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The Anarchist Black Cross Federation



Who we are? What do we do and why?

What is the Anarchist Black Cross?

The origins of the ABC date back to the 1905 Revolution in Russia. It was originally formed as the Anarchist Red Cross to organize aid for Political Prisoners and their families as well as organize self-defense units against political raids by the Cossack army. During the Russian Civil War, its name changed to the Anarchist Black Cross to avoid confusion with the International Red Cross, also organizing general aid relief in the country.

Outside of Russia, the organization continued to work under the banner of the Anarchist Red Cross and other names, such as the Berkman Aid Fund in Chicago. During the post-civil war period in Spain and World War II, the organization worked to aid anarchists who were fleeing from the rise of fascism throughout Europe. By 1960, the organization ceased to exist in any real sense.

The organization re-emerged thanks to the help of Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie, who formed the Anarchist Black Cross in London in 1967. The organization quickly spread throughout Europe, providing support to the renewed anarchist resistance movements particularly in Spain, England, Germany, and Italy. However, as the organization continued to grow, ABC members found themselves the target of the repressive measures of the State. Numerous members were arrested and accused of participating in various anarchist revolutionary groups, such as the Angry Brigade and the First of May Group. While most of the allegations had little merit, the State's focus on the ABC had deadly result. In December 1969, Giuseppe Pinelli, a member of the Italian ABC in Milan, was thrown from a fourth story window to his death by the Italian police after being falsely accused of several bombing that were later attributed to the fascist movement. A few years later, members of the Berlin ABC group, Georg von Rauch and Thomas Weissbecker, were shot and killed by German police for their involvement in the 2nd June Movement.

While ABC groups did emerge briefly in the 1970s in Seattle and Chicago, the Anarchist Black Cross movement did not truly take root again in North America until the emergence of Toronto and California ABC in 1982. From there the organization continued to grow with numerous autonomous groups scattered throughout the North America and has grown to support a wide variety of prison issues, ranging from prison abolition, exposing the torturous conditions of Communication Management Units (CMUs), the cruelty found within mental health facilities, and much more.

What is the ABCF?

In May of 1995, a small group of ABC collectives in North America merged into a Federation whose aim was to focus on the overall support and defense of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POWs).

Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War are not in prison for committing social "crimes", nor are they criminals. Different PP/POWs participated in progressive and revolutionary movements in varying levels, some in educational and community organizing, others in clandestine armed and offensive actions against capitalism and the State. All are in prison as a result of conscious political action, for building resistance, building and leading movements and revolution... for making change.

Many of us in some way or another are part of these very movements, part of that resistance that PP/POWs helped to build. As people continuing to struggle for change, we are obligated to support those people who are in prison as a result of struggling to make change.

Though some have a wider definition of Political Prisoners, we maintain that even if the definition of a Political Prisoner

was expanded and widely accepted to include social prisoners of conscience, it needs to be clear that those prisoners who went to prison because of political action taken on the street would still demand our priority support. For movements to support other prisoners before we support the prisoners who have gone to prison for building the very movements we now participate in is backwards and criminal.

Supporting PP/POWs?

Our primary goal is to build a community and movement that supports PP/POWs. We want to ensure that all areas of the struggle for liberation and social justice include the liberation and support of PP/POWs as a demand. We want to ensure that those who have been imprisoned for their participation in our movements are not forgotten or excluded from our movements. We work to ensure their voices are heard and they continue to play an active role in the changes outside of the prison walls.

Through correspondence and visits, we maintain relationships with our PP/POWs to ensure that the State is not successful in isolating and breaking down the psychological and mental will of those held captive.

Letters can be a literal lifeline to those who the State is trying to break.

Raising material assistance is a crucial responsibility in the

"This fund for Political Prisoners is a vital support system... Please know that this aid has helped me in the worst of times."

- Oso Blanco

support for Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. It is not uncommon to find that our imprisoned comrades are left with no financial support to pay for phone calls or postage stamps to communicate with their families, friends and supporters. Not enough money to pay for a news subscription or buy books. No funds to get proper footwear or seasonal clothing. If we call these prisoners our comrades, we cannot allow this to continue, and we don't. It is through the Warchest Program that we attempt to provide them the aid they need.

Since 1994 the ABCF Warchest has collected monthly donations from ABC groups and the larger anarchist and political prisoner support community. With these funds, we provide reliable non-partisan financial

support of monthly checks of up to \$50 to those revolutionary PP/POWs who are receiving the least financial support to our knowledge. As of December 2025, the Warchest has disbursed over \$273,000 to PP/POWs, either through monthly donations or through emergency aid.

PP/POWs serve the hardest time. The government often attempts to lock them away from their families, friends and supporters. We must not allow them to be isolated. We must work to ensure that their treatment and the conditions they endure are communicated beyond the prison walls. This also brings the harsh reality of political imprisonment much closer to supporters. It reminds us that PP/POWs are not only names and figures, pictures on our shirts and leaflets, but people with personalities and personal needs. And if we forget this or neglect to include it in our work to defend them, our foundations will soon become weak and will soon crumble.

