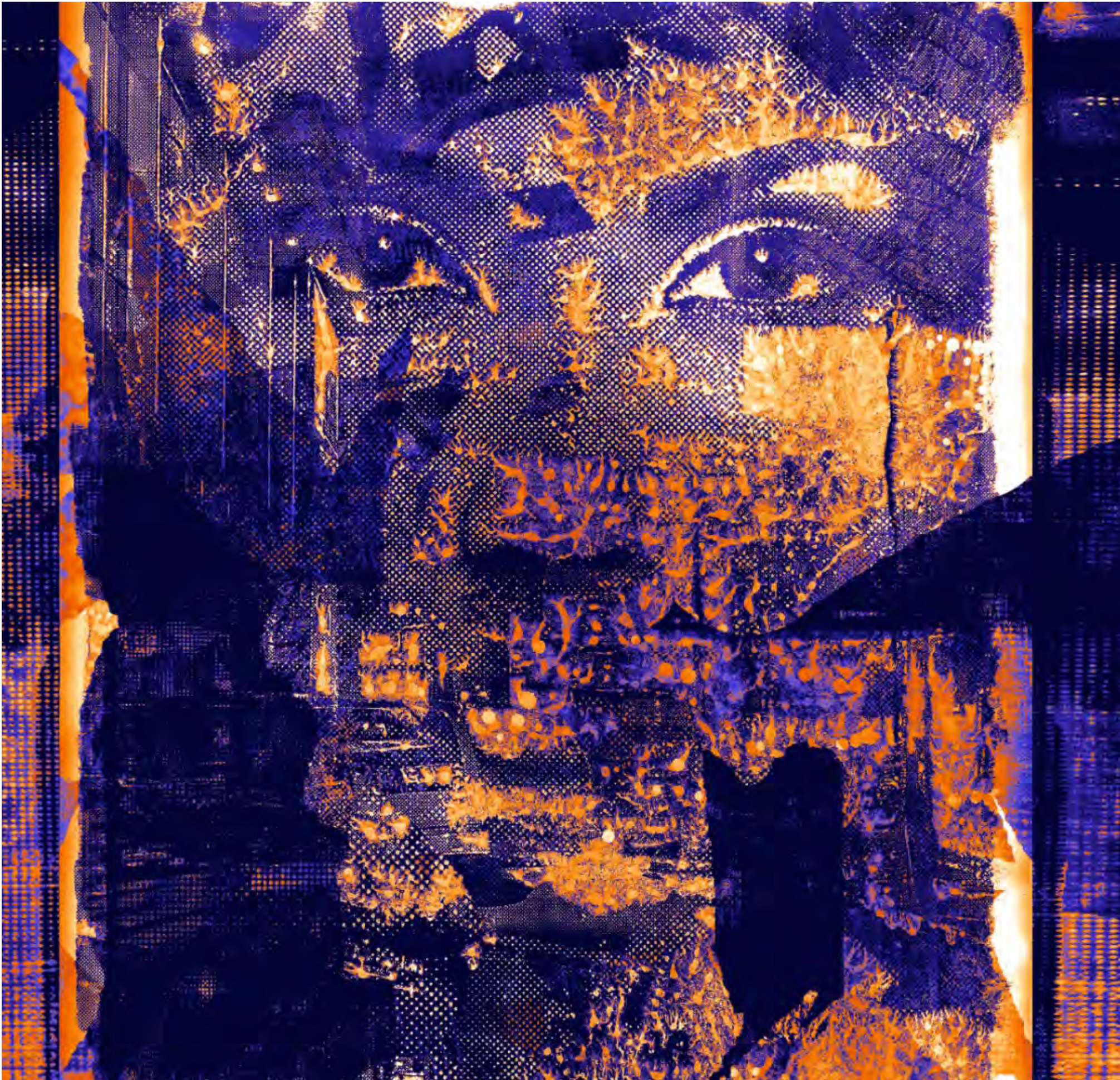




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until everyone has a home and nobody lives in a cage.
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FALL IN LOVE
NOT IN LINE

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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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The War of Position (Part II)

By **Matt Wilson**

In the last issue of DOPE, I discussed the question of language, and suggested we should pay more attention to the way language doesn't just represent, but actively shapes our world. Perhaps one of the most important examples of this is the way we currently talk about our political system: here in the UK, and in much of the world, almost everyone will tell you we live in a democracy. In this article, I want to make the argument that we should refuse this label and find other ways to talk about the political reality we endure.

Of course, this is a complicated issue, and this is a short article, so I'll race through some basic points. I'll also say this: it might be hard to imagine how powerful language is – surely it doesn't make such a difference to the way we think about the world? But then consider how many people follow ideologies you reject, and ask yourself why. They're not all evil, or stupid, or desperate – so what makes them think the way they do? Again, it's complex, but when we think about ideology and how it is reproduced, we tend to focus on very concrete things – like control of the media, or education; what we often miss is just how ideologically powerful language itself is.

