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In solidarity until everyone has a home and nobody lives in a cage.
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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.”



OFFICIAL VENDOR

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Chav Solidarity

By D. Hunter



In November I sent my book Chav Solidarity to the printers, the cheapest one I could find on the internet. I ordered a 100 copies, for a third of my monthly wage, and figured I'd sell 50 copies to some comrades and the other 50 would sit around in the front room of the two-up, two-down Forest Fields terrace I shared with my partner. Six months later, I still have 50 sitting in our new flat in North Merseyside, but now 750 copies have been sold. I've visited a dozen cities to do readings, and had folks from Santiago, Wellington, Dallas, Moscow and Sofia order the book. In the world of books I imagine this is very small fry; in the world of me, this is fucking ridiculous.

The book is a collection of essays, most of which I began writing whilst working night shifts in a care home for folks with long-term psychiatric diagnosis. They were/are a response to the shitty attitudes and behaviours I'd seen all over the Left in my decade plus of activism and political organising; attitudes about and behaviours towards the communities of people I had come from, and still feel deep kinship with. Communities of economically marginalised people who have constantly been subject to the sharpest edge of the policies and practices of the British

State and capital. The essays focus primarily on the so-called British underclass over the last 40 years, during which I lived as mental health support worker, child sex worker, anti-capitalist activist, crack addict, youth worker, writer, and thief. They aim to highlight the mutual aid, solidarity and self-defence that occurs on a daily basis in these communities, but to which the left I have worked within is largely disinterested and ignorant of, unless it is able to use them as symbols to bolster their arguments.

Most mornings I get myself a cup of coffee, and sit at my laptop reading the news, scrolling through social media feeds, checking my emails. And each morning brings different news stories, think-pieces and memes announcing the suffering caused by austerity, capitalism, neoliberalism, Brexit (delete as appropriate). Reading through stories of men and women freezing to death on the streets, consumed by addiction, having their benefits sanctioned and being left to starve, the rise in child poverty, the rise in prison deaths – essentially, the rise in state-sanctioned murder.

I read these “news stories” and I am reminded of the first 25 years of my life. Often the headlines are sympathetic, dripping in tragedy and pathos. Criticisms of social inequalities and the policy decisions that create them are made. Occasionally the dead are named, maybe a previous occupation might be mentioned, a home-town and its collapsed industry, its deprivation statistics stated, an attempt to humanise and contextualise what has occurred; the rise of food banks, benefit sanctions, child poverty, the effects of privatisation and public sector cuts, and the always-increasing levels of inequality – there is genuine suffering and a body count to go with it. But these news stories, think-pieces and memes leave a bitter taste in my mouth.

It's not that they're wrong, it's not that I disagree with the sentiment: there *is* a systemic attack on poor and working-class people both nationally and globally. It's been going on for a while now. Journalists, commentators and activists would be cretins for not connecting the dots between the government, economic policy and the suffering occurring up and down the country. Likewise, NGOs and charities that focus on issues around mental health, homelessness, child poverty, the prison industrial complex,

deaths in custody, unemployment, housing, institutional racism and domestic violence, would be fools to not make these connections. What is leaving a bitter taste in my mouth is the passivity that is attributed to those at the sharp end of austerity and neoliberalism.

For the first 25 years of my life I lived in what this nation-state would consider poverty, primarily surviving through the informal economy. My family and the community around it, fully comprehending the contempt/disinterest with which the state held it, found a variety of ways to provide food and shelter for themselves and those closest to them - from stealing livestock for dinner to selling stolen Reeboks in pub gardens. During the decade I lived on the streets, I experienced collective responses to deprivation, examples of mutual aid, solidarity and co-operation that in the last 15 years of living as respectable citizen I have seen no equal to.

Friends I had whilst on the street would share their quids, their food, their drink and their drugs, with others. Whatever they had, they shared. When they found a new source of income they'd share it. An unlocked door to an abandoned house, a closed-down shop that had left some stock behind, a sizeable score from robbing a lorry at a service station: they weren't opportunities to hoard and capitalise upon solely for personal gain, they were moments to revel in community, to take care of those you knew and were in the same boat as you.

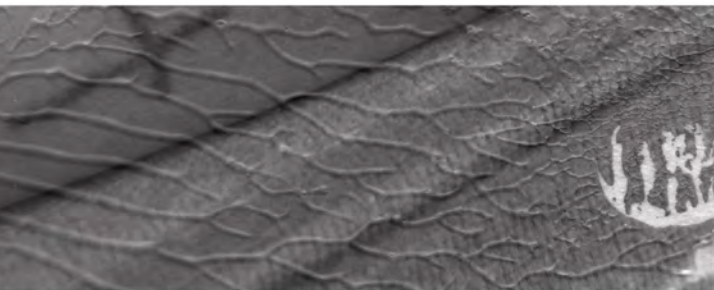
As a sex worker in my adolescence, I avoided physical assault and arrests because of the other young people I worked alongside. We kept track of who was going off with who, how long one another had been gone, where each of us was going to sleep that night, and ensured we all got home safely at the end of the night.

The boys I knew inside young offenders' institutes were able to show compassion, mutual aid and self-defence when they could. If someone was being bullied by a guard, they were willing and able to respond collectively, and put the needs of the individual first. They didn't decide what needed to be done about it, but offered assistance based upon what the individual said was needed.

In the communities I come from, where social marginalisation and economic poverty are high, resistance is not just something you organise for because you see injustice, it is woven into the fabric of everyday survival. Despite the patronising and paternalistic behaviour of the organised Left, ideas of what to do in response to attacks on the poor by governments and the economic system are not in short supply in poor and working class communities. What is in short supply are resources, time and energy.

All of this does not negate the social, cultural and political violence that is inflicted upon individuals in these margins. The generational trauma is real, and it leaves scars that may not heal; often it turns us against each other, as we are encouraged to trample on one another to get ours. Though the infection of a neo-liberal mindset does exist in the poorest of communities in the UK, that's not all there is – but it does appear to be the only narrative that is acceptable within the dominant discourses. The battle of discourses that view the poor as either violent, feckless cretins or passive victims is a battle carried out by two groups who have class privilege, and no respect for those they are speaking about. When journalists, commentators, talking heads and activists present the economically marginalised as passively accepting their fates as victims, they are denying them their humanity in order to score political points.

When talking about the atomisation of the working class and the individualisation of society, the Left would do well to note that whilst this has occurred within economically marginalised communities, it is the organised Left and the respectable classes – both working and middle – who are the most separated from one another. Whether it's the Left's in-fighting over approaches and methods, complaints of burnout, and dogmatic adherence to ideologies that increase disappointment and isolation, or the professionals whose economic status is more secure, but who tightly grip their economic security not as a community but as individuals. The organised Left and its figureheads need to learn from the resistance practices carried out by those they usually only engage with symbolically. And learn they must, if they are to play a role in moving towards the liberation of the working class from the capitalist class and its state infrastructure.



