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“Intellectual property is a legally fabricated monopoly, confining culture and science, and violently depriving the poorest and most marginalised from access to critical resources. The fictions of copyright and patent are despotic attempts to monopolise the mind; outrageous constraints on intelligence and creativity; and a destructive protectionist scheme for the profit of power.”



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Drillminister's Questions

By Drillminister AKA Yung Drilly

These politicians, elected officials, what do we know about them exactly? That’s right, absolutely nothing. A random name pops up, of somebody who was promoted behind closed doors without any coverage or democratic sanction. Then we’re told this person now has say over this, that and the other and ultimately, cannot only make decisions on our behalf, but can also decide our lives for the foreseeable future.

And I come back to my first question: what do we know about them as people, their individual morals and mindsets? Once again the average Joe just recognises names and titles, but nothing about the actual core being of the person elected to represent them and their entire family. This fake sense of superiority has to be removed from the political culture because it is cancerous.

It’s obvious now to see, in a digital age, the elected official’s distaste for the concerns of the poor and weaker members of our society, who can’t speak up or represent themselves. This social mugging happens either by making life more complicated for these people or just simply ignoring them all together. The superiority complex of Parliament stretches from punishing everyone from the elderly, by pushing the pension to a more unreachable age to ensure the payouts are less and that people never live to enjoy the taxes they invested. To the disabled, who are also inflicted with vicious cuts. It is reflected in the poorest areas, where people who desperately need medical assistance are left vulnerable, due to inhuman austerity cuts to our NHS services. This shocking lack of empathy has resulted in us becoming a nation of pounds over people and numbers over normality.

It boils down to politicians not pursuing their career with a real passion to change the world but for personal goals and accolades. Rather than implementing real change and showing awareness to the plight of the underprivileged, concern for those in our society who have no voice to defend themselves democratically, they award us with ten pence off our annual water bill so the public will feel that some social justice was won. In fact, like most things, it’s a distraction to preoccupy you so that you don't have time to question or challenge other absurd policies and wrongdoings by our government. People are so blindsided with media distractions, political fake news and the economic problems arising from poor leadership, that we all stress about and try tackling in our everyday life, that it draws us so far from the political frontline of politics and manifestos.



In fact, it seems that due to a total lack of enthusiasm for politics and a distrust in politicians, society is now happy to simply accept a downward spiral of poor governments and leaders. A lack of opportunity and genuine top quality British services, makes us not only behave second rate as a state but also start to believe it’s normal. So how do we infiltrate the minds of the people making these horrible decisions and bring about change – or how do we at least go about replacing them?

These are people who we’re told come from a similar background to us, who face the same daily trials and tribulations that we the electorate face. But in my eyes, ever since the riots, I’ve seen a growing disparity between the ruling class and the working or underclass – who seem to be falling further behind financially into a black hole of debt. This uncertain future and misery was compounded by messing us up on a world financial global level with an unprecedented, horrendous impact on the lower classes of this country. This leads us to the hypocrisy within politics of trying to identify with the public they hope will keep the country and economy afloat, while leaving them to drown.

And they persist in alienating this same group of people by casually stereotyping predominantly black urban music scenes with stock-phrases such as “murder music”, “knife crime”, “infighting”, “gang affiliated” and “crime-music”. It makes it obvious they don’t understand the people they are elected to serve. These same kids that are labelled as this lost generation, they ignore when asking for tax reform, they ignore when asking for aid for single parents, they ignore when they see their future held up for ransom with increasing uni fees and protest. They don’t seem to realise or understand the future is in the hands of those they are ignoring; if you keep ignoring the youth then the very same youth will ignore you – it’s a cycle.

The conundrum is that a lot of politicians have more in common with drill artists than they care to realise. Daily, a politician restructures and remodels the English language to best suit and fit their narrative, to fight their side of the argument, whether it be to the tabloids or to the digital or terrestrial news stations. There are often key words, or buzz-words to sell an ideology or event, such as: “Brexit”; “my deal or no deal”; and “education, education, education”. These are semantically similar to catchphrases used by drill artist to identify the group or the individual; the phrases usually identify something that’s instantly conducive to the artist’s persona or what they stand for. Yet when the youth use this initiative to market and propel themselves forward, it is not seen in the same light.



Another obvious similarity is the public distaste for one another and disagreement on points of view, with criticisms of the opposition’s structure, competency and execution of tasks and goals – often combined with severe nefarious activities to highlight confusion or negativity and gain the upper hand. Politicians concentrate heavily on looking for weaknesses in the opposition, trying to predict or anticipate the next move, and gain the upper hand constantly. This also resembles tactics used within drill, to seize control of another artist’s fan-base, or start rumours to create tensions between certain divisions in order to gain while the opposition become concerned with one another.

And last-but-definitely-not-least in the hypocritical rankings of Drill/Urban Music and politics, which I highlighted back in October 2018 on Channel 4 News: the language used by politicians, the rhetoric and the slander, may be coming from individuals whom society deems more responsible, but the foul-mouthed intentions from both are exactly the same – and definitely result in the same anguish no matter who is on the receiving end. This brings me to a question of my own: are the artists being foul or merely reflecting their realities, just as the older, wiser politicians are when they use violent rhetoric to get their point across?

Nobody wrong and nobody right: in my opinion, what we are is human, and we should accept that first. Hopefully we can all learn from this and not be so judgmental – especially, in regards to politicians, after getting what we call a social and political ass-whooping from none other than your very own Drillminister AKA Yung Drilly...

Drillminister AKA Yung Drilly is a musician and lyricist from South East London.

Mutual Fire Brigade

By *Cindy Milstein*

In mid-November 2018, smoke from the hellfires of so-called California drifted to my home base, so-called Michigan, as humans and nonhumans on the West Coast struggled to breath, struggled not to die from the latest “historic” new normal of capital/state-fueled climate catastrophe. Too many of us these days are feeling despair, perplexed as to how to stop the runaway conflagration that’s barreling toward us – or has already burned us. All bets are off on whether those flames can be calmed, much less extinguished.

The current social order is the disaster, and on a daily basis. Grist.org, for instance, turned the massive Fourth National Climate Assessment into an easy-to-read guide of how global temperature shifts will impact ten regions of Turtle Island. It’s not a pretty weather forecast. As Grist.org notes, we’re already increasingly in the storm. Yet Grist.org emphasizes that “we need to know what’s happening in our respective spaces so we can be prepared.”

“Prepared” can mean many things, of course. For the world’s richest people, it means buying up those regions predicted to be the least destroyed – or last destroyed – by the ravages of an unecological society of their own manufacturing, and then building fabulously luxurious gated communities for what might be the last of humans. As backup, they’re investing in space travel to other planets. For some liberals and Far Right folks, whether as “prepper” or “survivalist,” it involves learning individual survival skills and stocking up on emergency supplies in hopes of shielding their own ilk.