We then need to think a little more about how language works. Some words – nouns – are supposed to represent a specific thing, but they also always do more than that. The word 'dog' represents a domesticated animal originally bred from wolves – but it will always represent more than this: for some people happiness and playfulness, for others aggression and fear. Every noun in fact relates to a 'package of meaning', not just the direct thing it symbolises. Sometimes that package is personal, but often it is social.

So, let's start by considering what it means when we call the UK a democracy; when we say we live in a democracy, we are saying some pretty basic things: we're saying we get a vote, that it's a free vote, that there's a free media, an independent judicial system, and so on. But we're also linking it to a big social package of meaning, a long list of things that our culture associates with that noun – ideals of freedom, equality, justice and empowerment, for example. And we're making a sociological claim about our capacity to do things: apparently, in 'getting a vote' we are also 'getting a say' in how the country's run, giving a mandate for a government to do certain things. All of this and much more is parcelled together in that one simple word democracy.

Now anyone reading DOPE will be well aware of just how poorly these ideals match the reality; we all know countless ways that the system fails, either through out-right corruption, or simply from being a failed system. Yet we continue to call that system a democracy. Often, we will say something critical or negative at the same time: we'll say it's a democracy in crisis, or a failing democracy, or whatever – but, still, we call it a democracy.

The problem with this is that in calling our system a democracy, it re-enforces our culture's basic understanding of how that system works – because we're forever making a connection between the system we have and everything else in that package. Let's take one very simple example: how often have you heard a politician say they have a mandate from the British people to do such and such a thing? They do it all the time, but it's actually impossible for them to make such a claim, because under our system we can never clearly give any politician or party a mandate for anything. Let's say Labour wins the next election; the next day, Keir Starmer will be telling us all about the mandate we've given him. But everyone knows that if Labour wins, it will be in large part because people voted not for Labour's manifesto, but to get the Tories out. And even people who actively vote for Labour may well have wanted a very different manifesto. So, it's a sociological impossibility to speak of a mandate for anything under our electoral system. But a mandate to rule is part of that package of things we call a democracy, and so we collectively act as though our elections provide politicians with such a mandate.

One challenge we have if we want to stop calling our political system a democracy is the lack of a well-known word we might use to name our political system: and this lack of a more suitable noun also helps keep the cultural myth of democracy alive. Think about it: we have democracies and dictatorships, but we don't really have a word for something in-between. Isn't that quite revealing? How can it be that we don't have the language to describe a society which is freer than a dictatorship, which maybe grants certain powers and liberties to people, but in which those people are also institutionally incapable of really choosing how their society is run? It says a lot that we don't have such a word, and that we don't realise why this matters.

But it does matter that we keep giving our political system an easy-win by naming it a democracy, and it makes sense that we start thinking about how to respond. One option is 'polyarchy' – multiple rulers. That distinguishes it from a dictatorship, but doesn't give it the positive package of democracy. A few people here and there using the term won't make a difference – but imagine if everyone who feels betrayed and disempowered started to do this. Imagine if the next time a politician flippantly tells us they have a mandate to do something, a journalist asks them to explain exactly where that mandate came from. It won't change the world over night, but it's one small but powerful step in exposing the ideological work of contemporary capitalist systems – and maybe moving towards something we could actually call a democracy.

Matt Wilson is the author of Rules Without Rulers (Zero Books, 2014) and part of the LUCOOP project.

dogsection.org/product/re-organise-power



Violence is the Only Answer

Interview with Bobby Vylan

Your music is very political – what was your personal journey in terms of political consciousness?

My political awareness comes from a societal awareness that I didn't have a choice in. Being in this country, my existence is a black person is politicised. I suppose my journey started with trying to figure out why I was treated the way that I was treated – in school, on my way to school, y'know, in the various institutions that I had to operate within in this country.

And then that leads to answers around how we, as an African people, came to be in this country and the enslavement of African people, the creation of the Caribbean as a place where Africans were taken. Then obviously comes human rights, the fight for civil rights – and that just informed all of these things that creatively I was doing.

Ignorance is bliss and if I was ignorant to the history of this country and to my existence and my – and my ancestors' – relationship with this country, I would maybe not make this sort of music. For me that understanding was very much through reading and through exploring different writers and different sociological and historical accounts.

What sort of things were you reading?

Like many young Black people within this country my journey really started with the autobiography of Malcolm X. It seems to be a book that a lot of people – especially young Black men – read at a certain point in their life and it kinda flicks a switch and leads you on a path to ask more questions.

I remember being very young and reading Benjamin Zephaniah poetry, and even some of his novels like Refugee Boy. Funnily enough, I was looking through my books and found some that he'd signed – I'd seen him reading poetry and I'd seen him talk and I'd asked him questions as part of an audience when I was younger. And so that's a memory that sticks out in my mind as a writer that's had an impact on me.

