



DOPE Magazine is published in solidarity
until everyone has a home and nobody lives in a cage.
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“Somos jardineros que nos hemos quedado sin flores...”

Neilly Sachs

IN MEMORY OF THE 56 LIVES* TAKEN BY THE POLICE DURING THE COLOMBIA NATIONAL STRIKE 2021.

Marcelo Agredo Inchima, 17 years | Michel David Reyes Pérez | Cristian Alexis Moncayo Machado | Yarli Parra Banguera | Pol Stiven Sevillano Perea, 19 years | Jeisson García, 13 years | Miguel Angel Pinto Moná, 28 years | Dadimir Daza Correa | Rosemberg Douglas, 22 years | Jesús Alberto Solano Beltrán, 34 years | Edwin Villa Escobar, 39 years | Heinar Alexander Lasso Chará | Evelio de Jesús Florez, 86 years | Jovita Osorio, 73 years | Brayan Fernando Niño Araque, 24 years | Jeferson Alexis Marín Morales, 33 years | Yinson Andrés Angulo Rodríguez, 24 years | Santiago Andrés Murillo Meneses, 19 years | Santiago Moreno Moreno, 23 years | Joan Nicolás García Guerrero, 27 years | Harold Antonio Rodríguez Mellizo | Cristian Arturo Hinojosa Murillo, 26 years | José Emilson Ambuila | Wenceslao Solís Sánchez | Kevin Anthony Agudelo Jiménez, 22 years | Javier Alonso Uribe Díaz, 52 years | José Yesit Acevedo Santamaría, 59 years | Brahian Gabriel Rojas Lopez, 26 years | Pedro Benito Suarez Ariza, 62 years | Jairo Alberto Cuartas Herran, 41 years | Dylan Fabriany Barbosa León, 27 years | Héctor Fabio Morales Henao, 24 years | Elvis Alfredo Vivas López, 24 años | Daniel Alejandro Zapata Pabón, 20 años | Lucas Villa Vásquez, 37 años | Alison, 17 años | Sebastián Quintero Múnera, 29 años | Jhon Alexander Yotengo Chaguendo, 21 años | Julio Cesar Caicedo Salguero, 36 años | Angie Yohanna Valencia Ordóñez | Julián Erasmo Vallejo Cortes, 22 years | Cristian David Orozco Cardona, 23 years | Javier Humberto Ordóñez Bermúdez, 23 years | Cristian Camilo Hernández Yara, 26 years | Jaider Alexander Fonseca Cañillo, 17 years | Germán Smyth Puentes Valero, 25 years | Julieth Ramírez Meza, 18 years | Anthony Gabriel Estrada Espinoza, 28 years | Fredy Alexander Mahecha Vásquez, 20 years | Cristian Andrés Hurtado Menecés, 27 years | Marcela Zúñiga, 36 years | Julián Mauricio González Forj, 27 years | Angie Paola Baquero Roja, 29 years | Andrés Felipe Rodríguez Ávila, 23 years | Lorwan Stüwen Mendoza Aya, 30 years | Dilan Mauricio Cruz, 18 años.

**Unfortunately, the count continues. More deceased people are reported daily; at the time of printing this issue the national strike is ongoing.*

¡RESISTENCIA!

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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.”



Photography

P5 – Museum of Homelessness
P11 – Pluto Press
P18&19 – Lisa Selby
P22&23 – Ad Block Norwich, Claire Bullion, Matt White,
Protest Stencil, Simon Boosey, Special Patrol Group.

Artwork

Covers & Centre – David Shillinglaw
P11– Jamie Keenan
P7 – Rebecca Hendin
P9 – Cat Sims
P14&15 – Double Why
P22&23 – Everybody Vertz, Frank Riot, Knapple, One Slut Riot, Protest Stencil.

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The Museum of Homelessness

By *Jess Turtle*

If you have paid any attention to homelessness news through 2020, you will have heard this story: in March 2020, the government opened hotels for everyone on the streets, to save people during the pandemic, and it was a huge success.

Spoiler alert: it was not. Fast forward to March 2021 and we receive confused responses from people when we try and share a more balanced view of what happened: “Didn’t the government end homelessness?” and “But wasn’t all this support put in place?”

The latter was a question we were asked recently when we shared the devastating findings from our Dying Homeless Project. The deaths we documented in 2020 had skyrocketed by 37% across the UK. Almost all these deaths happened when people were indoors, not on the street. Something about that news doesn’t compute with people, it’s a glitch in the picture that has been painted about what happened last year. It doesn’t fit the narrative.

A quick segue: Museum of Homelessness runs a UK-wide memorial project to remember with love people who have died whilst homeless in the UK. Since we took on the project from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, we have documented 2,466 people on our memorial. We work with the findings to ask questions and hold decision makers to account. Since 2019 we have focused on the needless numbers of people who die whilst they are homeless but in temporary accommodation.

There is another fact that doesn’t fit the narrative either. Placing people in rooms without a kitchen for months, or in a hotel, miles away from their area without any support doesn’t end someone’s homelessness. If anything, it can increase the risks to people’s lives. Once you start to piece together these uncomfortable truths a new narrative emerges: Everyone In saved people from COVID, but it did not save lives. Solving homelessness is about far more than giving someone a roof.

This is quite shocking for people, and there is a lot of pressure to not say that bringing people indoors can cost lives. People talk about how hard everyone worked, and the government triumphantly points to housing 37,000 people in the last year alone. The official figures used to be around 5,000 (although anyone working on the ground or homeless knew different). This last point is important. How can this be an achievement? The fact there were way more people affected by homelessness than officially recognised is a scandal, not a triumph.

The story here is that homelessness is obviously far worse right now than the government will admit and that we are nowhere near resolving the structural factors causing the crisis. You can find this buried in reports and briefings but it’s not put out in the media. Instead, the numbers game is spun as a success story. The act of bringing thousands of people inside has been judged as the measure of success. The quality of an individual’s experience is the part of the narrative that gets left out.

Full disclaimer: we are not saying here that there wasn’t a need to get people inside so they could safely self-isolate. In fact, we published a plan on 15 March 2020 to make it happen. We’re also not saying that some people didn’t have a good experience. What we are saying is that we need balanced representation. We need to ask why people are still in hotels a year on, or why did people feel they had to leave? Most importantly, why did so many people die over and above COVID-19 deaths?

How then to deal with this last fact? Politicians have a good strategy for this: ignore it. The week we went to press with our findings of a 37% increase in deaths, the government announced that rough sleeping numbers fell by 37%. They did not respond to any journalists requests for comment on our story. In the era of fake news, such a selective approach to what truth is shared is hardly surprising. It really is left to communities to look out for each other and carefully interrogate what is going on.

Our response was to install two temporary memorials, one at the foot of Nelson’s Column and one on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Each had 976 electric candles – one for every person who passed away last year. It was powerful and emotive and involved members of the MoH community, both currently homeless and not, coming together on the deserted streets of central London to make a statement and hold a space of remembrance and mourning.

