

Our Organization

2.0 Updated August 2012



**First of May
Anarchist Alliance**



*Updated August 2012
changes are highlighted*

I. Group Name:

First of May Anarchist Alliance

Shortened/abbreviated versions:

First of May

1st of May

Alliance

M1



The First of May, the day of global workers solidarity, was born from the mass struggles of a militant, multi-national, heavily immigrant working-class movement strongly influenced by the revolutionary politics of Anarchism. Going back, in many parts of the world, Mayday has also been a traditional holiday celebrating the end of Winter, the emergence of Spring, and respect for the Earth. More recently May First has become associated with the mass marches of immigrants – the largest workers mobilizations in the history of the United States.

With our name we identify with the history of the masses and martyrs of anti-authoritarian revolt . . . and also with the coming of a new Spring.

II. Purpose

We need a different kind of world - a world without war, exploitation, oppression and ecological devastation. We believe those conditions stem from a social system that ultimately favors only a small ruling class and that they won't give up their profits or power without a struggle. Their system promotes a dog-eat-dog culture and seriously risks a common catastrophe for us all. To live and love, we must fight.

We are committed to organizing the social self-defense against these attacks. We aim to identify, draw out and help build the movements within our communities, workplaces and schools that have the determination, sophistication, and solidarity necessary to resist and ultimately overthrow the system and the underlying authoritarian social relationships that prop it up.

We believe that in order to win the freedom worth fighting for - that the revolution necessary must have an anti-authoritarian character – egalitarian, decentralized, directly democratic, ecological, and internationalist. The anarchist tradition represents the most consistent proponent of revolutionary politics, and we synthesize the lessons and insights of other movements into our anarchist framework including Black Liberation, feminist, indigenous, revolutionary socialist, environmental, queer, and anti-fascist, among others.

We, therefore, organize ourselves as an anarchist force to collectively analyze situations, determine revolutionary strategy, promote anarchist methods and solutions and collaborate on projects within the working classes and social movements with the aim of overthrowing all authoritarian social relations.

III. Politics & Strategy

Our Anarchism

The initial statement of First of May Anarchist Alliance is expressed in the document ***Our Anarchism***. This document may be amended or replaced at a Members Conference. We will strive to have it translated into Spanish and as many other languages as possible.

Position Papers and Strategy Documents articulate the First of May approach to specific questions and struggles. They have been discussed, amended, and approved by the membership at the Members' Conference.

Working Papers are documents that have not yet been ratified (or amended or rejected) by the Members' Conference, but are being actively debated by the Alliance, and in some cases made publicly available for broader discussion. Working Papers may be proposed by any member to (or solicited by) the Members' Conference for approval.

Outlook/Action papers are presented for discussion at each Members Conference where they are debated, amended and approved (or rejected). Outlook/Action (O/A) papers analyze the present moment politically, economically, and culturally -and the dangers and opportunities for oppressed people, the working classes and anarchist revolutionaries. O/A documents are designed to be our guide **until next Conference**. Specific tasks will be outlined as goals to be pursued in line with our broader strategy and as a way of measuring our work. The membership will solicit at least one member or Local Collective to prepare a draft O/A but any member or Local Collective may submit alternative drafts as well.

IV. Structure

First of May Anarchist Alliance begins life with a modest number of members. We do not expect to stay small for long and therefore outline both a provisional and an anticipated organizational structure. In both cases the individual anarchist militant, our ideas and activity, remain at the heart of all that we do and stand for.

Provisional Structure: all members - for now – across regions are part of a common structure whose major decisions are made at the annual Members Conference. Interim decision-making is open to all members. ***Until the Alliance has built strong Local Collectives –First of May will function under this provisional structure.***

Anticipated Structure: M1 will be made up of members who are largely organized in Local Collectives, and attend Members' Conferences which will be the highest decision making body. Local Collectives will determine tactics for implementing Alliance strategy in their area and other Local matters. Delegate Councils made up of delegates from the Local Collectives make decisions between the Conferences within the bounds of strategy and policy set by the members at Conference. Responsibles are members elected to carry out specific tasks for the Alliance within the framework of strategy and policy set by the membership.