D. Hunter is the author of Chav Solidarity.

In a Society That Profits From Your Self-Doubt, Liking Yourself Is a Rebellious Act

By Caroline Caldwell

Advertisements force us to think about ourselves in terms of everything we're not. I think people should walk down the street and feel filled with everything that they are. So a few years ago, I made the message I wanted to see, put it up inside of a train where an ad used to be, and took a photo. Maybe only a few people noticed it on the train that day, but the photo spread far and fast online – shared over a million times across Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and other social media. It's been printed in books and magazines, referenced in TED talks, tattooed on a few people, translated into other languages, hung in classrooms and bedroom walls. I've read literally hundreds of long-form captions reacting to this, interpreting it, contextualising it within that person's own life. It doesn't feel like there's a need for me to explain what this piece is about because it seems like you already get it.

The piece developed a trajectory of its own without me doing anything, and often without my name attributed to it. It spread through a dozen fast fashion companies printing it on t-shirts and mugs without asking my permission. It spread when Madonna posted it on her Instagram to promote her tour, through celebrities sharing it without crediting me, even paraphrasing it in interviews as their own. I keep getting cut out of the wealth gained on my own work. I feel like a spectator, watching capitalists profit off a message about overcoming capitalist-manufactured insecurity. There's a dark humour to it though. My critique of consumerism is spreading through consumerism. I don't know if that means I'm gaming the system or if the system is gaming me ...

Even without my name attached, it's humbling that something from my heart is resonating with so many people. I wasn't trying to make a buck or have something go viral, and honestly, I don't know a whole lot about self-love. I just noticed a lot of my

insecurities stemmed from not fitting in with a fucked up system (a sexist, racist, Islamophobic, homophobic, capitalist patriarchy, to be specific). I found a simple way of expressing that and scribbled it on my bedroom wall, then thought: "Maybe other people need to hear this too".

Shortly after posting my message, I was linked to a viral video by a radical body-positive activist named Amy Pence-Brown that included my words. Amy stood blindfolded in a public square in a bikini, allowing passers by to draw on her body in support of self acceptance. This was her raw reaction to living in a society that told her a woman's value is her attaining an impossible beauty standard. Amy's confidence has a contagious effect on others, and thanks to social media and Amy's other activist efforts, a lot of people are catching it.

If those who control the media control the minds of the masses (to quote Malcolm X), it's important for us to think seriously about who we give that power to. We never chose to give that power unanimously to marketers, and yet marketers manipulate every aspect of our daily lives – from sponsored Instagram posts for skinny tea, to billboards for ambulance chasing lawyers. Marketers are here to make us feel incomplete. How do we regain control of our experience? How do we escape a system that wants us subjugated as a 'brain-dead consumer' to experience something richer, higher, real? Let's talk about taking back the tools of control. Let's talk about how art is a powerful tool in our arsenal. Social justice through direct action. Self-empowerment through DIY art activism.

I've been doing ad takeovers since I was 16. I felt empowered from a young age by culture jammers like The Situationists, anarcho-punk collectives like Crass, community builders like Swoon, writers like Molly Crabapple. Not only did these activists use their art to draw our attention to corruption, but they actively built something better in its place. It only takes a few challenging the status quo to disrupt the illusion for the rest of us.

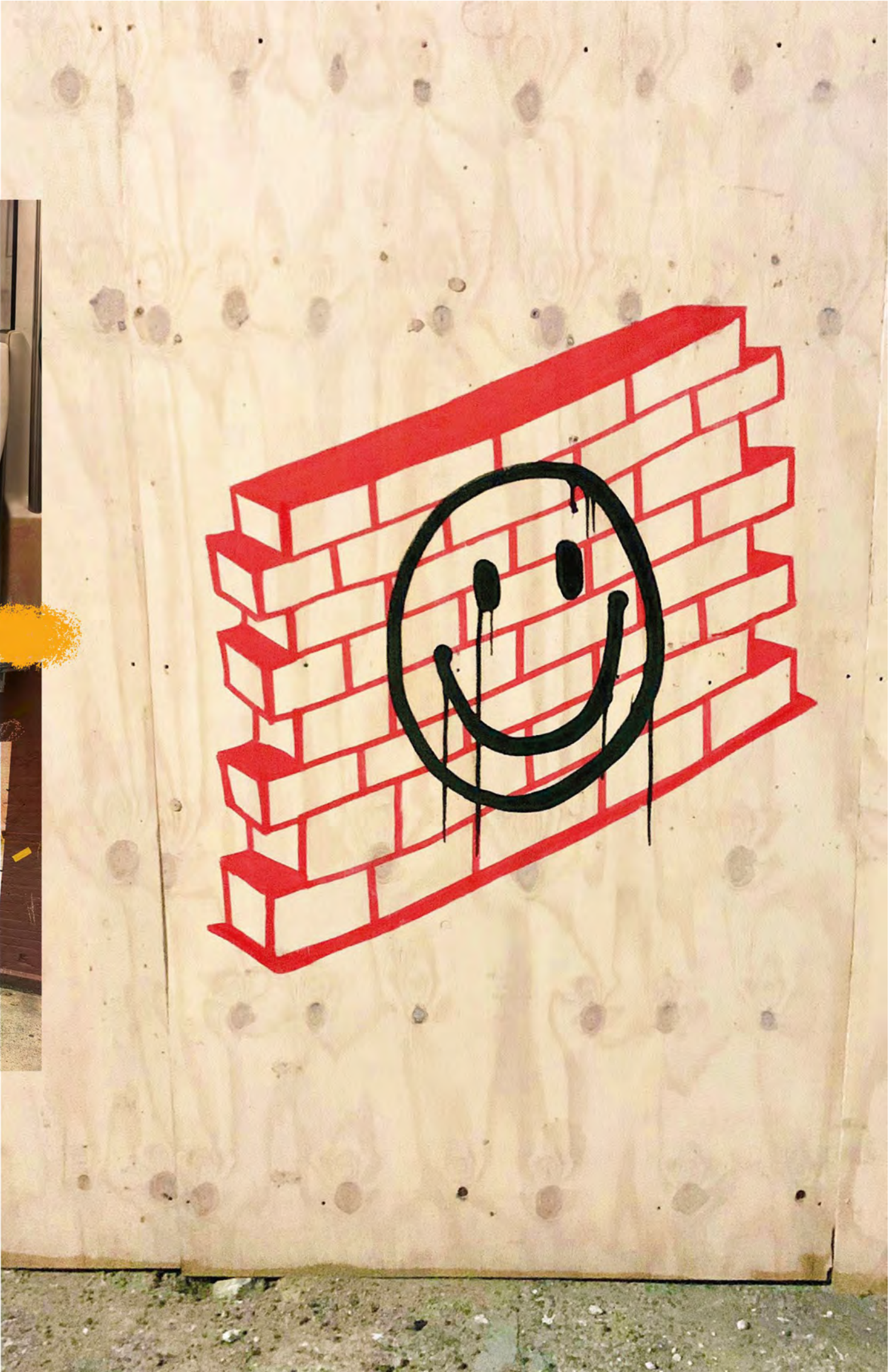
In 2017, writer RJ Rushmore, photographer Katherine Lorimer and I started *Art in Ad Places*: a guerrilla community service project that replaces advertisements with artwork.

