

“I intend to survive.”

— Octavia E. Butler

This is the best advice we know how to give, but it's your life, trust yourself first. It was written for revolutionaries and Queers but it applies to everyone these days. There are many online and offline resources about preparedness but beware: many of them are trying to use your fear for profit.

Things that inspired this zine:

Margaret Killjoy's podcast *Live Like The World is Dying*

Octavia E. Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower*

Dean Spade's book *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During this Crisis (and the Next)*



a Foothill Fire zine
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Foothill Fire is an organization of anarchists and communists fighting for a stateless, classless society.



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They say the night is darkest just before the dawn...

but what do you do when the sun is just setting?

You've probably already noticed that something is wrong. That the systems that you depend on are starting to fail you more often, if they ever really served you. That this Summer really *is* hotter than it was last year, food really *is* way more expensive, the cops really *are* worse than they used to be...

There's a lot to grapple with here. Things aren't supposed to get worse, they're supposed to get better. But it isn't helpful or brave to look away or become hopeless. The time has come to act, and staying prepared gives you more options to fight with.

You aren't the only one waking up to a changing world and you don't have to go through this alone. We're going to get you started and let your imagination go from here!

"It is we who built these palaces and cities, here in Spain and America and everywhere. We, the workers. We can build others to take their place. And better ones.

We are not in the least afraid of ruins.

We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. **We carry a new world here, in our hearts.** That world is growing in this minute."

- Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936), Spanish-born anarchist

Disability, Medical Needs, and Preparedness

"Disabled people are really used to the concept that no one is going to save us." -Leah Lakshmi Piyechnas Amar Singh

There is a lot to be said about disability and preparedness that this zine cannot do justice. If you are disabled, nobody knows you and your disability like you do.

The main point to stress, especially to people who aren't disabled at this time, is to not leave anyone behind or write anyone off. See the earlier section on communities of strength vs. communities of vulnerability. It is beneficial to everyone to live in a community that embraces vulnerability.

If you need powered medical devices or have refrigerated medication, you can protect against outages with battery backups, and some county health services install these for free. There are many means of generating power on a personal or local scale not detailed here. If you're on **medication**, learn how to safely stock up, save extra doses as it's safe to do so, and use first-in-first-out to keep things fresh. Signs that pressed pills have gone bad include: change in color, texture, or smell, pills sticking together, being harder or softer than normal, or being cracked or chipped. Do not take medicine that shows these changes. While most expired medications simply lose potency, all experience chemical changes that can be a threat to you, some can grow bacteria, and impotent antibiotics can cause a stronger, antibiotic resistant infection to develop. Keep your medicines in a cool, dark, dry place.

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Do not not play by the rules your enemy expects, and certainly not the rules your enemy sets. Be cunning and full of tricks. And lastly,

We wouldn't be writing this if we didn't think we had a chance.

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Stored Food

Just like with the rest, the most important step you take is the first. We recommend having a pantry with rotating shelf-stable foods, a long-term food storage with an indefinite shelf life, and some way of producing food like a garden. These three work together to help keep you fed.

An extra can here and there keeps the pantry a little more full. Practice FIFO ("first in, first out" – the oldest thing gets used next) to keep things from spoiling. We highly recommend getting at least one five gallon bucket of food with an indefinite shelf life. These are sold commercially (I've been recommended Augason Farms) but you can make them yourself. Put dried bulk food (like rice, oats, beans, sugar...) in a mylar bag with an oxygen absorber, seal the mylar bag to protect against moisture, and put the bag in a bucket to protect against pests. This is just to lay out the concept, this is not a tutorial. Sealed honey and salt both keep well on their own. When assessing food for spoilage, trust your nose and eyes, and if you think something is poison... don't taste-test it.

Canned goods may be spoiled if they are deeply dented, rusty, or swollen. A hiss is normal but don't eat from a can if there's a loud release of gas or it spurts when you open it, it's an indication of bacterial growth, which can create potentially deadly toxins. Acidic food and high temperatures (>100°F (38°C)) sharply decrease shelf life of cans. **Dried foods** remove water so that it does not enable the growth of microorganisms, which can be achieved by drying, salting, or freeze-drying. Done properly, these last until an outside force spoils them. Dried meats must still meet minimum cooking temperatures at some point to be safe to eat (145°F for beef, 165°F for poultry). Dry goods like flour usually spoil with sights and smells that make it obvious it's no good. Look for insects or insect waste and pungent smells. Freezing food can preserve it but it does not sanitize it or reverse spoilage.