Members: individual anarchist militants affiliated to First of May Anarchist Alliance. Members are encouraged to join or help build Local Collectives. *See next section on Membership.*

Local Collectives: 3 or more members in the same city or region. Local Collectives determine tactics and local matters autonomously. Local Collectives send delegates to the Delegate Council (1 delegate per 3 full members).

Delegate Council: Meetings of delegates from all Local Collectives and Members-At-Large, either in person or via phone/email communications to make interim and emergency decisions within the strategy and policies set by the Members Conferences.

Members Conferences: Periodic (preferably annual) meetings of full membership (and invited Supporters) that discuss, debate, and determine the overall politics and strategy of First of May, including an annual Outlook/Action document to guide our work until next Conference. Membership Conferences elect rotating Responsibles to administer the work of the Alliance. The Conference is the highest decision making body of First of May, and can be held more than once a year if necessary. All Working Papers, including O/A should ideally be submitted to the membership 90 days before conference to facilitate the fullest democratic debate.

Responsibles: Members elected at Conference to fulfill administrative roles within the guidelines set by the membership as a whole. For instance: Treasurer, International Secretary, Editor, etc. Responsibles do not set policy and their terms are until next Conference, with the ability to stand for re-election. Rotation of Responsibles is encouraged. Local Collectives may elect Local Responsibles as well. Responsible positions may be reassigned for cause or replaced in cases of resignation by majority of the body.

Supporters: Folks who generally support the work of the First of May Anarchist Alliance and wish to have a formal relationship without having to agree with our full politics or other membership requirements. Supporters offer feedback on our work and projects, make regular financial contributions, help distribute First of May publications and otherwise assist our work. Supporters are not members and so cannot vote, but are often asked to participate in Alliance discussions, meetings and Members Conferences. M1 formally recognizes Supporters by majority vote of the Membership, or by recommendation of a Local Collective. This status should be reviewed and/or renewed at each Conference.

V. Membership

Members:

- Live life consistent with the principles of anti-authoritarian social solidarity
- Agree generally with First of May Anarchist Alliance's basic documents
- Participate as equals in M1 study, discussions and deliberations
- Hold a willingness to discuss all areas of work and maintain organizational confidence
- Work to build a personal/political base within the working classes
- Act to implement our strategy, including keeping all specific commitments
- Distribute First of May publications and other agit-prop
- Submit periodic reports of activity, observations, and ideas

- Contribute monthly dues based on 1% of income
- Have been approved as full member by a majority vote of the Alliance
- May be removed from membership by majority vote for leaving any of the above behind

Joining

We take membership seriously. It is important that new members understand and support the ideas and mission of First of May. **Prospective members** apply to join and an interview will be arranged where they can discuss membership, go over First of May politics, history and by-laws and ask questions or share critiques. The members conducting the interview will report back to the Alliance and after a discussion the prospective member may be approved for **candidate** membership by majority vote. Under the **Anticipated Structure** this process will happen at the level of Local Collective if one exists in their area or, if not, the Delegate Council. Candidate Members may be tentatively approved for membership and start functioning within Local Collectives or as Members-At-Large, but **with an advisory vote** in Alliance-wide decisions. After 6 months the Candidate Member must be approved for Full Membership by the Alliance **after a 2nd interview**.

Dues

An active serious organization that seeks to have an impact in the world needs resources. Active members pay 1% of their wages on a monthly basis to the First of May treasury. Members may pay up to a year in advance. Additional fundraising appeals may be made to the membership for specific projects.

Local collectives and/or First of May treasurer would approve any **exceptions**, with appeals to the Member Conference.

Dues paid by Members in Local Collectives are split evenly between the Alliance and their Local Collectives' treasuries.

VI. General Decision Making Process

No decision-making process is perfect, but we strive to be an ultra-democratic organization where everyone has an equal voice and vote. All members are encouraged to formulate ideas, engage critically, generally speak-up and vote their mind. Those that speak often are reminded to make room for others. **Decisions are made by majority vote after real attempts are made to reach consensus and/or clarify important differences.**

Consensus and its shortcomings

We generally strive for consensus as part of our commitment to collaboration and inclusion. We want decisions implemented by members that feel strongly committed to them. But we also recognize some shortcomings of the consensus model. Consensus can paper over significant differences that deserve to be debated out and clarified. Consensus can be used as a veto by a minority or even by a single individual to stop the majority from acting. Consensus can drag out discussions and decisions so that only those expert at debate and process (and with fewer other responsibilities) are consistently setting the direction of the Group.

