

booksandbricks@riseup.net

B♀OOKS



BRICKS

VOLUME 1



THEME: FEMINISM

SPRING 2020

Hey there!

We at The Red and Black Collective are excited to introduce what we hope will be the beginnings of a long and fruitful project.

This Zine marks the start of an endeavour we have been looking forward to for months now. Books and Bricks is intended to be a platform in which we empower ourselves and others to voice their perspectives, share their experiences and showcase their art. Our aim is to cover an array of topics and voices – we hope we encourage you to think, laugh, reflect, share and get active. This first edition is dropping on the 8th of March 2020 and we look forward to sharing a small variety of feminist content with you.

We kindly would like to remind readers that this is a new project and it's possible we will make some mistakes – we hope to learn and grow from them. We would also like to ask our readers to assist us in our growth, if you would like to make a suggestion on ways in which we can improve ourselves, please get in touch with us via our riseup e-mail. We are looking forward to hearing your thoughts, opinions and critiques!

Furthermore, we would like to express that our submissions are a combination of our own and others. While we would never publish something that strongly goes against our values, we also make a conscious decision to not censor our comrade's politics too harshly. The reason for mentioning this is because the content published in Books and Bricks do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the Collective as a whole, the contributors as a whole nor any one individual contributor aside from the individual that wrote it. In fact, we have had some incredibly thought-provoking conversations and debates about the topics of this zine throughout its compilation. If you would like to respond to a particular piece, please don't hesitate to send us an e-mail.

With that all out of the way, we sincerely hope you enjoy the fuck out of this Zine and we look forward to hearing back from you fine folks.

Enjoy!

- Black Spruce

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ABOUT THE RED AND BLACK COLLECTIVE

We are a collective of Anarchists and Libertarian Socialists.

We stand for the complete liberation of all peoples and fight against all unjustified hierarchies.

We strive for a society rooted in mutual aid, bottom-up organising & equity - in opposition to the current social power structures and classism in which today's society is based. Drawing knowledge and inspiration from a variety of societies, past and current, as well as social movements like the Zapatistas, Autonomous Rojava, early Kibbutz collectives in Palestine and Indigenous communities we acknowledge the natural diversity intrinsic to social organizing; most notably outside of the capitalist sphere. These communities, and others like them, have a wide range of teachings which we believe will certainly help mold our societies in the future. Our assertion is that relations between people and peoples should not be established upon the unnatural premises of competition, hierarchy and greed, but rather on the qualities mentioned previously.

This collective aims to support and/or address the unique struggles which our surrounding communities are afflicted by as well as the numerous global challenges faced by society collectively; transgressing both walls & borders.

Our collective maintains focuses on a wide variety of issues while also recognising the limitations and finite reach of our efforts given the number of individuals belonging to this collective as well as the amount of dispensable labour we hold. We mention this in order to make our following positions clear and our abilities understood, but also to establish a general comprehension among ourselves, and others whom may be interested, that we do not intend to recreate the exploitative environments we are so accustomed to within our own organizing spaces - we value the rest, clear

headedness and wellbeing of ourselves and our comrades in order to make our work effective and long standing.

On issues pertaining to class, we intend to contest and respond according to our ability to both repressive political action & the perpetuation of class society/elitism in our work places, educational institutions, private lives and, more broadly, all of our shared communities.

Our collective recognizes that the exploitation we live through day to day oppresses us through more than the economic arena alone, but permeates virtually all factors of our livelihoods; our goal is to crush class society as well as the statism that maintains it.

Furthermore, we intend to challenge the stereotyped figure of a "working class" individual to encompass a wider, more inclusive array of peoples facing exploitation including those without work, sex workers, domestic labourers and the ever-dwindling so-called "middle class". Our position confronts exploitation of all forms and contexts in order to bring the fight for worker-operated, collectively owned and democratic workplaces to each and every doorstep.

As for race, ethnicity and nationalism, our aim is to create and further promote strong diversified communities revolved around true understanding, action, intersectionality as well as an array of unique voices. We aim to challenge and question both white dominance & more specifically, white-male dominance within all communities; especially with intention to hold our own left & autonomous communities responsible. We hold true to the fact that liberation is unattainable through another 'White Vanguard', but rather a movement which raises the voices of peoples and communities too often silenced by those that claim to represent them. Furthermore, our stance on white supremacy, and other forms of racial, ethnic, national or religious supremacy, with their inherit direct and indirect violence, is that it should be smashed by

any means necessary – and we, without hesitation, commit ourselves to this task.

Within the context of gender and sexuality, as different and as interconnected as these two topics are, we work to dispel ignorance through education & to do everything in our power to support as well as help actualise the absolute liberties and self-determinations not yet fully accepted by society for both the queer and gender queer communities. On a platform of intersectionality and open dialogue we stand within and alongside the fight for sexual and gender liberation. We refuse to accept the celebratory notion that LGBTQ+ liberation has been achieved while lesbian, gay, bi and especially our trans and non-binary brothers, sisters and comrades are subject to malicious attacks enacted by states and bigoted society and while BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People Of Colour) folks maintain limited freedom in contrast to white folks belonging to the LGBTQ+ community.

Our views on the ever more crucial environmental epidemic are as follows, we hold the position that we are living in an economic system that perpetuates its oppressive structure through brutal exploitation of the water we drink, the air we breathe and the land we live off; this reckless pursuit of power and profit results in the continued oppression of our indigenous communities, working class and the countless voiceless species we share this world with. The liberal notion that recycling and electric cars can stop the ever-accelerating effects of climate change is an ignorant perspective that finds its origins in privilege and a lack of comprehension for the unignorable effects of the 100 companies responsible for 71% of climate change. Our position is one of a collective effort in anti-capitalism, feminism and the pursuit of raising BIPOC voices to spearhead the fight against this imminent climate catastrophe.

As an autonomous collective we stand in opposition to the state, but more noteworthy perhaps is our opposition to the legal system it perpetuates in order to control, divide, repress, vilify and conquer; all within a goal of protecting capital

along with the ruling class. Our view of a true justice system is one that utilizes restorative justice practices in order to maintain social responsibility, pursue compassionate rehabilitation when necessary and function for the purpose of strengthening communities rather than punishing them.

Taking these positions and stances into account, our collective without a doubt recognizes the various intersections in which these struggles and more can intersect and overlap creating many unique struggles, perspectives and experiences that must be taken into account for any true progress to be made. For this reason, we determine to take an intersectional approach in our dialogue, practice and action against the struggles we intend to face.

In addition to these, our political views work against all hegemonic perspectives that directly and indirectly support systematic oppression and repression such as ableism, islamophobia, antisemitism, misogyny – among many others.

For liberation, self determination and unwavering justice –

We fight, learn and work for a brighter more fruitful future.

With Love and Rage, The Red and Black Collective.

Texts by Red and Black Collective members in this zine:

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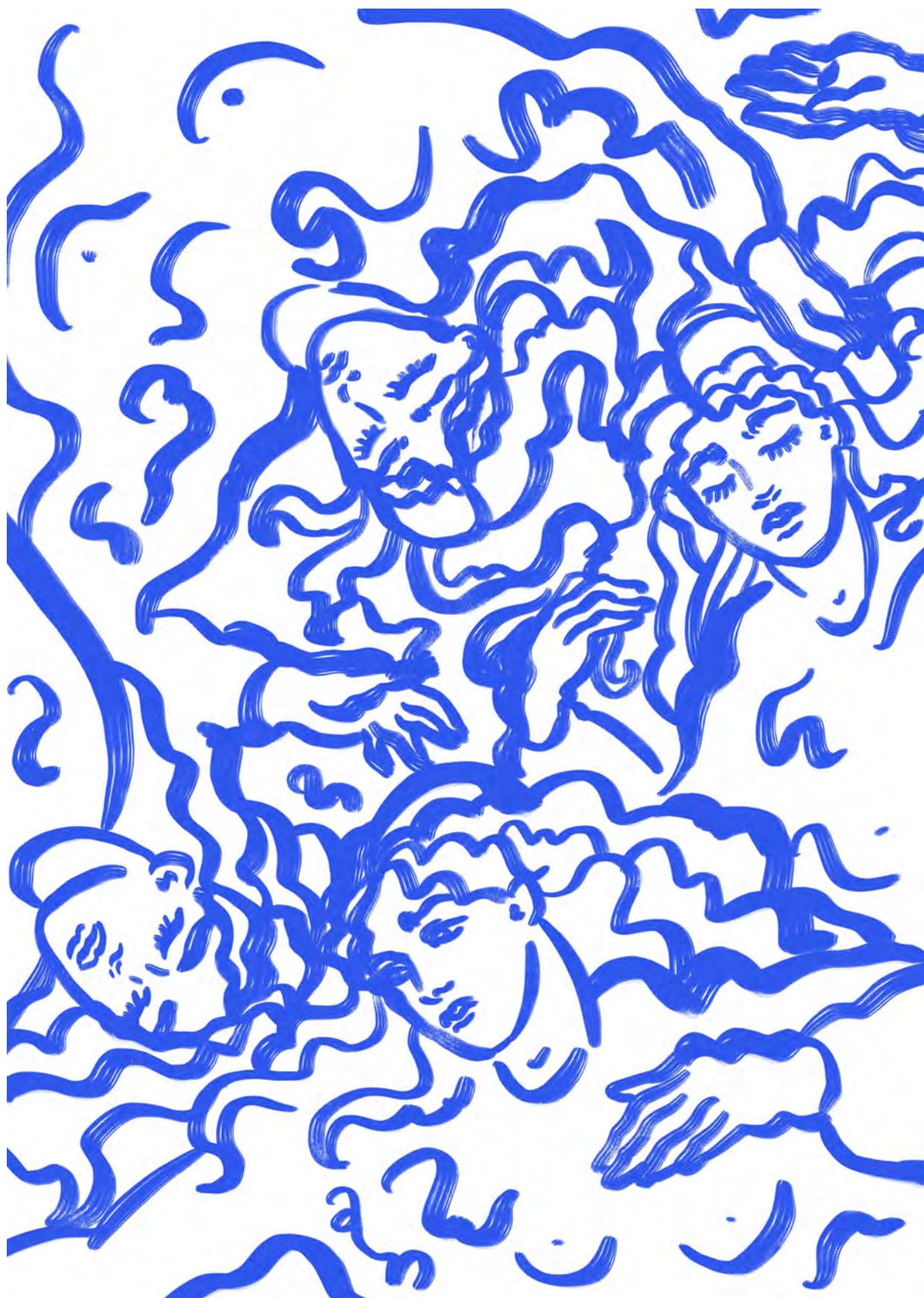
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Art by tzvia and HannaNevada found in, but not limited to, the Red and Black Sketchbook (p. 27)

Editor: Black Spruce

Design and layout: tzvia



art: Ewa Siarkiewicz (@ewuwua)

Volunteerism in the era of peak capitalism

by Rozalia Szomeciak 

For quite some time I have held the attitude of animosity towards jobs that don't have any significant positive social impact. I quite firmly believed that the only work I wouldn't feel guilty doing would be the ones with which I could combine my ideals and views. I remember that a few years ago I actually felt the need to explain myself to a person who asked me what I did (back then I worked as an assistant at a retail clothing store), saying that: of course I am aware of the company's use of sweat shops, but I need money to live on, and frankly no other enterprise had offered me a job. The person looked at me with a great deal of confusion, and I ended up quitting the job after one month.