For the vast majority of humanity, however, any sort of preparation seems nigh impossible. Whether because of poverty or marginalization, white supremacy or settler colonialism, or other systemic violences, most people are stuck in the path of one socially constructed disaster after another. How is any sort of preparation possible in this zombie apocalypse, in which it feels as if we’re reduced to a choice between fascism or extinction, or some macabre “survival of the fittest” without worry for others? How can we speak of “seeds beneath the snow” – possibilities in the present-day dystopia, or a prefigurative politics aspiring toward “everything for everyone” – when the polar ice caps are quickly melting?

The disaster that is capitalism, to name a big one, creates its own cracks, though. The question isn’t how to become ambulance chasers in relation to suffering, or how to accelerate social collapse. Rather, it concerns our desire and growing capacity to self-determine and self-organize within those fissures. Or rephrased, it’s a question of our desire and capacity to point toward a different fork in the road: fascism, extinction, or as a fellow troublemaker put it, “successful anarchism.”

If the “real world” serves up horrific versions of devastation and death, our actually existing efforts must supply liberatory forms of co-creation and life, and in as much abundance as we can. We actually already are! But too often, we busily bury our own seeds, thinking of what we do – from popular education and solidarity projects, to self-organized social/cultural spaces and self-governing assemblies, to building collective infrastructure and carving out autonomous communities – as the “unreal world.” For sure, our experiments do feel otherworldly. They should! Yet in a manner that allows us and, just as crucially, people who aren’t in our rebellious subcultures to exclaim, “I’ve never felt so alive!” Our work should be that of cultivators: loosening the soil around cracks that are already there, tending to and nurturing those spaces of possibility, and fostering the growth of good lives and good deaths, all with intentionality, fed with waters of empathy, dignity, and love.

Cultivation isn’t a onetime or occasional practice. It’s the stuff of daily life, or what could be called radical collective self-care. The “self-” here is inherently part of an ecosystem, a social “collective,” made up of qualitatively diverse parts that thrive on interdependence, cooperation, and reciprocity. Such care is also “radical” in the sense of getting to the roots – both those of structural violence and what we must encourage to blossom. In this way, we might fiercely uproot pernicious systems that are antithetical to shared freedoms. We might – and in many subterranean ways, we already are – just as fiercely prepare the ground for healthy, mutualistically caring lifeways in their stead.

Because only we can and must take care of each other. That means ramping up not only our own everyday care toward others. Equally essential, it means crafting an infrastructure of radical collective self-care that’s solid and continuous – as simultaneous resistance to and replacement for this fucked-up social system.

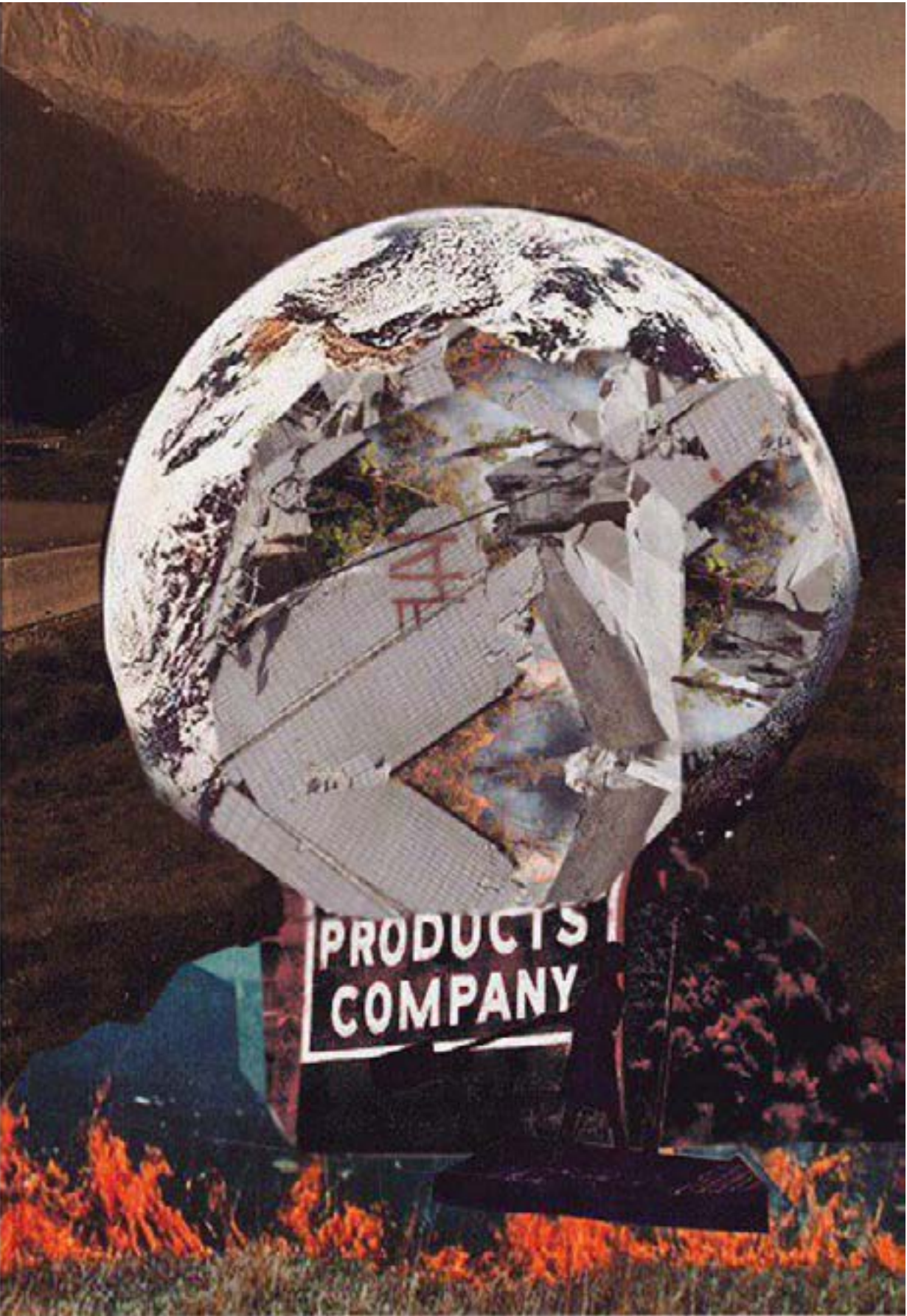
About a week before the fires swept through California, the Mutual Aid Disaster Relief (MADR) tour did a preparedness workshop in so-called Chico. Premised on an ethics of “solidarity not charity,” the workshops have come to numerous cities and rural areas across Turtle Island this past year. The notion of mutual aid disaster relief emerged out of radical collective self-care in the wake of previous calamities, such as the Common Ground Clinic set up right after Hurricane Katrina in so-called New Orleans or, closer to the present, the West Street Recovery in reply to Hurricane Harvey striking so-called Houston. MADR aims in part to inspire the building of everyday anarchistic and feminist infrastructure to handle the everyday disaster that is today’s world while encouraging a loose nonhierarchical network – a small step toward knitting together a commons of care.