Also, things like Walter Rodney, biographies on various Black Panthers, watching talks and speeches of Cornell West, Angela Davis. One book that I think is extremely important now is Akala's Natives; I think that has almost become like the autobiography of Malcom X was – an entry point for lots of people, especially younger people, to start asking questions about how they came to be in this country as people of colour

What challenges do you face as a 'political artist' making music under capitalism?

Well, we never call ourselves a political band. Like I said, our existence is politicised within this country, so it's impossible for us to not address that. Especially me being the mouthpiece of the band and writing the lyrics and – knowing what I know – it's hard for me to ignore that and to not address that in some way. There's far more qualified people to speak on outright 'Politics' – y'know, foreign policy and what not – but what I can speak on is my upbringing in a working class community, which obviously has politics attached to it. So, we are a political band, in that sense.

This industry is purely capitalistic – it doesn't exist to get good art out there, it only exists to turn a profit. If the art is good and it turns a profit? Well, that's a bonus, but who cares about the art, we just need to turn a profit – that's the mentality of this entertainment industry.

For us, we are able to operate in that industry on our own terms by creating our own record label and putting our own music out and having complete creative control over that music. From the very beginning of picking up the guitar and making the song to the song being played in your headphones we've had complete control over that. If you're buying the music from our website then we've had say over how much the record should be priced at. And we've taken into account how much it cost to make the album, making sure everybody's got a fair compensation for whatever they may have done for the album, and then what it is that we need to be able to survive and live as artists.

That's one way that we're able to combat this purely capitalistic industry and still manage to make art that we're proud of. So, we don't have to face the choices that some artists have to make and then they are called "sell-outs."

A sell-out, for me, is somebody that is going against their principles and their morals for financial gain. There have been offers, there have been certain things – a fast food company, for example, offered us money to write a song for them that would have been shown throughout the World Cup on ITV. There would have been an amount of money that would have helped me, a lot, especially at the time. But we decided not to do it, obviously, because the album that just came out had Health is Wealth [a song about healthy eating, exercise and class that contains the lyric "a pig can't kill what a pig can't catch"] on and it's like – I can't promote that.

The new single is called Makes Me Violent. Anarchism often gets characterised as violent as a way of dismissing it, and obviously so do certain racialised groups. It's quite a brave thing to be so up front about violence – what's the message behind the single?

That is one thing that we've always said: Bob Vylan is a violent project – we're not a pacifist band. I believe in the use of violence, in certain instances and on certain occasions. People often say "violence is never the answer" but to me that is an idealistic way of looking at it; violence *should* never be the answer but sometimes it is, right?

It also seems like a very privileged thing to say, like if you've never encountered violence before. I grew up where people had problems with other people and I've been the victim of that sometimes, I've been targeted in various ways and I've had friends targeted in various ways, and violence was the *only* answer to that. There wasn't no talking your way out of it!

Makes Me Violent is different because it's not talking about a personal type of violence, it's talking about an anger targeted towards the state. We're living in a country that will tell us not to be violent: you see them on the news talking about violent groups are taking over theses protests or demonstrations. Meanwhile, the country is facilitating violence all around the world, d'you know what I mean?!

Allowing weapons manufacturers to operate, in any capacity, on British soil, is a violent act. But they tell us not to be violent as a population – we as the state can be violent but you as a people should be pacified. Just watch your organised sports and just shut up.

This country is guilty of *so much*. It is guilty for the actions that it has taken on my ancestors, and it's guilty for what it is allowing to continue in Palestine, it's guilty for the war crimes committed from 2001 onwards in the Middle East. It's guilty for so much violence, there is so much violence attached to this country.

And that song kind of talks about how all of that makes me feel. I think a lot of people want to burn something down, right? They want a change in this country and it's like, how do we get change if our voices are not being listened to? Well, then our actions must be seen. There's a Jamaican saying, "who can't hear, must feel" – and so if this country can't hear us, as a people, it must feel us...

Bobby Vylan is one half of the band Bob Vylan. Their latest single – Makes Me Violent – is out now and their latest album – Humble as the Sun – is out on 5th April.

@bobbyvylan



Among the Trees

By Rowan Powell

Across settler-colonial contexts, the planting and clearing of trees are practices that are waged as acts of war. This is evident in the scorched earth tactics of the Israeli state: the destruction of olive groves, diverting, drying and desecrating water supplies, cutting off access to harvesting, eradicating swamp land by mass planting Eucalyptus, white phosphorus shelling across Palestine and southern Lebanon rendering the ground uncultivable. The violence of settler planting rings out in the call to ‘make the desert bloom’. As with the Israeli propaganda slogan ‘a land without people for a people without land’ the call for life is truly a call for death, falsely projecting a lifeless empty space over flourishing lifeworlds. Palestinian communities stand in defence of their land, and on a deeper level, in defence of the very relationships of care to land, and against the commodification of life of all forms.