This attitude rose from both my intrinsic need to do something that would positively change the world and from the deeply rooted unwillingness towards being stuck in a boring, dehumanising routine, without the impact and the awareness of the results of my work; to put it in other words – unwillingness towards corporations.

Based on the stories I heard and the articles I read (the latest one was about designing uncomfortable toilet seats to prevent the employees from spending too much time in the bathroom) my mind created

a clear, Mariana-trench-deep gap between what I felt defined work at the neoliberal temples of capital; and what characterised being employed in the monuments to humanitarianism, aka NGOs. The image was based on opposition, of course; where the former equated to disrespect, dehumanisation and the abuse of power; the latter meant respect, humanising the dehumanised and the abandonment of hierarchy. Slightly naïve, I know, but undoubtedly very idealistic.

And don't get me wrong, this is not a piece that aims at glamourising corporate offices.

I still think that corporations are fucking evil, but at least they hide their true nature under a lid so narrow, that it's not that difficult to peek into what's lurking underneath. For NGOs and cultural institutions, however, this is not always the case.

I guess it's time to explain the context. In Poland, where I come from, the situation of NGOs' and cultural institutions' is rather dreadful. They used to be grimly underfinanced, relying heavily on the unpaid work of young people. However, with the rise to power of our far-right government, the situation has gotten even worse – the funds are often frozen if the organisations don't match the governmental policy line. Therefore, there's even more unpaid labour, anxiety and resentment.

Both me and my friends have had tons of experience with working pro bono in Poland. We organised educational events, participated in protests, did translations, wrote articles, conducted trainings and helped with the everyday stuff that volunteers are usually asked to do. We did this because we believed in the cause, wanted to gain knowledge or become “more valuable in the job market” (hey, all the recruiters I've ever had contact with said, that what truly mattered was experience, not the degree, but the relevant experience; there's gotta be something in it, right? Right...?). And yeah, sure, being a volunteer had perks on its own, one could e.g. watch a movie for free or participate in a lecture. However, what it really meant was doing actual work, quite often full-time, without any kind of recognition or gratitude. Some of us

have not heard a simple thank you, others were left with unfulfilled promises of possibilities for future involvement or never-written recommendations.

But hey, I'm a Pole, and as the majority of the Polish society does, I also believed that in the great Western world things can't be that bad (a classic example of the Eastern European inhibition). Therefore, I decided to try out European volunteering; I spent a year in the capital of one of the "rich, old Western democracies", landing myself a place in a well-established human rights NGO. I was lucky, the volunteering experience I had was mostly amazing. Of course, there were some negatives; from time to time I would collide with the Corporate Hierarchy Wall or be kindly censored whenever the topics I wanted to cover seemed too political. Nonetheless, what I had missed the most – gratitude, respect, recognition, growth – I was able to find there.

The above sentence could not be applied to the experiences of people who, despite volunteering in the same country, landed different NGOs. For instance, there was the case of a girl who ended up chopping wood for 3 hours a day in the middle of nowhere. There was a boy and a girl, who were asked to complete absurd tasks (e.g. translate texts for a campaign that had been cancelled), and whose organisation provided them with less money than they were supposed to.

Whenever I compared their experiences to mine, I felt both privileged and disappointed. The later because my beliefs about the NGO work culture abroad were smashed. The former, because I realized that the NGO I volunteered for was the exception to the rule; if I had ended up somewhere else, the experience would have not only been a "wasted year", but a massive financial drain of my parents and any savings I had managed to compile throughout these years. Yes, class privilege turns out to be a crucial requirement in long-term volunteering.

I ended up being offered a job at the NGO I volunteered for, only to find out that everything I had admired was gone. Starting from the notorious

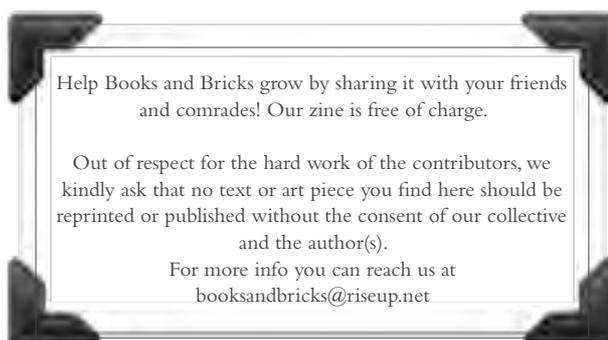
zero hours contract, through communication flow blocked in the corporate hierarchy and the unwillingness to disclaim information about the salary, to being left hanging for weeks as to the possibility of continuing or receiving the payment for the work I finished.

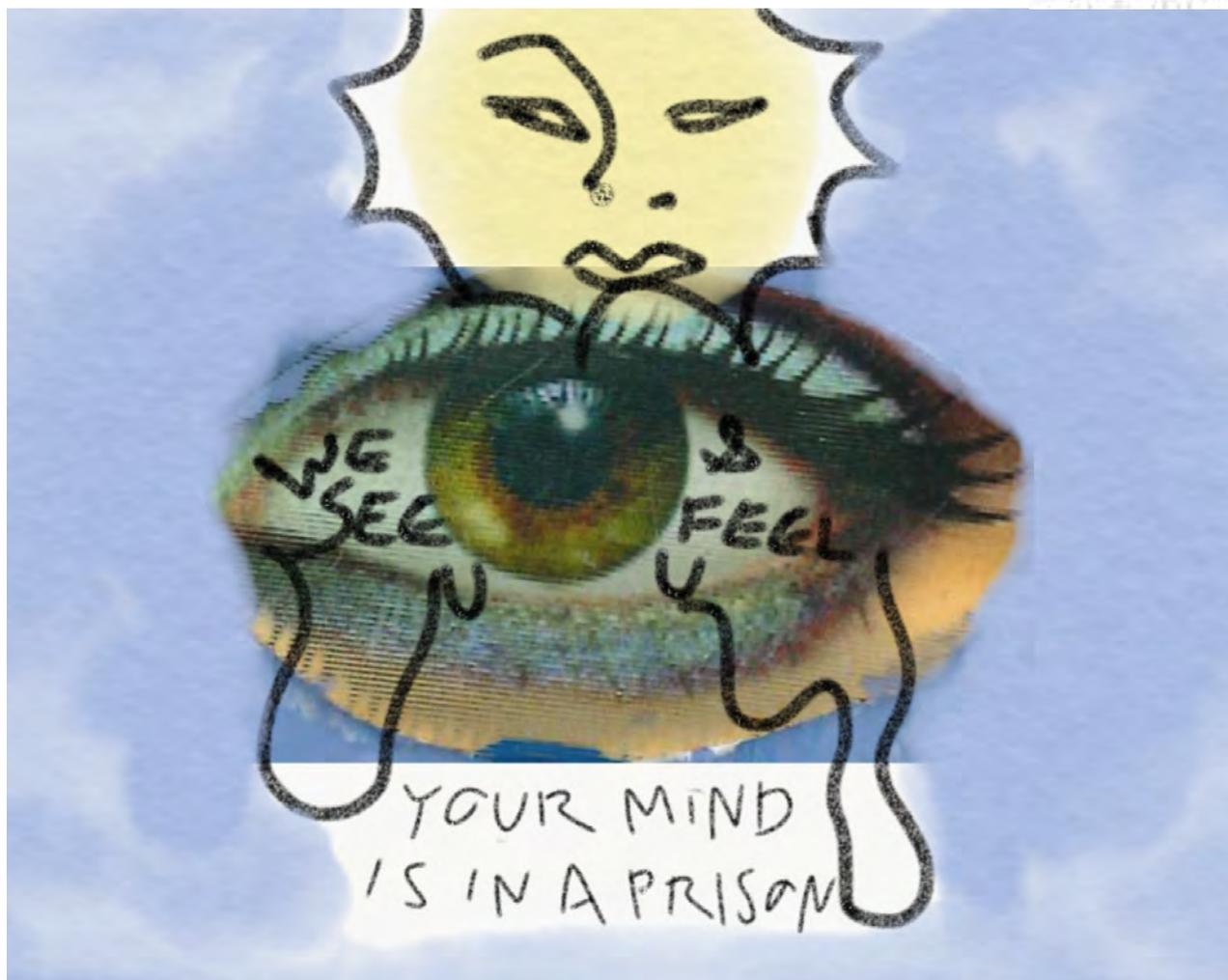
It greatly saddens and enrages me, that institutions which claim to fight for equality, freedom and dignity, fail to value and respect their own workers and volunteers.

I speak for many, when I say that we would prefer not to hear the false promises than to be kept waiting and feel ignored. NGOs and cultural institutions (not to mention the beneficiaries of the services they provide) rely on our labour, commitment and expertise, yet often fail to acknowledge the value our work possesses.

By declining to show recognition, gratitude or to provide the needed support, they greatly contribute to the burn-out many young activists suffer from; often perverting their self-image, by making them doubt their skills and value of the provided work.

It's important that we start holding the institutions which proclaim themselves the guardians of ethics, to higher moral standards. Volunteering/work in this field shouldn't mean sacrifice of one's mental and physical health. Only by staying loyal to ourselves, will we be able to truly, positively change the world.





Too brown, too big and too Muslim? Or rather, too white and not Muslim enough?

The multiple intersections of my identity

by Ebru Calin 

1. I was four years old, one of my very first days at a new kindergarten, and a little boy told me I was the devil because I had black hair, dark skin, black eyes and thereof, a black soul. It was the same boy who

told all the other kids not to play with me because I was fat.

2. It was last week, September 2nd, 2019, that I was asked in the surgery room of the gynecological department if I was capable of speaking German (my native tongue) and if I was still a virgin. "(anesthetist slowly in English: WE ASK YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY MUSLIM." (I still do not know on what fact he based this assumption on.))

3. Growing up within two cultures has often given me the feeling that I need to apologize for my identity. "Why are you not wearing a headscarf?" "Why are you even studying, if you could already be married?" "Aren't you too fat for being in your 20s without kids?" "How can you believe in tarot cards if Allah is the only truth?"