When the flames engulfed miles and miles of stolen land across the West Coast, the town of so-called Paradise became an inferno and then, in the blink of an eye, a wasteland, displacing over fifty thousand people. Some of those who fled to nearby Chico set up tents in a Walmart parking lot, dubbed “Camp Wallywood.” Quickly, some of the recent workshop participants called a face-to-face assembly in Chico, and upward of a hundred people showed up. Together they determined what was needed, and discussed the resources and talents on hand. They initially formed into working groups (later connected via a spokes council) to leap into autonomous direct action, and an informal organization took shape – North Valley Mutual Aid (NVMA).

Such makeshift projects are works in progress, growing in fits and starts. And the wounds of this specific disaster won’t be mended easily or even soon, nor ever forgotten. Yet among other things, such as collecting and distributing material aid in do-it-ourselves ways, when folks in the Camp Wallywood asked for a community space, the NVMA engaged in the mutual and emotional aid of construction. As one evacuee in Camp Wallywood explained in an NVMA video, “When (NVMA) came out and built this community space, I know they get it, because community is how we heal. Community is how we do everything.”

The fascist forces of social domination will likely continue their scorched-earth ethos in the days ahead, attempting to break us and making us feel as if we’re in the end times. All the more reason that we must care for each other, and in ways that gesture toward a future – even as we aspire to collectively, tangibly, and yes, even tenderly make the present far more livable for as many of us as we can.

As our vulnerable planet burns, let’s be our own volunteer fire brigade!



Cindy Milstein is author of *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* and editor of *Rebellious Mourning: The Collective Work of Grief* (both on AK Press), and currently co-organizes the Institute for Advanced Troublemaking. For more writing, see cbmilstein.wordpress.com, and on Instagram, [@cindymilstein](https://www.instagram.com/cindymilstein). Thanks to Payton Alexandre for his consult on MADR.

Wife Tourist

By *Cash Carraway*

A few days after the 2015 General Election I became a wife tourist. My daughter and I were evicted from yet another private rental (one that threatened to throw us out as far as Zone 6, or even worse – racist Kent) when I received a text with an offer that no mother needing to feed and home her child in austerity Britain could refuse.

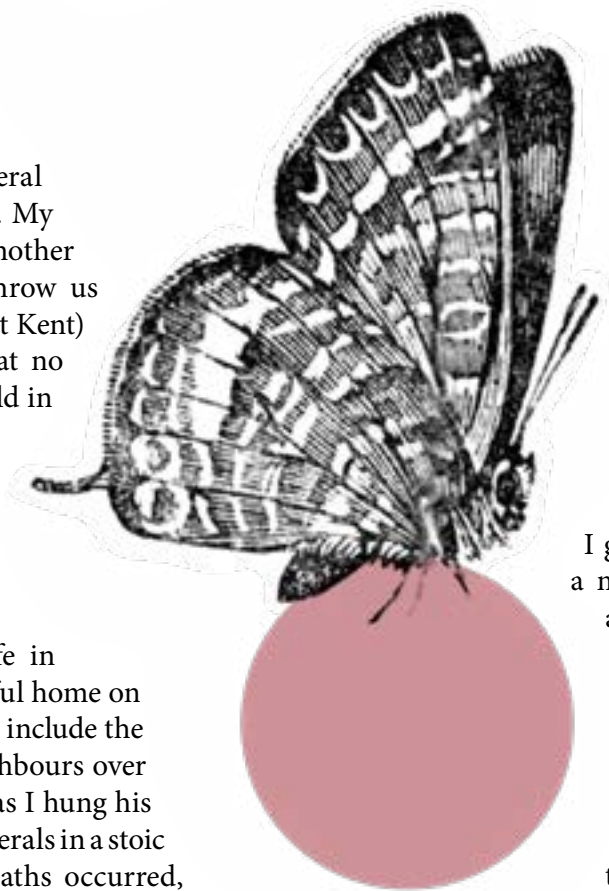
It read: I NEED A FAKE WIFE.
DO IT?
Sure, I replied. What’s the terms?

I was to pretend to be some man’s wife in exchange for living rent free in his beautiful home on the River Thames. My wifely duties would include the usual; cooking, cleaning, chatting to neighbours over the fence about my wonderful ‘husband’ as I hung his underwear out to dry, attending family funerals in a stoic yet supportive capacity whenever the deaths occurred, putting up with his bad taste in music and snuggling on the sofa watching episodes of Mid Morning Matters.

And because he was gay there would be no sex involved. We needed a home – he needed a beard to ensure he wasn’t cut from the inheritance.

It was a casual job. Like an au pair. Like modern slavery. Like Camp America. Like a gap year job in an Australian bar. Like a ... marriage on zero hours.

Got really into it. Like you do when you’re on a working holiday; got to explore classic suburbia through the eyes of its native middle class – a truly authentic cultural experience. I downloaded Deliciously Ella recipes and cooked them on the Aga. Wore floral dresses and ordered paints from Farrow and Ball. I could have two whole bottles of Sav Blanc in one sitting if I fancied – because whilst scrounging working class single mums have alcoholism, middle class mothers have this ritual known as ‘wine o’clock’ which means you can get pissed whenever you like so long as you post a picture of your drink on social media. And being a borderline alcoholic scrounging single mum – I took full advantage of it.



We both got into it. My ‘husband’ and me. He’d look at me in such a disappointed way - like a real husband would; scolding me for running off my political mouth at dinner parties or for snogging all the guests “You’re an embarrassment!” he’d proudly slur as he’d give my bum a sleazy slap to push me into the Uber at the end of night.

I-had-that-middle-class-wife-act-down.

I got *so* into it that I even created and wrote what became a multi-award nominated blog about my perfect husband and perfect child and perfect home and perfect life and made money doing adverts for brands who exploit the stereotypical aspirational lie of the perfect nuclear family. To live with my actions, I convince myself I’m exploiting them; we’re both dealing in the currency of lies therefore our exploitation of each other is ... *pure*. In my mind I’m mocking them and *everyone* who buys into the lie of my life. Yet I consider my gains more than just financial; I had been elevated from vilified single mum to an almost respectable woman living the middle-class suburban dream. I mean, I had a kitchen island and *everything*. All I’d had to do was forgo *all* my morals – because after all, what is a working-class woman with morals but a poor one?

