

IN THE PAST 40 YEARS,
IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD,
THE OWNERS OF PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL
AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
HAVE TAKEN A GROWING SHARE OF THE INCOME
WHILE THE SHARE GOING TO PEOPLE
RELIANT ON JOBS AND LABOUR
HAS SHRUNK

TODAY
A TINY, OBSCENELY WEALTHY
PLUTOCRACY
AND A WELL-PADDED SALARIAT
CONFRONT A GROWING
PRECARIAT
CONSISTING OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE
WITH BITS-AND-PIECES LIVES
STAGNANT AND UNCERTAIN
FLUCTUATING EARNINGS
AND LIVING ON THE EDGE
OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEBT.
THOSE TRENDS
ARE THE RESULT OF POLICY DECISIONS
THAT HAVE MADE ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES
MORE FRAGILE AND LESS RESILIENT
TO SHOCKS

THEY HAVE RAISED EIGHT GIANTS
THAT BLOCK THE ROAD
TO A GOOD SOCIETY
INEQUALITY
INSECURITY
DEBT
STRESS
LOSS OF RIGHTS
ROBOTS
CLIMATE CHANGE
AND NEO-FASCIST POPULISM
PANDEMICS
MAY BECOME
A
NINTH
GIANT.



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“If we do not do the *impossible*,
we shall be faced with the *unthinkable*.”
Murray Bookchin

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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.”



Cover and centre spread artwork are
AI generated images by *Mario Klingemann*.
Taken from Massive Attack's Eutopia EP.

1235 CET – 22nd April 2020
Professor Guy Standing
[SOAS University of London]
46.2044° N, 6.1432° E

#universalbasicincome

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P17 – Michelle Tylicki
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Bristol Underground

By *Melissa Chemam*

Three decades ago, in October 1990, a single came out in the UK that would make an indelible mark on the evolution of British music.

Launched with a slick black and white video representing a hot, exotic landscape and interiors, the sound and visuals of Massive Attack’s Daydreaming perfectly reflected what had been brooding in the underground scene of Bristol: a new subculture was born out of the decay of the punk ethos, the dynamic rhythm of Caribbean families’ love for reggae, and the powerful statements of hip-hop. It had the sons and daughters of immigrants at the forefront, particularly the offspring of the Windrush Generation, arrived in the 1950s from the British West Indies.

By February 1991, the band’s second single Unfinished Sympathy, with the gorgeous vocals of Shara Nelson, charmed most of Europe and, in April, the album Blue Lines came out, which embodies for many the beginning of a new musical era.

I came to Bristol in February 2015 to retell this story. Even though I was not from there, it mirrored my youth in an urban environment in the 1980s and 1990s, constantly bombarded with mainstream entertainment on television and radio, but in search of a genuine underground culture that had a story to tell.

Impassioned by the sound of Motown as a child, I grew up to love socially conscious rap, from MC Solaar to Snoop Doggy Dog, and later challenged by the folk sound of Jeff Buckley, the revolutions of Radiohead, the intimately powerful rock of PJ Harvey, as well as indefinable electronic music – from Björk to, well, Massive Attack.

Bristol’s underground scene looked full of mysteries and fascinating threads

In August 2014, I read an article about the band, as they were travelling to Lebanon, to perform at the Byblos International Festival and visit Palestinian youth they support in a refugee camp in Burj El Barajneh, a southern suburb of Beirut.



Since 2006, I had been reporting in a multicultural Europe, in Africa and in the Middle East, covering elections and migration issues, culture and music. But when I read their interview in The Independent, all these threads suddenly melted into one.

Massive Attack’s two remaining members were visiting Palestinian refugees, telling the press how “All of them have a right to a life of dignity and beauty,” and staging a fundraising concert to raise money for the ambulance service in Gaza.

For weeks, this story stayed with me. Talking about it to an accomplished music journalist, he convinced me to write this story. I would only do it if I could go to Bristol and meet the artists. I sent some emails and once I knew I was welcome in Massive Attack’s studio for a first encounter, I packed my bags. Once in town, other artists, young or established, agreed to meet me too, and a week later in Paris I met Tricky, on his European tour.

I came back to Bristol many times, to deepen the story. I decided to centre the book on Massive Attack’s social awareness, their lyrics, melting-pot sound, and their visuals and performances. I found deep meaning in my discussions with some of the members, a real engagement with social causes, so quickly felt I was writing a sort of counter-history of the United Kingdom in the past 50 years. Edward Colston was mentioned from the start, as much as DJ Derek, punk rebels, Horace Andy or Adam Curtis.

Graffiti and DJ Superstars

Massive Attack’s story, to me, started when 3D’s murals in Bristol attracted the DJs from the Wild Bunch collective.

Before 1984, Bristol had great reggae bands, including Black Roots and Talisman, and super cool punk bands like The Pop Group and The Cortinas (who unfortunately disbanded quite early on, as punks tended to do). And it had innovative DJs, like Milo Johnson and Nellee Hooper, who formed the Wild Bunch around 1980, later joined by Grant Marshall, aka Daddy G.

Then came visuals and, above all, ideas that brought the whole scene to another level.

Before he switched to producing art for album sleeves, 3D used to paint outdoors illegally, in the then bohemian, arty neighbourhood of Clifton and in Jamaica Street and St Paul’s (he was also among the first to use stencils). When he started painting the first murals in Bristol, everybody noticed because he pioneered a style that had not been seen in England before. A few other artists made a name for themselves in the same way in Wolverhampton and London, like Goldie and Mode 2, and soon they all met.

When 3D joined the Wild Bunch in 1984, first as a graffiti artist then as a rapper, the collective found a way to express meaningfulness, a whole generation of mixed backgrounds, working class ethos, and raw, uncontrolled intelligence. When they split up, in the most Bristol manner, this ethos evolved into another collective, Massive Attack, with Mushroom bringing a genius passion for hip-hop and sampling. Three boys (3D, Daddy G and Mushroom) who would work as producers involved on most tracks.

This new ethos brought to their sound a message that could travel through time and space and be instantly recognisable. It became the flame on Blue Lines’ sleeve (inspired by Stiff Little Fingers’ album Inflammable Material); it spoke as raps and social lyrics that made songs like Safe From Harm, Hymn of the Big Wheel and later on Karmacoma, Risingson and Splitting The Atom so iconic; and it evolved through the number of guest vocalists from diverse horizons (Horace Andy, Tracey Thorn, Nicolette, Elizabeth Fraser, Sinéad O’Connor, Martina Topley Bird or Young Fathers more recently).

Since then, these two subcultures – graffiti and rap – have rocked the world. Street art has changed the face of visual art forever. Now, in St Paul’s and Bedminster, you can see long-lasting murals; the city’s street art festival – Upfest – is known all over Europe. And hip-hop and electronic music has made rock and pop music sound very mainstream to many.

From one Conservative era to another; culture as a light at the end of the tunnel

The underground and anti-establishment ethos of Bristol, inspired by decades of rebellious protests, was culturally remastered behind closed doors; with budget cuts and the global pandemic, it’s had to move back indoors again.

In the 1980s, Britain had Thatcherism; now it lives with BoJo’s Brexit, threatened venues, unpaid artists, rigid culture disputes, and a new class war. The stage is set for a surge of anger ... and Bristol wants to rebel again.