The answer is yes. My identity has always been AND is continuously being questioned. Society has often stripped me of who I am by dehumanizing my racial, sexual and political identity. I am a first-generation female Turkish-German Muslim Graduate who primarily fell in love with the soul and the intellect of a human being. Their gender came second. The fact that my partner happened to be Caucasian/White, Christian and male were not the three crucial variables that made me want to marry him. I believe this fact should not necessitate a binary opposition labeling me as either bisexual or heterosexual. I believe I can both be an academic and have kids. I believe my desire to be a successful academic does not make me less brown or less of a woman. My passion for tarot cards and my wish not to wear a hijab does not make me disrespect Allah and my identity as a Muslim does not make me less German. Unfortunately, it is society that is struggling with the multiple intersections of my identity and that only knows verbal and non-verbal violence to cope with this truth. However, I am learning that my racial and sexual identity, the person I chose to love as well as my politicized body is not an apology.

My entire life, my identity has always been attached to a story or belief about my value and my worth in the world. There is a specific narrative that has been created around my identity, a narrative shaped and reinforced by familial, social, cultural and political factors.

Therefore, the question I would like to keep in mind is not only concerned with whether or not I have been asked about my identity but also addresses the following: What is the underlying reason that the narrative of a heterosexual, Muslim

woman has been forced upon me without ever being questioned?

I believe hearing someone's truth "strikes some deep part of our humanity, our own hidden shames, it can be easy to recoil into silence. We struggle to hold the truths of others because we have so rarely had the experience of having our own truths held" (Taylor 2018: prologue). I believe the narrative that shapes me as a heterosexual, Muslim woman who is supposed to have 'the ideal body', who is supposed to focus on children and marriage rather than an education and a career, makes people feel safe. It's normative gender roles, a sickening beauty image and the century-long tradition of getting married and having children that makes the community I grew up in feel comfortable. These aspects stabilize the heteronormative and patriarchal structure of our community. It also forces me to be equipped with an emotional armor at all times. If people in my community allowed my truth to be voiced, heard and tolerated, this norm-driven construct would be destabilized and eventually, fall apart. My truth must not coexist within this normative construct of the Turkish community I grew up in. There is a pain that emerges within me from the following realization: We all struggle with seeing ourselves or others in the fullness of our intersections. We fail at accepting others' truth and celebrating our differences as we deny our own truth, afraid of being rejected.

The world is struggling to find space for the complex reality of these intersections. The truth is, we all live at multiple intersections of our identity and this causes our multiple identities to affect each other. Thereby, the German community struggles to understand that I am brown, Muslim, Turkish AND German, AND a graduate, AND have an intimate life AND suffer from chronic conditions, which, however, does certainly not make me less German, less Muslim, less human with sexual desires and hopefully not the devil. However, people struggle so very hard to label me and put me into a box at their convenience.

Consequently, their incapability to do so causes a radical racial siren to turn on and to attack my value and my worth as who I am in the world. Sonya Renee Taylor talks about the ‘Three Peaces’ that fight the impetus to make racialized, sexualized and overall misjudged bodies we do not understand, wrong. Among these ‘Three Peaces’ are making peace with not understanding and making peace with difference (Taylor 2018: 19). However, reality shows that humanity is not even close to liberating themselves from the oppressive expectation to understand everyone and to make peace with difference. I believe this has been creating an immense lack of empathy. Unfortunately, it is this exact lack of empathy and human connection which has been causing people to continuously question my identity whilst not questioning it enough.

What is agency?

By Chantal Renee 

Agency, activism, empowerment and autonomy have been central themes of collective struggle in women and gender history. While not exclusively a feminist term, agency in the context of feminist thought describes the capacity for self-determination where women are able to be effective in challenging their own oppression and assert control over their circumstances. Furthermore, it is a call to action for women to ascertain control over their bodies, lives and decisions – and to challenge their subordination in the process.

While what is understood as ‘agency’ may differ amongst feminist streams, it remains a relevant concept that aims to explore the relationship between power and ideology. In essence, agency highlights the dichotomy of individual action and social structure. Women’s agency is complex and affected by a number of factors such as race, class,

ability, orientation, religion, status and age. More recently, geographical location has become a large area of study in analyzing agency and feminist theory within Western Feminist contexts – which widely and often, unjustifiably, assumes certain regions to be ‘sexist’; one frequently used example of this narrative is the portrayal of the Middle East. It is important to remember that agency is locally defined and socio-culturally mediated thus impacts the way an individual interprets, practices, exercises and understands the concept of agency. Forms of agency or achievements may indicate empowerment in some contexts and not in others.

It is also important to note that women exercise agency in different ways with different motivations, internal negotiations and utilizing various strategies. Agency can be hard to see and less visible forms can still be an expression of agency accordingly;



agency should be defined beyond observable actions. Some sites where agency is taken up are in work, politics, legislation, family, relationships, health-care and education. Women’s agency is important for two major reasons: its intrinsic importance to the wellbeing of individual selves, other women and their communities; and it is required to dismantle, shape and evolve institutions and social norms.

These stories deserve to be heard.

“The Unwomanly Face of War” by Svetlana Alexievich - a review

by tzvia

The story of war is rarely ever written from the perspective of a woman. It's no wonder that overwhelmingly toxic and masculine narratives dominate the mainstream historical discourse. Active warfare throughout history has been seen as a matter concerning men, but women have undoubtedly also played a role, regularly a leading one. Yet, women were often either portrayed as civilian victims of war, as accidental heroines or rather their experiences omitted completely.

Until not so long ago, there was very little place for telling the stories of the everyday experiences of women who decided or were forced to participate in combat, since war was glorified and used as a powerful nationalist propaganda tool. However, World War II, along with the academic and artistic responses to the collective trauma of the events, has opened a new chapter of recording women's voices; this is connected with a few important factors. Firstly, suffrage and feminist moments getting momentum in the XXth century helped to shine light on the importance of listening to “everyday” stories and the re-reading of history to include experiences of women, that before were largely deemed unimportant. Feminist historians analyse voices heard as well as unheard to explore and illuminate the women's viewpoint of history through rediscovery of forgotten writers, artists and philosophers in an enormous effort to recover and demonstrate the historical significance of women's stories. Secondly, during WWII it is estimated that a total of 70–85 million people perished (3% of the 1940 world population) – trauma for the world was unspeakable. There was a need for collective mourning and processing of the atrocities that happened – genocide, destruction of cultures, mass

murders, widespread sexual violence and hunger. People, who were not able to process openly (due to social norms or hegemonic discourses of totalitarian systems they lived in) did in private – many by writing books, memoirs and journals. The generation of children born after WWII also felt the need to process the trauma of their parents, since it greatly impacted their personal lives and the societies' they grew up in.

“The Unwomanly Face of War” by Svetlana Alexandrovna Alexievich (born 1948 in Ivano-Frankivsk), a Belarusian journalist and oral historian who writes in Russian, tells the emotional history of the Soviet women through a carefully constructed collage of interviews. Her book, finished in 1983 and published two years later, is prefaced with passionate and touching personal thoughts about the destructive heaviness of war. “The Unwomanly Face of War” is a collection of intimate recollections of the Soviet women that fought against the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War (a Soviet term for WWII) both in the regular army and as partisans. The stories are collected by theme (“Of Everyday Life and Essential Life”, “Of Death and Astonishment in the Face of Death”, “Of a Loneliness of a Bullet and a Human Being”). In her book, Alexievich writes:

“The monstrous grin of the mysterious shows through these stories... ‘Women’s’ war has its own colours, its own smells, its own lighting, and its own range of feelings. Its own words. There are no heroes and incredible feats, there are simply people who are busy doing inhumanly human things.”

For many of these women the war period of their lives, even after years, were the most important and formative. For decades their stories were stripped of personal details and used simply as Soviet war propaganda – all of the Soviet people, women

included, fought bravely against the Nazi aggressors. Yet, as much as there were many that were incredibly proud of their medals, they felt abandoned by the system and their individual voices were unheard. Some of them were shunned for the imagined “promiscuity” of women who fought shoulder to shoulder with men. They could never publicly speak up about the hardships, traumas, losses and mourning, but they shared those stories between each other. Alexievich gave them the opportunity to share the humane perspective on one of the most destructive conflicts in human history with the wider public; which was met with a warm embrace and gratitude. The women recall love, friendship and the desire to be considered pretty, but also harsh living conditions, working without rest for days and sexual assaults.

As the author writes herself, “But ‘small details’ are what is most important for me, the warmth and vividness of life: a lock left on the forehead once the braid is cut; the hot kettles of kasha and soup, which no one eats, because out of a hundred persons only seven came back from battle; or how after the war they could not go to market and look at the rows of red meat.” Those small details like finding time to sing or embroider, mourning friends and lovers, and overall themes of their deep belief in the values of communism and fierce antifascism are what makes this book so unique and personal. It’s both a collective voice of the generation and the collection of individual lives shaped by war.

The publication of this incredibly touching and, in my opinion, important book was first

stopped by the authorities because Alexievich’s narrative obviously did not fit the general tone that the Soviet Union spoke about the Great Patriotic War – many of her interviews also reflect the lack of support from the state for the veterans, or even suspicion and accusations of treasons they had to endure after the war. To question the narrative of the state was sacrilege. It was finally published in 1985 and printed in millions of copies.

Alexievich describes the theme of her works this way: “If you look back at the whole of

our history, both Soviet and post-Soviet, it is a huge common grave and a blood bath. An eternal dialog of the executioners and the victims. The accursed Russian questions: what is to be done and who is to blame. The revolution, the gulags, the Second World War, the Soviet–Afghan war hidden from the



people, the downfall of the great empire, the downfall of the giant socialist land, the land-utopia, and now a challenge of cosmic dimensions – Chernobyl. This is a challenge for all the living things on earth. Such is our history. And this is the theme of my books, this is my path, my circles of hell, from man to man” (2015). After political persecution by the Lukashenko administration, Alexievich left Belarus in 2000. She was offered sanctuary by the The International Cities of Refuge Network and during the following decade she lived in Paris, Gothenburg and Berlin. In 2011, Alexievich moved back to Minsk. She was awarded a Nobel Literature Prize in 2015.

Whataboutism

By Iñaki Yagüe Zamora 

Whenever there is a movement that calls for the end of sexism, there tends to come a chorus of protests saying “Well what about when a woman treats a man poorly?” as if such a claim somehow negates centuries of systemic oppression endured by women. These objections, these shouts from critics of feminism, seem to think sexism is a myth because they’ve seen women yell at men. These retorts are fairly common to come across and also not always worth your time to debate, not because their claims are untrue, there most certainly are women that will treat men like shit, but because it is simply not a debunking statement to the existence of sexism or patriarchal society. Are we to expect that after centuries of mistreatment, subjugation, and abuse that there won’t be some women, who in an attempt to fight back will throw the same treatment they have received back at men?

