

# These are Yinsur- rectionary Times



by Canday Flagbat

“Liberals love proxy violence and armed-struggle; so long as it is from another time or place, as sure as conservatives love US military and police violence. Zapatistas and Sandinistas and aging bombers are venerated money magnets, but break a window at a present day demo or hit a nazi with a stick and their American Exceptionalism is triggered. They’re incensed.”

-Michael Vesch

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## Part I

I would see him around: political meetings, social centers, demos. We traveled out of town on occasions to fight in the same fights, but our paths paralleled more than intersected. When we met I knew we would be friends. On a frigid and lonely day I walked to the corner store. I never knew why they spelled candy “canday” but there it was proudly on the windows. I came to buy some snacks to cope, Mike to re-up on his rollies. We met and with excitement directly to Peanut Chews and Chick-O-Sticks, aisle two. These new vegan snacks would have been enough fortune for one day. We stepped to the counter to pay.

He had a way with words. The *canday* store, my young little body and the clerk were filled as fiery synapses began lighting up. Mike shared some history of Peanut Chews as Army rations, some insight into what The Steelers losing the AFC Championship meant for the city’s mood and how the neighborhood was starting to feel an economic and demographic shift. He connected the dots with just enough humility to cut through our content isolated scaredness. As the borders broke down between the empty and fixed roles of “worker” and “customer” I myself began to unwind, recenter, unlearn the rustic societal recitals, those same old motions that had me locked up in automatic movements, unthinking conversations I could traverse day in and day out without ever feeling like I was talking with someone whose history and experiences made them. I began to see how Mike’s had made him and I too wanted this ever so much. As he talked, the person behind the counter was seen as a human, a fellow. I learned to see the strugglish store as a place to be connected with and hold as a part of me; to locate myself in relationship to and within it. Mike made a union of people, politics, place and mutual respect. I come back to these memories today to find his nurturance.

Mike opened up space with such gifts; there was always a discovery of a new way to look and see what is and can be there. There was a way we were together, the way I know he was with others but when we were together it was as if the world was a little quieter and my eyes a little clearer. There was such attention and respect in conversations; Never a hint of macho bravado or an imbalance of power. It would take some years to fully appreciate the tools he bestowed on me.

One day he would show some youngsters the beauty of the flag bat. Made by affixing any black fabric through a crude puncturing of a wooden club this simple but creative tool would come to know as many models as there were uses for it. Banisters, golf clubs, sticks, baseball bats, 2x4's... just as the way Mikes words extended conversation into reflective and provoking understandings this arm enabled us to reach the heads of those we needed to meet. Now we were able to beat cops, Nazis, and reporters, later it would help protect us from fascists who would engage in an armed standoff at our social center. Sometimes it was driven through store windows to reach and wedge a negation in to their shelves of lies. Armed Joy, willful disobedience, our passion learned us life.

## **Part II**

We were grown in an American city whose character and population is increasingly vanishing amongst economic restructuring set by the canvass of government officials and capital developers. This city has sold our family homes to build stadiums, buried our history in university dust bins, lost us in overly bureaucratic health care, depraved us with non-existent local resources and locked us in a system of buying and selling that still proves incapable of fulfilling our basic needs. This is our pain, it is not the entirety of it, but every day it is there and we carry it. Our enemies have eroded our memories of both time and place and we are made to question our selves with the shaky ground beneath our feet. How can we learn

stability in times like these? As the construction equipment swing wrecking balls into neighborhood homes, developers reroute streets. The cracks in the concrete that were so familiar are gone now.

The faces, including this one, have moved away. In spite or maybe because of this, we found friendship. We have always been the limbs that formed the body of the “known unknowns”. Adventurists seeking companionship from unlikely accomplices we found one another over the years of bad beings. Whether we grew up in Pittsburgh or just survived its six months of winter to enjoy some spring days in rusty steel mills, throw summer bloc party benefits, or sneak in to pools, we come to know how to make space our own. Through stories and a soft charm that would warm even the grinchiest of hearts Mike planted seeds that allowed us to grow into the mentors and guides to the little ones, organize with people in similar economic and employment positions and feed down and out neighbors on our harsh city streets. In way, a new culture was born. We have been there in solidarity with those imprisoned, with those who sought liberatory change, and with those who are rejected by the institution and constructs they didn’t help create but are forced to be a part of.

