

Anarchy In The Town

An intro for people of color

anarchist people of color

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Anarchism is a political philosophy based on freedom and the idea that groups of people should not hold established power over others. This power over others is authority, and it happens in a lot of ways: the rich over the rest of us, white people over people of color, men over women, etc. And those in power enforce it in many ways: the police, the KKK, domestic abuse, etc. An anarchist is someone who tries to live life fighting those power structures so that we can all come up and achieve freedom without becoming the oppressors.

“and the old folks tell me it’s been going on since back in the day,
but that don’t make it okay
and the white folks tell me all the looting and shootin’s insane,
but they don’t know our pain
so please don’t come around these parts, and tell me that we all
a bunch of animals,
the only time they wanna turn the cameras on,
is when we fucking shit up”

-Anderson Paak

from the track “Animals” (2015)

There are a lot of here in the Town. We’ve been spotted smashing bank windows and fighting the police these last few years, popping up in various social movements. We started noticing each other more during the rebellions in 2009 after the police murder of Oscar Grant. Since then we see how every time we hit the streets enraged by another police murder of a black or brown person, the police and media are quick to claim that only people who aren’t from our communities are the ones breaking shit and fighting back. Those in power would say anything to divide us, because they are afraid of the dangerous potential of our revolt. They’ve been using the news, corporate media, and even people of color (POC) so-called “community activists” to mislead you. Even now, they are trying to draw a dividing line between the Black Lives Matter movements and those of us that have been going hard in the streets.

The time of their lies is over. We out here in the streets, fighting back as we face oppression and lost life. There’s more of us anarchist people of color out here every time. We been out here, doing it the way we do out in Oakland, and the way they do now in Ferguson and Baltimore. We black and brown rebels have been here the whole time, donning the black mask. We know that the proven way to defend ourselves when they take one of our lives is to lash back in collective fury, and show that the horror they inflict on us won’t be tolerated. We’ve been the one’s fighting like hell, turning it up, along with many others. We ain’t waiting and we ain’t playing, this is a war against our oppressors.

So here’s a short read that some POC anarchists wrote about what we think. Check it, and next time shit pops off, maybe we’ll see you out in the streets.

GOVERNMENTS, POLICE, AND THE ELITE

Anarchism is against the government, straight up. The job of the government is ultimately to protect a small group of elites and their property. Most of us would be better off without govern-

ments. These elites are the economic class of the rich and powerful. No the rich and powerful like Beyonce and Drake. Oh hellll no. Elites are the no-talent entertainment industry executives that own the record labels and always get a cut for themselves no matter who's hot this year. They're the executives of corporations, the owners of machinery that makes cars, cell phones, guns and drones. They're the politicians that get cashed out for fixing up the laws to help these greedy business people. The government is the agencies, the laws, and the cops that maintain the power of the super rich people over the rest of us. The police are the front line of government. Their job is to criminalize, beat, intimidate, jail, and kill us so that we never stand a chance at rising against the elite.

FUCK THE POLICE.

FUCK THE POLITICIANS.

As anarchists we understand that a lot of things that governments claim are bullshit. Even though they claim to be by and for all the diverse people in society, they still serve the elites, and work hard at oppressing the rest of us. One historical example of this is how we are made to memorize that line from the united states declaration of independence that "all men are created equal..." But we know that in reality what they were saying about equality was bullshit because slavery was legal! They weren't talking about black people, native people, new immigrants, or women. By men, they only mean white men. As anarchists, we feel that Citi is crucial call them on their bullshit, which is still very present in today's world. When government workers like city council members and cops call themselves public servants while calling us gang members, writing and enforcing curfew and anti-protest laws, and terrorizing us in the street, that's some bullshit! Anarchism is not a political party. We're over going out to vote. We see that the only voting options are ones that people with hella money came up with. It doesn't matter if you vote Democrat or Republican, it's all the same.

COLONIZATION

For ages our people lived off the land, which provided enough to live off or trade to get by. Across the world, our land has been conquered, divided into plots, and stripped of valuable resources. This was largely set in place by the white supremacist project of genocide and slavery called colonization. For 500 years europeans sailed around the world stealing land and destroying our ways of life. It was either work for them, believe their religion, fight against our own people, or die. A main part of their strategy was to get us to internalize their values, to hate our own skin, to be patriarchal and homophobic. For many dignity was all about survival. And for others dignity was fighting the impossible. Most of those decolonial fighters lost, and their stories will never be told. But some were able to hold out, deep in the jungle, high in the mountains, or hidden within the cities, and later fight decolonial struggles casting off white governments. And some were only able to get partial victories, like "rights" within the oppressive government structure. Writers of history books want us to think that the ills of the past have been corrected by progress. Teachers say the key to our future is getting a good job. Can you feel them brainwashing you? That 'good job' is your continued slavery. Those history books are written to colonize your mind, to keep you internalizing their values. The struggle for decolonization and dignity goes on to this day. It starts with decolonizing our own minds while joining our ancestors in fighting back against the continuing oppression of our people.

Know your history. Know your enemies. Fight your enemies.

“Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging [voting], nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.” -Lucy Parsons

MALE DOMINATION

In colonizing our peoples, european men enforced the oppressive idea that there are only two different genders, men and women. They set up a system so that people in those categories have to be a certain way, allowing men to dominate. It's called patriarchy. This social structure denied the existence of gay, queer, or trans people. It was enforced by sexual assault, domestic violence, gay bashing, and withholding jobs from women, queers and trans folks. Racism, classism, and this gendered system are overlapping social systems of oppression constructed to serve the elite white men that divided and conquered the population. As POC anarchists, we must deeply reflect on how we have internalized these values, and deconstruct these oppressive systems within ourselves and among our communities. If we are serious about fighting white supremacy, patriarchy needs to be fought with the same energy, at the same time.

