

DANGEROUS CONVERSATIONS



Breaking down domination
and finding our voices

Dangerous Conversations is a project born out of the struggle to end systems of domination. Our involvement in movements described as anarchist, activist, horizontalist, and so on has been at times inspiring and at other times disillusioning and frustrating. This zine is not aimed at Anarchists or Activists but at anyone who struggles against the many forms of domination that blight our lives: ableism, ageism, authority, capitalism, civilisation, caste and class systems, heteronormativity, islamaphobia, male privilege, speciesism, transphobia, white supremacy (and others that are still unrecognised).

Dangerous Conversations is intended as an intervention in business as usual. We hoped to collect texts and viewpoints that challenge the status quo in a way that, rather than (or perhaps as well as) provoking hostility, provoke constructive responses and discussion. We hope that, as much as possible, the zine becomes a place to converse and to deepen affinity. By showing solidarity with others who also see the struggle as their own struggle, even when we differ on the details, we can become stronger as a movement. Ours is a strength that comes through diversity and empathy for different viewpoints rather than the imposition of dogma and distrust.

As well as not claiming to have the answers, we are aware of the shortcomings of this project. We don't claim to be trying to represent all of the different struggles against privilege and hierarchy that exist. We do not seek to have ownership of this project and know that it is necessary for everyone that struggles to be heard and have a place. We hope that Dangerous Conversations can be a space where marginalised perspectives can get the prominence they deserve and we hope to widen participation in the editorial collective.

This first issue contains original material inspired by our callout, but we also wanted to republish articles that we found valuable for getting us to think about these issues in the first place and thought were worth sharing (although obviously we couldn't include everything).

These conversations are dangerous to oppressors because they threaten their privilege. They sometimes seem dangerous to us too because they threaten our own privilege. Because of this, they are important conversations to have.

Nottingham, UK, April 2011



No Pretence

In June 2009 a group of anarcha-feminists took the stage at the UK Anarchist Conference to protest about sexist oppression within the movement. They projected a film and read out a statement based on the themes of the conference, which we have printed in sections throughout this zine.

MOVEMENT or why we aren't one

No matter how much we aspire to be 'self critical' there is a clear lack of theorising and concrete action around sexism, homophobia and racism in the anarchist movement. We do not feel that the content and structure of the conference deal with gender and we're tired of asking for space – we're taking it ourselves.

You want to talk about history? Let's stop pretending that feminism is a short blip in the history of political struggles. The feminism you know may be the one that has been dominated by white middle-class liberal politics – NOT the struggles and

pockets of revolutionary resistance missing from our political pamphlets and 'independent' media. The feminism of Comandanta Yolanda, of bell hooks, of Anzaldua, of Mbuya Nehanda, of Angela Davis, of Rote Zora, of Mujeres Libres...



Angela Davis



Going beyond activism

MG

I have been frustrated with the culture and lifestyle associated with activism for a long time. In the UK, where I live, a particular, narrow section of the community seems to have taken ownership of the term “activist” and used it to label and justify its own activities. It was my increasingly negative perception of the anarchist activist scene that I was a part of that led me to write “Why I Hate Activism”*, criticising the white, middle class, patriarchal values that still ruled the roost in the “alternative” subculture. The article was published on the Ceasefire magazine site but was subsequently reposted on various other activist sites and blogs.

I should say from the start that I have been deeply involved in activism for many years and have to take responsibility for my own complicity in its failings. If it

hadn't been for good friends who shared their experiences of exclusion and alienation I might never have noticed the fundamental flaws of what I was involved in. I felt a responsibility to write about the new understanding that these shared experiences had given me, as a way of showing solidarity with the excluded and to raise awareness about the power dynamics that I felt were often made invisible. Because I felt passionately about what I was writing, I was angry and antagonistic and was not always receptive to the often helpful comments others were making about the piece. Having stepped back and reflected more on the conversations that began, I'd like to try to engage in them more constructively than before.

Initial responses to the article were quite polarised

*<http://tinyurl.com/3gwzujc>

with some readers seeing aspects of their own experiences touched on whilst others felt that my article was inappropriate. Given the many criticisms, I felt the need to clear up misconceptions, take heed of others' personal experiences and try to make some positive suggestions about what we can do.

Firstly, I want to make clear what I think is the problem and why it definitely should be viewed as a problem by anyone who is against hierarchical systems. I think that the activist scene reproduces many of the hierarchies of visibility and privilege present in mainstream society and that this is not being challenged. In particular, white British cultural norms, especially those of the middle classes, are privileged within the scene. This has given particular privileged people the feeling of ownership over the term activism, which has come to describe a movement in which they are guaranteed a place. It subsequently marginalises those activists whose activities and identities do not fit the cultural norm.

Many of the events and campaigns that come from the self-defining activist community reflect the

preconceptions and preoccupations of this elite group. Attempts to challenge privilege are usually treated as subordinate to saving the planet/helping refugees/attacking capital, etc and are not taken too seriously.

"the activist scene reproduces many of the hierarchies of visibility and privilege present in mainstream society"

Fighting the state and capitalism are given priority over struggling against hierarchies which white, middle class men benefit from. When privilege is challenged more effectively, a smokescreen of denial goes up, obscuring the real issues until the threat has passed. Take, for instance, the anarchafeminist intervention at the UK Anarchist Movement Conference which was subsequently ridiculed by some activist men as "retrograde" (because the women involved masked their faces), "pathetic" and "manipulative". The privileged activists lined up to belittle the action with no apparent awareness of how they were being dominating, disempowering and misogynist. The attitude amongst many of these self-appointed leaders

seems to be one of outrage that women, people of colour, queers and disabled people should challenge their authority.

Faced with this cultural hegemony, many of those who don't feel that they fit in rapidly become disillusioned with the scene and move on to environments where their race, class, sexuality and gender aren't reasons for

their exclusion or exploitation.

The result is described by Kareem, who

commented on the original article:

"I would like to move towards a place where we can sit down together... but that isn't possible at the moment"

Speaking simply from experience, it is not easy for someone with a background in the Global South, especially if they also come from a working class (or even lower middle class) background, to adjust to a lifestyle and become accepted within the activist communities referred to in the piece. This is not to valorise either black and brown people, or people from a non-elite class background, except to say that if such people feel automatically alienated from activist groups – and I think many do – it is difficult to think of how such groups will bring about lasting, progressive social change.

This conclusion was echoed by Elena, who recalled her experiences of leftist activism at university as being “a very macho environment in which I felt very uncomfortable. Unfortunately it can only take a few bad experiences when someone is first dipping their toe in the water to put a curious progressive person off for life.” Switch commented that the “mainstream” activist

movement “makes it look like there is one ‘movement,’ which

perpetuates the invisibility of parallel movements in other (non-white, non-punk, non-student) subcultures..., but there are of course much purer revolutionary elements in all sorts of places).”

But whilst these people's experiences seemed to validate my observations, there were many criticisms of what I had written. For example, Sara claimed that: “[t]he polemic has its uses sure, but how useful is it against potential allies; how productive is it?” She continued:

Representational polemic... disarms and is disempowering; it speaks over,

speaks at as opposed to engaging with and opening up a conversation, a dialogue in which all parties are vulnerable and put themselves on the line, and learn to trust each other to be able to begin to deal with the difficult complicities and contradictions in many of our political actions and relationships amongst ourselves and the wider community.