This is not meant as an excuse for anyone who abuses men mind you, but as a realistic recognition of the effects that abuse have on a population. To be clear I’m not saying to debate these individuals but rather to not fall into the trap of debating this line of argumentation.

This tactic to use “what aboutism” as a way to discredit a legitimate argument such as feminism, is meant to put us on the defensive and deflect the issue at hand, an attempt to “corner” us into condemning the actions of some random individual so that they can say something along the lines of “see some women abuse men, and not all men abuse women” well, no shit, but we must not let anyone equate the outlying individual examples to an entire systemic power relation that subjugates all women and ultimately affects all of us. It’s almost as if as a society we expect women to be frail timid creatures who won’t ever fight back. I’ve been told

by my editor to clearly state for you fine readers that the previous sentence is indeed sarcastic.

Additionally, someone who tries to equate these two situations or is shocked that a woman might become a vengeful bitter person probably doesn’t grasp the extent and pervasive nature of which sexism affects the lives of women. We should not be scared to respond simply with a “so fucking what?” There is no need to hesitate around the subject as if Brad’s friend Dave, whose girlfriend likes to humiliate him in public, is the biggest travesty in human history, yes Dave’s girlfriend is acting like trash, but that doesn’t excuse sexism or all the sexist assholes out there, especially considering that Dave’s girlfriend might be acting like trash because most of the interactions she’s ever had with men have been far “trashier”. Honestly, I’m more surprised there aren’t more women who will take a metaphorical uppercut at whatever unfortunate sod is around when the opportunity arises. But maybe that’s just the result of growing up in Texas, a place full of macho attitude where my middle school vice principal once told me the way to deal with bullies was to break their jaws, I know wild. Interestingly enough his name was Mr. Wild. Which brings up an entirely different conversation about socially acceptable behaviors based on gender when it comes to violence and oppression. Also, not great advice for a 14-year-old child, unless we’re talking about how to deal with Nazis, but I digress.

So, then what should we do when these objections arise? Simply put, we should not make excuses or deny these claims but rather acknowledge them and move on. Do toxic women exist? Yes. Is that in any way an argument against feminism? No. If anything a lot of toxic behaviour is a raw reaction to sexism. Don’t let the statement derail the conversation. It’s an attempt to victimise the oppressor and marginalise the struggle of the oppressed. And we should never fall for those kinds of traps. It’s a sad reality that whataboutism is something that we even have to entertain but unfortunately it is an ongoing part of modern discourse.

At a Glance

By Black Spruce

At a Glance is intended to be an ongoing series in which we select lesser known individuals that have exemplified revolutionary action, good praxis and/or the personification of the societies we are fighting for. The intention is to take a moment to stop, reflect and pay our appreciations to those whom have fought before us – the intention is not to idolize, but to acknowledge and learn. Perhaps readers will enjoy the history, some may be inspired by these stories, others might decide to dive further into these past stories of our shared struggle; whatever you gain from these stories, we hope you enjoy.

Feel free to shoot us a message for possible future individuals to look into and also message us if a detail seems partially or wholly incorrect – we are trying our best, but none of us are immune to mistakes.

Thank you and enjoy!

Luisa Capetillo

October 1879 – October 1922

A trail blazer for women's equal rights and labour organising, Luisa Capetillo was home schooled by her domestic working mother and laborer father in Puerto Rico. Capetillo's immigrant parents dedicated their time to raising Luisa with an education that was inspired by their own experiences with regard to the French Revolution and workers' rights movements from their respective homes.



In early adulthood Luisa acquired a position at a local cigar factory where she was responsible for reading the current events as well as novels to the workers; a position not commonly held by women at the time. Throughout this period at the factory, Luisa capitalised on her impressive childhood education by further familiarising herself with the labour unions. From there she would go on to begin a series of essays of her opinions and beliefs that were published in a number of political and union newspapers. In 1905 Capetillo would make a prominent name for herself by leading an agricultural worker's strike.

The writings of Capetillo were often rooted in the emancipation and strength of women. Her convictions would lead her to become a key player in the fight for women's suffrage as well as a large supporter for equal education. In 1910 Luisa worked with the FLT (American Federation of Labor) and traveled across Puerto Rico organising women. As her influence grew, she later traveled to the United States and began organising tobacco workers from New York to Tampa.

Among her many successes was the 1916 Sugar Strike which she helped to organise; the strike lasted five months and resulted in a national salary increase for laborers. Three years later, at about 40, Capetillo was jailed for being the first woman to wear pants in public, the charges were later dropped. That same year she assisted in passing minimum wage legislation in Puerto Rico.

Luisa Capetillo was an extraordinary women's rights activist and labour organiser, having dramatic effects across the Greater Antilles and beyond; espousing free love, lifting up her fellow women, fiercely fighting for workers rights and promoting anarchism on both an individual and organising level.

Fumiko Kaneko



January 1903 – July 1926

Raised in Yokohama during the Meiji era of Japan, Kaneko's formative years were affected by wide spread Japanese imperialism. As her parents were not officially married, she was unregistered until 1911, but not as her mother's daughter, but rather as her mother's sister due to her parents having Fumiko out of wedlock.

Fumiko Kaneko faced many obstacles in obtaining education at a young age because of her circumstances as an unregistered child. To deepen her struggles Kaneko's family was fairly poor and her family life became increasingly worse as her father left his job, became abusive and eventually

left. Despite the many adversities Kaneko had to overcome in her youth she became a well learned student.

As poverty inflicted further hardship on Fumiko and her mother it was decided that Fumiko would live with one of her aunts in Korea under the pretense of her adoption into the family and a possibility for higher education. However, it quickly became apparent that her life in Korea would not be as was expected; Fumiko was treated as an outsider and was only permitted to read her school literature, nothing else. The family did not enroll her in high school and instead had her work around the house; she was regularly abused and beaten. An additionally notable development during her time in Korea was witnessing the oppression carried out by Japanese occupiers against Koreans.

Kaneko returned to Japan at the age of 16 and after passing from family member to family member she left for Tokyo; there she finally had the agency to take her education into her own hands. Fumiko got a position delivering newspapers which paid for her enrollment and during her time working there she came into contact with the Salvation Army as well as some Socialist groups. She developed relationships with some of the groups, but those relationships were short-lived as both groups held beliefs that strongly contradicted her own.

Fumiko began to develop a close friendship with a classmate, Hatsuyo Niiyama, which led her to thinkers like Stirner and Nietzsche, ultimately lighting the fuse to Fumiko's anarchist and nihilist thought. At this time she also met Pak Yol, a fellow Korean activist that shared many of her beliefs. Together they published their thoughts in two magazines from an anti-imperial, Korean perspective and established an anti-government group which planned actions against it.

The Great Kanto earthquake in September of 1923 led to arrests and mass violence against Koreans, based on the belief that Korean independence activists would use the disarray to further their rebellion. While not formally connected to the Korean independence movement, both Fumiko and

Pak were arrested and both awaited a long legal proceeding. They were ultimately convicted for an attempt of obtaining explosives in order to kill the emperor and/or his son.

The two comrades confessed and decided to legally marry one another days before the sentence in a final dramatic act of ironic resistance. While imprisoned, Fumiko Kaneko is claimed to have taken her life in 1926, however circumstances are understood to be suspicious.

The incredible perseverance that Fumiko Kaneko embodies when fighting for her education, later reflects in her ability to stay true to her convictions until the very end. However, her dedication to the cause and the comrades she held dear, as well as her unapologetic and unwavering resistance against imperialist oppression has not yet brought this extraordinary woman the recognition she deserves. This will hopefully change soon, as Fumiko Kaneko's story is spread and recognised within wider and broader communities.

Alina Margolis-Edelman

April 1922 – March 2008

Born in a Jewish family in Łódź, a large industrial town located in central Poland, Margolis was just 17 when the German invasion of Poland began. During the early period of the invasion Alina's father (a physician) was executed and her mother (also a physician) sent Alina to Warsaw with some extended family where she would then soon be confined to the Warsaw Ghetto.



Alina's mother, Anna, enrolled Alina in the Jewish School of Nursing where she learned and worked within the Ghetto. Alina travelled between the Ghetto where she practiced nursing and a family outside of the Ghetto that were anti-Semitic; this forced Alina to maintain the false identity of a daughter to a Polish prisoner of war. In her time outside of the Ghetto she relayed messages from the resistance and developed relationships as well as a strong reputation among other Jewish resistance fighters.

As the Nazis prepared the final mass liquidation of the Ghetto to Treblinka, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was already underway. Margolis played a key role in the Uprising, acting as a contact for the Jewish fighters, while remaining outside the ghetto walls. For three weeks, from April 19th 1943, Jewish Combat Organisation fought bravely against the Nazis. Many leftist groups that came together to form the resistance fought under five commanders and of which only one survived, Marek Edelman, an acclaimed Bund activist whom, after the fall of the Uprising, managed to evacuate through the sewers. Later during the Warsaw Uprising he would again need to escape the Nazis, this time the evacuation was organised with the help of the Polish Red Cross which were at the time rescuing civilians from the scene. Marek Edelman escaped anonymously on a stretcher of which Alina helped to carry – they would later marry in 1945.

In the aftermath of war Alina continued her studies and became a pediatrician in her home town of Łódź and later specialised in kidney diseases as well as juvenile diabetes. Alina later emigrated to France with her children due to a steady rise of anti-Semitism in Poland. While in France, she was unable to gain recognition for her Polish degree at which time she began her studies again.

Over the following years Alina Margolis-Edelman worked in a variety of health care facilities before joining Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) and assisting in the aid of Vietnamese refugees of the Vietnam War. From here she went on to co-found Doctors of the World (Médecins du Monde) and participated in aid efforts around the globe.

Alina Margolis displays the incredible strength and fierce antifascist resistance of the women that were put through the trauma of the Holocaust. Her ongoing dedication to help all of those in need, most notably underprivileged children, forever places her among the *tzadeikes* (righteous) that, regardless of circumstance, are willing to risk their lives for the sake of others.

Opening thoughts on Womxn in Video games

By Wogasso

The playing of video games has historically been perceived as a masculine interest and not associated with womxn. In my opinion, there are a couple of reasons for this. One is that video games have often targeted the male audience in terms of content and

themes. Another reason is due to the perceived stereotypes of Men and Womxn, somewhere along the development of video game culture, womxn were left out. I'm not entirely sure why this happened but it would be an interesting topic to look in to. In this piece, I am going to focus on the recent increase of womxn gamers and the effects that I have personally seen in the gaming world.