Colston’s statue has been toppled; his investment in slavery is now being explained in new pedagogic curricula. Musically, Bristol has new punk voices in the form of bands like Idles, band-rappers like K-Dogg, Ngaio and Nicole Blaze, as well as creative underground electro collectives like Young Echo and the Viridian Ensemble.

If there is a time that mirrors 1984, it’s 2020. Hopefully, for all our struggles – against racism, climate disaster, social inequality, an anti-intellectual populism and rampant economic theft – this brooding rebellious culture will help us emerge on the other side of these dark times again – to build a new world, with a powerful soundtrack and visuals.

Melissa Chemam is a freelance journalist, associate lecturer in journalism at UWE Bristol and author of the book Massive Attack - Out of the Comfort Zone (2019).



Survival is Our Game

By Stacey Clare

The narrative that sex workers are vectors of disease has been around for a long time. It was upon this principle that the Contagious Diseases Act 1866 was passed. During the 1850s, garrison towns along the south coast of England became red-light districts for soldiers returning from the Crimean War, rife with venereal disease. Military officers balked at the idea of clinicians boarding naval ships to inspect the health of noble, upstanding war heroes, so government officials turned their attention to the ‘cause’ of the problem instead – prostitutes.

The Contagious Diseases Act reinforced a popular belief, that sex workers were responsible for the public health crisis. This convenient narrative not only deflected culpability away from their client base, but also completely buried any concept that women who were desperate enough to put their health at risk had little to no social capital within their communities. At a point in history when women were forbidden from voting or owning property, in many cases banned from working (and thus competing with male labour), and were legally defined as chattel property themselves in the context of marriage, it seems survival sex work would have been a common way to stay alive.

Fast forward to 2020: Covid-19 has brought the modern world to its knees, making its impact felt by almost every living soul on the planet. Global economies have been shredded overnight, while populations watch their future projections disintegrate. The crisis has not been indiscriminate, however: it has very much discriminated against the poor, the vulnerable, the precarious. Stories about individuals taking risks with their health through lack of choice are common. Sex workers are no different. Covid-19 has brought into stark relief how precarious people are made even more precarious when social security is thin on the ground.

On April 18th, just a few weeks into lockdown, the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) held a virtual forum to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on sex workers. Niki Adams, speaking for the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), stated, “we heard of a couple of women who were stopped and arrested as suspected vectors of disease ... It seems like the police and authorities are using this crisis to reinforce that kind of stigma and prejudice.” Adams has a point: no one arrested key workers whose jobs required them to have direct physical contact with patients, clients or children, and whose work cannot be done remotely. Sex workers who may see one or two, even three clients a day are probably at less risk of being exposed to the virus than, say, a teacher or a nurse.

The pandemic immediately affects sex workers’ incomes: client bases evaporated, leaving many in dire straights. Juno Mac from SWARM (Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement) describes some grave situations: “People are dealing with food shortages in really unprecedented ways, finding their local food banks empty. A lot of people are single parents, dealing with mental health difficulties that are being exacerbated by being in lockdown with their families, carrying the pressure of worrying about income for those families.” The problems of poverty are amplified by criminalisation: raids, arrests, and prosecutions all merely add to the extreme combination of stressors faced by many. And as Adams points out, “for women being taken to court for loitering and soliciting, what are they going to do? Convict people and fine them when they have nothing to eat?” ECP have long scrutinised the logic of fining prostitutes, since fines add further to the financial pressures that drive people into sex work in the first place. It’s hard to hear these accounts without wondering what has really changed over the last 154 years.

In my own area of the sex industry, strip clubs, dancers have not worked since lockdown began in March and resulted in immediate venue closures. While most bars, restaurants and nightclubs have reopened and adapted to new restrictions, enabling those in the hospitality sector to get back to work, Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) have been disallowed from reopening. And while salaried workers with employment contracts have been able to benefit from the government furlough scheme, strippers, like many gig economy workers, are misclassified as independent contractors (when they almost always qualify for worker status), leaving them without furlough. Shockingly, this has meant paid staff in strip clubs – the doormen, bar staff, management – have all received financial aid throughout the crisis. Dancers? No such luck.

It’s not news that sex workers are some of the most vulnerable and oppressed members of society. Covid-19 has shown up just how little consideration there is for precarious people, particularly for sex workers. Government furlough schemes and self-employment grants are meaningless to people whose jobs are criminalised, with no access to labour rights. One of the devastating facts of 2020 is that the year actually began with a huge victory for sex workers’ rights.

In February, Sonia Nowak, a stripper who joined the sex workers union United Sex Workers, took her club boss to court for workplace abuses and won. It was a landmark legal ruling since Sonia was the first dancer in the UK to establish worker status, setting a legal precedent and opening the door for fellow dancers to bring forth legal claims. Sonia’s case was a triumph for the entire industry, bringing us one step further towards changing conditions from the inside and establishing employment rights for sex workers once and for all. Within weeks of Sonia’s win every strip club in the UK was closed, slowing down years’ worth of trade union activism and efforts.



Unsurprisingly, strippers have been turning to other forms of sex work for subsistence. The rise of Onlyfans.com has been propelled by Covid-19 and the company increased its net worth by 75% this year alone. Sex work online comes with its own problems. Market saturation means a lot more work for a lot less money, since building up an account and growing a client following takes time and resources. Plus, for so many reasons, not least social marginalisation of sex workers, not everyone can be identifiable online.

Out of the crisis, though, have come some remarkable responses from the sex work community. Between March and June SWARM ran a mutual aid fund, raising over £250k to support sex workers with direct financial relief. Cash grants of £200 each were given to 1,255 people in need of immediate support. In April, a crew of internet savvy strippers formed the collective Cybertease and began running a virtual online strip club, sharing earnings equally between performers and providing much needed income for their team.

The summer of 2020 has also arguably seen some of the biggest cultural moments for sex workers. Performing artist FKA Twigs launched an online fundraising campaign to support sex worker led mutual aid, while at the same time coming out as a past sex worker herself. Singer Kehlani released the music video Can I, which marked a departure from the relentless misappropriation of sex work culture by mainstream media, instead acknowledging it in the best way possible by featuring sequences from actual webcam performers. A political statement at the end of the video draws attention to the global demand for full decriminalisation of sex work.

While the pandemic rages, the movement for sex workers’ rights is finally going mainstream. Who knew that vectors of disease could be so determined? If there’s one thing the public need to know about the sex working community, it’s that survival is our game. Beneath all the popular age-old beliefs about sex workers is an incontrovertible truth – hardship breeds resilience.

Stacey Clare is the co-founder of East London Strippers’ Collective (ELSC). She has been stripping for almost a decade and has mastered the art of pole dancing.

@ethicalstripper

Is There a Doctor in the House?

By **Peter Gelderloos**

Anarchists are against hierarchy – but what does that actually mean?

Pop philosophers and liberal commentators think they’ve scored an easy goal when they pull off a little number like this: “Anarchists don’t live in the real world. They wouldn’t let their neighbour perform brain surgery on them, so they recognise expertise, but expertise is hierarchy.” Anarchists have actually been studying and analysing hierarchy for more than a century, so it shouldn’t be a surprise that we’ve answered this exact question many, many times.