Other Items

Theoretically, cigarettes do not expire, but after about two years they do get stale and have dull smell and bitter taste. The home trick to rehydrate them is to place them in a plastic bag with a slice of bread or moist paper towel. Vape juice lasts about two years (a date set by the propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin). All forms of processed nicotine lose potency over time. Rubber, elastic, and latex break down over time (which is why you should use your condoms within 5yrs of manufacture). Sunscreen that uses chemical barriers (as opposed to physical barriers like titanium dioxide and zinc oxide) start to lose their effectiveness after 3 years. Gasoline goes "stale" after about 30 days of being stored and is still usable for about 3-6 months. This is due to oxidation removing octane, the combustible component in gas. This shelf life can be increased with very well sealed containers or with fuel stabilizers, which advertise two additional years of fuel stability.

Anxiety

When you picture the future and learn more about what's been changing for the worse, you may be filled with dread, anxiety, and fear. Talking about collapse isn't going to make you just either happy or sad, it's more complex – *you're* more complex. Allow room for that.

For us, preparation helps alleviate anxiety. I am scared of a wildfire harming me → I keep my fuel tank at least half full, a bag of essentials in my trunk in case of evacuation, and plan some ways out of town → I stop worrying about wildfire because if one happens, I know what to do.

The only way to play a game is to believe that you can win. More and more people understand what is going on in the world and are prepared to act. Things were never good, and there is not an ideal past to return to. The only way out is through.

Change is the only constant. Change must be used, molded, embraced. To be brave, you must first be afraid. Always afraid, never a coward.

Permission To Escape / What is going on?

Maybe there's a part of you that's willing to admit that some aspects of disaster *excite* you. The idea that you'd be thrust into a thrilling situation of high stakes problem solving instead of forced to sit in traffic on the way to your useless job. The idea of stepping out of the cage, no matter what broke the bars. If you can use this as a source of inspiration, energy, and joy, we encourage you to.

As you move through the project of preparation, you should figure out what you think is happening. Are you preparing to buy time until the government saves you or are you preparing to build a new world from the ashes of the old? What you believe in will inform the way you prepare.

You might want to have the same opinions as everyone you work with, but that can be an unrealistic and often counter-productive idea. A diversity of tactics and strategies can be very helpful. Harmony was always more beautiful than unison. In disaster, the people near you are the people you have. Before you write someone off thinking they won't be interested or you're too different, remember that preparedness can attract anyone and disasters make for strange allies.

Not All At Once

Preparedness is not something you will *arrive* at. It is a journey, not a destination. Every thing you do makes you better prepared to handle all sorts of situations, but there is nothing you can do that will make you totally prepared for every possible scenario. Just like how preparedness is a slowly building process, collapse is a process. It has already started and will continue to develop over time.

Preparedness as Part of Life

Preparedness can sound like adding another expensive task. If you want to get real fancy, you can spend a lot of money, but “prepper gear” is mostly an attempt to profit off of fear and you can definitely do this cheaply. In fact, the most realistically prepared people tend to be poor, and have extra food and cash tucked away for hard times because they know what it is to be hungry.

So fit it in where you can. Make it a part of your lifestyle. You can learn the streets of your town better by taking a new way home from work today. If there's a deal on bulk rice, make it happen, if you can't this week then don't. You can get some stuff by just taking it home from work (just kidding...?).

Author and anarchist Margaret Killjoy describes “dating the apocalypse” – treating collapse as a committed romantic partner, as in something that affects your life decisions but is not the only thing to consider. Do I want to go do eight years of college if I think the economy will collapse by the time I could use my degree?

Threat Modeling

What's threatening you? How does it work? What is your relationship to it? What are its strengths, weaknesses, and how do your strengths and weaknesses compare? How do you confront the threat where it is weak and you are strong?

To be prepared, you have to know what it is you're preparing for. It doesn't have to be just one thing. We'll keep using the wildfire example: Because our town is at risk for wildfires, we need to prepare for evacuations and smoke. Smoke sucks, so we keep hundreds of N95 dust masks so we have plenty to share on smokey days. For evacuations, keep enough gas in my car that it won't run out sitting in traffic and a bag of things like food, water, lights, and a sleeping bag. Being stuck in traffic could get us killed, so we plan alternate routes.

Preparing for the most likely problem also prepares you against ones that are less likely or less dangerous. For example, keeping a bag of essentials in your car will come in handy if your car breaks down or if you just want to stay the night somewhere you didn't plan to.

Start with one scenario and then start thinking about others. What if you have to take shelter stuck where you live, or get far away, and what kind of things put you in either situation?

Hypotheticals are very helpful. Think of a situation and then ask questions about it. *I think I can get myself out in an evacuation, but who do I know that would need help?*

What would I do if the cops came knocking at my door? What about fascist vigilantes? Follow your hypothetical as far as you want to take it.

Skills and Skillshares

When it comes to building skills, look to your passions to see what you should do. Don't force yourself to learn how to weld when you hate loud noises and can't stand being hot. Not only will you be worse at skills you don't like but you'll sink a bunch of energy in and burn out. Follow what you are interested in and passionate about. Attend skill shares and see what you like or don't like – you might surprise yourself.

