

Praxis Radio 2020 Podcast

Episode 4: Peter Werbe, Detroit, MI // Sandy, Montreal, QC

<orchestral music intro, "Praxis Theme" by Jason Cross continues to play under narration>

Taylor, the host of the show: "Welcome listeners—to a new installment of the 2020 season of Praxis. If you're starting with this episode, you can go back and listen to the trailer or previous episodes for some more context on the show. If you like what you hear and want to follow the rest of the season, you should take a second now and click subscribe, wherever you get your podcasts. There are also links to most outlets if you go to praxisradio.com and click on Praxis.

Today's show starts in Detroit, in conversation with Peter Werbe, editor of *Fifth Estate* magazine. This wasn't our first conversation, though. At that point, I had published two stories with them and had also hosted Peter by phone on the live radio incarnation of this show, on KYRS in Spokane, the year before. It was our first time meeting in person though and we chatted in my friend's living room about the history of the *Fifth Estate* and putting anarchy in print for fifty years.

He also kindly introduced me to Sandy, who you'll hear later in the episode, a longtime collaborator and friend who works on issues of the magazine, as well as in the collectives that put on the annual Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival and run the anarchist bookstore in Montreal, L'Insoumise. I would meet her a few days later as I made my way north to Montreal.

<music fades out>

If you didn't figure it out already from past episodes, I am "anarchistically inclined", myself, and though I've worked with many groups who aren't toward shared goals and have interviewed plenty of folks who aren't anarchists, it always feels good to share space and conversation with the ungovernable. I also appreciate the chance in this episode to romanticize the tangible—the newspaper, the bookstore, the stage—as so many of us spend more time with screens during the pandemic.

Here's part of that August 4, 2015 interview with Peter."

<radio static bursts>

Taylor Roseweeds (TRW): "Alright, so if you could just start by introducing yourself and a bit about who you are?"

Peter Werbe (PW): “You stumped me already

<laughter>

PW: Hi, I’m Peter Werbe and I’m a long time staff member of the *Fifth Estate* magazine and *Fifth Estate* is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year, fifty years of publishing. It’s one of the longest, if not the longest, publishing anarchist newspaper in American history. I also professionally work on the radio as a talk show host and an interviewer.

TRW: So let’s talk—ok, fifty years of *Fifth Estate*, how many of those years have you been involved for?

PW: Forty-nine.

TRW: Wow...And how has that changed? So you publish people from all over the world? Basically it’s a collaborative model?

PW: Back when it began fifty years ago and then quickly between 1965 and 1970 there was this phenomenon called the underground press, which essentially were these oppositional newspapers that challenged the dominant institutions—on race, on war, on the rule of the wealthy, gender discrimination, of course civil rights and the suppression of the Black population. In fact—a lot of times people think that the *Fifth Estate* just jumped out of nowhere, but it was right in the middle of a tumultuous decade that had already begun the challenge of power by the civil rights movement by the Black power movement. But it began as what we called a quintessential new left publication taking on all those issues. And you have to remember, there was no internet. And there was virtually nowhere to get counter-information, that countered the dominant narrative. And I mean there were like, a weekly newspaper there was something called *The National Guardian* so like my wife and I, we would see all this stuff on TV, the newspaper, about you know Cuban missile crisis or any number of other instances, Vietnam for instance, or the civil rights movement, and we couldn’t wait until *The National Guardian* came so we could get the straight scoop on things. So suddenly, we started, the *Fifth Estate* started, providing quote ‘the straight scoop’ and this expanded to the point where there were like, 500 other papers like ours publishing weekly and with a circulation of about four million a week. So this was extraordinary and it was the voice, or I should say gave voice, to all these oppositional movements, protest movements which then very quickly morphed into revolutionary movements. Demanding not just this reform or that reform, but a desire for simultaneously for a world revolution in the Age of Aquarius.

TRW: Uh huh

PW: And that’s important, at least for us, cause a lot of these revolutions, of course, turned out to be administered by these Stalinist bureaucrats whose idea of a revolution was to put a different crowd of police in and get people working even harder than they

did. So it was...and they would call us hippies, but I was... I don't know if I was much of a hippie, but I always loved the hippies and still do and...

TRW: They certainly interrupted things.

PW: They interrupted things, yeah.

TRW: So it started specifically as oppositional, did it start as explicitly anarchist?

PW: No, nowhere near it. In fact, I was influenced by a radical psychologist, Wilhelm Reich, who was a disciple of Freud but became more and more radical. And he wrote a book that tremendously influenced me called *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and he looked at—how did people submit to authority as they do in mass numbers? And he called it a 'culture of submission' and it was that they transferred this fear of father figures, the politicians, from this fear they had learned from their actual father in the family. So I was always interested in how do we subvert that? Back in the 1950s, they called communists 'subversives', in other words, you were trying to subvert loyalty to the United States and it occurred to me— that's exactly what we were all about. Not so much, I mean certainly to nationalism, but also to patriotism, to militarism to the US continual overseas military adventures, to its suppression of other countries and its internal suppression of minority people— of women, of gays. And so the idea that I always had was how do we sever those bonds and transfer them to a different understanding of who we are in the world? I mean, this almost sounds corny, but we all are one people and we all live on this planet together and we have common interests that are different from those that rule us. The IWW— the Wobblies— had, the first part of their constitution says that 'the working class and the employing class have nothing in common' and if you just change that wording a little 'we the ruled have really nothing in common with the rulers' because they have a different agenda. They want wealth, they want power, they want privilege, they want prestige and we wanna live pretty simple lives. We do a lot of politics but what do we really want to do? We want good friends and family, we want to dance, we want to listen to music, we want to enjoy life, and we don't have grand schemes of power and domination and accumulation of wealth. And yet, you have so many ordinary people that are responsive to the agenda of those who actually smash their potential for living. So why do they do this? What are the psychoanalytic structures that keep them linked to the ruling class? So I'm going a long way to answer your question. So, within the *Fifth Estate*, you asked was it specifically anarchist? We would have everything under the sun. From Zen to or, we were talking Alan Watts, to Allen Ginsberg, tai chi, Mao— which kind of contradicts some sense of rulers— but then the Black Panthers... in other words, anything that took people's connection and respect away from the rulers and said 'yes, we don't respect the police; we do respect the Black Panthers.' 'We don't respect Billy Graham; we do respect Alan Watts', who advocated Zen to American audiences. So it was that desire to be a subversive element to create literally a counterculture. When you say, oh yeah the counterculture, you think 'oh yeah, it's like hippies spinning around in a circle to the Grateful Dead'. But to make an authentic counterculture, a culture that's counter to the dominant one, and that's what happened in Europe, in working class areas there was a

counterculture. They were very frequently involved in very intense class struggle, and they had their own music and they had their own theater, they had their own literature and this was the model that I always saw as important for the *Fifth Estate*.

TRW: And then it, so, through that, and it sounds like it mirrored a lot of people who were involved, their personal development to the point where they became anarchists, right? And then it became explicitly along those lines?

PW: Yes

TRW: Which even just within anarchism obviously there's a ton of, sometimes a comical amount, of niche...politics

PW: Hyphenated

TRW: Yes what's your...