I liked it. The women at the school gates confided in me about their terrible *legitimate* marriages and my daughter got invited to Build a Bear parties. *Finally*.

So, it was a tough decision handing in my notice. I’d fallen in love with collecting superficial things, but I was aware that I’d swapped financial poverty for an emotional depravation. You-cannot-live-a-lie-forever. Plus, his dad had died, and he’d got the inheritance, my job was done. My zero hours marriage had to end, and it should have been easy to walk away because pretend marriages don’t require divorces, but my boss husband didn’t accept my resignation and kept us hostage for a few weeks. He said he owned us. Like modern slavery.

Anyway, we escaped, and we found ourselves in the same position we had been in after the 2015 election, although 2 years on the world appeared immeasurably worse and void of hope and there was even less housing and even higher private rents and even more stigma toward women like me, so we surfed sofas for a while before moving into a refuge in Ladbroke Grove. From there we navigated cheap B&B’s by motorways and temporary flats. I closed down my multi award nominated lie blog and started writing the truth; I was a working-class mum who had turned tricks (albeit of the non-sexual kind) as an attempt to survive in a society that doesn’t give those below the poverty line autonomy over accommodation or food. Gone were the pictures posing in front of Agas and replacing them was our real life of food banks and hostels.

And although the truth wasn’t as popular as the lie life of the wife tourist, the real wives of suburbia took a peak into my world and wanked off to my poverty porn with supportive likes, crying emoticons and comments of pity. And they were kind to me, because I fitted into the stereotype of the fallen, broken working-class woman.

But as I got back on my feet, got housed (out past zone 6, dumped somewhere in racist Kent) and my life got back on track – they didn’t like it.

I was no longer palatable.

I was no longer a victim.

My cat puked up ham on a Le Redoute rug which I owned, and I was deemed ungrateful. “How could you let your cat vomit on a rug? There are people out there who would love that rug. If you don’t love that rug, give that rug to someone who deserves it” someone actually wrote. As if I had forced my cat to do a sick on a rug that I was unworthy of owning.

“And if you’re so poor – how can you even *afford* a cat?”

My life was picked apart by hordes of middle-aged, middle-class women;

“She went to see an Eastern European Jazz band play on Hampstead Heath”

“She reads Camus, she wrote a play – these are not the actions of a working-class woman!” “Did you see her daughter was wearing a designer tracksuit? She’s not poor!”

The wine I drunk was scrutinised (“It costs £7 a bottle!”), the lipstick I wore deemed extravagant, my DM boots too expensive. These strangers on social media felt I was accountable to them. I took a flight (on a budget airline) to visit my family and hundreds of women asked – why is this woman going on holiday?

I was called a liar. A cheat. Undeserving. A creature of suspicion merely for being a working-class woman who had got her life back on her own terms.

Not one person had ever questioned my multi-award nominated blog of middle-class lies, yet my real life was deemed false. I think it is because a man had featured in my life back then, his presence validated me. I think it’s because people don’t want to believe that poverty can happen to smart, functioning people. I think it’s the “I pay my taxes for women like you” tabloid mentality that so much of society holds dear.

It-makes-them-think-they-own-you.

Because not only have we been refused autonomy over food, accommodation or jobs, we have been stigmatised to the point where working-class mothers are forbidden from possessing *nuance*. Forever expected to languish in a world where we glug undiluted tropical squash from Sports Direct mugs and cook pasta that isn’t gluten free until we either win the lottery or luck out and marry a middle-class man who will save us from our disgusting selves.



Cash Carraway is a playwright, author and spoken word artist from Penge, South East London. Her sell-out one-woman spoken word show Refuge Woman was nominated for 'Best Innovation' at the 2018 British Journalism Awards.Cash's book Skint Estate, a memoir about life in the gutter, will be published by Ebury/ Penguin Random House in June 2019.

Radical Posture

by *Josh MacPhee*

The U.S. anarchist newspaper Profane Existence used to carry the tagline “Making Punk a Threat Again.” While I’m not sure what is so threatening about spiky jackets and unlistenable crust-punk, it raises a perfectly legitimate question: What would it look like to make anarchist culture threatening?

Let me be clear, I’ve got nothing against youth subculture – it’s what birthed me – but that doesn’t mean that it has what it takes to truly transform the world in the ways anarchism promises: an end to exploitation; meaningful engagement with questions of justice; equity of access and opportunity to all – to just name a few highlights.

Just what is the relationship between anarchism and art? We can look at this question historically, and pull out a long list of successful artists that rallied around the black flag (for at least part of their lives): André Breton, Gustave Courbet, Robert Henri, Donald Judd, Rockwell Kent, Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Georges Seurat, and Paul Signac. Beyond this being a one big sausage-party, it is fair to say that what binds most of these artists together – and what drew them to anarchism – was the promise of individual freedom. Artists love the idea of freedom, the thought that they can and should be unfettered in their pursuit of a pure self-expression.

While the idea of individualist freedom was likely quite attractive during the 20th century, with its World Wars and rise of totalitarian governments, it just hasn’t aged well. If we’re going to be honest with ourselves, we have to admit that “individual liberty” is like WD-40 for neoliberalism. The 21st century and late-capitalism has brought us the freedom from unions and a social safety net, the freedom to choose between consumer products but little else, the freedom to recycle as individuals while the polar ice-caps melt due to massive corporate, state, and collective societal impact on the environment.

And what’s so great about self-expression anyway? We can broadcast to the world what we have for breakfast every single morning on Facebook and Instagram, while just about every form of collective expression is severely curtailed and suppressed. Collective bargaining has been under brutal attack for forty years, to the point that we have the smallest percentage of working people organised in unions in the United States since the advent of unionism. Even peaceful demonstrations are regularly kettled and attacked by riot cops and teargas. Every single form of Left protest group is under intense surveillance – even Quaker peace and justice organisations are routinely infiltrated by police informers. In the face of near-total social repression, it’s an amazing feat of propaganda and capitalist yoga that we regularly celebrate self-expression as rebellious, or even revolutionary, despite its being the only form of expression we’re allowed.

We’ve seen tremendous social and economic changes since the 1960s. The economies of the Global North have seen fundamental transformation by a three-fold process: the movement of manufacturing jobs to the Global South and rise of a service-based economy; the development of robotics, the algorithm economy, and the logistics industry; and the shift to a global economy built on finance capital. This has lead to a steady suppression of wages (as indexed to cost of living) and an increase in precarity, fueled by attacks on access to healthcare, job security, pensions, and affordable housing.