The confusion is little more than a word play, conflating the definitions of three very different terms: rank, expertise, and hierarchy. Aside from populists who pretend that all forms of power are the same so they can continue to justify the very worst, most oppressive uses of power, the waters have also been muddled by psychologists with an individualist bias or animal behaviouralists who created overly simplified schema for social groups by studying animals in captivity. They were drawn to the term hierarchy, even though (or perhaps because?) that term was originally applied to human society and was being developed by anarchists to distinguish between just and unjust forms of social organisation.

That meanings change over time and across contexts is a fundamental fact of language, but the effect of those changes is far from neutral. There are changes that destroy meaning, that make it easier to manipulate people and harder to speak with clarity. And, for whatever reason, English is particularly vulnerable to such changes – perhaps because it’s the language the advertising industry was invented in, or its abundance of both homonyms and synonyms, or the prevalence of puritanism in the culture.

Whatever the case, we can assert that the aforementioned uses of hierarchy are incorrect, not just because of the term’s original meaning but because those uses make it impossible to analyse oppression and coercion in human societies, which in many cases is the very reason centrists have tried to steal the term from anti-authoritarian theorisations.

Ranking

Ranking is simply a comparative, linear ordering of elements. This could range from someone having favourites, to an athletic competition, to rating people’s skill in a specific activity. This football team is better than that one, she has the best aim, I like grits better than Cap’n Crunch. The criteria are infinite: there are millions of skills or preferences to compare, and millions of ways to compare them. In the absence of a social hierarchy, ranking does not confer you power over anyone else. Having a high rank can give you status, which can certainly play a role in true hierarchies, but it is not in and of itself a hierarchy. Being #1 at something doesn’t necessarily give you an advantage elsewhere.

Expertise

Expertise is the social recognition of knowledge and capacity. That recognition can be informal – you ask your neighbour to help fix your car because everyone knows she is a great mechanic – or it can be formal, as in the licensing of doctors. When it’s formal, that means a group of experts has organised themselves to confer recognition and perhaps also decide who can practice the profession. This recognises that knowledge is collective and expertise takes a great deal of effort. People are in fact not all equal and in some cases being better or more experienced at something gives you more legitimacy to do that thing, like fly an airplane or mediate a serious conflict. Questions of oppression come into the mix when people are denied access to the education they need to become experts in their chosen field, or when someone’s experience or ability is not recognised because they come from a marginalised group. Again, both of these forms of exclusion require the existence of a social hierarchy, and are not innate properties of expertise itself.

Anarchists won’t have any trouble imagining a society in which professional groups organise their own training, guaranteeing free access and assurances of quality and safety. If you’re going to get surgery, you want to make sure the person performing it is good enough or, if they’ve been dangerously negligent in the past, they won’t be able to do so again. A formal institution that gets to decide who is chosen for training, especially if they have a monopoly in their field, certainly has an authoritarian potential that anarchists would want to watch out for, but there are plenty of ways to organise such institutions to prevent that authoritarianism from manifesting.



Hierarchy

The original meaning of hierarchy is “rule by priests.” It is a social order in which a closed organisation with internal ranking decides who can join and how they must ascend the institutional ladder. The higher up, the more power they have, over both initiates and the masses of people outside the organisation. In other words, a hierarchy allows a small elite to control an organisation as well as the values of broader society, getting everyone (inside and outside the organisation) to participate in their domination. Even the elite are not completely free. Though they have the most agency, they still must uphold the logic of the institution that produces the power they wield, and that power tends to accumulate over time, meaning the organisation’s traditions may be stronger than its individual members. In the end, members of a hierarchy are only free to increase the hierarchy’s power, with disputes over how best to do that resolved through the relationship of how much power the hierarchy can mobilise and how much power specific members of the hierarchy can utilise for their own ends against their opponents.

In other words, the President or supreme ruler of a very powerful hierarchy might not be able to win a power struggle against lowlier members of the hierarchy if it means going against tradition (including institutional structures) or the perceived interests of the hierarchy itself.

Conversely, a dictator or supreme ruler who is able to command most of the power produced by the hierarchy may end up destroying it if they dedicate it to irrational pet projects that weaken the hierarchy’s basis.

A further consideration is the role of the people at the very bottom of the hierarchy, external to the institution yet vital to the hierarchy itself. With the weakest hierarchies, like the religious orders that formed some early states, they are not captives but spectators, and technically they could walk away. In these cases, the hierarchical organisation has captured some symbolic central ground, and walking away means people would lose their culture, their social relations, and access to spiritual rituals that had become important to them.

In the case of stronger hierarchies, like all modern states, the people at the bottom are captives. We do not give our consent, we cannot walk away, and the hierarchy of the state can inflict whatever decision on us that it wants, backed by the force of its police and military.

This is what anarchists oppose, and with good reason. And with good reason, apologists for the State try to muddy the waters, because when the involuntary nature of the State is laid bare, its only justification can be brute force.

Peter Gelderloos is an anarchist and author of several books, including *Anarchy Works*, *The Failure of Nonviolence*, and *Worshiping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation*.

Abolishing the Police

By Koshka Duff & Connor Woodman

“Our efforts at incremental reform have failed. Period.” – Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender in a statement committing to dismantle the police department, June 2020.

More and more people are thinking it: there is something rotten about the police – not just as individual ‘bad apples,’ but as an institution. And not just as one isolated institution but as the tip of a much larger iceberg of coercive institutions, all of which work, often in concert, to criminalise, subdue, and punish.

Policing, in this broader sense, includes the whole criminal punishment system of courts, prisons, juvenile detention facilities, electronic tagging. It includes the mechanisms of border enforcement such as detention centres, walls and barbed wire fences, chartered deportation flights. It creeps into the most intimate aspects of life in the form of mass and targeted surveillance, and it spreads beyond state boundaries in the form of colonial and neo-colonial ‘counter-insurgency’ operations, the ‘pacification’ of unruly populations, and the ‘extraordinary rendition’ of terror suspects.

While the forms of policing are various, they all make the same claim: we are here to keep the peace; you need us to keep you safe. Meanwhile, they enact some of the most elaborate and systematic, if not sadistic, forms of violence that humans have ever devised. Notoriously, moreover, they enact this violence most regularly and most vigorously against those at the sharp end of the unjust hierarchies – of race, class, gender and sexuality, and disability – that stratify our society.

If you are Black in Britain, you are at least nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than a white person is. During the three months of lockdown, around 1 in 3 young Black men in London was stopped and searched by the Metropolitan Police. People of colour make up 12% of the UK’s general population, but 27% of its prison population – rising to over 50% for children’s prisons. The number of BAME people who suffer death at the hands of British police is so concerning that even the UN has sounded the alarm.

Look at a court case in the UK and you will, in all likelihood, find an array of plummy judges and lawyers accosting a working-class defendant, often one who has been disciplined, let down, and traumatised by every major institution throughout their life: school, the family, social workers, the ‘care’ system.

These are not accidental disparities that could be corrected through improved guidelines or cultural sensitivity training. They are products of police and prisons’ very purpose in society, the very reason they were developed. Since their invention in the early 1800s, the police have been used for racial and class control: as slave patrols in the US South, as strike-breakers in industrial England, as colonial enforcers in Ireland, Kenya and elsewhere.