I have played video games since a relatively young age and I started playing mostly online around 2014. In this time, I met a lot of people in the online gaming community, but almost all of them were men. There was also a large amount of toxicity in gaming communities; mainly surrounding homophobia, racism, and sexism. Due to this, I never really made any friends online and mainly played by myself, even in games that were specifically designed to be multiplayer and social, such as World of Warcraft.

I remained playing games solo for quite some time although in 2017 I started playing a game called Overwatch which is where I started to run in to a lot more womxn gamers. The reasons I found for this are both in the theme and levels of interaction in the game. The theme was a lot more open than most games I had previously been and the characters in this game were much more diverse than I had ever experienced. There is representation of different genders, ethnicities, and sexualities in the characters you get to choose from. This caused the game to attract a much more diverse player-base. It also required a large amount of communication in order for your team to succeed, which forced (in a good way) everyone to speak up in the voice chat. This was a key difference compared to many other games as it was much more beneficial to support each other rather than talk shit. This was a key development in gaming communities as the echo-chamber of "white men talking shit" was shattered.

This was the first time I started making friends online and interestingly enough, most of my closest gaming friends were womxn. The "white men talking shit" rhetoric was broken as different people started joining the gaming community.

I found that when I was playing with womxn online, the sexism, racism, and homophobia decreased dramatically. It's hard to understand why this happened but my assumption is that once that echo-chamber is broken and individuals are no longer surrounded by hateful voices, they improve themselves.

Not to hide what their "real" thoughts were but because with exposure to more positive and diverse people, the hate falters.

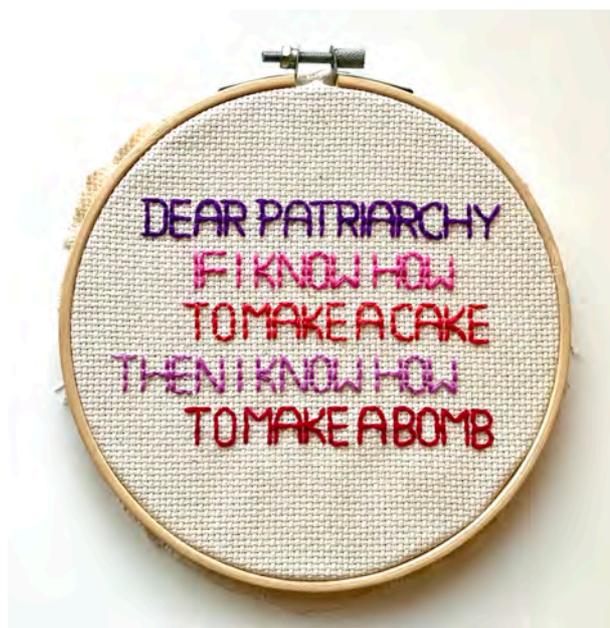
I have personally seen a huge increase in womxn gamers over the last few years and I think it has directly contributed to a much friendlier and less hateful community overall. As gamers, we must continue to support and make connections with the womxn and queer-folk in the community in order to continue the progress forward. I have seen for myself, how directly and substantially diversity has improved gaming atmospheres and it is in a much different place than it was a couple of years ago, but there is still more work to be done. If we want to see positive change in popular culture than we have to influence it ourselves and in our communities. This can be done in a number of ways: Join or make a political chat server where you can share the fun in gaming with likeminded individuals; Work to include womxn in your gaming groups and diversify your experience; actively work to speak out against sexism, homophobia, and, racism. There are many more ways to do this but it's always better to initiate change rather than play alone.

Do you have an interesting, leftist take on a hobby you are passionate about?

Send us a message to booksandbricks@riseup.net to be featured in future editions of our zine!

Reclaim the needle - why the forgotten art of embroidery should make a feminist comeback

by tzvia



I re-discovered embroidery by accident when I was about twenty. Before, it was one of the crafts I seldom had any interest in - knitting, sewing or crocheting were never my forte, possibly because my mom, an artist herself, never really pushed me to explore them as interesting or pleasurable skills. Instead, we played with paints, clay or other less-time consuming, but also traditionally less-gendered, activities. I trace her general lack of interest (although today, she considers crocheting kippahs as one of her side hobbies) to her own mother, a very liberated woman from a traditional background who, I imagine, doesn't feel like traditional crafts are her thing because she sees them as oppressive expectations put on her by the patriarchal system. But yet, here I am, a daughter and granddaughter with a needle in her hand, stabbing at the fabric over and over again. My foremothers did not pass the knowledge of

traditional crafts on to me, instead I discovered embroidery completely on my own - on Pinterest.

The deep connection between embroidery and my feminist identity came after I started exploring the craft. I suddenly realised that I can use a medium, forgotten & gendered, looked down upon & not really regarded as art, for my political expression, giving it another dimension. I deeply believe that skills, once necessary and passed from generation to generation by women, should not be forgotten. Patriarchy sees our skills as insignificant, we however should not make this mistake. Exploring embroidery can be a revolutionary act of reclaiming the craft from, on the one hand, patriarchy from the other - capitalism. Very recently I learned the etymology of the word spinster (now used for a single woman who is old enough to be married but isn't—and isn't likely to get married). It comes from Middle English (in the sense 'woman who spins') and back then meant that the women had a profession therefore she could be more financially independent. This should be a lesson for us in modern times - we can and should be proud of the art we make with our hands. The same applies to cooking, gardening and any other creative activity. Being able to reuse, reduce and

repair objects are also essential skills for anybody who identifies as an anarchist & feminist, and for those aiming to further reduce their participation in the capitalist system.

It only seems natural to have pride in what one can make with one's own hands, I would encourage anyone, certainly regardless of gender, to pick up a crafting hobby of some sort or another. Life skills never go out of fashion and reconnecting with your familial or cultural roots can be incredibly liberating. So pick up a needle, a bag of top soil or a carving knife, get together with some friends and share what you know.

some of my favourite feminist embroidery on instagram:

@abortion_embroidery

@stillbitterdesign

@atakamakata

@see.me.stitch



art: Opossum Collages (@opossumcollages)

The Man on the Moon

By Matilda 

I wrote this at a spoken word poetry event in Newtown in Sydney. It was in the beginning of 2018, and the world was talking about the me-too movement. So were we at the event, where woman after woman were sharing her story. I had not written for a few years at the time, but I felt helpless and lonely, like we were all quietly living the same stories, unable to protect each other from them.

There is a man on the moon
 Young girls write poetry
 Write letters to him
 Like they used to write to Kurt Cobain
 To rock stars
 To throwaway pop stars whose names are
 forgotten and whose pictures are hidden away
 in the back of closets in rooms empty since
 long
 But these girls have matured
 Have grown wiser
 And now they write to the man on the moon
 Thousands of letters going nowhere
 Saying help me
 Saying what am I to do with myself
 but the man on the moon can give them
 nothing
 But a sad smile and a shake of his head.
 There is a man on the moon
 And I talk to him sometimes

Late at night
 When I flip my cards and they give me
 nothing
 But Death and the Two of Swords
 And I tell him
 I am sorry
 I do not mean to get personal
 I do not mean to get political
 But what am I to do with this mess?
 There are no trees on the moon
 And there is an ongoing, ever raging sandstorm
 But the man on the moon is always clean
 I can see
 I can understand
 From looking at him that there is a way to
 stand clean in a storm,
 A way to stay unaffected
 In the face of a storm
 And I ask of him
 Please
 Teach me.
 But the man on the moon can give me
 nothing
 But a sad smile and a shake of his head.



Content Warning: Mental Illness, Domestic Violence, Physical, Emotional & Verbal Abuse, Misogyny, Self Harm, Suicide, Addiction and Sexual Assault.

The following piece contains content that may potentially be triggering to readers.

The text ends on page 21.

SIKSA

SIKSA is a Polish feminist punk artist/duo that unapologetically and boldly shares experiences, opinions and reflections. Alex Freiheit creates an experience on stage that is like no other – inches from her audience, fans can feel her screams as if they are coming from their own bellies. Backed by her incredibly talented partner, Piotr Buratyński, on guitar the pair immerses you in a raw and unforgettable show. They have been kind enough to share some translated excerpts of one of their shows with us. Enjoy!

REVENGE ON THE ENEMY

[excerpts] 

The Show

Hi Max!/I couldn't be more literary now/i hope some of your friends will finally tell you this/hi Max/i hope you'll introduce yourself kindly to millions of listeners/and if you won't then let me introduce you instead, hehehe/so there was a boy, Max, who for years kept me in submission/cos for years he told me nobody will love me as much as he did/and nobody ever will/with all your neuroticism, this mental illness there's no doubt you have/schizophrenia even – you're such a piece of

work, but that's okay, I like fucked up girls/Im Max and I only me knows the answer to your fucked up psyche – it's sex/and it was like, how shall I put it, I couldn't say no/cos when I said no, punch in the face and punch on the wall/and it was like, I couldn't say no/all the more/he was so handsome on the face/my mum was impressed, so impressed/cos when he visited, he was all like:/I'm so delighted to meet Aleksandra's parents/oh, he calls you so nicely, not Ola, but Alexandra!/He introduced himself and the perfume/oh, what was that perfume, ask him, and will buy daddy for Christmas/and we will all smell like Max!/Who is so neat and young and has such a white teeth/Im sure he brushes them all the time with a whitening paste, he can afford it!/As his lawyer daddy, plus he studies law too/you're so lucky, girl – so handsome and now this/LAW LAW LAW/no matter he still didn't graduate cos he's a schmuck and only plays tanks and mini-football/WORLD OF TANKS FUCK MY ARSE/mum, last time he visited cos he was somewhere with his pals, drunk...mum, dunno what to say but i have to, he came and.../what are you talking about!!! shut up for good!!! and ri tell your father, he'll get heartattack, and you mature maybe, girl, maybe you need to man up, this is how all relationships go!/Dont tell the father – wanna kill him?/Dont kill him – you hear me? Dont kill him!/Better do something about your yellow teeth, quit smoking, I still remember/the Maxi's shiny teeth – well, he was too good for you, evidently./ You couldn't have done better – not so smart and not so pretty either/You couldn't have done better

Poor dust

appreciate it.../appreciate that you have a family/a happy family, the one you can sit at the table with/with nothing to talk about/but at least happily and healthily you can sit with them!/My bro gobbles meat, tongue-smacking hard/so that i felt my made up silly veganism up my arse/and watches match on telly, scrolling the news/with his oily finger/to immediately add something about going to buy cars in Germany/he doesn't feel safe there anymore, oh no/and could i bring him some bread, two pieces/I bring four/so that he spared me the look

of half-eaten sausage sticking out from his mouth/
and he tells me/hey, why did you bring me four, I
asked for two, no?/You never hear a word I say!/
Now take it back, cos it'll be ruined!/Why, you not
coming? Lazy bitch/lazy, that's all Im telling you./
Whoa, at the family table things get better and
better/especially since at least three men here think
my brother's right/and join my father in thinking
that in turn, im hysterical./And two uncles have
hard time not agreeing with the fact/that it must be
not getting fucked up at home when I was little/or
that I got one spanking too little, cos surely I was a
pretty child/so it must've been hard beating me up,
no? You didnt hit her and you should/shut the fuck
up or I'll fucking kill you/stop screaming so that
neighbour could hear/understand?/Im sorry/stop
whining/understand what stop whining fucking
means?

