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“THE ASSUMPTION THAT WHAT CURRENTLY
EXISTS MUST NECESSARILY EXIST
IS THE ACID THAT CORRODES
ALL VISIONARY THINKING”
- 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.”



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Fight for Your Right to Party

By Will Crisp

At about 2am on a Sunday morning in 2012, on the top floor of a decaying, abandoned nightclub near Bayswater, a woman in her fifties in beige robes arranged large quartz crystals on a woven mat amongst disused stripper poles and spangled ravers while the sound of pounding electronic music seeped up from the room below.

For the British-Guatemalan documentary and fashion photographer Karla Hunter, that squat party was the start of an infatuation with the UK’s illegal rave scene.

“I was just fifteen and it was my first time at a rave and I particularly remember this woman,” says Karla.

“She had loads of really big crystals. It seemed totally bizarre, and I just really wanted to interact with her and find out what was going on. I don’t even remember clearly what kind of music was playing, I’ve just got these visual memories of the crazy décor and the random variety of people that were there.

The whole thing seemed like something that was totally separate from my everyday life at that time – like a different reality with different rules. The kind of social interaction that was going on seemed so unusual and I was really curious about it all at that age.”

Ever since the UK’s unlicensed rave scene emerged amidst an explosion of acid house and ecstasy in the summer of 1988, it has ebbed and flowed with the rise and fall of new musical styles, new drugs and changes in legislation. With roots in punk rock, Jamaican sound system culture and the New Age traveller movement, it now exists as a chaotic, decentralised movement consisting of hundreds of sound systems and tens of thousands of ravers. Over recent decades the unlicensed rave scene has waxed and waned in the peripheries of society, from psytrance gatherings in woodlands to techno parties in barns, and drum and bass raves in disused office blocks.

After the night in 2012 in the abandoned nightclub, Karla started going to raves in squatted buildings almost every weekend.

“It felt funny to me at the time how frequently people from outside of the scene would talk about illegal rave culture as if it was something from the past,” says Karla.

“A lot of people thought it had been stamped out in 1994 with the introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill. But, when I was fifteen, there were at least three different drum and bass raves every weekend in London and if one got shut down you’d see hundreds of teenagers piling onto public transport – overwhelming it – to get to one of the other parties that was still going. It felt exciting to be part of something that most people didn’t know even existed. At the time it felt big and uncontrollable.”

Most of the drum and bass raves she was attending at the time were full of other young people – with many experiencing drugs like ecstasy for the first time.

“I was in huge warehouses that were just totally overwhelmed by emotion,” she says. “There was something that was really honest and unguarded about the way people were communicating. You could just sit down with anyone and talk. It felt very different from what you experience normally in London, where everyone is avoiding eye contact and just keeping themselves to themselves.”

Some of her photographs from this time include pixelated images from inside a party at an abandoned Royal Mail delivery office in Croydon on 14 June 2014. The party made headlines in national newspapers after it descended into a pitched battle with the police and a 15-year-old boy died from an overdose.

One of the grainy digital images shows hundreds of young people glistening with sweat in a vast dark room beneath concrete beams and exposed steel pipes that are decorated with colourful fabrics and geometric shapes. Another image shows teenage ravers pressing themselves against a speaker stack that is held down with heavy duty ratchet straps and stands ten-foot high in the darkness next to makeshift projector screens made out of scaffold poles and white sheets.

“As I’ve got older my whole relationship to the rave scene has changed,” says Karla. “When I think about why I am still going to raves and taking photos it’s definitely different now. As I re-engaged with the scene when I got older, I had a totally different perspective.”

Instead of hunting down the same kind of drum and bass raves that she attended as a teenager, she became interested in exploring the diversity that the UK’s illegal rave scene has to offer.

Travelling around Britain going to different kinds of events she gained a deeper understanding of the political motivations some rave crews have, and the reasons why they risk losing their equipment and even going to prison just to put on parties that anyone can attend for free.

“One of the fascinating things about most of the illegal rave scene in Britain is that – in some ways – it is like looking at what a music scene and a community can be outside of capitalism. Although there are some individuals and groups that put on illegal parties to make money, in my experience the vast majority of crews are about putting on the party for the sake of the party itself.”

Across all genres, these events are, usually, mainly about the experience of setting up a huge sound system and communally experiencing music together, according to Karla.

“It’s not about consuming a product or big-name DJs promoting their latest album. Often the lines are blurred between the ravers themselves, the organisers, the DJs and the producers. Ultimately, it is just people coming together as a community to share music and have a good time.”

“Sometimes, there can be a powerful sense of inclusivity and togetherness that cuts straight through things that divide people in everyday life – like prejudice based on race, gender and sexuality.”

Karla believes that, while the 90s rave scene is still widely revered for its innovation, the cultural value of the contemporary illegal rave scene is under-appreciated in the UK today. Illegal raves are not constrained by the same kind of financial costs that commercial events have to deal with, so they don’t have to sell consumers a commercially-viable musical product – and this has made the illegal rave scene a place of constant innovation in a way that clubs cannot be.

“It means that, at an illegal rave, you often don’t know what you are going to get,” she says. “You can end up being exposed to sounds and vibes that you would never get to experience in a legitimate club. On top of that, there’s no dress code so you see all kinds of looks, from New Age fashion, to punks, to teens in designer brands, and fashion influenced by queer culture.”

“As society changes, and the politics of the UK changes, I’ve seen shifts in the way that the party scene has operated. It’s a kind of fairground mirror that reflects everyday life in unusual ways. Even after nearly a decade of taking photos at illegal raves, I’m still motivated by capturing those flashes of unguarded openness that you often find as the sun comes up next to a big sound system.”



Will Crisp is a writer and part of the Noise Control Zine collective. noisecontrolzine.com

Everyone Needs a Friend

By Anon

It's not safe for me to reveal my identity. If I were to do so, the stories you are about to read would result in me losing my livelihood, my community, and my relationships with many people that I care for and who care for me.

My friend Max loves animals, particularly dogs and birds. Thanks to Max I know more about animals and the natural world. I know that the male mallard duck is the green velvety duck, and the brown-looking duck is the female (the opposite to what I assumed). I can identify a Canada goose, an Egyptian goose, and a moorhen. I sometimes sit with Max for hours, watching the ducks go about their life in the pond in our local park. I listen to him noticing how much the baby ducks have grown since we were last here and wondering aloud what happened to the shoal of goldfish that he swears he saw in the pond last week. Sometimes we talk about our own experiences of life as we sit sharing a view of the pond and the ducks. Sometimes I just listen to him describing what they are doing, and we both immerse ourselves in their world, escaping our own worlds together for a moment.

I met Max in the homelessness hostel that I used to work at. He was a ‘client’. My first memory of Max is walking with him to McDonald’s. I remember noticing with admiration and curiosity how he seemed to be constantly looking for opportunities to help passers-by, like giving a hand to an elderly lady struggling to get on the bus, or letting a kid know his shoelaces were untied. As we walked, we chatted – he told me about some important life events and relationships that had shaped him.