Every emancipatory movement (be it anti-racist, anti-capitalist, environmentalist, LGBTQI+, or whatever) tends sooner or later to come up against the police. The ongoing revelations that police officers infiltrated nearly every significant social movement and progressive organisation in recent British history, spying on the most intimate aspects of their targets’ lives, attest to this.

However benevolent a face it may present in theory, the essence of policing in practice has always been the use of violence and the threat of violence to enforce the prevailing social order – to protect the ‘haves’ and their accumulated wealth and power from the ‘have-nots’ who might contest it.

It is unsurprising, then, that policing has always met with resistance. The anti-police protests that have radiated outwards from Minneapolis following the murder of George Floyd are just the most recent manifestation of a longstanding and justified antipathy towards policing’s oppressive power that is widespread among those sections of society that actually experience it.

But while they did not come out of nowhere, these uprisings have achieved something remarkable and new. They have taken these experiences, and the critical understanding born of them, and burst them into the mainstream. As Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors put it, “This is the first time we are seeing... a conversation about defunding, and some people having a conversation about abolishing the police and prison state. This must be what it felt like when people were talking about abolishing slavery.”

Just as slavery was once perceived as necessary and natural, the idea of a society without police and prisons is, for many, unthinkable. There is a deeply ingrained sense that these institutions are necessary, however distasteful they may be.

The question is, necessary for what? Clearly, the police are necessary to our current form of society. A world where the poor burn in a tower block as the rich sweep trillions into off-shore havens is a world that needs police and prisons to uphold these rank inequalities.

An abolitionist perspective is not one that imagines, naively, that the police could be abolished in isolation while everything else carries on as normal. Abolitionism is a perspective that challenges us to ask: what about society would have to change in order that such immense levels of normalised violence would no longer be required to maintain it.

But still we face the question: what would you replace them with?

To this we respond, firstly, that the core function of the police – to subdue, warehouse and brutalise the poor, the downwardly racialised, the non-conforming, to maintain our profoundly unequal and crisis-ridden social order and repress any challenges to it – is not one we think worth replacing, in any form.

Nonetheless, there are some genuinely valuable social roles currently placed on the shoulders of the police that could be performed much better by alternative, more caring institutions.

The police are often the first port of call when people are suffering from acute mental health crises, for example. Yet, quite evidently, an institution characterised by cuffs and restraint, violence and submission – the infliction of further trauma – is not best placed to intervene positively in these situations. Certainly, policing does nothing to prevent such scenarios from arising again.

Similarly, intimate partner violence and sexual assault are products of deeply-embedded patriarchal norms, reinforced by an economic order in which leaving a violent partner or standing up to a harassing boss can leave you destitute. Rather than assisting women in this position, the criminal punishment system is often arrayed against them. Four in five women in prison have suffered domestic violence or sexual abuse outside of it.

A system that strip-searches tens of thousands of people every year, incarcerates and abuses migrant women in detention camps, and reflects a notorious macho culture, simply intensifies the patriarchal power relations at the root of the problem.

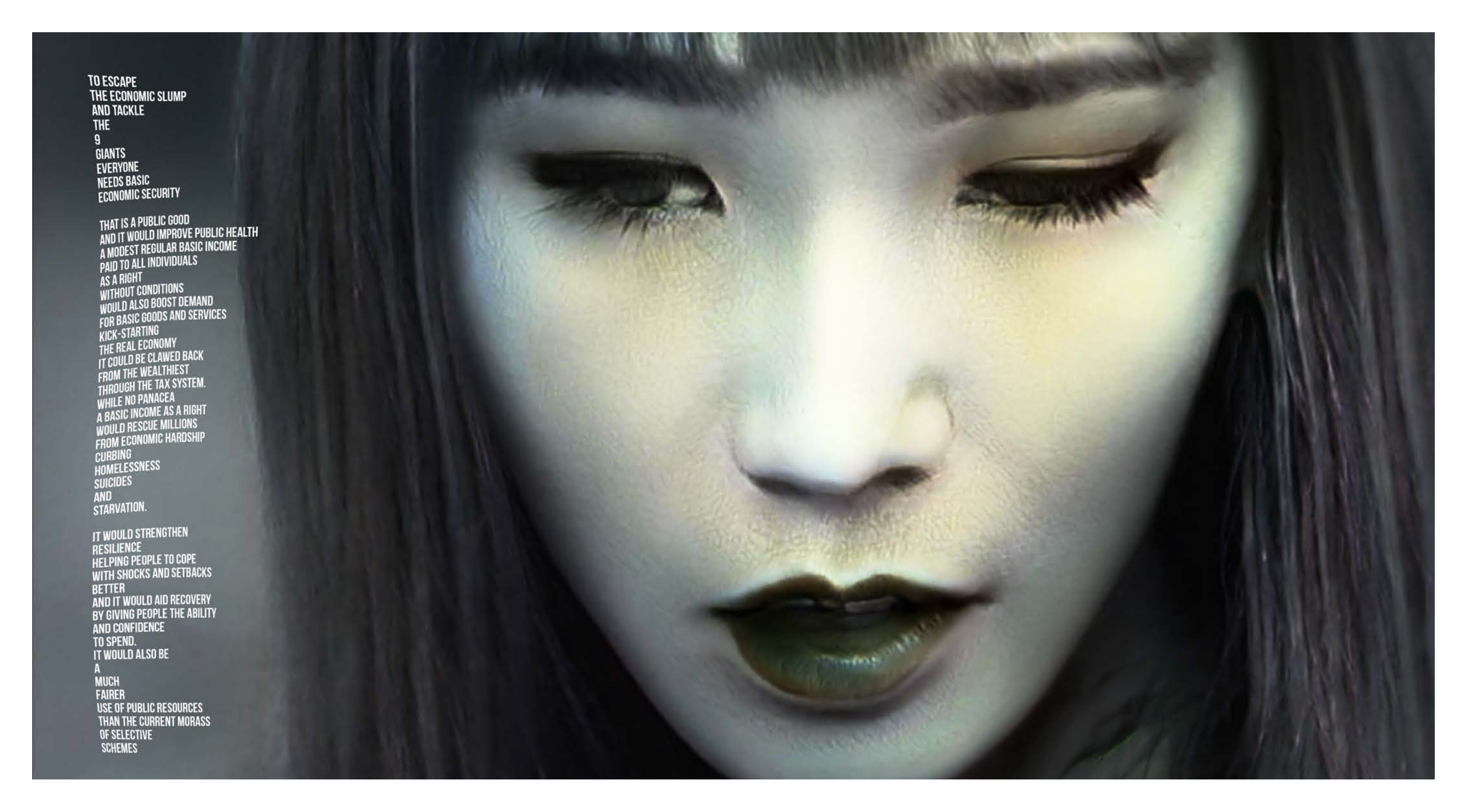
Abolitionists seek not just to eradicate the police and prison estate. We seek to transform the conditions that generate the serious and pervasive forms of social harm that police claim to deal with but in reality tend to exacerbate and feed.