Game Of Thrones – director's cut part 1

Ola could only have sick relationships/this is how
you call relations when you're in toxic
relationships/full of anger – and what am I telling
you, you know the feeling/that you're so keen to
hurt the other person so they left you/and then
you don't let them leave you./Ola loved strongly,
she was able to love and wanted to bring good to
the world/she didn't understand why her ex-
boyfriend wans to kill himself/still teenage, he was
already scarred and disappointed/so I hope you're
more understanding now – you know how it is/at
least once?/Ola told her boyfriend, look, there's
whole world awaiting you/with the colours
projected through the big Chihiro eyes or other
romance/you know, this Japanese director, don't
pretend you weren't into his stuff too back then./
Ola told her parents she took extra classes from her
older friend/she sucked at maths and so, with little
trouble, the lie went on/and she just wanted to
walk around with headphones on/and smoke her
first cigarettes/and sit in this allotment house in the
fields, none of which still exists./She wondered
now, if somebody followed her?/And how could
that affect her story?/There were three of them and
they were into cinger-track racing/STOP!/START
GNIEZNO HOOLS RED AND BLACK

BEELZEBUBS/START GNIEZNO KIINGS
RED AND BLACK FIENDS/DEFECT!/Ola
decided she won't be hurt like this again/like her
dad who was drunk when she got back home/so
she was scared to tell him what happened/or like
her mum, who only said, we told you/not to go
there at night and you never listened./Ola decided
she will take her revenge one day/you know, it's
one of those moments/when you decide to be a
bad person./But she wasn't bad. She only couldn't
have a normal relationship with anyone./so she's
met this young, strong, amazing guy/unfazed by the
rape-talk/and she was grateful to him./Hi, i'm Ola
and now I will tell you why I changed it to ALEX.

Game Of Thrones – director's cut part 2

Call me Aleksandra, he was like one of these guys/
who now sometimes come to my gigs/and are just
as weak as the words of this song/„im a macho, girl
you liked that, so don't cry now”/Max used to sing
it to himself/just imagine I was with the guy/who
got this nick from his pals, F/as in 'fuckboi'?/No
matter, he called me Aleksandra/he was nice to my
parents and my first employers/(fucking shithead
bastards, who still use my pictures and advertise
their business with this modern approach to the
client, wearing skate trousers, which make them
look like kangaroos after three abortions – one day
mobbing will be so punishable that we'll take
personal revenge, promise!)/so apologies, but what
you see is me working hard so that every little Max
present here/or someone, who only discovers a
Max in himself/was called a rapist/no matter if he
does it on a stranger's body, or to somebody
seemingly close/Max deceived me, persuaded me,
just like the evil characters from the Game of
Thrones/which he adored so much/so please, don't
ask me if I saw the latest season of GoT/cos I'm
sick of these stories about kings and wars and the
women either raped by the masters who own them
or who just look so fucking great rear-wise/that
made Max to come home earlier from RPG session
and I was just too scared to say NO/to admit sex
with him was not pleasurable, that it's overrated/he
didn't give a shit/he just wanted to own a princess
that he can look after/and for her to go with him

to family meetings/always looking pretty/he was one of those guys who will tell you you're so pretty/but only when you're natural and in that white dress, off with that glitter/only porn actresses wear make up/that's why now I call myself Alexis Texas/and imagine him kicking and screaming/I only wonder, if forever every single tosser walking in the yard/thinking to himself: I got the dark throne box/to me will be Max, who once told me, without batting his eyelid/man I can't take it no more, can't stand this tension/I'm a man, for fucks sake!/If you won't give me piece of ass I'll have to rape you./All I know is: my name is not Ola, neither Alexandra/I'm Alex fucking Freiheit/and when I wear this superhero costume/who Siksa no doubt is/then you can at most write on the fucking internet you'd like to fuck me/or that I'm a cunt, stupid bitch, but good in bed so you recommend playing this clip mute/all I know is one day there'll be an invasion at your place/and a destruction of all your male attributes pumping your ego/before you dare to fuck someone/and if not me, some other Siksa will do it, cos yes, there's more of us/no time to fucking lose time:/YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT/YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT/YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT

English translation: Agata Pyzik

Perspectives on the Nordic Model of Sex Work Criminalization

Part 1:

by **Ortica**

Disclaimer: Although there is a great variety of definitions of sex work within mainstream discourse, this article focuses on sex work which necessitates the factor of consenting adults; leaving out child prostitution, trafficking and debt-bondage - obviously not wanting to create a dichotomy

between voluntary and forced. The issue of consent is at the core of the radical feminist critique of sex work, as they believe that there is no possibility for consent. Radical feminism gives a special status to sex work, among other forms of labour, due to the interlinkage of economic inequality and the use of bodies as commodities. However, how many of the gut reactions surrounding sex work are grounded in a truly feminist and anti-capitalist perspective? And how much are they influenced by stigma and moral values that have been passed on to us and subtly used to justify our anti-commodification views?

The selling and buying of sex, in the variety of forms that it may take, has long been a subject of tension at the social and political level. In the past, in Europe, sex work was often perceived as a “necessary evil”. As reported by Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*, in the 19th century working class people who sold sexual services were tolerated as they were seen to cover two social functions: on one hand, to enforce heterosexuality by maintaining the virtue of the “good, monogamous wife”, and on the other, to provide sexual and emotional services to the labouring class and military[1]. Nowadays, most of the discussions surrounding it are framed around whether “prostitution” can be considered a legitimate form of labour at all and, since the 1970’s, whether sex work is compatible with feminism.

In the first instance, there is often the lack of recognition that selling sex is, in fact, WORK. Abolitionist approaches coming from a variety of moral and political standpoints, see sex work as a form of exploitation which should be abolished. On a national level this stance often results in the criminalization of sex workers and/or buyers, in an alleged attempt to protect. These regulations also create considerable obstacles for both native and migrant sex workers to unionize and struggle for collective rights, in the context of a society grounded on wage labour.

In the second instance, a certain narrative is predominantly taking hold in some activist circles and in radical feminist networks (SWERF's: Sex

Worker-Exclusionary Radical Feminist), and is increasingly being embraced by certain Northern European states, which pictures “prostitution” as merely an expression of male patriarchy. In this manner, all sex work is perceived as violence perpetrated by men against women and, therefore, non-consensual. Although there is no denial that sex work is linked to patriarchal and capitalist structures in our society, this essentialist narrative is often rejected by sex workers themselves, as well as other feminist and activist circles, on two grounds: firstly, due to the victimization and stigma that it propagates and secondly, due to the lack of recognition of queer and transgender folks as well as men, who have sold sexual services as labour.



art: @brokat_art

It is in the context of these heated debates that the current “Swedish model” has taken shape: the 1998 Bill “Kvinnofrid” (Peace for Women), emanated by the Social Democrat Persson administration, made Sweden the first country in which buying sexual services is criminalized – rather than “prostitutes” themselves. This law, largely supported by the public and the lobbying of women’s unions at the

parliamentary level in the 1990s, aimed at preventing prostitution by targeting the buyer as well as shaping public norms around the issue[2]. At the European level, legalization and taxation of sex work, coupled with the criminalization of “demand”, were seen as progressive measures “against prostitution but for prostituted women” and spurred the Swedish state to become an advocate of the so-called “Scandinavian model” abroad.

The Swedish state has a long history of perceiving sex work as a threat to public safety, order and general norms. Research by Petra Östergren reports how in the first decades of the 1900s, the Vagrancy act was used against sex workers and resulted in thousands of people, predominantly women, being condemned to forced labour. The ‘60s and ‘70s saw a rise of clubs offering strip tease, porn film screenings and live performances, as well as small scale brothels acting as massage parlours. Pornography was also legalized in 1971, but the apparent openness about sexual topics did not directly extend to sex work: in these regards, the municipality of Malmö initiated a research project aimed at dissuading women from selling sex, inspiring social services in different cities and informing the debate on sex work as an issue to gender equality. ((framed as a “woman” issue – is this part of the patriarchal view of the woman as virgin/whore?))

This article does not claim to fully represent either side of the debate for or against decriminalization of prostitution and does not attempt to provide a one-solution-fits-all ground in state legislation. It is written from an anarchist perspective, hence ground in a deep critique of both patriarchy and state. However, giving space to claims for decriminalization, uttered by sex workers themselves, is essential in order to allow people who are actually involved in the industry to be heard and to take a primary role in the discussion and shaping of the issues. Of course, there are also people who were and still are involved in sex work who argue for its full abolition and who should not be merely represented by the views of other

abolitionist groups (see PRIS <http://www.nätverketpris.se/start-english.html>) or silenced. However, their views involve the support of higher prison sentences for buyers. But in this article, due to the nature of the Scandinavian model, we thought that it would be interesting to bring the experiences and positions of women who find themselves further oppressed even in the supposedly feminist approach to the issue that the Swedish state has taken up. In this manner, we are criticizing the supposed feminist stance taken by the State.

The issue with abolitionism, and in some ways with decriminalization (for anarchists): it relies on state enforcement, on punitive measures and social stigma surrounding the type of work, workers themselves and buyers. I don't think that we would like to reproduce these dynamics in an anarchist society.

In my view, struggling for better working conditions in the current system is no way less revolutionary than a complete systemic change, as the people who are involved in the trade must be the primary agents in the discussion of this issue.

[1] Global sex workers: rights resistance and redefinition p 80 - Michel Foucault history of sexuality

[2] Assessing prostitution policies in Europe, Synnøve Okland Jahnsen and Hendrik Wagenaar p 170

Part 2:

by Wogasso

In recent years, first Sweden, then Norway, Iceland, and Finland introduced a system phrased as partial sex-work decriminalization. This system involves the decriminalization of sex workers while still criminalizing the buyers and pimps. At first glance, this might seem like the best option in order to retain safety and security as a sex worker but the reality is quite different.