This project was our attempt at showing what a healthy public environment could look like. It felt important to use this platform to amplify voices of women, immigrants, trans folks – anyone who might be misrepresented or underrepresented in today's media. Some of the art was political and some of it was just beautiful. And sometimes the beautiful is political. We just wanted to send out good vibes. There are so many amazing people doing this kind of work: Special Patrol Group, Jordan Seiler, Billboard Liberation Front, Brandalism, Thomas Dekeyser (AdDistortion), to name a few. Advertising Shits in Your Head (published by Dog Section Press) pretty much covers everything you need to know about the perils of public advertising, and strategies for resistance. Basically, the space belongs to all of us. Permission is yours if you take it.

Even at its worst, this world is full of wonder, magic and love. My very existence is the result of an act of love, and that's what I want to bring into the world. I don't have to accept any voice that talks down to me, but I don't want to ignore them either. Tuning out all the vapid media I'm bombarded with might mean tuning out the beautiful and complicated things that make life meaningful – and that's a compromise I'm not willing to make. If I want to live in a world I like, I have to help create it.



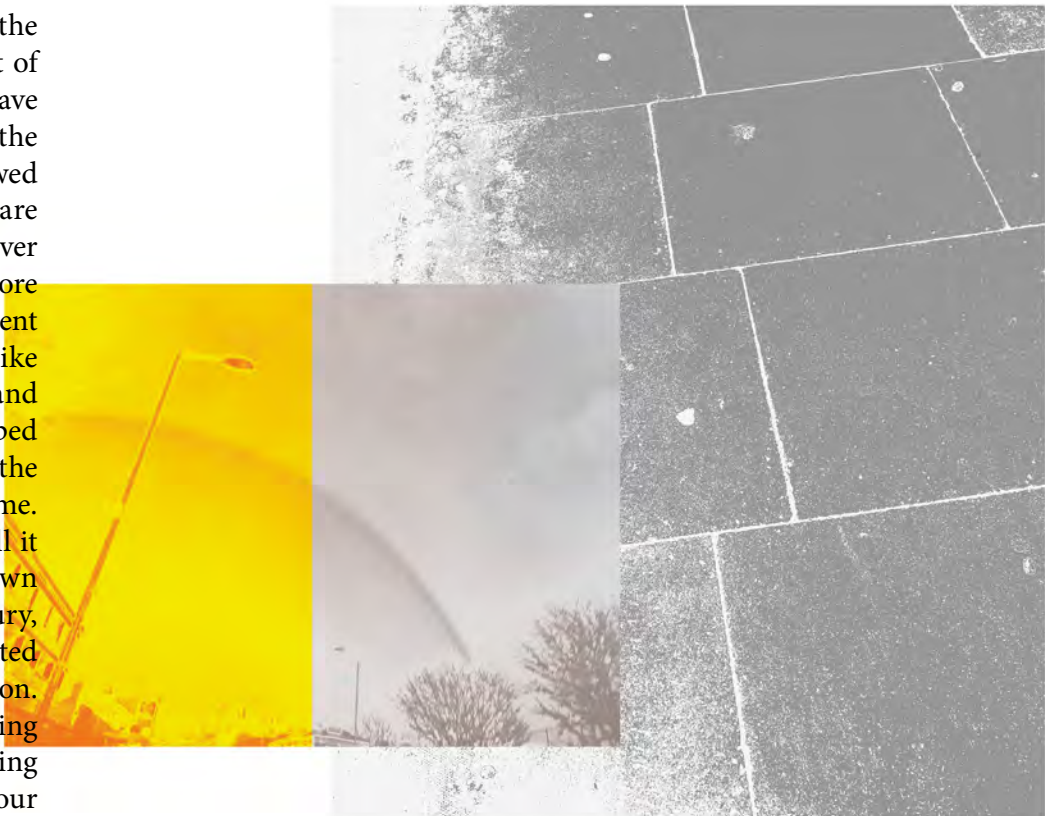
Caroline Caldwell is an artist and co-curator of the Art In Ad Places project. She lives and works in New York City. artinadplaces.com/



The Shit-Head Essence

By *Jason Williamson*

Where do you draw the line with shit music? The type that has snared, fed and pummelled the carcass of the originator with little or no regard for the millions of nutritious particles that flow through and enrich the imposter’s systems as it stands gimping at itself whilst flogging the fucking idea to death in front of yapping idiots. What does shit music make you feel like as it churns itself around your ear’s belly. The thing I hate most about expressing myself on this issue are the terrible hurdles, the justification, the ‘points to back it up’. It’s hard to explain a lot of the time and you find yourself retreating even if you feel you have a point. A simple “look it’s shit” just won’t do in the eyes of the dominators. The gatekeepers want intelligent answers, burrowed chasms of justification that are wholly unrealistic, really. You are just simply not climbing the fuckin’ wall are ya. The exposé never gets written. I don’t feel intelligent most of the time because more often than not I’m full up on dogshit, swimming against a current consisting of Unleaded and Diesel, daylight robbery and Tron-like capitalist rhythms, neon movements, road paint, red, amber and green. I’m laden with lack of anything in the linguistically equipped department, or at least this is what I tell myself. I cannot supply the content, the proof, philosophy, ability to reference history, a frame. So, if the dominators don’t get it, don’t get what they want, well it just gets fucking tense. In my mind it gets awkward. I get thrown against the wall like a shop entrance piss in-between bars. The fury, the dismissal from the sub-operators aimed at my short-sighted perception thunders me into some kind of vague submission. Presently this current crop of white indie bands is disgusting. Aping the struggle of existence like it’s an exercise they fucking hate doing at the gym or something. Or a brief comfortable moment of dour drunken reflection in a cosy bar. Contemplation in Business Class.



Generally speaking the shit-heads are no longer allowed to win when they powerfully express themselves because the ideas are too good, too lethal. No, we are given one option: “Talent contest on TV or fuck off”. So what happens is that the work originated by the shit-head is closed down but its essence is taken, passed on to the acceptable board of dominators where it is cleansed of any thrust but retaining its original casing. And it is in this exterior casing where the idea-less find kudos because the dumb crowd buying into it feels just enough affinity with the basified stolen property that it hurls a mass of manic confirmation back to the acceptable dominator. The acceptable board of dominators cannot carry the full weight of the shit-head’s message, as attractive as that might be, because essentially they just don’t get it. The acceptable classes know Pain, they know Isolation, Failure, Depression, Hopelessness, of course they do. But largely speaking, and in my experience, they cannot evoke the validity of it as well as the shit-head can. They do not stare into the curb, into hardcore and cement, because the acceptable classes, the dominators, possess an inbred happiness and an order which the shit-head doesn’t have. The open smiling feeling that falls onto my lawn along with the frost in the morning is as characteristic of the acceptable classes’ domain as their first in the queue dibs at being noticed in the professional world. I say ‘my lawn’ because I have finally managed to achieve nice living off my own back. I dwell in the area of the acceptable classes now and I like it, I’ve had a taste before in so called ‘mixed’ areas where Class collides but this is something else entirely because there is no mixed bag. Its straight up pure-bloods and new money. I like the “hellos” to strangers who in turn wish me a “good morning” when I walk my dogs. The acceptable classes are generally not prepared to engulf the damning path that leads to real creative skill because they don’t have to. This is because their audience doesn’t know what decent shit is and also in a lot of cases their routes are easier to access – it’s just a matter of reaching for the top and if the money eyes the project with interest then a plan is hatched and the dominators collide, causing a massive boom of limp wank-dom. A blowing belch of guff weighted bollocks.