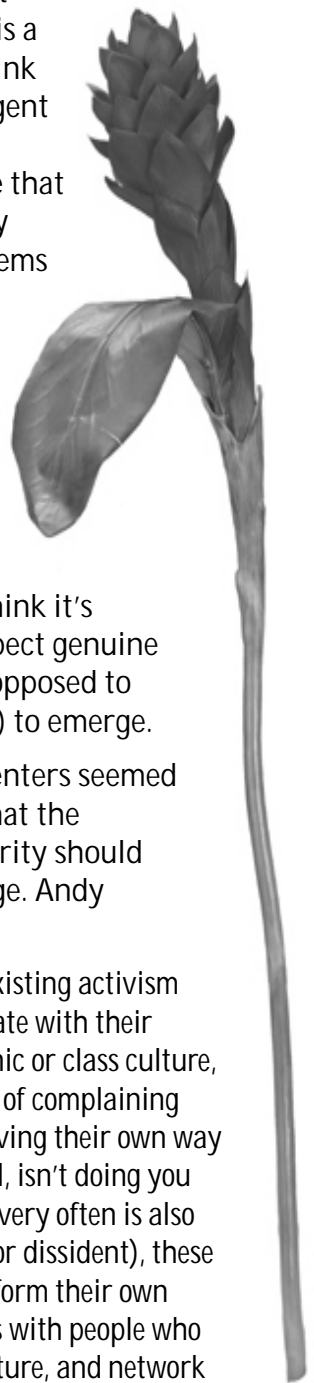
I think that this is certainly true of the ways in which I and other university-educated people learn to engage with these problems. By adopting a particular form and style of writing to express our discontent we perpetuate an exclusionary mode of communication. However, given that the piece was aimed at precisely the kind of people who communicate in this way, I would argue that it was not excluding its targets from engaging in conversation.

I would like to move towards a place where we can sit down together, in mutual trust, to discuss as equals. But given the hierarchies that exist within the activist community this isn't possible at the moment. There isn't the willingness to engage with these issues because many

activists don't realise there is a problem. I think there's an urgent need to communicate that there are very serious problems in how we relate to one another. Until privileges are meticulously unpicked, I think it's unwise to expect genuine dialogue (as opposed to power games) to emerge.

Other commenters seemed to disagree that the cultural majority should have to change. Andy argued that:

If people feel existing activism does not resonate with their particular ethnic or class culture, maybe instead of complaining about others living their own way (which after all, isn't doing you any harm and very often is also socially taboo or dissident), these people should form their own affinity-groups with people who share their culture, and network



these affinity-groups into the network.

These sentiments, to me, betray a lack of understanding of the problems faced by those without access to the existing activist scene. The people Andy seemed to have in mind could (and often do) form groups with people who share their culture (when they can, and often they can't which is why they turn to the wider activist community in the first place), but then they face invisibility or reduced visibility in the wider activist scene. They may be assumed to be focussed on identity politics or accused of being separatist, even though they may feel that they should be included in wider activist circles. The decision to form culturally specific groups often results in reduced trust from the wider network, as the in-group, paradoxically, feels excluded by the autonomy of those with different cultural values. Certainly, a minority group that chooses to organise in this way may feel more autonomy, but this may come at the expense of increased separation. To blame the excludeds' own cultural practices for their separation demonstrates a lack of appreciation of the power

dynamics at play, where the majority's cultural practices are assumed to be the norm.

"When we experience resistance to the ideas that we find, we should try to work out whether we have vested interests in maintaining hierarchies."

Whilst I want to continue to engage in conversation with other activists and those who would be activists about the precise nature of the problems, I also feel like I should offer some suggestions about how we might start remedying the situation. For me, the main problems are the power differentials that exist within wider society and that inevitably contaminate any activist groupings we create. I think that we need to work to identify and eliminate male privilege, white supremacy, heteronormativity and other hierarchical modes of thinking not just in the obvious baddies (the police, the fascists, etc.) but in ourselves. We need to make effort to educate ourselves through the experiences of those who have suffered from and have been complicit in the kinds of abuses we seek to eliminate. There

is a wealth of information available in zines, books and on the internet that is relevant to the issues I am talking about. We need to make ourselves, our friends and accomplices aware of these viewpoints. When we experience resistance to the ideas that we find, we should interrogate that resistance and try to work out whether we have vested interests in maintaining hierarchies. I have found groups such as pro-feminist men's groups invaluable for creating spaces conducive to collective unpicking of our complicity in perpetuating hierarchies. Many people write off such ventures as hand-wringing guilt-fests but I have found them to be a necessary step in taking collective responsibility to change the values that exist in activist spaces.

I think that once tribal groups (e.g. men, white people, straight people) have made an effort to empathise with the experiences of others and people are taking responsibility as individuals and as part of wider collectives to combat hierarchy formation and perpetuation, dialogue can begin in earnest. Once there is a respect for others' views and perspectives we can begin a conversation. We can start to share

our vulnerabilities with one another, as those afraid of being dominated and those afraid of losing our privilege. Once people recognise the divides that exist and make genuine efforts to move beyond them, trust becomes a possibility.

I am excited at the prospect of reaching this stage in the communities I am involved with although, of course, it is a daunting mountain to climb, personally and collectively. I think that, by incorporating a lifelong struggle against our own conditioned value systems into our actions, we can move towards more enriching and sustainable relationships. It is in everybody's interests that we work to accomplish this.



GLOSSARY

definitions of some of the words and terms used in the zine



Cissexism: the belief that transsexual genders are less valid than cissexual genders.

Cissexual: "[...] people who are not transsexual and who have only ever experienced their subconscious and physical sexes as being aligned" (Julia Serano)

Cissexual privilege: Experienced by cissexuals as a result of having their fe/maleness deemed authentic, natural and unquestionable by society at large. It allows cissexuals to take their sex embodiment for granted in ways that transsexuals cannot.

Entitlement: a belief that one is deserving of/entitled to certain privileges

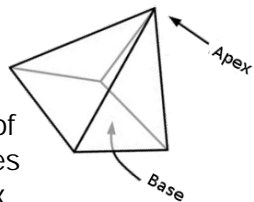
Heteronormativity: the cultural bias in favour of opposite-sex relationships of a sexual nature, and against same-sex relationships of a sexual nature. Because the former are viewed as normal and the latter are not, lesbian and gay relationships are subject to a heteronormative bias.

Heterosexism: a form of discrimination that favours heterosexuals over lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Most legal systems are profoundly heterosexist, offering visitation rights, tax benefits, and other protections to opposite-sex couples that are not available to same-sex couples. Heterosexism is distinct from homophobia, though homophobia is in all likelihood the driving force behind heterosexism.

Intersectionality: a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias. e.g. women of different races can experience sexism differently. An intersectional approach goes beyond conventional analysis in order to focus our attention on injuries that we otherwise might not recognize.

African American Policy Forum

Kyriarchy: a neologism coined by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and derived from the Greek words for "lord" or "master" (kyrios) and "to rule or dominate" (archein) which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination...Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex



pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression.

Glossary, Wisdom Ways, Orbis Books New York 2001

Oppression: the constellation of structural economic, political, and psycho-social relations that systematically confine or reduce the life-choices of a social group, often through presenting members of the oppressed social group with a set of "double binds": that is, choices between equally problematic outcomes. [See also privilege]

<http://www.kickaction.ca/node/1499>

Oppression Olympics: competing for the position of most oppressed (a group event) e.g. "women face far more prejudice than black people." Doesn't really get anyone from any group very far.

Patriarchy: Literally means the rule of the father and is generally understood within feminist discourses in a dualistic sense as asserting the domination of all men over all women in equal terms. The theoretical adequacy of patriarchy has been challenged because, for instance, black men do not have control over white wo/men and some women (slave/mistresses) have power over subaltern women and men (slaves).

Glossary, Wisdom Ways, Orbis Books New York 2001

Privilege: unearned advantage conferred systematically to members of a social group, in virtue of their group-membership.