Community care and mutual aid has been a theme of the pandemic and we are no exception. When COVID-19 was taking hold just over a year ago we – with other groups, Streets Kitchen, the Outside Project, the Simon Community and others – formed a local initiative that we dubbed the COVID-19 Homeless Taskforce. In the space of three weeks, we went from buying the last digital thermometer in Boots to opening the doors of a disused community centre in Islington to re-purpose it as a food depot.

Around the UK, we’ve seen these kinds of responses with countless mutual aid groups being set up to respond on the ground.

And we need this action, this collective taking care of each other. The crisis is getting worse and the awkward bits of the narrative just get ignored by politicians. We still have lots of people sleeping out who are being subjected to unfair enforcement on a daily basis; we are still not building any social housing; and we have an increasingly hostile environment for non-UK nationals.

At Museum of Homelessness, we’re committed to picking up on the things that don’t always make the headlines and responding where needed. A big part of this is fighting the enforcement agenda that exists around homelessness. In the early part of the pandemic, we teamed up with Liberty and Streets Kitchen to share thousands of cards telling people their rights in relation to the government’s new coronavirus powers. Over winter, we’ve been collaborating with a friend who lives outside, Martin, and Liberty to challenge Westminster Council and Northbank Business Improvement District over their harassment of people sleeping rough. Most recently we launched Project Fortify, an anti-racism project that will combat the increasingly toxic narratives around homelessness and migration – in particular the myth that veterans have been left outside while non-UK nationals are housed in luxury hotels.

As we enter spring and the prospect of a new season emerges, we are also thinking about how the community can heal together. One of our MoH community members, gobscore, inspired by Hakan Geijer’s Riot Medicine (a manual for practicing insurrectionary medicine), is creating a collaborative radical self- and collective-care manual. This manual will draw on the survival processes that enable people who are experiencing trauma and mental distress whilst also fighting for change to care for each other outside of statutory services. This is something that people experiencing homelessness, racism, transphobia/homophobia and other forms of oppression become expert in and it is something that we saw a lot of in 2020. Communities looking after each other is one thing that we can rely on as the 20s continue to throw the unexpected at us.



Jess Turtle is a co-founder of The Museum of Homelessness.

museumofhomelessness.org

The Boys Are Alright

By **Tabitha Bast**

15 years ago, I came home from my 12-week scan after being told my baby-to-be was a boy. I lay on my bed and sobbed. The dread I felt was personal – my family of origin story was a long history of male violence and abandonment – but it was also a story born of our modern discourse, a common shared story of boys, one perpetuated through the left wing and feminist circles I inhabit. The good news for the mothers, lovers, friends and boys themselves is that, actually, the boys are alright.

Back in the 1950s the rules of being a man were brutal but straightforward. Strong, solid, direct, everything the feminine wasn't. Through generational hard work we've moved beyond this version of masculinity, and beyond a binary notion of gender, but there are still a host of rules that are unwritten, quickly punished, and often contradictory. The rejection of that 1950s masculine role is only partial, too – jokes about a 30-year-old man living with his mum, for example, lay bare this gendered expectation of self-sufficiency, an accusation of loserdom that isn't part of the female experience. 'Boys Don't Cry' has been replaced with boys can cry, but only about specific things.

Back to my son. And crying. Sometime in primary school he came home crying after the teacher had made the children chant "girls are cool, boys drool" at the end of class. This was based on a misguided notion of empowering the girls, as if female emancipation is dependent on male shame. (Spoiler: it isn't.) The week before he'd been kept in at break as a collective punishment of the boys because 'one of them' had been naughty. This was your average inner city, multicultural primary school, and these messages are the same everywhere. It's okay to laugh at boys, it's okay to collectively punish all for the actions of one. These were boys who hadn't put a foot wrong. Yet. This was all in anticipation of the monsters they were going to become.

The expression about carrying yourself with the confidence of a mediocre white man sidesteps the mighty issues of class and place. Educationally, it's white working class boys from disadvantaged towns who are least likely to reach higher education. There is a more general cohort of boys who lag behind girls with reading in the UK. These are boys who doubt their intellect and abilities, in massive numbers. They are not the swaggering, overly confident, brazen beasts we seem to think they are.

Here's a truth: there is no lone wolf, we are relational creatures, and we develop according to our beliefs and expectations about ourselves, which we get from others. We know that when parents, or teachers, or even other children, tell children they are bad or stupid or unloveable this forms pathways into adulthood; our thoughts, feelings, behaviours are filtered through these stories about ourselves. If you tell young girls they struggle with maths, they not only struggle with maths, but girls and boys will grow up to judge other girls' maths as poor even with evidence to the contrary. Damaging racial stereotypes about black men in media has masses of research examining both the process and the racist outcomes. Social movements have worked to change both material conditions and to counter these popular narratives, because we get a better, more progressive society by doing so. What are the consequences to society of a consensus that says boys are either violent or useless unless they can continually and collectively prove themselves otherwise?

At a personal level, boys like mine feel it unfair. Because it is. My lengthy explanation of patriarchy and 1000s of years of female oppression whilst he cried at me provided no remedy. Nor did it create more gender justice. Instead, these early laid narratives that he was experiencing perpetuate the very thing they criticise. Our expectations for boys create cultural norms for the boys – and also the girls who want the boys. Rather than empowering girls, telling girls boys are brutes makes them more accepting of bad behaviour. In domestic violence work, one of the first things we do is break down the normalising of abusive behaviour. It's work against the seatide of a culture that says yes, men are like this. No, we can collectively say, men are not like this.

It is when sex and desire comes into the frame that the narrative around boys gets particularly harsh. Patriarchy is deadly for women and crushing for men. Patriarchy compounded by male hopelessness makes for bleak and terrible times. Incels are perhaps the most modern crisis of rejected man meets technology. This crisis leading to misogynist killing sprees actually began with a queer woman looking to support online those finding it hard to meet a sexual partner. Because, whilst 'unsuccessful dating male' has been tragically hijacked, that world, replete with rejection and awkwardness, is an extremely complex one to navigate for most young men.

In this world the stakes are high for boys who crave belonging and connectedness just like all humans.

There is a bitter trend on social media to mock opening gambits from boys on dating apps, not just offensive ones but anything clumsy, over earnest or not spelt right. Social capital is gained from this very public humiliation of boys' efforts for not coming up to an unclear standard because somehow "boys deserve it". And yet it is also boys who are still expected to make the first impeccable move. A blog by dating site OkCupid found that of 1.5 million respondents to a questionnaire, 75% of women and 60% of men identified as feminists, but less than 1% of women said they preferred to "do the pursuing" – beginning conversations and escalating them.

If boys want romance and sex and love – which they do – they are required to be the ones to make the first bold move to get it, but this is highly likely to be rejected: it takes about 114 messages to get a 99% chance of a response. For men to succeed in this world they have to be thick skinned and assertive, direct the whole experience, but also must never step too far and be 'creepy' – they must seduce, not harass, and the guidelines are often invisible. The ridiculous but clear rules of men's rights activists like Jordan Peterson threaten to become ever more appealing the more bewildering the swamplands of relationships become.