There are parts of Loski’s long player ‘Call Me Loose’ that demonstrate the pain of being trapped in nothingness so well that you are virtually straddled with shock and yet why is he not championed? The misogyny and homophobia are alienating to me but these are stems of fear and anger hanging from the bigger beast, the wrath as a reaction to a life that is clamped. Why am I told some white indie band from the sock department in Selfridges are ‘Vital’? It clashes so much that I like to visualise the absolute hell of the dead landscape by piecing together and visualising in my mind any current slab of political corruption with a televised performance from an inferior musical act straight out the sock dept. who carries the arm band of the lobbyist. It makes for depressing results. Like a rubber comedy chicken that turns on itself.



I hated the notion of Class a while back. I still do. I hated the fucking long drawn out presence it has on chapter after chapter. I got sick of it being thrown onto me and my partner in music. You can’t even take a poo without some fucker accusing you of using better loo roll. But when you see the system’s food chain in action it then takes a different motion. You start to get really pissed off about it, it’s like daylight robbery done by complete idiots. Wimps and fucking tossers. It’s like being creatively robbed by Tim who worked at Wilkos who you knew was an absolute fucking idiot as he stacked and replenished shelves so brilliantly and believed so madly in the idea of absolutely nothing to then go on and win big.

Of course, this piece is full of holes. I mean it could be literally torn apart by whoever, but you know that’s the thing isn’t it. You need to penetrate the operator’s defences, create the exposé and damn the walls of the mediocre thief. The operators tell us its better to write nursery rhymes bathed in virtue than it is to write about buying new trainers. What’s wrong with rapping about new trainers? Do you expect these people to sing pleasing heart felt compositions about the degenerated infrastructure? Compositions that fit your idea of struggle from the comfort of your upgraded life? Struggle isn’t a political book you pick up to marvel at the darkness of its content. Most of the time it is things you cannot identify with. Male bravado, disdain for all and tales of consumerism are not the corrupted wrong route in rap. It perfectly translates the hopelessness of the box to me.



Jason Williamson is one half of Sleaford Mods.



Why I’m an Anarchist

By Benjamin Zephaniah

I got political after I suffered my first racist attack at the age of seven. I didn’t understand any political theory, I just knew that I had been wronged, and I knew there was another way. A few years later, when I was fifteen, a marked police car pulled up to me as I walked in Birmingham in the early hours of the morning, three cops got out of the car, they pushed me into a shop doorway, then they beat me up. They got back into their car, and drove off as if nothing had happened. I had read nothing about policing policy, or anything on so-called law and order, I just knew I had been wronged. When I got my first job as a painter, I had read nothing on the theory of working class struggles or how the rich exploited the poor, but when my boss turned up every other day in a different supercar, and we were risking our lives up ladders and breathing in toxic fumes, I just knew I had been wronged.

I grew up (like most people around me) believing Anarchism meant everyone just going crazy, and the end of everything. I am very dyslexic so I often have to use a spellchecker or a dictionary to make sure I’ve written words correctly. I was hearing words like Socialism and Communism all the time, but even the Socialists and Communists that I came across tended to dismiss Anarchists as either a fringe group, who they always blamed if there was trouble on demonstrations, or dreamers. Even now, I just checked a spellchecker and it describes Anarchy as chaos, lawlessness, mayhem, and disorder. I like the disorder thing, but for the average person, disorder does mean chaos, lawlessness, and mayhem. The very things they’re told to fear the most.

The greatest thing I’ve ever done for myself is to learn how to think for myself. I began to do that at an early age, but it’s really difficult to do that when there are things around you all the time telling you how to think. Capitalism is seductive. It limits your imagination, and then tells you that you should feel free because you have choices; but your choices are limited to the products they put before you, or the limits of your now limited imagination. I remember visiting São Paulo many years ago when it introduced its Clean City Law. The mayor didn’t suddenly become an Anarchist, but he did realise that the continual and ubiquitous marketing people were subjected to was not just ugly, but distracting people from themselves. So more than 15,000 marketing billboards were taken down. Buses, taxis, neon and paper poster advertisements were all banned. At first it looked a little odd, but instead of either looking at, or trying not to look at, advertising boards, I walked, and as I walked I looked around me. I found that I only purchased what I really needed, not what I was told I needed, and what was most noticeable was that I met and talked to new people every day. These conversations tended to be relevant, political, and meaningful. Capitalism keeps us in competition with each other, and the people who run Capitalism don’t really want us to talk to each other, not in a meaningful way.

I’m not going to go on about Capitalism, Socialism, or Communism, but it is clear that one thing they all have in common is their need for power. Then to back up their drive for power they all have theories, theories about taking power and what they want to do with power, but therein lies the problem. Theories and power. I became an Anarchist when I decided to drop the theories and stop seeking power. When I stopped concerning myself with those things I realised that true Anarchy is my nature. It is our nature. It is what we were doing before the theories arrived, it is what we were doing before we were encouraged to be in competition with each other. There have been some great things written about Anarchism, and I guess that’s Anarchist theory, but when I try to get my friends to read these things (I’m talking about big books with big words), they get headaches and turn away. So, then I turn off the advertising (the TV etc.) and sit with them, and remind them of what they can do for themselves. I give them examples of people who live without governments, people who organise themselves, people who have taken back their own spiritual identity – and then it all makes sense.

