

No Trespassing!: Squatting, Rent Strikes, and Land Struggles Worldwide

Anders Corr



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An Excerpt from No Trespassing! By Anders Corr

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Chapter 1

Homes Not Jails:

The Secret Success of a Squatting Movement to House the Homeless

Benjamin volunteered to open the vacant building on Shotwell and 22nd, and said I could follow. He had squatted it before the landlord kicked him out, but now lived in a sleazy downtown hotel. We walked up to the alley door, and just as Benjamin produced his crowbar, a very large guy (much smaller than Benjamin and much bigger than me) walked up to his own door just a few feet away. Benjamin thought quick and pretended legitimacy by knocking. "Whatcha knockin for?" the neighbor asked. His eyes narrowed. "Nobody lives there."

Benjamin has broken into hundreds of buildings with Homes Not Jails and knew when to lead a tactical retreat. But undaunted, he circled the building and easily lifted his seven-foot frame over a fence and into the backyard. From my cowardly vantage I could see a weak flashlight flickering at us from a window in the second story of the next-door flat. Was it the neighbor who confronted us? Did he have a gun? Again, Benjamin either failed to notice the flashlight-wielding neighbor or cared little. He climbed the back stairs, jimmied the door, walked out the alley and returned with two homeless people who needed a place to stay. After letting the two into the squat, Benjamin promised to help change the lock if they stayed for a week. Afterwards I skipped to keep pace as, with a crowbar dangling from his pinkie, Benjamin lumbered about the neighborhood in search of more squats.

Homelessness and the Growth of U.S. Squatting

Homes Not Jails began with the wave of other homeless activist gro

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