To grow our boys well we need to do it without shame for their accidental failure in being born male, show them the truths of masculine everyday loveliness, of individual and collective joy and achievement; if these are the dominant narratives about boys and young men then this is what boys and young men will be. Stories like the teenage boys in Quebec wearing skirts in solidarity with their female friends; about a group of gamers and their surprise party for a little lonely kid they met online; about straight football lads holding hands to bait homophobes; peer support talking men's projects like Andy's Man Club; and remarkable interventions such as the anti-rape movement in Nairobi where 250,000 children have learnt that 'real' men stop rape, and boys intervention on sexual assault rose to 74%. This is what happens when you expect kindness not violence from boys.

My U-turn from 15 years ago is in part due to my son – and his funny, sweet, ridiculous mates – and in part due to the very many grown men I have loved and liked and struggled alongside, who reframed my childhood experiences and the dominant narrative of what men are. The stories above are of exceptional times, but it's also in the everyday, of the usual and ordinary, when the boys are totally good enough. I shared this article with a 20-something male friend of mine. He's into boxing. He's into football. He's into feminism. "Imagine," he says "if this is the generation we can change what being a man means. Imagine the potential."



Tabitha Bast is a psychosexual therapist and occasional writer.

The System Has All the Traps

By Jason Williamson

Social commentary from the nicer seats? It's obviously reasonable to do it. It can be justified. There's no answer in Luxury; it helps, of course, and as nice as its early stages are if it happens to you, the world re-enters your life and those early months of success and its perceptions weaken. It changes and that's where I've looked since 2016, in the cracks and the dead ends of the societal structure I now inhabit. I say "Luxury" but I don't mean an apartment in New York and Berlin, I just mean the end of unskilled manual labour and office work as a living in exchange for creative endeavours and largely free thought. Let's also consider certain academics or noted philosophers, who I would say generally come from privileged backgrounds. I'm not saying I'm the same, I'm clearly not. But they have looked out and fed off of that sight line of political authoritative reality. The outside never lies when you start interpreting it through Critical thought, which is why such a practice is hidden from the greater bulk of working society, obviously. No offence to Nordic culture but why is my 9-year-old daughter being taught this, extensively? It will serve her no purpose at all. So, to round it up, it's possible to have something valid to say about the plates of society from this privileged end. Imagination doesn't just dry up because you can afford more shit.

As a mass of people within society, we are all to some degree dragged by the hand of conformity. Its levels of severity in routine and responsibility can be mind-numbing whatever the conscious material platform we inhabit and that influence our behavioural patterns under Capitalism. So, with this in mind, creative expressions of struggle across the social spectrum simply just have to be GOOD, don't they? Interesting, provoking. I think this justifies any notion of state induced guilt (if you have it and I do sometimes regarding my position), so long as you stick to that principle.

The way in which you measure this, I feel, is by how much your expression resonates without the easy route of deception and creative burglary. All the best ideas are stolen they say. Really? Well then, you're a wanker with no vision.

The Thunderdome has various options that bring with them a string of preference or grudging servitude or to put it simply 'Shit'. Shit is far worse than Preference. Nobody wants Shit, do they, it's not natural to be pissed off all the time, or in turmoil. How is that natural? Balance is needed, of course it is; too much dissonance is a sure-fire route to internal breakdown, it'd be damaging to revolve in chaos.

But I understand now that real education isn't given to all of us so a lot of us are unaware that we dwell in chaos and therefore our expression isn't academically challenging to the witness because its language doesn't challenge. The higher classes have been programmed to dismiss Working Class vocabulary in any serious notion, so it's only empathically received, depending on how compassionate the witness is, or, as in most cases, it's ignored. For the articulation to contribute in a way that counter acts the prevailing ideology of the oppressor depends on Class Consciousness, I think. Without, it is a disturbing tragedy, a primal noise, and for a lot of Working Class people, it's a case of 'In space nobody can hear you scream' type shit.

The culture and visibility of the lower classes are so buried these days. There's not a lot to see on the landscape unless you are in that landscape. Which is always tucked away 3 or 4 miles from the city centre. Middle class culture and public familiarity with Middle Class living space is largely domineering within cultural prose, in advertising, TV, language etc. There are some exceptions of WC representation of course but not many, and those that do exist are either in comedy format or tapered editions of music. Nobody wants a rough cunt at the party do they? At enlightened level, none of us do. The system has all the traps.

Class Consciousness elevates your perception, I feel, and so your options within the Thunderdome are more likely to be closer to obtaining Preference instead of suffering with Shit because I think you understand the mechanics of your position in the world through Class Consciousness and so therefore you start to own the means of your production if you should so wish. Two doors are placed in front of you, that's how I'm currently seeing it anyway. You either learn to make money out of this new perception or you become opposed to it thoroughly and activate your existence in a way that challenges this. Or both.

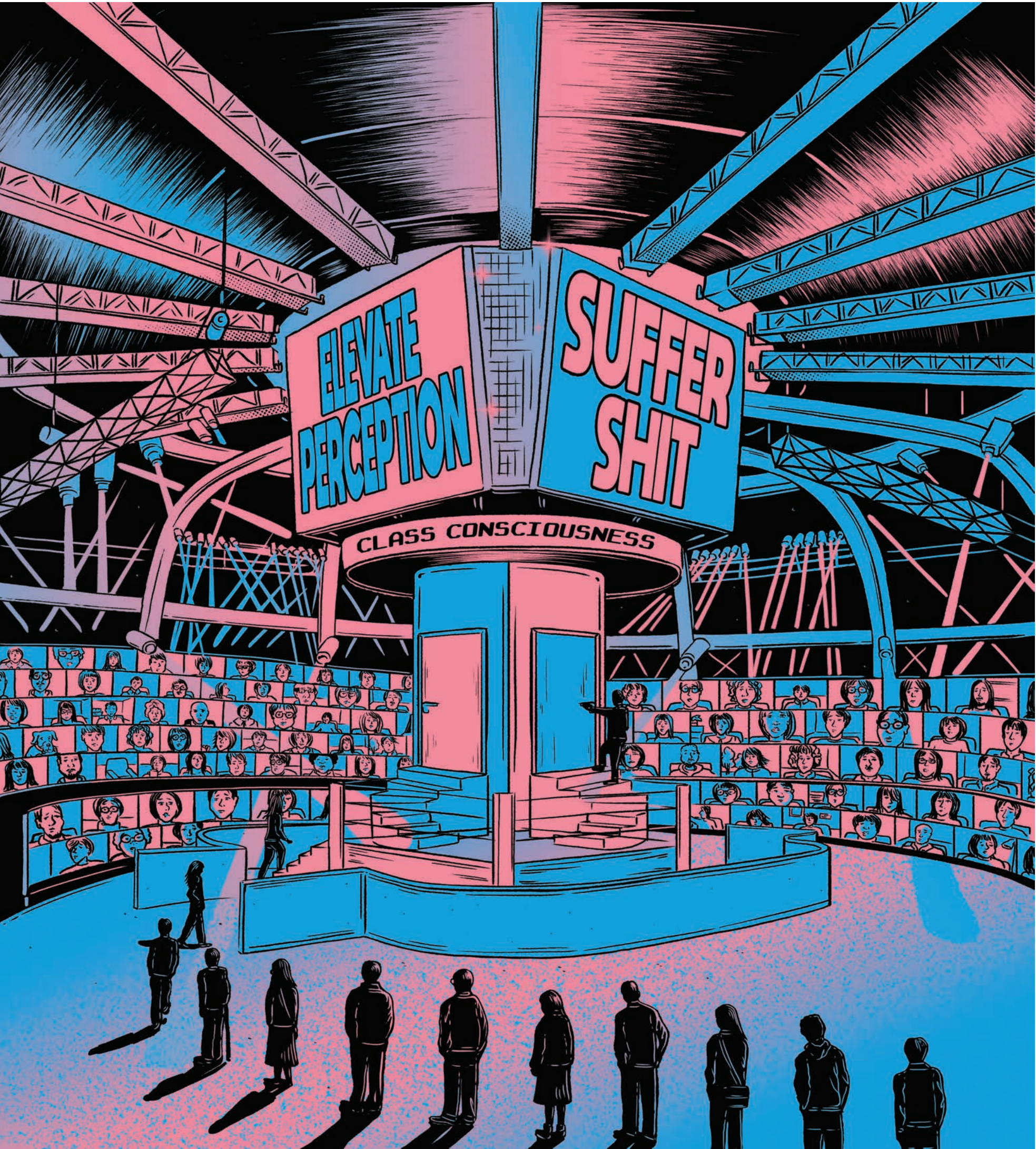
My own self education was born out of a desire to be successful under capitalist order, under consumerism and status, but I couldn't get that for a very long time. I wanted respect and possessions, whenever I wanted possessions. I wanted the things I saw other people have because that was the only source of self-value. But they didn't come because my creative ambitions were not linear with the easier route towards capitalist success. The easier route being the millions of bland jobs (that weren't really options if I'm honest. The world of business, of trade, was way beyond my capabilities).

