

Scott Campbell on the Narco State, Eco-Extremism, and Popular Resistance from Below in Mexico

It's Going Down

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We recently caught up with Scott Campbell, a reoccurring translator and writer for *It's Going Down*, as well as the author of the column *Insumision*, which details and analyzes unfolding social movements, struggles, as well as the overall political landscape in so-called Mexico. Beyond just talking about Scott's contributions to *IGD*, we more over talk about his plans to launch a trip into Mexico for the purpose of interviewing collectives, groups, organizations, and individuals about what is going down in their regions and what they think of the current social and political landscape. The trip will serve to build bridges with anti-authoritarian, indigenous, anti-capitalist, and anarchist movements, groups, projects, and struggles, and also expand our understanding as to what is happening in Mexico and why.

For an intro to the upcoming tour and to much of Scott's work, we encourage people to listen to the interview with Scott that was conducted by the *Final Straw*. In our interview we focus on things that have been happening in Mexico over the last year and how resistance movements have responded. First, we discuss the broadly the history of anarchist ideas in Mexico and then move on to the Normalista movement and how struggles have evolved since the 2014 disappearance by state and narco forces of 43 students in Ayotzinapa. We then discuss the most current teachers' strike in Oaxaca and the strike in San Quentin by farm workers which has lead to a boycott of Driscoll's berries (among others here in the US). We also talk about recent developments in various social movements and their implications, such as within the Zapatistas as well as the growth of the so-called eco-extremist groups, such as Wild Reaction and others. We then touch on the anarchist movement in Mexico, and Scott compares it to the United States and outlines his hopes for creating concrete links across North America.

We then end our discussion by talking about why certain myths about Mexican migrants continue to hold sway among many US citizens and who these myths end up benefiting. We then conclude by talking about how the fierce resistance to the Narco State in Mexico shows the deep contradictions between the racist stereotypes promoted by the far-Right and actual reality.

Host: All right. Thanks for tuning in. This is the one the only that's going down podcast and itsgoingdown.org. This podcast is really great. It's really long, so please stick with it. It's really insightful. This is a in-depth interview with Scott Campbell. He's a very current translator and writer for it's going down in the auth. Of the column in submission, which details unfolding, social movement struggles and the overall political climate in Mexico beyond Scott's contribution side, GD we wanted to use this podcast as an opportunity to not only talk about his upcoming trip to Mexico, which he plans to use as a way to talk with different groups and collectives and individuals. And social struggles and movements be the anti authoritarian indigenous,

anti capitalist or anarchist. But to talk about what he's been writing about in Mexico and what's been happening there, we start our friend interview talking about the normalista movement and the movement of various students in Mexico, as well as the unfolding teacher strike in Oaxaca. The strike in San Quentin, which has led to the boycott of Driscoll's berries here in the US, and also updates. It's different movements such as Deputises and the growth of so-called eco extremist groups such as wild reaction and others. We didn't talk about the actual anarchist movement in Mexico, and Scott compared to what's happening in the. United States and talks about his desire to build concrete links across North America here in the US and Canada. Within. In our discussion, talking about why certain myths about Mexican migrants persist, and how do the fierce resistance to the so-called narco state in Mexico showed the deep contradictions between the racist stereotypes run by the far right and actual reality? This is a great interview. We really hope you enjoy it. And as always, if you can go on, it's going down org. You can donate, become a monthly sustainer and really help us grow a time when Rebel media and autonomous anti capital voices are needed. Now more than ever. And once again, here's Scott Campbell. Thanks a lot for showing me. OK, so we're joined here today with Scott Campbell. Scott is obviously the author of the Great, The Great Column we have on. It's going down the. Rounds up things going down in Mexico. Scott is about to partake in a trip. Scott was just on the final straw radio show that you should have been able to see, and it's going down. He talked there about his trip, about the column. So we're not going to really. We are going to talk a little bit about that, but we want to get into some more stuff. But Scott, why don't you just start off by telling people if they haven't read it already? About the column and about the trip.

Scott Campbell Sure. Well, thanks for having me on. And intimacy on is a calm. I've been putting together for it's going down since March and we've put out 14 this year, comes out every two to four weeks, depending on what's happening and how much time I have and it attempts to really encapsulate the. What's been happening over that time period since the last column came out so. Two to two weeks or a month. It looks at resistance in Mexico. What social movements are up to? What repression has been happening, as well as trying to put all of that into a context that makes it understandable to those who may not be so familiar with what's what's happening in Mexico and to provide. Hopefully a constructive radical critique of. Of of some of the activities so that it's not just straight reporting, but there's some analysis, some contextualization, and hopefully some inspiration that people get learning about what's happening down there.

Host: OK, great. And we're going to, we're going to really get into a lot of these looking at some of these different social struggles and tensions and just different big things have been happening in Mexico. While we talk to you and I'm really excited about that. But tell us, tell us a little bit about the trip. I know you talked about this on the final straw, but if you can just kind of tell people why you're going and what you hope to get out of it and why they should potentially donate to help you get there.

Scott Campbell Absolutely. Will the trip is set to happen in a couple of months, I'll. Be headed down. There for about four or five weeks and we'll be visiting several locations throughout Mexico. I've been traveling to Mexico since 1999 and have lived there for about a total of three years. And have been particularly involved with. Radicals, anarchists, social movements. So I've had a lot of connections and those have even grown stronger. And I've built up new ones since I've been doing the intimacy on column and we've been producing translations of news and and articles and communiques from Mexico. So the the intent is to. Get to as many places as I can and talk to as many folks as I can who are involved. In everything from urban struggles around gentrification, creating autonomous spaces, culture, the production of independent news and media anti prison work, and just articulating and organizing a new society, and then going into villages, indigenous communities that are. Fighting back against extractive industries against neoliberal infrastructure projects and also transforming how they make decisions and participate in the communal life of. Of where they live in their territory, without the use of political parties, without the participation of the state, and hopefully will also be visiting Chiapas and looking at what's happening with the Zapatistas if they and the National Indigenous Congress end up deciding to run a presidential candidate. We'll of course be talking to teachers, radical anarchist teachers who participated in the uprising earlier this year. So there's a lot of opportunities and I'm. Just going to try and do as much work as possible and then put out content, video, podcasts, photos, analysis, interviews, anything you can think of to hopefully build up these connections and build understanding and and opportunities for solidarity.

Host: OK, great. All right. Well, let's let's just get right into it. I'm I'm I'm curious if you could to just kind of open this up to maybe speak to kind of really broadly and and obviously this could be a podcast in itself. But but the way in which anarchist or anti authoritarian anti capitalist ideas have played a role in Mexican social struggles and movements. Obviously, a lot of people have heard of the the Zapatistas, both both the first incarnation and the current one. But also like Forest, Meghan and Magoon and all those people. But can you just talk about like overall like what has been the the over lasting influence and how big are these ideas? Have they played out in resistance movements in Mexico?

Scott Campbell Yeah, that's a big topic, but I'm I'm happy to to take a look at it. As you mentioned, I mean anarchism has a long, long history in Mexico. Ever since, you know, back during the Porfiriato under Ricardo, when Ricardo Flores Magon and his brothers, Enrique and Jesus, coming out of Oaxaca, started, the Liberal Party started publishing regeneracion and started advocating. Anarchist ideas that that heavily impacted the course in thinking of the Mexican Revolution, which was over 100 years ago at this point and. And Mexico, ever since, since the revolution, which was founded, conducted largely along issues of access to land. And the for the benefit of the people who are being exploited under basically the colonial reign of of the US, the French and then the Porfiriato, which was the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, who industrialized the

country for the benefit of of corporations and the church. And UM. So. Mexico, like the Mexican Revolution itself, the the outcome of it, although extremely problematic, and which led to the creation of the the the party of the Institutional revolution, the pre, you know, the pre used to be part of what is ostensibly a Socialist Party, and it did a lot of. Work nationalizing industries, really. Building up sort of. A welfare state type apparatus very clientelist sort of mixture between the state and popular movements and unions and that sort of thing. And it had a a socialist orientation, although that quickly faded once it became more interested in maintaining power than it did. Working for the benefit of of the Mexican people and we see like the the radical ideas that came out of the Mexican Revolution were at first embraced by the political elite and although tampered down extensively after they assassinated Zapata and and crushed via and that sort of thing. But. The latent notion that that the people deserve. Autonomy, self-determination, and to be able to decide the course of their own lives and the the the parameters of their existence that's remained. And we see that in the guerrilla movements from the Sixties, 70s and 80s, which were primarily Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyist, we also see a heavy. The anarchist influence. In the student movement through the 60s, including the the mobilizations that led to the thought, the local massacre in 1968, when thousands of students were killed right before the Olympics, and this has continued, I mean, there's been a very strong anarcho punk scene in Mexico for decades. There have been occupations, there have been. Really it's it's been. Presence throughout, you know, ever since the the Mexican Revolution and people have been sort of mixing these ideas that stem from the revolution stem from indigenous communities and stemmed from perhaps more western conceptualization of anarchism and applying them into that own mixture and coming up with what works for them inside of a Mexican. Context and as. Urbanization has grown as neoliberal capitalism has had a huge and just devastating impact on Mexico since the early 90s. We've seen the militancy of the anarchist movement, the growth of the anarchist movement and the links it's been making, and it's increased participation in other social movements really take off. And so now it's very vibrant. It's very powerful. The governments very scared. Of it. And they faced a lot of repression, but they also put together some amazing and inspiring resistance and and creative projects, both on the offensive and defensive.