PW: Yeah, well for white people, for white activists I would say, I don't know if other people share this experience, but I would say the 60's really existed from 1965 to 1972. The reelection of this war criminal Richard Nixon really knocked the struts out from under people. I mean it was, if someone of that intense criminality and venality could be reelected by the American people, what had we done over the last seven years. You know the Grateful Dead have that line 'what a long, strange trip it's been'. It's kind of interesting because when you think about it, seven years isn't very long and what would have been stranger would have been to be a business man or something like that, but it seemed forever. And when you look back, when you read history, everything is condensed into important events like in that period, assassinations and marches and elections and reelections and all that, but it really felt that intense. That every single day something was happening that was really pretty momentous and people were just absolutely exhausted. They ended the draft which was one of, I think more is made of that than actually was, people say, 'oh the anti war movement stopped once they ended the draft for young men' and I'm sure that had an effect, but it was mostly an ethical opposition. That people saw the slaughter of these people 7,000... 8,000 miles away who had done nothing to us and the majority of victims of the empire were civilians to the point where they think upwards of three million Vietnamese civilians were killed, a lot are still dying from Agent Orange that was dropped on them. And we, we always talk about our losses and everyone knows of there was I don't know the exact figure, 58,682. You say to an American, 'how many Vietnamese died?' and they look at you blankly like you asked how many kilometers to the moon or something like that, and they might guess 2, 300,000, I've heard people say that, but that's like asking a German how many Jews, communists, Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals died in the Nazi concentration camps and a German looking blankly and saying, 'I don't know, what, maybe 2, 300,000?' So it's... for the Americans not to know the damage that American militarism does is like this ethical black hole. I think I've wandered from your question.

TRW: That's ok, that's great, it actually brings me to a different one...

PW: Let me say I have this on air partner when I do this talk show who always...

TRW: Who calms you down?

PW: Who always says, 'Peter where are you going with this? You started talking about x' and I'm like, 'oh yeah right', but I'm on my own here now I realize.

TRW: Yeah, so we're talking about the 60's and you pointed out those seven years, and obviously I think everyone thinks that their own time where they're coming of age is important because they are important during that time...

PW: Yeah

TRW:...but, so the last seven years since I graduated from high school, right, has been kind of kicked by the financial crisis in 2008, housing and everything, we're looking at going-on fifteen years of embroilment in Afghanistan, thirteen in Iraq, student debt hitting one trillion, all of these things, like Black Lives Matter erupting recently, people finally talking about police violence... part of the reason I'm traveling this summer is because I think we're in one of these moments that's not dissimilar to the 60's that you pinpointed as 65-72. What do you think about that? In terms of, especially as someone who's getting stories from all over the place for this magazine? Where do you think we're at?

PW: Well it's always hard to tell of course, but I'm hoping it's 1964 if you get my meaning. Because there were things that happened even among white students and white activists beginning in the late 1950s and there were things like the free speech movement at Berkeley, I think in 1964, and there were a lot of whites who were involved in the civil rights struggles and many— like Black activists— paid with their lives and this is all beginning to percolate. The greed and the psychopathology of the people running the system is so out of control, you would think that if someone said, 'hey you could run this system and still maintain your dominant position, have all this money, have all this power,' you could do a lot better than this and so could I, cause you'd figure we've got two people a little better than this. So it's very possible that we could be on the edge of an explosion. Because, like when we got into the 80's, it seemed like nothing was happening and even into the 90's, and then all of a sudden you have something like Seattle in 1999 and there's this big explosion. And one of the things I wanted to say that I didn't finish, that my on-air partner would have corrected me—by 1972, all of the so called underground papers of that era, the 500 regularly occurring ones, there were hundreds more that would generate one or two issues, there was GI papers, in the armed services, high school papers, labor caucus papers and all that, they all peeled off and all dropped out except for the *Fifth Estate*. And it was because we came upon these anarchist and what we called ultra-left ideas that so ignited our sense of what was happening in society. I mean, the movement of opposition had all but collapsed, but we were all of the sudden taken with these ideas of why this was all happening. So it was a real coincidence of time and of who we met and the ideas that we came across that

were pretty unique. A lot of them were the Situationists, and then tying our greater knowledge to what happened in Paris in 1968, the works of Fredy Perlman, and a number of other kind of obscure writers, Jacques Camatte, Jean Baudrillard, people like that. And we also just had a group called the 'eat the rich gang' and we began, we took over the *Fifth Estate*. *Fifth Estate* had almost turned into a commercial weekly taking cigarette ads and X-rated movie ads, and we took it over and we said 'boom, no more ads, no more salaries, we're going to operate this collectively and we're going to come out monthly instead of weekly'. And... it's worked out, we're here fifty years later.

TRW: Yeah, and what do you want people to know or to think about— about *Fifth Estate* or about anarchism in general?

PW: Well anarchism contains a vision that's diametrically opposite to how we live in this society and it's about balance. And I've been influenced some because I've been taking tai chi for years, about harmony and the *Tao Te Ching*, which is this text that talks about the idea of natural harmony and when man enters the world with intention—I use the gender on purpose—with these great intentions, everything gets screwed up. And there is a natural harmony that always existed between people until men got these great schemes of gods and rulers and wealth and domination and conquest and all of that. And anarchism negates that. Anarchism says we're all family and that we ought to relate to each other—well, not the authoritarian family—but everyone has, everyone holds hands. And if we actually could diagram pre-state societies and now how I think anarchists would like to be is that everyone would be holding hands. Everything. The natural world, everything in the natural world, so-called inanimate objects, trees and stones and rivers and what have you, and that would be a harmony. Whether it's possible, given the damage that capitalism and the state has done, I'm sometimes discouraged about, but anarchism is also a personal philosophy is how does one navigate in the world. Even though one may be a privileged person like myself—a white, middle class American, it's hard for me, impossible for me, to live when other people are suffering or while nature is, um, suffering. So that impels me to act in terms of a vision where we all hold hands.

<cicadas chirping loudly in background>

TRW: That's a really good description.

PW: Yeah?

TRW: Yeah. And how can people find the magazine?

PW: They can go to fiftheestate.org and if they want to hear my radio program, you can do that via the internet and they can go to peterwerbe.com w-e-r-b-e dot com.

TRW: You went into full radio mode right there.

<laughter>

TRW: W-e-r-b-e

PW: W-e-r-b-e dot com

TRW: You got the cadence there.

<music fades in>

TRW: Yeah, well thanks for talking to me, its been great to meet you in person.

PW: Wonderful! Same here. We should say you've written for the *Fifth Estate* as well."

TRW: Yeah"

<conversation fades out>

<music continues under narration>

TRW: "I met up with Sandy a few days later at her home in Montreal. Toward the end of the show, you'll hear—in a sense—her impressive bookshelf. Here's that interview from August 7, 2015."

<music fades out>

<radio static burst>

Taylor (T): "So if you just want to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about what projects you're working on?"

Sandy (S): "Ok my name is Sandy and my main projects are the Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival and the anarchist bookstore here in Montreal, which is called *L'Insoumise*."

T: And how did you get involved with both of those?"

S: Starting with the theater festival, there were two of us that started talking about the fact that in Montreal there is really a lot of activism, a lot of anarchist activism, but the importance of creativity historically in anarchy and anarchism is not emphasized enough. Whereas, let's say in Europe and you know with Italian or Spanish immigrants there was always theater even in the States and Canada. And anarchism isn't only on the street. And creativity is, you know, coincides with the idea of each individual's empowerment. So that kind of started the talking and we decided to put on a theater festival, which is the only one in the world!

T: Wow

S: Anarchist theater troupes participate in many activities— book fairs or gatherings, but we are the only, as far as we know, we are the only anarchist theater festival, the only theater festival devoted to anarchist theater.

T: Nice and is—does anarchist theater refer to themes or process or both?

S: It— certainly themes. And process is not enough. In other words, collectively putting on a play about um...not paying a war tax but paying other taxes would not be in it, let's say...

T: Ok

S: Or how the government should legislate against air pollution. Even if it's done collectively, at all levels, it would not be in it.

T: Oh, gotcha

S: Because it doesn't go along with you know, anarchists don't ask the government to do anything basically.

T: Yes, exactly. So have you been involved in theater?

S: No I was never involved on the stage but I really like theater, I like dance, like modern dance, and so I'm just, you know, in the organizing part.

T: That's really important

S: And not even the technical things I don't do anything like... I take tickets. Where other people are doing the lights and the sound and arranging the stage.

T: So then where does the book store fit in to all of the...