So, I then began to detest those things and through my indifference I began to question their worth. I now have a basic understanding of truth relating to how a small amount of people can dictate to a larger mass of people, but I also now have the things I couldn't have before. The things that ignited my class consciousness. So, approaching critique and creativity in this position as a now successful musician is challenging because you don't want to sound like a wanker. Self-doubt riddles you from time to time; you kind of don't like yourself in this because you feel you have now become Michael Aspel.

Spare Ribs, our 6th studio album released in January of this year, was like any other record – we just did it. It contained the same processes of early dread at not having any good ideas when assessing the sticky-pad memos you had in your head. But what singled this album out was the motionlessness of life outside the house, walking through the city until I finally got to the studio. The unspoken weirdness of what this is, of it's slow treading nausea and uncertainty, and that did affect the album of course but perhaps no more so than the ongoing experience of living in this country in 2020. The pandemic is an historical happening without a doubt, but its real time events aren't events at the moment are they? Because they happen as we do so you take in a sensible amount of data and repeat this each day. Only memory will dictate it as an event in the shadow of its trail etched out on our awareness. So, I don't know why this album got a bigger shout from people. I just think the songs were better and we released it at a time when everybody else shared the same domestic tent, more or less.

Jason Williamson is one half of Sleaford Mods.

sleafordmods.com



Deport Nation

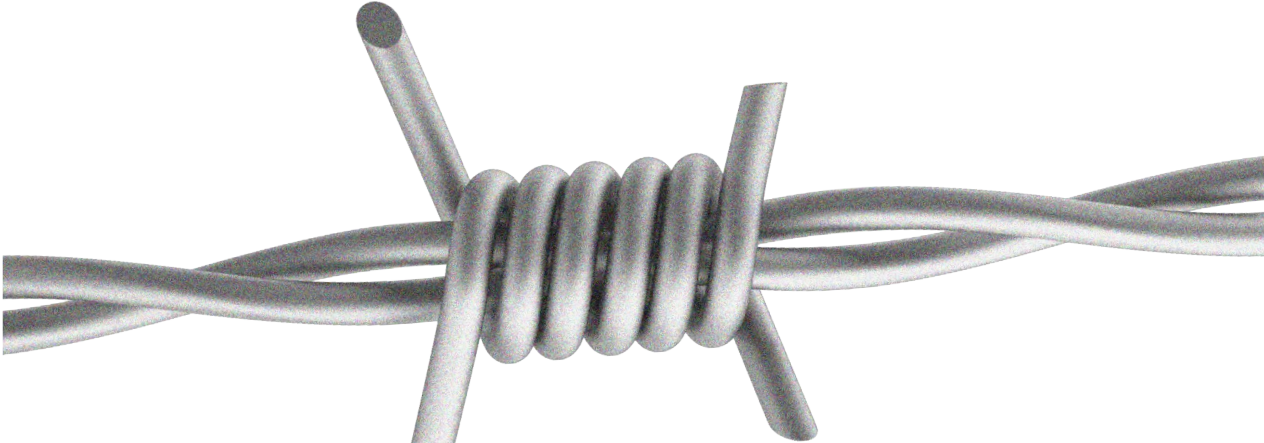
By Leah Cowan

[Trigger warning: murder, state violence, police brutality]

When G4S guards killed Jimmy Mubenga on a British Airways flight bound for Angola in 2010, passengers reported that he had been saying “I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe” for ten minutes before he lost consciousness. Mubenga had been handcuffed and heavily restrained by three guards, and the manslaughter trial heard that Mubenga’s head had been pushed down between his knees in a position known to incur a high risk of asphyxia. Mubenga was just one of the 12,000 people who are deported or removed from the UK every year. A further 20,000 people each year ‘agree’ to voluntary return under threat of forced removal.¹ The use of deportation in the UK is nothing new; deportations have long been used as a practice to reassert the border. I use the word ‘deportation’ to refer to all forced removals from the UK. The term ‘removal’ is the legally accurate term for when a person is physically forced to leave the UK simply for not having, or being able to prove, their leave to remain; however, the use of the term ‘removal’ signals an attempt by the government to minimise the physicality and violence of this process.

Carmen Bryan was one of the first people to be threatened with deportation from the UK in the wake of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which sought to clamp down on the migration routes opened up by the 1948 British Nationality Act. Bryan was served a deportation order to Jamaica in 1962 after allegedly shoplifting one packet of tomatoes, four tins of milk, two hand tongs, a clothes line, a Pyrex bowl, and five pairs of nylons – around £2 worth of goods. In response to public and parliamentary pressure, the Home Secretary cancelled Bryan’s deportation order.

Bryan’s case remains relatively exceptional; deportation for many people, like Jimmy Mubenga, has meant murder. In another high-profile murder case in 1993, Joy Gardner was killed when three special branch officers, two police officers and an immigration official raided her home with orders to detain and deport Gardner and her 5-year-old son to Jamaica. The three officers handcuffed her, bound her with straps, and wrapped almost four metres of tape around her head. Gardner lost consciousness and died of asphyxia, and the three officers tried for manslaughter were acquitted.