<http://www.kickaction.ca/node/1499>



Feminist Power



Author: Shotgun Seamstress

Text is from:

shotgunseamstress.blogspot.com/2010/08/feminist-power.html [See link for complete version of this piece]

Everyone's different, so not everyone's going to agree about whether feminism is still relevant or necessary. I mean, if you're a middle class, college educated white lady with a sensitive white guy boyfriend and you feel liberated cuz you have a hyphenated last name, maybe you feel like the coast is clear and that women are no longer oppressed and we don't need feminism anymore. I have to explain why I think that the idea that feminism is irrelevant is bullshit.

Even though I'm black and gay, I don't really identify as oppressed because I live in the U.S. and I can live where I want and travel around and I have a roof over my head and I've had a lucky life with relatively minor things to complain about. But I don't feel like we still need feminism because I specifically believe that all women are oppressed relative to me.

I believe that feminism is still relevant because it speaks to the necessity to generally redefine power in our society and globally.

When we were starting the Portland chapter of Anarchist People of Color in 2003, I remember sitting in the small group that comprised us, talking about how we wanted to define ourselves. I remember talking about how even though I considered myself an anarchist, in my heart, I identified with feminism the most and I wanted that to somehow be reflected in our organization. My fellow organizer expressed that there were aspects of feminism that she just couldn't relate to. I told her I felt the same way about anarchism, picturing Rick Mackin and his ilk, in all their manarchist glory. We decided to compromise and define ourselves as an anarcho-feminist group, and since then I've been able to see more and more clearly how these two concepts work together and help us think of new ways to redistribute and rethink power dynamics.

"I believe that feminism is still relevant because it speaks to the necessity to generally redefine power in our society and globally"

For me, being a feminist means learning not to put the idea of expertise on a pedestal. Somehow along the way, I realized that prioritizing technical knowledge over experiential knowledge is patriarchal. What does it mean to "know how" to do something? Why isn't the action of doing something evidence that you know how to do it? Why do people, especially women, convince themselves that they don't know how to do things they already do? Why is it perceived that there is only one correct way to do something and that you probably need to take lessons or read a manual in order to learn it?

Knowledge really is power. Convincing yourself or allowing yourself to be convinced that you don't or can't know things is dis-empowering. I recently checked out this book *The Power of*

Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity by Amy Allen. Allen breaks down three ways of defining power: as a resource, as domination and as empowerment. Feminists who think of power as a resource are basically the ones who think of Hillary Clinton as their saviour. They see power as a resource that has been unequally distributed and they think everything will be fine once women have as much access to power as men. They want more female CEOs and politicians. They don't see anything wrong with the power structure as long as women have an equal place in it.

Feminists who see power as domination define all women as oppressed compared to all men. They wish to end male domination and see power as something defined only by patriarchal violence and the subjugation of women. This conception of power is very black & white and relies on a strict dichotomy, and it doesn't do a very good job accounting for how race, class and numerous other factors change the experience of power for men and women. Plus, not everyone's either a man or a woman, right?

"...race, class and numerous other factors change the experience of power for men and women."

Then there's the idea of power as empowerment. Empowerment is just a new way to define power—not as domination, but as “the ability to transform oneself, others, and the world,” writes Allen. It means that if you have confidence, skills or knowledge, you don't lord it over other people or use it to bolster your own ego, you share it. It's about seeing power as a nurturing force in the world. Allen writes that the main influence for this idea of empowerment is motherhood (in it's most ideal incarnation)—fostering growth, not submission through domination. This type of power benefits everyone, not just women, and it can be applied to a variety of relationships, not just ones between women and men. It also works really well with anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical ways of organizing ourselves. Power to the people, not over the people, right? This is an old idea that has yet to gain the popularity it deserves.

CLASS or is anybody out there?

We are all oppressed by the class system, but there is nobody 'out there' who isn't also oppressed by white supremacy, imperialism, heterosexism, patriarchy, ableism, ageism...Pretending these systems don't exist or can be subsumed into capitalist oppression, doesn't deal with the problem, it just silences those

people most oppressed by them, and allows for the continuing domination of these systems over our lives. We are tired of being told that anarchists don't need to be feminists, because 'anarchism has feminism covered'. This is just a convenient way of forgetting the reality of gender oppression, and so ignoring the specifics of the struggle against it.



Disability is a feminist issue

S.E. Smith

This article was originally published on the FWD (Feminists with Disabilities) blog: <http://disabledfeminists.com/2009/10/14/disability-is-a-feminist-issue/>

FWD is all about the intersection between feminism and disability issues, so it's worth talking about why I think (know) disability is a feminist issue. I'll note that this post is not intended to be a comprehensive review, nor is it intended to be the final word on the matter. It's just a brief primer.

The short version of the reason that disability is a feminist issue is that some people with disabilities are women. I know, shocking! But I'm here to tell you that it's true. And I don't speak from purely anecdotal evidence. According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately one in five American women is living with a disability. So, people, science says that some people with disabilities are also women.

So, if you identify as a feminist, presumably you are doing so because you care about women and issues which affect women. If an issue affects one in five women, it's probably something which you should care about.

But, there's more!

Did you know that women with disabilities are up to twice as likely to be victims of sexual assault and violence? Those certainly seem like feminist issues to me, so it seems worth examining why one in five women is at a higher risk of experiencing violence.

Did you know that people with disabilities are also twice as likely to experience poverty and unemployment? Poverty and unemployment are also considered feminist issues by many

feminists, in no small part because they tend to disproportionately affect women. So, if you have conditions which already disproportionately affect women involving some women more than others, again, it seems worth exploring the causality behind that.

Did you know that the wage gap is also more severe for people with disabilities? The wage gap is often identified as a key feminist issue; it's the thing that a lot of non-feminists think about when they hear the word "feminism." Again, if you have a problem which is recognized as an issue which affects women and you find out that women experience that problem at an even higher rate than ordinary women, isn't that a feminist issue?



This is called intersectionality, people. It's the idea that overlapping and interconnecting systems of oppression are involved pretty much anywhere you feel like looking. Now, every single feminist in the entire world does not need to address every single overlapping system of oppression which touches women. But every single feminist in the entire world does have an obligation to make sure that deliberate harm is not inflicted by ignoring intersectionality. That means that if the focus of your feminism is, say, sex positivity, you need to think about sex positivity beyond pretty white straight cis people without disabilities. Because, if you don't, there's a chance that you, yes, you, are hurting people with your feminism. And not just people in general, but other women!

Heteronormativity

and the War of Language

Paul Challinor

One word I cannot abide being used is “gay”. Of course I mean when the word is used to denote crap, shit or bollocks. I am gay, and I am gay because I am a man who likes men. I am not gay because I am shit. I have no idea where along the line this has become acceptable, no idea whatsoever. But it has. And it really pisses me off.

Heteronormativity

The cultural bias in favour of opposite-sex relationships of a sexual nature, and against same-sex relationships of a sexual nature because the former are viewed as normal and the latter are not.

The most significant time I have faced the wrath of heteronormativity was when a very good heterosexual male friend of mine referred to a situation as “gay”. He did not mean the same-sex loving kind. Granted, I was slightly intoxicated at the time, but I basically went, for lack of a better word, ape shit. I immediately began barraging him with how

offensive and stupid it was to use that word in that way. He was stunned. Of course he was one of my best friends, he should have known better. He also did not want to offend me or hurt my feelings and I knew that. But a lesson needed to be learnt. I used the aged old example of “you wouldn’t refer to something as Jewish in a negative way would you?!”. My friend was Jewish, that example seemed to hit home.