Ecological warfare tactics used against Palestine go hand in hand with expropriation, dispossession and ‘the buying and selling of the earth.’ The tactics of ecological warfare seen today in Palestine draw on hundreds of years of a very English form of green imperialism.

At the turn of the 1600’s, ship building was a matter of urgency as England began consolidating imperial warfare in Ireland while expanding its colonial gaze to Africa and across the Atlantic. Once home to thousands of old oak, the New Forest was one particular site of contestation. Oak trees take around 50 years to reach maturity, and the trees required for ship masts often longer, each ship requiring between 500-5,000 mature trees. Multiple laws were passed by the Crown to enclose land, turning these woodlands into cash crops while clearing land for ‘efficient’ timber planting in service of the colonial Navy.

Further laws were introduced to curtail the millennia-old modes of being in relationship to trees. For example, pollarding, a pruning method encouraging the growth of a renewable head of branches suitable for firewood, stood in direct opposition to the cultivation of shipping timber. Pollarding was outlawed by an Act of Parliament in 1698. Trees were often marked with a broad arrow known as ‘the King’s Mark’ designating trees across the country as property of the Crown.

Criminalisation and woodland destruction was resisted with fervour. In England the protests of the Western Rising from 1626 to 1632 raged against the “disafforestation” and fenland drainage ordered by Charles I. People persisted in newly criminalised

activities on which their lives depended: walking became trespassing or vagabondage; tending to trees and collecting wood became property damage or theft. Rural communities also collectivised to reverse the architectures of enclosure by routinely breaking hedges, filling ditches, tearing down fences, jamming pumping machinery and interrupting the work of surveyors.

John Evelyn, founding member of the Royal Society and concurrently member of the Council for Foreign Trade and Plantations (whose familial wealth was gained through the gunpowder trade) wrote feverishly in the 1660’s about the value of tree planting in post-civil war England. Not only was he concerned about the production of suitable timber for the imperial navy, he saw the precision of tree planting in rows in contrast to the disorder and chaos of ancient forests, marsh lands and fens. Relationships formed on tending to trees, plants and waterways were supplanted in favour of mappable, predictable and calculable organisation. These developments, driven by the speculation of financial markets, ran alongside the introduction of comprehensive slave codes in Caribbean colonies such as Barbados (1661) aimed at the ‘better ordering and governing’ of enslaved populations.

Barbados was intensely deforested by English planters who, arriving on the island in 1625, cleared so systematically that only one small woodland remained by 1665. The destruction of trees made way not only for plantation crops like sugar, but also reduced strategic outposts for maroonage, both in terms of shelter and access to firewood and building material. Soon, across the British empire, the smooth garden lawn of the manor house lined with planted trees became the exemplar of social order in support of an elite leisure class. The forest was to be smoothed, and land everywhere charted, made predictable, legible and calculable for profit.

In Ireland, the Caribbean, North America, India and across the English empire, the valuation of land and the destruction of ancient forests went hand in hand. Once English forests had been pillaged and enclosed, North America was conceived by English elites as the ‘right and proper nursery’ for naval timber supplies. Here again, under George I, the King’s mark appeared, this time on Eastern White Pines. Across North America, trees thousands of years old were uprooted and destroyed. They were replaced with fast growing Eucalyptus imported first to Europe from colonial Australia by Captain Cook. Eucalyptus oil is used in traditional medicines to heal wounds and fungal infections and their leaves can be used as tea

to reduce fevers. Instead of being honoured for these gifts, from the 1800s onwards, these trees were put to work to produce timber for railroads and as quick fuel reserves, while inhibiting the growth of native plants. True to their cleansing spirit, Eucalyptus use in industry became untenable as the trees were prone to catching fire when used on railway lines and areas of roadside.

More recently still, Eucalyptus has been compelled into the settler project of the Israeli state, backed by the British government, planted to rapidly drain swamp land, displacing indigenous communities who have lived in the Hula valley for thousands of years. The sharing of settler tactics is no secret: Zionist Ze’ev Jabotinsky, in his essay “The Iron Wall” (1923), spoke openly about the concurrent techniques of Zionist settlement in Palestine and that of English colonists to seize control of indigenous lands in the Americas. Since 1967, Israeli settlers and authorities have uprooted 800,000 olive trees, with routine attacks on fruit bearing trees and Palestinian farmers assaulted to disrupt harvests – 1,700 trees were attacked in 2020 alone.