Deportation as a money-making scheme

As deportations have increased in the past decades, so too have the profits being made by the private companies who are outsourced to carry them out. The current £525m contract to provide guards to ‘escort’ people who are being deported is held by outsourcing company Mitie. Other companies making profits off deportations include the airlines that carry them out, such as British Airways, Easyjet, Qatar Airways and Turkish Airlines. The only airline carrier to have publicly committed (although follow-through is unclear) to ceasing deportations from the UK is Virgin Atlantic.

Deportations of individuals or small numbers of people commonly happen on commercial planes – meaning that people who are being forcibly removed sit alongside or near to other passengers who are going on holiday, visiting family or travelling for business. Often people who are being deported will be brought onto the plane before commercial passengers board; they might be sat at the back of the aircraft or behind a curtain so as to not ‘disrupt’ the journeys of other travellers. Sometimes people being deported are handcuffed, or restrained with straps or a muzzle, and accompanied by one or two guards.

The other approach taken by the UK Home Office is ‘mass deportations’, when charter flights are scheduled with the explicit purpose of effecting removals. Despite the government claiming that this aspect of the border apparatus should act as a ‘deterrent’ to people wanting to come to the UK, these planes normally depart in the middle of the night, away from the potential scrutiny of other passengers. The majority of these shady, undercover mass deportations are to Nigeria, Ghana, Albania and Pakistan. Mass deportations have also been carried out to Jamaica: in recent history up to 164 members of the ‘Windrush generation’ of Caribbean elders are known (and many more likely unreported) to have been detained or deported² as part of the British government’s soulless pursuit of deportation targets.

Deportation of ‘low-hanging fruit’ as a colonial pursuit

Home Secretary Amber Rudd was forced to resign in 2018 after it came to light – in what was dubbed the ‘Windrush scandal’ – that immigration officers in her department had been encouraged to target what a witness to the Home Affairs Committee termed the “low-hanging fruit”³ of Caribbean elders who had the right to live in the UK, but might not have had the documentation to prove it. Rudd had stated that her department did not set targets for removal figures, but when pressed on the issue by Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott, Amber Rudd was forced to concede that “there are some offices which are working with [targets], unfortunately I was not aware of them and I want to be aware of them”.⁴

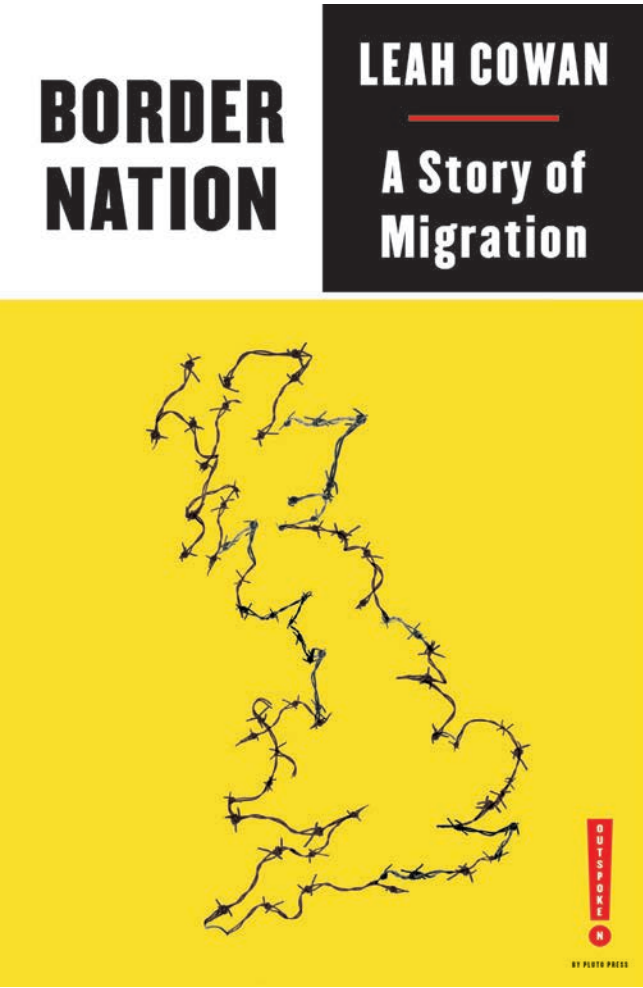
The Home Office refuses to release data on people who are deported broken down by nationality; however, data on deportation ‘destinations’ show an increasing amount of deportations are carried out to European countries such as Albania, Romania and Poland – countries where people are statistically less likely to have access to financial resources to challenge their deportations.⁵ Deportations to western European countries include those carried out under the Dublin III regulations, which enables people who have sought asylum in the UK to be pushed back to another EU country where they have already been identified.⁶ It is evident that these practices are an extension both of Britain’s pursuit of racial capitalism generally, and its colonial dealings specifically. Mubenga, Gardner and Bryan were all born in former European colonies; the dogged attempts by the state to shut them out of life in the UK and eject them from the hub of stolen colonial wealth demonstrates a commitment to hoarding the spoils of the empire and pulling up the drawbridge.

Furthermore, in order to further facilitate the deportation of people from the UK into purpose-built prisons outside the country, in recent years the UK government has also made plans to build prisons in its former colonies, such as Jamaica and Nigeria. In a visit to Jamaica in 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron announced plans to spend £25m of aid money on building a prison in Jamaica, where people living in Britain can be sent to serve prison sentences.

Similarly, in 2018 Boris Johnson released a statement outlining that a new agreement between the UK and Nigeria means that “prisoners serving criminal sentences in Nigeria and the UK can be returned to complete their sentences in their respective countries” and that, in support of this, the UK government will be building a 112-bed wing in Kiri Kiri Prison in Lagos.⁷

Despite not seeming to have a handle on the operations of its own Home Office, as became evident during the Windrush scandal, the British government spends an astronomical amount of money on removals and deportations. Seats on mass deportation charter flights still have to be paid for even if deportations don’t go ahead or they are blocked by last minute legal challenges. Stats compiled by the Guardian in 2019 revealed that in a sample three-month period, the Home Office spent a hefty quarter of a million pounds on charter flights that never actually left the runway.⁸ A Freedom of Information Act request by No Deportations in March 2021 also revealed that the Home Office spends £13,354 for a single deportation.⁹ Like immigration detention, charter flights appear to both be incredibly costly and fail to meet their stated aim of effecting removals.

A clear picture emerges: deportations aren’t a particularly ‘effective’ element of the UK’s violent border regime, but they do pour a considerable amount of cash into the pockets of private companies, and give governments something to point to when claiming with wild-eyed fever to be “tough on immigration”. Upcoming legislation such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 seeks to ramp up deportation numbers, by increasing the racial profiling and criminalisation of our communities, and building towards potentially more people being automatically considered for deportation after serving a six-month sentence. This is cause for great alarm, and marks the increased use of border violence as a tool to racially harass and divide our communities. Fight-back to #KilltheBill is well underway; check out Sisters Uncut (sistersuncut.org) to learn how you can join the resistance. The deportation regime from its inception has sought to place a limit on who is permitted to ‘belong’ in Britain. By joining together and refusing to accept this division tactic, we can build towards a future where border-crossing for all is celebrated and not criminalised.