While art and culture may seem marginal to this process, they have played a couple key of roles. The ’60s anti-authoritarian revolt against the constraints of any overly bureaucratic managerial society led to a strange bi-product: capitalists saw the increasing costs of keeping unhappy and unfulfilled workers tethered to an assembly line, so they looked around to see what sector of the workforce was better adjusted and caused less problems. It turns out that artists, cultural workers, and freelancers made much fewer demands on the system than the labour in more organised workplaces, and seemed happy to give up things like pensions and job security in trade for an affective sense of freedom from the constraints of “the grind”. This insight relatively quickly helped in the transformation to a much more precarious work-on-demand economy, to the point that I now regularly see subway advertisements showing happy Black and Brown “mechanical turks” proclaiming that they are entrepreneurial Do-ers and don’t need things like company health-care plans, pensions, or even regular paychecks, dragging them down.

Meanwhile, merry ’60s and ’70s anarchist experiments like Provo white bikes, hippie crash-pads and communes, Digger free-stores, and alternative economic experiments have been weaponised by technological developments and venture capitalists. Airbnb, corporate city bike programs, co-worker development schemes, ZipCar, Groupon, Task Rabbit, and Uber are not simply built on the ruins of our utopias, but quite literally out their very fabric. While the counter-culture built their projects out of the exploration of new and exciting ways to build communities and push the boundaries of what can be accomplished through collectivity and sharing, the gig-economy empties out the very ontology of these ideas, invisibilising relationships (and exploitation) in order to extract profit, all the while maintaining the skin of liberatory activity, or freedom.

Any way you cut, these are dark days my friends. I can’t say I know what to do about, but I can comfortably say my artistic self-expression isn’t a significant part of the answer. Those of us that consider ourselves artists, anarchists, cultural workers, anti-authoritarians, designers, autonomists, have to ask some very hard questions about the roles our practices and histories have played in constructing the behemoth we now face. We have to seriously consider what collective expression can and should look like, and how to speak and act like a social force, instead of a rag-tag group of rebels.



Josh MacPhee is a designer, artist, activist, and archivist. He is a member of both the Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative (Justseeds.org) and the Occuprint collective (Occuprint.org). He is the coauthor of Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s to Now, coeditor of Signal: A Journal of International Political Graphics & Culture, and cofounder of the Interference Archive, a public collection of cultural materials produced by social movements (InterferenceArchive.org).

SOCIAL MEDIA...



Abandoning Our Humanity: Total Liberation and the Political Ecology of Speciesism¹

By Simon Springer

Speciesism. Anthropocentrism. Human Supremacy. Anthroparchy. Whatever label you want to apply to this myopic and profoundly violent worldview, it represents nothing less than a planetary atrocity. Given the intensity of the malevolence that humans unleash against other animals in the name of science, industry, labour, and food, it is astonishing that discussions of the problematic legitimization of violence against animals haven’t factored more prominently into the discourse of contemporary political ecology. As a loosely defined area of inquiry, debates have touched upon global warming, declines in air and water quality, soil degradation, deforestation, intensifying greenhouse gasses, species extinctions, and global population growth. Yet the general outlook of political ecology remains decidedly anthropocentric. Above all else, these destructive processes are lamented for their impacts on human societies, where attention to the wellbeing of the Gaia itself is relegated to a secondary concern or externalized to the domain of ‘deep ecology’. Meanwhile the deaths of non-human animals are usually framed in terms of the loss of biodiversity and the implications that this has for humans insofar as it represents a disappearance of potential future utility. Scant attention is paid to how factory farming plays a key role in environmental ruination, and even those few studies that do take note seem to downplay or discount the unintelligible mass murder of sentient beings and what this means for the development of a greater planetary consciousness that may be able to turn the tides against ecocide.

In demanding a politicization of environmental issues, most political ecologists have been oddly apolitical in terms of their reflections on the agency and sentience of non-human animals and particularly the othering that underpins the very idea of dismembered and decapitated bodies being euphemized as ‘meat’. There is a distinct need to bring political ecology into direct conversation with the violence of indifference that surrounds non-human animals. We must insist on going beyond the confines of contemporary political ecology, with its narrow Marxian focus on class and anthropocentric worldview, to embrace a much wider sense of what I want to call ‘total liberation ecology’. To fulfil its promise as a politicization of ecological concerns I am convinced that political ecology must begin to embrace both a vegan and an anarchist current. If the first principle of radical political ecology is a metaphysics that places humans in nature not above it (Merchant 2005), then speciesism surely should be as big of a concern as class, ethnicity, gender, or any other category of difference. Since the political ecological status of humans is clearly within nature, “one cannot fully grasp the foundations of racism, classism, sexism, patriarchy, ageism, and ableism without also understanding speciesism ... because they are all ideologies and practices rooted in hierarchy and the creation of oppositional superior and inferior subjects” (Pellow 2014). Such a thoroughly intersectional approach demonstrates the weakness of Richard Peet and Michael Watts’ (1996) so-called ‘liberation ecology’, which seeks to unleash a process of “broadening environmental issues into a movement for livelihood entitlements and social justice”. On first glance this sounds all well and good, but upon closer examination it is simply not enough. It reflects the same anthropocentric framing that guides the bulk of Marxist thought, thereby representing a continuation of Marx’s species imperialism inasmuch as its dialectic fails to consider how certain forms of oppression remain intact, particularly when livelihoods are built on the back of animal exploitation and justice is confined to the social affairs of humans.

The lives of animals remain marginalized as they continue to be conceptualized largely in terms of utility to human livelihoods and wellbeing, rather than considered as having intrinsic and inalienable value in their own right. Insofar as political ecology is concerned, there is consequently a profound importance to adopting the thoroughly integrative approach of a total liberation perspective. For political ecology to succeed as a worthwhile approach, “it must become as radically dialectical as possible” (Clark 2008), at once ruthless in its outlook on capitalism and destructive in its response to the blinkeredness of anthropocentrism, while also caring for the well being of the biosphere as a whole and creative in its placing of humans back within the web of nature. The thoroughly hybrid and relational ethics of total liberation avoids the limited morality of the animal rights discourse, which problematically ignores the nonhuman majority in elevating small groups of species (for example dogs in America and cows in India) to ethical parity with humans and therefore frames the question of animals once more through an anthropocentric lens. What is at stake in political ecology is nothing less than the very fate of the planet. A burden that we often assume must be shouldered alone. Yet thinking this to be the case is to once more assume a position of human supremacy, renewing the hubris that has long underpinned everything from Marxism to modernization theory. Such anthroparchy also rests at the rotten core of capitalism, a form of domination that much of the Left is not well equipped to transcend given the class-centric outlook that has defined much of its formulation. In contrast, the intersectional spaces of feminism and the integral geography of anarchism offer significant promise for the disavowal of such speciesism (Harcourt and Nelson 2015; Springer 2016).