Skills are something you can give away without losing anything, so get giving and get learning! Most people have a skill they're passionate about and would love to share it. It doesn't have to be formal or professional or anything, and it doesn't have to be one of your friends doing the sharing - you can just find someone who knows something and see if they want to talk to you about it. Skills can include anything: medicine, sewing, welding, knitting and crotchet, tracking, speaking, construction, mediation, massage, food preservation, stargazing, farming, backpacking, a language, repairs of all kinds, navigation, maintenance of cars and bicycles, fitness, firearms...

Water

Water is just as important as you think it is and honestly, pretty easy to store. A person needs about a gallon of drinking water per day. Again, that's just for drinking and doesn't include cooking or cleaning.

Like all of preparedness, your first step is the most important one. Your first three gallons make you way more prepared than the average person. Start with a three day supply and work your way to a three week supply, then three months... and get a filter (the Sawyer Mini is great and only \$24).

It's easier to store water than you might imagine. Take a clean container, fill it with drinkable water, store it away from sunlight and heat, and cycle it out once a year. You can wash out drink containers or buy filled jugs. Water itself doesn't “spoil” but things in water can poison it, so make sure you're cleaning containers thoroughly and protecting from sunlight (sunlight can feed things that'll grow in your water). Plastic containers eventually give you a plasticky taste: protect them against heat, cycle the water out at least once per year, and consider packing some electrolyte powder to cover the taste.

If you're cleaning water by boiling it, bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 1 minute (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for at least 3 minutes). Both boiling and (most) filtering **does not** remove industrial chemicals, like in the case of a chemical spill or other industrial water contamination event. This is one of the reasons why storing water in the first place is important.

If you know water supply will soon be lost (to contamination, frozen pipes, or the water system will be affected by a big storm), consider stocking a supply by filling up any containers you have and filling your bathtub if you have one. Prioritize water for drinking and consider creating a greywater system, where water is used multiple times (like showering, and then using the dirty shower water to fill the tank that flushes your toilet).

Cover, Concealment, and the Survivability Onion

The survivability onion is a method of assessing and avoiding risk to survive in a combat scenario, but it can be applied elsewhere. Worth mentioning here is the difference between cover and concealment: *Cover* protects you by stopping incoming projectiles (bullets) and *concealment* protects you from being seen (so the person shooting can't target you in the first place).

Don't be there. Avoid exposure.

Don't be seen. If a threat cannot detect the presence of potential target then it can't be engaged. Remember your concealment. Some find it necessary to also note that you can avoid being seen by a threat by eliminating it before it sees you.

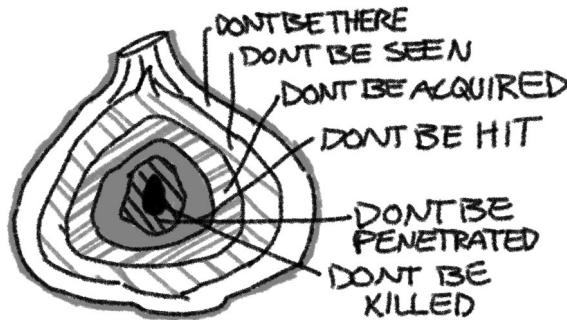
Don't be acquired. The threat may simply choose not to engage with you. Encourage this, possibly by de-escalation or by making yourself look like you're not worth the trouble.

Don't be hit. The most effective way to not be hit is to end the engagement as soon as possible (close the engagement by eliminating the threat or by escaping it). Remember your cover.

Don't be penetrated. All else has failed: perhaps you resist a knife swing with slash-resistant clothing, or a shot strikes your body armor.

Don't be killed. As long as you can move, you can fight: to survive, you must win or evade.

Once the threat is no longer relevant, treat wounds!



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"You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend."

Bruce Lee, *Bruce Lee: A Warrior's Journey*

Communities of Strength vs Communities of Vulnerability

In Stacy Clifford Simpican's book *The Capacity Contract*, part of which looks at how disability is included in political theory, she makes a distinction between two different types of political communities:

Liberalism and anything further to political right tends to create **communities of strength**: "you're on my team because you can do something". You're strong, fast, intelligent, speak the same language as me... consider for example how xenophobes talk about immigrants by debating what they "have to offer" a country. Whatever support or love you can get in a community of strength is conditional: "we love you for what you have to offer while you still offer it".

We on the political left can (and do) build **communities of vulnerability** - "you're on my team because we both need something". At first this might sound like making ourselves easy targets or something, but we already have vulnerabilities and disabilities and ignoring them doesn't make us stronger, it makes us weaker. There is an intense shame surrounding weakness that leads us to hide it from ourselves and others. People will always be drawn to a community that is willing to accept them with their flaws. Strong labor unions don't start because the workers realize they're strong, they start with workers realizing they have shared vulnerabilities that their bosses don't.