Host: Awesome. Yeah. We're going to talk more specifically about anarchism, along with other movements in in a bit, but I was hoping we could go to into the column. And, you know, when you first started writing, you know, one of the biggest things that was on people's minds was. The students that were disappeared and that ties into the normal, least of movement. I was just kind of curious if you could just talk to people. A lot of people have seen, you know, and it's going down other websites. Obviously people in masks. I mean, they look like black block fighting. With the police. And people that have been fighting for the people that have been disappeared. But I'm wondering if you can just. Kind of flush out for people. What are the normal leases? What do they want and and how are they organizing themselves and just kind of more

about that because I I feel like you know a lot of people, including myself, don't really know that much about the normal listas. I'm kind of just, yeah, just about.

Scott Campbell Absolutely. The normal listas are students are college students who attend schools called Normales, which they used to exist in the US and elsewhere, where they're basically normal schools teaching where you go to school to learn how to be a teacher. These are also byproducts of the Mexican Revolution, and they were specifically. Created to provide. Education, training and education for people who are going to go into rural and indigenous communities and teach there. And so it had to encompass more than just walking into the classroom, giving a lesson and going home. But what it meant to be in community, what it meant to be an outsider working with a very close knit community. And how do you contribute to the community? Beyond providing sort of straightforward education in a classroom, this led to a necessarily political analysis of education, which was heavily influenced by. A lot of socialist and communist thought and some anarchist thought, and there was for years the Mexican state has tried to shut down the normal schools and even Vicente Fox. A few months ago gave a he gave an interview where he was talking about how when I first came into office. I was told that these normales were hot beds. Of guerrilla warfare and Trotskyism. And then we had. To shut them down. And to some extent, it's it's true, not so much the guerrilla warfare that definitely has like Trotsky, but, for example, when talking about. Ayotzinapa. Hold up. Let me back up a little bit. So you have these schools that train people to go into communities and address their political and educational and communal needs. That in the eyes of the government leads to people having a a broader conception of. What their needs are and why they are not getting met and so it it. It's a tool that politically empowers communities and supports them in their struggle to to get their needs met, to live in, in security and well-being. And so the state doesn't like it, and as a result of the the trainings in these normal schools, they've led to some powerful movements such as you heard about Lucio Cabanas and Henaro Henaro Vasquez. I believe his name is who created the party of the Poor in Guerrero. Both of those guys were. Graduates of Ayotzinapa. And UM, they fought a guerilla war. Very popular guerrilla war in the mountains of Guerrero for many years. And it led to the creation of The Dirty War by the by the Mexican government, which was a smaller version of The Dirty War carried out in Latin America, where villages were were cleansed, people were. Disappeared massacres took place, and that legacy, that intellectual legacy comes directly out of. These normal schools.

Scott Campbell And in the case of Ayotzinapa, they have, you know, from Lucio Cabanas on a very militant legacy of struggle. They. To education as part of a broader whole of anti capitalist struggle of self determination of the of autonomy, it often comes through more say, authoritarian, socialist lens. But they're not out there. You know, selling papers. They want to go into communities. And help people organize to fight for themselves and they see the state trying to shut down these schools and they see the state attacking the communities where they want to go and teach. And so they're very organized politically, they. There's a network of UM, it's called flexum. The student,

like Farmer, socialist, farmer and Student Federation of Mexico, which is a network of all the normal schools. There are several primarily at Michoacan, Guerrero. Tapas, wahaca and mainly throughout southern Mexico, there used to be more, but most have been shut down and they organized marches. They organized conferences, they. Frequently have highway blockades that clash with the police all the time. Primarily, their demands are more funding for schools, more funding for the normal schools, more funding for rural schools and indigenous communities, and the state has come up with this clever new way where they refuse to hire students who graduate from normal. Schools as teachers, and so they've been fighting to get jobs once they graduate, because if they can't go into the communities, it's the state that holds the per string of education, obviously. So if they can't go into the communities then, then they leave without a place to. Go. And. So I have I also now, but it obviously has this. This notes and legacy of resistance and on September 26th in 2014, they were headed up to Mexico City for to participate in the October 2nd commemoration March of the Thoughts of local massacre and. As is common in Mexico, social movements often take over public transit, and so they commandeered a few buses. They were stopped by local police in the military and according to the latest theory, that seems plausible. They unknowingly commandeered buses that had more than \$2,000,000 worth of heroin hidden on. Board. And they the cartel called the army who facilitates the. The trafficking of drugs through the area and said you got to get us this drug back, these drugs back. So the army showed up and they opened fire, stopped the buses. But they realized that if they were going to unload the buses. These students would see them unloading, you know, millions of dollars worth of heroin. And that couldn't happen. So the thinking is that the army disappeared, the students to preserve the the clandestinity of the so-called clandestinity of the of their involvement with the drug trade. Which makes sense because the last time like students. Those signals registered they all registered from a military base nearby. Wow. And so. Those 43 have disappeared. They remain looking for them. I mean the the corruption and impunity in that case is so monstrous and so just like it. Really. You really gotta impress. Be impressed with the degree that the Mexican government just does not care and thinks they can get away with it. Literally is 1 like.

Host: Right.

Scott Campbell Institutions internationally respected institutions from the Organization of American States out of the country who are trying to investigate it, and so IOTA now. But like that led to huge, huge protests around Mexico and it did include people like masking up, getting together in black blocks and throwing down against the state like super militant stuff. People were attacking institutions, they were ramming them with trucks, setting things on fire. There were blockades, and this was happening all over the country and it really looked like a huge threat to the. Team. And So what the regime did was using its friends in the media, was to create this division that we're so familiar with here in the US between the the peaceful and the violent protester, between the anarchists and everyone else. And it got so bad that even the Zapatistas, who will have some anarchist tendencies or not anarchists themselves, sent out a com-

munique. Saying, you know, people who mask up and fight the state, they're not the bad guys and stop talking about them like.

Host: That can you just real quick. Can you talk about like, OK, when does that batistas intervene like that? How big of a deal is? That I guess. Like does that does that influence people like, is that a big deal, or are most people that would hear? That are just like, Oh yeah, I already knew that.

Scott Campbell I think. It's definitely less of a big deal than it used to be, but it's still a big deal when the Zapatistas write something, it gets republished all over, including in in the more left-leaning mainstream media, they'll they'll publish the communiques in full.

Host: Which is crazy, you know.

Scott Campbell Yeah, it is. And it it tends to it impacts some opinion. There's this notion that which is usually correct, but that whatever the Zapatistas say sort of is is the correct analysis at the moment, which the ZAP piece is like everyone else can be wrong and. Have been wrong. But uh. Like in this case they were right and and people who get caught up like, it's incredible. The power of the media. Like we see it here in the US, but it's even more blatant in Mexico and just being bombarded through every means of communication with this certain message that this is the narrative people can start to believe in and start thinking that way. Without even realizing it, and so to have that Zapatistas interject that voice and say, hey, let's, let's reframe this discussion. It does help. It didn't obviously sway the vast majority of Mexicans who aren't gonna read the Zapatistas anyways, but it did help people who may have been on the fence and starting to. That, like the the militancy and and thinking, yeah, maybe there is something worth criticizing here, yeah.