S: Well, the book store is a separate project. It's huge, there's a lot of stock in English and in French, some Spanish, a trickling of German, Italian, Portuguese, new and used books. It's probably one of the most anarchist bookstores—complete, that I've seen, you know with classics and new things. Especially new and used. But the main stock is anarchist. And there are other sections that we consider pertinent. Some books on Natives. Actually the bookstore is divided up on the shelves by subject not by new or used and so we have, let's say, a classical anarchist section, we have the history of anarchy, but we have a history section. It's more like separating the anarchist and the not. So we have feminist but we also have an anarcha-feminism section, anarchist literature and a literature section. To emphasize, you know, that there is a difference.

T: Mmhmm

S: Even though many, let's say many— there have been Marxist feminists who have inspired anarchy-feminists, let's say. Or certain other people who are not necessarily really anarchists who inspired anarchists, so we do have them. We have a section on the war and the revolution in Spain, let's say. A green anarchy section and ecology section.

T: That's an interesting approach

S: It's by subject because otherwise we have English, French, new and used, and both, it would just be a mess to have you know, so many mini sections so it's by subject and anarchist and non-anarchist separated.

T: So you talked about there being a strong kind of anarchist community here...

S: I say communities with an 's'

T: Communities, yes, a strong presence?

S: Yes, a very strong presence.

T: What do you think that can be attributed to historically? Is it a long term...? I'm assuming you've...that these communities are long term?

S: um...you know I don't think it's that...I don't know. There's a book actually written in French about traces of anarchism that's periodically mostly brought in by immigrants. I can't say why in Montreal since the 90's or the 80's there is a lot of anarchist activity and a lot of groups, but I'm not sure why that would be? But it kind of just is and it kind of attracts other people so it gets bigger and it attracts other people.

T: And how long have you been an anarchist?

S: Hard to say. Quite a long time actually. Well, you know in French there's actually a word that was taken away from the left in English—*libertaire*—which you know, now libertarians on the right wing have taken that, but there's a separate word for 'libertarian' in French. So I actually like anarchy better than anarchism or anarchist, or being a *libertaire* which is the libertarian, before. But I'm also comfortable, you know if someone asks me 'are you an anarchist' I'm going to say yes, I'm not going to say no. Start splitting hairs right? But it's kind of, an interesting anarchist thinker, contemporary but who's not alive anymore, Fredy Perlman, wrote in the anarchist newspaper the *Fifth Estate*, an article that actually he was quoted I'm sorry, David Watson wrote the article and Fredy was quoted and he said, 'all -isms are -wasms and the only -ist that I am is a cellist.'

T: Nice

S: Very nice

T: I like that a lot. There's enough, um, I think about that a lot about all the hyphens, I talked a bit with Peter a bit about the hyphens, but they're useful but not for the general audience I think

S: Yeah, but we have tendencies so at the bookstore we try to reflect all the tendencies so we have an anarchy-feminist, you know green anarchy section, let's say, because those tendencies are pretty active in Montreal. But I just consider myself an anarchist.

T: So having been involved on some level politically for...

S: quite a long time

T: ...quite a long time, without you know pinpointing that, what do you think of what's going on now? So the reason I'm traveling this summer is because I think a lot of things are coming to a head at the same time and that we're kind of moving toward some kind of precipice. Obviously we're moving toward an ecological one whether we want to or not...

S: Mmhmm

T: ...but I think socially, a lot of things in the US and it seems in Canada too in the brief time I've been here, are kind of...the pot's getting stirred. What's your reaction to that?

S: Um...sometimes I'm really optimistic and sometimes I'm afraid. You know, when things go badly very often people want like, the strong man, and people want order and people are afraid and they want somebody or a group like the military to take over and make sure things are calm. And that, you know, also what makes me afraid is when the, um, lower middle class gets threatened with poverty or proletarianisation, they tend to swing to the right. And want that authoritarian system to come into place to save them so that they can be—I'm talking about in North America—middle class. It's not like, because the idea of being a worker or proletarian, no one is a worker or proletarian in North America, people are all 'middle class' or striving to be middle class. So there isn't that kind of identity there and that certain strata of the lower middle class can sometimes become very much afraid and then become pretty right wing. So that worries me.

T: Yeah.

S: But there's still like, I'm also involved in the *Fifth Estate* anarchist newspaper and the paper has more and more new subscribers so that makes, that's really interesting. You know there's more of an interest, there's an interest in anarchism itself you know so that's pretty encouraging.

T: Yeah. Do you think that that's...so you were born in the US?

S: I was born in the US, yes.

T: You've traveled around, and lived in Canada for...

S: More years than I lived in the US, actually.

T: Ok. Do you think, so just now in the US, just really since like Occupy Wall Street, the last few years, we're beginning to lift the very edge of kind of the taboo of talking about capitalism, other than as the only possible option for arranging life. Do you think that's different between the US and Canada?

S: No. I think your observation....I wonder how many people would really think of capitalism. First of all, I even wonder how many people even understand that they live under capitalism and what that means. That's my first question. I don't know if there's a difference and I think it's more of a difference of cities and rural. There was Occupy Toronto, there was Occupy Montreal, there was Occupy Vancouver, but there were probably not 'Occupys' in small towns. You know, there was a huge student strike here in 2012. It spread to some of the small areas, but not to all of them. I think there's really a cleavage between cities and the countryside, unless they're intentional communities.

T: Hmm...

S: More than, let's say in the US compared to Canada. There might be a cleavage between North America and Europe, let's say. Or North America and Asia or, you know, where people do raise their voices they do talk about politics at the table, they do debate rather than thinking that it's impolite to do so.

T: Yeah

S: Where I was always taught that you shouldn't discuss politics and religion at the table.

T: Oh yeah, me too. But I'm finding the more that I do, the more people want to...

S: Mmhmm, for sure!

T: ...and they're very excited to have that kind of conversation especially outside of an online forum...

S: Yes...

T: ...which is often the worst place to have a conversation.

S: I would think so, yeah. I think the face to face is always better.

T: So theater is kind of like that too.

S: Yes— theater is face to face and um, more, you can't, you know once you make a mistake it's not like a movie where you can just shoot it again— even though half the time the audience doesn't know a mistake has been made— but still the presence is not the same. No, I mean there's a live person up there in front of you, or people, which changes everything. And we're not a talent show for anarchists. We do judge the quality. It's not enough for you to be anarchists to come. And this might sound elitist, but our goal is also to have well known, lets say Bread and Puppet, we have The Living Theatre, other French troupes and from Belgium I'm not going to name them, but we also have good troupes of people who have, lets say, once been on stage or even never been on stage. So it's kind of...to find that balance. And local and international. And that's the balance we strive for. So when I say it's not a talent show for anarchists it isn't only, you know, 'oh I wrote a play'. You know sometimes we see plays that are so obvious like, you know, people write a short story and they want to have anarchist content and there's no nice writing, no beautiful writing? It's just, you know, I have to have a lesbian and I have to have, you know, a mean capitalist kind of thing.

<laughter>

S: So sometimes we get theater that's almost like that, too. It's not... you don't feel the creativity, you don't feel the spark, You say, 'oh, here is the message: the message is that capitalism is not good'. That's not what we want. You know, Bread and Puppet is so elaborate with their huge puppets, The Living Theatre was, is, absolutely extraordinary, radical, experimental theater. People we've had from France and Europe as well, the Philippines as well, it's all been quite interesting. But there's quality theater, even if people are amateurs there's a difference between an amateur and a quality theater.

T: So how, looping back around to previous things as I tend to do, how has your political, like, involvement or outlook changed over the years? Kind of a big question.