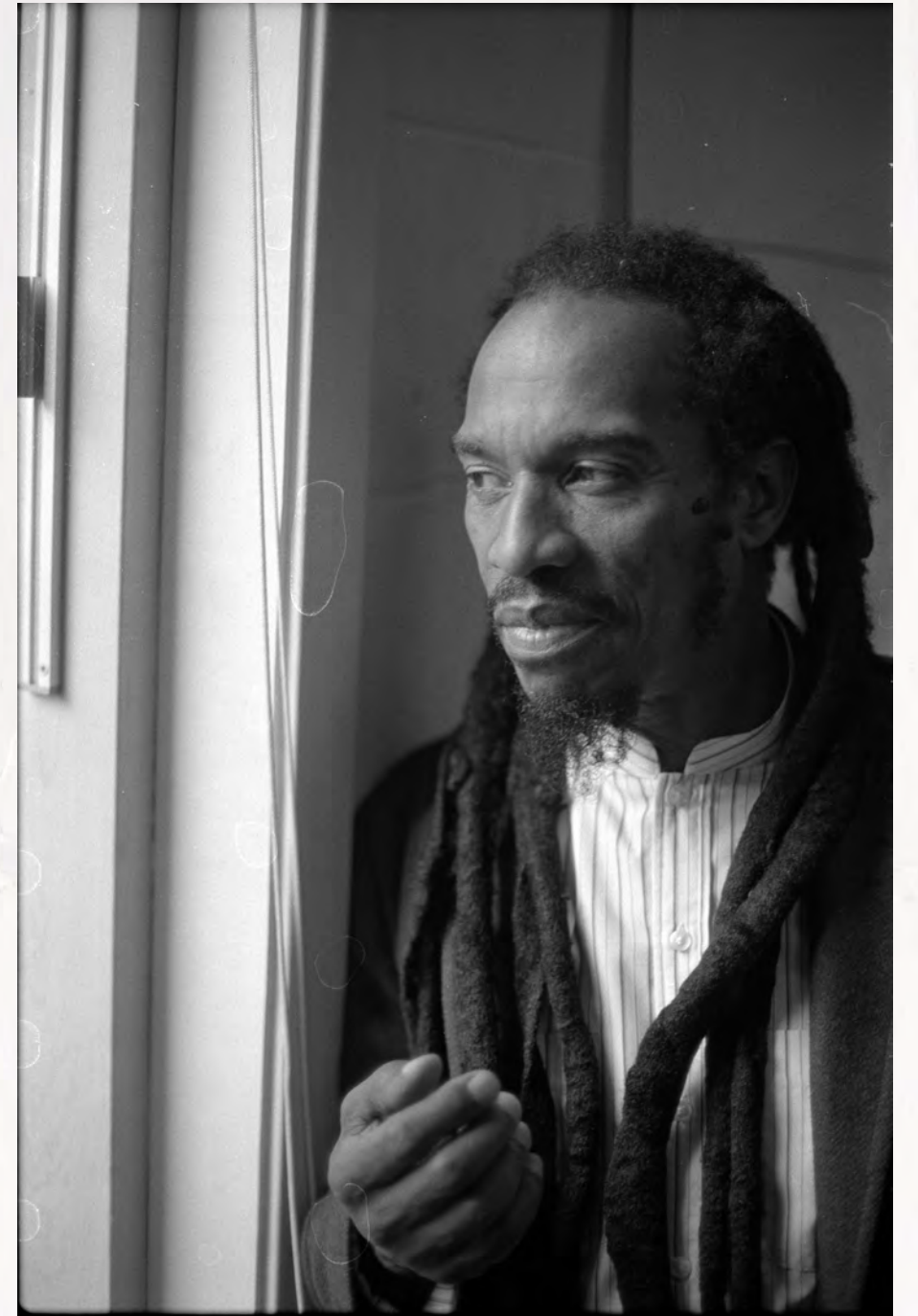
If we keep talking about theories then we can only talk to people who are aware of those theories, or have theories of their own, and if we keep talking in the round about theories we exclude a lot of people. The very people we need to reach, the very people who need to rid themselves of the shackles of modern, Capitalistic slavery. The story of Carne Ross is inspiring, not because he wrote something, but because he lived it. I love the work of Noam Chomsky and I love the way that Stuart Christie’s granny made him an Anarchist, but I’m here because I understand that the racist police who beat me have the state behind them, and the state itself is racist. I’m here because I now understand that the boss-man who exploited me to make himself rich didn’t care about me. I’m here because I know how the Marrons in Jamaica freed themselves and took to the hills and proved to all enslaved people that they could manage themselves. Don’t get me wrong, I love books (I’m a writer, by the way), and I know we need people who think deeply – we should all think deeply. But my biggest inspirations come from everyday people who stop seeking power for themselves, or seeking the powerful to rescue them, and they do life for themselves. I have met people who live Anarchism in India, Kenya, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and in Papua New Guinea, but when I tell them they are Anarchists most will tell me they have not heard of such a word, and what they are doing is natural and uncomplicated. I’m an Anarchist because I’ve been wronged, and I’ve seen everything else fail.

I spent the late seventies and the eighties living in London with many exiled ANC activists – after a long struggle Nelson Mandela was freed and the exiles returned home. I remember looking at a photo of the first democratically elected government in South Africa and realising

that I knew two thirds of them. I also remember seeing a photo of the newly elected Blair government (New Labour) and realising that I knew a quarter of them, and on both occasions I remember how I was filled with hope. But in both cases it didn’t take long to see how power corrupted so many members of those governments. These were people I would call and say, “Hey, what are you doing?”, and the reply was always something along the lines of, “Benjamin, you don’t understand how having power works”. Well I do. Fuck power, and lets just take care of each other.

Most people know that politics is failing. That’s not a theory or my point of view. They can see it, they can feel it. The problem is they just can’t imagine an alternative. They lack confidence. I simply blanked out all the advertising, I turned off the ‘tell-lie-vision’, and I started to think for myself. Then I really started to meet people – and, trust me, there is nothing as great as meeting people who are getting on with their lives, running farms, schools, shops, and even economies, in communities where no one has power.

That’s why I’m an Anarchist.



Benjamin Zephaniah is a writer, poet and anarchist. His most recent book is *The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah*.



Land Reform Is Liberation

By Nick Hayes

The historic root of inequality in Britain is the uneven distribution of land, the rights given to those who own it, and the rights taken from those who don't.

Across the country, a network of fence-lines and walls, modern and old, divide up the land into parcels of ownership. These barriers do more than just exclude us, they turn our common wealth into private wealth and reinforce a status quo of inequality that has existed since the Norman Conquest.

In 1066, William the Conqueror seized all the land in his name – disinheriting most of this island's inhabitants, and removing common rights to great swathes of land so the King and his Barons could hunt deer. In late medieval times, land was fenced-off for sheep by the landed gentry so they could maximise their profits from the booming wool trade. The onset of capitalism in the late 1600s saw the mass enclosure of common land for the ruling class, justified by an early incarnation of the mantra of 'trickle-down economics', an enduring myth which states that privately accumulated wealth will ultimately benefit all parts of society. It didn't then and it hasn't now.

Today, a tiny number of people and institutions still own most of the land in Britain, with the country's twenty-four Dukes owning over a million acres between them. Much land is now also divided up amongst a new global elite via off-shore companies, often used for tax evasion or international money laundering. This gives them great power over land use, where they prioritise profit and status over the environment and local communities. Currently, the richest man in parliament, Richard Benyon, is digging up shale from the common ground that his ancestors enclosed 200 years previously. Over the next ten years he will mine 350 acres of two million tonnes of sand and gravel, employing the same rights to the land as the commoners held for centuries, but on an industrial scale, and for his profit only.

Look into land, hop over the walls and fences that divide us from it, and you find not just the roots of economic inequality, but of gender, race, and class. When slavery was abolished in 1833, £20m of taxpayers' money was paid to the slavers in compensation for the 'property' that was being confiscated. This money went into building new estates and remodelling old, throwing up new walls around English land, and allowing the inhumane mindset of slave capitalism into the seats of government. Women were only allowed to own property from 1884 because, for most of history, under the legal fiction of *feme covert*, they themselves were classed as property. And as for class, look behind the velvet drapes and ermine fancy dress of the aristocracy and you find nothing more than basic rentier capitalism: land enclosed, resources privatised and then sold back as privileges to those that can afford them.