Host: Wow. Well, can you talk about like, where where do you see the normal ease of movement now? What is it trying to do and what's going on with the the people that have been disappeared currently?

Scott Campbell It's been the normalises throughout most of this year were we're lining up with the the teachers union during the strikes that were happening and they played a big role in particular in Michoacan where continuously the battle. There has been for employment following graduation as well as more funding for schools, and they've been, I mean, it seems like at least once a month they'll blockade like train tracks in Mitchelton and set trucks on fire on the train tracks, which is a big deal because the trains run to Lazaro Cardenas. Which is Mexico's biggest port. And so they're blocking the traffic of goods and merchandise. So they've been subjected to a lot of repression in IO T Napa, like the students just blockaded the highway on December. 12th I think, which was the five year anniversary of two iodine office students who were shot dead during a protest in 2011. And so iota, of course, has been experiencing repression long before the 43 were disappeared. And unfortunately, while people are still paying attention to the. Place it's lost some of its urgency and some of its momentum as it's faded into the past. The parents continue having encampments in Mexico City. They're continue being marches and and commemorations. The 26th of

every month there's a new. Commission that's been sent from whatever it's called the Inter American Human Rights Commission or whatever that's supposedly following up on the 1st commissions work after they got ran out of Mexico. But I think the state is just is hoping to to block enough that people forget and unfortunately. Well, there were big commemorations on the two year anniversary. There is. It's not mobilizing people like it used to.

Host: Well, let's switch gears a little bit. Let's talk about the teacher strike. That was one of the another big things that you covered over the course of the months of the the call has been going. Some people are aware of the uprising that took place in 2006 and we don't need to go into that too much. But I'm just curious if you could just kind of lay the groundwork for. What happened in the strike? Why was it important? And kind of what tensions did it show like with with the Union because it is a, you know, it is considered A at least segments of a radical union and it has this ability to mobilize so many people. So what happened with it and why was it important?

Scott Campbell Right on. It's, uh. The strike began on March on May 15th, which is the day of the teacher every year in Mexico, teachers belonging to the National Coordinator of Education Workers, which is. Is it's called a dissident faction of the main union, which is the National Union of Education Workers, the SNTE, the main union and then the CNTE, which is the the dissident union. The dissident union exists inside the main union. The main union is entirely loyal to the government and completely useless. OK. 36 years the CNT E has existed the cente we call it and it start in Chiapas, the strongest union now is in Oaxaca. And they were the people who pushed the 2006 uprising, which led to the formation of the popular assemblies of the People of Oaxaca. And led to the government and police being run out of the state and people running it via assembly for about 5 months before it was crushed by federal forces, and that legacy remains really strong in Oaxaca and that, I mean, it's probably one of the most significant. Uprisings and rebellions internationally in in the 2000s, and a lot of those networks, communications, forms of struggle remain latent 10 years later. So when the strike happened, usually it happens every year. It's just part of the bargaining process. This year, as with 2006, the state said we're not going to. Talk to you. And instead we're just going to use. Course and the big grievance that the Union had is the the so-called educational reform, which began to be implemented in 2013. There was also a big struggle with severe repression back then. But this time, instead of a state by state strike, it was a national strike of all sente workers, which is about. Well over 100,000 teachers. And it was strongest in Michoacan, Mexico City, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas, with some even up in Nuevo Leon and and in Monterrey and Veracruz and and elsewhere. So the the educational reform, basically privatizes education is subjects. More state control over the Union in deciding who can teach and what are the qualifications for teaching. They have to pass an assessment, but there's sort of a. It's like the same deal with no Child Left Behind, where they have a standard of testing that they put the teachers to and evaluate the students performance on. But there are some communities that don't even have school buildings, but yet they're

supposed to pass the test. The same test that's given to the most elite high schools and in the wealthiest parts of Monterrey or Mexico City. And so it's completely, I mean it's complete nonsense and it just it erodes a lot of the power of the Union. And so they weren't having it. And the one thing about the Union and this is that it does have a broader conceptualization of struggle than many unions we're familiar with. So when they go on strike, they demand it's typically not over wages. It's typically over government policy, more funding for education. And they also throw in demands. Justice for ayotzinapa, freedom for political prisoners and that sort of thing since the state did. Negotiate repression increased, blockade started happening and then there was the massacre and no cheat. LON, when police opened fire for about four hours on a barricade and killed 11 people, one other person was killed that day in a separate confrontation in Wahaca. And in total, during the struggle in Wahaca, I think 14 or 15 people were killed by the state. And that really kicked things off to a whole nother level of resistance where we saw coordinated actions around the country in Mexico City in one day. There were like 70 different marches and blockades that shut down highways into and out of the city, shut down in central downtown Mexico City and really show the. Power that these unions have to bring people out. And so that's the plus side. The downside is that the Union is successful because. It is organized, it's relatively well funded, and if you belong to the Union, you you have to show up in these actions, right? So it's less of a choice. It's more of an obligation. They take roll call and attendance at the actions. If you're not there, you get in trouble. So yeah, it's funny being in marches and like.

Host: Can we start doing meeting meetings like that, please?

Scott Campbell They take it. Exactly right. And so if the Union says we protest, we have an encampment. You know, people show up. You have to send a certain amount of people from your, your district or local or whatever. And because they have the power to mobilize, saying wahaca 80,000 people at the snap of a finger like that means they're forced to be contended with. And so a lot of organizations and movements. That don't have that same mobilization power pin a lot of their hopes on the unions's ability to mobilize. So if the Union steps up and takes action, people who are also passed off but not as able to to mobilize, will join that struggle because they also see the teachers have a broader vision than just fighting for them. Supposedly and. That's especially when the repression happened and because the teachers have the legacy that they do, especially in Chiapas and wahaca of really stepping up and confronting the state and being willing to take losses and to fight back. People will join them, and that's what we saw when it became more of a popular revolt. As opposed to a teacher's movement and the teachers slowly began to realize this and began holding consultations with socializations with indigenous communities, and began to implement. Demands that reflected both those of the people and those of the teachers. Unfortunately, what happened is that at the end of the day, like I wrote about. The teachers union is still a teachers union and it's not a revolutionary vehicle, and when the one thing the state has always been able to do, to demobilize the cente

is invite them to the negotiating table. And so after the massacre, that's what they started doing. They held months and months of pointless, fruitless negotiations. And the sente slowly demobilized. And at the same time as they were demobilizing and stopped showing up in the streets and then taking away the steam from the people, the state started bringing more and. Or federal forces into these states. And then when the teachers were like, hey, nothing's happened for two months, what's going on here? They said, fine, you want to keep fighting the school year is about to start. So you're not gonna have any support of the people anymore because they're gonna have to take care of their kids. And we have thousands of police. Paramilitary forces ready. And if you don't go to school, we're not going to talk to you. So the teachers. The teachers lost and then state by state, what started off as a national struggle. Each union in each state. On their own accord, voted to go back to school until no one was left standing and. And they lost. The only state that won anything was Chiapas, where they agreed not to implement the educational reform so long as Enrique Pena Nieto remains in office, which is through 2018. And so that's the thing. I mean, they they have a lot of capacity to mobilize, but if people. I mean, who am I to lecture but? For there to be a true threat. To the state. It needs to have a vision that goes beyond using the teachers union as a vehicle for that, because the teachers union at the end of the. Day is a teachers union.

Host: Well, let's let's talk about another strike that's going on in San Quentin. This is something that's led to a massive boycott of sands and berries. Also driscolls berries, I think, is a part of that. But can you talk about how that strike erupted in that area of Mexico and how people have responded here in the US? Its ramifications.

Scott Campbell That's that's a great question. And UM. It's been it's been pretty amazing. I think it started back in 2014 in this place, San Quentin, which is just South of Tijuana and Baja California, where there are 80,000 farm workers, mainly internal migrants from indigenous people. Monaca and Chiapas, and Guerrero, the poorest states in Mexico, who go up, and they get paid. Very little, as little as 60 or 70 pesos a day, which right now is like \$3 a day \$4.00 a day to pick berries for 12 hours with. Maybe 30 minutes for lunch and that's it. There is no employment, is very precarious. They can be fired. Whenever they want, they have no health insurance. They have no benefits, they have no job stability or security. They live in really deplorable conditions. There's no infrastructure to address the needs of these 80,000 people who are living there, and they pick berries that are worth millions and millions of dollars that are exported to the US. And primarily the US for driscolls is the big one Berry mix and a few others. And you can read more about their organizing struggle. We have a a translation up of a really well done microsite by Rihanna Asian radio, it's called the San Quentin Rebellion. And up on it's going down and also its own micro site with videos and interviews and all sorts of things and. 11 worker it started off with just a conversation between two workers being like. They they didn't get paid the bus home to come back next week and they're like they they might not have our money anyways. And if we protest, we're going to lose our jobs. So what choice do we have? And is this the future that we?