The familial love between caretakers of olive trees and grapevines stands against the militarily enforced monocultural planting of the Israeli state. The efficient compulsion of all settler regimes cannot comprehend entangled and mutually sustaining relationships between human and non-human life. Behind thinly veiled calls to ‘make the desert bloom’ Israel pledges to ‘wipe Hamas off the face of the earth’, ‘flatten the ground’ in Gaza, and ‘turn Gaza into a parking lot’, decimating all life in Palestine to speed up access to oil reserves. Meanwhile, land defenders in Palestine and across the globe act against the smooth operation of capitalist flows, shaking off colonial order by refusing to abandon life ways and living trees, thousands of years old. Continuing to tend to the trees in the face of oppression has always gone hand in hand with jamming the machines that come to destroy them.

As Karim Wafa Al-Hussaini writes:
after treating our farms
they wondered why
the trees stopped growing
who’s going to tell them
that plants can only be fed
with water
not blood

Rowan is a writer and researcher from South West England, currently living in Oakland, California.

GLOBALISE



An Old Olive Tree in Kaubar Village Taken during the first Intifada (meaning “shaking off”). 1989.

From November 1987 to October 1991, Palestinians carried out the Al-Fijara Intifada, which means the “Uprising of the Stones”. During the rebellion, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip governed themselves with grassroots committees devoted to tasks such as education, health care and agriculture. Although a formal leadership council emerged one or two months after the intifada’s start, the majority of actions remained decentralized.

the INTIFADA

Luddites, Buddhism & the Machine

By Grove

As technology in the outer world develops exponentially, can our inner worlds keep pace?

One man’s convenience is another’s exploitation, and our need for dopamine keeps the big wheel turning. From extensive and brutal cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the physically-tagged and overworked workers of Amazon.com, and the 7 year long battle of union-busting against Deliveroo drivers – all around us we see examples of people en masse avoiding uncomfortable truths of dire working conditions to benefit from the fruits of their labour.

Where does that leave our collective psyche? Algorithms and marketing get smarter, while we become more mindless and question-less. I say this from no place of purity. I’m just as wrapped in The Machine’s relentless churn, following that dangling carrot and feeding it a valuable currency: **attention**. The Machine is the learning, consuming organism that turns data into dollars. Surveillance capitalism mixed with “oh cool, I’ve always wanted an earwax-cleaner with a camera on the end.”

Within this algorithmic machine realm, humanity must be practised or it risks fading. With each passing generation, behaviours necessary to our mental and physical survival can wash away like old symbols etched into sand.

“This is where the luddites had it right...”, some old geezer at the pub interjects.

The luddites?
With my limited understanding, that was someone unable to use technology, or living without it in an anachronistic, half-baked Amish way. Inept with a computer, too stubborn to learn... kinda like a vinyl collecting Dad in the 2000s.

Scratching deeper, the history of the real Luddites – a decentralised political/labour collective composed of textile workers in early 19th century England – is much more compelling and radical than we might expect from the modern colloquial use of the word. In fact, the rebellious spirit of Luddism has much to offer in teaching us about courage through their dramatic pull to **action**.

$$\text{attention} + \text{intention} + \text{action} = \text{POWER}$$

Lessons from the Luddites

Luddism was a fascinating movement taking place at the intersection of the struggle for workers’ rights and responses to the new industrial technology being introduced at the time – which was affecting the livelihoods of skilled workers.

Their rejection of technology was actually, at its core, a rejection of the consequences these new forms of automation were having on them and their communities. They believed that this technology should have been benefiting the common people of 19th century Northern England, not just the textile factory owners – who were using it to hire fewer people for less money, and increase their profits.

They did a lot more than just smash up machines – their most famous and symbolic *modus operandi*. They went to war with The Machine itself. In their pursuit of equitable conditions, the Luddites advocated for workers’ pensions, a minimum wage, and adherence to basic labour standards. Sounds familiar, right? All their demands are ever-relevant today as Deliveroo “continue to operate a system that can pay riders as little as £2 an hour... 70+ hour working weeks, and... exposes riders to health and safety risks” (The Guardian).

The Luddites’ initial attempts at negotiation with factory owners, in which they proposed exceedingly reasonable measures such as minimum prices and phased introduction of new textile machines, were wholly rejected. Frustrated, they resorted to smashing machines, viewing it as a last stand against the disruption caused by technological advancements.

The Luddite uprising, commencing in the autumn of 1811, saw the destruction of hundreds of machines monthly. After five to six months, the government’s enormously fierce counter-reaction shows how serious a threat the movement was to the status quo. The iron fist of the government hit hard, fast, and brutally. 12,000 troops were dispatched, quashing the rebellion with the full might of the King’s army, and enacting punishment through execution and exile.

It’s not a “happy ending” by any stretch of the imagination, but the POWER that these activists embodied with their actions has inspired and informed activists ever since. The legacy of the Luddites is still with us today, whether that be material or emotional, despite the written history of the victors prevailing. They teach us a key lesson: that the benefits of technology must be shared by all who interact with it, not just hoarded by a profit-seeking elite. And we must **act** when that is out of balance.