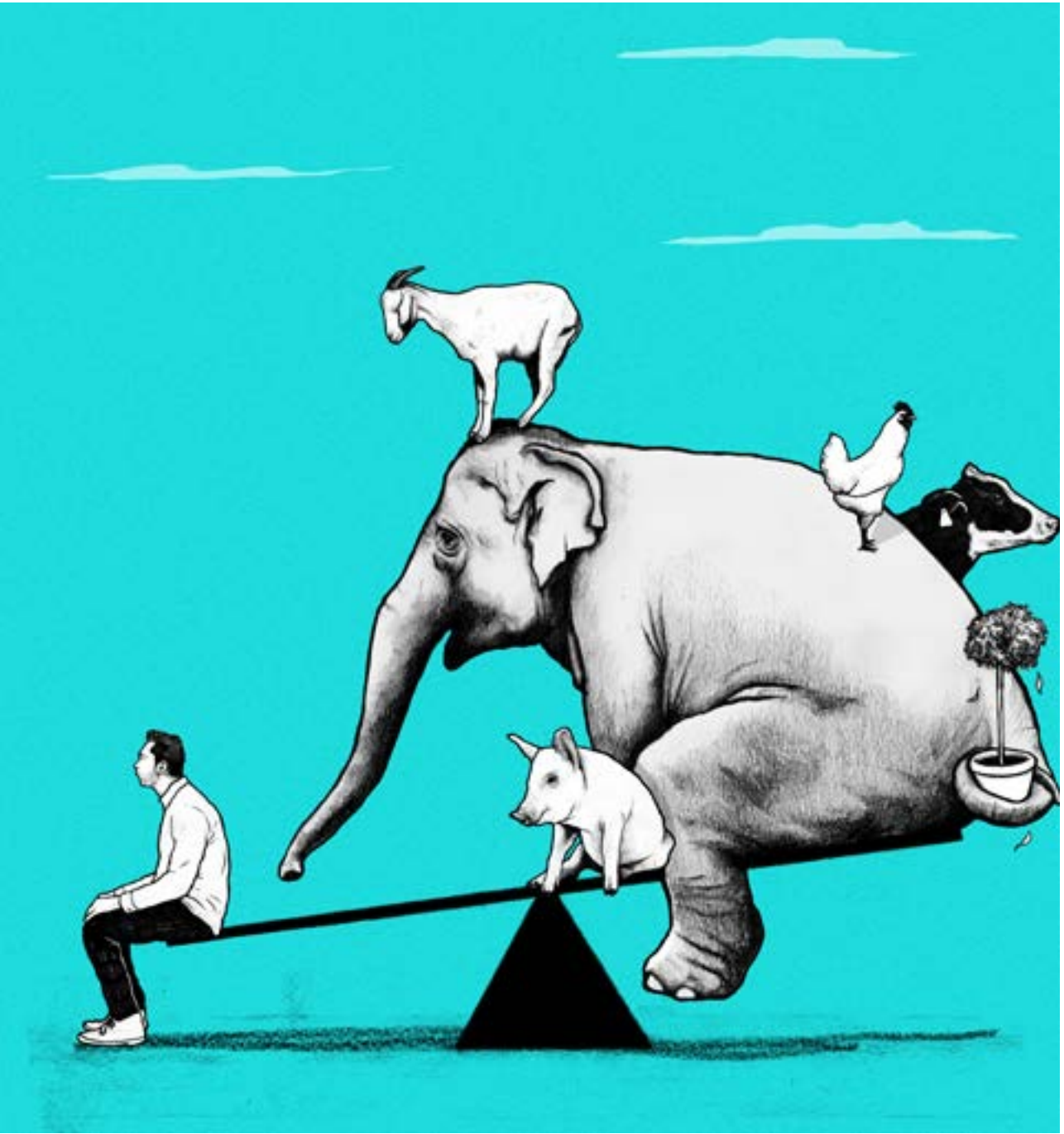
Reconvening the oneness that has been lost in human civilization’s forward march is the only path of hope, and it is irrefutable that the fates of humans, animals, and the Earth are inextricably tied together.

¹ Excerpted from the chapter ‘Total Liberation Ecology: Integral Anarchism, Anthroparchy, and the Violence of Indifference’ in the forthcoming volume *Anarchist Political Ecology: Undoing Human Supremacy*.

“Progress can no longer entail the zero sum game of human ‘gain’ at the expense of animals and the environment” Stephen Best (2011) argues, “Rather, a deeper concept of progress must emerge that eliminates the opposition between human and animals and society and nature. Most fundamentally, it would understand the profound interrelatedness of all aspects of planetary ecology”. A total liberation ecology allows us to realize that the future will not be decided solely through human intervention. The providence of the Earth is collective, unavoidably bound in unison by the intersections and evolution of all life forms, identities, and processes. As our land bleeds from the lacerations that come with the clearing of its trees, as our oceans choke from being fed with effluence from rivers of shit, and as our skies converge with greenhouse gases that will eventually suffocate the life out of the planet, hope is difficult to find. We’ve been consumed in the throes of a global bloodbath called capitalism, and as with all great noirs, only in the final revelation do we finally recognize that the enemy is inside. In that final scene all moral ambiguity is stripped away, and we see our own selves reflected in this fatalist mirror. We are the criminals. The antagonists. The executioners.

Yet in the grace of humility there exists the potential for a radical transformation of planetary consciousness. Looking within, attuning ourselves to the affective lives of the animal other, and finding the current that flows through all life on this planet is to realize that “what is human and what is natural is always the effect, rather than the grounds for politics” (Lorimer 2009). When we become aware that human interests blend with that of nature, binding us together as a single idea, we can begin to think quite differently. We repair the damages incurred by our predecessors and in this process of having become the consciousness of the Earth (Reclus 1894), we see the beauty of harmony and recognize that love and life are indivisible. Love is the preeminent condition, temporarily shattered only through the falsity of separation. The reflexivity that both veganism and anarchism imply is an attempt to reconnect with this vital frequency and realize the ‘Other’ of nature as ‘Self’. When we establish our politics as a total liberation ecology, the human/nature binary breaks down allowing everything to transform from the assumed fixity of partition to an inherently shared processes of symbiosis and mutual becoming.

This unfolding dance has never been choreographed, and the sequence has no beginning and no end. It is a geopoetics traced in air, a bending of the light of existence, a realization of mutual aid through the process of evolution. So it is not our actions as ‘humans’ that will determine the fate of the world, but paradoxically the abandonment of our humanity. By letting go of our ego we might yet come to learn that love, planetary wellbeing, and the immanence of connection are all one and the same.



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SURVIVING BAR-WORK WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO FUCKING DO BAR-WORK

By Liv Wynter

IS THE ARGUMENT WORTH IT?

