

# **Jurnal Anarki Interview with Anarchist Author Kevin Tucker**

Kevin Tucker

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*The following interview with self-described primal anarchist advocate, writer, editor, independent researcher, publisher, musician and rewilding human, **Kevin Tucker**, originally appeared in the first issue of the new Indonesian anarchist journal, **Jurnal Anarki**. Jurnal Anarki is written entirely in Bahasa Indonesian, and this is the first time content from it has been republished in English. We'd like to thank comrade Eat for making this possible!*

**1. Looking at the Anarcho-Primitivist Primer by John Moore, he explains that Anarcho-Primitivism has nothing to do with romanticizing the primitivist way of life, or as many people love to accuse Zerzan of, suggesting that we go back to the stone age. What do you think about John Moore's interpretation of Anprim? Do you have a different interpretation, or perhaps even a critique of the Primer?**

I don't know if I would call it a critique of John Moore's primer, but the 'Anarcho-Primitivist Primer' was admittedly a quick and personal take on anarcho-primitivism (AP). It was really only a few pages long, the kind of thing you hand out to contextualize other pamphlets, zines, and books you might have at the same time. It wasn't meant to be definitive, even though, I would say, at the time it was still effective.

That said, I have a lot of appreciation for John, but his work was still limited by the time and when he died in 2002 there was a lot that had been kind of left unaddressed, to the point where a pamphlet like his earlier 'Lovebite' was dated pretty quickly.

A part of that is the terminology and framing. Personally, I've been moving towards a framing of "primal anarchy" over the term "anarcho-primitivist" for the last fifteen years now. "Primitive," as a term, just doesn't really cut it anymore, but it also reinforces this idea that "primitive" refers to a point in time or place. Like it's something that has gone or remains in a few places. I think primal is a lot more fitting, which is the direction that Paul Shepard had been leaning in for some time.

This primal state of egalitarianism isn't about where you were born, but how we have evolved: to be nomadic hunter-gatherers. So there's nothing to romanticize, but a lot to come to terms with. We were all born nomadic hunter-gatherers and it is the domestication process that must continually break us to be complicit and complacent within civilization. It's not about being perfect humans, but understanding how we got into this situation and how we get out of it.

Sky Hiatt once put it really great (in either Species Traitor or Green Anarchy), when people talk about "romanticizing the past," what they're really doing is romanticizing the present. The entire concept of history is buried in its own hubris: the idea that civilization has liberated us from the reality that we are animals, and social animals at that.

If we speak honestly about the fact that roughly ten thousand years of domestication has made our lives worse and only more joyless and meaningless, you get accused of these romantic thoughts. But we don't question the alternative: that accepting the

myths of civilization and the ridiculous thinking that this will go on forever is worse than romanticizing the present, it's normalizing it.

I believe that a primal anarchist or anarcho-primitivist critique of civilization eviscerates it. If you follow any lead long enough, it would undo the entirety of the myths that underlie its stories. Those narratives don't determine what civilization does or does not do. Technology and technique determine that. But we are a story telling animal, so the narratives matter. They justify the way we see and interact with the world and each other; they set the bar for what we're willing to sacrifice to this vision where we've set along a path of evolution to become civilized. The narratives support the ludicrous notion that things have gotten better and that they will keep improving.

To upend that narrative and confront it challenges people at their core. It's not shocking that they'll try to find ways to dismiss it! When you throw civilization into question—even more to the point, when you question domestication—then you're suddenly asking someone on the edge of the roof to look down. It's terrifying. We get so used to technology that we believe there is a safety net, that someone is there to protect us or make it all work, and there just isn't. No one is looking out and the reality of the world that civilization has created, despite all of its supposed experts, is a looming catastrophe that is now unfolding in real time.

An eighteen-year-old child in Afghanistan has only ever known a world of endemic bombing campaigns and has only ever feared clear skies because that's ideal weather for drone strikes. A seven-year-old child in Syria has only ever known the devastation of civil war prompted by the impossibility of agriculture to sustain in a world with a destabilized climate. It goes on and on. If understanding that the most sustainable societies to have ever existed—nomadic hunter-gatherers—were also the most egalitarian, the most free, and living without restrictions is romantic, then we have to ask what that really says about us.

Primal anarchy and anarcho-primitivism are about being honest about where we are now and how we got here. That's not a very hopeful assessment to make, but it's the only starting point that makes sense. The only way to understand the consequences that civilization and domestication have created is to see the world without them. As luck would have it, it's a fight that every bit of our minds and bodies has a lineage in already.

## **2. How did you initially become interested in anarcho-syndicalism?**

I defaulted as an anarchist to anarcho-syndicalism in 1993. As an activist, the things that I was really into were Indigenous struggles, earth and animal liberation, and fighting against extractionism. Feminism had been a huge influence on me, lending quickly to eco-feminism alongside my move towards bio-centrism.

At least in the US in the 90s, it wasn't uncommon to take part in these movements that are, at best, intrinsically oppositional without really questioning how being a member of the IWW made no sense if you're against industrialism and work. At a certain point, it just made increasingly less sense to keep upholding the words of

anarchists that had died before the Green Revolution and not see how hollow the industrializing world they had fought for was. So the question became, if being an anarchist is being against power as governments and the State embody it, where does that power originate?