Leah Cowan is the author of Border Nation (Outspoken Series, Pluto Press, 2021)

@La_Cowan



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MACHINE

Liberatory Education 101

By Lee Shevek

Radicalising people towards liberatory politics is a challenging, deeply rewarding, and vital component to building real political power towards liberation. It is also emotionally taxing, difficult to navigate, and often rife with conflict. I hope to offer some tools, tactics, and frameworks for engaging in this process with others in ways that can keep doors open for continued process, as well as protect the boundaries and energies of my fellow militants who engage in this work.

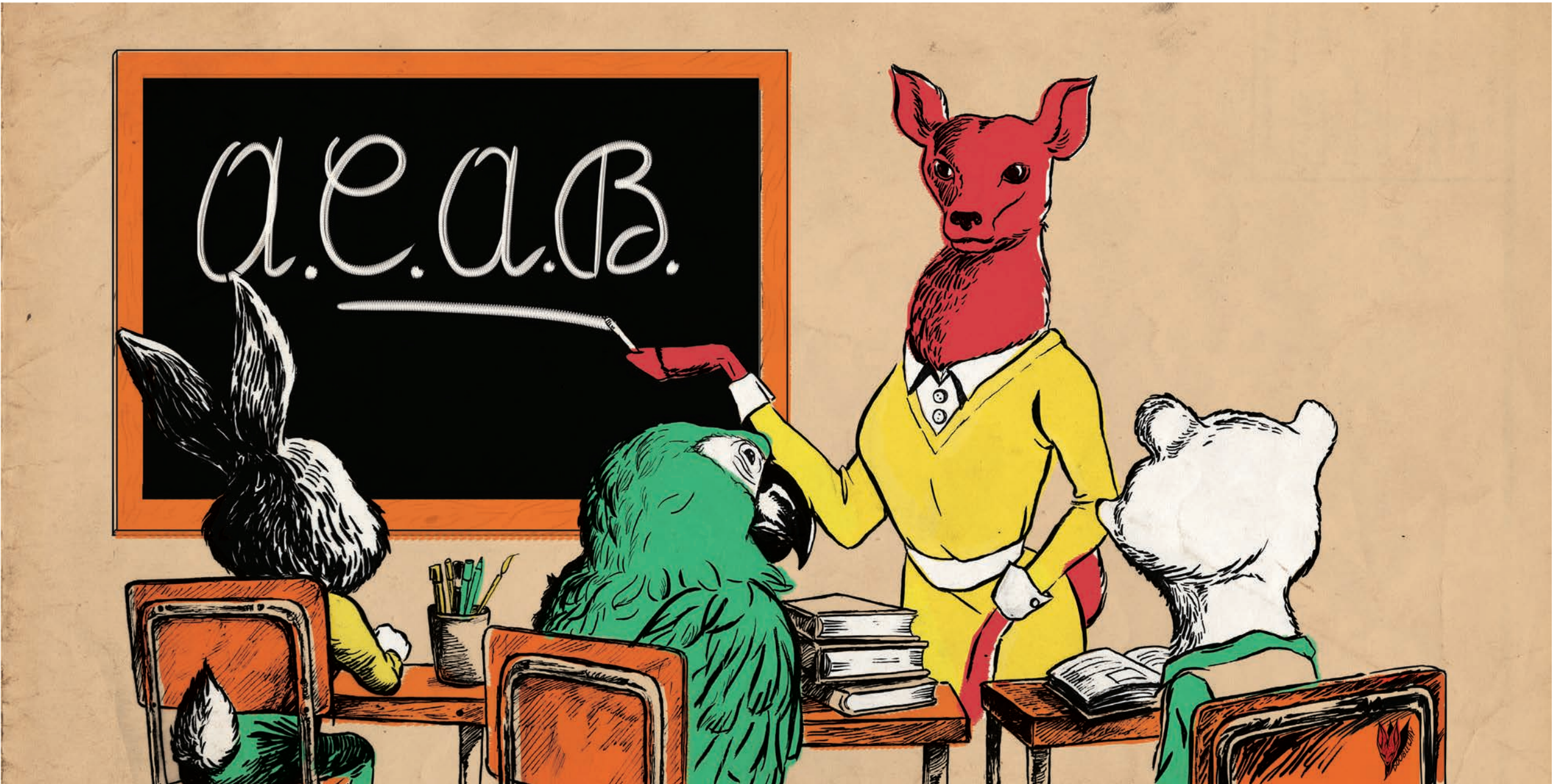
First, attend to how you see *yourself* in the process of radicalising others. Are you treating other people as vessels that you can pour your “superior” knowledge into? If so, the radicalisation process, if it proceeds at all, is likely to be an unnecessarily arduous one. Liberatory education is a process of mutual growth and is fundamentally about modeling and building liberatory relationships with people: challenging them and letting them challenge you in turn. People will rightfully resist being “taught” by someone who claims to know their lives better than they do and has all the “answers” prepackaged for them. If we’re here to be a part of the process of liberation, then we have to be here to build up comrades. Learn from comrades. Grow *with* comrades. Don’t lock people into new forms of the same old cultish thinking because we live under the illusion that we know what’s “best” for them. Even in the (rare) situation in which someone takes what you say as truth or gospel, this is not the positive outcome it may seem. Most people have already learned how to parrot someone else’s political analysis without having one of their own, and that is not what liberation looks like. What we want, when we engage people in liberatory education, is to help them to think in new ways, to build their own analyses, not just mimic our own. We need to help them build their *own* political autonomy, not submit to the blanket will of another.

Radicalising people also requires holding compassionate space for them in different parts of their process *and* communicating clear expectations for growth. If you don’t strike the right balance, you’ll either completely alienate people or entirely fail in challenging them to change. Important here is to recognise that holding space for someone in their process is *not* equivalent to allowing harmful behavior or beliefs to go unchallenged. People don’t learn how to treat others better if they’re not given expectations for accountability. It is deeply important to hold compassionate, but firm, boundaries in this process. We’re not just out here trying to teach people economic theory, but, rather, a whole new way to relate to one another outside of domination and control. We will not make that possible if we’re not modeling and practicing those ways of being with one another that are both compassionate and boundaried. The “I understand why you came to believe that but here’s the flaw in that argument/why it’s harmful” method works wonders. Most people just want to know that you understand why they are where they are and can be open to new ideas once you show them that respect.

Allow opportunities for people to save face. Most people involve their egos in their position. When you’ve communicated your message, know when to ease up and let the conversation change without making them admit “defeat.” It is often enough to have planted the seeds. That doesn’t mean the conversation is over, but people need breaks. They need to have an opportunity to sit and chew on new ideas and concepts. Check in on those seeds later and tend to them, there will certainly be opportunities to do so. Often, people will bring it up again themselves. Sometimes, they’ll act like they never actually disagreed. Let them, if you can, and be glad you can take the conversation further now. I say “let them” here because I think we tend to undervalue the benefits of letting people save face in this process. Sometimes it’s necessary to do otherwise, but most of the time it’s better to mark it as a personal win internally without lording our victory over them.