While I was getting ready to meet some friends later that evening, I felt a strange, unfamiliar mixture of emotions rising from deep within my stomach. Max, in who I saw so much life, love and warmth for the world and the people and animals within it, had experienced so much loss, abandonment, and disconnection. How could the world have been so cruel to someone who has such a beautiful, kind, warm, compassionate soul? I felt an overwhelming surge of love, empathy, and connection; our first conversation had touched a deeply human part of myself that existed buried within me.

As we got to know each other, a silent, magical connection began to develop between us that we both knew had to remain unspoken. To his fellow residents, as staff, I was the ‘enemy’. Getting on with me could be seen as betrayal; collusion with the cold, compassionless enforcers of rules that

regulate their lives without their consent under the guise of rescuing them. To my colleagues he was the ‘client’; incapable of the full complexities of human connection because of his presumed vulnerability and ‘complex needs’.

I have had some of the most powerful conversations I have ever had with another human being with Max. We agree on the fundamentals: arbitrary authority is bad; friendship is forever; we should all respect each other whoever we are (we all end up the same way); everyone has equal value and should be treated as such; money is the root of all evil; and love knows no sex, gender, colour, creed, age, or class. I think Max likes himself more since we have been friends. He accepts parts of himself more than he did before. He knows that he deserves a chance at life and is trying harder to give himself this – for him and for those he has loved and lost. When I asked him what he likes about himself he said he likes the fact that he always tries to do the right thing. Max is the most human human I have ever met.

As we became closer, I was warned by my employers that my role was strictly not to nurture lasting connection with Max; this was ‘unhealthy’. I must be ‘friendly’, but never a friend. I must listen and relate, but never relate too much. I must constantly remind him of my impermanence in his life to protect him from emotional attachment to me, never letting him forget the apparently inevitable truth that I too will abandon him one day.

I ended up leaving my job when I was awarded a scholarship to study a master’s degree in law at a prestigious university. I remember sitting in class reading the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights, which the UK has signed up to. Article 1 states ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. During the week, I was castled within the walls of one of the most privileged institutions in the world, sitting and discussing the concepts of freedom and equality with others who, like myself, had been chosen to acquire an exclusive, prestigious decoration valued at £25,000 that would radically increase our range of employment options, earning capacity, and social status. I spent my weekends covering shifts to be with Max and his friends, some of whom spent their days risking their liberty to make money to buy

substances that palliate the pain of their poverty, lack of opportunity, and exclusion they face every day at the hands of a society that purports to be committed to the notion that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’.

The stark contrast between the worlds I inhabited precipitated my nervous breakdown; a fracturing of my sense of the world and my place within it. Was I colluding with those who declare all humans to be born free and equal, but sit blinded on an ivory throne, while people like my friend Max are sentenced to life in conditions of emergency, enslaved to survival’s imperatives?

I decided to follow the magnetic compulsion I felt back to Max and his community, this time as a local resident working in another hostel. As I took the bus to Max’s hostel for the first time in six months, I felt more excitement thinking of the conversations I would have with him and his friends than I had felt in the past year sitting in a classroom with the ‘world’s brightest minds’. At the same time, I was acutely aware that I had not fulfilled the silent promise I had made to be Max’s friend. I had disappeared without a trace for six months while recovering from breakdown.

It took time for me to regain Max’s trust, but distance could not erode the silent, magical human connection that we shared. We began to rebuild and express our friendship in new ways, negotiating this exciting, unconventional chapter in our relationship and our lives. We are committed to being friends: to being honest with each other; being there for each other as far as we can and in the ways that we can; trusting each other. He has found therapy in writing an uncensored book about his life and experiences, which I am reading as he writes. I am still learning about him; he is still learning about me; and we are both still learning about ourselves. Our lives are enriched with the love, care, respect, and new perspectives that we bring each other.

The homelessness organisation I work for strictly forbids personal relationships between past and current clients and staff members. The threat of dismissal, shame, and career ruin ensures that few transgress. Colleagues collude in spying on and reporting staff who show too much compassion and seem to be connecting too closely with their clients. Managers remind us to ‘watch your boundaries’ and ‘remind him that this is just your job; he is not your friend; it’s for his own good’.

I prefer to listen to Max, who often reminds me, as we sit watching the ducks: ‘it’s nice to have a friend; everyone needs a friend’.

An anonymous key worker



The Paris Commune in Britain

By Laura C. Forster

On 28th May 1871 the regular troops of the Versailles army overcame the last resistance of the Paris Commune and, during a final stand-off at Père-Lachaise Cemetery, massacred hundreds of Communard combatants against the *Mur des Fédérés*. A month later, Thomas Wright, the “Journeyman Engineer” as he called himself, considered the response in England:

*Anyone taking the general tone of English public opinion from the “organs” which are popularly supposed to embody it, would have been led to the conclusion that horror and reprobation were the universal feelings in regard to the Commune. But anyone who could have penetrated working class circles, who, let us say, could have sat with men round workshop breakfast stoves, or in workshop dining or reading rooms... would have found, from the talk of the men... the sympathy of the people was with the communists.*¹

The kind of solidarity that Wright describes is difficult to measure. Feelings of sympathy and affinity are a powerful part of the history of social movements; encountering an event like the Paris Commune – be that as part of a reading circle, in the workplace, or through a friendship with an exiled Communard – was a formative radicalising experience for many Victorian activists.

The Paris Commune of 1871 was a radical experiment in government. Following the Franco-Prussian war of the previous year, and in defiance of Adolphe Thiers’ newly elected provisional republican government (under control of a monarchist assembly), Paris democratically elected a ‘Commune’ council which governed Paris for seventy-two days and passed radical measures such as the abolition of night work, free secular education, the separation of Church and State, and the cancellation of rent arrears accrued by starving Parisians during the Siege of Paris the year before. In May 1871 the Commune was brutally defeated during a week of bloodshed, and more than ten thousand Communards were killed. Following this defeat, thousands of Communards fled France to avoid imprisonment, deportation, or death.

As a result, and due in large part to Britain’s liberal asylum policy at the time, around 3500 refugees – some 1500 Communard and their families – arrived in Britain in the 1870s. The vast majority of refugee Communard settled in London. A small number, such as Jules Johannard, Henri Bardout, and Leo Melliet, settled in Manchester, Nottingham, and Edinburgh respectively, but

they were among a tiny minority. Most of the Communard in Britain were relatively young, relatively skilled workers and artisans (jewellers, lace-workers, dressmakers, engineers, mechanics, shoemakers), as well as journalists and teachers.

The largest concentration of Communard exiles, and certainly the political centre of much Communard activity in London, was in the area now known as Fitzrovia – the small area bounded by Oxford Street to the south, Euston Road to the north, Berner Street/ Cleveland Street to the west, and Tottenham Court Road to the east.