Capitalism clearly became a part of this story, but not the entirety of it. So I kept looking, being heavily influenced by the work of Susan Griffin and Carolyn Merchant and a lot of the deep ecologists and I arrived at agriculture. By then it was 1999 and suddenly green anarchists in Eugene, Oregon are making the headlines with the Reclaim the Streets riots in the summer and then the anti-WTO riots in November 1999.

John Zerzan was as loud, clear, and uncompromising of a voice as you could have for that moment. I immediately knew that he was saying what I was thinking and feeling. I got three of his books, *Elements of Refusal*, *Future Primitive*, and *Against Civilization*, and read all of them right away, knowing I had found my home with anarcho-primitivism. I've been friends with John since and started the Coalition Against Civilization before the end of 1999. That slowly became Black and Green Network/Press starting in 2000.

**3. I had a very ridiculous experience with a friend, who at the time labelled himself as an autonomist Marxist. He asked me out of nowhere “Do you think that the remote tribes in West Papua should be ‘converted’ to the anarcho-primitivist point of view?” His question made me laugh. I said to him that it’s not really a question and that I don’t think they should be converted because they are already primitivist in their own way- the women are still gathering sagu and plants and the men are still hunting for their food. He then started to explain his alternative take, that ‘Indigenous people’ should have been taught to understand their sovereign rights. For me, this alternative is just another way of making them- the hunter gatherers, domesticated and controlled under a veil labelled ‘sovereignty and rights’. As for my thoughts, I think that we should just leave them alone and that perhaps the best thing we can do is to prevent capitalist expansion from reaching them. When it comes to your experiences with Indigenous people, do you have a different opinion regarding this issue?**

This one gets complicated, but first off, no, it is the interest of myself nor any other primal anarchist or anarcho-primitivist I have ever known to preach the virtues of hunter-gatherer life to horticulturalists or other Indigenous peoples.

I want to be clear about this: this is a critique against civilization. Personally, I want to live without domestication. I think it’s clear, in the long run, that nomadic hunter-gatherer life is the most sustainable and egalitarian. It’s not uncommon for horticultural or agrarian societies to revert to hunter-gatherer life, temporarily, if not permanently.

But my target is, unequivocally, civilization: the structures and infrastructures that make a globalizing, technological apparatus possible. That network becomes enshrined in its narratives, but it is, first and foremost, technologically dependent. There is not an Indigenous society or wild community on this Earth that isn't threatened directly by this civilization. And those who are fighting the hardest and giving it all to that struggle are Indigenous societies, many of whom are not nomadic hunter-gatherers.

There is no part of me that is interested in withholding support or not having solidarity with their struggles: we fight this common enemy.

The crucial aspect is that understanding domestication means looking at how it originates, which I believe is best done in seeing how it forms in minutiae by contrasting how nomadic hunter-gatherers respond to the world against how horticulturalists or sedentary hunter-collectors might. Those differences are massively significant, but they are miniscule compared to ways that civilization amplifies them, most directly as the cascading waves of contact flood over everything.

It's not that native civilizations weren't resource devouring, hierarchical leviathans. I grew up and live within the shadow of a former one: Cahokia. I'm not saying that we should dismiss or ignore the nature of hierarchical institutions, but when hereditary chiefs are on the frontlines against fracking pipelines in the Americas, it would be ridiculous to say we need to sit down and have a workshop on how their culture could be better. No one, that I'm aware of, is saying that. It's not a secret that there are differences and that Indigenous communities of resistance know that anarchist outliers have different worldviews, but, again, it's hardly the most pressing thing in that situation. Discussions, but we're not locking down around totems or anything.

But for those of us within civilization, we have all this baggage that we need to check. It shows how deeply entrenched that narrative of civilization is within us that we just can't seem to give up control. We have this colonizing mentality where we still think that we invented the wheel and that we'll just do it again.

Technology is like a parasite in our minds. We become so dependent upon it and so oblivious to its pervasiveness that we just seem to forget that it's there. It blends into the background and it means that our visions about what could be are unhinged from the reality of what subsistence means, much less what it takes to keep the means of production grinding along.

There's this kind of asinine presumption that many within civilization have that we can just let civilization take a step back, a soft crash of sorts. As though agrarian life was so simple that we'll figure it out again easily. Meanwhile, a farmer, in most of the world, is a manager overseeing mechanical harvests or they've micro-managed anything from slavery to debt-peonage to predatory forms of wage slavery to keep the gears greased. Even then, they're following prompts, following corporate, scientific instructions on how to artificially sustain a mono-crop yield that is unbearably resource dependent.

To give an example of how far that's gone, Monsanto bought up a social networking platform called Climate Fieldview. They are pitching it to farmers like it's this hip

new technology, but it's part of this whole deal they're trying to push where there are smartphones, smarttractors, and all this gadgetry that would read soil and air conditions and use algorithms to determine how much fertilizer and pesticide to spray and which GMO seeds to plant. It's so insidious that it almost sounds made up and yet it is very real: they want to recontextualize the reality of climate change as a means to remove any human decision or oversight from the application of all this absolutely insane technology.