Is a rise in “modern-day” Luddites on the horizon? People who see the damage of the outer world technological development and choose to take their **attention** away, and take others’ **attention** away in the process? Richard Conniff wrote for The Smithsonian, “It’s already happening in the form of computer viruses, cyberworms and other malware – to disrupt the technologies that trouble them. Recent targets of suspected sabotage include the London Stock Exchange and a nuclear power plant in Iran.”

In the situation we find ourselves in now, garments and textiles are no longer the central product – we are. In questioning our role as the product from which others profit, perhaps the most effective means of ‘seizing the means of production’ is to collectively disengage, turn off our attention, and withhold our POWER.

Buddhism & Inner Resistance

Over the past few years, I have immersed myself in meditative practice on-and off. It takes practice and intention but, when that aligns, I experience a whole body sensation that is deeply connected to existence and the world. I can imagine how humans conceptualised the world-wide web from this experience, and think a lot of our external technologies come from this rich inner world of consciousness.

The Buddhist Centre explains, “The basic tenets of Buddhist teaching are straightforward and practical: nothing is fixed or permanent; actions have consequences; change is possible... It teaches practical methods which enable people to realise and use its teachings in order to transform their experience, to be fully responsible for their lives.”

Now, there are much finer details that are complex, deep and varied between branches of Buddhist practice – so take this as a more simplistic analysis of an enormous school of thought.

The practice of mindfulness urges us to detach from the ceaseless flow of information and reconnect with our inner sense of intention and morality. Buddha says “Meditation brings wisdom; lack of meditation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom.”

It is also said by Buddha, “Three things cannot hide for long: the Moon, the Sun and the Truth” – the latter being the most powerful source of resistance that we can harness in modern day society. To have the self-discipline, the internal power and the long-term contentment of truly knowing ourselves when The Machine seeks to integrate with our being.

- Meditation
- Reflection
- Ritual and devotion
- Ethics
- Mind and body alignment

As we navigate the digital landscape, these Buddhist practises are all important for us to attain the innerstanding that our worth is not tethered to productivity, nor is our identity confined to the virtual realms we inhabit. Mindfulness becomes a tool for navigating the distractions imposed by the The Machine, allowing us to reclaim agency over our attention, time, and, ultimately, our humanity.

Philosophers, psychologists and neuroscientists have attempted to delve into the impact of modern technology on our psyche. As legendary psychologist B.F. Skinner mused, “The real problem is not whether machines think, but whether men do.” While people worry about AI gaining sentience, the real issue may be in retraining our own. In this era of constant connectivity, Skinner’s words prompt reflection on the potential consequences of outsourcing our cognitive and emotional experiences to the digital realm.