At 67 Charlotte Street was *Le Bel Épicier*, a grocery shop run by the Communard Victor Richard.² Richard’s shop was “for many years a head centre, where political refugees, as they arrive from the Continent, go for advice and help in finding lodgings or work, and where, of course, the continental police agents also flock so as to spy upon the land”.³ Richard was a member of the International Workingmen’s Association (IWMA) and the *Cercle d’Etudes Sociales* – he was a very well connected and locally celebrated revolutionary; apparently he sold only red beans, not ‘reactionary’ white ones.⁴ The British press described Richard’s shop as a “shady haunt” within which you could find Communard “discussing the crises of the bourgeoisie and... the vengeance which will one day fall on that obnoxious class of society”.⁵

Just down the road from Richard’s shop, also in Charlotte Street, Elizabeth Audinet owned a restaurant, “a home of rascals and ruffians”; as one aggrieved police agent put it. She hosted several banquets held in honour of the anniversary of the Commune in the 1870s and was particularly associated with the Blanquist Communard refugees – she lived with one, and another married her daughter. A few doors down from Audinet’s restaurant, Communard exiles would crowd into the Spread Eagle pub, a favourite haunt and one used regularly used by the Communard’s largest and most comprehensive society, *La Société des Réfugiés de la Commune à Londres* (SRCL).

The SRCL was established on 30th July 1871 and met weekly in pubs around Soho and Fitzrovia. Subscriptions were introduced for those who had found work and these small sums, supplemented by donations from sympathetic comrades and from the IWMA, went towards the establishment of a cooperative soup kitchen in Newman Passage – La Marmite:

*Situated on the top floor of so wretched a building that there was not space for a staircase, but the room was reached by means of a ladder with a very greasy rope that served in the stead of a balustrade. But here any refugee who could prove that he had fought for the Paris Commune was able to obtain a meal for twopence.*⁶

These places, the soup kitchen, the pubs, and the grocer’s, were community centres, places with practical purposes that served newly arriving or struggling Communards. But they were also political places – meeting spots for planning and discussing and making connections. And it was in and around these places that Communards found kindred spirits in Britain.

Fitzrovia had long been established as a dissident neighbourhood. In the second half of the nineteenth century a host of radical activists – mostly secularists, freethinkers, old Chartists, O’Brienites, and members of the Land and Labour League, the Manhood Suffrage League and other radical clubs – operated their outfits out of the pubs, meeting rooms and halls of Fitzrovia. The Hotel de la Boule d’Or on Percy Street was reputed to be the birthplace of the IWMA prior to its official foundation in 1864. The association later made their headquarters in nearby Rathbone Place. The arrival of Communard exiles and other revolutionary refugees did not displace these existing radical communities, but instead made Fitzrovia a place of radical cross-pollination. On any given night, the upstairs meeting room of the Blue Posts pub on Newman Street, for example, might have been host to a lecture on rent strikes or coercion in Ireland, or a meeting of land nationalisers, international socialists, Communards, or secularists, many of whom also lived and worked in the area. Politicised socialisation in the streets in and around this part of London shaped fresh political alliances and political philosophies, and helped to create links between British, French and international activists who frequented the same places. The pubs, clubs, shops and streets of Fitzrovia became informal political forums, and mirrored some of the associational cultures that had been so important under the Commune itself.

The Commune was both created and shaped by the political culture of popular organisations. The organisation of the Commune was rooted in neighbourhoods and relied on the politics of association.



The refugee Communards had been clubbers in Paris – they formed, shaped and enacted their politics through club life, both formal and informal. From the countless official organisations such as the Club des Prolétaires, the Cercle des Jacobins and the Association Républicaine, which were organised around quarters, to informal café cultures within which opponents of the Empire socialised, the politics of the Commune were expressed through associationism, which had economic, political and social facets.

In 1871, the Communard exiles carried many of these traditional modes of organising with them to London. Through political organisations, informal hubs like the shops and kitchens of Fitzrovia, and philanthropic and educational societies, Communard modes of political socialisation – both collaborative and Communard-only – could be utilised within the new environment of London, and in doing so gave rise to new, diverse communities that combined some of the practices of English Clubbers with the clubistes of the Commune.

Many of the future leaders of late-Victorian British socialism encountered the Commune in this way. Often the personal and the political overlapped: casual meetings, eating, drinking, love affairs and friendships provided the context for discussions of the politics of the Commune.

The socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw engaged in weekly singing sessions with an Alsatian exile of the Commune, Richard Deck; Shaw would sing to Deck in French while Deck, a basso profundo, provided the bass backing vocal. These sessions led to discussions of the Paris Commune and of how the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon had influenced the events of 1871.

John Burns, trade-unionist, socialist and Battersea MP, was introduced to continental socialism as a young apprentice engineer through his friendship with an exiled Communard colleague, Victor Delahaye. The two men worked side by side and were frequently sent on contract work together around London and the south east, affording abundant opportunity for conversation.

Eleanor Marx met the Communard Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray at a Commune anniversary celebration in 1872. Their subsequent friendship, sexual relationship, and (failed) engagement oversaw much intellectual collaboration. Eleanor translated Lissagaray’s authoritative *The History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, one of the earliest book-length histories of the Commune, and one of the few still in print today.

These friendly and informal interactions helped to shape the intellectual outlook of many fledgling British socialists. Their understandings of revolutionary

socialism were encouraged by the informality with which they could enter into political conversations with individuals who had taken part in the events of 1871. Very often studies of the origin and nature of British socialism stress British exceptionalism. But for the soon-to-be-socialists who encountered a Communard in a friendly place at a formative time, the Commune connected them to a wider world and opened up a wealth of imaginative possibilities.

¹Thomas Wright, ‘The English Working Classes and the Paris Commune’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 4, (July 1871).

² Smith, ‘Political Refugees’, p. 401.

³ Smith, ‘Political Refugees’, p. 401.

⁴ John M. Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (New Haven and London, 2016), p. 120.

⁵ ‘London Gossip’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 July 1894.

⁶ Smith, ‘Political Refugees’, p. 401.

Laura C. Forster is a lecturer in 19th Century British political history at Durham University, focussing on the development of British radical and socialist ideas c.1815-1930.

Solidarity, Comrade

By Jeremy Gilbert

What’s wrong with allies?

How should white people relate to black people? What does it mean for men to support women’s struggles for equality? How should people who aren’t direct victims of certain forms of oppression relate to others who are? And what about the struggles in which we all have an equal stake? What is the appropriate language to describe relations of solidarity?

Over the past few years the term ‘ally’ has become a popular way of describing the kind of relationship that people possessing certain kinds of privilege ought to have towards those who lack it. A white anti-racist, a feminist man, a cis person who wants to support trans people: all are described as ‘allies’ while ‘allieship’ has become something which we’re encouraged to aspire to, usually for very good reasons.

But in her recent book *What White People Can do Next*, black feminist Emma Dabiri takes issue with this concept of the ‘white ally’. This isn’t because white people can’t be active participants in anti-racism, but because the way the term has come to be used implies a somewhat impoverished relationship between potential collaborators in a common struggle against racism.

Instead of assuming that racism only affects black people, or that white people should help them merely out of some sort of moral obligation, Dabiri argues for a politics of solidarity, recognising that racism ultimately does harm to all of us. As I often like to put it: racism is bad for everyone even if it is obviously much worse, and bad in very different ways, for black people than for white people. Exactly the same can be said of the variable but shared ways in which men and women are affected by patriarchy.