In much of the world, we eat diets built around a variation of a dozen cash crops and some animals fattened in feedlots on the same core of our own diets—wheat, soy, and corn, and all the maladies that come along with them. We have become hyper-specialized consumers, so removed from production that most of us probably couldn't identify that dozen or so cash crops in a garden, if it were possible or if we had to. Suddenly we're going to get a green thumb and develop greener practices, just start farming? I don't think so.

We aren't meant for work. There's nothing about us that wants the labor that farming entails. We are taught to uphold the virtues of subsistence that come with it, while ignoring the aspects that tie it all back to civilization; paying rent, mortgages, or taxes, being stuck with debt, and dependent upon catalogs and tools, to name a few. Our minds weren't meant for that.

But our minds and bodies were meant to hunt and gather, to scavenge and fish. Make tools, discard them; that's all a part of who we are. We are social animals, like other social animals, we are fission-fusion adapted, meaning that we work best when we can be fine on our own and we also like being in communities, particularly ones that aren't bound and defined.

The critique goes to domestication because it digs back to our primal state. Not just as a species, but as individuals. We aren't horticulturalists struggling to maintain our culture, we are hunter-gatherers placed into a world that makes no sense to us and we are told that the only path ahead is to conquer, to win. So if we're looking for a way out, here it is: give up the need for control, stop trying to make something that fundamentally does not and will not function work. Again, it's about taking that honest look at where we are and where that leaves us.

And a part of that honesty means that the whole issue of Indigenous sovereignty and rights-based struggles can be a double-edged sword. On the face of it, yes, if Indigenous groups are able to assert their right to their lands and lifeways, then it can be a massive blow against an insatiably growing civilization. But on the other hand, the rights aspects tend to become the sole focus once NGOs and liberal groups, missionaries, or anthropologists get involved, which is a huge issue.

There are all these post-modernists out there now who want to constantly redefine and uphold the resilience of Indigenous societies as a virtue. As though surviving attempts at genocide (intentional or not) and navigating clear paths of ethnocide means their culture has changed for good. Never mind the catastrophic impacts that conquest and contact continue to have, that assimilation and relocation are detrimental

to the survival of whole communities. Never mind that post-traumatic stress disorder becomes endemic. Forget that civilization's diseases (biological and social) are far more pervasive in settled communities. We're supposed to ignore all of that and be happy because a group like Cultural Survival has created really good records and documentation for whom these groups were so that they can become marketable and compatible with a global marketplace.

This is the same shit that missionaries have been slinging for hundreds of years, now we get the secular variations. There's a massive spectrum, from using land claims to maintain a way of life to using them to build tourist attractions or, worse, native corporations. So the term gets difficult because it can include real sovereignty, in the sense of the freedom to be left alone, and it can include things like economic sovereignty, the false notion that Indigenous societies freely and willingly want to enter into and assert themselves into the whole capitalist system.

It's one thing to say that it's not my goal to preach the virtues of nomadic hunter-gatherer life to Indigenous societies. But it's another to think that things like native corporations are off limits from being targets and proxies of civilization as a whole.

**4. Most wanna-be radicals who are still trapped in the leftist mentality, always have the same old question: "If you hate technology so much why are you still using a computer?"**

Leftists are still playing the game. If you're on the Left or the Right, you're playing on the field of politics. Like it or not, it means you're always a politician. You're always trying to sell yourself to someone else as the embodiment of your campaign promises.

It leads to this whole notion of being moral and having answers for every possible scenario. If you are meant to be the poster child of your movement and ideology, then it's a high bar to clear. One that I think just about no ideologue, religious leader, or revolutionary has ever upheld. That's because politics are and always will be a sham.

I'm not an anarchist because I'm living in anarchy. In all of the egalitarian societies to have ever existed, there was never a need for anarchism. That's the core of primal anarchy: it works because it works. Egalitarianism is our default. It's not workshops, workers' councils, and democracy in action, it's people living in a world without systems and infrastructure that, by definition, impeded upon others.

I'm an anarchist exactly because I'm not living in anarchy. In terms of primal anarchy, that egalitarianism is within each of us, but it is beaten into submission and buried by the domestication process. No hunter-gatherer had to dream of or risk in romanticizing another way of life, that's what the dispossessed and dissatisfied consumers and producers of civilization are left with: their dreams and wants only.

Like I said earlier, the immediate reaction that those of us who have grown up within civilization have to any of this questioning is somewhere between rage and depression, though those things are pretty compatible with each other. It is so much easier to find a reason not to listen to what someone has to say about it than it is to listen to what

they say. We default on the politician's moves: attack the individual and any perceived hypocrisy.

What that really does is romanticize the notions of freedom we have. The freedom to choose or whatever it is. You get this all the time in the States, "love it or leave it." These words coming from the mouths of the descendants of colonizers living on stolen land that is saturated in lives lost to the march of civilization and the profound absence of wild communities. We get here because we don't have to question how it is that we got to this place; we just believe that getting to this point in civilization made us the winners. We get to believe that we're the good guys and that if you question who it is we are then the supposed sacrifices it takes to keep this whole thing moving (or plowing I should say) are being spit on and disrespected.