Many public health issues are directly linked to trends in land use. Crammed into polluted cities, many people have seen their respiratory

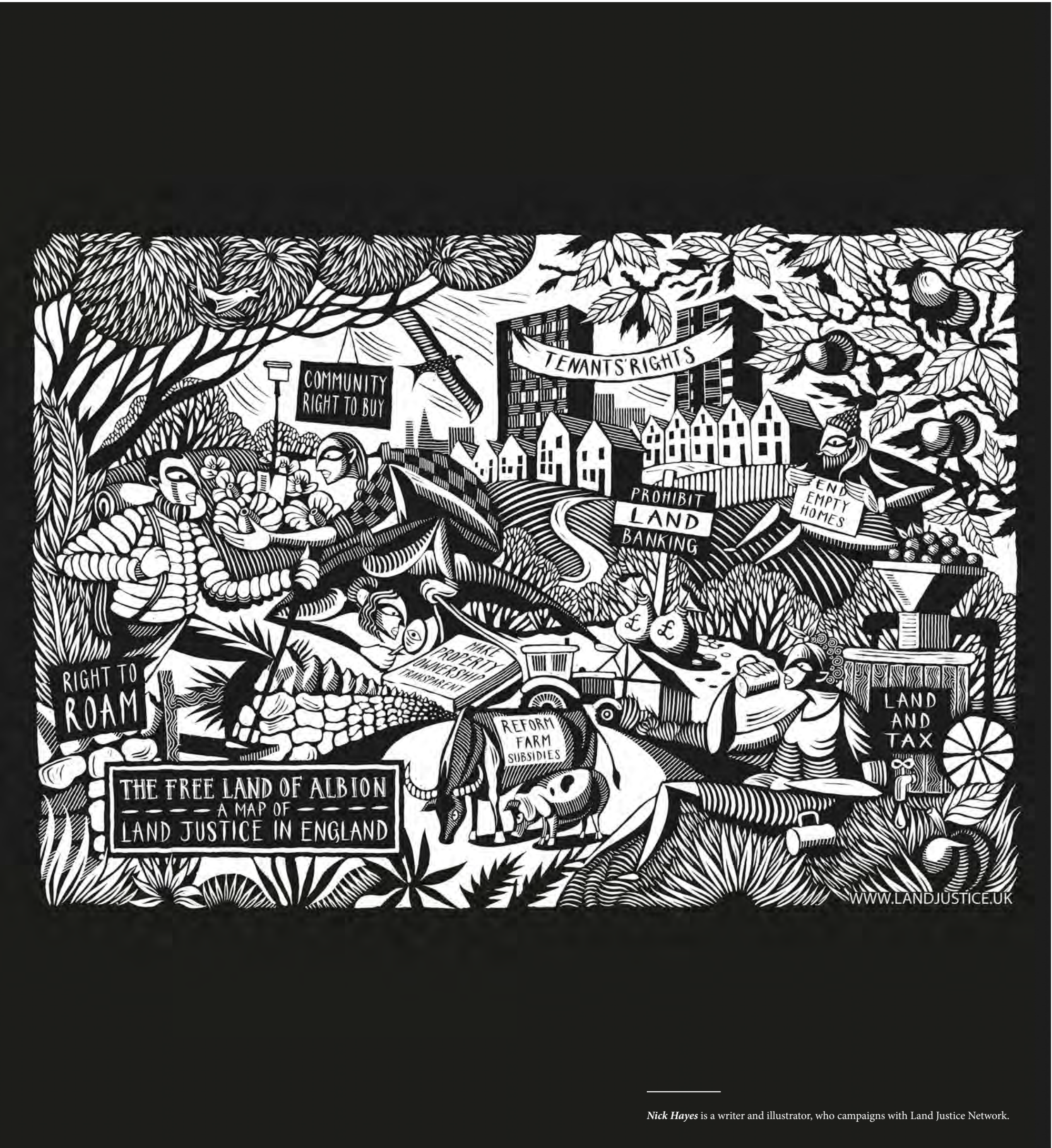
health affected, and their mental wellbeing collapse by lack of contact with nature. Cash-strapped councils have started to sell-off public parks and playing-fields to plug funding gaps, while Tate and Lyle Sugar regularly top the list of farm subsidy recipients. How can we tackle obesity and other health issues whilst our food system is geared to producing low-quality, cheap food, and people are disconnected from the outdoors?

Common land, land owned communally, shared resources, have all but died in the modern day. But 'the commons' is as much a philosophy as it is a space. It rejects a top-down hierarchical power distribution in favour of horizontal networks of listening, sharing and consensus decision-making. When you create boundaries to shared resources, you create matrices that marginalise certain people, entirely at the whim, or ideology, of the property owner. But when you stand on common ground, the dynamic that pushes certain sectors of society to the margins is almost entirely obliterated. Philosophers from Foucault to Henri Lefebvre to Edward Soja have all studied how space is constructed and the impact that has on how society is structured. The latter two talk of a notion called 'Thirdspace', a place where the designed architecture of environment meets the stories we tell about its use. Such a hypothetical space, they argue, could become a place of resistance against the systemic power that continues to divide our society, a place where all sectors of society stand as equals – in other words, on common ground.

The Land Justice Network was set up several years ago as a coalition of growers, city planners, data modellers, academics, architects, activists, artists and song-writers who are working together to change the way England uses its land. It aims to put land where it belongs: at the heart of political debate and discussion. We're advocating radical changes in the way land in the UK is used and governed to create a system of land-use that benefits us all. Liberate the land and you liberate the people.

The map that illustrates this article is our vision of the land we are working for. It forms part of a pamphlet we have produced that sets out each theme in its context, a brief introduction to how and why this will lead to greater equality. Sign up to our website, and get as many of those pamphlets as you want, for free (or a voluntary donation towards print costs).

We have spent the last year or so building solidarity, extending the network, and drawing up our shared ideology. We are now turning to outward action. In early May we planned our first major occupation of land, targeted against the grouse moors of England, where the farming techniques have been shown to cause flooding in local towns. We want to highlight not just this particular injustice, but to bring to the forefront the idea that communities should have a greater say in how, and for whom, the land is managed. We want you to join us, to sign up to our website, to come to our occupations, and to spread the idea that there is an alternative.



Nick Hayes is a writer and illustrator, who campaigns with Land Justice Network.

The Coffee Grind (Through Grittied Teeth)

By Sila Yucel

Working part-time in a cafe to support your creative path is exhausting and stressful. With long shifts, zero-hour contracts and the feeling of being a scapegoat for gentrification in a low-income area (despite your poverty wages), it's not just the coffee that leaves a bitter taste in your mouth.

After graduating university, I began working for an artist I admired in Deptford, south-east London, in exchange for a shared studio space. I was never going to earn much money or have stability doing this, at least for the first few years, but being creative keeps a playful element in my life that I rely on for happiness and sanity. The free studio space was an alright deal. I specialise in glass-making and the basic equipment needed is priced in the thousands, something I - a twenty-something fresh out of uni - would never be able to afford alone, even if I was living at my Mum's. In need of financial support to pay for the running of machines, materials and general life expenses, I began looking for extra work elsewhere.

A friend of mine was working at a cafe near my studio and said she could get me some part-time work there. The idea of working in a small cafe seemed like a reasonable option, where I wouldn't leave work too tired to work a couple extra hours on my own stuff. I'd worked in retail and in supermarkets before and disliked both for different reasons, and I didn't want to do bar work because the temptation to constantly drink would probably distract me.

It felt conflicting that someone like me would start working in a middle-class coffee shop. The minimal shop fronts signify the coming of a class culture war that will, over time, change the whole composition of the neighbourhood - dividing communities by charging insensitive prices that keep long-term residents and members of low-income households out, and encourage a new class in. It felt like turning my back on everything I'm against, especially as, during university, I made a series of zines designed to highlight negative change in the area; but I really needed a fucking job and decided to bite the bullet and learn to make flat whites. And, to be honest, when there are about ten cafes on the high street already, how much choice do you have?