Allies or comrades?

In her recent book *Comrade*, the American theorist Jodi Dean also argues against the phraseology of the ‘ally’ and some of its implicit assumptions. Instead, Dean argues in favour of a more traditional term, at least for certain sections of the left and the labour movement: ‘comrade’. For her, a comrade is different from an ally, because comrades are supposed to be equal participants in a struggle in which they all have a stake. White people and black people, men and women, can be comrades in shared struggles against racism and patriarchy; the idea of ‘allieship’ tends to imply that men or white people can only be relatively passive supporters of other people’s fights.

Dean makes a very powerful point here, even though there’s no obvious reason why the word ‘ally’ has to be used this way. Both ‘ally’ and ‘comrade’ are originally military terms, and both refer to the idea that people, or entire countries, will fight for each other as well as for themselves. But Dean is certainly right that the way in which ‘allieship’ has come to be conceived in contemporary jargon doesn’t carry that connotation. Rather, just as Dabiri argues, the concept of ‘allieship’ for Dean tends to assume a situation in which one underprivileged group are engaged in a fight, while another more privileged group cheer them on from the sidelines, perhaps offering some minor assistance occasionally. The further implication is that white people, men, etc. themselves have no real stake in these battles, so there’s nothing significant that women or black people could do that would benefit them.

By contrast, Dean appeals to the ideal of comradeship, which she sees as designating a sense that all these struggles are necessarily shared, and we all have stakes in them to varying degrees. Dean is arguing from a revolutionary communist perspective, which is not dismissive of the need to fight against racism or patriarchy independently of the fight against capitalism, but which places a particular value on class struggle as the route to emancipation for everyone. But her arguments have relevance for anyone concerned with challenging entrenched forms of social and economic inequality. The idea of comradeship invites us to see ourselves as engaged in a common struggle that affects us all. For Dean, the comrade is more than an ‘ally’ and is different from a colleague or a friend. It is not just a collaborator or a well-wisher, nor just someone you work with, nor someone with whom you need an intimate connection to maintain a powerful relationship: it is someone with whom you fight and struggle against a common enemy, even if you know almost nothing about them individually.

A politics of solidarity

Although Dean is primarily interested in class politics, while Dabiri is mainly interested in the politics of race, it is striking that their conclusions and their objects of critique are so similar. In fact, what they are both pointing towards is the need for a socialist politics of solidarity, a democratic and inclusive politics recognising the shared interests that we all have in overcoming capitalist power, white supremacy, patriarchy, and all of their associated effects.

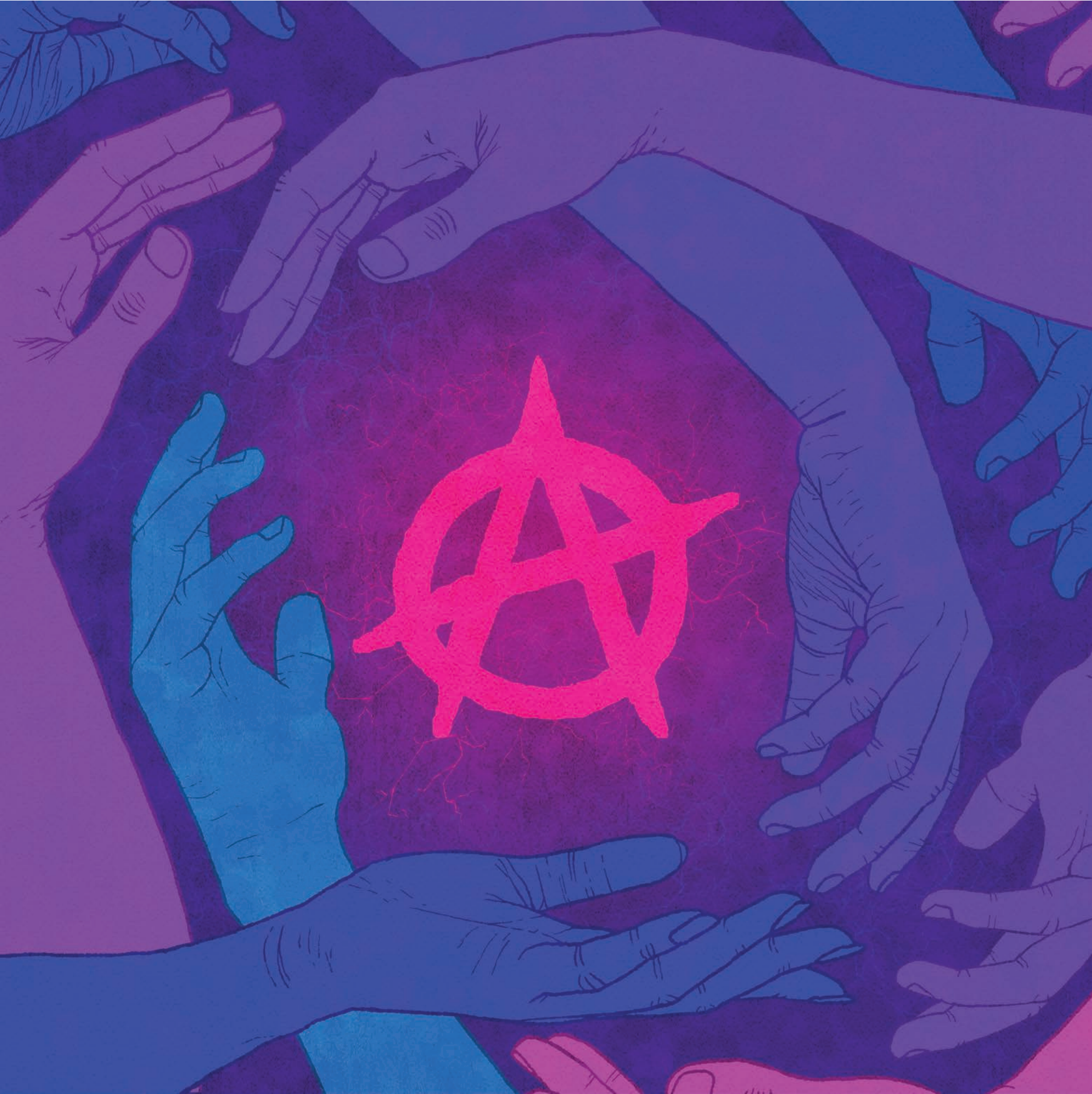
This may all sound obvious, but in practice, even those on the left have tended to be very bad at articulating a politics that is both inclusive and confrontational, as any such socialist politics must be. Our critics on the right may paint us as wild-eyed revolutionaries, but in fact our rhetoric tends to be apologetic and moralistic in just the ways that Dean and Dabiri urge us to avoid. Our public denunciations of poverty, austerity, racism, sexism and all forms of oppression are too often couched in a moral language, intended to stir the consciences of the public; too rarely do we make any explicit attempt to explain to others exactly who we think the enemy is, and why it would be in their direct interests to help us defeat them.