This is a huge task, of course, but the first step is to move beyond the simplistic logic of crime and punishment. Homelessness, knife and gun violence, most if not all of the real social problems that police are currently tasked with responding to, can be better addressed by means other than ramming them under the carpet with the end of a police baton.



Koshka Duff is a lecturer in political philosophy at the University of Nottingham and campaigns against police strip search abuse. She is the editor of Abolishing the Police (Dog Section Press).

Connor Woodman is the author of the Spycops in Context papers.



TO ESCAPE
THE ECONOMIC SLUMP
AND TACKLE
THE
9
GIANTS
EVERYONE
NEEDS BASIC
ECONOMIC SECURITY

THAT IS A PUBLIC GOOD
AND IT WOULD IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH
A MODEST REGULAR BASIC INCOME
PAID TO ALL INDIVIDUALS
AS A RIGHT
WITHOUT CONDITIONS
WOULD ALSO BOOST DEMAND
FOR BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES
KICK-STARTING
THE REAL ECONOMY
IT COULD BE CLAWED BACK
FROM THE WEALTHIEST
THROUGH THE TAX SYSTEM.
WHILE NO PANACEA
A BASIC INCOME AS A RIGHT
WOULD RESCUE MILLIONS
FROM ECONOMIC HARDSHIP
CURBING
HOMELESSNESS
SUICIDES
AND
STARVATION.

IT WOULD STRENGTHEN
RESILIENCE
HELPING PEOPLE TO COPE
WITH SHOCKS AND SETBACKS
BETTER
AND IT WOULD AID RECOVERY
BY GIVING PEOPLE THE ABILITY
AND CONFIDENCE
TO SPEND.
IT WOULD ALSO BE
A
MUCH
FAIRER
USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES
THAN THE CURRENT MORASS
OF SELECTIVE
SCHEMES

A Word to Tramps

By Lucy E. Parsons

A word to the 30,000 now tramping the streets of this great city, with hands in pockets, gazing listlessly about you at the evidences of wealth and pleasure of which you own no part, not sufficient even to purchase yourself a bit of food with which to appease the pangs of hunger now gnawing at your vitals. It is with you and the hundreds of thousands of others similarly situated in this great land of plenty, that I wish to have a word.

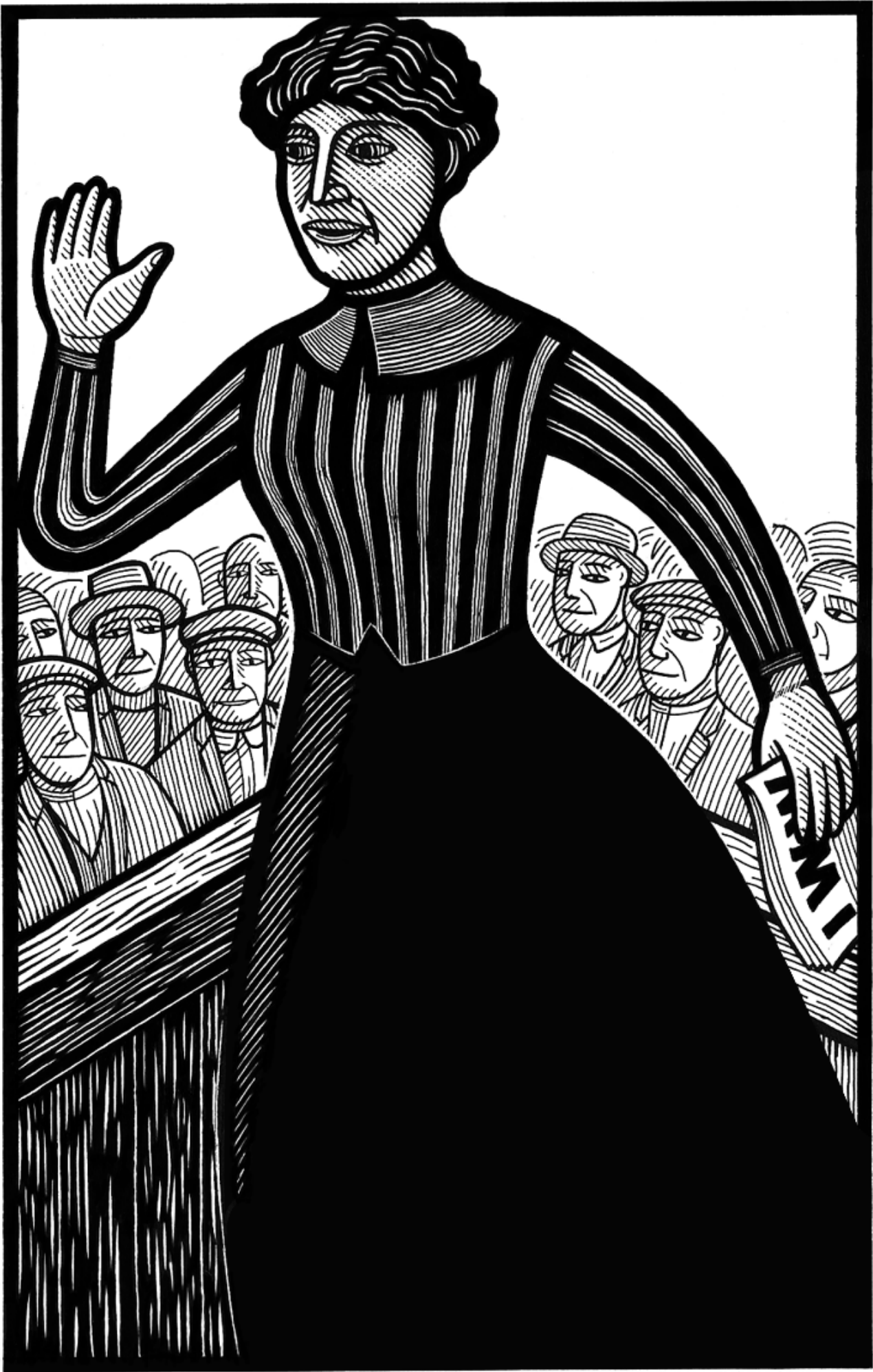
Have you not worked hard all your life, since you were old enough for your labor to be of use in the production of wealth? Have you not toiled long, hard, and laboriously in producing wealth? And in all those years of drudgery, do you not know you have produced thousands upon thousands of dollars’ worth of wealth, which you did not then, do not now, and unless you act, never will, own any part in? Do you not know that when you were harnessed to a machine, and that machine harnessed to steam, and thus you toiled your ten, twelve, and sixteen hours in the twenty-four, that during this time in all these years you received only enough of your labor product to furnish yourself the bare, coarse necessities of life, and that when you wished to purchase anything for yourself and family it always had to be of the cheapest quality? If you wanted to go anywhere you had to wait until Sunday, so little did you receive for your unremitting toil that you dare not stop for a moment, as it were? And do you not know that with all your squeezing, pinching, and economizing, you never were enabled to keep but a few days ahead of the wolves of want? And that at last when the caprice of your employer saw fit to create an artificial famine by limiting production, that the fires in the furnace were extinguished, the iron horse to which you had been harnessed was stilled, the factory door locked up, you turned upon the highway a tramp, with hunger in your stomach and rags upon your back?