He immediately began apologising profusely and saying how sorry he was. I obviously accepted his apology and told him that I just wanted him to understand how offensive it can be to use gay in that context. Everything was fine. But then another dickhead piped up and everything turned quite sour. Another heterosexual male (surprise, surprise) who I was not as close to turned round and said “I don’t understand why you’re so bothered, he wasn’t being homophobic”. Quickly the tides turned. Bear in mind I was at my friend’s for drinks and I was the only homosexual there. Suddenly everyone began to look at me awkwardly. I quickly told him that

referring to something as gay is fundamentally homophobic. He didn't understand why. And then everyone else began to not understand why.

Heterosexism
Discrimination favouring heterosexuals over those in same-sex relationships. Distinct from homophobia but homophobia is in all likelihood the driving force behind heterosexism.

It was normal for them to say “gay” and none of them were homophobic or saw themselves as homophobic or agreed with homophobia at all. So how could it be homophobic? I immediately looked like I was being over-sensitive. That was made pretty obvious. They understood where I was coming from, but they didn't necessarily agree. I began to look around the room, waiting for someone to defend me and explain how it was, of course, homophobic. No one did. At that moment I became different. I felt like I had transformed from Paul to “Paul, the homosexual”. It was

the first time I had ever felt different to my friends. I knew they could never understand why I took it so personally, because how could it be personal to them? They didn't have the word shouted at them in school, intending to be offensive. They had made the word okay to use and they weren't going to understand why I had made such a fuss/defended myself.

Don't let them make it okay. The language we use is reflective of the culture we live in. If we allow for homophobic language to become normative then we allow homophobia to become normative. And then heteronormativity won't be our biggest problem.





“I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.”

AUDRE LOURDE

Your qualities aren't taken to represent everyone else from your social group

You had opportunities where you were born

No-one is uncomfortable with your sexual orientation

You have a passport that easily gains you access to other parts of the world

You're not too young

You are unlikely to be blamed

if you are subject to a violent attack or murder

~~People aren't uncomfortable~~

with your

religion/lack of religion

You're not too old

The way you speak isn't held against you

The world is set up in a way that means you can access what you need and engage with it easily

You're (a) white(r) / pale(r) person

People don't make assumptions about you based on what you look like or how you dress

No-one would ever call you a "chav"

People don't tend to assume that you're stupid

You are genetically male

Things you say are taken seriously

You're not from the global south

Other people aren't suspicious of people "like you"

You agree with many of these statements

You can participate in your society with ease

Your society considers you attractive and/or intelligent

You're only attracted to the opposite sex

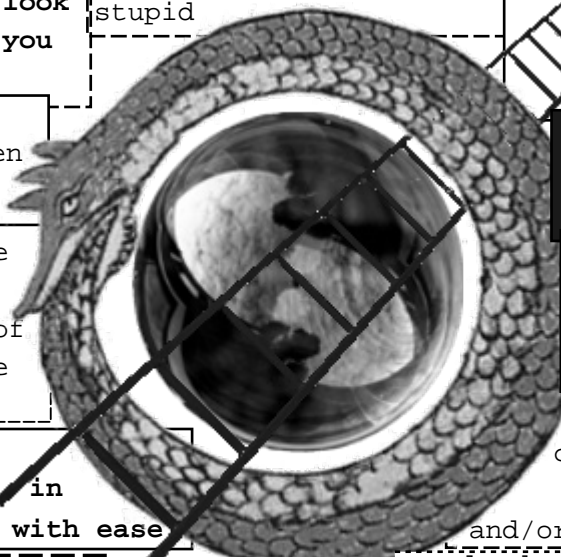
You easily identify with a particular gender

People don't make assumptions about your (cap)ability based on how you appear to them

You don't have to choose between different parts of your identity

You don't have to worry about your immigration status/ lack of "papers"

You can easily get food/water for you and your family



<<<<<<this is not an exhaustive list.

All privileges were **not** created equal - some privileges offset the lack of others; a lack of one privilege can make the lack of another even harder. However, this is **definitely not** about scoring the most/least points. This is **not** meant to be an exercise in guilt (or pity).

Just because most people benefit from some degree of privilege that **isn't** a reason to do nothing about it. Someone else's privilege does not "excuse" your own.

This is an attempt to understand what scores points on the privilege ladder and what doesn't.

It's a starting point for thinking about which parts of the privilege ladder we prop up... and which parts we need to take responsibility for taking down...

For the privileged ones: moving on

Anarchists who are serious about getting rid of hierarchies need to see how they individually benefit from different types of privilege and work towards dismantling the systems that enable those privileges. However when privilege is pointed out to people that have it, it is rare that they are willing to engage. Anger defensiveness, dismissal of the issues raised and switching to examples of their experience of prejudice (awkward conversation successfully derailed) are more common.

Alternatively, people are closed to criticism and feel that they're fully aware of all issues faced by <insert particular marginalised group here>, that they're getting it right. In fact, they have done so well, members of <the marginalised group> should be grateful to have them on side. Both kinds of response are hugely patronising and further embed privilege while pushing people away. It is essential that anyone who has

their privilege challenged accepts that the person who challenged them had a reason for doing so and to at least try to see the situation from their viewpoint. The answer is not to engage in guilty hand-wringing but to genuinely acknowledge what the issues are and take steps to tackle them as/if necessary. This isn't to do a favour to people from that particular group, it's just what you do if you want a world without systematic domination by privileged groups. Oh and the people who are dealing with the fall out of the systems that ends up benefiting you, they're not responsible for making it easier for you to deal with your shit. Privilege may be complicated but this doesn't change the fact that some groups benefit massively from it. If you are in one of those groups, it's up to you to take steps to make your community one that invites participation by all. And if you are not willing to take those steps, maybe this means that you don't actually want a movement that is for everyone, just one for people that are like you.

RESISTANCE or are we futile?

If the anarchist movement doesn't recognize the power structures it reproduces, its resistance will be futile. For as well as fighting sexism 'out there' we must fight sexism 'in here' and stop pretending that oppressive systems disappear at the door of the squat or the social centre. Only a movement that understands and fights its own contradictions can provide fertile ground for real and effective resistance.

Ask yourselves this – do you believe sexism exists within the movement? When a woman comrade says she's experienced sexual abuse or assault from a male comrade – what do you think? That it's an individual or an isolated case? Or that it can happen – and disproportionately to women – because there is a system which allows it to develop and gives it life? Can we honestly say that our own autonomous spaces do not play a part in upholding this system?

Ask yourselves this – Why do fewer women speak in meetings? Because they think less? What is the gender of the factory worker? Why do more

women do the washing up and run creches at meetings/events? What is the gender of the carer at home?

Now tell us if you believe sexism exists: tell us why men rape; why more women are battered than men; why more women are used by the state to do free and unwaged work. Tell us – are you a feminist?

We believe that in the anarchist movement, the strongest evidence of sexism lies in the choice we're told to make between 'unity' and what-they-call 'separatism', between fighting the state and fighting sexism. Fuck that! We refuse to be seen as stereotypes of 'feminists' you can consume – like fucking merchandise in the capitalist workplace.



Gloria Anzaldúa

For the Freedom of Myself

The liberation of myself from all that attempts to mediate, alter, and control my thoughts and actions is the most important struggle I can be involved in. This struggle is fought from an understanding of this society as an abusive, white-supremacist, patriarchal and capitalist system, which leads to a knowledge that in struggling for my own liberation means to struggle against those entwined systems. I am aware that having lived in this society without this awareness for over two decades means that these systems are embedded within me. However, self-improvement or challenging the way these

systems play out inside of me is not enough. It must be done in order for me to avoid reinforcing those systems, but equally important is that I confront them. Similarly, this confrontation must not only be played out in the act of creating spaces, communities, ways of living

which reject those systems, but the confrontation must be explicitly offensive. The importance of creating spaces, communities and ways of living should not be ignored, but it must be done with the knowledge that the more successful the creation of these things the more likely they are to come under attack. This attack will be both insidious and obvious,

the obvious distracting us from the insidious. These attacks responded to on the front foot, that is to say, I must hit back before I'm hit at all. What I'm suggesting for myself is an existence which responds to the world in numerous ways at the same time, never

privileging one more than another.