Want for. Our children, and so in 2014, they started talking amongst themselves, going to farm to farm community, to community in this. Area in this valley. And they agreed by word of mouth to walk off the job, all of them. In early 2015. I think it was March. And so they did say 80,000 people walked off the job this day. The farmer the had no idea they blockaded the Pan American Highway or the Trans Peninsula. Anyway, whatever and UM, they sent in, the police were sent in the federal police. There were really militant battles between the workers and the police and it they fought back so well that the state. Coerced the producers to sit down at the table with them, and in November of 2015 they won recognition for an independent union, which is extremely rare in Mexico because almost all unions are created and run by the state. So to have an independent Workers Union is huge, and so that was officially recognized. At the same time, the state went ahead and created an alternative union as well, so there would be some confusion and competition, but the Union? They met all their demands, except none of these demands have been implemented more than a year later, and as a result they joined the call of Amelia Sunita for Lucia up in Washington, who are calling for a boycott of Sakuma Berries, who is also a producer for Driscoll's. They're basically had the same demand to Union contract they got that demand and dropped the boycott. Driscoll's call. But the 80,000 workers in San Quentin. Sean Driscoll still refuses to sit and sign a collective bargaining agreement with this independent union, so the call for a boycott of Driscolls and Driscolls affiliated producers continues, and they've been mobilizing creating autonomous boycott committees around Mexico and the US We're also. They're also branching out into Europe and. Pushing for international days of action, we've had some down in Watsonville and aromas at the main Driscoll packaging plant. There's actions all over different grocery stores and in Mexico City, Tijuana, New York, Chicago, Oakland and Bellingham. All sorts of places. Pull over and the push is really on to to get this union a collective bargaining agreement and the cool part about that struggle is that. The the struggle that led to the creation of the unit remains intact, which is another organization called Alianza, and they have still the capacity to mobilize lots of workers, so they're often walk offs off walk offs of the job by workers. It's not quite as. Flashy or explosive, as it was in 2015, but it's still very strong.

Host: Well, I'm wondering if you can talk about a couple of months ago we did an interview with the I think it's pronounced doorstep Chopper Solidarity coalition or committee or something from it's actually based in the UK, but they talked a lot about these ongoing reclamations of of the land. In mostly Chiapas, by indigenous communities, and I know you've also talked about this extensively in in the column, but I'm wondering if you can, if you can just basically talk about how indigenous communities are essentially rising up, taking over towns, kicking out the government and forming their own organizations to to deal with daily life. And I'm also wondering too if you can talk about the growth of these community police organizations and and exactly what those mean and just kind of flesh out for people the idea that in Mexico

there is a continuation of people essentially rising up, kicking out the state and forming their own organizations.

Scott Campbell Exactly. I mean that's that's basically what's going on in a nutshell. It's incredible and. People like the framework we so often operate under here in the US and elsewhere is that it was a Zapatistas who did that right, but that has been happening all over Mexico and in Chiapas, including in communities that support the Zapatistas and belong to the 6th declaration, but don't. Aren't affiliated, don't consider their communities to be Zapatistas, and in part it's been inspired by that, but has been more inspired by just the the predations of neoliberal capitalism. And so we have communities in Chiapas such as Acidotic, Ala, such as the ochu communities in the Soky region. There's so many that I and I'm not remembering the names, but they're basically communities that have a grievance, be it the manipulation of power by political parties, threats by paramilitaries, dispossession from their land, construction of a infrastructure project and. Or just general overall exploitation or not getting their needs met by the state. And so they come together and these communities are very tight knit and usually quite small and they have their own ways of functioning and making decisions that existed before the imposition of the state, that the state then tried to crush by introducing political parties and that sort of thing. But the the memory of that and the. Practice of it still. Exists so they come together in assemblies and say you know what we're. This isn't working for us. Let's take action around it and they organize and they decide they're going to declare themselves autonomous of the state. They decide that they're going to kick out political parties, that they will no longer be allowed to function there. That ballot boxes won't be welcome in the community if they try to get in, they'll blockade them or set them on fire. The municipal police are. Asked and escorted out of town. Sometimes their weapons are confiscated and they. Basically, sit in that same assembly and say, well now what do we need to run this town together and who's going to take on what role? How are we going to make decisions? How long are? How are we going to negotiate issues of power and most more often than not, it's a it's a rotating thing where people get together and assembly. They make the decisions. Collectively, not necessarily by consensus, and people take on a certain job for a certain period of time, and they can be subject to recall at any time, but more often than not, if it's a, it's a serious honor and obligation to be elected. To take on a role in a community like that. And so people are often they want to do the best job they possibly can, and then so that's what what happens. Very vaguely. It sounds a lot more simple than it actually is, but of course then the state tries to crush it via paramilitaries via invasions, consistent harassment, detentions. And that sort of thing, and this has been happening in Chiapas and Guerrero, in Oaxaca, in Michoacan, even up in Sonora with the Yaki communities. There are attempts to do that in Jalisco with the. I can't. I'm going to say it wrong. The Weird Dakota, which is but really known as the we told people like Tehran is probably the most well known example where a small city of 20,000 people and indigenous community ran out both the state. And the drug cartels from their town and for five years, they've been holding it

down autonomously, making decisions on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis and then within a broader assembly, so. Cool. That's that's what's happening. And often when when stuff like that happens, there's a need for security, right? Not so much for internal issues, but for self-defense and the main model that groups. Takes their inspiration from, along with the Zapatistas, is this group called the Crack PC, which is the regional coordinator of Community authorities. Community police in Guerrero, which have existed since 1990. Five, they exist in about close to 200 communities with 2000 community police, all indigenous communities who decide to form community police based through their assembly. So it's by the consent of everyone in the community and under the Guerrero state Constitution there there's some legal recognition for this. Group to exist. But they're consistently harassed and arrested, especially when they go after powerful people who are committing crimes in their community, and then they get charged with kidnapping and and that sort of thing, when really they're just doing their job. So they have several political prisoners now. Nestor Salgado was probably the most well known one who was released in March of this year, and they have sort of. Low caliber weapons like small arms like pistols and and hunting rifles and that sort of thing.

Host: Is it? Is it more of like a, A a defensive force like other community? Or is it something that's actually like, you know, a quote alternative to police like, of of an area like, is it supposed to police the population and defend or is it mostly just a defensive met?

Scott Campbell It does both. It's not like it's not. There are some aspects of authority and power that are exercised by the police. But in general, like their replacement to the local police and their selected on a rotating basis, they can again be recalled in any time and. The phenomenon that's been experienced is that when these, when community polices or community police are formed in a community like violent crimes, almost disappear because the people policing you or your neighbors, you know who they are and they know who you are. And then just as likely in two years time you're going to be asked to be the police and you'll be policing them. And it's it's not the. The same type of policing we experience here when we see a cop and and. Think. You know, see them as violence and and fear and power and threat. It's seen as a neighbor who currently has that role and is carrying it out, and they have their own justice system and that sort of thing. But they also do mobilize. A few years ago, they they mobilized all their members, all 2000 armed forces to prevent mining companies from entering their region. They defend community radio stations from a. Backs and they often blockade highways and and hold armed marches through cities to demand an end to violence and impunity, both from the cartels and the states. So it's yeah, it has both aspects of like what we see as police, although much less oppressive, and then community self-defense.

Host: And it sounds the way you're describing it is that it's not corrupted, which is a big thing in in Mexico.

Scott Campbell Exactly. Yeah. You can't they can't.

Host: Or is that your assumption that it's it's not a corrupted institution, I guess?

Scott Campbell Be bought off.

Host: Maybe that's the wrong way to say it.