S: You know, when I was really young it was the anti-war movement. Which was a movement. It didn't have—it wasn't anarchist or not— in fact, cause organizing in it was slighter, you know kind of, people were proclaiming. It was against the war, and it was broad. So then I think I became more focused as time went along and to really have an analysis that was, you know, anti-capitalistic, anti-patriarchal, obviously. Um, and when I was growing up the anti-racism, I grew up in Detroit, so the anti-racism clicks in after a while. Or not, but it did with me. You know, I was amazed in junior high school that Black kids in my classes, their fathers made more money than my father did. I couldn't believe it. So that's an example of institutional racism. No one in my household ever told me that Black people were poor, it was just institutional racism.

T: You just picked it up.

S: I couldn't believe that there were Black doctors. And Black lawyers, you know. I mean my father was a salesman, you know. So those kind of things click in. But then you

know, I became more and more focused and with a more and more anarchist let's say, approach.

T: And what's next for you do you think?"

S: I don't know.

<laughter>

S: I haven't thought about it. Politically? I don't know!"

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: "None of us really knew what would be next. That uncertainty is what Ursula LeGuin says makes life possible. When I talked to Sandy again on Aug 26, 2020, I started off asking her about the obvious—how had the covid 19 pandemic affected her projects?"

<music fades out>

<radio static burst>

Sandy (S): "...but the bookstore is open, there are people doing shifts, and only three other people, other clients can be in the bookstore at the same time. And the theater festival was cancelled for last May, this is not a surprise, and what we're going to do is initiate not a festival, but a situation where people can send us at any time either plays or performances, radio plays even you know that people can just sort of sit and listen to, on a continuing basis. Until we see what is going to happen, we're not going to plan another festival for next May until we see what happens with the covid.

Taylor (T): "Yeah and you know when we talked before we talked a little bit, I think mostly regarding the bookstore, around the importance of kind of—and we talked about it with theater actually now that I'm thinking of it—kind of the importance of that tangible, intimate experience I guess, of a bookstore, of theater in person, I guess just maybe from a political perspective or just aesthetically how's that been for you and that community?"

S: Well I still think it's really important that, you know, anarchy is not only on the streets, I mean creativity was always a part of anarchy. I mean, some of these people would work in factories for like eight or nine hours a day and it was mostly the men, and obviously they could do this, because the women were working at home, that's the basis of kind of capitalism now to have the women, until the women have to go into the factories they were at home, so the men could do that. But they would— on the weekends everybody would put on plays and have cultural festivals and anyway it was never separated. Some of it was for propaganda, and most of it was just for the pleasure of doing so. Culture was never like, separated from their lives. And people were, you know, working class people if they weren't literate they had other people

reading anarchist texts and plays and what we call the classical anarchist texts to them — you know, like Bakunin and Kropotkin and other people of their... you know, and read anarchist newspapers out loud to them. So it was never really separate and history was also important and so that's from the theater festival. And also at the bookstore, I mean you know we have all those classical authors, Emma Goldman an anarchist feminist, and we also have you know poetry, and there are some writers that many people would be surprised that are anarchists, let's say like Ursula LeGuin, Marge Piercy, and you know and we have their work and we have you know Blansky (?) in the news now, we have his creative stuff and a lot of graphic novels. So culture and theory and history come together at the bookstore as well.

T: I guess this is still on the bookstore but in the five years since we talked, I think that just recently, but kind of on a steady trajectory since then, you know these big companies that control all of the digital sphere and the ways that people are largely sharing information, you know, Facebook specifically Facebook, but Google, all the rest are really being called into question—does that... do you think that's going to affect the world of print based people or I don't know, the power grab of the tech companies during covid?

S: You know, I don't know. I mean there was always the prediction that print would die and that the internet was going to take over. And yet, there are more and more small anarchist presses, there are—certainly bookstores they open and close, we have a privileged position because we pay a very low contribution to the project that owns the building where we're in, but there are infoshops. You know I don't, there's always this prediction that print will die and you know it doesn't seem to. I don't think, I think the covid has made life difficult for all publishers for a while, and publishers are cautious. Whether they're anarchist publishers, radical publishers, or very straight publishers. Cause they just want to see what happens. If bookstores close for three months then obviously there are no sales. Or there are sales by, you know, by internet, by Amazon etc. but I don't think electronic, maybe people are looking for information, quick information electronically and there are anarchist sites also like *It's Going Down*, but I don't think that's replaced books.

T: Well, you mentioned *It's Going Down* and they're one of the outlets that have been targeted you know by Facebook just in the past few weeks here...

S: Right

T: ...and had their groups taken down, kind of in the name of balance and that might go unnoticed by a lot of people, but I think that books have kind of a... heftier, weightier, older symbolic value that a Facebook group doesn't. Or you know, if the government comes and shuts down your bookstore, I don't know...

S: Yeah, they— they won't, you know. I mean they won't here and I doubt in the States cause, you know, the whole thing of quote unquote freedom of speech right?

T: Mmhmm

S: And it's... I mean when you look at who is publishing besides like AK Press or PM Press, I mean we get anarchist books from you know, University of Toronto Press, University of Minnesota, Rutgers, there are all kinds of academic presses who are publishing anarchist books. Either because the authors are academics, or because they think they'll sell. I mean they're not obviously doing this for the cause...

<laughter>

S: ...but they think they'll sell. And books on race and books on Native people and genocide and most, a lot of the universities in the West or in the center of the continent publish books on you know, genocide of the Native people. You know, books at the universities of the South publish books on Jim Crow, I mean and not only universities. If it's going to sell, like *Carceral Capitalism* or...I can't remember the one about how many Black people were in prison...I mean, it's quite amazing that these books are coming out of standard publishing, Random House, let's say.

T: Mmhmm

S: And you know Orwell and Camus are always published by, let's say, Penguin! They never stopped just because of what was the content because they thought they could make money on it and I think they'll continue. At least for a while. There would have to be a big shift to the right in the States, you know I mean a huge shift for them to think that it was too dangerous for them to do that, you know.

T: I think they have been, I hate to say smart, in the way that they have gone just far enough with all of those things..."

S: Right. And it also proves that the United States and Canada, you know how liberal democracy works because you can publish these books that criticize, you know, liberal democracy. You know Herbert Marcuse, who talked about that a long time ago, as long as you're not a danger to the system, you can say or do whatever you want and then when you become a danger you get killed like the Black Panthers."

<radio static burst>

TRW: "When I caught up with Peter again by phone on August 20, 2020, we also talked about our reliance on tech and its dual roles regarding political repression"

<radio static burst>

Peter Werbe (PW): "...you know I don't want to, I start talking like this and it doesn't make for very happy conversation..."

TRW: "...that's fine

PW: ...but we could be dead ending ourselves in a manner that could wind up to not be very pretty. You know empires in collapse don't end well.

TRW: No. Yeah, there's a lot of flailing going around right now. That's how I see a lot of it.

PW: Let me just say so it doesn't sound totally hopeless. So, it's really imperative as I decided, although I decide this about once a week, that I'm not going to do anything on Facebook anymore, to talk about spending our time on the internet which seems so real, you know, what we're posting and the replies and the comments we're making and the arguments we're putting out, it all seems so real. And it's not. Because it— if everything collapsed tomorrow, food, police, fire, you know, what would we do? People used to live without international food distribution and without formal police and didn't have fire departments and what have you. Well, it would really behoove all of us wherever we are to begin organizing in a manner around perhaps just day to day things that aren't at a crisis point. To be able to have the structures that if things really went bad as they have at other times in other countries, that we wouldn't be just by ourselves and have you know no recourse, whatsoever.

TRW: Yeah, that actually brings up something I wanted to ask you around the magazine and around print—print publishing and um, actually just this morning, I'm really glad I listened to this this morning, I heard Facebook has done a big crackdown— they removed like 800 Q-Anon groups which... that's a whole rabbit hole we don't need to go down, but they also for the sake, for what appears to be for the sake of quote unquote 'balance', removed groups associated with *Crimethinc* and *It's Going Down* and a couple other either explicitly anarchist or far-left publications because they have this idea that like, 'oh you know both sides', this 'both sides' rhetoric that's been rattling around the last... forever, but especially the last decade or so. So what do you think about—that seems to enhance your point on our reliance on the internet and reliance on the digital sphere does that influence your decision as a collective at *Fifth Estate* to remain focused on print and what do you think about the like potentials of like, a digital anarchism kind of alongside that in person organizing you're talking about?