Yet your employer told you that it was over-production which made him close up. Who cared for the bitter tears and heart- pangs of your loving wife and helpless children, when you bid them a loving “God bless you!” and turned upon the trumper’s road to seek employment elsewhere? I say, who cared for those heartaches and pains? You were only a tramp now, to be execrated and denounced as a “worthless tramp and a vagrant” by that very class who had been engaged all those years in robbing you and yours. Then can you not see that the “good boss” or the “bad boss” cuts no figure whatever? that you are the common prey of both, and that their mission is simply robbery? Can you not see that it is the **industrial system** and not the “boss” which must be changed?

Now, when all these bright summer and autumn days are going by, and you have no employment, and consequently can save up nothing, and when the winter’s blast sweeps down from the north, and all the earth is wrapped in a shroud of ice, hearken not to the voice of the hypocrite who will tell you that it was ordained of God that “the poor ye have always”; or to the arrogant robber who will say to you that you “drank up all your wages last summer when you had work, and that is the reason why you have nothing now, and the workhouse or the woodyard is too good for you; that you ought to be shot.” And shoot you they will if you present your petitions in too emphatic a manner.

So hearken not to them, but list! Next winter, when the cold blasts are creeping through the rents in your seedy garments; when the frost is biting your feet through the holes in your worn-out shoes, and when all wretchedness seems to have centered in and upon you; when misery has marked you for her own, and life has become a burden and existence a mockery; when you have walked the streets by day, and slept upon hard boards by night, and at last determined by your own hand to take your life — for you would rather go out into utter nothingness than to longer endure an existence which has become such a burden — so, perchance, you determine to dash yourself into the cold embrace of the lake rather than longer suffer thus. But halt before you commit this last tragic act in the drama of your simple existence. Stop! Is there nothing you can do to insure those whom you are about to orphan against a like fate? The waves will only dash over you in mockery of your rash act; but stroll you down the avenues of the rich, and look through the magnificent plate windows into their voluptuous homes, and here you will discover the very *identical robbers* who have despoiled you and yours. Then let your tragedy be enacted here! Awaken them from their wanton sports at your expense. Send forth your petition, and let them read it by the red glare of destruction. Thus when you cast “one long, lingering look behind,” you can be assured that you have spoken to these robbers in the only language which they have ever been able to understand; for they have never yet deigned to notice any petition from their slaves that they were not *compelled* to read by the red glare bursting from the cannons’ mouths, or that was not handed to them upon the point of the sword. You need no organization when you make up your mind to present this kind of petition. In fact, an organization would be a detriment to you; but each of you hungry tramps who read these lines avail yourselves of those little methods of warfare which Science has placed in the hands of the poor man, and you will become a power in this or any other land.

Learn the use of explosives!



Dedicated to the tramps
by Lucy E. Parsons
First published in The Alarm [Chicago], vol. 1, no. 1 (Oct. 4, 1884), pg. 1

The Dreamers of Dreams

By Game Worker



Imagine working in a video game studio, making video games. What does that look like to you? Is it a fun place? An office slide and ball pits, where you get to work on what you love? A workplace where you get paid your worth? After all, video games are worth a lot of money. More than the film and music industries combined. Many companies even talk like it’s a family, forged by shared creativity and a deep connection to the medium.

Unfortunately, I know from my own experience as a game developer, as well as the personal stories that echo through the whisper networks, that this is far from the reality. In the real world, the sector is blighted by precarity, unpaid overtime, stark inequality and a culture of harassment.

For many, the games industry means floods of unpaid overtime – 14-hour days, seven days a week, for months at a time. At other times, droughts leave you with no idea when your next job will come along. It means a deep exploitation of your enthusiasm and passion. A slow bleeding dry of the self. It means living in fear that you can be fired at any time for no reason. It is an abusive family, guilt tripping you into working weekends to create profit for shareholders.

One of the lowest paid and most under-appreciated roles on the video game career ladder is the Quality Assurance tester (or QA tester), the backbone of the industry. These are the people who ensure that your video game works as well as it can, that there’s as few bugs as possible.

It might sound like their job is just to play video games, but what it means is staring at a screen for at least eight hours a day, doing the same repetitive action over and over in the virtual world as you test for mistakes in the game and try to replicate them, testing what happens if you press the A button 50 times instead of 40 and whether that makes a change.

You do this mind-numbing work on a zero-hour contract, unsure at any time whether you’ll be starved of work or drowned by it and forced to do so much overtime you neglect everything else in your life. All for £8.50 per hour.

The problem with making work out of what you love is the rose-tinted glasses that make every red flag look like a regular flag.

On average, video game developers stay in the sector for about five years. That’s how long it takes for the glasses to come off.

At its worst, this is an industry that grinds workers down to the bone to cater to the vices and patriarchal power fantasies of young men. The video game crash of 1983 devalued the industry and, to recover, it orientated itself towards targeting one demographic above all others: adolescent heterosexual white cis men. The demographic is much broader now: 23 million people in the UK play video games and 46% of them are women; however, there is a deep vein of toxicity that has yet to be addressed.

This toxicity is reflected at both ends of the food chain. Multiple video game companies are on As You Sow’s list of the 100 most overpaid CEOs. Take number 45, Bobby Kotick, CEO of Activision Blizzard. The average salary for one of his workers is \$93,660. The average QA tester earns a quarter of that, around \$24,000. In 2017, Bobby Kotick made \$28,698,375 in total compensation. That means Bobby earned three hundred and six times more than his average worker and over a thousand times more than the QA testers. He’s not working a thousand times harder, that’s for sure.

That \$28 million was created by forcing salaried workers to work overtime without proper compensation. In the industry, we call it “crunch.” Many employees describe themselves working six 10-hour days, for months on end. Sometimes it’s paid but most often it’s not.

Red Dead Redemption 2, made by Rockstar Games, was rife with crunch. The game is an immersive simulation that plays out a violent fantasy of being a manly cowboy. During development, it lauded itself on the promise that it was so realistic that the testicles of the horses will shrink in cold weather. This is the level of attention to detail afforded when it comes to horse testicles, while not a thought is spared to the conditions of the three thousand workers thanked in its credits for making it happen.

We also have a toxic minority in the consumer base who will harass developers for perceived slights. They’ve been catered to by the industry so exclusively for so long that many now feel entitled to that service.

August 2014 marked the start of the online reactionary movement Gamergate. It pushed back against critics of the entitled white cis-het male gamer culture through persistent and deeply personal harassment campaigns that espoused misogyny, racism, homophobia and transphobia. A lot of creators, primarily women, bore the brunt of these attacks. A lot of people – black, women, trans – left the industry and never looked back.

And where are we now?

We’re a young industry who have only recently started organising. In 2017, Game Workers Unite, a global grassroots advocacy group began pushing for unionisation. It lit a spark in the hearts of developers around the world. If we, the workers behind your video games, could create an industry worth so much, then how come we couldn’t claim a fair wage? Why were we left at the back of the line, bullied and exploited – and what could we do about it?

In the UK, we decided the solution was to attach ourselves to an existing union. In December 2018, Game Workers Unite UK was formed as a branch of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB). After all, the IWGB is used to working with historically non-unionised parts of the labour force and could easily bring its expertise into the game industry.