For a number of years in the mid Two Thousands there were crannies in the city where a new social fabric could be made. Organic crews could outshine the technologies of separation and find one another in the commons. We were guided by revolutionary ideas: attack, mutual aid, temporary affinity groups. Friends, lovers, comrades, people we only knew for a short while, some then, now and forever; we had all come from different backgrounds, sundered by the usual race, class, gender divides. Some of us assholes, some far too romantic and starry eyed. We fucked up, we learned some shit, we built what we could when we could because that is what we had, the only thing we had. We couldn’t separate ourselves from our pasts, nor could we really go back. We held in common

the project of revolt, of seeing each others freedom as our own. So we lent our ears, hearts, all kinds of body parts, we kept our roommates, neighbors and the shops up at night because we took the space we needed. The cruelty and banality realized through years of coming to understand our selves and the world around us had caused us to clarify what we felt in to what we must do.

Our stories would be written in the language of physical emotion. We had something together, solidarity. It was to be defended and space made for it to flourish. We were guided by ideals capable of changing our world, yes. Mike had shared with us wherever you are, the fight is. We could not rest, we were not content with flags flying above our heads or dollars in our pockets. The effigies of the democratic man were to be burned, figuratively and literally.

Words, stones, pistols, fire, graffiti, theory, analysis, identification of the class enemy as it changes in order to stay the same, skateboarding, mace, poetry, robbery, banner drops are some of the weapons we had known, and come to use for our defense and for the possibility of escape. We come to loathe the posh shops, the air headed swagger of yuppies, and the suave politicians that would speak in to their squawk box as if their words flattered or should be heard.

No wealthy resident of the isolated echo chamber neighborhood known as Shadyside wanted to listen to the nighttime screams of children busting their ass for 50¢ an hour to make their \$49.99 sweater. So we would strike their garment stores at night so they would wake up empty. No business man would send their children off to fight far off and away wars in some hot ass country. So we catapulted oil paint into the recruitment stations so nobody would. No boss wanted hear it from the back of house workers or grant reprieve from the daily degenerations hurled at servers of the shop floor. So we would strike the faux jovial night life with spray paint, thugly

attire and dawned masks to change those signs from open to closed. The industry couldn't come to terms with the mass suicide of technology workers, no black ribbons for those heroes whose lives were stolen making the iPhone. So we shut down their tech stores and emptied the shelves.

### Part III

*We will either determine our history ourselves or let it be determined without us.*

-Communiqué of the "General Assembly of Insurgent Workers" (Greece, 2008)

I was planning a trip to see Mike not but a few weeks out. I was quitting my job and wanted to discuss new anarchist projects and share the excitement that comes with growing past some personal limitations and into new ways of being. Mike had always guided me towards clarity and caused great travel. He had shown me the wonderful words of Alfredo Bonanno, Guy Debord, and Severino Di Giovanni. He would encourage and guide wild ideas bringing vivid imagination to ways and means. He would always profess the continual reversal of action into theory and theory into action. He was an older brother looking out and I wanted to ask for his brilliant mind to come in commune with mine, to plot and scheme, to avenge yet again.

In one of my favorite cities by the ocean, I rode passenger aside some of my favorite people; the phone rang. I knew who was calling, I answered with full excitement ready to share in the exuberant yelling that has come to color my friendships. The first few syllables haunted me in the way only a guillotine can. An immediacy took hold of me; the news of death brings robbery. At times it is hard to breathe, loss is crushing, excruciating even after the first week when reality comes to greet you in the morning.

I remember reading faces that day. The well-known reads were showing themselves with an aggrieved tenacity and a vulnerable sorrow. Faces red with warmth because our blood knew where to head. Swollen eyes resting on exhausted pink lids that were coming to know the light of a day without the handsome man who could dare to be himself. All of us mourners have come to know an intimacy through afflictions that relentlessly march upon us day and night. We were hurting with a condition that would strike even tight-shut eyes wide open; the world had killed our friend.