Some basic ways we fight patriarchy are getting to know and respect women, gay or trans people and listening to their point of view. By pointing out to our male friends that it aint cool to holler at women that are just trying to walk down the street. By telling men we suspect of physical or verbal abuse that it aint cool, and create serious consequences for abusive behavior. By taking “gay” and “bitch” out of the vocabulary we use to dis people.

MUTUAL AID AND A BETTER LIFE

Anarchists are fighting toward a better, more liberated world. We do a lot based in mutual aid, which basically means taking the time to help people out when you can and knowing that some people will see that and give back in return. This way of helping each other is how our people survived centuries of oppression. What it means is that regular folks play a role in creating the rules and doing the work it takes to survive and enjoy life. In anarchy, there is no elite group. Instead, we have to organize our own ways of survival, with the goal that everyone's voice actually counts.

When we see bullshit we stand as a witness against it, not by calling cops, but by dealing with it ourselves. That said, we don't just wile out on fools we don't like, because we know that even folks actin a mess might someday be comrades in struggle. Anarchism seems to us the most parallel term or political ideology to many of the ideas that we have felt for most of our lives, having been passed down from our elders and friends, that everyone would prefer to live in harmony amongst each other than at war. This is based on survival as a group, so we live for the interests of our fan, team, or genre rather than just for ourselves. Our group is autonomous even from other anarchists if we want, and does its own thing. We do all this because we know that by building healthy relations free of domination, a better life is possible.

CAPITALISM

A main hurdle for anarchy in today's society is capitalism. Unlike many healthy social traditions that supported our peoples for generations, capitalism pushes everyone to compete for jobs, homes, and status, isolating us from the living world around us, the land, and each other. This way, even if we are part of an oppressed group, we end up competing with each other to move up in capitalism. Those who succeed might come up out of poverty and feel so bad about the ways they are still funk'd over. But the system forces them to dominate over others to do so. We then see a common theme of the rich and their police police dominating over everyone else. In a society where the rich upper classes of elites can do whatever they want, anarchists see this for what it is, a war against the have-nots. In this way, we see other layers of bullshit domination, such as rich Raza dominating poor Raza, rich Blacks dominating poor Blacks, etc.

NON-PROFITS

Many government programs and services have been built up for poor people to make it seem like government mostly helps people. But what they are actually doing is keeping us busy waiting in lines, filling out forms, calling different offices, just to get food stamps or see a doctor. Doing all this, we barely have time to talk about the government's role in reinforcing capitalism or time to connect with each other and strategize on getting back what was ours in the first place. When militant groups like the Black Panther Party organized children's breakfast programs to improve the health and lives of many people in the 1960's and 70's, the government viscously attacked and killed off or jailed many of its members. When the movement grew, the government offered a solution; non-profit organizations. Today, many non-profits play the role of providing much needed services, like breakfast for children, but without the militant edge of former revolutionary groups, since the government built itself into the non-profit structure. Like government aid agencies and churches, non-profit charities are the institutions that reinforce the domination of the "haves" over the "have-nots." They help coordinate the very slow process of distributing a small slice of resources and power to poor people. But it is just enough to make us rely on them instead of seeking the destruction of the very system that forces us to beg for crumbs.

PRISONS

Possibly the worst example of governments controlling lives is seen in prisons and detention centers. The US has a higher percentage of its own population in jail than any other country in the world, and private companies make more money if more people are locked up. In the pen, wardens and guards feed into racially based rivalries to make sure prisoners don't unite in struggle and revolt against being locked up for breaking the laws of the rich. Outside of lockup, families struggle to stay close and connected, and are subject to searches and surveillance for even just having someone close to them behind bars.

STRATEGY

When anarchists organize, we do it in a decentralized and disciplined way. This means we seek to share responsibilities and leadership, because we don't want to mimic the same fucked up system we are fighting and hold power over each other. Decentralization is a widely used strategy throughout the world with key benefits against state police and military, who use top-down chain of command tactics. We know that the enemy has great success singling out leaders and attacking, imprisoning, or assassinating them, as they did in the 1960's militant movements. We use strategies that can be beneficial to keeping our momentum. For example, covering our faces and wearing jeans and a plain hoodie, so that they can't tell who is who if they try to put cases on us. It is important that we constantly scheme about new strategies to defend ourselves and our people from repression.

CONCLUSION

In summary, anarchists seek the destruction of governments and any social relation where one group dominates over another, aka hierarchy. Hierarchies like racism, patriarchy, and homophobia exist between individuals and must be torn apart as they are foundational pillars of the system that oppresses us all. That system is capitalism, which stand front and center in exploiting our labor and destroying the natural world. So as anarchists, we are on this 'fuck capitalism' tip, as we see through the illusion of modern capitalist democracy. It is crucial that we organize resistance against these relations, as our ancestors did, autonomously and based on what we have in common. This can be our fan, our block, our classmates, our coworkers, our queer family, however it breaks down for us. But it is also essential that we not let them pit us against each other. Instead of fighting each other we can work collectively to find ways to challenge, sabotage, and defeat the elites and shake from the roots the power structures that hold us bound from liberation. Anarchism is a stance, an attitude, a way of looking at the world to build liberated communities and strategize about what, how and when we must strike back against power structures that ruin our lives.

This zine was written by anarchist people of color (APOC) in Oakland, California in 2015. We're a few people that work together informally towards a common idea of liberation. We recognize that POC only means not white, that we are not the same, and that freedom can look very different to the many distinct groupings of non-white peoples. We don't always agree on everything, and we speak only for ourselves.

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