That's how civilization works; if we're just obsessing about the thing that's right in front of us then we never have to look at the big picture. Or even try and look beyond the narratives we were sold. The reality is that freedom is a part of the myth. It's a lie we are told so we believe the fences and walls protect us instead of hold us back.

Indigenous societies, every single one, in every part of the world, at every point of contact with this civilization, had their freedom to choose removed at first contact. There were no warning signs, no quarantines and proxies, just disease, missionaries, roads, extraction, and industry. Our belief in freedom comes at the expense of their real world experiences of it. If our reality was freedom, then hunter-gatherers wouldn't be struggling to win hunting rights on their ancestral lands that have been turned into fenced off parks bearing their names while hosting foreign tourists, hunters, miners, and oil workers. Subsistence, in almost every part of the world, has been rendered illegal or poaching without the proper documentation and procedures.

The way of life that we are discussing, the primal anarchy that each of us is born into, is being continually undermined by the realities of civilization. That's the part that we aren't prepared to look at and understand. That's why the defensiveness comes out. The problem isn't that you and I are using a computer to confront and attack civilization, it's that attacking you and I keeps people from having to question the reality that everything they have ever understood about the world is a fucking insidious lie.

No amount of supposed hypocrisy on my part or your part is going to change the fact that civilization, the world built upon those lies, is the world that has created technologies capable of altering the climate in ways that are rendering agriculture, the very foundation upon which it is built, impossible. The tides are rising. The soils are both bone dry and overly saturated. The balance and dependability that civilization required, the cycles of nature we want to believe that we've beaten, are quickly passing us by.

Playing politician is just another way to keep ignoring the reality that is hitting us all in the face. It's always funnier when it comes from Leftists, I've had plenty of anti-capitalists try to sell me newspapers that are paid for in cash and bought with cash. I get that none of us are living in the world we want to be living in, but I don't



think it's asking for much to at least just be honest about it. But since when have politicians cared about honesty?  
I'm only interested in being done with all of it.

**5. According to the Australian Financial Review, at the end of 2018, 16 major insurance companies expressed their 'alarm' regarding the issue of global warming and its disastrous effects. Even now, the capitalists are kind of 'panicking' however we all know that for them everything is just business as usual. As you mentioned in our email exchanges, there is a growing interest in environmental sustainability and all of those other bullshit NGO terms. From a radical green anarchist perspective, although our future looks very bleak, do you have any alternative proposals- such as the ones the leftists and social anarchists have- regarding how we can resist the techno-industrial civilization?**

I think the answer has been there all along: every step of the way civilization's advances have been fought. That looks like armed conflict, it looks like running away at times, it looks like burning or destroyed infrastructure, it means burnt fields, it means work stoppages and supply blockages; there's no shortages of ways that civilization has been and will be fought. And all of those things were the right solution; we just need a whole lot more of them right now.

So, the skeptic might wonder, what am I doing then? Does writing solve this problem? It definitely does not. But at this point, there's little to take off the table. It is absolutely clear that we are facing a catastrophe and equally absolute that while everyone seems to feel it, few are aware of its depth and impending collision. We don't have time to wait for everyone to figure it out or whatever.

There are communities on the frontlines; nearly all of them are Indigenous. They don't just need support: they need accomplices. This isn't just an Indigenous or civilized issue either. There isn't a person or being on this Earth that isn't being impacted by the realities that civilization has unleashed upon the world.

Yet the reality of civilization is that we are meant to see ourselves as the benefactors of civilization's Progress. We become complacent, complicit, or both. But there are enough of us in this world that are the supposed beneficiaries of a system that is built to benefit a handful of people without forcing any of them to confront the overt consequences of that system. If you're one of those people, then you are trained to not see systemic suppression and oppression.

For everyone else, you're taught that the way out is to become a part of that handful, to get money or power or fame, and then you win too. It's all just a fantasy, but it's an intentional one, it's a distraction. Over and over again, the message is don't look around, don't look down, and don't trust your gut or your senses. Because that system works so well, whether its doled out by programmers or managers, those struggles against civilization that take place constantly just aren't seen. And they need to be pulled into sight. The consequences of this civilization need to be understood.

Those that are the supposed benefactors of this ecocidal and omnicidal regime need to have their faces rubbed into it.

Ultimately, the goal is to target the grid. That requires an understanding that civilization is collapsing and to put pressure on the bottlenecks, literally strange civilization. The entirety of civilization is a mathematical impossibility: infinite growth on a finite planet. It cannot continue. It hasn't "beat" nature or whatever you want to call the world outside of civilization. It's just a part of the story that we are told that it has: that because it is here, that it was meant to be here.

That's all bullshit. That's the kind of story that makes it seem like Indigenous resistance is a part of history, something we can absolve ourselves of. We can act like the daily and ongoing tragedies of industrial strength life are all things that exist outside of us, and that the weight of our supposed freedoms should be weighed against the freedoms that "remaining" populations want. That's the baseline of economic thinking: everything has a price and there's some utilitarian argument where the majority wins.