Through 2019, we fought for our members’rights and won over £25,000 across 19 legal cases on everything from wrongful dismissal to discrimination. We’re growing and working together to ensure that every worker in the industry is given fair compensation for their work, and have both a supportive and a legal network to help with any kind of issue.

At its best, the video games industry can be such a force for good. More than entertainment, it can create safe havens to heal, escape, relax, and recharge. What it produces can set a child’s imagination on fire, forge lifelong friendships and create meaningful memories for many. It offers a way for people to connect with each other across distance, something of real and profound value in these times of isolation.

The industry can only offer that if the people working within it are protected from exploitation and harassment, if we are given fair pay and conditions. There are those who would have us believe that this is impossible. But we’re game developers, the dreamers of dreams. We create pockets of wonder and pieces of heaven. Making the impossible real is our business.



Game Worker is a member of the Game Workers branch of the IWGB
gww-uk.org

Anarchist Black Cross

By ABC Brighton

Since the beginning of an organised anarchist movement, its adherents have often found themselves behind bars. If you are an anarchist and you push against the bonds that the state places upon you, sooner or later you are going to break some laws. Whether it is distributing anti-state propaganda, participating in strikes and other forms of direct action, sometimes merely for having the wrong thoughts, our movement has perpetually been the target of repression. This is why support networks for imprisoned comrades started appearing.

The origins of Black Cross go back to Tsarist Russia, where it was organising aid for its many political prisoners. After the October Revolution, when the Bolsheviks started consolidating their power and their political opponents started to get imprisoned, anarchists were amongst those that often ended up in forced labour camps or killed. Those that managed to get away (such as Alexander Berkman) put all their energy into organising aid for those left behind.

In Great Britain, ABC was started when a young Scottish anarchist called Stuart Christie returned to the country after a few years in Spanish prison, where he was serving a sentence for his involvement in a plot to kill the fascist dictator Franco. He decided to form a group together with Albert Meltzer, later on joined by Miguel Garcia, with the aim of helping anarchist prisoners in Spanish prisons. In time it started expanding and helping comrades in other countries, offering material aid, applying political pressure and spreading news about prisoner struggles. In the 90s there was a pretty good network all around the country, with many groups also in Europe and USA. Some of them were very ephemeral whilst others lasted many years. These days, unfortunately, prisoner support is not as strong as it used to be and seems to be much less organised, but there are still quite few anarchist initiatives around that support imprisoned comrades.

ABC Brighton is one of those groups that has been going for a long time now. It has existed in its current form since 2000, so we have been busy for the past 20 years and we are definitely planning to continue our activities. Over the years we've been actively involved in innumerable different campaigns and have supported prisoners such as Mark Barnsley, Patryk Cichoń, Jock Palfreeman, Thomas Meyer Falk and many, many others. We were also strongly connected to the Campaign Against Prison Slavery (CAPS), which was aimed at exposing those profiting from prison labour in the UK.

As a group there are certain areas that we focus on.

Writing to prisoners

This was always a big one for us. One of the worst aspects of prisons is the isolation. Those behind the bars often feel lost, with very little contact with the outside world. Letters are a great way to keep their spirits high and to stay in touch with things happening outside. Pretty much everybody that has spent some time inside can attest to just how great an impact receiving letters has on prisoners. We always try to have an up to date list of anarchist and class struggle prisoners on our website and we always encourage people to write to them, whether it is a letter or even just a short postcard. We organise quite regular letter writing events in the local social centre and every time we have a stall at an anarchist bookfair or other similar events, we have cards for prisoners that people can sign that we then post to them. Any serious political movement can never forget about its prisoners and we make sure to do our part.

Material solidarity

Letters are one thing, but when inside comrades often need help with basic necessities. We organise paper subscriptions, sending books (they can't just be posted by anyone so they have to be ordered from prison approved distributors and prisoners would never be able to afford paying for those). We send postage stamps whenever we can and often in the past we assisted prisoners with regular payments of funds that they could use in prison canteens. We have helped with medical costs, educational costs and other needs and, when prisoners were released, we usually made sure they had at least a little bit of money waiting for them outside as well.

Helping prisoners is only part of the work though. Their families often need support, too. From partners needing support with transport costs for prison visits, to us helping with other costs such as bills and rent so comrades leaving prison do not end up homeless. When Polish antifascist prisoner Patryk Cichoń was serving his sentence in Poland, every month we were topping up his brother's house rent, to make sure Patryk's son, who was living there, would be well cared for.

This meant that Patryk had one less thing to worry about in prison. You always have to remember that, for those doing the time, knowing their families struggle financially is often the number one worry.

Spreading the news and organising support campaigns

We always try to have regular and up-to-date prisoner info on our website and social media. Often prisoners are targets of pretty severe campaigns of repression by the authorities, whether due to their political affiliation or rebellious nature or both. We always try to highlight those cases and exert some pressure on prison authorities. Usually the less the outside world knows about what's happening inside, the more prisoners suffer because of it. There are many cases when an international campaign of pressure has resulted in comrades winning concessions, the easing of that repression – sometimes it literally meant the difference between life and death for some of them. In the past we have also organised or helped organise pickets and demonstrations in support of different prisoners and against repressive campaigns in different countries

Throughout the year we always have stalls at events in Cowley Club social centre in Brighton and we regularly attended the Anarchist Bookfair in London with leaflets, cards for prisoners, literature and other merchandise with the aim of spreading awareness and also fundraising. For the last few years, we also produced a benefit pocket diary called The Bottled Wasp, which turned out to be quite popular with many people and allowed us to raise much needed funds. We also have a small webshop where you can purchase books, stickers, t-shirts and other things.

Who do we support?

We support all anarchist and class struggle prisoners. We are of course against prisons in general, but we decided to focus on the anarchists and prisoners in struggle, as we simply can't support everyone.



If you want to find out more or get involved in prisoner support, find us at:

@brightonabc
facebook.com/abcbrighton

brightonabc@riseup.net
www.brightonabc.bigcartel.com

Or write to us:

Brighton ABC
PO Box 74, Brighton
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www.leoncavallo.org

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Red Emma's, 800 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202,
www.redemmas.org

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www.facebook.com/libreriarosadefoc

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autonomous.org.uk

BASE Community Co-operative, Bristol,
network23.org/kebele2/

Black Cat Cafe, Hackney, London, E5 8HB,
www.blackcatcafe.co.uk

Blackcurrent Centre, London, NN1 4JQ,
www.blackcurrentcentre.org.uk

Common House, London, E2 9QG,
www.commonhouse.org.uk

Cowley Club, Brighton, BN1 4JA,
www.cowleyclub.org.uk

DIY Space For London, London, SE15 1TF,
diyspaceforlondon.org

Decentre, London, E17QX

Glasgow Autonomous Space, Glasgow, G5 8JD,
glasgowautonomous.weebly.com

Mayday rooms, London, EC4Y 1DH,
maydayrooms.org

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Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 1BB

SUMAC Centre, Nottingham, London, NG76HX,
www.veggies.org.uk

Partisan, Unit 2, New Islington Mill Regent Trading
Estate, Oldfield Rd, Salford, Manchester ,M5 4DE
partisancollective.net