Sometimes the hardest part about bar work can be the insufferable nature of the customers. None of the Millwall fans are going to care about my pronouns, my boss might be clued up on feminism but he doesn't like homeless people, and I serve unfathomable amounts of Tories and BNP members. In my community, in my home-life, in my friendship groups, I'm committed to calling-in and discussing shit behaviour. I'm committed to bystander intervention, both at work and in public spaces. However, conversations with a man whose so coked up he's eating his own cheeks whilst he stutters out "what does trans even mean" is absolutely not my form of direct action. Try and only have political conversations with people that are going to actually remember them, or else you're just wasting your time and using up your own capacities.

TRY AND FIND ONE OF THE 'GOOD' ONES

My first full-time bar job had basically no perks, but I didn't know any better when I was 17 and just happy to be working. My next bar job had perks that were not only valuable to me as someone who likes to drink (Jager bombs on shift, 25% off all drinks) but were valuable to me as an artist. This was a wake-up moment for me where I realised that rather than a coffee job or working in retail (I suck at both), bar work was going to actually be a good way to research my personal practice. I got a job in a theatre bar, where I was able to see live performance constantly. I suggest, if you're gonna be creative and work in a bar, try and work in a theatre bar. Everyone that works there is a suffering artist – you'll be right at home.

CAN IT BE RESEARCH?

I'm a writer, and I'm very lucky now to have a pub job where the pub is full of incredibly interesting regulars who don't give a shit about art but do give a shit about me and what I'm up to. This means I get to speak about my practice, and ask questions and develop ideas, in a completely non-pretentious space. I'm also a story teller, so working in an Irish pub full of drunk Irish men is potentially the best research space I could find.

TAKE WHAT'S YOURS

Working in bars is fundamentally shit, so make sure that you drink for free when no one's watching, take the tips your offered from sleazy guys and put them straight in your pocket, and if your boss is a cunt (and there's no CCTV) just steal straight from the till. You aren't paid enough, your time isn't valued enough, and you don't owe anyone shit. If you work for a chain then you're definitely not being respected the way you deserve, so I suggest covering the bathroom with anti-fascist or very political stickers, maybe form a union, who knows. Make the most of it.

IGNORE THE DRAMA

Working anywhere full-time makes it very easy to start believing the bullshit, getting invested in the drama, so it's vital for your survival and well-being you remind yourself that chances are, when you eventually quit, you won't see any of those people again! Enjoy their company, of course, and enjoy pints with 'em – but don't get upset if Chris who's training to be an actor is annoyed you put your bag on his coat. Fuck Chris. And fuck his coat.

KEEP YOUR HEAD

It's easy to let partying become your life and get lost in the sea of constant free – or at least cheap – booze. It's also easy to end up working 16 hour days, drinking just to fall asleep, burning up and burning out and essentially losing your mind. There's no other job in the world where we care so little about each other's substance abuse and mental health – and a functioning alcoholic is still an alcoholic. Try and make sure you're not drinking to survive the day.

BUT ALSO – PARTY

Let's be real, you work in a bar because you like to party! So if you're gonna work hard, play hard. The bar I work in at the moment has a dedicated 'Sunday Sesh', where all the staff get together on Sunday night and get outrageously drunk over a few bottles of Jamesons. We also, sometimes, if it's been a really hectic night, sneak our way into the trashy club over the road for the final few hours of service. These moments of comradeship are really fun and important – enjoy them! Just try not to let them happen every day.

UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR JOB SHOULD BE VALUED BY OTHERS

Don't let your partner (who secretly thinks their job is way more important than yours) expect you to move your shifts or take the night off work, or suddenly be super available every weekend because they work a 9 to 5 and wanna hang out with you on Saturday night. Your work is how you pay the bills and although it might not be impossible to swap a shift, do that shit on your own terms and because you want to.

SACK IT OFF

This is one I'm still learning but I think a really good tip for being bar staff – when it gets shit, quit. That business isn't invested in you, so you don't need to be invested in it and you definitely don't need to stick around when the shit hits the fan and the perks start dropping off. If your free drinks or staff discount suddenly disappear, go find somewhere that does both. Your skills are completely transferable, the wages are all the same, so work somewhere that's better than the last place – and don't feel guilty for leaving and doing what's right for you.

DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE

If what you want to be is the manager of a bar, or a publican, or a brewer, then props to you, stick at your bar job chase the dream etc. But if in your heart what you want to do is be an artist, or a musician, or a carer, or a teacher, or a fucking astronaut – don't let your bar job get in the way. These kinds of jobs rely on you desperately needing the money and getting swallowed into their system. Try to resist this as much as possible. Prioritise the things that really matter to you, try and use your time off to chase the dream, and cancel your shift to play that show if you can afford to do it. You are a fucking person in the world, and you are so much more than the pints you pull.



Liv Wynter is a bar-worker, artist-activist and educator.

Criminal?

By *Jasmine Ahmed*

A society that is ready to perceive you as a criminal does not so easily see you as a victim. While liberal feminists celebrate new legislation relating to up-skirting and misogyny as a hate crime, many marginalised people remain not just unsupported against violence in their homes and on the street but also vulnerable to state violence in the form of police brutality, imprisonment and immigration detention.

Abusive people target those who they perceive as powerless and so does the state. Black and brown people, women, trans and non-binary people and disabled people are more likely to experience abuse, and then not be supported by the police and court systems. They can be more vulnerable to homelessness and poverty, and to being trapped in abusive situations because they cannot afford to leave. On top of the physical and psychological violence experienced during imprisonment, over half of the people held in women’s prisons are survivors of domestic abuse and more than 80% are serving time for non-violent crimes such as theft and drug-related offences. Those who are imprisoned for violent behaviour are often being punished for defending themselves against someone who had been abusive, mentally or physically, towards them for a long time. Many of the migrants held in Yarl’s Wood detention centre have experienced abuse in their past, and those not in detention but with insecure immigration status are frequently targeted by abusive people who know they are unlikely to be reported to the police due to the survivor’s fear of detention and deportation.

To keep any human in a cage is an inhumane and ineffective way to address harmful behaviours. More often than not, society deems you harmful enough to be imprisoned not due to your actions but due to your social identity. Put plainly, our criminal justice system does not act as a deterrent to violent people but instead it sends the message that you can do anything you like as long as you’re rich and you target those who are, whether due to gender, class, race or disability, less powerful than you.

In the UK, most prisoners are poor, working class people, and over a quarter of the prison population is Black, Asian or another ethnic minority, despite making up only 10% of the UK’s overall population. 29% identified as having a learning difficulty or disability, and literacy rates are much lower than in the general population. Injustice prevails: the conviction rate for rape cases remains around 6%, we still see no charges for those responsible for the Grenfell Tower fire, and heads of state cut welfare services while spending billions on weapons of mass destruction.

