interaction with technology has reached a crisis point, is spreading further than the pine tree fringe ideology though. This year the theme has been featured often in the press. Even Silicon Valley, which made tech junkies out of us all, is having a twinge of guilt. Some reformed tech-bros have created "humane tech" organisations such as the Time Well Spent movement, founded by former Google employee Tristan Harris.



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The pine tree community is a radical response to what writer Grafton Tanner once called "the mall": a digital hellscape where people are nostalgic for something that never existed, constantly "doped on consumer goods, energy drinks, and Apple products."

In Rin's opinion, it's all falling down already. "Our technological civilisation is complex and unsustainable. Its breakdown is inevitable," he says. "It will be slow and boring, but technological civilisation has already signed its death warrant."

A Response by Redux

## Who Are The Pines?

By now you've all seen Jake Hanrahan's article on Pine Tree Twitter, some were less than impressed, most were outright offended. But that begs the question, how did he get us so wrong? Whether it be a lack of research, or a malicious mischaracterization, I think it's time we establish ourselves in writing. To be clear, I don't claim to be a speaker for all Pines, this response is a reflection of my own thoughts on the topic. To that end I've sought input form a couple guys you all know and respect, Mike Ma and Storm King, both veterans of this side of Twitter. On the topic of the article itself, Mike had this to say:

"Whether Jake Hanrahan truly believes that the Pine Tree movement gained its footing on the back of a documentary series is irrelevant, because regardless, the movement still grows. Every day, the modern world beats down on many a man for the last time. If he's truly meant to make it, he seeks the same route as we have. There's nothing unreasonable about what we aspire to. A life of freedom reached through education and hard work in some remote forested area? An escape from the pollution and carnival attractions? A family raised away from the unnecessary horrors of today? A rewarding existence? These are things that you cannot actually argue against. For one, because they are time-tested ways to live. Two, because it's none of your fucking business what we do, so long as we act within the confines of the legal system. When shit finally hits the fan, we'll see who is better equipped for the world thereafter."

I interviewed Storm King on some of the broader topics surrounding Pine Tree Twitter:

Q: Is Pine Tree Twitter the product of a Discovery Channel documentary on Netflix? A: "No this shit came directly from Mena posting Ted years ago fuck Netflix Jake is an idiot"

Q: What is Pine Tree Twitter to you?

A: "Pine tree twitter is a community of people tired of living in industrial shit world who want to return to a more holistic way of life free from the cage and closer to nature by whatever means."

Q: Is Pine Tree Twitter indicative of a larger movement, or just shitposters online?

A: "PTT (Pine Tree Twitter) is just one aspect of the emerging force that is the rise of neo technoskepticism."

Q: Although many pines have disagreements, do we have a core set of values that define us?

A: "I would say our core set of values is against globohomo technoslavery and for the earth and family"

Q: How would you respond to people who would call an eco centric movement on an online platform hypocritical?

A: "I'd say they are retards who haven't read the literature and don't understand that part of this project has to happen in the online political space."

Powerful words from powerful men. It's clear that Pine Tree Twitter means much more to us than a TV show and a folder full of "SHUT THE FUCK UP URBANITE" memes. So how do we articulate this to those outside our circles? The first step must be to clearly define ourselves, and where we're headed.