What that really means is that we all lose. But in practice it works to dissociate active struggles against civilization from our day-to-day lives. It feeds the chasm. So it becomes vital to rattle the cages. To abuse any position of privilege and not let any of this go without challenge.

That's why it's not a situation where there is one answer. There might not be an answer at all. What does it take to bring down civilization? It might just convincing people that the costs of keeping it moving aren't worth it. There's nothing easy about any of this, so, as is so often the case, reality is more complex and complicated.

My easy answer is that it is vital to undo domestication in our own lives and that will help see the bigger picture and make acting on it an instinct instead of an option, but of course nothing is that simple.

It's all going to be ugly. That's all there is to it. And when you see smiling First World douche bags talking about how great rewilding makes them feel or how much they have gained spiritually from some New Age mish-mash of Western philosophy, the best-of Eastern religion relics, and this comically racist cultural appropriation mixed with neo-colonial fantasy surrounding Indigenous cultures, that's the person who is looking for consumable identities. That's the half-baked measure right there.

You can't find yourself in this world alone. You can't buy your way to liberation.

To borrow a great phrase from Terry Tempest Williams, there is still beauty to be found in a broken world. But that's the thing I learned long ago after coming from these revolutionary currents: the difference between revolutionaries and Indigenous resistance came down to the fact that revolutionaries fight for Ideologies. Indigenous societies know the world that they are fighting to maintain. It's not an ideal: it's a reality.

Almost no Apache warrior was taken alive. They'd end their own lives before being captured if they had to. And they were fierce and massively effective warriors. But they were fighting an impossible enemy: an unceasing cavalry. That cavalry was the outgrowth of a civilization that could just continue dumping bodies into Westward

expansion here in the States. Meanwhile, socialist revolutions expanded gallows and industrialized misery.

When you find that beauty, there is your unshakeable rage. That is the kind of weapon that we need. And it will continue to take everything we can throw at it. When enough fiber optic cables get cut, when enough helium balloons get released around electrical substations, and when enough of the internet's data facilities crash, then the fight gets a whole lot easier.

If there is a target or endpoint when it comes to any kind of action or target for civilization at a whole, I suppose it is to do everything you can to disrupt the flows. We have to stop allowing this to be a choice.

I do also want to point out that civilization becomes a monolithic target, but it is, as Fredy Perlman put it, the beast of Leviathan with many heads and faces. There is panic in some industries or some corporations. And if people think peak oil is no longer an issue, just read some oil futures predictions from investment firms. They're pretty dismal.

Capitalists don't stop being cutthroat with each other. Fracking and conventional oil or coal companies regularly launch PR campaigns to undercut each other. They'll dip into their extensive climate change and peak energy research (itself a catch-and-kill strategy) to slit each other's throats and then call out those environmentalists who take funds from the others through shell companies in the process.

There are a few programmers that have this universal intent to tie it all together: namely technology companies and social media platforms, but watch something like Apple or Google, soon enough they'll buy out or outperform any other corporation too.

It's ultimately those corporations that the environmental groups and NGOs will be pitching too, another reason to give them a big fuck off, if it was necessary.

**6. Can Primal Anarchy in the sense of a resistance against our techno-industrial civilization be incorporated into the tactics of informal groups such as the FAI-IRF now that groups like the ELF have more or less disappeared? And what do you think about insurrectionalism in general?**

ELF and ALF will always exist, but they definitely aren't what they were. I think the resistance that is happening with communities setting up blockades is really inspiring, and there have been acts of sabotage and arson going along with all of that. It could always arise again, but you see too that while it isn't often reported, there are a lot of cases of pissed off individuals doing shit like leaving pipe bombs in pipeline and well sites.

This is the thing about the stage civilization has reached in a post-cheap energy world: the more it invades the backyards and property of those who believed they were the benefactors of civilization, the more you'll see people lashing out. I think that's a good place to keep shaking things up and keeping the anger out there. It's not that I

think these people are secretly green anarchists, but that, even when it's hidden into this mantra of freedoms and rights, there are glimpses of that breaking point.

Though I've moved away from being a revolutionary over a decade ago, there's always going to be that romance in insurrection for me. It's an outburst that inspires. Often the less direction it has, the more inspiring it is. Will insurrection be what takes civilization down? Probably not, but it has before. We've seen in the ruins of past civilizations that people hit their breaking point and they leave, usually fucking shit up along the way.

In some of the Mayan cities, when their civilization was collapsing before European contact, people smashed the thrones of kings when they left. I love that. Those thrones had zero actual power, no meaning outside of what their social and religious systems instilled in the positions attributed to them. There was no power gained from smashing them, other than the empowerment that comes from its destruction. It was purely symbolic, but it happened.

That kind of rage is a sign that we aren't dead.

Again, it can come about in weird ways, even for reasons that are more contrary to a wild existence than the systems they are revolting against at that moment. I don't put a lot of implicit meaning in it other than it being kind of this beauty in a broken world that people can act in this very non-rational, uneconomic way. But those moments where things break down and people fight back, you see life again. Often it gets co-opted by the politicians and their spokespeople, the liberal moralists and people like that. They often die, but you always have to leave open the hope that one day they won't.