Together we gathered in the old haunt of the anarchists, the place where so many of us learned a camaraderie without time or borders. Huddled in the alleyways where many a great conspiracies have been hatched we paused. I saw in each of those faces the ways our friend had rubbed off and within each of them he was to continue. There were those of us ready to go, cautious but down, scholarly and humorous, patient, organized, poetic, musical, and outspoken. For those of us who were close to Mike, it was known that upon his sunset we would venerate him with the solemn beauty he had always greeted us with.

So we wore masks to reveal ourselves, to show ourselves to each other, to unmask the pain of the days where we cried ourselves to sleep from an insufferable exhaustion of death, bed ridden snot faces. We let it run like the lions we are with no remorse or second thoughts. We did what we had to because our souls were calling for a healing. For the living death is about finding yourself again.

In news print obituaries it is often said the deceased is survived by the following ...

We turned to the main boulevard and began belting out with an ungovernable fury. "Remember the dead, Fight for the living!" A catharsis of decades erupting in a symphony of



emotions. Our banner read “These are yinsurrectionary times - RIP Mike V.” Our mournful tears gave way to the beautiful sounds of lovers’ voices reverberating off of known roads and brick buildings. Each time our legs passed in front of the other we carried each other’s purpose. “One boss, one bullet!” - The calling our man used to say. Our vocal chords stretched and ripping into the brisk air as his words from the heavens rang through us. Collective moments are what has filled each one of us in the procession time and again with life larger than ourselves; now we were the survivors of a man who challenged each one of us to walk together. Our bodies were a collective body, each one of us an appendage to the other and we were screaming out in the pain of having a limb cauterized. If his death is our own it too will be shared.

As of late such a crazed mass has been a not-so-common sight on The Ave, however, bystanders found it in them to discern what was so self-evident; Release. We kept marching and chanting and when the police came we out maneuvered them. We walked down a side street, up and over a pedestrian walkway to arrive at the place we needed to be. Our pain is not a sterile sorrow.

With a raised fist, taser in hand, 10,000 volts went electrifying the nighttime sky. “A, Anti, Anti-capitalista” we rang out to announce an honesty, to cast the first tremor into the veneer of gentry nightlife. We chose to unmask the irreducible violence-violence that is foundational and indispensable for the functioning and existence of the ruling class. Against the logic of submission we unleashed the terrifying abyss of freedom. A hauntingly beautiful pain that will gift the living loss to earn real security, the kind Mike had all them years ago in the canday store. The hollow decadence of glass castles came shattering down with whack after whack of the flag bat. The borders they so sedulously constructed chimed at a smooth 80BPM. We tore off the facades of buildings that had denied Mike a home, a refuge, a space to come in commune with

others. Spaces which will continue to deny as long as they exist. We catastrophically altered the vain contours to show Anarchy is solidarity, Anarchy is infinite.

The beau monde could be seen fleeing with an enthusiasm for life as they learned danger. A gift for them to be in touch with their emotions the way we are every fucking day. The screams of the wealthy heard as another verse as we chorused to outro our footsteps away into the moon's grace.

#### **Part IV**

Our feet will bring us to the places we need to be even when our minds aren't ready to make sense of it all. My friends and lovers have come to know a more lost me in the year since, but my movement brings me great pause, and my great pause brings me new.

One cold December afternoon in a land far away the flag bat transcended form as a crude instrument of beating to act as an antenna. To communicate to me a message of solidarity, of kinship. Anarchist school children were in insurrection as one of their own as murdered by the state. The flag bat was my beacon and it transmitted across time and physical distance in the way only love can; it brought me into commune with the people, politics and place. I wrote to him during those days and nights and he would share my exploits, taking my words and positioning them along side his own understanding to hold in commune our great love. He would share our story in the Yinsurrectinary Times as front line updates from one of two hometown comrades. It was to be the last of his writings in this exceptional journal, but not of his lasting impressions.

For Mike,  
The anarchists won't forget you.

# *Original Yinsurgent*

*Rest In Power*



Mike Vesch: 1973 - 2015

“If our activities seem feverish, it is because we feel the  
urgent need for solidarity with others.”

-Refus Global