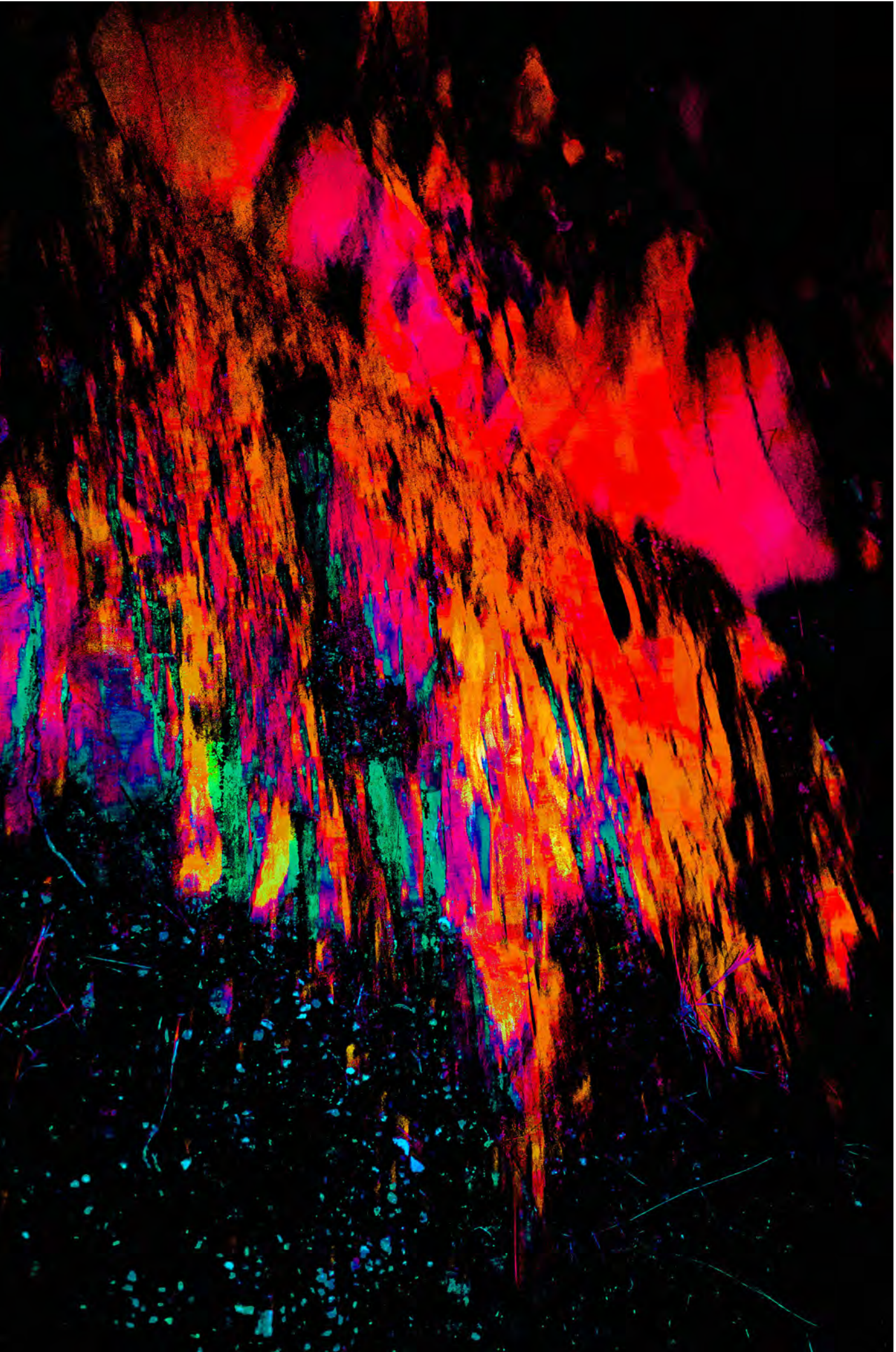
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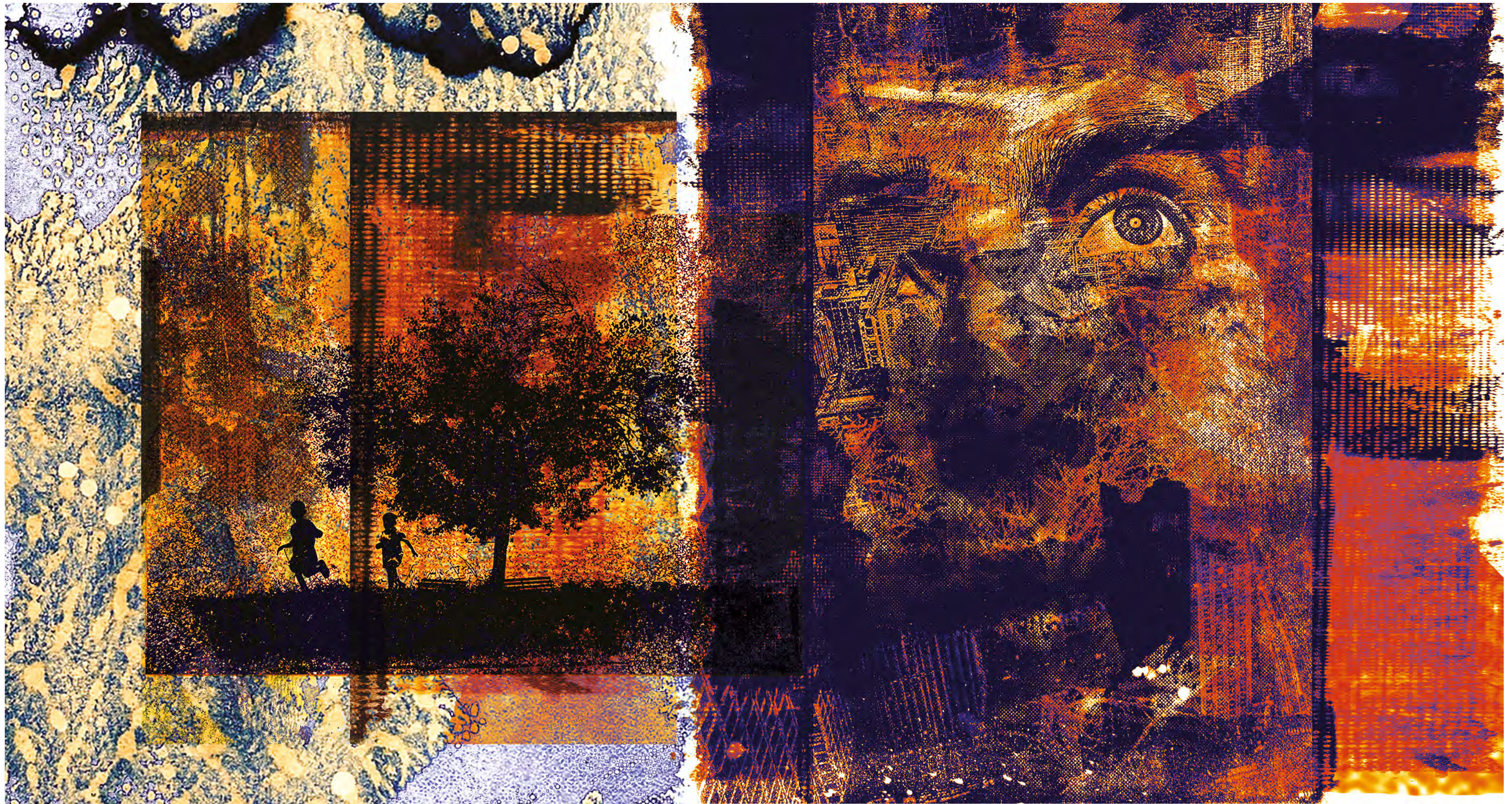
I don’t propose a rejection of technology, but instead I feel a deep desire for a more conscientious and humane integration of it into our lives and the lives of workers internationally. Progress should be a force for liberation, not oppression, and as we confront The Machine, we must take forward the lessons of the Luddites, look inwards as a daily practice to make space within such a saturated world, and forge a path towards humanity developing as technology does, not regressing.