The first aim of the Nordic Model is to change the general societal perception of sex workers, to transfer the crime of sex work from the workers to the buyers. Within this logic, it is viewed that all sex work is a form of violence against women and that sex workers are victims of the buyers. This takes the autonomy away from sex workers and hands it to the "sovereign nation" in order to "protect" them. Next is to reduce the demand for sex work. This is a simplistic approach to suppress the demand for sexual services but is this really what is being accomplished or is the industry just being pushed underground? It is extremely difficult to answer this question due to the inherent nature of underground industries and the incapability to track it. This system also comes with increased policing and surveillance of sex workers in order to allegedly find and arrest buyers. There has also been an increase in state authority in relation to the lives of sex workers in order to "protect" the "victims" of sex work. The last and one of the most pushed aspects of this model is to export it to other countries and proliferate an ideal of progressiveness; these are the main focuses of the Nordic Model and the next step is to look at what it has actually accomplished.

As stated before, with the increase in police surveillance, the only way to sell sex under the Nordic Model is to go underground. For obvious reasons, a potential buyer is not going to give patronage to a sex worker that is being surveilled. Due to the social network aspects of underground sex work, it is likely that a buyer will have to look in to a specific sex worker to make sure they are not at threat of being surveilled. This reduces the safety of sex workers because they can no longer go to the authorities in order to report a crime because if they do so, they risk becoming a surveillance target and furthermore, risk losing their patrons. This cycle will further increase the push towards the underground market which only leads to more precarity.

From an Anarchist perspective, we are fighting to end all forms of exploitative labor but that is a goal that is not likely to be fulfilled in the near future.

For the time being, we fight for the safety and security of our fellow workers. Right now, sex workers' autonomy has been stolen from them by the states that embrace the Nordic Model. This is unacceptable. Sex workers' voices are being silenced and the industry is being driven underground and out of sight. Since when have we relied on the state to make the "moral" decisions for our own bodies? If you disagree with some or all of the points made in this article, that is ok, what isn't ok is if you are supporting the Nordic Model then you are allowing the state to control the livelihoods of sex workers. It's time to start listening to sex workers who are actively speaking out against this system, and stand in solidarity with their struggle against the Nordic Model.

If you are interested in hearing some perspectives given by sex workers, activists, and academics on the Nordic Model and, here are some resources:

- [1] A Swedish Sex worker on the Criminalization of clients. By the Swan Network <https://youtu.be/7D7nOh57-I8>
- [2] Twenty Years of Failing Sex workers. By Fuckforbundet <https://www.sexworkeurope.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/files/FF19%20-%20INTERACTIVE%20%281%29.pdf>
- [3] Governing in the Name of Caring. By Niina Vuolajarvi (2018)
- [4] Challenging the Introduction of the Nordic Model. By the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)



Do you enjoy the art published here in Books and Bricks? Many of the amazing pieces published in our zine are submissions! If you are interested in publishing your art in Books and Bricks send us an email to booksandbricks@riseup.net



art: @brokat_art

On Boxing

By Brokat 

After six months of planning and empty talk I finally went to boxing class. Something was constantly dragging me away from it until an incident happened making me angry and ready to express this anger on trainings, plus I just quit drinking so my head was clean and ready for challenge. Though first trainings are mostly practicing the right position and repeating basic punches it was physically so exhausting I could already see myself throwing up or fainting right there. The same thing happened in the next training but as I past this difficult moment I felt better, stronger and able to finish the practice.

When I started coming to my group's trainings there were two other girls practicing as well but I saw they're not treating it seriously or applying themselves as much as I did. Which is completely okay, pissed me off though.

Very soon I've learned a couple of things.

One - As soon as the word „boxing” comes out of my mouth in a conversation it will always meet huge interest mixed with confusion and kind of a mockery. Is that because so little people are training boxing in Poland? Or because the image of a girl punching and getting punched seems purely ridiculous to many people (both girls and guys)?

Two - Sparring or practice in pairs cannot start without a C-class joke like „just don't kill me” or “o, I'm scared”. Get it? Cuz I'm a girl? So funny.

Three - I'll get funny looks every time I enter the class, sometimes wearing my usual glitter on my face.

The fourth one really gets me cuz it happens outside of gym leaving me feeling put down and irritated. The Man-Only Handshake. You know, when you're a girl standing with a group of guys and some other guy comes over and shakes everyones hand leaving you with just quiet, cold “hi”. What's up with that? Am I not worthy? I guess some people were just raised that way but in what world is being left out of salutation considered polite?

Here comes my explanation why I found the attitude of previously mentioned girls annoying. Of course fully knowing how immature my way of

thinking is in this area. Forgive me. Considering all the things I just mentioned, the gym is a place where you can really feel that you're a girl. Maybe for some this isn't anything wrong but my brain demands equal treatment and it doesn't like being reminded every second that I'm a girl. You may say it's a form of self hate, I wouldn't but you're welcome to judge me. Anyway this way of thinking led me to conclusion that I have to prove myself to guys on trainings, show that I can be treated the same way they treat each other, and two giggling girls joking through out the whole practice made me feel like they're undermining my whole operation of creating this dignified and strong picture of women. Which I know just shows that they're less insecure in this area but I can't change how I feel.

I'm not sure why but I always had the need to show how strong I am. It's not like anyone expected that from me, again- cuz I'm a girl. But I liked competing and from an early age I was pretty physically skilled, for example in running I was even better than boys in my class which obviously made me very proud. Not much changed, inside I still feel like a little boy trying to show his guy friends how much stronger, faster, better than them he is. Now I've been boxing for over half a year so sometimes I manage to do it on the trainings. I put my whole heart and soul into training and in my head gained the respect I wanted. Lately I even managed to demand this stupid handshake I fucking deserved, and I got it. And here's the point: you are the only one to change the way people treat you. It is shitty that someone won't shake my hand cuz I'm a girl, for whatever reasons, but it's me who wasn't strong enough to demand it. Well now I am.

About guys I work out with, obviously there were moments when they acted sexist but they were mature enough to talk about it and admit it. For example once I heard two of them talking about how two girl fighting is pathological, so I said that well, anyone fighting is kinda pathological (meaning a street fight) and I told them they're being sexist. First they objected than admitted it was sexist and explained how they see women as beautiful and delicate gender so it's hard for them to see them fight. Probably not the heartwarming ending you were hoping for but I'll take it, at least they're honest with what they feel. Besides few stupid jokes that right now I immediately put down



with fake laughing, they were really cool. I've heard many complements about my work without awful things like "for a girl". We practice together and they don't mind me giving them advice just as I don't mind them. Now I'm usually the only girl on our trainings and I do feel respected and appreciated for my performance.

I always had a problem with discipline and boxing was one of things that really helped me with it. It helps people around the world with their anger issues and keeps them out of trouble. Physical strength is important but technique and speed are equally if not more important. I think the reason why boxing is considered a typically male sport is the view that men have a bigger predisposition to aggressive behavior. It's also almost completely socially accepted for young boys to get into fights cuz you know "let's let boys be boys", however a girl getting into fights from an early age would

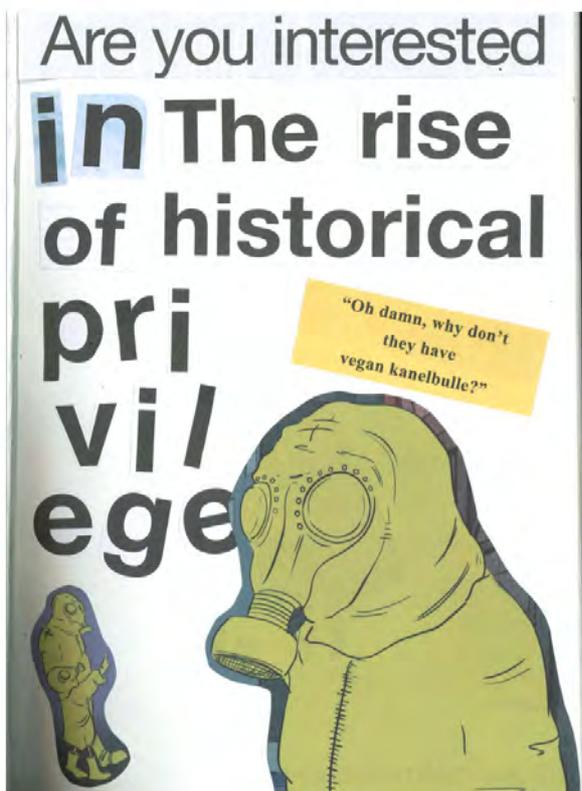
most likely get sent to a specialist or called "violent".

I want to get somewhere in boxing even though I don't know if I have any chance for it, starting at my age. What seems depressing, after even accomplishing something like starting in competitions or winning them, are empty tribunes in most of women's sport events and questions like "aren't you afraid about your pretty face?" dropping at multiple boxing world champions - female obviously cuz a person asking shit like that at a men's world champion would probably lose their beautiful face. I don't care though, I would be doing this whether I was born a girl or a boy. And if I do accomplish something please, don't write about me as a "strong woman grabbing her dreams by the balls", cuz being a girl has nothing to do with it.