PW: You know it's hard. I mean certainly now, in demonstrations, we depend on our cell phones a lot. I mean even sometimes to avoid the cops. Certainly text messages, the way we can meet up with our affinity groups at a big demonstration, alert people you know 'cops are kettling people you know at the corner of Broadway and 41st Street, make sure you don't go there' on and on. It's not like it has no value whatsoever. I started with print fifty-four years ago you know, I wasn't one of the founders, so I come from one generation and you're already— I don't know am I two generations up? You want to be real careful about affirming something whose day maybe has passed. There's something, this is I know non-Buddhist were supposed to go for the impermanence of things, but at our fiftieth anniversary celebration at this local hip museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, we said, 'are there any twenty-three year olds here?' and a number of people raised their hand and we said, 'good we want

you to be here for the hundredth anniversary' and there is—there is a permanence which has to do with linkage, but we did that—in the 1960's people did not... there wasn't much continuity between the 1930's and the radicalism there. In fact when we found out in the 1960's when suddenly people were involved—I don't remember any anarchists, mostly communists and socialists—we were shocked. You know, you're sixty and still alive? We were absolutely floored that these people existed. Then of course we met, in the 1980's, we met all these anarchists in their eighties who were born 1890, 1900, they were just thrilled that we were still putting out a print publication. But I suspect in the age of Facebook and TikTok a magazine, I could imagine like a 20 year old being like, 'what are you reading, the AARP magazine?' You know...

<laughter>

PW: ...it does seem to some extent, magazines are around all the time so it's not like a total dinosaur, but there is something to sitting down somewhere, sitting on the subway, sitting like I am where I am now, sitting out in my backyard, sitting and reading something and gee, maybe dozing off— maybe do that when you're older I don't know, I think I did that all my life. Also, you go down and you go 'wait a minute. I thought the person said it up here that you...did blah blah blah', then you go back one page and reread. I mean I know you can scroll up again, but who does that?

TRW: No

PW: You know, and also you tend to read less. We asked a guy one time for a 1200 word essay and he turned in 8000

TRW: Yeesh

PW: And we said, 'what are you doing?', you know and he said, 'oh nevermind, I'll publish it online.' I wonder how many people does he think read his 8000 word essay on their phone? Probably pretty limited...

TRW: Maybe his mom I don't know?

<laughter>

TRW: its...yeah and that's...

PW: So the other thing is, here's what I like about print publication. This is an aspect of it. They're expensive. And, you know, wait a minute why would you want it if it's expensive? It demands a community to support it. You can put up, you know, a news site or post on Facebook something like that, usually you don't have a lot of idea of how many people are checking it out, but we—people don't subscribe and people don't donate theres no *Fifth Estate*. Because it costs us about \$3,000 to print an issue, it costs another \$1,500 to mail it, so people gotta come up with all this money. And it's, I know a lot of radical publications who self-fund, the people involved kick in their own

money, and it's not that I'm ungenerous or anything, but if it got down to the point where so few people were interested in it, I'd pay for it myself, it'd just be this ego project. So we get an idea that people want it to be there and the other thing is, even among radicals, even among anti-capitalists, that if you pay \$15 a year or \$4 for a single copy, you're gonna read it cause you bought it, you know. You wanted it and you're going to say, 'wait I paid four bucks for this, I better read it'. Well, you don't like it you don't resubscribe, you don't buy another issue. I would say, and this is true with every publication, maybe a third of the people don't renew their subscription. And I have no idea why. I mean why did they want it in the first place? Why did they decide not to? But it's always, I mean we're... our circulation is actually growing, not by leaps and bounds but it gets bigger with each issue, to the point where it's actually begun to put some pressure on how much time, for instance, my partner Marilyn and I spend doing it. You start feeling—you know cause we sell posters and t-shirts and books and CDs—so I'm beginning to feel like a fulfillment clerk, you know what I mean? I used to say, 'oh great we got orders for two t-shirts last week', 'oh hey, we just got orders for seven t-shirts today'. You know, it takes some time and I'm glad people are wearing the t-shirts and it doesn't occur to me to not sell them because, you know, I have to spend the time so I think the permanence of it is good. You ever see books by you know, radicals, with those letters they exchanged and all that?

TRW: Mmhmm

PW: It's never going to happen again! It's all just in emails that were deleted.

TRW: Yea

PW: So we're not going to have any record of these discussions or debates or what have you.

TRW: Unless perhaps everyone takes this mandate to buy stamps very seriously and we create at least a month long archive of physical correspondence among people in my generation, but we'll see how that goes.

PW: Well can you imagine writing a letter?

TRW: I just did! I do it all the time.

PW: Is it handwritten?

TRW: yeah! But i'm kind of a Luddite, yeah

PW: Wow, I get it from our comrade and dear friend, Marius Mason, who's in prison so he writes handwritten letters all the time, but my handwriting can only be read by one person—me— you know the only thing I write is you know, scribbled notes and sometimes I look at that like 'what the hell does this mean?'

TRW: Yeah, it's... I like that idea of permanence though and I wonder— that kind of leads into a more personal, but its all tied together version of that I think a lot of new ppl are entering like you said and you were talking about you know the demonstration dwindling to fifteen people, how do you personally sustain doing this kind of work over time and do you think that there are any parallels to that like with the magazine work? Like a sense of momentum and a sense of permanence and building on the history even like you said, you know, meeting those anarchists from the turn of the century during the 60's and the 80's?

PW: Well, I suppose just in terms of a model of aging for instance, cause I just had my eightieth birthday not too long ago and I keep thinking there's gotta be some mistake. Probably mistook it by twenty years, but whatever. You can't really fool it. But when I met these people, these men and women, they were between eighty and a hundred and I remember we were at what they called a *cena*, they were Italians and they would have these dinners where they would go on and they would talk like *The Godfather*. I thought it was a joke they would say like, *<dramatic Italian accent>* 'we're raising money for the publications and the political victims'. And I'd go... ok, good. And so, they were joined together by solidarity, by vision, by the activity they had taken over—that had began, you know some of them were opposing the First World War, imagine that! And you know, their radical activities had spanned seventy years and they were united as a community, they were happy, they were friends. I remember there was one guy, they were bringing, they weren't supposed to, but they were bringing wine into this park in Florida, so they were drinking, they got drunk! And one of them, I think late eighties, slapped this older woman on the butt! And she looked at him furiously and said, 'Tiglio, you were a sexist pig sixty years ago and you're a sexist pig today!'

<laughter>

PW: And they all roared, including the woman who did it. You know, I don't think you could get away with it at all now, and you shouldn't, but you know, it wasn't people sitting in an assisted living home looking at television or looking at the floor. These were people that were still joyous about life, that had a vision, an ethics grounded in a different world, in a world they wanted, not that they weren't being realistic. And mostly, except for things that I described, they acted on them in their daily life, so it was a model of aging. Because usually we think of aging as you know a diminution of our powers, our intellectual powers, our physical powers, and you know, you can't hold everything off forever, I understand that but these people sure gave it a hell of a go and that's what I'd like to see in our group as well.

TRW: Well and it's so valuable just as someone who is fifty years behind you, to have those people around and still active and not, not perpetuating this myth that, you know, when you turn forty or however old you're supposed to turn and just become a Republican....

<laughter>

PW: Right!

TRW: ...if you're a white person in America you know? To have those models so we can kind of see ourselves as part of a through-line that's not taking it. You know?

PW: Yeah.

TRW: Yeah, and I guess on that note who do you think, you mentioned the Black Lives Matter protests, since George Floyd's murder at the beginning of our talk, but who do you think— you know since anarchism is kind of all about articulating that other world that we want to live in—who do you think is doing that most effectively right now? Who's doing that? Who do you find inspirational right now?