In the books I have mentioned, Dean and Dabiri are largely talking about issues that affect the ways in which we on the left talk to and about each other. But as we can see, these issues also have dramatic implications for the way that we present ourselves and our perspectives to the wider public. A politics of comradeship and solidarity doesn’t just imply inclusiveness and mutual support across the labour, socialist, anti-racist and feminist movements: it should also involve explaining to those who are not part of those movements that it would be directly in their interests to join forces with us.

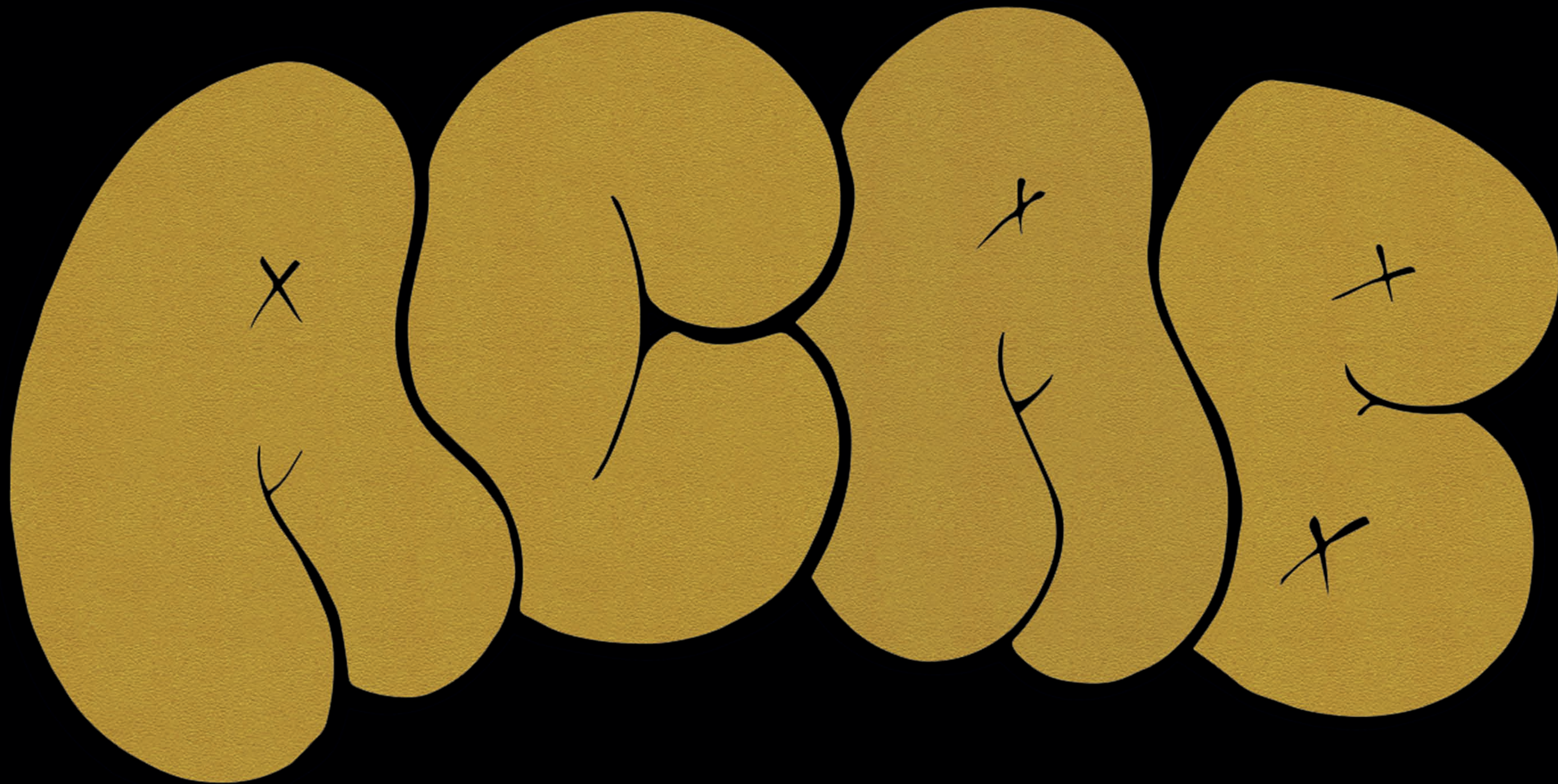
In other words, our politics must involve explaining to the wider public why they should want to be our comrades. This is an entirely different thing from telling them that they ought to support us, simply because we’re the good guys. Solidarity is a beautiful thing; it’s also the only thing that keeps wages up, the NHS public, and racists off our streets. A politics of comradeship should involve communicating that message – relentlessly and unequivocally – to those outside our movement, as well as those within it.

Further Reading

Emma Dabiri: *What White People can do Next*
Jodi Dean *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging*
Jeremy Gilbert: *Twenty-First Century Socialism*
David Featherstone *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*



Jeremy Gilbert is Professor of Cultural and Political Theory at the University of East London. His most recent publications include *Twenty-First-Century Socialism* (Polity 2020) the translation of Maurizio Lazzarato’s *Experimental Politics* and the book *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. His next book, *Hegemony Now: How Big Tech and Wall Street Won the World* is co-authored with Alex Williams and will be published in 2022.



The War of Provision

By Matthew Wilson

It's pretty depressing that one of the most rampantly capitalist companies on the planet is named after one of our most precious forests – but at least people don't think you're talking about a delivery service when you mention the Amazon rainforest. Sadly, when people hear anything about coops, their first thought is often the Coop supermarket; even worse, many people are simply unaware that coops refer to anything else. Yet cooperatives have a long and varied history and, when the right people and the right ideas are behind them, they offer a radical alternative to the capitalist norm (and, indeed, the state socialism which is often deemed capitalism's only alternative).

The story that commonly gets told about cooperatives is that the movement began in Rochdale, in 1844, when a small group of individuals decided to set up a consumer coop to provide cheaper and safer produce for its members. Using their collective bargaining power (much like trade unions do) the Rochdale Pioneers helped establish the principles and procedures that hundreds of millions of coops still follow to this day. The seven 'aims and principles of cooperation' have been modified a few times over the years, but they're still based on those established by the Pioneers almost two centuries ago. Some people idolise the Rochdale experiment and see the entire coop movement as belonging entirely – and exclusively – to this history. It's certainly true that the Pioneers helped give a particular organisational structure to a cooperative principle that had been tried many times before, but which often ended in failure. But it's also true that the history of the cooperative movement is one that for too long has been dominated by the consumer model established in Rochdale, and the huge and influential company that eventually emerged from it.

The Cooperative Group, which owns the Coop supermarket, claims to be owned by its 5 million members, who all have a say in how the business is run. Strictly speaking, there's a grain of truth here: members are allowed to vote at AGMs, and, to their credit, some committed people take this seriously and try to encourage greater membership engagement. But the reality is that most people treat their Coop supermarket membership like they do a

Tesco Clubcard – a way of earning 'points' to get cheaper produce, not as a way to shape the company in any meaningful way. We could blame the members for their lack of engagement, but there are structural reasons why 'membership' in a company like the Cooperative Group is barely worth the ink spilled in signing up.