This is also why punching nazis is an ideologically smart move. When a nazi screaming about being member of a powerful "master race" gets their ass handed to them, it proves their weakness.

In fact, all oppression requires constant maintenance to continue the lie that it is all-powerful. It takes constant work to hide vulnerability, and there will always be opportunities to make weaknesses known.

The Bunker Mentality, the Individual, and Community

The bunker mentality is the idea that you can be saved by separating yourself from the rest of the world. It is hiding in a bunker screaming "fuck you, I've got mine". It's a harmful mentality and it doesn't even work.

Now, the bunker mentality is a specific trap to fall in, and it is different than stockpiling resources. You need to stockpile resources to make sure you're taken care of (putting less strain on your community to take care of you) and to share with your community (making sure the community is taken care of).

Being a prepared individual helps your community and being a prepared community helps each individual in the community. The needs of the community and the needs of the individual are not opposing forces.

Networking / The Individual

As a person living today, you've already seen supply lines and communication lines threatened. What happens when they go down and *stay* down? Anyone familiar with anarchist organizing knows the power of a decentralized network. You're going to need supply lines and communication lines of your own. Whenever you need a skill or some materials, there's almost certainly someone out there who can meet your need. Find them and connect with them.

Capitalism teaches you that if you need something, you have to do it by yourself. Because of this, when you start looking at preparedness, you could feel like you have to learn how to be everything you need – a doctor, farmer, seamstress... but that isn't true. We build communities of interconnected strengths and vulnerabilities every day. Learn about what you're passionate about and we will provide for each other.

Things You Might Forget

In the final few pages, we'll talk about specific practical things like keeping food and water. It can be easy enough to think about what you need to just stay alive (after all, you've made it this far alive), but there are some bonus things that you might appreciate a reminder on:

Do not forget your mental health. Prepare things that make you happy, comfortable, and entertained. Never hurt anybody to pack a deck of cards. If you have any pets, don't forget to look out for them.

Hygiene supplies are often ignored. We don't care if you stink, but you'll probably be happier with some floss, toilet paper, soap, and face wipes.

When keeping canned goods, don't forget a can opener. This thinking applies everywhere. Either imagine or actually practice using the supplies you're storing. Does it all work? Do you have what you need?

If we lose power and/or the internet, anyone who uses those things will be losing access to a huge amount of information and media, both personal and public. Anything stored "in the cloud" would be gone.

You could get a cheap old iPod and load it up with your favorite music, burn CDs, or at least download music to be available offline. Print out your favorite photos and keep them on a thumb drive for offline access.

One of the biggest losses would be online tutorials. For this, we've been collecting do-it-yourself zines and textbooks and guidebooks on practical skills.

If you're preparing to lose internet but expect to be able to charge your devices, you can download videos and music to play later. Wikipedia offers a free download of all its content to interested users.

Resilience

The first thing you will notice about being prepared is that it will start "smoothing out the bumps" pretty quickly. Maybe you had a random sleepover, but the bag you keep in your trunk meant you had pajamas and a toothbrush. Somebody crashed into an electric pole so you won't have power tonight, but you have a headlamp and a book. Your tap water started running brown and your landlord is going to take a week to fix it, but you have stored drinking water to fall back on. The more resilient you are, the more problems you can manage and the more options you have to manage them. It's an investment that becomes useful quickly and doesn't all have to be about massive disasters.

The Harm Reduction Model

The harm reduction model is something that drug users created to make their communities safer against overdoses and transmittable disease without stigma. It is exactly what it says on the box: working for there to be less harm. Where you cannot eliminate harm, reduce it. It's a pretty helpful model in a culture obsessed with perfection and purity. Embrace change. Never a failure, always a lesson.

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When becoming prepared, you should try to be realistic in the way you're using your resources. It's fun to focus on the flashy exciting preparations, but if you have room for either snacks or a gas mask in your purse, which is more likely to be useful today?

Keep Long-Term Goals and Embrace Hope

Faced with the problems of every day life, long term goals can feel unthinkable. This is as true of preparedness as it is of activism or of regular life. That being said, we ask you to look beyond and dream big. What does your perfect situation look like? What kind of world do you want for yourself and your friends? How are your small goals serving your big ones? Don't be afraid to change your goals, big or small, but you do need to have them.

When you imagine collapse, consider the good things. You and your friends painting pictures on the sides of abandoned corporations, never clocking in to another job. Going somewhere else because you felt like it.

Being hopeless doesn't make you brave and being cynical doesn't make you smart. Be willing to believe in a better world, it's the only way to fight for one.