So I don't think insurrections will necessarily be the end of civilization, but I do know that they have before. I'll still keep my fingers crossed.

Insurrectionalism though, I do not care for. That goes for Bonanno as well; fortunately the feeling is quite mutual. It's one thing to embrace insurrection and get some kind of hope from it, but insurrectionalism dumps it right back into this rigid revolutionary kind of structure. In that narrative, insurrection will undo it all (though usually pretty limited to capitalism).

John Zerzan and I are often the target for insurrectionalist types (and nihilists) because we state upfront what it is we're fighting for. It doesn't mean that we have blueprints and ideologies, certainly not platforms and Little Green Books, but this is what I was getting at about Indigenous resistance: if you're fighting for something know, then it escapes those revolutionary traps. It stops being about some beautiful unknown theory or vision, one that will inevitably fall flat, usually at the gallows.

Early in the 2000s, I'd get into arguments with the insurrectionalists at Killing King Abacus, and it just kept coming down to this idea that if you had any vision for what a society might look like after the insurrection or revolution, that made you an ideologue, the truest of boogeymen.

Those kinds of arguments get pointless, usually pretty quickly, but I was younger and more willing to play along. At that time, a few of them just started tossing out

the phrase “small c communism” instead of anarchism. After years of going back and forth about all of this, one of the editors of that journal finally shared their vision of what “The Insurrection” would bring: that in the act of revolt, people would recognize their role as the proletariat, rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie, and then undo class identity. “Small c communism” turned out to be just “regular c communism” after all.

I’ve seen this over and over again, but the flirtations with communism happen because of that limitation people impose by seeing everything through the lens of civilization. If we start putting things out of limits—say, for an obvious example, that looking at hunter-gatherer societies is romantic—then this is what we’re left with: a whimsical Leftist utopia. And in it, we aren’t just left with Marx; we’re left with Trotsky, Stalin, and Mao.

The problem is that political power, like socio-economic power, is a historical creation. It’s not something that should have ever existed. To think that some kind of revolutionary resolve would mean that some variation of the proletariat would take the means of production (whatever that means in a globalized world) and then dismantle it is impossible. In this regard, revolutionaries and insurrectionaries are the cargo cult of capitalism: the means of production were meant for us, we just have to wrestle them away from the capitalists that created them.

Every single time, every revolution, all of those gaps in rhetoric and improbability about the nature and function of mass society end up getting filled in. That’s why you have socialist states instead of communist ones. The beauty of the rhetoric lives because everyone can say the flaw was in the people or the practice, it could be done better, or truer.

Can it? What evidence is there that it can? Insurrectionalists can skirt the edges of this because they have fewer cards on the table than revolutionaries—which I suppose is a good thing, since it simply ensures that they aren’t likely to be able to claim or direct an insurrectionary uprising. But I don’t believe that the intent isn’t there.

In general, I’m more skeptical of the person whose motives I can’t figure out. That’s why I put it out there. I’m not a politician. I’m not seeking any power for myself nor do I think I would handle it differently. I don’t want myself or anyone else to be in the position to wield power, even if they say it’s only to dismantle it. That’ll never happen. Our brains aren’t wired to harness it, even momentarily.

I think it’s better to target the entirety of civilization, which means understanding its infrastructure and its institutions. Look at how you can render them obsolete. In that case, insurrection can be effective, but it makes it all the more important to put all of this upfront and keep it out there.

In the race to the bottom, it becomes the politics of negation: if you can’t win the argument, then sink the argument. Sink into the abyss of that call to individualist appeal and liberation, seeing any bigger picture as the enemy, or “Spook” as the Stirnerists want to believe.

So while there are aspects of autonomous groups like FAI that I think are good strategically, there are also excesses that move far away from the form and function

of autonomous cells like the ELF and ALF and open the door for groups like the eco-extremists, namely ITS (Individualists Tending Toward the Wild) and all of their off-shoots.

Like other extremists molded around the internet, namely ISIS, it's hard to distill which actions were genuinely theirs or not, but it seems probable that one of their bombs killed an innocent person and, in their attempts to justify it, they went off the deep end. Then they had an online group cheering them on, so long as they positioned themselves as being against other rigid anarchists (often John and myself). It then got to the point where it has been for some time now; anarchists become their targets.

There's nothing in anarchist history that matches this level of insanity.

There has always been infighting. Emma Goldman whipped Johann Most in the street when he came out against Berkman's attempted assassination on Henry Clay Frick. I think that most anarchists can say that was well deserved. But there wasn't an outlet like Anarchist News that facilitated and prompted calls and plans for assassination attempts against other anarchists while the groups being cheered on were actively sticking bombs in anarchist spaces.

What I am saying is that the insurrectionalist rhetoric left a gaping hole and the only logical filler for it has been individualism or an appeal to the individual.

We can't escape the reality that the internet took that to these ridiculous extremes. High school kids know about Stirner and Kaczynski from memes now. Everything else is gone, it's just snarky little jabs and this comic book infatuation. Those two get to become the superhero or the supervillain.