Over time, the cooperative movement as a whole has become increasingly capitalist in its outlook, and its democratic soul has often degenerated into a shell of its radical potential. Much like the political system we live under, which we call democracy – even though most of us have no power at all – many coops operate according to a certain set of principles that give a nod to participation, whilst actually disempowering members, allowing for only the most superficial engagement. Some of this has happened as a result of what is often called degeneration – where the values that were there at the start of the coop have slowly faded away. We need to understand the causes of degeneration if we want to create coops that will continue to offer a radical alternative to the capitalist corporation. This also means recognising that the Rochdale Pioneers, and their legacy, are not the whole story.

The modern cooperative movement is made up of a wide variety of models: consumer coops, worker coops, platform coops, housing coops – the list goes on. And their politics are just as varied. Some models, like worker coops, lend themselves to real democracy, whilst others, like the consumer model developed in Rochdale, are far more likely to move away from genuine participation. Consumer coops have also been accused of defending consumers' rights at the expense of workers and the environment, and of following the same logics of endless growth that capitalist firms live by. The truth is, coops have always had both radical and reformist elements, and have been defended and promoted by a broad spectrum of political positions. Some see them as a way to replace capitalism entirely, whilst others simply see them as a nicer way to keep the economy more or less unchanged. Many radicals on the left have long recognised the potential for coops to become much the same as any other businesses but, sadly, their response has therefore often been to avoid them entirely. The result is that the cooperative model, and the cooperative movement, have been largely left in the hands of people without a radical political critique of capitalism, and it is their voices that have often come to dominate cooperative culture.

But it doesn't have to be – and isn't always – like this. The paper you're reading right now is published by a worker coop, which means the people who work for it also control it. No bosses, no profits slipping off into the greasy palms of even greasier investors, no one with any more power than anyone else. Worker coops are often the more radical type of coop, but there is a growing movement of other models that offer members genuine control. Of course, there are always discussions to be had over what it means to be radical, and what strategies we should use to create social change. For some, even a coop committed to destroying capitalism is still part of the problem. But a growing movement of people see coops as powerful and versatile tools, not only helping show us the right direction to move in, but also providing valuable work in their communities right now. Many coops do a whole lot more than simply running their business, using their resources to help people in their neighbourhood and to engage in wider political struggles. Coops can help us learn how to work together democratically, a lesson we rarely learn in other areas of life. On a broader level, they can help promote a different way to organise socially, politically, and economically, prioritising mutual aid over self-interest and competition.

The Rochdale Pioneers helped promote the idea that people can come together and work collectively for a common good. They didn't need the state or the church or a charity – they just needed to cooperate with one another. That might seem pretty obvious, but it's something we so often struggle to do. Coops offer us the tools to turn those vague ideas into a more concrete and practical reality. And they can do so in pretty much anything you care to think of: from housing to food to news, from mooncups to beer to websites, coops can help us take control of our lives. Part of that means taking control of what cooperation means to us now, pushing the coop ideals towards an ever-greater commitment to democracy, equality, and sustainability, and towards a world where consumers and workers are united and bosses and landlords are a thing of the past.

Matthew Wilson is an academic, currently researching the cooperative movement, a worker with Bartleby's (a cooperatively owned micro-brewery), and author of 'Rules Without Rulers: The Possibilities and Limits of Anarchism' (Zero Books, 2014).

Democratic MEMBER CONTROL 2

Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

MEMBER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION 3

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Voluntary AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP 1

Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

CONCERN FOR Community 7

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Cooperation AMONG CO-OPERATIVES 6

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

Autonomy AND INDEPENDENCE 4

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

EDUCATION, Training AND INFORMATION 5

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Waiting in the Rain

By Nader Awaad



Nine months after the Supreme Court ruled that Uber drivers are workers and entitled to basic protections such as minimum wage, drivers like me are still facing long hours and poverty pay. As the headlines attest, Uber says there’s a shortage of drivers – but this isn’t true. Drivers like me are ready to work. Instead, there’s a shortage of pay.

I’ve been an Uber driver since 2019 and at the beginning of this year, I joined the Private Hire Drivers’ Branch of the IWGB. With Uber still failing to meet many of the requirements set out by the court ruling, it’s down to unions and drivers to fight for better pay and conditions.

Lately, the service provided by Uber has not been up to scratch: customers are waiting longer to be picked up and rides are being cancelled or outright declined by drivers left, right, and centre. The reason for this is simple. Uber has been slashing the rate per mile to the point that it is impossible to work for them.

Since Uber began operation in the UK in 2012, it has set the pace of the private hire app industry. From the beginning, Uber sunk its prices below the competition to dominate the market. An Uber ride became cheaper than public transport. In fact, there is a joke amongst private hire drivers that we are competing with Transport for London to take their customers. But this all comes at the expense of the drivers’ cut of the fare. All the while, Uber keeps a quarter of the cost of every ride.

Recently, the rate per mile has dropped by around 20% and the fares have become too low to cover our costs and pay us the money we need to live, so we have no option other than to decline these jobs. These poverty fares mean we are trapped in long working days of 12-14 hours and often we do not even make minimum wage. As we say in the drivers’ community, we do not want to be a “donkey driver”, working for peanuts.

The recent reduction in the rate per mile is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Uber’s unfair payment model. Uber is becoming almost impossible to work for. In October 2020, it introduced fixed-rate trips, quoting for a journey from point A to point B rather than calculating it based on the actual time and distance of the ride.

This policy does not take into consideration traffic jams, diversions, customer stops and road closures on the way. Any unexpected changes that happen during the trip come at the expense of the driver. In fact, the trip must nearly double in time and distance before the fare changes to reflect this.

Uber calculates the fixed-fare based on the shortest distance between the pick-up point and the destination, to reduce the customer fare. This means that a route from one side of London to the other will always go through central London. Because of this, Uber contributes to congestion in the city as their routes do not use alternative A roads or motorways outside the centre.

This is all made worse by the fact that customer pickups are also at the driver’s expense and not the customer’s. Sometimes, Uber sends jobs to drivers who are up to 20 miles away. If the journey started at the time the driver accepts the job, this would not be a problem. As it is, drivers decline these jobs because we lose money on them. You don’t want to do volunteer work for a multi-billion pound corporation that seems determined to wreck your livelihood.

Uber also offers airport trips at a reduced rate compared to city rates. The difference in pay between a trip from Heathrow airport to west London and east London is around £10 even though the time it takes to drive to east London is at least an hour longer. Long journeys from airports are another challenge as the rate per mile is reduced with a long journey and the fare does not accommodate the fact that the driver has to drive back empty to London.

Uber is well aware that drivers are accepting far fewer jobs. Despite the jobs being declined, Uber keeps circulating them in the hope that it will catch a driver going in that direction who is desperate enough to work for sub-minimum wage or is new to the job and doesn’t understand the system yet.