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www.wharfchambers.org

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www.warzonecollective.com

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mustankaninkolo.info

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crack.forteprenestino.net

Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival
www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk

UK GROUPS

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afed.org.uk

Autonomous Design Group
weareadg.org

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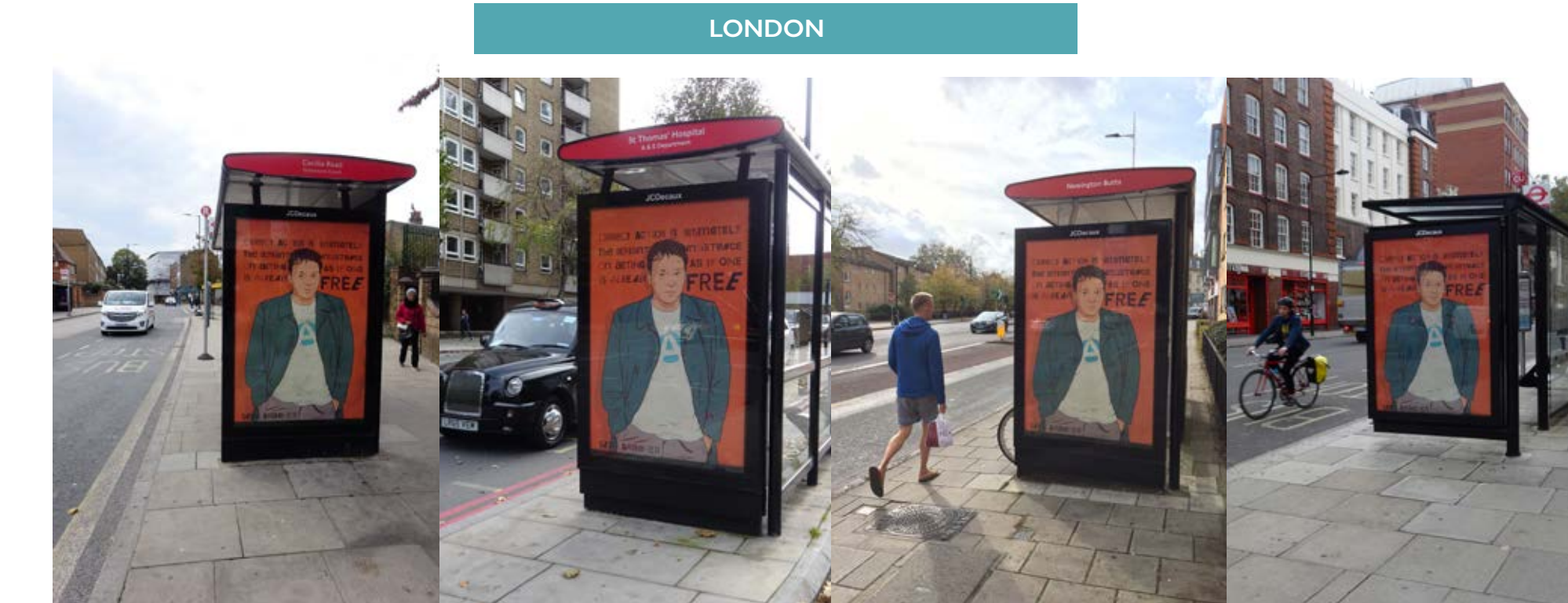
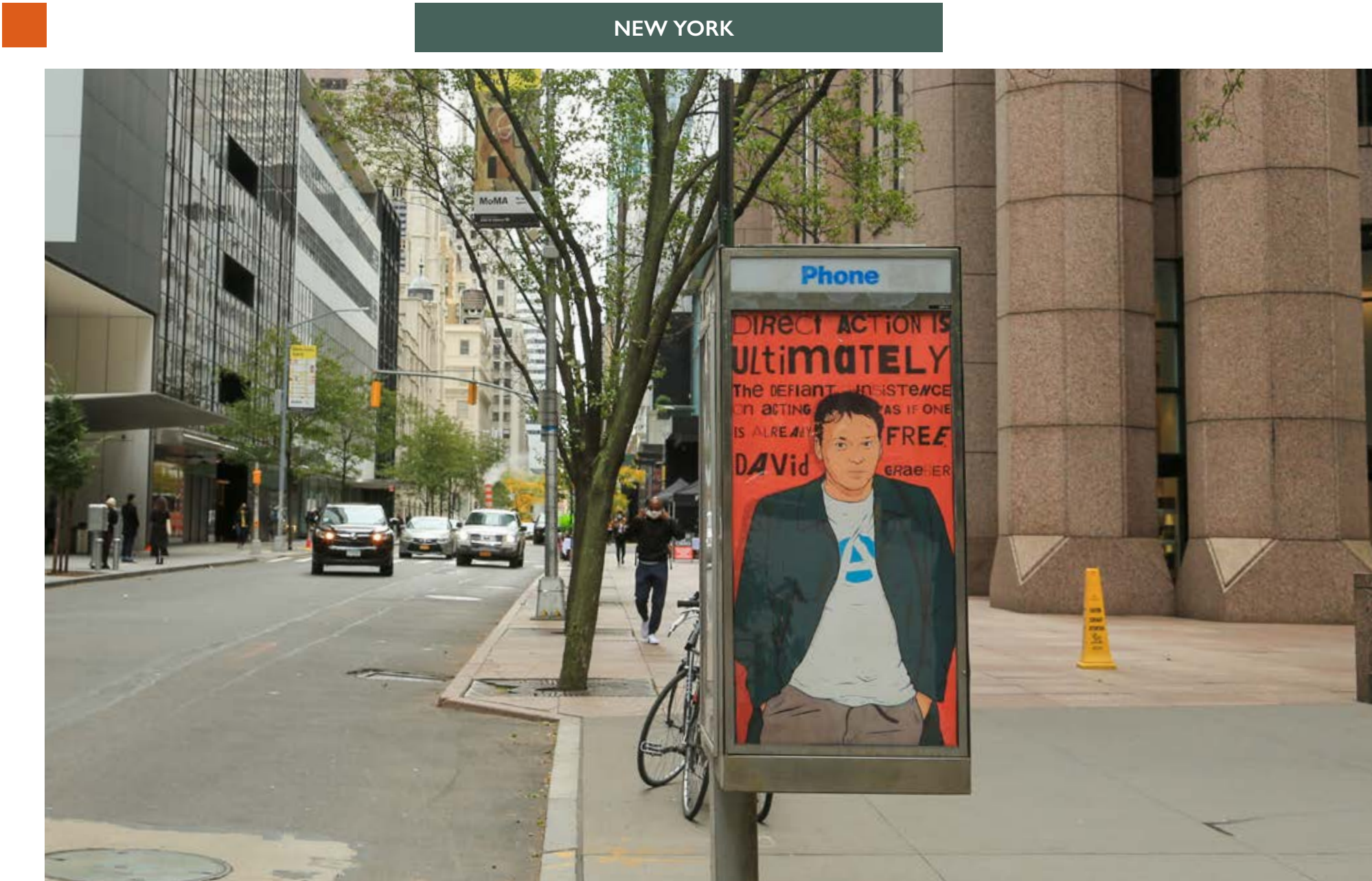
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