



8. POP A SQUAT

SQUATTING WITH FRIENDS **DISRUPTS** CAPITALISM'S DEFINITION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

THE LOWDOWN: Capitalists adhere to a stringent definition of property rights in order to maximize their profits. The idea of private property helps line capitalists' pockets but the people don't do so well. For example: during the Great Recession, there were lots of unoccupied homes that could have provided shelter to people. Instead of letting people in, capitalist authorities forcefully kept people out. Rebels: it's time to take a dump on the way that capitalists define ownership.

DISRUPTING CAPITALISM'S DEFINITION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

- A) REBEL:** Squatting is the premise of setting up camp in a vacant home or plot of land. Squatters utilize space that is otherwise just dormant and they turn it into their home. To pop a squat, organize with nearby rebels to identify a vacant home or public park and plop down. Bring plenty of food and resources to chill out for a while. The good news for squatters is they're not paying for their lodging. The bad news for capitalists is they're losing out on revenue and their very definition of "ownership" is called into question.
- B) DISRUPT CAPITALISM:** Here's some numbers that don't quite add up: there are over 600,000 homeless Americans on any given night and an estimated 1.5 million vacant homes in our country.^{169, 170} Even though these homes could provide shelter, capitalists don't want to let people crash there because than they're losing out on revenue. Ownership is central to capitalism and fat cat vigilance to protect private property extends back for decades. In the 1940s, for example, capitalists censored verses of Woody Guthrie's rebel classic *This Land Is Your Land* because they didn't like his tenor about private property.¹⁷¹ More recently, Occupiers helped us reconsider who owns public space.
- C) HAVE FUN:** Camping out with friends for a night, week or month is fun if you bring the right supplies. Think: good company, guitar, s'mores, and drinks. For any squatters hoping to remain in a place long enough to achieve legal squatting rights, bring enough supplies to last for a long while. Squatter's rights can take as long as 21 years to obtain in certain jurisdictions.¹⁷²

BONUS POINTS (A+B+C):

Squatters have some protections codified in U.S. law and these rules are worth learning because if you squat in some properties for long enough, you actually end up obtaining legal ownership. For a bonus, show capitalists that you can play by their silly legal rules and still win the game.

"THERE WAS A BIG HIGH WALL THERE THAT TRIED TO STOP ME; SIGN WAS PAINTED, IT SAID PRIVATE PROPERTY. BUT ON THE BACKSIDE IT DIDN'T SAY NOTHING; THAT SIDE WAS MADE FOR YOU AND ME." WOODY GUTHRIE