I soon found myself amongst like-minded, passionately-driven artists, musicians and writers, all in the job for the same reason as I was (and still am). The long days and zero-hours contracts seemed unstable, but others reassured me that it worked, as a few long shifts might bring in enough cash to allow me to spend the rest of my week working on something I actually care about. Unfortunately, my co-workers and I are all-too-familiar with working multiple jobs that can lead to seven-day weeks; your boss doesn't care if you are working every other day this week - often they'll ask you which days you're not working, then book you in for those - and you aren't being paid enough to say you won't do it. Those treasured days focusing on creative projects slide out of reach, to make way for a much-needed day-off.

The fact that paying less than London living wage isn't actually illegal tends to mute any voice of objection you have against your wages; it allows businesses to turn a blind eye to their employees' well-being because, as far as they are concerned, it's not their problem if you can't afford your rent. The average barista earns the minimum wage of £7.85 per hour or below, whereas the average rent in London is currently £2,000pcm for a two-bed flat, and rising. Employees are forced to work more hours, leaving them exhausted and uninspired - and, often, battling with mental health problems. I work about 3-4 jobs on and off and a musician I work with does the same. When this becomes just one of your many jobs, who has time to breathe let alone consider a union? Part-timers go into these jobs with the mindset of "just getting on with it", not caring about causing any friction, because your creative work is way more worth your energy.

I've had customers with 9-to-5s respond to my job with rose-tinted glasses, telling me how great it must be to stand around all day drinking coffee. Back in the real world, duties include cleaning the mess of a child whose parents can't be bothered to do it themselves (but won't tip), working two 11 hour shifts in a row with a thirty minute (unpaid) lunch break, and actually paying for any coffee or food you consume. Add these to the job description and you'll see it isn't exactly ideal - don't quit your day job. Especially if you're entitled to basic fundamental rights like pay-rises and sick-pay, and aren't forced to work during national holidays at minimum wage. I, too, was fooled by the myth of the humble coffee shop that cares about its produce; maybe I was naive to think it cared as much for its employees too, but it's just like any other underpaying café, even if the prices aren't.

This is just what it's like working day to day in a café - but beyond that, I would also like to talk about the discomfort of working in a café that is seen as symbolic of gentrification. I know people who would rather die than be seen walking into a trendy coffee shop, but the reality is that the people working inside it are just regular young people trying to get by. Despite appearances, baristas can't actually afford the community they're unfairly associated with.

These social spaces are where developers meet to discuss their investment plans for the area while sipping overpriced lattes, simultaneously ignoring the locals scraping to get-by outside. It is these developers that are knocking down estates; destroying community gardens that provide essential fresh air in inner-city areas; pressuring councils to use violent guards against protesters; supplying pseudo 'cultural assets' that pretend to support artistic communities; raising rents; putting local pubs under threat; and booting people out of the area to make way for bullshit luxury flats that not even middle class people can afford anymore. Developers like Lendlease and Peabody, who shamelessly use art-washing as cover for social cleansing, remove

established communities in exchange for overpriced, sky-high tower blocks with little balconies where rich people can sit and watch the sunset over Canary Wharf.

My co-workers try their best to support the local community, offering free tea for anyone who needs it and trying to make everyone feel welcome. The tension caused by gentrification in the area creates an aggressive atmosphere - we must show our solidarity and not let it divide us. I've been to community meetings and I love that new-locals, students and squatters alike are present in them, even if they only live here for a few years of their life. I know people who've been in the area for generations that speak kindly of new-locals who have organised campaigns to save reservoirs, protest for a minimum of 35% social housing in new builds and stop demolitions of community spaces. We must continue to rise together against the faceless developers to support our communities.

Also: don't forget to tip your baristas ...



Sila Yucel is a glass-maker and barista from south-east London.

PROP '72

By London IWOC

On the morning of Friday August 4, 1972, many would have awoken in British prisons with an unusually pronounced sense of apprehension¹. Two weeks earlier, Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners (PROP), a newly formed prisoners’ union, had announced that, unless the Home Office were prepared to meet to discuss a list of demands, the country’s first ever national prison strike was set to take place on that day.

PROP had formed earlier that year, during the course of an escalating protest movement within the prisons. Conditions inside had been deteriorating drastically since the publication of the Mountbatten Report in 1966, an investigation commissioned in response to a series of high-profile prison escapes. In the context of a more pervasive anxiety over perceived social disintegration (student and trade union militancy, the insurgency in Ireland, moral panics over sexuality and migration, etc.), the Mountbatten Report inaugurated a draconian shift in prison regimes, explicitly emphasising control over rehabilitation, and stripping away many previously held entitlements.

Screws used their union, The Prison Officers’ Association (POA), to push for the increasingly punitive measures advocated by the report, and subsequently took the Mountbatten recommendations as license to indulge in widespread deprivation and brutality. Protests erupted in response, the best-known being the HMP Parkhurst uprising in 1969². Demonstrations continued to spread in the following years; however, despite their proliferation, their immediate impact remained minimal. The Prison Department refused to officially recognise the majority, and lack of public exposure limited their leverage. In an effort to overcome this barrier, PROP was formed in May 1972 by a network of ex-prisoners and their supporters, to give visibility to the movement and act as a representative body for people struggling inside.

PROP attempted to articulate and represent demands for the movement in a Prisoners’ Charter of Rights. The document contained 26 rights, pertaining to things like participation in the union, communication, independent inspections, access to legal support, parole, visitation, education and training. Although a small organisation, PROP presented itself to the press as a much more substantial entity, claiming, for example, 500 associate members and the power to start and stop prison strikes at will. The media, for its part, revelled in the opportunity to spin sensational stories about scandalous demands, and, with front-page reporting and television coverage, contributed to the high profile the union quickly achieved.

The declaration of the national strike typified PROP’s use of the press. They timed their announcement to coincide with the POA’s annual conference, dramatically upstaging their opponents and disrupting the public relations work planned to coincide with the event. While forcing the screws onto the defensive, PROP deliberately set a relatively large window between their announcement and the strike itself. This was to allow time for both the media and the screws themselves to circulate news of the action throughout the prisons.

By this point PROP had attained fairly widespread support inside, bolstered by the achievement of concessions by protests at the remand prison at Brixton. Inside interest, though, far outstripped outside capacity, and so the functional network of contacts inside remained limited. To a large extent PROP operated by declaring actions and then focusing its efforts on publicising them through the media, relying on people inside to catch wind of them through the press or word of mouth. The screws also inadvertently helped information spread inside. Suspected ringleaders would be picked up, for example, to be interrogated over whether or not they intended to participate in upcoming actions, actions of which they may well have been, until that point, completely unaware, but were then only too happy to inform people of when they returned to the wings.

When August 4 eventually arrived, nobody was exactly sure what was going to happen, least of all the people inside. In the lead up to the strike the prison governors and the Home Office had held a secret meeting to discuss how to respond to the proposed action, and had decided that as long as the strike remained non-violent it would be tolerated. A sympathetic governor leaked the news to PROP; however, given their relatively limited network of direct contacts within the prison population itself it’s unlikely this information would have travelled very extensively. The terroristic suppression of protest at Parkhurst only a few years earlier would have been heavy on many people’s minds.