Scott Campbell Community. Yeah, it's, it's. There are lots of problems and there have been splits and disagreements within the crack PC, but it's much harder because again, these communities are small and everyone knows everyone and but that's not to say that it's, you know, problem free by any means.

Host: Sure. I mean also for anarchists, I mean, it's an interesting. Question and and way to think about it like is this basically defensive organization, you know or? Is it just a defensive organization? Or, you know, is it the self organized thing or is this just the state, you know, by another name, you know, the big question.

Scott Campbell Yeah, it's definitely open to critique. Absolutely. And it's I'm not sure it's the model that I would aspire to, but it is a it's a powerful alternative that at. Least. Works more than it harms where it's being implemented, I guess. If that's acceptable, I don't.

Host: Know. Sure. Well, let let's continue on with talking about a lot of this stuff. I wanted to switch gears and talk about, you know, we talked about the reclamations, we talked about the disappear. I'm I'm wondering. If we can talk about the anarchist movement now specifically, and I wondered, you know, this is the thing that's been on the topic on a lot of people's minds, just this kind of growth. First, we can talk about this growth of the what's been labeled eco extremism. And it's not stuff that we. We don't really public communicate from these groups on IG D because we don't really share their beliefs. We don't really want to give them a platform, but I'm just kind of curious and they also claim that they're not anarchists, they're something different. I'm curious if you can talk about how these groups are maybe perceived or just, you know, how this has played out because is this just something to Mexico that people are like? Yeah. Something else that's really crazy. Blow some **** up or you know how. How? What is your perception of how people are looking at this thing? If they are at all.

Scott Campbell Down in Mexico? Sure, like the response to. To ITS and that sort of thing. Well, I first of all I want to say that one of the appeals so starting working with it's going down. It was when when I was told that the ITS was not welcome on the website and I was like good they know what's up because it is. You're right. They don't call themselves. Anarchists. They definitely come from that milieu, but have been. In their eyes, further radicalized or revolutionized and their basic thing is that. By participating in civilization, you deserve to die and and so they they set off bomb. Exactly like.

Host: **** you, dad.

Scott Campbell Was it steal from your grandma and kill your puppy? But it's it's I I don't know. When I read those communicates it, I lack the framework for understanding how someone could arrive at that conclusion, but I think. So in my view, they're problematic. They they intentionally try to kill people. They intentionally

try to kill. Who we we would call civilians. They proudly adopt the label terrorist. To supportive sort of support their views, they claimed that they too were worthy of death. But you know, they're the ones bombing people. Wow. So it's it's really bizarre. I think it's a it. It originated in Mexico, I think. Took some inspiration from. You know, an expansion of the the conspiracy of cells of fire and stuff, but ohh yeah. Kosinski. Yeah, you're right. They do take him. And I think, just like the obscene levels of violence and impunity that exists in Mexico has led to the conclusion that, like, perhaps this is legitimate because the States doing it.

Host: Present to be. Then Kathy was the inspiration.

Scott Campbell Cartels are doing it. Everyone's getting away with it, so why don't we do it too? But they try to fit it into this ideological framework and some of their critique is right on. But then the conclusions they arrive at are appalling for me and. Most people it's something that I hadn't broached with many people in Mexico, mainly out of concern, just security and and communication. I don't think it's something we want to be discussing over, you know, most means of of Internet, the Internet. I have seen, I've never seen an anarchist. Aside from anarchistsnews.org, which proudly publishes their communiques, I haven't seen an anarchist from Mexico say I support ITS. I've seen them condemn them and call them all sorts of names, and they have solid critiques, but they don't really, for the most part, as far as I can tell. Most people just ignore them.

Host: It's interesting because it I mean maybe this is just me, but it seems to be that there is more of a I don't want to say media blackout because there has been some articles. But it seems like there's less of a spotlight on them, like it literally looks like people are just like, ***** leave that ***** alone, you know, like on all sides. And it it also. It's interesting too, because from what I've seen, that whole whatever you want to call it, I mean, it seems like a small group of people, but they desperately want people to read their *****. So it's like.

Scott Campbell Yeah. They do.

Host: Hey, not only do you deserve. To die. But you gotta read our. Ship. Yeah, you do.

Scott Campbell And read it on the Internet so.

Host: Yeah, exactly. So it's like and you know, obviously the energy is you know movement or space or scene or whatever, you know is the only place they can really go to like engage in that kind of thing. With people that will you know. You know. Engage back, I guess, and but I. Mean. Interesting to hear. So you're saying basically, most anarchists in Mexico are just like god damn. Like, don't want, don't want to touch that, just like everybody else, pretty much.

Scott Campbell Basically, I think that the sense is that obviously the way they come across, they're not people that are going to listen to an an argument or disagreement. And so what's the point, you know?

Host: Ah.

Scott Campbell And I think that's the sense like there's so many bigger struggles happening that a few people who seem to have gone off the rails a little bit, you know, aren't worth engaging with. Right. But I actually one of my hopes when I go down there and maybe it won't end up being recorded or or anything, but hopefully paraphrased at least is to have a discussion of like what are the thoughts on. Groups like its or even perhaps the more insurrectionary or nihilist trends of of people who do identify as anarchists but have a more fierce critique of the masses and social organization, like how does this mill you play out, and what sort of communication and thoughts or lack thereof, is going on down there?

Host: Has there been? Is there a feeling that like that those type of things are causing or you know causing repression to come down on other people too, or is no?

Scott Campbell I think. I don't think the the repression does come down a little bit because. When when you look at, UM, sort of militant, what I guess could be termed armed or at least explosive oriented types of attacks in recent years has been the anarchist and it used to be the sort of communist guerrillas. But they haven't done much recently. And so the state does have concern and they do increase. Their repression and monitoring, but they also, I mean they have sophisticated technologies and sometimes they do things really well, but they're kind of sort of ham fisted half the time too when they do things just like the state is up here. Right. Like they just don't get the culture and the scene and the means of communication. So they just tend to label everyone as an anarchist and go after them, especially if you're public. So there has been repression. But I also feel like the state is equally as threatened, if not more so by sort of the social organizing the anarchists are doing. And sort of the reclamation of spaces and fighting back against prisons and taking militancy out into the streets and fighting with the cops and being unafraid to fight overwhelming opposition in terms of state forces. So. Well, I don't think the repression we can blame the sort of insurrectionist tendency for the repression against anarchists.

Host: Gotcha. Well, let's talk about, you know, the the actual anarchist movement in Mexico. You know, most of us in the US, you know, I guess it's going down as a part of this, but you know, most of us see. It's, you know, the United States is huge and like the way that we hear about things is mostly through online. And so looking at Mexico, it would seem, I think to people that are just looking for stuff online, there doesn't seem to be that much of an anarchist presence in Mexico. But I'm hoping you can kind of shed some light is like, what does the movement look like? What are the various organizations and tendencies involved and what are people working?

Scott Campbell That's a great question and it's I think a big reason for for the trip as well is to get a bigger picture of that and see how it all fits together and what lessons can be brought back here and how can we support that. But my sense is, is the hub. Hopefully actually in a few days, or perhaps by the time this comes out, we'll have a nice piece on. Translated from this magazine called Contra Linear, which looks at the sort of NSA slash FBI of Mexico's investigation into the anarchist movement, and who they identify as threats, and how they conceive of their organization. But they

list. A bunch of. Groups, many of which are well known and many can be found by. People searching and the anarchist movement in Mexico, I'd say is probably the most powerful in Mexico City and Oaxaca, and it looks much like. I feel like it looks very similar to. In certain aspects of the the anarchist scene in the US in that. There are a multitude of projects, and they're all very exciting, but there isn't much cohesion or in the sense of of what we may conceptualize as as building up organization or movement or infrastructure. I think people do take on different tasks of that, but I don't see them being put together, at least from afar, and I could be wrong in all of this. So take everything I say with a grain of salt, but what I the main distinction and difference that I see is that. Anarchists have a I feel a broader conceptualization of struggle in Mexico when it comes to participation and support for other social movements, and reciprocally, those social movements are more welcoming of anarchist presence and participation as well. And so anarchists there. I mean, not that we don't appear but. It's a different arrangement, like understand the importance of sort of community autonomy and indigenous struggle and the role that say as an urban anarchist who has access to an independent media outlet, can play in supporting that and there's. There's more affinity across. Ideologies. I guess there's less a little less sectarianism and I think the main anarchist movement that we see aside from sort of the nihilist, insurrectionist, clandestine stuff, which is usually the communiques that are available, they there's sort of along the line of social anarchism. Building up community spaces, building up networks of solidarity. And tend to. There are the occasional national and local conferences and conferences. I just said conferences twice. Convergence is what I meant to say. And but there. I mean, they talk to each other a lot. They they mainly produce material for. Not for consumption by people outside of Mexico, I guess is how I'd frame it. So which is probably why we don't hear much. They talk with what they produce is primarily for themselves and for interim movement communication and for solidarity within the resistance. It's happening in Mexico.