PW: Well, it's inspirational, I mean, I always find any rebellion inspirational. Even little acts. Someone put on our local mailbox 'do not remove', you know taped a sign on there, and it made me chuckle. I mean certainly though, a rebellion of this magnitude, with tens of millions of people involved, and you know racism being the curse of this country because that's what it was founded on. I mean you can spin everything a hundred different ways and talk about the good parts of the Constitution and what it set in motion. But this society, this country, at its root was— you know, Europeans going beyond their boundaries because they had destroyed this one continent, they exported this toxic culture, they had the opportunity upon meeting a superior culture in the people that lived here— the Native people— and rejected it, instead committing genocide, brought slavery here, and it's pretty hard to undo the genocide and it's really difficult to undo the racism that is fundamental to this society and culture. And the idea that people are in open revolt against it, saying it is—at least culturally— it is no longer acceptable, you know is such a good beginning. How we quote 'reform the police' close quote is way beyond me. I mean what can be done. I assume these guys, you'd think they'd be a little more circumspect before they start shooting somebody or beating somebody or lying, the whole thing you could get me going for a whole half hour on cops lying to imprison people, but in terms of brutality they still—you know I mean since George Floyd, I forgot how many more people have been killed by cops under shaky circumstances and what have you. And people just get knocked around by cops on a day to day basis every time they get stopped. So in a sense give me the question again—what inspires me? Was that it?

TRW: Mhmm, yeah and who— are there groups or individuals specifically too?

PW: Yeah, I mean individuals, you know, I should know more of the names of people in Black Lives Matter so many people who have popped up as spokespeople who suddenly just ordinary people become just gifted orators because they're speaking with the zeitgeist, the whole spirit of the times just flows out of their mouths. And so much of it contains what— I don't mean to go totally ideological— but rather than even going into the Democratic party or saying we should join some little communist or socialist sect, they're operating pretty much on anarchist principles, that is collective decision making,

the um... why do I always forget what you call it? People's bullhorn is that what you call it?

TRW: Mmhmm, peoples mic

PW: People's mic. Right. You know, those kinds of desire to not have, you know, leaders in the sense that people who are going to make decisions for us, but ultimately if we have a vision it's everyone making decisions equally. So there's been, you know, kids involved in this, a lot of young women, young women of color have just risen and it seems that every—I just always go to demonstrations, as I should be I suppose, just as a participant and it seems that people who are most articulate, who most have come to the leadership, as opposed to being leaders, but who have come to the leadership are you know young women of color. And you know, we've come a long way from the 1960's when it was with a few exceptions, all white men who were the big shots.

TRW: And the last thing, this has potential to be like a wild long tangent, but don't like feel pressure for that, the last thing— when we talked, I've been listening back to these interviews from five years ago and obviously 2015 was a big precipice, of course in retrospect, but it felt that way then, and you said when we talked you said, 'I hope it's 1964 right now' meaning like right before what we think of as the 60's kind of popped off. So do you think that it was that, now that we have the benefit of these five years and...?

PW: Well one of the things I'm so happy about saying that I probably should have felt back then, well way back then five years ago was, 'I don't know'. I mean, the future just feels so murky. It probably always was. Even when we were sure that this or that was going to happen, or that these actions, or this upsurge, or these urban riots, or this march on Washington, or this local activity, this is going to presage a leap forward to... And I'm not sure what. It used to be there was a group in France, I won't even try to say it in French, but who essentially said 'socialism or barbarism' essentially meaning that the center couldn't hold. That either we were going to go into an idealized future or an idealized society or the worst elements that had dominated state society and capitalist society overwhelmingly since its origin. I mean think about it, how many democratic societies have there been in the last 8,000 years? How many free societies? How many societies without slaves? How many without rulers? How many without people being so heartily exploited for the benefit of a ruling class, you know? So where are we at now? I don't know. Maybe we'll get rid of Donald Trump and everything will be ok again!

<laughter>

PW: It will be just like it was under Barack Obama...

TRW: *<sarcastically>* Which was fine!

PW:...which was better than this...

TRW: Yeah

PW: But it didn't solve any of the problems, and I won't do it toward the end of things, but I could construct a worst case scenario for Joe Biden's presidency. I mean hopefully it won't occur, but in some ways it depends upon your mood. You know? Now the majority of people think the cops are racist! How did that happen? Overnight, almost! So I don't know. Remember—there was a slogan, it's kind of old now, it probably happened around Seattle 20 years ago “anything can happen”?

TRW: Mmhmm

PW: Anything can! Or no, I'm sorry, that's the wrong one. That was the name of a book by Fredy Perlman. It was ‘another world is possible’. Well, I guess I feel more comfortable with Fredy Perlman's title *Anything Can Happen* than with ‘another world is possible’. I would say we desperately need another world. Is that going to happen? Well, we'll see...

You know they estimate that twenty-one million people were involved in the Black Lives Matter activities beginning, you know, with the death of George Floyd? That's an astounding figure I think. I don't think the 60's ever even approached that.

TRW: Mmhmm”

PW: But I was— where I live, it's kind of an upper working class suburb, but just four blocks to the east of me, there's an upscale, upper middle class, about ninety-eight percent white suburb and someone said, ‘oh theres going to be a Black Lives Matter demonstration there’ at the beginning of August. And I thought, ‘I gotta see what this is’, so 300 white people assembled in this upscale neighborhood and were marching down the streets, the residential streets that had never ever had a demonstration, ever, chanting ‘Black Lives Matter’. I mean, it was astounding. I don't know what tripped it. I mean, think about all the Black people that have been murdered—the men and the women— and this was particularly egregious you know, and brutal but the others, so many of the others, I can't remember all their names. The signs say ‘say their names’, but I've forgotten. I remember the guy that was shot in the back, the child that was killed by the cop in Cleveland, and on and on. I mean why didn't that do that? And who knew? That there was this reservoir of ethical indignation that sprang forth from white people? You know we tend to think because what— two-thirds of white people vote for the Republicans regardless who their candidate is— we generally think that they either don't pay attention, or don't care, or are just fine with what the police are doing. But this is quite astounding, I would say.”

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: “I want to finish this episode back with Sandy, in our more recent conversation. She finishes with a pretty big reading list, two actually, so if you don't have a pen, don't worry— it is listed in full in the show notes, with links to buy from non-Amazon sources.”

<music fades out>
<radio static burst>

Sandy (S): “I mean it must be very scary in the States now, you know. I mean, just to be at the wrong place, just the number of guns, handguns, that they can be legally visible when you’re anywhere, could be scary enough you know. And the whole backlash against women, here too, whole backlash against women, it’s pretty scary.

Taylor (T): “Yeah, it’s something that I find kind of curious, you know talking just as anarchists and anti-authoritarian people in different states, you know, different versions of a similar state really. I don’t know we’re the worse cousin right now, or I don’t know what metaphor I’m going for, but when we talked before we were talking about anticipating the near future, this is five years ago, and you said something that you felt kind of scared about then was the desire for authoritarianism and authority among threatened middle classes?

Sandy (S): Yeah, and I think am I in the middle class? And I think among what’s called the lower middle class, people who are afraid to become working class, unfortunately people will despise the people in the social class just below them rather than seeking solidarity with them, right? And lower middle classes have reverted to kind of fascism, authoritarianism, racism, xenophobia, a lot— feeling threatened by the working class and to become working class, right? They’re just holding on to what they have and they don’t want to sink any lower. And you know, nobody wants to be poor, but especially in North America, people didn’t ever identify as working class. I mean, they did. The radicals did, but most people didn’t want to identify with working class or the proletariat was a word that was never used like in Europe because they wanted to identify with middle class and be, or be wealthy. So they admire their bosses, rather than...and I’m generalizing...