It remains unclear exactly how many participated in the strike, but PROP’s final estimation was somewhere around 10,000 (around a quarter of the prison population at that point), in 33 separate prisons. The Home Office’s inconsistent estimates were about half of that number; they spent most of the day attempting damage limitation in the media, denying participation wherever possible, and finding themselves exposed as liars in case after case. In probably the most humiliating example, an administrator appeared in front of HMP Gartree to an assembled crowd of journalists to deny strike activity, just as a banner dropped from a window overhead declaring “24 hour strike is on”.

As remains the case today, many people inside wouldn’t actually have had jobs, and so expressed their participation in the strike through joining sit-down protests on the wings or in yards. Despite this, what made the strike an effective tactic owed to the kind of labour people were engaged in. Prisons depend for their daily reproduction on the labour of the people they incarcerate. Cooking, cleaning, laundering and various kinds of maintenance work are generally conducted as prison labour. When this labour is withdrawn the institutions grind to a halt.

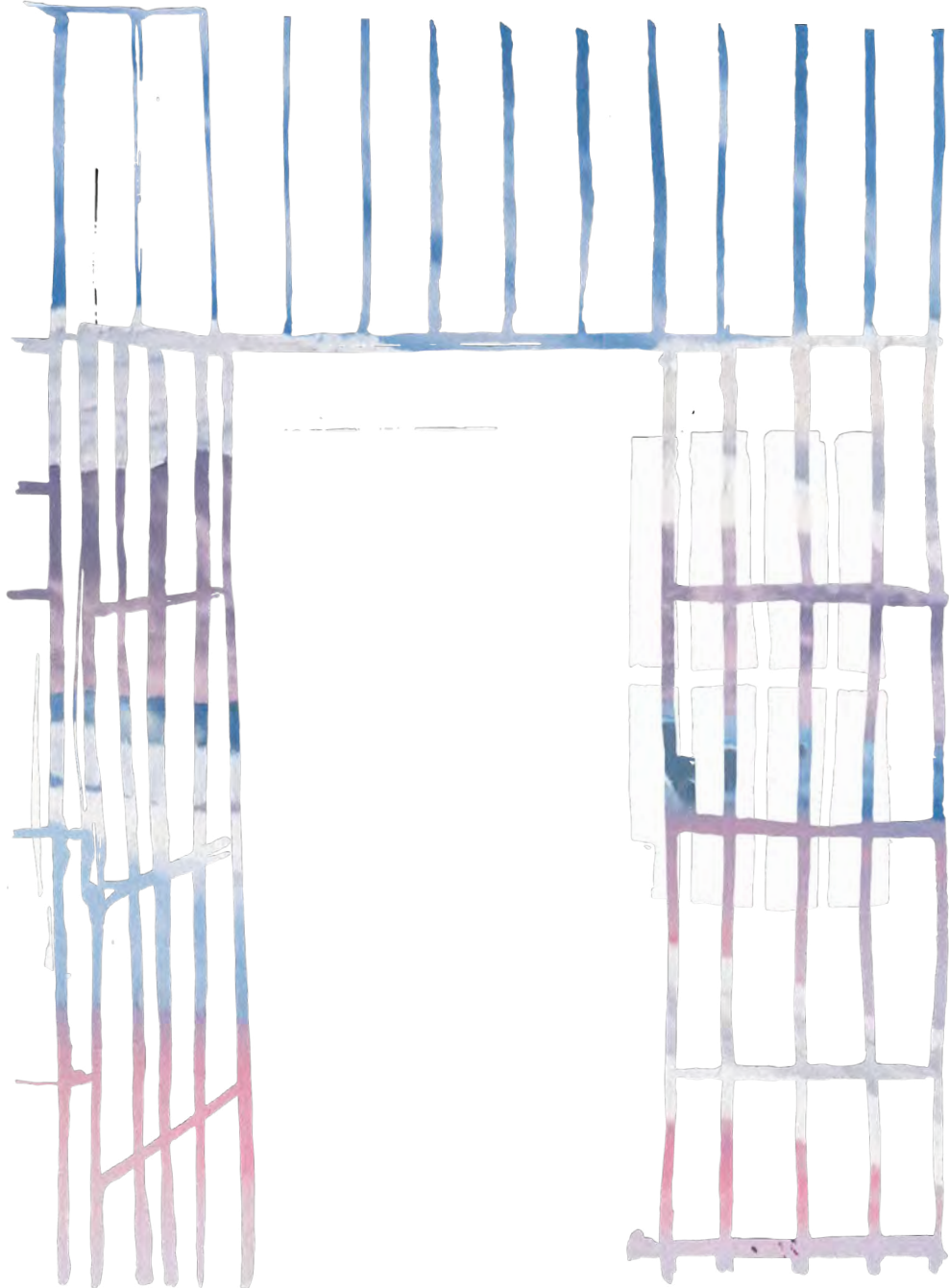
While in the short term the Home Office and governors may have been satisfied to tolerate this, the POA was not. Of the prison administration, it was the screws that suffered the impact of the strike most directly, and in this case it was not government that took initiative to crush the self-organisation of imprisoned workers, but this other, hostile, sector of organised labour. The POA co-ordinated a retaliatory crusade, the brutality of which far exceeded anything PROP were capable of ameliorating; an organisation which, in the meantime, was busy tearing itself apart in a power struggle among the central committee. Screws provoked, and violently repressed, riots at HMPs Albany and Gartree, and throughout the country targeted brutalities and reprisals were widespread.

Although PROP remained active in some form until the end of the ’70s, their backing inside didn’t survive the strike. Determined to achieve institutional recognition, the central committee had pushed obsessively for an escalation of the movement, promising support which, in the wake of repression, failed to materialise. As desperate pleas rushed out of the prisons, the union wasn’t there.

The need for structures to support prisoners’ self-organisation is no less acute now than it was 45 years ago. In the intervening years the prison population has doubled and conditions now are worse than ever previously recorded. Outside of the prison walls, the economic stagnation that was then only a suggestion of the deterioration to come has continued to deepen, punctuated by acute crises and global deindustrialisation. As factories disappear and ever greater numbers of people are abandoned by the wage, prisons are waiting there to meet them.

The world has changed, and it’s clear that when we look back on these histories we can’t just cherry-pick what worked’ then and reapply past strategies in the present. The ’70s are over and they’re not coming back, and we can’t afford to base our struggles on a world that no longer exists. But nor can we abandon the lessons of the past. It’s only in having done with what’s done, and drawing on what’s still useful where we can find it, that we can hope to make a survivable future.

¹ The main body of this account is adapted from Mike Fitzgerald’s ‘Prisoners in Revolt’.
² The uprising followed violent retaliation enacted against prisoners attempting to communicate prison conditions to the public. When a protest in response was met with further violence, the demonstration escalated into rioting.



The Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee (IWOC) in Wales, Scotland and England was launched in February 2016. It was inspired by fellow workers in the US, who have been organising in solidarity with incarcerated workers since 2014

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