Everyone has their in. Everyone is crushed in some way by this system, you just need to find it and leverage it to help reveal to them where their interests actually are. Get to know someone, build a relationship with them, and you will find their in. Does their boss suck? When they talk about it, commiserate and also throw light on *why* they suck. Yeah, their personality is trash but it’s trash because they get to profit off of others who do the labour for them. We could all do a better job just doing it together, couldn’t we?

Avoid politically charged words whenever possible: anarchism, communism, socialism, etc. are all important terms that we should use and demystify for people, but at the beginning of the process they will almost certainly work against you. Be attentive to the connotations these words have for many people, due to the massive propaganda machine they’ve been put through their whole lives. There’s a time and place for those words, but it’s certainly not at “hello.” Find ways to talk about the concepts and values of anarchism without mentioning the word anarchism. If you have a hard time with this, take some time to read more introductory books on the subject, because those will help you find simpler language to use.



Do not underestimate the value of reading/listening to a lot of theory/political books and podcasts that run through the basics. Even if you already know the basics, hearing the language used to explain them to those who don’t will help you do the same.

Finally, recognise the difference between someone who is open to growth and someone who utterly refuses it. For the latter, you can leave the door open for change but don’t let yourself get pulled into pointless circular debates. Protect your energy. A key point to “holding compassionate boundaries” is recognising that you can only do this work with people who are willing and interested in engaging with it. You cannot force change in someone: you can only support it. For folks determined to continue to do harm, a compassionate boundary might mean cutting them off.

Be compassionate to yourself in this process too. You’re not perfect, you’re still learning. If you get into a conversation with someone and you don’t know how to answer a question, that’s okay. Take it as a lesson on what you need to learn more about. Ultimately, there are no specific steps on exactly how to radicalise people, because everyone is different. This is why I speak to process, rather than giving a step-by-step how-to. Liberatory education is, ultimately, relationship building. Take your time, develop your own analysis, learn how to set and maintain compassionate boundaries and relational norms for change. Have patience. Some people are slow going, others pick it up right away, but regardless it is an amazing, fulfilling, and vital process to be a part of.

The First Domino to Fall

By Fran Scaife

I’m Fran, I’m 25 and I live in a small northern, deindustrialised town in Teesside. I began working for Stuart delivery around 2 years ago after being on disability benefits for years. I struggle with chronic health issues, which seemed initially to go hand in hand with Stuart, an app-based ‘gig economy’ platform for couriers.

I was sucked in by the promises of flexibility and being your own boss. I thought I had found something that would work around me, at last. I started working, came off my benefits and finally started to feel useful for the first time in years. Initially the pay was okay, I was able to work part time and take days off around when I had a flare up of my health issues.

Slowly things began to slip. Waiting time compensation was cut, fees and multipliers changed and I began to realise I was sliding into debt. After the first year I had maxed out my credit card and had to apply for an overdraft extension. The money I was pulling in was nowhere near enough to cover just my bills, let alone much else.

Thankfully, having an amazing family around me, I was able to ask for help from my parents. I finally told my mum about how bad my debt was getting. We consolidated some of my debts but still, even now, I’m about £1k overdrawn – my credit card maxed out with nothing left.

With this job I’m not offered any sick pay, holiday pay or employment benefits or rights. I began to earn so little that I was having to force myself to go into work when I was unwell. Some days I was in so much pain, forcing myself to go to work in agony; it was so bad some days that I was having to take extra pain medication just so I was able to stand up and do a shift for a few hours.

Stuart doesn’t offer any reasonable adjustments for disabilities because we’re not technically employed by them. They seem to be able to duck and dive around responsibility to their workforce. I know so many couriers with chronic health issues who are barely even surviving, trying to do a job when the cards are stacked against them.

I would love to sit down and have a conversation with the people who own and run Stuart, but the only access to support I have is via a chat box in the Stuart app. There’s nobody I can call or directly talk to, it’s all via a chat service based usually in places like Bulgaria. If I have an accident at work or a case of sexual harassment, there’s no clear method of reporting this. All I can do is open the chat and tell them what’s happened. Usually you receive an automated reply based on your message, then after a while you are connected to someone in a totally different country who doesn’t know what Teesside is like.

As far as I know, my boss is the Stuart application. I don’t have anyone who I can report issues to. We do have team leaders at Stuart but there is a huge culture of misogyny in this industry, so a lot of women don’t want to report issues. When you see your team leaders and workmates engage in transphobic and misogynistic jokes, when you’re not taken seriously because of who you are, who do you turn to? Part of the problem here is the culture and the fact this industry is so male dominated. Why would you want to report a case of harassment to someone who you feel uncomfortable with?

I’m currently signed off work sick due to stress and health issues and the debt is just creeping up and up. I wonder sometimes if I’ll ever get out of the hole I’m in. If I’d have stayed on benefits I would most likely be better off financially than I am now.

Some of the only support and comfort I’ve found in this is through the union I’m part of. So many people have kindly sent me money to help me through this period, I’ve had people sit and listen to me cry for hours about everything, others sending me money to put in a savings pot for private healthcare. Without IWGB (Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain) and my family I am not sure how I would have gotten through the last year. The solidarity from other people, some of them total strangers, is incredible.

A few others and I helped to establish a women’s and non-binary committee for the couriers’ branch to help tackle everyday sexism and street harassment, as a safe space to discuss issues, a way to access support and signposting to organisations who can help. We soon began having regular meetings to discuss campaigns and how we move forward. We recently set up a blog that anonymously documents some of the everyday sexism that we deal with as women and non-binary people, as well as issuing a statement with a list of demands for gig work platforms.

In my time off working I was chosen to be part of an investigative journalism project. Myself and Ethan (our secretary) have been working solidly for the past month to perfect this project with the help of The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Soon there were stories in every newspaper, on every news bulletin revealing our findings about Deliveroo riders sometimes receiving as little as £2 per hour, whilst Deliveroo is set to net its co-founder Will Shu around £500 million.

Now the big Deliveroo story has hit, I think people are finally opening their eyes to how their delivery drivers are treated. I wonder, if the general public knew about how badly couriers are treated, would they feel so happy about their takeaway?

If the general public knew that many pickups don’t allow couriers to use the toilet or wash their hands, would they still be rushing to eat that food? Amazon drivers having to urinate in bottles, takeaway drivers banned from using toilets, forced to urinate and change their tampons behind bins? If people really knew I don’t think they would be ordering so freely.



I’m past the point of giving up or being exhausted – now I’m just angry. I’m angry at the way this job has plunged me into debt, caused me to hurt my body, and I’m angry that at no point have I ever been offered any support for my health and disability. I’ve shed blood, sweat and tears for this job – many, many tears. But I’m not giving up until we are given basic employment rights.

The Deliveroo story is the first domino to fall, and I hope and pray that this trickles down to the other gig work platforms.

Fran Scaife is a freelance courier who works in Teesside.

Prison Lingo

By Lisa Selby and Elliot Murawski

Lisa: As language is constantly evolving, we need to rethink terminologies that may be deeply ingrained. When my mother and my partner Elliot were in active heroin addiction, I started to think about terminologies around contested terms in substance use such as ‘addict’, ‘substance misuse’ and ‘drug abuse’. When my partner Elliot was incarcerated, I began thinking about the terminologies around the words ‘prisoner’ and ‘addict’; these are often interlinked.