T: Of course

There was a strong, strong union movement and there was you know [unsure] in the early twentieth century, but you know it is like social class can be very scary. Where do most of the white nationalists come from now? In the States or in Canada. I think they come from that social class who feel threatened by everybody and if they’re men they feel threatened by women, and it’s also the whole environmental crisis. I think that when people, when things get really bad, people are going to want law, order, and assurance that things are going to go well and that they’ll be able to eat and that their kids will be safe and that is a lot of the themes of the right.

T: Mmhmm

S: And I mean they won’t look for the solutions, the radical solutions, I don’t think it’s what is going to appeal to them, or kind of long term change, or having to think about what change really means, you know, and being on the neighborhood council, say, to

get change. I think they're going to want change instituted from above because that's all they've known.

T: Just a nice, like comforting...

S: Yeah, a father figure you know?

T: Yeah. Which, ugh... yikes. But, so you alluded to— you just mentioned white nationalists in Canada and I'm curious, you know I've been kind of underwater trying to keep up and maintain my well being here. I wonder if you could talk a little bit just about what you see, just like general political movements and I'm especially curious about you know, I live in the Pacific Northwest and that's really a hotbed of white nationalist organizing here in the States, but I'm curious just to hear more about what that looks like in Canada.

S: Well, I think what it looks like in Canada is just more, it's not... it's not like, there are some groups but they might have a hundred people or less, or fifty. White nationalist and organized anti-Semitic movements didn't have a lot of appeal here especially since before, groups like the Ku Klux Klan were also anti-Catholic.

T: Mmhmm

S: And that wouldn't work in French Canada, let's say, including Quebec, because the Catholic Church is so strong and most of those people were Catholics. I think, and I could be wrong, that the white nationalist movement is stronger in the West in the like, province Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba are more conservative to begin with. And that's where the Conservative party of Canada, parts of it which are pretty right wing, have their base. And then there are pockets of their base everywhere. And that party is the merger of more right wing part and another conservative —they're called Red Tories, it's kind of like, more 'progressive' quote unquote on the internal politics like Medicare and less progressive on things like foreign policy. And those two parties merged and there's always a tension between them. But the far right wing of this is more in the middle provinces and then not in British Columbia. There might be, there's a group here, I'm probably exaggerating to think they have a hundred members here, but that doesn't mean that people aren't sympathetic or just aren't racist or aren't anti-Muslim, let's say.

T: Hmm

S: Which is a big one, here. And anti-Native people is another big one here, I would think. The racism toward Native people is pretty strong, you know, and toward immigrants, and toward people with dark skin who are not immigrants. I think it's pretty strong everywhere in Canada, but it isn't manifested as much in Quebec. I think if you're people who live near a Native reserve—which is a reservation—will probably have strong— a lot of people— strong anti-Native sentiments and all the normal prejudice. But first of all, the whole gun culture is not the same here.

T: Yeah, and I wonder so there's I know there's a lot of even more so in Canada than in the US, this is totally changing tack a little bit...

S: Ok

T: But a lot of the visible action and resistance around climate change is led— this is true in both countries but I think in Canada it's been highly visible— by indigenous people and I wonder just about that? If there's specific cases people should know about if they're listening down here and they don't know?

S: You know, a lot of it related to climate change is also related to the land, right? To the control of the land. And, you know, there wasn't as much genocide here as there was in the States, but there was what was called ethnocide. There's—to try to kill the ethne, you know. Residential schools, which there were in the US as well, residential schools where they try to 'take the Indian out of the child', right? There are a lot of areas in Canada where there were never any treaties, ok? The land was never given up and in those areas there's also a lot of battles for exactly to take back their land, ok? Let's say like the Mohawk struggles in Quebec and Ontario let's say where they will say half, well not half, but a good part of the province should belong to them, but they wouldn't kick people out. And in the west as well, with what happened in the west probably made bigger news. But there are Native struggles everywhere. There's the Mi'kmaq in New Brunswick and in Quebec, you know, there are other groups that are periodically, the Innu, always, that's I-n-n-u, it's not Inuit are always struggling against dams, against Hydro-Quebec bringing dams into their territory. So I mean there are constant struggles here in Canada with Native people.

T: So that— do you think there's been a movement among left, left-ish, radical, progressive, whichever label, do you think that those movements have catalyzed like broader conversations about kind of reconciling the—the violent, the colonial history?

S: Yeah, I think so. But I think that started even beforehand. But yes, yeah of course. But not only progressive I think it's trickled down even to you know—it's not acceptable, say, anymore for schools to have Halloween parties and dress kids up kind of in this stereotypical like 'Native people', say with three feathers and whatever and a tomahawk. So I think it has kind of trickled down, it's trickled down to the change in the textbooks in school, Native people are just not figurants here anymore who tortured missionaries. Which they were for a long time, but it's a slow change. And I think, yes I think the whole question of allies is an important topic in radical communities. What do you do if you're an ally? Which is probably the same thing happening in the states toward Black people too. But the question of allies, it's not only allies. Like, you speak out against certain injustices because, for you, you feel they shouldn't happen right? It isn't even necessary for the person who's the victim of the injustice, let's say, right? I mean, am I being clear? So let's say, a long time ago in Detroit or in other parts of Michigan, there was no open housing. I mean everybody knew there were areas in Detroit where Black people and Jews couldn't go buy a house. Period. Ok? So let's say

somebody who was not Black and not Jewish organized a group and did a sit-in because basically it got them sick, ok? That whole attitude, right? That as a non-Black, non-Jewish person, they were against it, ok? So it becomes—they're not doing it for somebody else, they're doing it for them, let's say. Right?

T: Mmhmm

S: In some cases, are you an ally? It's hard to say. Let's say during the Gulf War, people were out in the streets here, 300,000 people. They're not doing it necessarily for the Iraqis, they're doing it also because they are incensed and they didn't want necessarily the Canadian government to be involved in this. So how does that apply? So let's say white people are incensed about police killings on their own basis, right? Not necessarily to quote unquote 'support' Black people. So that's where it becomes touchy and difficult, you know, and again here, now, I don't really know how it's playing out. Because again, here it's just less of [visible police violence] because there's less population. The police are horrible; they have killed, you know people who are mostly, mostly people, homeless people become the victims; there's a lot of racial profiling in Montreal— Native people, people who look Arabic let's say, and Black people. A lot of it. But it's still the level of intensity because the level of population is different than the United States. I'm not saying it's fun for Black...for a young Black man here either, but... and Canadians tend to be smug about it when they look at the States, right? But, I mean it's only because the populations are not the same, I think.

T: Well cause the same...the reverse is true...

S: Because of the gun thing I think, but the police have impunity here as well. Coalition Against Police Brutality has the numbers of how many people were— have been killed by the police in the last ten years say. I mean, it's not nothing, not at all. It's very important here too. There's a march here, a big march, every March 15 to stop, against police brutality. Everybody's aware of it, but for some reason it doesn't seem to have the same intensity as in the States, let's say.

T: And it's interesting that you bring that up because it kind of goes back to like, an anarchist argument that is becoming popular, and you see the right wing reaction to the fact that language around abolition of policing and abolition of other parts of the carceral state are gaining traction among, you know, kind of milquetoast liberal folk

S: Oh yeah, for sure

T: You know, and so I think that that actually provides a really good way for people internationally to— I mean, in the UK the police don't have guns, but should there be someone who the state says can beat the crap out of someone with a stick? Like...?

S: Yeah you're right. But they don't have guns which is also, though, amazing. They don't...

T: It is! Exactly!

S: ...they don't have guns and it's hardly ever mentioned that they don't. I've been reading the *New York Review of Books* for a long time. They are, you know, Democrats all the way, but they consider themselves more like AOC kind of Democrats, Sanders Democrats, those kind of people. And they have had articles for years about how—how rotten the prison system is in the states. But they're like the intellectuals, and now I think it's moving even closer to like the mainstream Democrats. They were kind of like, the leftie Democrats if I can say it that way...