This society's system is abusive, white supremacist, patriarchal and capitalistic; it mediates, alters and controls my thoughts and actions through a myriad of oppressions. The culture it creates



encourages a uniform behaviour and the worship of property and ownership. It is not possible to live a life untouched by this culture; cultures are living things which are re-appropriated, reproduced and recreated by all those living within them. The same is true for the dominant culture of the current society, it does not exist without those who live within it. It is for this reason it is of importance that we challenge its fundamental characteristics in our everyday lives, taking none of its assumptions.

This society's system is abusive, white supremacist, patriarchal and capitalistic; it mediates and controls my thoughts and actions.

The most ubiquitous of these challenges currently are eco-friendly living and vegetarianism. However, these have been co-opted by capitalism and have become merely “ethical consumption” choices. Whilst there is a certainly a place for living a day to day life which minimizes ecological harm, it does not on its own challenge the abusive social relationships we exist within and reproduce on daily basis. Further challenges need to take place, limiting the ways in which we uphold white supremacy and patriarchy are amongst them. There is no easy litmus test where these are concerned,

to a certain degree they will occur, but their vigour and viciousness can be limited by regularly assessing the role we play in their reproduction. Unlike the lifestyle options of eco-friendly living and vegetarianism there are fewer opportunities to hide behind consumption choices. Instead honest self-assessment is needed, this can be made possible by small groups of friends who are comfortable enough to be honest with each about the reality of their behaviour, but more importantly they need to be internalised. This task is not a small one, and neither is its importance if we are to work towards the total destruction of all oppression. It is a task which we must take on with utmost fervour and desire, at the same time recognising that it is only through practical experimentation that we will find a way that is true. Focusing ourselves and our energies on this alone, however, will not fully address all domination and mediating factors in this society.

Internalizing an anti-domination practice must work in tandem with the claiming and creation of physical spaces that overtly challenge capitalist, sexist, racist, classist, and ableist assumptions. These spaces can be, and perhaps should be, both temporary and permanent. Temporary spaces like discussion groups

or meeting spaces which last for as long as they are needed, and allow individuals to come together for brief periods of time to discuss and assess the ways in which mainstream cultures assumptions dominate their lives are a place where those assumptions can be challenged. Alternatively, permanent spaces, such as community centres and homes can be made and developed in order that we are able to have permanent locations of resistance against the dominating forces of capitalism, civilisation and the state. Ensuring that these spaces are genuinely challenging to dominant culture is incredibly difficult. They will be inhabited by people like myself who have spent the majority of their lives in a society which has so many different hierarchies and assumptions based on race, class, gender, etc that they are walking talking versions of those hierarchies and assumptions. This is why any resistance to dominant culture, any hope of liberating myself, must include working on internalising anti-domination ideas and ensuring that those ideas are also challenged within the spaces that I inhabit. We must be vocal about these ideas, encourage others to challenge us when we reinforce dominant culture through our actions, as well as creating and maintaining spaces where those actions are not accepted.

I do not believe that internalizing anti-domination practices, nor creating truly anti-domination, anti-capitalist spaces will result in the liberation of myself from all that attempts to mediate, alter, and control my thoughts and actions. They must occur, but without direct confrontation with the dominating man made systems of this planet they will not be enough. The spaces that we can create will always be under attack from systems of power, particularly if those spaces expand and grow to include more people. Those spaces will be merely a pseudo utopian ghetto, as they will still exist within the context of society as whole which will mediate who has access to those spaces and who does not. The internalisation of ideas will be under constant threat, because unless I am to spend my time only within those spaces (pseudo utopian ghettos that they are), I would forever come into contact with a society which is devoted to having its inhabitants internalize and reinforce ideas which maintain the status quo of domination, capitalism, racism and the patriarchy. It would be a life led entirely on the defence, thus one which is not liberated but one that is quite clearly trapped. Only in attacking the system and the forces that maintain it can I possibly find moments of liberation. How long these moments last depends

on the strategies and tactics that I choose to use, whether the attacks are forceful enough, whether they occur combined with those of others, whether my actions, along with those of others, are able to rupture this society for long enough to experience liberation for prolonged periods of time. However long these moments last I think they are the only moments when I am actually free, when the threats, the coercion, the fear of retaliation and the silent oppressions of this civilisation are not enough to hold me back.

I do not want to privilege these types of action over creating spaces and internalizing ideas. If these actions are organised and occur

within a group of people where sexism, classism or racism exist then they will shorten the length of my moments of liberation. Likewise the more these three elements interact, the stronger and more affective each will be. Attacks against the system should be accessible to all, not merely the white male whose privileges are born out of this society's hierarchies and oppressions. Internalizing processes, and creating genuinely non-hierarchical spaces develop the possibilities that all can participate in

Attacks against the system should be accessible to all, not merely the white male whose privileges are born out of this society's hierarchies and oppressions.

self-defence, self-liberation, and the destruction of domination.

The things that I need to do in order to be permanently liberated are immense and I do not believe they can be achieved on my own. If I merely view the struggle for liberation as an individual then I have already lost. My struggle is entwined with the struggle of others and a part of the struggle is making connections with others. One facet of state and capitalist oppression that reaches us all is the breaking down of those connections.

The most obvious methods of doing this are class, race and gender, but they exist in the ways we form our subcultures, the ways in which we find personal and collective identification through our consumption habits, whether they be the food we eat, the clothes we wear and where we get those clothes from and the jobs/social functions we perform.

I live, and spend most of my time in a subculture which places great emphasis on it's ethical choices. Inclusion and exclusion to this social group is often predicated on performing certain "ethical" habits. These include, but are

not limited to: veganism/freeganism, freeshopping, permaculture, recycling, cycling, renewable energy, composting, home brewing, having an allotment, and art and education projects based around gardening or recycled materials. A lack of participation in these, or an overt rejection of these, makes inclusion into the social group that much more difficult, unless you have a regular supply of ketamine and dub

step. That these habits have become so closely associated with anti-capitalist movements is to these movements' detriment. I don't

believe any of them have anything to do with building a movement which will destroy capitalism, and everything to do with white university educated men and women carving out an identity with which they can view themselves and each other as women and men of conscience and ethics without ever having to challenge the pro-capitalist racism, classism, and sexism that they have had ingrained in them through living in this particular time and place in history. This behaviour is an act of domination, it is a refusal to internalise anti-capitalist, anti-state, and anti-

domination ideas. A refusal to participate in spaces which encourage and facilitate such behaviour is an active attempt to generalize and spread the amount of attacks on capitalism and the state.

It's because of this that I feel this subcultural baggage damages my struggle for liberation. If "ethical" work and "ethical" consumption remain as dominant as they are then there will

The anti-domination practices, actions and movements that I seek to be part of will always be short lived whilst those within the supposed anti-capitalist movement use their privileges to dominate the discourse.

always be a barrier between those who participate in them and those who do not. The simple answer at this point is to reject the

subculture, for me to step out of it, but this does not take into account the fact that, like many subcultures, this one has created a supportive and protective environment where friendship and affinity can/has occurred. As well as this, much of the subculture has stemmed from genuine movements of resistance. The road protest movements, Reclaim the Streets, J18 and the G8 in Stirling all have their critics, but for me it is clear that they, at the very least, resisted capitalism and the state in some way. For these small reasons alone I think it would be foolish to reject them wholesale, but I am under no illusions

that there are people within the subculture (whether you want to call it activist or environmental or whatever) who rely far too strongly on their privilege, and with whom I will never find any affinity, and am actually in a very profound state of conflict with.