Uber’s solution? Surge pricing. Surge pricing usually happens when there is particularly high demand in a specific area. The app temporarily raises all prices by a given amount in that area until the demand dies down. Recently, Uber has been using surge pricing more and more to deal with the decreasing rate of job acceptance from drivers. But surge pricing comes with its own problems.

The surge is not fair to the drivers because it is not unified. It goes up and down and it’s a matter of luck who gets the better rate. During a surge, drivers all start chasing the more rewarding jobs and so they turn down local jobs. Surge pricing is restricted to a small radius in the area and customers outside of this radius will struggle to find a ride.

As a union we stand against surge pricing. It’s not fair to customers and it’s not fair to drivers. We want every job to be valued fairly. This will stop drivers being forced to decline jobs and the customers will receive a reliable service.

But we know that surge pricing protects Uber’s short-term profits. Following Uber’s loss in the Supreme Court, drivers are now legally entitled to holiday pay and pension. Rather than pay us this money out of their profits, Uber is slashing the rate per mile to pay for it, and then surging the prices for customers when they can’t get the drivers out on the streets. In doing so, Uber is keeping its 25% cut of the total fare rather than giving drivers the cut of the fare they need to live, on top of the holiday pay and pension we deserve.

Until Uber tackles the real cause of the issue and raises the rate per mile, its customers will be left paying high surge prices, waiting in the rain, or walking to their destination. This is not the service that customers want, and this is not the service we wish to provide.

On 16th of September, I wrote an email to Uber after customers complained about the long waits and the high number of cancellations. I offered Uber an opportunity to meet and work together to resolve the issues and to build a private hire industry that works for everyone. Uber did not respond to our letter.



I also wrote a letter to TFL requesting a meeting to discuss issues within the industry and the health and safety of the drivers, following the killing of Gabriel Bringe, a Bolt driver who was fatally stabbed in his taxi. We want to make the industry better in the interest of the drivers and the customers. TfL are ignoring us, too.

The IWGB is the largest union of private hire drivers in the UK and yet neither the operators nor TFL want to talk to us. We have no direct channel of communication to raise our issues and voice our perspectives on how to make this industry better for everybody. Protests and strikes are our only way of making our voice heard.

We have the answers to improve the service in the interest of drivers and customers, but we know that it is only through taking direct action as a union that we will get Uber to listen. That is why we are planning a protest outside parliament in early January to bring legislators’ attention to our issues – and we will continue to fight until we are given the rights and pay that we deserve!

Nader Awaad is a private hire driver and chair of United Private Hire Drivers, part of the IWGB union.

uphd.org.uk

Bent Bars

By Sarah Lamble

Anyone who has spent time in prison, or has loved ones who have, will know that prison can be a pretty harrowing experience. Although the tabloid press likes to portray prison as an easy ride, in reality it is a place where every aspect of your life is subject to surveillance, regulation and control. It is also a place where the threat of violence is often present.

For people who have never experienced prison first-hand, it may be hard to fathom what it's like to be locked in a room the size of a bathroom (many cells are 3 meters by 2 meters). Things have become even more difficult in Covid conditions, where many prisoners have been locked up in their cells for 23 out of 24 hours a day.

While the harsh reality of being locked up is common to all prisoners, the experience can be exacerbated by other factors, depending on who you are and how the prison perceives you. This is particularly the case for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) prisoners. Yet the wider public is often unaware of the specific realities of how prison plays out for different groups, especially LGBTQ+ people. These issues are often 'out of sight, out of mind.'

Over-criminalisation

People often assume that because most formal laws directly outlawing same-sex sexual activity have been overturned in Britain, LGBTQ+ people are no longer criminalised. However, many LGBTQ+ people still end up in prison because of discriminatory criminal justice practices as well as wider forms of inequality and discrimination that funnel people into prison.

For example, a young person might get kicked out of their home for being queer. Once on the street, they turn to criminalised economies like the drug trade or sex work for survival, and then get arrested or targeted by police. We also know that trans and gender non-conforming people – particularly those from poor backgrounds and communities of colour – are often subject to heightened scrutiny and may experience more targeted policing.

Harassment, bullying and abuse

Once in prison, LGBTQ+ people are often subject to harassment, bullying and abuse related to their identities. This can be from staff or other prisoners. It can range from negative comments to physical harm and violence. While some prisons do have LGBTQ+ support groups where prisoners can provide peer-support to each other, there is still a lot of stigma and shaming.

Experiences can vary considerably from prison to prison – some prisons are more actively supportive to LGBTQ+ people than others.

Coming out

Because of the widespread stigma and fear of harassment, many LGBTQ+ people struggle with 'coming out' in prison or fully expressing their gender identity or sexuality. Just as it is difficult to come out outside of prison, it can be even more difficult inside prison. Fear of bullying or enhanced vulnerability often means that prisoners do not feel safe to express or share their LGBTQ+ identity.

This is especially the case for people who are coming out for the first time in prison. Because prisoners are locked in cells for extensive periods of time and denied ways to engage their minds, prison is sometimes the first opportunity that people have to really reflect on their lives. Some people begin to more clearly identify their feelings around gender or sexuality for the first time in prison. Yet prison can be quite hostile to such exploration, especially for trans people, who are often subject to a presumption of disbelief around their gender identities.

For prisoners that opt to remain 'closeted' while in prison, this can also add to feelings of isolation and a sense that you are the 'only one'. Generating a sense of community, which can be an important source of solidarity and support when coming out, can be very hard to create and maintain in prison.

The Bent Bars Project

The Bent Bars Project was set up in 2009 to address some of these issues. We were founded with a specific aim to support LGBTQ+ people in prison and to build stronger community connections across prison walls.

The Bent Bars Project is primarily a letter-writing/penpal project for LGBTQ+ prisoners in Britain. We support prisoners who are questioning or exploring their gender or sexual identities (e.g., if someone thinks they might be LGBTQ+ but aren't sure).

We match LGBTQ+ people inside prison with LGBTQ+ penpals outside of prison in order to provide mutual support and friendship. We also produce a newsletter written for and by LGBTQ+ prisoners, which contains letters, artwork, stories and poems written by prisoners.

Over the past twelve years that the project has been running, we've been in contact with more than 800 LGBTQ+ prisoners, who have shared their stories and experiences and been part of the penpal scheme.

LGBTQ+ prisoner resources

Bent Bars also has a resource library where we compile and create resources to help people survive prison and to educate the public about the issues LGBTQ+ people face in prison.