Majorities and Minorities

Majority rule is also imperfect in that those members in the minority, possibly a large minority, may feel unrepresented in an organization they have given much to, or unable to honestly carry out work or represent positions that they feel are seriously mistaken.

Minority rights

Members should be generally committed to carrying out all decisions of First of May Anarchist Alliance collectively. But because we realize that we will never all see eye-to-eye on everything and because we stress our members functioning honestly and authentically, and that (importantly) majorities can be flat-out wrong, we make some provisions to maintain a healthy organization:

Anyone in the minority may continue to reasonably advocate for their position within the organization and all channels of First of May communication (listserv, internal bulletins, and external publications) as long as it is not designed to sabotage the implementation of First of May decisions. These members may also indicate their position publicly, taking care not to misrepresent it as the First of May Anarchist Alliance position.

Any member with reservations so strong that they cannot endorse a political position or carry out a strategic decision may request the right to stand aside from any role in carrying it out. This is not a black & white decision. In some situations this will not be a “splitting question” and the Alliance may accommodate this request because of the overall respect for the dissenting members’ character and contributions to First of May.

Revoking membership

However, if the differences are judged to be too significant and/or too consistent, then we probably do not belong in the same Group of this type. The majority would be in its rights to separate. This may be done initially by the Local Collective or Delegate Council. This process of revoking membership should be handled with respect, the goal being not to punish anyone but to defend the politics and purpose of the Alliance. There would be an automatic appeal to the next Members Conference where the decision to suspend and/or revoke membership would be heard (with the suspended or expelled member allowed to argue their case) and either upheld or overturned by majority vote.

Membership can also be suspended or revoked for behavior inconsistent with our principles.

Timeframe

In between Conferences timeframes for decision-making will be set by Alliance Secretary in consultation with proposer.

VII. Communication

Good communication across First of May is vital for a democratic and efficient organization. We want to emphasize face-to-face communication and decision making, supplemented by email, conference calls, and printed pre-Conference Bulletins. We also encourage members to build their own personal ties and channels of communication across the Alliance.

Face-to-Face

- Members Conference (the highest decision making body) annually
- Local Collective meetings (regularly twice a month minimally)
- Delegate Council meetings (at least one face-to-face per year)
- Movement Mobilization/Gatherings (informally or as organized caucuses)

Internet

- First of May will maintain an email list for reports, discussion, debate, and voting.
- Local Collectives should set up their own independent email lists.

Conference Calls

- Provisionally the membership (and then, we anticipate, the Delegate Council) may hold regular conference calls for regular and emergency decisions.

Pre-Conference Bulletins

- To insure full membership access to Conference proposals, 2 Pre-Conference Bulletins will ideally be published prior to each members Conference (with deadlines 90 days and then 40 days prior to conference for responses and late proposals) and should aim to include all formal proposals and any amendments, discussion and debate.

Any members not fluent in English or who struggle with reading will be assisted with translations or verbal review to strive for good understanding of all proposals and debate. Pre-Conference Bulletin will aim to be bilingual English/Spanish (with other languages added as appropriate) at the soonest possible date.

VII. Media, Agit-Prop, Outreach, and Dialogue

A major role of M1 is to promote revolutionary anarchist critique, solutions and methods – and to create dialogue with broad sections of the working classes, especially the most oppressed and exploited sections. Toward this end we aim to publish a newspaper, host a website, distribute posters, stickers, CD's and DVD's, hold Forums, and sponsor public anarchist events.

VIII. Anarchist Movement & Beyond

Replaces VIII. Class Struggle Anarchist Conference & Beyond

Our perspective is for building a North American – and ultimately an international - confederation of anarchist revolutionaries out of significant discussion, debate and coordinated activity on multiple fronts. We are not for rushing towards a premature merger of groups, nor for ruling out a future common organization.

Instead we will seek concrete ways to work with and talk with groups and individuals within the larger anti-authoritarian movement. We will also inevitably learn from and struggle with people and tendencies outside anarchist ranks - but we reject any synthesis with authoritarian politics and approaches. We will judge other groups and tendencies less by their labels and more from our experiences with them in struggle.

End

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