I think that deep within the movements that exist (and their subcultures) is a need to reject capitalism and the state. Unfortunately the privileges that we have, which have been given to us by capitalism and the state, have not been challenged vigorously enough. We pay lip service to those privileges, we can talk a good talk, but in placing such a great emphasis on “ethical” work and “ethical” consumption we betray ourselves. And as I said previously, this betrayal damages my struggle for liberation. If instead of being evangelicals of “ethical” low impact living, we detected the things which stop us from being fully free, un-mediated human beings and challenged those things, whether they be inside of us, or inside our communities, or inside society as a whole, IF, after asking questions of ourselves, we then explained to others what we found, IF we

did this, and then talked to others, without attempting to persuade or cajole, without making assumptions on what their needs and wants might be, we might find that we can make deep connections with people outside of our subculture. Then we can work on developing those connections, whether they are with one person or a hundred and we might be able to do something with those connections.

The anti-domination practices, actions and movements that I seek to be part of will always be short lived whilst those within the supposed anti-capitalist subculture/movement use their privileges to dominate the discourse. I don't want to stay part of a subculture, never mind one which is ignorant of its flaws. Those of us who want to bring this capitalist society down must challenge those who attempt to distract everyone with notions of ethical work and consumption. If they ignore this challenge, then they are guilty of maintaining the shackles and chains of capital and the state which imprison us all.



Against Prison Society

To act deliberately in this society; to attempt to live free from coercion and control; to be genuine and authentic to one's desires; to act truthfully and with honest reflection; all of this means to risk prison. The physical infrastructure of the prison system provides the means to contain those who elude the infinite mechanisms of control that permeate our society; those tools and instruments that attempt to order and restrain the misery, anger, and frustration of civilised life.

And yet prison is more than the bricks and mortar of physical buildings, the metal of iron bars and cell-doors. It is also a social condition, made manifest each time we submit to the regimentation of work, each time our faces appear on the screens of a security camera, each time we act on fear rather than desire. To struggle against prison is not to struggle against a singular institution; it is to struggle for the dismantling of the entire control apparatus that has spread like a spiked mist into almost (almost) all corners of our society.

The experience of prison, of the acute oppression and restriction of freedom, is but a more extreme form of the experience of everyday life in civilised society. We all experience containment; the only variable is the size of the container. Indeed, the management of prison complexes reveals in stark colours the modes of operation of the state and its instruments of oppression. It is here that the spectacle of society outside is stripped bare, and the repressive measures that everywhere prevail are left uncovered and clear. For example, a reflection on prison labour reveals many of the underlying logics of oppression characteristic of society at large. So when the British Justice Secretary explains that the idea of prison labour is to 'give these guys the idea that work is a normal part of life' and that if they want to escape the vicious circle of being taken in and out of prison 'they'd better get used to working', he reveals how prison forms just one part of an inter-locking web of institutions that work together to oppress us. Thus prison becomes a means by which people are coerced into the system of work (a much more



cost-effective form of control for the state).

When one of the expressed aims of prison industries is to 'ensure dynamic security by providing purposeful activity at relatively low cost', this is but an expression of the underlying logic of all work, with coerced activity

draining any energy that could be used in ways which threaten the dominant system (i.e. which pose a security threat). Similarly, the government's attempts to re-establish control after the prison rebellions of the 1980s and 1990s by introducing competition for limited jobs and the privileges that come with them merely reflects the wider divide and rule logic of capitalism.

For those of us who have never set foot in a prison, the thought of doing so is a great source of fear. It is this fear that stops us from doing what we believe needs to be done. It is this fear that eats away at us because it can't help but make us feel that they're winning. It is this

fear that stretches the gulf between our heads and our hearts. It is this fear that keeps us languishing in nervous hesitation with consequences writ large and



blocking out motivations. It is this fear that must be overcome, but weighs us down like an anchor keeping us from just below the surface of the

water, stretching to catch a breath. It is this fear that provides the fuel for our prison society, that keeps it functioning.

In order to overcome this fear, we must build secure communities of resistance that place the struggle against prison at their heart. As well as developing a robust security culture, this means building a solidarity network with prisoners to continue the struggle against oppression both inside and outside the walls. Effective resistance will face repression, which means we have to be ready to continue the struggle within the cages they force us into. We must also destroy the illusion of freedom on 'the outside' that keeps us so compliant and controlled.

IDEAS INTO REALITY and what's in between?

There will be no future for the anarchist movement if it doesn't also identify as an anarcha-feminist movement. Anarcha-feminist organisational structures must exist within the movement to make anarcha-feminism an integral part of it. And you don't need to identify as a woman to be an anarcha-feminist – every anarchist should be able to participate in the struggle against sexism.

The state's incursion into our private lives and the relationship between sexuality and productivity from which it profits affects people of all genders. The gender binary system violently allocates us roles on the basis of our anatomy. A refusal to accept even these basic precepts will be a great hindrance to the movement.

You ask, 'Can we find common cause despite our

differences?'. We will only find common cause if we recognize that our differences are structured by numerous oppressive systems, and together fight to end each of these systems, wherever we find them.

Our feminisms must be plural, they must be anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic. Our inspiration must come from the actions of feminists who have helped self-identified women reach revolutionary consciousness.

Our feminisms must be revolutionary.



Mbuya Nehanda

Strengthening Anarchism's Gender Analysis:

Lessons from the Transfeminist Movement



Author: J. Rogue

From: <http://tinyurl.com/jrogue> (Full article available at link)

Transfeminism developed out of a critique of the mainstream and radical feminist movements. The feminist movement has a history of internal hierarchies. There are many examples of women of color, working class women, lesbians and others speaking out against the tendency of the white, affluent- dominated women's movement to silence them and overlook their needs. Instead of honoring these marginalized voices, the mainstream feminist movement has prioritized struggling for rights primarily in the interests of white affluent women. While the feminist movement as a whole has not resolved these hierarchal tendencies, various groups have continued to speak up regarding their own marginalization – in particular, transgendered women. The process of developing a broader understanding of systems of oppression and how they interact has advanced feminism and is key to building on the theory of anarchist feminism.

Transfeminism builds on the work that came out of the multiracial feminist movement, and in particular, the work of Black feminists. Frequently, when confronted with allegations of racism, classism, or homophobia, the women's movement dismisses these issues as divisive. The more prominent voices promote the idea of a homogenous "universal female experience," which, as it is based

on commonality between women, theoretically promotes a sense of sisterhood. In reality, it means pruning the definition of “woman” and trying to fit all women into a mold reflecting the dominant demographic of the women’s movement: white, affluent, heterosexual, and non-disabled. This “policing” of identity, whether conscious or not, reinforces systems of oppression and exploitation. When women who do not fit this mold have challenged it, they have frequently been accused of being divisive and disloyal to the sisterhood. The hierarchy of womanhood created by the women’s movement reflects, in many ways, the dominant culture of racism, capitalism and heteronormativity.