If you negate the reality that we are social animals, that we are individuals who thrive in wild communities comprised of both humans and non-humans, then dump that into the internet age, that hole is going to get filled very, very quickly. It merges all too easily with a libertarian sense of freedom, one that rides in off the entitlement of civilization's ever-expanding frontier, which is exactly what has happened. In negating Leftism, this thread of anarchism didn't negate politics; it just absorbed the narrative of the Right.

When LBC got blacklisted from anarchist events and distros because of the fascist tendencies that they, and only they, have continued to publish and give a platform for, their reaction was "what about free speech?" "What about stirring controversy as the role as a publisher?"

That's the exact same shit the Alt-Right fascists were saying at the exact same time when they had been "deplatformed" from speaking on university campuses after Antifa kept fucking them up. I mean, really, is this what anarchists were reduced to? Are we the bastions of free speech or are we here because we're fighting against the State? Do we stand for something or are we just kicking at screaming because the State said X, Y, and Z were bad?

The whole ordeal has made me feel less at home within the anarchist world and more firm in standing behind the call for "primal anarchy." In no uncertain terms, this

is what we are fighting for. This is what we look at the world and see.

When the insurrections do happen, it is that primal anarchy that is boiling over. That doesn't have to mean that in the moment of insurrection people suddenly find themselves as more capable hunter-gatherers, it doesn't mean that at all. It just means that systemic suppression and repression are failing, as they always would. As they always will. It doesn't have to have purpose or meaning, it just is.

When you remove the grounding from the critique, what is left? An appeal to the individual? That's the epitome of civilization's narrative. That's how domestication works. We won't undo this by just digging further and further into our egos or having knee jerk reactions to everything around us that doesn't align with anti-moralist puritanism.

I know that domestication loses in the end. That is inevitable. I can be excited about the mold cracking, but I won't hold back on what I know to try and tell people what they want to hear or to give meaning to life within civilization.

There is none.

The least we can do is be honest. Quite often, being honest is also doing a lot. Because in that moment of insurrection, there's always a chance that a power vacuum does arise, and, if people aren't ready for it, that's where it could end in fascism just as much as it can end in collapse.

**7. In the latest issue of Wild Resistance, you wrote a very long introduction. I read it with excitement but also some pessimism towards the future. Have you become more pessimistic? I've noticed a change in your writing since your early journals. What is your opinion regarding this, and what is it that makes you still insist on keeping your feet firmly rooted to the ground while others have fled into the shambles of pseudo-nihilism and the post-modernist bullshit they call misanthropy?**

I don't know if I think I've become more pessimistic over time. Realistically, I've been really consistent in my views for some time. I might take a while to articulate things a bit more clearly, usually to elaborate things more fully, but overall, the changes are subtler in nature. At least that's how I see it.

What has changed is that the things I was warning about in the early to mid-2000s are unfolding rapidly now. It's not that they weren't then, but I think we saw glimpses of it all then: an escalation of resource wars, the first talks about climate change being taken more seriously, the ramping up of technological infrastructure, the increasing personalization of technologies, and things like that.

But we're in the flood now.

The incidental theme in my opening editorials in Wild Resistance (which issues 1-5 were under the name Black and Green Review) has been centered on that unfolding reality. I don't know if it is more pessimistic, but the reality is becoming more frightening, which I think the editorials probably reflect. They tend to come back to rising temperatures, which lead to increasing destabilization, more wars and movement,

droughts and floods, fires and rising tides. It's not that civilization hasn't always been terrible, it's not that the train wreck wasn't predictable, it's that knowing it is looming and seeing it happen are two completely different things.

I think in the first issue I said that there's no comfort in being right here. It's gutting really, because fifteen years ago, we had more momentum. People were getting pissed. We thought there was a floor, but didn't realize there was a basement.

Around 2005-2006, I started talking about the ghost economy of credit. Joseph Tainter, one of the major names on collapse, had long drawn out a primary cause of the collapse of civilizations: diminishing returns. You see, we believe that we have conquered nature. We believe that we beat carrying capacity: through technology, through agriculture, through the Green Revolution, through genetic engineering and super-pesticides, we believe that we broke the limits to growth.

Only the sky was the limit, and soon enough, not even that.

Tainter obliterated that notion: all civilizations think this, usually right when they passed the tipping point. There is a common misconception that peak oil means that we will hit the point where we run out of oil. That will never happen. What it means is that we hit the point where it costs more money and takes more energy to harness energy than it is worth.

And in every collapsed civilization, there are a number of factors that lead to that point or what comprises that energy: be it people, technology, or resources. At a certain point, those in power inevitably wind up in a situation where they no longer have the infrastructure and resources to keep people strung along. When that becomes obvious, when the scale of returns has diminished, that is when uprisings, abandonments, and warfare weaken the power of the elites. That brings about the end of that civilization.

Sometimes it's a complete collapse, sometimes people abandon it for a neighboring civilization, sometimes they get in boats and sail across the world in a power grab for more resources, and sometimes an imperial force takes over.