As a feminist and anti-racist organiser, prison abolition is a goal that encompasses a holistic redressing of our society’s approach to harm, healing and justice. My comrades and I support campaigns to resist the prison industrial complex and build towards a world without cages and state control, while trying to support those affected by violence.

Community Action on Prison Expansion (CAPE) is a network of groups fighting the expansion of the prison industrial complex in the UK. In 2016 the government announced plans to build six new super prisons for men and five prisons for women. There are also plans to build new detention centres and children’s prisons. A step towards abolishing the prison system is to resist the expansion of that system, so local groups have been opposing these new projects through grassroots campaigns. The proposed plans for a prison in Port Talbot, South Wales, have been rejected by the Welsh government, which is a huge success. While some of the other prison construction plans have been delayed, construction is beginning to go ahead at the sites of HMP Wellingborough and Glen Parva. A month of action against prisons has been called for March 2019 and the fight continues.

The campaigns for more specific laws around sexual and domestic violence show that the narrative around these issues is changing. While it may seem as if these issues are being taken more seriously, further legislation strengthening police powers and increasing punitive responses rather than tackling gendered violence at its root, the misogynistic culture that allows this violence to happen in the first place, will not change the reality of everyday life for most women or gender non-binary people. Community-led organisations who support survivors to find safe housing and support them, through the process of leaving violent relationships and living circumstances, desperately need funding. Sisters Uncut, a feminist direct action group, has spotlighted ways the criminal justice system and the state perpetrates violence against survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Their campaigns demand the redistribution of funding away from the criminal justice system and into communities.

Bystander intervention approaches encourage us to speak up in safe, non-escalating ways when we witness harassment or assault. It empowers us to consider the simple ways we can support those experiencing violence and disrupt a culture that normalises violent behaviour by so often remaining silent. Hollaback London promotes bystander intervention as one of the ways to support those experiencing gendered and racist violence, instead of criminal justice responses.

Detainee support groups work with people held in detention centres on their immigration cases and provide much-needed emotional support. Groups organising against detention and deportation are playing a crucial role in disrupting an increasingly hostile environment, such as the Anti-Raids Network resisting immigration raids or the Stansted 15, a group of activists who took direct action to stop the deportation of 60 people on a charter flight.

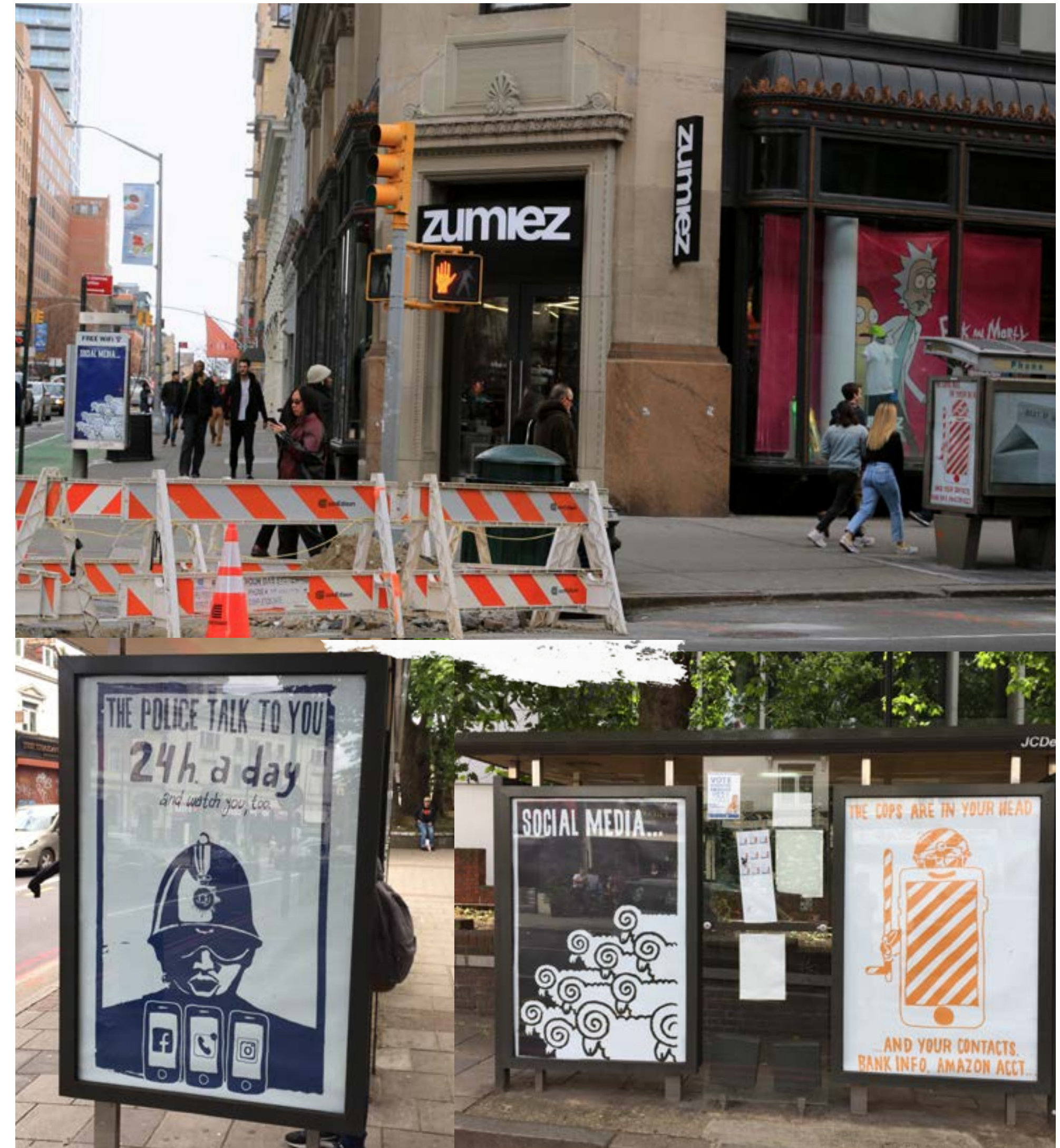
Education-focused campaigns are another important aspect of preventing violence and building a less punitive society. A holistic approach to education is needed to teach young people about consent and boundaries, about power, control and coercion, and the true history and impact of patriarchy and colonialism. Activists are also working with young people to help them gain skills in movement building, community organising and resistance.

This is just some of the work being done by abolitionists in the UK, and there is much more to be done. We continue to work to build our movement, to resist the state’s violence and oppression. If we really want safety and liberation for our communities, we must reconsider our perception of who the real ‘criminals’ are.

Jasmine Ahmed is a prison abolitionist and intersectional feminist writer and activist fighting the expansion of the prison industrial complex in the UK.

If you want to get involved, please email info@cape-campaign.org.







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