Mainstream feminist organizing frequently tries to find the common ground shared by women, and therefore focuses on what the most vocal members decide are “women’s issues” – as if the female experience existed in vacuum outside of other forms of oppression and exploitation. However, using an intersectional approach to analyzing and organizing around oppression, as advocated by multiracial feminism and transfeminism, we can discuss these differences rather than dismiss them. The multiracial feminist movement developed this approach, which argues that one cannot address the position of women without also addressing their class, race, sexuality, ability, and all other aspects of their identity and experiences. Forms of oppression and exploitation do

not exist separately. They are intimately related and reinforce each other, and so trying to address them singly (i.e. “sexism” divorced from racism, capitalism, etc) does not lead to a clear understanding of the patriarchal system. This is in accordance with the anarchist view that we must fight all forms of hierarchy, oppression, and exploitation simultaneously; abolishing capitalism and the state does not ensure that white supremacy and patriarchy will be somehow magically dismantled.

Tied to this assumption of a “universal female experience” is the idea that if a woman surrounds herself with those that embody

This “policing” of identity, whether conscious or not, reinforces systems of oppression and exploitation.

that
“universal”
woman,
then she is
safe from
patriarchy
and

oppression. The concept of “women’s safe spaces” (being women-only) date back to the early lesbian feminist movement, which was largely comprised of white, middle-class women who prioritized addressing sexism over other forms of oppression. This notion that an all-women space is inherently safe not only discounts the intimate violence that can occur between women, but also ignores or de-prioritizes the other types of violence that women can experience; racism, poverty, incarceration and other forms of state, economic and social brutality.

The Transfeminist Manifesto states: “Transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels genuine, comfortable and sincere to us as we live and relate to others within given social and cultural constraint. (1)”

The concepts espoused by transfeminism help us understand gender, but there needs to be an incorporation of transfeminist principles into broad based movements. Even gay and lesbian movements have a history of leaving trans people behind. For example, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act does not protect gender identity. Again we see a hierarchy of importance;

the gay and lesbian movement compromises (throwing trans folks under the bus), rather than employing an inclusive strategy for liberation. There is frequently a sense of a “scarcity of liberation” within reformist social movements, the feeling that the possibilities for freedom are so limited that we must fight against other marginalized groups for a piece of the pie. This is in direct opposition to the concept of intersectionality, since it often requires people to betray one aspect of their identity in order to politically prioritize another. How can a person be expected to engage in a fight against gender oppression if it ignores or worsens their

racial
oppression?
Where does
one aspect of
their identity
and

There is frequently a sense of a “scarcity of liberation” within reformist social movements...

experiences end and another begin? Anarchism offers a possible society in which liberation is anything but scarce. It provides a theoretical framework that calls for an end to all hierarchies, and, as stated by Martha Ackelsberg, “It offers a perspective on the nature and process of social revolutionary transformation (e.g. the insistence that means must be consistent with ends, and that economic issues are critical, but not the only source of hierarchical power relations) that can be extremely valuable to/ for women’s emancipation. (2)”



Notes

1. The Transfeminist Manifesto by Emi Koyama (2000)
2. Lessons from the Free Women of Spain an interview with Martha Ackelsberg by Geert Dhont (2004)

ACCOMPLICES

As a child I smashed cash machines, robbed students, broke into fancy houses, and set fire to stolen cars. Sometimes with friends, sometimes alone; sometimes it was planned and sometimes it was a spur of the moment thing. I couldn't articulate it then, but now I can. I/We wanted to send a message to everyone who was having it better than us, whoever had the money, the power, whoever was included in the thing (whatever that thing was) that we were excluded from. The message to them was always "Fuck you, fuck you and your world. Your world which keeps you safe and me/us at the mercy of how things are." These actions also had a direct impact on our lives - money from the students to buy us drugs and booze, cool shit from houses to take home or sell to our neighbours, fires to warm us on the nights we were too scared to go home and the smashing of a cash machine gave us a giddy glow a sense of control over our external world, which did not exist anywhere else. These were acts of resistance, before we knew what resistance meant, when it was just about taking back a bit of control, a bit of freedom and directly improving our immediate lives. Those

friends I carried these acts out with I found in stairwells, under bridges, at raves and at school. We didn't have consensus meetings we didn't need to, we already knew where we stood.

Two decades later and my immediate life has changed, I don't have the same worries about where my next meal will come from or whether I'll be able to go home at night. I've been accepted into the world of the included, where hot baths are run easily and it's not necessary to lie in bed with one eye open. But I still want to send that message, I still want to cause as much damage to the world which creates the included and excluded through state and capital. I want to use my position inside the included as place to attack from. My reasons for this are in many ways the same. Left over animosity for the damage this society did to me, and the damage it still does. Because I am under no illusions that just being on the inside, just because I have those hot baths and comfy beds, that I am not being systematically fucked over by this society and the conditions it cannot help but create.

As a child I found my accomplices in attack, and as an adult I've found

through semi-autonomous social spaces, it has been possible that those who do not wish to collect as much capital as possible can still sustain themselves. We are able to do this, because it poses no threat to the established order of things. In merely minimizing our participation in capital we pose it no threat and are allowed to continue do so. Our aims of encouraging others to reduce their participation is equally of little threat as a reduction in participation is



still participation. Despite this I cannot entirely dismiss this way of living, as it creates spaces in which some accomplices in attack can be found. Those that want to minimize their participation in capitalism are occasionally also those who want to see its destruction. However, they should not be viewed as the only place to find accomplices. Those that find themselves in permanent structures which enable them to minimize their participation in capital will often find themselves dependent on those structures, and those structures depend on capitalism.

What do I mean by accomplices? In my case they are those who wish to attack the entirety of social structures, they are those who view this society as endlessly interconnected, those who do not see multiple issues that need to be resolved nor situations which merely need to be improved, but those who see those issues and situations as inevitable results of the current society. I may find connections with those who wish to attack a particular issue or change a specific situation, but it should always be known by all involved that in attacking an arms manufacturer, government cuts or a fur seller, my goal is not to end the existence of the thing that we are attacking, but to create space to discuss further targets and find more ways in which our lives are connected. It is from these connections that accomplices are to be found. The connections maybe limited and thus we will not be accomplices for very long, or the connections may grow and expand and we will be accomplices for many years, whether that be intermittently or constantly.

Why do I need accomplices? I don't. I can, and always will attack with all that comes from me, but this society thrives on atomizing us, refuting our

collective impulses, and because of this attacking with others is that much more powerful. In finding long term accomplices, those who share the same to desire to attack society in its entirety I am able to share my autonomy, to act with others in a way which represents the desires of all of us, where each of us is acting for freedom and against domination in a way which is true to each of us and without coercion. Each of us knowing that if further connections aren't made then we'll not need act together again.

How many accomplices?

One. Six hundred.

Nineteen. The quantifiable amount does not matter, what matters is the quality of

the connection. If it takes eight thousand of us to act together to burn parliament to the ground, then let each of us know one another. I have no wish to be one of those eight thousand if half of them want to build a new parliament in its place. My thoughts here, if they are not clear, are that I wish to struggle for my freedom with people I know, specifically people who wish to struggle for their own freedom and in solidarity with others fighting

for their own.

For me the largest difficulty here is that it is easy to limit myself to working alongside only those who I socialize with, those who attend the same bars, go to the same houses for dinner, watch the same films, listen to the same music i.e. those who have the same points of reference to me. I see the answer to this is to enter into different circles, primarily other areas of confrontation with authority, where particular individuals have identified an aspect of their life in which they



wish to confront authority, and act alongside them, not for them or on behalf of them, nor as an ideological ambassador,

but as an individual who sees their struggle as connected to his own. In order for this to occur in a way which is mutually beneficial then I must take particular care to listen to the opinions of all those involved, and articulate myself and my motivations clearly, so no confusion or coercion occurs. If I am unable to work directly with the group of individuals, due to differing understandings of power and collectivity then I am always able to

express my solidarity in other ways. In taking part in activities which are full and vigorous acts towards my own freedom from authority, but which are done with empathy for others involved in the same struggle.