T: Mmhmm

S: You know like the Sanders, the AOCs, or whatever you know. And there are articles always on things like the condition of health in prisons. So I guess now they just want to — they're just going to move their fellow Democrats along. They won't disavow the Democratic party, let's say. At least I don't think so. And those people have their counterparts here. As well. Here we call them social democrats.

T: Ok

S: And there you call them liberals.

T: What do you think with all of this, like, going back to the idea of speed and how quickly information is flying around and also just how quickly things are happening in our political culture— you know in the US, we're reacting to some new out of control thing that has happened maybe twice a day at this point, it feels. And there's this really frenzied media landscape. As someone who, I feel like through your work and just through who you are and your history in movements, and as someone who's been into anarchy for a long time, what lessons do you think there are in kind of like radical history in general, and in theory, and which writers would you point people to just to become like a little more grounded during these times?

S: Before I answer that, I just want to say that the violence toward women is a constant. It hasn't really fluctuated with anything. It hasn't fluctuated when times are better, and it hasn't really fluctuated when, you know I'm talking about like, violence in relationships like marriage or someone living with someone or even, you know, seeing each other, ok? I think there are better and worse periods—well, better is not the right word—there are worse and even worse periods, rather than—nothing gets 'better', you know what I mean? I think that when times are better and everything is more liberal, then maybe the violence toward women is just more subtle, but I think it's always there and I think there's a horrible backlash that is continuous. I mean I couldn't believe that even, even at the Republican convention, this woman is saying that she is for the family vote, right? Which is where the husband— they'd never think outside of people being married—the husband gets the final word on how the family is going to vote. I was like, 'what wait a minute, where could it even come from, this idea?' You know, but I mean for me that's already a violence but the reaction to any form of feminism. The fact that there are

probably more women pediatricians now, let's say, or there at least are in Quebec, than men. More women graduating universities, more—which we don't want—more women in the army and the police, all that, you know I think it just creates even more violence toward women, but it never stops. It's something that's always overlooked, this violence and toward women of color is probably even worse because they also have the whole racism of the general society on them as well, you know. I mean, I worked in a shelter. Women were torn—do they want to press charges and, you know, have their partners beaten up in jail? I think with all this, patriarchy should not be forgotten in all these movements.

T: Mmhmm

S: You know I think it's really important. I think it's the last *Fifth Estate* or the one before, Cara Hoffman had a very strong article, she's an author, on violence toward women. It was really, really powerful and her books are powerful as well. And *So Much Pretty* is where she's dealing with violence towards women and so I would recommend, leading on to your question, I would recommend Cara Hoffman's books. I would think it's important to read Lola Lafon—*We are the Birds of the Coming Storm*. To go back, I mean, for me the whole question of gender is for me less important than the question of patriarchy, but that's again, for me, and who I am. I mean I'm not necessarily separating those questions, but you know, I think they go together very well, gender and patriarchy. And racism and patriarchy. But I think that patriarchy, it should never be overlooked. You know?

T: It's the system that enforces gender, in this rigid way, right?

S: It sure does. Yeah. And I think *Caliban and the Witch* which is by Federici, ok? So I think that's really important. And I think, you know, *Caliban and the Witch*, it's a novel, *We are the Birds of the Coming Storm*, a novel, Cara Hoffman's *So Much Pretty*, books on *mujeres libres* who were the Spanish women anarchists, I think are pretty important. You know, I just read an incredible novel, 570 pages that I was at the end trying not to read so fast, but it kept calling me

<laughter>

S: ...calling me, called *Suosso's Lane* by Robert Knox. It's a historical novel about Sacco and Vanzetti and if you don't know where were coming from, then we're going to, as they say, it's K-n-o-x. It's really, really good, but it also has some contemporary— it's an excellent novel. Because it's not, I think you know, at least I if I'm reading fiction, literature, I don't want to be reading a tract, or propaganda, or you know, I want to be reading literature, or else I'll take a history book.

T: Mmhmm

S: But I mean, those are quite good. I just think it's important for people to have all the basics, you know, *No Gods No Masters* kind of books, there's Cindy Milstein who just

put out a book called *Deciding for Ourselves*, which is edited by her, that just shows different collectives and different ways of how people organize in times of crisis, that's really good. You know I think *Against the Megamachine* by David Watson, I think is a basic. Fredy Perlman's [*Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*], Fredy Perlman's *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism, [Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom]*— I think those three by Perlman are like, essential, to really understand because nationalism is— can be really, you can transpose that to religion or to white supremacy, right? All that. You know, I think those are kind of basic texts fiction and nonfiction. So yeah, while I think it's important to understand what's happening now, it's also important to understand like how we got— there are books on fascism in the States and the origins of fascism in the States and understanding fascism in Europe as well I think is pretty important. What else? *Beyond Geography*, by Turner, is another good one I would recommend. And then you know, I would recommend like Thomas King's books about Native people, his novels too. Cause you can get a lot from novels as well as by reading history, I think.

T: Mmhmm

S:—What else, what else, I mean there's so many, there's so many incredibly you know, good books. I mean someone could start looking at all the books reviewed in the *Fifth Estate*, let's say, ok? And then there's references from there, you know there are enough references in *Against the Megamachine* to keep going people going for a long time.

T: That's a pretty good start off the top of your head!"

S: And then people can get references from there, but I think — I think *No Gods No Masters* or even just *Anarchism* [both] by Gurein leads to other kind of writing and reading as well..."

TRW (narrating now): "And here is a second reading list, five years old. Book people are the best people."

S: "I'd also start with a pamphlet called *Communicating Vessels*, it's a zine called *Communicating Vessels*. [title not confirmed yet], I would think that Daniel Gurein-- *No Gods No Masters*, you know it goes historically, or his *Anarchism* is a good one. If anybody is interested in fiction there's Cara Hoffman who, is not directly anarchist, but is very feminist and think that's pretty important. George Woodcock wrote a book on anarchism as well [*Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*], his stuff is pretty interesting. There's also a very interesting historical book called *Caliban and the Witch*, I just cannot remember the author's name, I'll try think of it, actually <voice fades as she walks to bookshelf> I would read also *Against the Megamachine* by David Watson, [*Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women*] by Martha Ackelsberg is really important. Norman Nawrocki's book *Cazzarola!*, it's fiction, but it's very good, it's about the Roma and the contemporary and historical anarchist struggle in Italy. Yeah, I think that I would start there. My *Caliban*, I don't know who has it.

Anyway, so I'd start with that. Reading *No Gods No Masters* can lead people to others they'd say, 'oh I want to read more about Proudhon or Bakunin or anybody else. So I think that's pretty important. There's also, I don't know if it's translated, [Agustin] Gomez-Arcos, if people read Spanish or French, he's a Spanish anarchist fiction writer so his stuff is pretty interesting. If you like fiction, there's Traven in fiction as well, Marge Piercy, who's an anarchist, Ursula LeGuin, who's an anarchist in her fiction. So there's a lot of interesting things."

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: Thanks to Peter and Sandy and all of those involved in the collectives of these three wonderful anarchist institutions. Thanks to all of you for listening. If you enjoy the show, you should subscribe and it would be lovely for you to also share it with a friend. As I said, the show notes below have Sandy's entire reading list, links to the projects we discussed, and a few bonus resources. You can also ask questions, get in touch with me, support this project and more at praxisradio.com that's p-r-a-x-i-s-r-a-d-i-o dot com.

You might have noticed episodes are getting longer each week, against my best efforts. There were wonderful moments in both of these conversations I couldn't include, and in other past episodes, too. At the end of the season, I'm planning to share bonus versions with full length interviews if you just can't get enough.

Next week, on the eve of election day here in the US, we'll head to New York City for a little escape from all of that and into the transformative power of imagination, art and artists in social movements. Hang in there.

<music fades out>

<radio static burst>

END