#### Who are we?

A question that can sometimes be difficult for even us to answer, who exactly are the Pines, and what do they believe? While there are many disagreements on the finer details of ecology and technocapital society within our ranks, we all share a core set of principles that have guided us here in one way or another. The first and most important being that we all see an issue with the way the world is today. Massive corporations, "capital," own governments and do what they please at the expense of the worker and the Planet. Deforestation, massive pollution, Global climate change, ultra-processed foods, endocrine disrupting chemicals present in almost everything you eat or drink, it can be maddening. Every device you own tracks your habits in one way or another, with either capital or the government listening in. Artificial wombs, cloning, genetic editing, and open transhumanism stand poised to change what it means to be human, in the worst way possible. Every device or invention dreamed up and produced serves in part or in whole to further the atomization of humanity. Were slowly and willingly being hollowed out into a shell of a person, regurgitating the same lines were told to, consuming the same media as everyone else, becoming a carbon copy of every other person. These are things we all recognize as huge issues. We long to return to a more organic way of life, one in the intimate bond between man and nature is restored. A simple life, a good life, a life worth living. In the end I feel that what we all truly wish is to be left alone. The rigors of Industrial society push themselves on us constantly. We are bombarded with woke capitals attempts to mold us into "consumer/producer unit #12384." We chose to stand against this manipulation, even if its solely at a personal level. We chose to put the planet, our home, in front of empty consumerism. We believe that the way to truly live a good life is to disconnect and live like people again. We refuse to be ground into the relentless global favela that capital so desperately wants us all to reside in, stripped of our identities, robbed of our connection to the Earth. If we're keeping with the current political trends, we can be summed up in the tagline "Make People Human Again."

Why are we Here?

This is a question with many answers, so I'll share my personal reasons as to why I'm here tweeting into the void, and of course speculate as to why all of my peers are as well. First and foremost, I've always had an intimate connection with nature. From that first backpack my father took me on at 6 years old, I've been hooked. Since then I've developed my personal beliefs, deepend my love and connection to this beautiful planet, and of course read the manifesto. I suspect most of us have had a similar development curve. But why Twitter? Its no secret that social media is a powerful networking tool, It will probably be cited in the history books as facilitating perhaps the most miraculous presidential election in history, our experience is no different. To be in communication with so many intelligent individuals allows us to grow and develop our ideas into something feasible. Many of us are taking real world measures to break out, and live a truly holistic life. But perhaps most vitally of all, we come for the friends. Most of us don't have people in our lives who we can relate this kind of thinking to. And so we come on Twitter to bant, shoot the shit, and generally have a good time. Having a core group of like minded individuals to talk to helps ease the burden the world has placed on our shoulders. We see that we're far from alone, and that our suffering is shared. While there's important work to be done, we will absolutely have a good time doing it.

#### Where are we Headed?

It bears repeating that the true focus of our endeavors here hinge on selfdetermination, being left alone. With that goal in mind, the only option left to us is to disconnect and bug out. Some Pines dream of a communal compound, tucked away from the war being waged against humanity in the hell we call cities. Others look to a more personal goal of securing a plot of land for themselves and their families, to live a simple life in balance with the world around them. Environmentalism as it exists in a liberal frame is impotent to its core. It's a fad taken up by bourgeois busy bodies with too much time on their hands. They never want to see real change, they'd rather sport their newest 40 dollar tote bag reading "think green!" brought to them by some Milesian child working a 12 hour shift in a sweatshop. The left has coopted and destroyed any chance of meaningful conservation, and the right is more than happy to throw a pack of straws into the nearest body of water to "own" them. Most pines agree that it would take a complete collapse of modern society, brought about either internally or via ecological disaster, to hit the hard reset and save what remains of humanity. Given that a collapse of this magnitude is unlikely to happen in our lives, we must look to "collapse now and avoid the rush." Begin growing some of your own food, fix up your own homes, go out into nature and sharpen your skills, do anything you can to increase your own self-sufficiency. When the opportunity to escape presents itself, grab onto it with the confidence that you've prepared yourself to live a natural lifestyle. This is the best course of action left to us.

### Jake's Summary

Fair few fascists talking about this article. Just FYI I fucking hate you and I hate your ideology.

Just got the first batch of hate mail from a pine tree kid and it's glorious. Keep sending your tears lad. A lot of the less childish ones actually seemed to have liked it though.

A lot of pine tree lads crying in the DM saying the Netflix series was nothing to do with the rise of the pine tree internet subculture. It absolutely was. I watched it happen in real time. Edgy internet boys suddenly going full Kaczynski. Rin confirmed too. Cheers. The Ted K Archive

Jake Hanrahan and Redux Freedom Club Revival and a Response How the Unabomber Became Relevant Again Aug 1, 2018 & Aug 4, 2018

The wired article & comments on the original draft.

#### www.thetedkarchive.com