Participating in different circles will allow different connections to be made and opens up the possibility of new accomplices to be found.

But I cannot participate in movement building, in the development of a mass fighting under one banner, one ideology or one identity as this is a process of homogenisation, a process which will lead to the silencing of individual voices and the erosion of autonomy. There are those that identify as anarchist who believe in permanent formal structures for organising themselves. It is important for me to say that whilst I disagree fundamentally with this, that I still wish to act in solidarity with them and to act alongside them when to act in such a way would be appropriate. I do not view them, nor for that matter any other organisation or individual which wishes to destroy the current social order as an enemy. They are often

friends with whom I have many connections with, and as such I hope to have ongoing and honest conversations with them, without ideological stagnation or defensiveness.

There is no one true way to confront all forms of domination and oppression, no single strategy or tactic which is applicable in every context. And I don't dare to presume I

ever know the correct way to act in any situation. I am however able to know which way is most appropriate for me to act and know that this might change depending on the context I find myself in. The challenge is to learn as I act, to embrace my autonomy and allow it to be an open expression of my ideas, needs and aims. I don't believe this can be done in permanent formal organisations nor in isolation, thus the need for making connections and finding accomplices, thus the need to listen carefully to myself and to the others who I cross paths with.



Some Resources

Things we like/found interesting

[Doesn't mean we necessarily endorse everything they say]

Blogs & Zines

The Angry Black Woman theangryblackwoman.com

Black Feminists blackfeminists.blogspot.com

Black Looks blacklooks.org

Dark Matter darkmatter101.org

Dealing with Our Shit tinyurl.com/dealingwithourshit

Hack Gender hackgender.org

The FWord www.thefword.org.uk

Muslimah Media Watch muslimahmediawatch.org

Questioning Transphobia questioningtransphobia.com

Race Revolt racerevolt.org.uk

Shotgun Seamstress shotgunseamstress.blogspot.com

Vegans of Color vegansofcolor.wordpress.com

Zero at the Bone zeroatthebone.wordpress.com

Articles

Anarchist People of Color, Senzala or Quilombo:

tinyurl.com/senzalaquilombo

Feminism needs transfeminism:

tinyurl.com/transfeminism

Human Privilege:

tinyurl.com/humanprivilege

"Intersectionality" is a Big Fancy Word for My Life:

tinyurl.com/mylifeintersection

Other things

Are you a Manarchist?

tinyurl.com/youaremanarchist

How Not To Be Insane When

Accused Of Racism (A Guide

For White People)

tinyurl.com/insaneracist

How to suppress discussions
of racism

tinyurl.com/suppressracism

Privilege checklists

Age: tinyurl.com/agepriv

Class: tinyurl.com/classpriv

Heterosexual:

tinyurl.com/hetpriv

Non-disabled:

tinyurl.com/nondispriv

Non-trans (cis):

tinyurl.com/cispriv

White: tinyurl.com/privwhite

Some last words

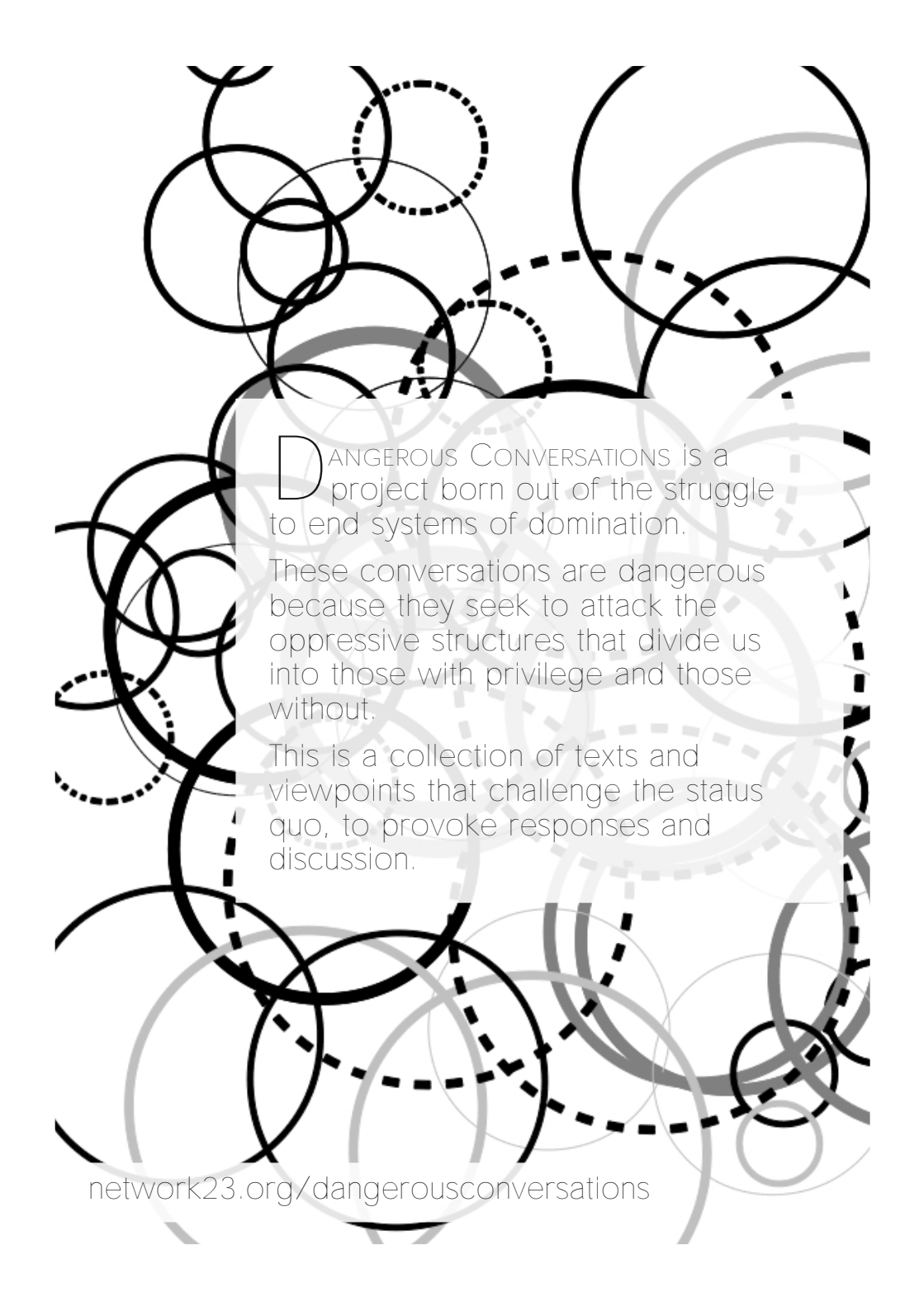
We think that these ideas are important and worth discussing and would like to continue exploring them, but to be meaningful this project needs to become a conversation. We're really keen that readers respond to and involve themselves in the project by contributing to this conversation in whatever way seems appropriate. Submissions for future publication, criticism and new ideas are all very welcome.

Contact us at [dangerousconversations\(at\)riseup.net](mailto:dangerousconversations(at)riseup.net).

You can pretend we didn't come here, pretend nothing was said.

You can purposefully misunderstand us.

Or you can ask yourselves why we came, what we meant, and whether we'll come back again.



DANGEROUS CONVERSATIONS is a project born out of the struggle to end systems of domination.

These conversations are dangerous because they seek to attack the oppressive structures that divide us into those with privilege and those without.

This is a collection of texts and viewpoints that challenge the status quo, to provoke responses and discussion.

network23.org/dangerousconversations