Many people who are in prison or have been in prison describe themselves as prisoners when talking about their experiences; I know Elliot did, without a second thought, because that’s what they become used to. And who was I to ask him to reconsider his language at the time? I’d been locked in toilets and corridors within prisons, but I wasn’t being held against my will. It was my unspoken exchange with the prison: if I wanted to see my loved one, I had to obey. The first time I was locked in a toilet was when I was on a visit, towards the beginning of Elliot’s sentence.

A couple of years later, Elliot was put on an enhanced regime. Enhanced essentially meant Elliot had behaved himself, according to the prison system, and had earned certain privileges. It meant that I could hold Elliot’s hand and sit next to him sometimes, instead of sitting opposite him. When I say sometimes, enhanced visits were only once a month. It felt a bit like when I was fourteen, sitting at a bus stop with a boy I fancied, not wanting the bus to come so we could be together longer. It had been years since I felt his arm around me, we’d only held hands across tables. So many tables. Tables for watched hands. Officers would peer over our food as they passed to make sure our hands were behaving. On standard visits they’d shout at us if we touched too much or touched in the wrong way, according to them. I wanted to tell them to fuck off, but I had to behave too, or I would be punished by being banned from visits.

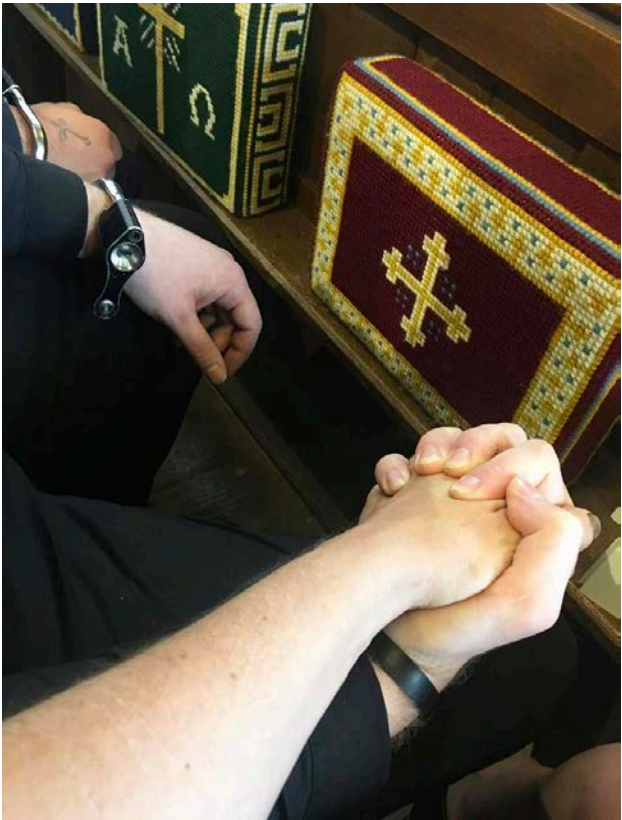
Elliot would get taken away and strip searched, humiliated as he stood in the naughty queue for ‘prisoners’ in front of everyone. The other lads laughed; humour goes a long way in prison. Time to get the balls out for the officer. Time for them to see what I wasn’t allowed to see anymore. We’d laugh to try and make light of it too. They didn’t punish me directly, they punished me for being with him – the ‘prisoner’ – through punishing him.

On occasions, Elliot being enhanced meant that we had a double length visit, more time. Prison reminded me of school in many ways, the double visit would be like a double lesson of my favourite subject but instead of a break, we’d have to sit and be watched by them from every angle. I wanted to run out with Elliot, hand in hand. I wanted to make love with the man I loved. We wanted a child, and I was in my forties – prison was taking my last fertile years. I wasn’t even allowed to wear an off-the-shoulder top to look and feel sexy. Instead of running off with Elliot, I raised my hand to be taken to the toilet by an officer. The officer walked me out of the visiting hall and locked the door behind him. We were now locked in a corridor together. He unlocked the toilet door and I walked in. I was shocked to hear the lock as I pulled my trousers down, he’d locked me in.

And that’s what I became used to. I’d stick my middle finger up at the officer behind the door, as a teen might do behind the back of a teacher they didn’t like. All these rules that we started to learn at school were now cranked up. All these new rules would change from prison to prison. I’d break the rules and not even know until I was shouted at. All these rules we had to follow because I was the loved one of a person in prison.

Elliot: Whatever you say you are, that’s what you are. Affirmation. I spent so long thinking of myself in labels. Addict, prisoner, mentally ill. Some labels completely overshadow others: junkie-thief sticks in your mind a lot more than plasterer or musician.

When I was in prison, I became accustomed to the dehumanising nature of being incarcerated. Numbers for names. I felt disturbed the first time I learnt that your prison number stays the same for the rest of your life, whether you never go back, go back a lot, or go back once when you’re 80. The number waits for you. It’s there, in the background, always. I can almost feel it. It’s just one of the looming overhangs of prison: the license period, the time my conviction remains unspent, my criminal record, travel restrictions. The sentence never really ends.



The word prisoner comes from the Old French *prisonier*, which meant captive or hostage, although the word hostage suggests there are some demands, or a ransom. I’ve felt like a hostage for a long time, but not to the criminal justice system; I have felt held captive by the system in general (but that’s one for another day). I’ve felt held hostage by my addiction, by heroin. I’m the double whammy of stigma: smackhead and ex-con, the Daily Mail’s dream.

There are some words that are becoming more acceptable than the words prisoner or inmate, at least in the eyes of the Ministry of Justice and all those who make it what it is. One word that sticks out to me in particular, which I first heard in HMP Thameside, is ‘resident’. This makes it sound like you’ve chosen to reside somewhere for a length of time. Some people might say I chose to reside in prison inadvertently by using drugs. Although it may have been a choice initially back when I was 15, it’s not a choice now because at times I realise I can’t stop or control any element of my using.

This month my license from prison ends, effectively signalling the end of my whole sentence. I no longer have to be in contact with probation, which is a relief. I was still called an offender while under probation, not that I’ve really heard from them much for the last year. The system they use is called the P-NOMIS, or Prison National Offender Management Information System, while the government website references the IIS or Inmate Information System. Offender and inmate are terms I struggle with. How is it helpful for people to be labelled this way? It’s a strange feeling, as I’m so used to not being free; always wondering if they’re going to take me back to prison for the rest of my license. I *carry* being a prisoner, it’s hard to shake off for many reasons, and it doesn’t help when people who don’t understand call me an ex-prisoner.

The word prisoner is not only a reductive label, it’s a label that had been put on me without being consulted. I’m happy to discuss my time in prison, because I think that’s important, but I’d rather be called a person or just by my name, than a prisoner.

Lisa and Elliot held a relationship down throughout his prison sentence for Possession With Intent To Supply Class A Drugs and Conspiracy To Supply Class A Drugs. Together they run the Blue Bag Life project.

@bluebaglife (Instagram)

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