Host: And we've seen, UM, there seems to be a really good journal called Negation. Yeah, and that seemed and that's I think it seems to be part of this project Avalanche that's kind of like an insurrectionary amalgamation of of different continents, like the best picks from certain places and stuff. And negation is is one of those. And they had a couple pieces have been translated lately. That's. Really. You know.

Scott Campbell Yeah. And they have really. Uh, I mean, anarchists down there do a lot of like, especially what I've been moved by is is some of the critique that comes from the insurrectionist trend, but also by the anarchist prisoners who keep in mind, most of them are really young people who are. Coming out with sort of. Uh. You know, in really difficult circumstances, but producing theories and insights that I really find helpful in my thinking around stuff is which and I'm really excited that it's going down translates and makes available almost every letter from an anarchist prisoner in Mexico that comes out. And I think that's huge.

Host: Well. And and real quick, you know, I think by the time that this podcast comes out, another podcast that were they were both that you're working on will be

out. But I hear that there's an anarcho punk band that's recorded in the podcast. Can you talk a little? Bit about that real quick.

Scott Campbell Absolutely.

Host: That's in. That's from recorded inside a prison.

Scott Campbell Yes, it's I. I had a hard time. I mean, it's pretty amazing. There's this in north prison in Mexico City, an anarchist comrade, Fernando Barcenas, who's been in prison for three years now. This is his second sort of formation that he's. Sort of spearheaded the creation of called Colectivo Cimarron and Cimarron is. Both had means sort of feral and also is a name for kind of the runaway slaves, maybe similar to key Lambo and. It's a group of both, you know, so-called political and so-called social prisoners. Very militant. They've reclaimed the space inside the prison where they have all sorts of workshops around writing and archive study groups, film study groups, anarchist library. They're working on creating podcasts and and. Radio shows for community radio. You know, they're working on health clinics to build up tinctures and the use of herbs. Because Healthcare is nonexistent in the prisons, they're doing all this amazing work, and they also have a punk band, like, literally like electric guitars, amplifiers, drums, inside the prison, and in this podcast that will hopefully be up with an interview.

Host: In the prison.

Scott Campbell From a comrade who's deeply involved in solidarity, work with them, they've recorded. Four of their four songs they performed inside the prison were recorded, and two of them are in the podcast that will be up on it's going down.

Host: Now, well, this podcast it's it's all in Spanish. So is there going to be any sort of if you don't know Spanish or you just need to learn Spanish or? Can you just tell us a?

Scott Campbell Little bit about it, sure. Learning any other language is always encourage be a Spanish and I should take my own advice and learn more, but no. Hopefully the podcast the the songs are inside the podcast but hopefully will make them available as they're separate audio clips and they're pretty. Good. You know, I mean it's. It's really incredible. Like my friend said, it's like the one benefit of corruption in Mexican prisons is that, like, **** like this can happen. So. So they they have their punk band, they have an anarcho punk band that practices and plays and holds concerts for prisoners inside the prison, and they're reclaimed inside this, this N prison in Mexico City. It's incredible. So. We're going to have, actually. Because, uh, I feel like all the information in that podcast is really important. We're going to have a transcription in English translation of the podcast, which may take some time because it is a 90 minute interview. But moving forward we the the podcast talks about sort of the climate of repression against anarchists in Mexico. Mainly Mexico City, facing 4 anarchists, or anarchist identified prisoner. In Mexico and Oaxaca, they're really amazing solidarity work that people are doing to meet the needs and support the prisoners on the inside and how they're building these connections through the walls. That's really impressive and inspiration from us. And also the incredible organizing

that I just talked about that the similar and collective is doing. UM&S. Like Fernando Barcenas says you know the job of an anarchist is to struggle wherever we're at. And right now it's on me. It's the struggle from where I'm at, which is the prison. So I'm gonna be here for six years. So I'm gonna fight back here. And that's what he's doing. And he's doing it successfully. And it's it's really incredible. So folks are check that out. If you speak Spanish. Please listen to the the the interview. If not, we'll have the translation available and this, I think is is sort of a taste of what's to come. It's a trip, so I hope people like it.

Host: Awesome. And just in closing in this part, when we're talking about the the anarchist movement in Mexico. So what do you think that that we have to offer each other, you know, interest in the US and enteritis in Mexico, I mean, we're so close to each other. There's so much going back and forth for different reasons. What did it? What did, what are the what do we have to offer each other, do you think and and how can we start more of a dialogue? With each other cause right now it seems like there is next.

Scott Campbell To nothing. Yeah, there there's. For the most part, I feel like we rely on personal connections, which is a great place to start. And you know when people are traveling, introducing them to the communities and putting on small events and and taking the opportunity to do interviews, I think I I. I think we have a lot to teach each other. That's think resistance in Mexico often look a lot different than it does up here. And I think that can be an inspiration. And it's also not entirely replicable. Obviously, the state operates sort of differently down there, but. It can be an inspiration. We can learn a lot about how they conceptualize struggle based on their location, both territorially. Urban, rural under capitalism, their identity is indigenous or not indigenous and how they extend solidarity and really the. The energy, the way they direct their energy, I think is is often different than how we direct it here. And I think we can offer a lot in terms of. Support solidarity, giving voice to the struggles down there, and recognizing that we are really close. The US is deeply involved in Mexican affairs, including arming them for the the suppression of social movements, and there's a huge Mexican community and and in this community up here that many have migrated because of the economic and. Political and social and security problems down there. So I think there are a lot of radical folks already living, you know, and involved in the anarchist scene here with deep connections to Mexico. And I think we can grow and cultivate those and lean on that. I think we can. Use our relatively more privileged access to to finances and technology and that sort of thing to amplify the voices in Mexico by translating more stuff into English, by spreading it around. I can't tell you how moved people have been who've gotten in touch with. Sort of without being asked to do so. I've just gotten notes from different anarchist collectives in Mexico saying like, thank you for writing this. It really means a lot. And to me it's a simple thing. It takes a lot of work, but it feels important to say, put out the column and to hear that it it has such meaning for people down there to say to know that they're being heard. That their voices are arriving in a different language and across borders,

the inspiration that gives them not to sound patronizing, but it's really touching for me. And I think if we can even make these small gestures. They see that they feel it and it means a lot to them, just as it meant a lot to us when we saw comrades in prison down there go on hunger strike and solidarity with the prison strike up here and put up banners when they were confronting police, saying in solidarity with anarchists in the US and Mexico. So if there's this. Awareness of the struggle. That's where conversation can begin, and we each have different tools and opportunities to help one another grow. And I think that's, that's where it starts and learning Spanish.

Host: Yeah, that's great to hear that people in Mexico are excited about the column and also the translations and. Can you just say anything else about just kind of the feedback that that people have been giving about the work that you and I have been doing to kind of build those bridges a little bit.

Scott Campbell Sure. I mean, we've been in touch primarily because of most of the content that goes into the column and most of our translations come from indie media outlets in Mexico. I've been in heavy contact with a lot of them. I don't really want to name names, but they they have been saying. Things like you know, your articles are really critical and a great help to the movement like thank you so much to know that prisoners like Fernando Barcenas and Luis Fernando Sotelo to know that their letters. Are being translated into English. Helps out say, helps them out. Both you know kind of giving them emotional strength to to continue the struggle. Especially Fernando Sotelo who's facing 33 years and it motivates the anarchist Black Cross in Mexico to like to know. So that the work they're putting in is being picked up by people up here who are putting in the work and that these messages coming from these cells in Mexico are getting amplified across a wider audience. And there's just a lot of gratitude that people down there expressing for being heard and seen and so often. UM. I think the anarchist movement is is getting much, much better about this, but often the dynamic is seeing that like the US, what happens in the US is more important and that it should be exported. And now that dynamic changes when it comes to social struggle and resistance and liberation, where a lot of the resistance. And we see happening in Mexico can can be applied to the US and can be serve as an inspiration for us and to see that recognition coming from comrades outside, I think really means a lot to them.