Bent Bars recently created some "Trans Prisoner Information Sheets" to educate the public about the experiences of trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary people in prison. This was in response to concerns about the way in which the mainstream press and social media has recently been reporting on trans issues in prison. We were very concerned about the circulation of wildly inaccurate, misleading and decontextualised information. So we created three information sheets to help better inform the public about transgender prison issues:

- Trans Prisoners Info Sheet 1: Key Issues faced by trans and gender non-conforming people in prison
- Trans Prisoners Info Sheet 2: Frequently Asked Questions
- Trans Prisoners Info Sheet 3: Solidarity/Things you can Do

Know your rights in prison

We have also created resources to directly support LGBTQ+ prisoners. Bent Bars recently teamed up with the Prisoners' Advice Service to create two 'Know your Rights Toolkits' to inform LGBTQ+ people about their legal and human rights when in prison:

- A Prisoners Guide to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights
- A Prisoners Guide to Trans Rights

The guides cover a range of issues, including:

- How to report homophobic and transphobic abuse
- How to make complaints if you think your rights are not being respected
- Sexual health and intimate relationships in prison
- Cell sharing amongst LGBT prisoners
- Access to LGBT content and materials in prison

The Prisoners Guide to Trans Rights also explains the Ministry of Justice's current policy around the 'care and management' of trans prisoners, and what prisoners are entitled to under the policy.

Copies of Trans Prisoner Info Sheets and Know Your Rights Toolkits are available on our website at www.bentbarsproject.org. Prisoners can also request copies by writing to: BB Project, PO Box 66754, London, WC1A 9BF.

While the Bent Bars Project is a small, completely voluntary-run group, over the years we have developed lasting friendships and connections with LGBTQ+ people in prison and have worked to challenge some of the public misinformation about issues impacting LGBTQ+ prisoners. If you would like to learn more, check out our website or write to us at our PO box.



Sarah Lamble is co-founder of the Bent Bars Project and an organiser with Abolitionist Futures. They are a reader in criminology and queer theory in the Department of Criminology at Birkbeck, University of London.

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kafe44.org
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en.squat.net
- Leoncavallo**, Via Watteau 7, 20125, Milano,
www.leoncavallo.org
- Majkällaren**, Spånehusvägen 62A, Malmö, Sweden.

- Red Emma's**, 800 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202,
www.redemmas.org
- La Rosa De Foc**, Calle de Joaquín Costa, 34, 08001,
Barcelona, Cataluña
www.facebook.com/libreriarosadefoc
- Sale Infoshop**, Orebítská 14, Prague 3-Žižkov,13000,
sale.451.cz
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pmpress.org / pmpress.orguk
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www.lin12.com
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www.56a.org.uk
- Ace**, Edinburgh EH7 5HA , Scotland
autonomous.org.uk

- 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, London, BN1 4JA,
www.cowleyclub.org.uk
- DIY Space For London**, London, SE15 1TF,
diyspaceforlondon.org
- Decentre**, London, E17QX,
www.decentre.org.uk
- Glasgow Autonomous Space**, Glasgow, G5 8JD,
glasgowautonomous.weebly.com
- Kebele Social Centre**, Easton, Bristol, B55 6JY,
www.kebelecoop.org

- Mayday rooms**, London, EC4Y 1DH,
maydayrooms.org
- London Action Resource Centre**, London, E11ES,
www.londonarc.org
- Star and Shadow Cinema**, Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 1BB
- SUMAC Centre**, Nottingham, London, NG76HX,
www.veggies.org.uk
- Partisan**, 19 Cheetham Hill Rd, Manchester, M4 4FY,
partisancollective.net
- Wharf Chambers**, Leeds, LS2 7EQ,
www.wharfcchambers.org
- Warzone**, County Antrim, BT2 7JHN, Ireland.
www.warzonecollective.com

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- Mustan Kanin Kolo**, Helsinki, Finland,
mustankaninkolo.info

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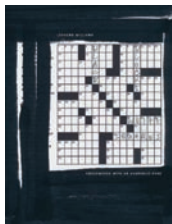
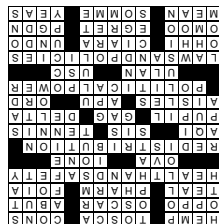
- 1 Cannabis fiber
5 Opera by Puccini
10 Downsides
14 Digging up dirt, politically
15 Denzel Washington received one for glory
16 Be next to
17 Florida Marlins uniform color
18 ___ D. (druggist's degree)
19 Authorization to see your FBI file: Abbr.
20 Invest in education, ... (part of OHS)
23 Some germ cells
24 Skye of Hollywood
25 Economic justice through ... (aim of some tax plans)
32 EPA stat
33 Solange, to Beyoncé
34 Serena Williams' game
36 Student
39 Type of gift

DOWN

- 1 Planet in *The Empire Strikes Back*
2 Olympic event
3 Movie rating grp.
4 Hoi ___
5 Formal wear in 1930s films
6 Govt. factory inspectors
7 Image-making operation
8 Notable woman of rap
9 Signal for an embrace
10 Espresso's kick
11 High woodwind
12 *La ___ étoilée* (van Gogh painting)
13 Puppy school command
21 DVD output devices
22 Contributed to the pot
26 ___ Nui
26 Provide with gear
27 Maniac prefix
28 Contrive a result
29 Hall of Fame musician
Hayes

30 Set to simmer

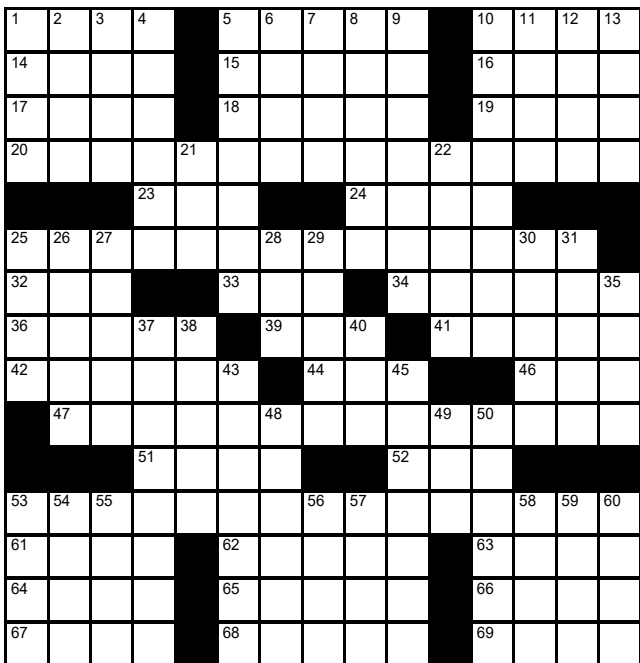
- 31 Saltpeter, in England
35 ___ City (Baghdad district)
37 Magician's art
38 Netflix dystopian drama
40 Dean's list qualifying stat
43 Positions on political issues
45 Wail
48 Duke Ellington's "Mood ___"
49 Pressure measure: Abbr.
50 Sit-in, say
53 Weaver's apparatus
54 Expressive sigh found in Paul Lawrence Dunbar's "Sympathy"
55 "Stop!"
56 Chicken ___ (Italian dish, for short)
57 Utah town
58 *Picnic* playwright
59 Scandinavian epic
60 Boys in the family



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A SAMPLE PUZZLE FROM THE BOOK
BLACK BLOCKS, WHITE SQUARES:
CROSSWORDS WITH AN ANARCHIST EDGE
BY LEONARD WILLIAMS







BLACK

BLUE

ORANGE

GREEN

PINK

YELLOW

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