



Seeing a police precinct burn is a much-needed release for all those who have been forced inside one, for everyone who has been beaten inside it, for everyone who loves someone who has been murdered by the police. Seeing cops run scared from a righteous crowd is a release. It's healing.

The Healing Power of a Precinct on Fire

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in graffiti. The driver was doing burnouts and donuts. People flipped it and set it on fire. Another banged up van peeled around the corner five minutes later and the driver nearly hit a few people doing donuts again. People eventually convinced the driver to chill and to reverse it into the burning police station; but in the confusion, people kept getting in the way, so the driver rammed it into the other burning USPS van and it, too, went up. Another one showed up five minutes later, too, set on fire down the street.

When we are given free rein, what comes out is beautiful—creative and destructive. When we destroy the halls of power, where we are so often forced to speak in tongues or body rhythms that aren't for us (law, social justice, reform), other paths of experimentation open up before us. Ways of living that already existed in the shadows of capital and authority can bloom freely and new ones that have yet to be created can emerge.

Some years ago, the police tried to ruin my life.

They led me to a room in their police precinct, angry and joyous about catching me, smiling with their gaping teeth. They locked my feet to the floor and then they beat me. The

experience of being at the violent whim of something or someone so powerful is something I will always struggle with. At any random moment, I can still feel like I am covered in blood. Alone. Crying.

I will never forgive the police. I'm not one to make bravado-filled proclamations about violence against cops. I would prefer they simply leave their posts. But if I saw one of the cops who beat me on the ground begging for his life while having a stress-induced heart attack, I'd step over him without hesitation.

For hours, outside the room, the police concocted a story to use to charge me with a crime. They came in from time to time, screaming and threatening to beat me again. Breathing in and out, I sat there telling myself that I had to prepare for it. Imagining the punches, preemptively tensing my whole body in anticipation. Fortunately, more beating never came. But the criminal indictment from a grand jury came just a day later.

Two years later, after dozens of court appearances, I was acquitted. I was lucky. I didn't end up dead or locked up.

I know that as an anarchist, this is just the way it goes. We fight political,

social, and economic authority in all the forms they assume. We come up against the forces of domination and we shouldn't be surprised when they respond with brute force. Still, it stings. And even though my mind and body can often be in this state of war, it is ultimately something I want to be released from.

In a lot of ways, the repression we experience can only be healed through the process of revolt. Mass refusal is the complicated release of our repressed longings—influenced by the various personal and systematic traumas we experience. These longings cannot be placated or understood by political campaigns or reform. Sadly, mass refusal often only occurs after a resonating event that is extremely painful and traumatic—a police murder, in this case. It can be an opportunity for the release of a freedom that is always struggling to break through the seemingly hopeless daily façade we call “normal”—liberation from racialization, patriarchy, capital, politics, school, or religion. The police are usually the ones who repress our efforts to shake free of all of these. But when things pass beyond their control, the release of energy feels infinite.

The uprising in Minneapolis after the murder of the George Floyd was such a release. An exit from this reality, from the hopelessness that history imposes on us. It represents the possible return of the repressed as actors against the various levels of invisibility that are imposed upon us. Against the reality that can push you down for being poor and black and then kill you for trying to pass a bad dollar bill as real. The same one that can also kill you without using the police—be it through the virus or the stress of private property, race, class, or social stigma.

On May 28, a window opened. It was like a jubilee. A great leveling. Many stores in Minneapolis became free—especially around the Third Precinct. The free movement of formerly locked up goods at Target and Cub Foods—what is called “looting”—was a sight to behold. I think of the times I've nervously shoplifted and I think of all the times I and others like me have been caught by security. I also think of all those who have been murdered over the theft or perceived theft of commodities.

Walking around the diverse crowd, there was poetry everywhere—both on the brick and mortar and in the actions of everyone present. I wanted to see it all. A car was on fire and people were going to the Target to grab what little was left of flammable materials to add to the fire—mannequins, display tables, and the like. Some churchy couple was playing guitar, singing Leonard Cohen songs, and people were singing along. A medic tent, presumably full of supplies looted from Target and Cub, was handing out water and providing first aid. Cars were streaming into the parking lot, so much so that there was a constant

traffic jam. Thousands of people were going in and out of Target and Cub Food and filling up their cars with liberated goods, many of them with shopping lists. They were smiling.

I heard one man in the store asking a friend on the phone where exactly the kitty litter was. At some point, someone tried to drive a car into Cub food, but failed. A liquor store was also being looted nearby and folks were sharing the spoils. The floors of these former stores were flooded with water and soggy paper from the sprinkler systems—but that did not stop some of them from eventually catching fire. A nearby bank drive-through ATM was meticulously broken into by a large group of people cheering each other on. It was all very cordial, no conflict in sight—besides with the police.

I had numerous conversations with people. I can't count the number of times random people would walk by me and we would catch each other's glance and both say something like “IS THIS REAL? ARE WE DREAMING RIGHT NOW? WHAT IS THIS?” One mom and her young son came down from a suburb to just see it. She was a sociologist and we started discussing the reasons for it all. Her son wandered off into the Target and she rushed off to find him. Another guy was talking about how what was happening was straight up anarchy. The range of people was extremely diverse—yet I saw none of the conflict around race that I'm used to seeing in similar situations.

Later on, as the sun went down, there was another attack on the already smashed up Third Precinct. From the roof, the cops responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, but then they stopped and abandoned the roof. In the adjacent parking lot, they were firing gas and rubber bullets as the rest of the cops that could fit into cars were getting in them. The others who couldn't fit crowded together into a riot line, periodically shooting at onlookers in order to protect the ones getting into the cars. Eventually, all the cops made their way to the gate of the parking lot. The cops on foot struggled to open the gate by hand, then eventually gave up. One officer used a car to ram the gate, bursting it open. A line of cops and cars spilled out, from cruisers to bearcats—all abandoning the precinct. It was incredible. Rocks were being thrown at them, laser pointers shined at them. Just like that, they were gone.

The crowd went wild. It's the happiest you could be, running the police out. A fire appeared in the lobby of the precinct. There was no effort to stop it and no need to stop it.

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At some point, a USPS van showed up, all of its windows busted out, covered