Host: Great. OK. One last Big Mexico question. We're going to kind of switch gears a little bit, talk about the Zapatistas saying they're going to run a candidate with the C and I and and and what that other organization is and what you think about it, I know. I can't remember the name of Subcomandante Marcos, his new his new nickname or whatever, but basically I think they recently put out it. He recently put out a statement basically saying like, calm down. It's not that big of a deal. Like we haven't changed our politics as well. Just a gag or what?

Scott Campbell Yeah, I mean this will be interesting. We'll know on January 1st what the deal is. But uh, so really quickly, the CNI is the National Indigenous Conference and the National Indigenous Congress Congress and it was created sort of

a Zapatista and initiated. Thing in 2019, 96 its idea is to bring together indigenous peoples and communities from all over Mexico to set an indigenous agenda and self determination and self-defense and autonomy and that sort. Thing. So they had their 5th Congress in San Cristobal in Chiapas in October, I think where the Zapatistas brought this proposal to the CNIC and said hey, the CNN should run a presidential candidate for 2018 and the sort of twist they gave to it is. That. It's gonna the the candidate will be an indigenous woman because you need one person to to be president, obviously, but the decisions will be made by a Council that's going to come together and she'll sort of, you know, she'll of course have input to the Council but will be responsible for sort of enacting the mandate of the Council. And UM. That's their whole thing about how they're not claiming power, that it's going to be a a council LED assembly type decision making process. And I mean right now the the CNI is consulting their communities, they're going to meet again at the end of this month and announce on January 1st. If they're going to run a candidate or not now the I mean, this caught everyone off guard a. A lot of people. People think, like I mentioned before, that anything that Zapatistas do with gold and therefore great, I encourage a more critical lens, looking at the Zapatistas, but I try not to be too judgmental because it's not my struggle, but it's my desire to understand it and then take lessons. On it so. And they sent out a flurry of communicates because the condemnation has been pretty swift. And of course, there's the mainstream, like racist, sexist, patriarchal, anti indigenous stuff saying haha, an indigenous woman being president. No way. And they've responded to those by saying, wouldn't it be? Be how powerful would it be to have an indigenous woman sort of laying bare the the patriarchy and racism of the society when she's on the the debate stage? And to me that's not a valid enough reason to participate in electoral politics. But that was their first response. Then he sent out a 30 page communique. Galliano is the name he goes by now, so come down, take Galliano and he said, actually, I haven't read this, the whole thing in its entirety, but basically saying it's not a Zapatista candidate. He makes a distinction between the CNI and the Zapatistas all. So that's sort of tendentious in my opinion, and it's also the Zapatistas who brought the proposal in the 1st place. So I don't know what's up with that, he said it'll be CI candidate or the aspiration of that thesis is not to take power but and the Zapatistas are not participating in the deliberations of the CNI and. But we do support the CNI if they decide to go with. Calm down, everyone. It's not that big a deal and that this appetisers are the same. We're not looking to have a president that is apathetic and the whole point of this is primarily to raise up the debate about the issues indigenous people are facing in Mexico because it's a mechanism to get broader attention. Uh. I think you know they'll announce on January 1. I don't know what that will look like. It's really hard to say if they're going to go forward or not. I mean, some people I've talked with a few comrades in Mexico and and some people think it is just a big publicity stunt. Others think it's more serious.

Host: Sounds like somebody got really drunk and.

Scott Campbell Select.

Host: Was just like, hey, this sounds like a great idea. We're gonna do this.

Scott Campbell I mean it's it's interesting, like how they're sort of playing around with the idea of electoral politics and it being a communal assembly type decision making process, but. If one were to really get down into the analysis of of power, of institutions, of how decisions get made in indigenous communities about who sets the agenda nationally, I mean it's so rife and ridden with problems, I can't imagine it happening. But you know, sometimes these appetites have been known for. Going on these big kind of spectacle type things like the ultra companion, that sort of thing. So right. My my position has been to take a wait and see thing I'm. I'm skeptical of it, but I don't think we should. All you know, burn our Zapatista T-shirts or whatever. I, I mean. But it it is what it is. It's a new step. They're trying to figure things out and they they make the road by walking, as they say. No, someone else said that. But they say it too.

Host: Right. OK, well, let's. Switch gears a little bit. We've been talking for a while, but I really want to talk about this. Let's talk about. Just immigration and and Mexican immigrants in particular, have been such a big conversation piece in the, you know, the last electoral campaign. And I'm just curious if we can talk a little. Bit. About if we can kind of dissect. You know how that idea kind of lives in people's heads with the reality? And 1st just with you know this concept that like Mexican immigrants are coming here and stealing our jobs and also with with looking at how like somebody like Trump has kind of like taking this this critique of globalization and really you know use that as a cornerstone of his campaign and just. Just if we can start to have that conversation, you know, I want to talk ultimately about, you know, how people in Mexico and also how we're at RGD are trying to talk about Mexico is critiquing, as this narco state. And but if we can just start to kind of have this conversation, like, how do you think these kind of? Muddled concepts of of Mexico and especially Mexican people coming to the United States that have already been here. How do you, how do you think these are are starting and like popularized in the in the in the current consciousness?

Scott Campbell That's a really important part of the discussion, and I mean I think ever since the US and Mexico started being nations next to each other, it's been. A very. Lopsided and and problematic relationship and so I. Don't want to. Rehash 200 years of history, but obviously you know the US took over half of Mexico, Mexico itself as a colonial formation. Mexicans overnight became U.S. citizens, some didn't. Then throughout the. Like in the 50s and 60s, you have the bracero program, and then you have the mass deportations once are not needed anymore and you have the different constructions of what it is to be Mexican. Sometimes in the US, they're hard workers, and they're trustworthy. Other times, like for Trump, they're rapists and criminals and carry disease. And that sort of thing. And they've always been for 200 years. A reliable scapegoat and also Mexico. The territory has been a place for exploitation and plunder. And that's what we see when we saw this upheaval of anti immigrant sentiment with the Minutemen and SB1070 or whatever the Sensenbrenner

bill, when things got really gnarly in the early 2000s and then there was this fight back in 2006. That led to ideas of, like the day without an immigrant and Mayday is an immigrant rights day. So you have 10s of 1,000,000 millions of. Of immigrants, millions of Mexicans, both documented and undocumented, and a deep connection to the place that's referred to as the United States that goes back generations. And they're also seen as just a steady supply of Labor, a steady supply of of exploitation that can be picked up and. And deported. And not only does that serve the benefits of capitalism economically, but it serves the rhetoric of white supremacy. Nationalism and xenophobia quite expeditiously as well, because when something's going wrong, what do we do? We can blame the immigrants and round them up. And Obama deported more immigrants than than anyone else. And we can see that Trump, you know this nonsense about building a wall and make Mexico pay for it is calling Mexicans rapists and criminals. That's blaming undocumented workers as somehow more. Genetically inclined to commit crimes, even though they only became undocumented when they crossed an arbitrary border, this sort of thing. It just it. It serves the purposes of capitalism by distracting people from the real issue by fomenting emotions that feed on on the needs of power in the United States. And. It's really uh, it also plays into the image that's been constructed of Mexico by the mainstream media, by the government of as this so-called failed state as a narco state. I mean it. Well, it is a narco state, but it's this idea that. Like walk across the border and you're gonna get shot like or have decapitated and your heads gonna roll into a disco. Like, that's not gonna happen. First of all, there is severe violence. There is mass impunity. Not that. We favor the justice system as is, but like 98% of crimes in Mexico go unpunished. So essentially the message is you can do whatever you want in Mexico and the cartels know that. And the with that, and it suits them both very well, which also suits the interests of the US because where the drugs going, they're going to the US, where the weapons coming from. They're coming from the US. Via the government as through the Merida Initiative and through just the the smuggling of weapons. But then the real fabric of Mexico that I'm interested in talking about and that I hopefully do an adequate job covering, is this like. Resistance, like the resistance in communities in Mexico, is the same who are being targeted by the state and extra state violence and exploitation is the same resistance we see in communities here and often like a lot of folks who threw down in Oaxaca, they have family members up in California. Wahaca California is called Wahaca California for a reason. Because so many people from that state are up here and they bring with them, that legacy of of communal organizing, of fighting back. And that's why we saw such massive mobilizations around immigrant rights in California. Part of the reason, and I think. Like that legacy of transnational struggle against the transnational enemy, as well as within the specificities of of Mexican context and the US context are really important and are really something that we can learn from and build solidarity and struggle around. I don't know if that touch on. Your question, yeah. I mean it was.