the red&black sketchbook



art: tzvia



art: tzvia



art: HannaNevada

You Have To Plant Stories Pride and Self-Love



art: tzvia

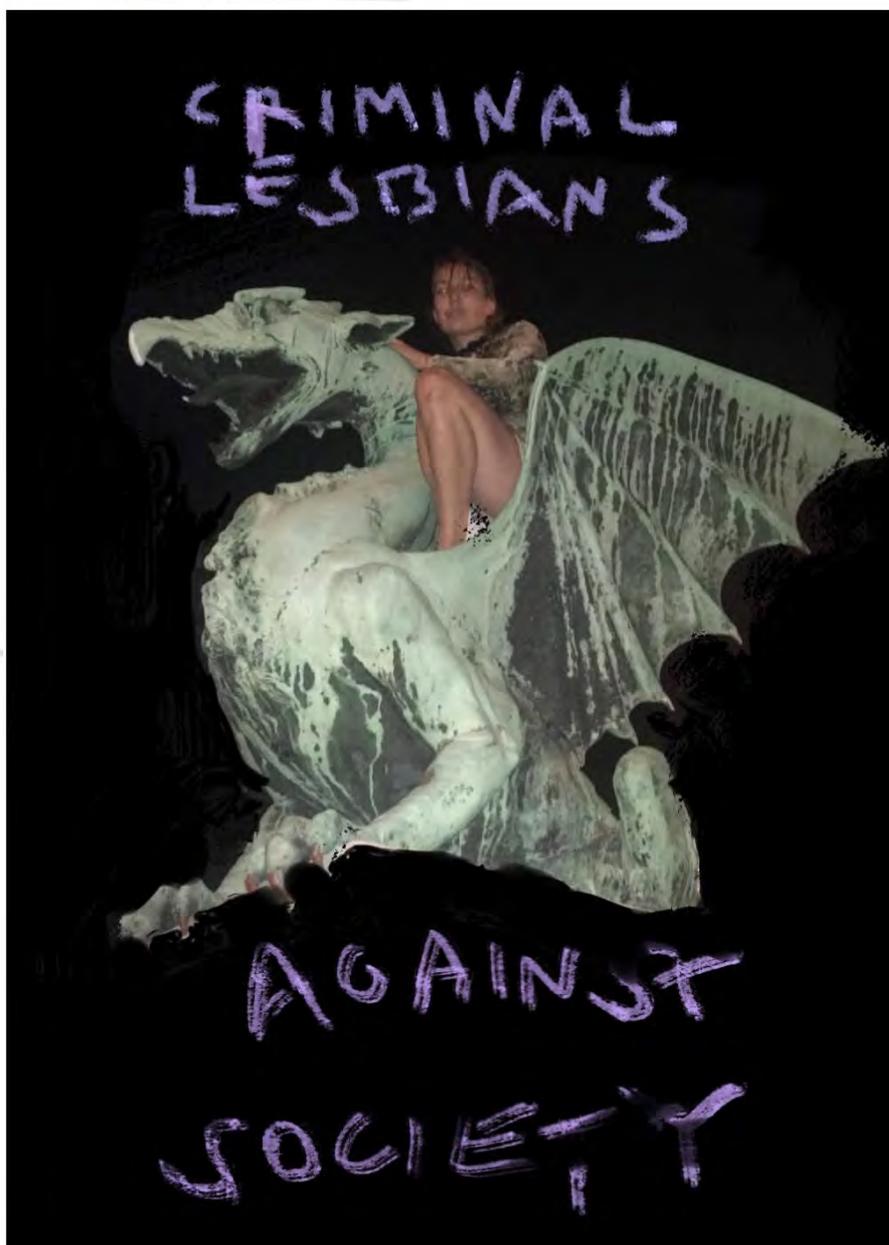


Sometimes Coddled, Sometimes Not

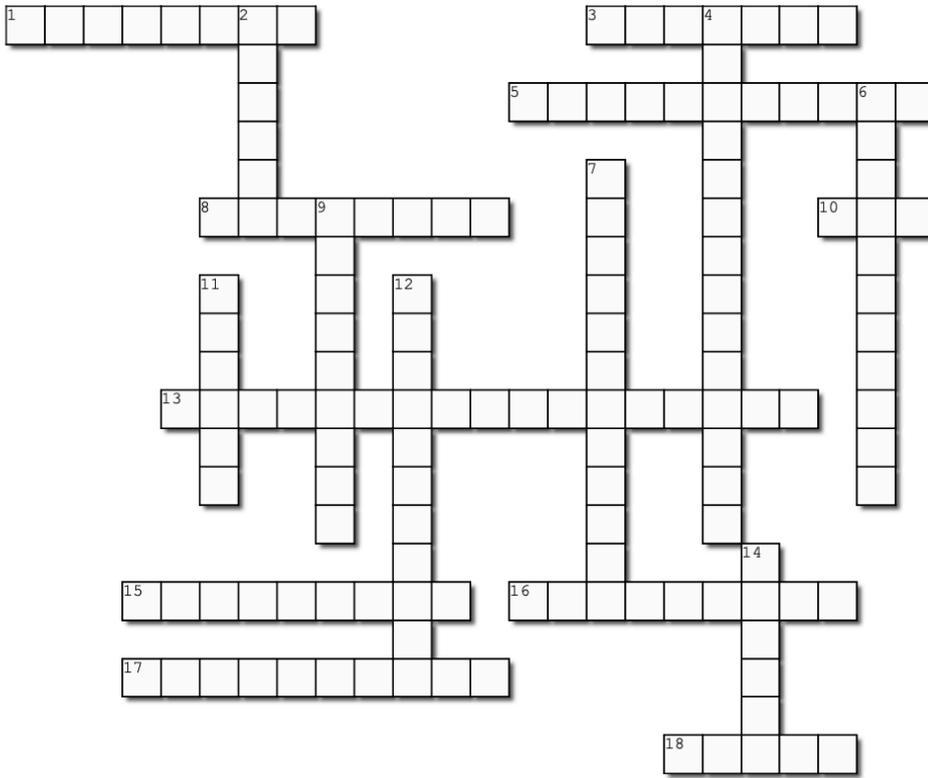
art: HannaNevada



art: HannaNevada



CROSSWORD



Across

- 1. a social theory based on the history and everyday experiences of women of color, especially black women
- 3. collective community that was traditionally based on agriculture
- 5. Jewish anarchist political activist and writer. She played a pivotal role in the development of anarchist political philosophy.
- 8. whether in the streets, when you are sick or looking for pet sitter - they are always there for you
- 10. rising First Nations electronic music group 'A Tribe Called...'
- 13. theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of one's identities might combine to create modes of discrimination
- 15. a group of protesters who wear black clothing and face-concealing items
- 16. slang title of Kropotkin's most famous work
- 17. a gel or liquid adhesive made from wheat flour or starch and water commonly used for postering
- 18. alternative, inclusive spelling of the word 'women'

Down

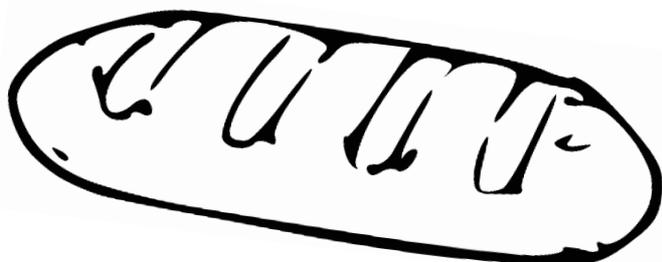
- 2. Archaic Greek poet from the island of Lesbos
- 4. zine by Red and Black Collective
- 6. American political activist, philosopher, academic, and author. She is a professor emerita at the University of California.
- 7. tattoo technique your punk friend will use if you want to get a tattoo at 4am in a musty basement
- 9. underground feminist punk movement that began in the early 1990s
- 11. app used for safe communication to plan and organise
- 12. originally conceived for the Iron Front, became a well known symbol representing resistance against Nazism
- 14. furry marsupial found predominantly in North America, that is also a popular leftist meme

By tzvia & Black Spruce

answers - next edition, via email or the Internet

From Each According to their Ability, To Each According to their Knead – No Knead, Four Ingredient Bread.

by Black Spruce



INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups water
- 1 1/2 tbsp active dry yeast
- 1 1/2 tbsp salt
- 6 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add warm water, salt and yeast together in a medium bowl and stir well
2. In a separate bowl add all the flour, then pour the yeast mixture over the flour and mix thoroughly using hands (or the dough hook on your mixer if you're bourgeois AF), until it's all well incorporated.
3. In a large plastic container or bowl place the dough, it needs room to rise to its full revolutionary potential so either place the lid on it without closing completely OR you can use a large bowl, covered with plastic wrap and poked with a couple small holes using toothpicks.
4. Let dough rise for 2 hours... go paint a banner or take a bath, especially you crust punks <3
5. After 2 hours the dough will be sticky and elastic. Cover your baking sheet with parchment paper. Add flour to your hands, and divide the dough in two pieces – 1 for you and 1 for that Trotskyist down the street that won't stop handing you newspapers every week... We know you feel guilty for not reading them.. perhaps this token of appreciation will help.
6. Shape the dough into shape and place it seam down on the baking sheet. Sprinkle some more flour over the tops and let the loaves rest for another 30 minutes so that they can continue rising.
7. Preheat oven to 450 F (230 C) degrees. Before placing bread in the oven, add a pan with a cup of water and place it on the bottom rack. Then slash the top of your bread like your favourite band T-shirt, to allow gases to escape.
8. Bake the bread for 30 to 35 minutes. The water will allow for the bread to form a nice crust top that Aus-Rotten would be proud of.
9. Cool on a rack before serving.
10. Spread that Bread Comrades

Some of us folks here at Books and Bricks have noticed an exceptional amount of enthusiasm for baking among some of our fellow comrades, therefore we are hoping to share with you a different recipe in each volume of this Zine.

If you have any suggestions please feel free to shoot us an e-mail!

Contact info is at the back – Cheers!

Silhouettes in the Sunset

At the end of your day, there is time to reflect....



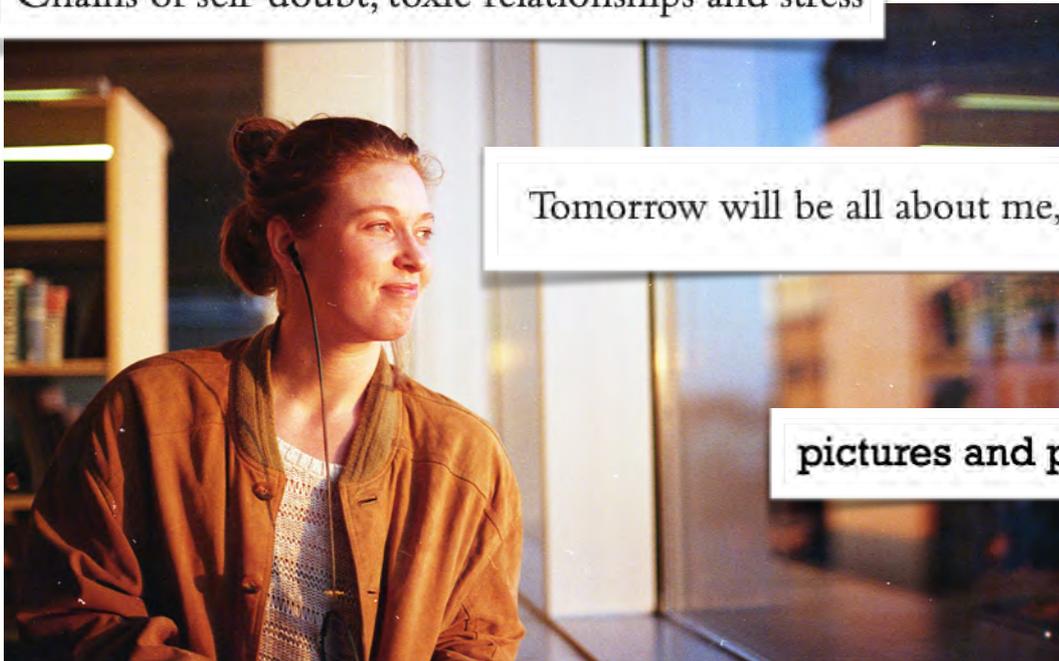
Remember, process, and if necessary, forget.

One journey has ended, but the lesson remains.



Never again shall I be restricted by chains.

Chains of self-doubt, toxic relationships and stress



Tomorrow will be all about me, no more, no less.

pictures and poem by Richi