Collapse is a process and it can take many forms. It has happened to virtually every civilization prior to ours, just as it is happening to ours. There is precedent for this, but there is no precedent for our scale. There has never been a hyper-technological, globalized civilization like ours and there certainly won't be another after.

But what was becoming apparent at that time was that we had already passed the point of diminishing returns. You could see that with cheap energy. The floor was that no one thought people would tolerate paying more than \$50 per barrel of oil in the United States.

The problem is that credit made it possible to defer or delay the consequences of diminishing returns. If you shuffle the deck indefinitely, it's harder to notice that cards are just falling out left and right. At a certain point, you lose enough cards and you're showing your hand.

At that time, it seemed like this chaotic part of the collapse cycle was coming quickly and that no one was watching. In reality, they weren't. But then the sub-prime housing mortgage deck ran out of cards and the economy tanked in the States, tied immediately



to the global economy. It set off a chain reaction that the world has never recovered from, even though the salvage capitalists have created an unprecedented wealth gap off of it.

That's where it should have ended. Right there. Oil doubled in price, then tripled. It passed \$100 per barrel in the States. Then laid off workers bought less of it, many using credit cards. The rate of growth slowed drastically. Methods of extraction that were unthinkable at \$50 per barrel, such as fracking and tar sands oil, suddenly became the new sub-prime mortgage.

Effectively, we went from a crash to a slow burn, but a burn nonetheless.

Civilization got a lifeline. Which meant that carbon emissions continue to go up. Forests continue to get cut down. And it's hard to dismiss that: the boom was so damn close and we, temporarily, dodged that bullet.

That brings us to the present. Decades ago, there were warnings about global warming. The consequences of an industrialized world playing out were becoming clear, particularly drastic if nothing was going to be done about it. Civilization did all it knew how to do: it kept growing.

When the predictions were wrong, it was largely because they were an understatement. What those making the predictions missed was how feedback loops self-perpetuate. We are well off the rails, but we're so invested in the endless cycles of argument in an ungrounded reality that we lose the ability to look around and even assess loss in real time.

We weren't equipped for the world of domestication. In an evolutionary sense, our resiliency and adaptability as a species got us through drastic changes in climate. But this is beyond our genetic memory. This isn't a natural cycle, it's a synthesized nuclear bomb on a natural fault line and we are increasingly seeing that we have no idea, no dependable prediction, for what is to come.

So, am I more pessimistic? No. It's a quark of my personality that I try to find some semblance of optimism, because optimism is absolutely not my natural response to really anything. I've always been more of a pessimist. But that doesn't mean I have nor will I ever give up.

It's been said that my willingness to find hope is a kind of naivety or some form of moralism. That's a false characterization. Hope doesn't mean that I believe some kind of magic will happen. Far from it.

My understanding of civilization has always been that the worst-case scenario usually ends up being the outcome. At every turn, civilizers face a decision and make the wrong one. And those decisions have consequences. Dire consequences. Hope, for me at least, isn't thinking that we change course. It doesn't mean that there's some happy ending where nuclear power plants disappear and offshore oilrigs rot silently while pipelines become harmless relics of a reckless past. Hope isn't a fairy tale ending, but a recognition that this primal anarchy, this innate wildness that exists in all life, is still here.

It is still fighting. Still struggling, against all odds.

Civilization creates a situation where those who benefit the most from its excesses never have to be confronted with the consequences it takes to get us there. We don't acknowledge what those consequences are because we don't have to. At least that's what we have come to believe.

There is nothing on this planet that this is genuinely true for. But it unquestionably more true for some than others. Be it the death of the last male white rhino or the last child of a society that never saw a European, but still died from their diseases, our lives have consequences. We chose action or inaction. There is no in-between.

I can't know what I know, have felt what I've felt, have loved and lost, and have seen glimpses of a wild world and grant myself the privilege to give up. Because it is a privilege. It is not my place to speak on behalf of others, but it is my obligation to tear at the cage and destroy its foundations.

I get why people turn to nihilism and misanthropy. It's easier, that's for sure. It's more comforting. We are not psychologically wired to understand the consequences of a world this large or to have impacts the world over with the flick of a switch. By all objective standards, fighting civilization seems impossible. It seems improbable.

Giving up is a choice that we have, but it is not, nor is it ever, a choice that we deserve. It might all be futile. We might have passed the point of no return. But I can't look my daughters in their eyes and say that it's not worth trying. I can't sit on the sidelines while Indigenous communities fight. I can't imagine a world without insects, but that is where we are heading.

Optimism, in this world, is an impossible request. Resolve, however, is not.

At a certain point, when you really see that the world is fighting, that there is beauty in our broken world, then inaction stops being a choice, a privilege. It is my hope to make that abundantly clear, sooner rather than later.

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*Links to some of Kevin's projects...*

- Black and Green Press
- Wild Resistance: A Journal of Primal Anarchy
- Primal Anarchy Podcast
- Peregrine
- Kevin Tucker on Twitter

# The Ted K Archive

Kevin Tucker

Jurnal Anarki Interview with Anarchist Author Kevin Tucker

Feb 18, 2020

[anarchistsworldwide.noblogs.org](http://anarchistsworldwide.noblogs.org)

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