Host: It was kind of poorly appraised to begin with, but. I guess what I'm getting at is I feel like if you look at if you get down to it like the kind of like the the reactionary fear of Mexico, I think comes a lot of it comes from this fear of cartel violence and basically spilling over the border basically like their problems are going to suddenly be our problems. And that if we if we secure the border like that won't happen, we'll just lock it in that. That place and it's, you know, we won't have to deal with it. But I think if people actually peeled back and like looked at the reality of what's happening, you know, a lot of the people that are coming across the border are, you know, people from indigenous communities. Not only that, but they're the, but they're coming from places where. People are fighting the cartels, people are fighting the state and this idea that I think like, you know the state, you know, the the government of Mexico or the cartels and the people that are coming here to work are one and the same is just obviously it's a racist assumption. But I think that there is some room there where people can start to look at it and be like, you know. Wow, actually this year I. Have is is not necessarily misplaced, but it's like these people that are coming here are, you know, coming from communities that are fighting back against this stuff. I don't know. I mean, to me, I think there's there's the possibility for the start of a conversation where maybe people, some, some minds can get.

Scott Campbell Changed. I think so too and I think. I mean, I know like, I feel like I know I've been talking a lot, but one of my transformational experience has happened in Mexico and I think perhaps that's why I was drawn to it where the first time I went there, I had a great time, stayed with the family and was reflecting back on it and realized that like I was surprised. I had a great time and upon looking at it, I realized that. Without even being aware of it, I was carrying with me all these racist and like colonial assumptions about what Mexico was like, how Mexicans were like, and it sort of blew up my world from my tiny suburban Connecticut world. And I've been really grateful for that ever since and I think. Like without a lot of people even being aware of it, we carry these ideas of the other with us and and especially in Mexico, it's a it's an easy target, but so often. Like the reason the drug war exists is because of the US. The reason the current regime handles the drug war that does the way it does is because of the US, and the only people fighting back in Mexico are these social movements. Are these communities in resistance and the state. Fears the community than resistance 10 times more than it fears the cartels, and so like we see in Michael Cohen and my last and submission column, these autonomous communities there are being harassed by the state while drug cartels reorganize and again start targeting the communities. And so the state is more. Interested in crushing autonomy than it is in crushing drug trafficking and the impunity with which these massacres and horrific violence occurs and the resistance? You're right. Like a lot of people come from indigenous communities, a lot of them live in places where we're not in frequent contact with them. A lot of them don't even speak Spanish. But they're here in the US. They're, you know, they're working as migrant workers. They're working, trying to get by, living in in urban centers with strong communities. And they have a lot of

lessons that I think it's really important for us to make space for and recognize and figure out a way to just like. Have them feel appreciated and to. Strip away that. That facade that you talked about of justice of the Mexican being the threat and realize there is just like in the US, there's many versions of Mexico and there's so much that that the resistance there offers us.

Host: Yeah, I just, I don't know. I think to me that gets to the heart of just kind of like what, you know, what ***** that kind of like white reaction is. It's like it's like, *****, it's like you really care about, like, fighting ISIS. It's like, talk to the people that are refugees. They're the ones that are filling ISIS, you know, it's.

Scott Campbell Exactly.

Host: It's so insane to me and I. I think I don't know. I I know I know most people listening to this and and yourself is presently converted but. I don't know. It's it's frustrating. Yeah.

Scott Campbell Very important to say though.

Host: Yeah. And I think I think you know, as Trump comes into power, I mean, that's going to be a big question too. And. I I guess this is where I'll leave the last question and we've been talking for a while. It's been really great. But uh. I know on this podcast we've been asking certain people. About how they feel that Trump will kind of go about doing some of the things he says, especially in this context like deportation raids. And you brought up that Obama has of course, deported more, more people than the last three presidents combined. But I'm I'm curious how you see that playing out. And one of the possibilities for building solidarity not only with people here in the US. But also people in Mexico too, because I'm assuming that if that starts to happen, it's not going to go quietly on either side of the.

Scott Campbell It's it's not, and I think, wow. Migration. It's. I love your questions because they could each be their own podcast. But I mean, I think starting with with Mexico, you know, at the behest of Obama, Mexico created its own Southern border plan, where it tries to detain Central American migrants and then makes their journey through Mexico. Just super risky and treacherous. And then they have to deal with trying to cross into the US and then so the I think we need to. Look at like the experiences of migration where people coming from, like, deconstruct the idea of like this person's from Honduras and this person's from Mexico and and these sort of national identities that don't really fit and like like we talked about in the last question like where the communities, what are the struggles, what's leading you to. To come up here and how can we support each other and build on our different? And that begins through communication that begins through getting prepared for what's going to happen here. Working with these communities, who often already have networks in place to deal with these raids that are likely only going to escalate the deaths at the border that are probably going to escalate. And the destruction of communities. And we need to go beyond sort of the resistance of spectacle model, which has its place but. Having a blockade of of an ice station every few months, I mean that that the machine can accommodate that, right? So we need to look like building up a consistent. Form

of defense led by these communities articulated by these communities. And how can we pitch in in solidarity with that? Because they're going to bring their own lessons, obviously, and then I mean Mexico. There are a lot of communities there. They're really working on defending the rights of Mexican migrants in the US, defending the rights of internal migrants in Mexico and defending Central American migrants as they pass through the. Country. And I think learning from those struggles and like how do how do communities? In Mexico, support Central American migrants is something that we can use when it when we think about, like solidarity with immigrants. For those of us who aren't and community defense and self-defense and mutual aid. And I think there's just there's so many stories, so many modes of organizing, so many conceptualizations of struggle that. This this next wave that's going to be coming is going to be brutal. It's going to be strong. I mean it's people are pointing back to sort of. The. The institutions of of Jim Crow and slavery, when they're talking about these immigration raids and who knows what it's going to look like when it begins to be implemented in policy. But it's not going to get any better. This is my feeling and UM like the notion of working with the state and having things like sanctuary cities. The federal government is still going to come in. It doesn't care, right? So we need to build up these alternatives because we do care. The government doesn't represent us. The government's not going to do anything for us. And these communities certainly not doing anything for them. So how do we build up like these spaces, where people who are under threat? And at. Least. Know that that. They're not going to get taken quietly. I think it's the least we should offer and hopefully a whole. Lot more.

Host: OK. Thanks so much, Scott. Once again, we've been talking with Mr. Campbell here. He's going on. A trip. Throughout Mexico in the coming months, so if you can go to itsgoingdown.org, check out his his column and submission and you'll see information about how to donate to his crowdfunding campaign. That's that's going to raise money so he can get down there. Scott, thanks so much for joining us. Be sure to also check out the final straw interview with Scott that should already be out. Anything else you want to say? How should people get a hold of you if they want more information about the tour or anything else or any other words that you want to put out? There before we sign.

Scott Campbell Off well, first of all, thanks so much for the opportunity. Thank you to everyone who's reading who's contributed to the fundraising site. Who cares about this stuff and wants to learn? I'm by no means an expert. I just. I know a little bit and hopefully that that helps out. I'm in communicating some of what's happening down there. If you want to help out with the the fundraising site, it's rally.org/I GD Dash, Mexico. There is a link in my insisting on columns. I'm also looking for people. If you got. Comrades down in Mexico or, you know, of some impressive struggles or things that that merit attention, that aim. I might not be aware of or you haven't read about in in submission column like I said I don't know everything hit me up on Twitter my link to my Twitter feed is in the in some missing column where you

can even shoot us an e-mail at infoitsgoingdown.org and we want to hear from you. Feedback, suggestions, complaints. Please let us know. Thanks a lot for listening.

Host: All right. Thank you, Scott. This has been great and I feel like we go for another two hours. We'll stop now.

Scott Campbell Right, alright, cheers. My pleasure. You too.

Host: Thanks a lot. Have a good one.

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