As philosopher of technology Lewis Mumford wrote in his 1967 book *The Myth of The Machine*, “...but for those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out.”

Grove is a music artist from Bristol

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Abolish the Family

By *Sophie Lewis*

We can all see that the overdeveloped world is in the grip of a ‘care crisis.’ Life expectancies are going down, people are working themselves sick, no one can comfortably afford adequate housing, and governments have decimated social services, such as shelters and refuges for battered women and fugitive queer youth. A thousand left-feminist ‘care’ manifestoes have bloomed, and no wonder. By cloistering huge numbers of people within the domestic sphere, the pandemic shone a light on the fragility of local webs of mutual aid (and unpaid kin-based care), as well as the inadequacy of global chains of outsourced and commodified care. The family: it isn’t working – no, not even the bourgeois one with all its supplements, maids, and other appendages.

Op-eds also came thick and fast in the mainstream press in 2020 wondering if ‘the nuclear family was a mistake’ only to fall back on the ‘extended’ family model as a panacea. Pundits seemingly agreed, at least for a moment, that the market leaned too heavily on the (still gendered) services of the private household. Still, the solutions proposed – get a bigger dinner table, let grandma and grandpa move in – were much, much too timid, predictably. Let’s face it: while COVID exacerbated them, the so-called ‘shadow pandemics’ of elder and child abuse, domestic violence, isolation, mental ill-health, and a phenomenon UNICEF calls child ‘regression,’ already existed, simply because of capitalism. Part of destroying capitalism, however, is family abolition.

To speak of ‘reforming’ or ‘expanding’ the family rather than ‘abolishing’ it sounds more congenial to most of us. But it makes no sense to try to enlarge what is essentially a system of organised scarcity. Capital depends on the free gifts of familial reproduction. This means that market society depends on ‘familism’ (a fact that the apparent ‘naturalness’ of marriage – and genetics-based norms of custody, habitation and inheritance – handily conceals). There isn’t ‘no alternative.’ Meals, clean clothes and human beings could all be manufactured differently. The overwork we experience in the private home is naturalised, not natural.

Family values are bourgeois economics writ small. For a couple of centuries, the family has functioned as a source of almost infinite free labour for bosses and states. It’s one thing to talk about ‘recognising’ and ‘valuing’ all this labour. I’m more interested in asking: why should we continue to house and reproduce ourselves in this atomised way? The family blackmails us into working shitty jobs (for love of ‘our’ kids) until we’re dead, yet many of us suspect it needn’t be like this. For a growing number of people young and old – including some participants in the mass anti-productivity trend known as the Great Resignation or Big Quit – revisiting the ancient revolutionary demand ‘abolish the family’ with an open mind in 2024 is intuitive. Wasn’t it precisely the economic ideology of ‘family’ that drove wage workers (perversely) to threaten their loved ones’ lives by going out to work for their sakes during lockdowns?

I detect, in the air, a faint yet unmistakable desire to ‘communistise’ care. In Philadelphia, where I live, a few neophyte family-abolitionists have been reading the 1970s feminist utopia *Woman on the Edge of Time* (reissued in 2019) together. In author Marge Piercy’s town of Mattapoisett, pregnancy itself is socialised, and kids are nurtured by specialist ‘kidbinders’ but

also mothered genderlessly by all. Dystopian times have the potential to inspire utopian conversations about how we actually want to feed ourselves collectively, layout our cities, spend our days, and cohabit with the nonhuman world. During WWII, English government experts stated publicly that the production of individual meals by individual housewives was ‘wasteful both in economic and nutritional terms’ (wartime socialism!). People briefly got to eat in ‘British Restaurants.’ Obviously, the logic behind decommodified communal dining still holds in peacetime – as anyone involved in Food Not Bombs initiatives could tell you.

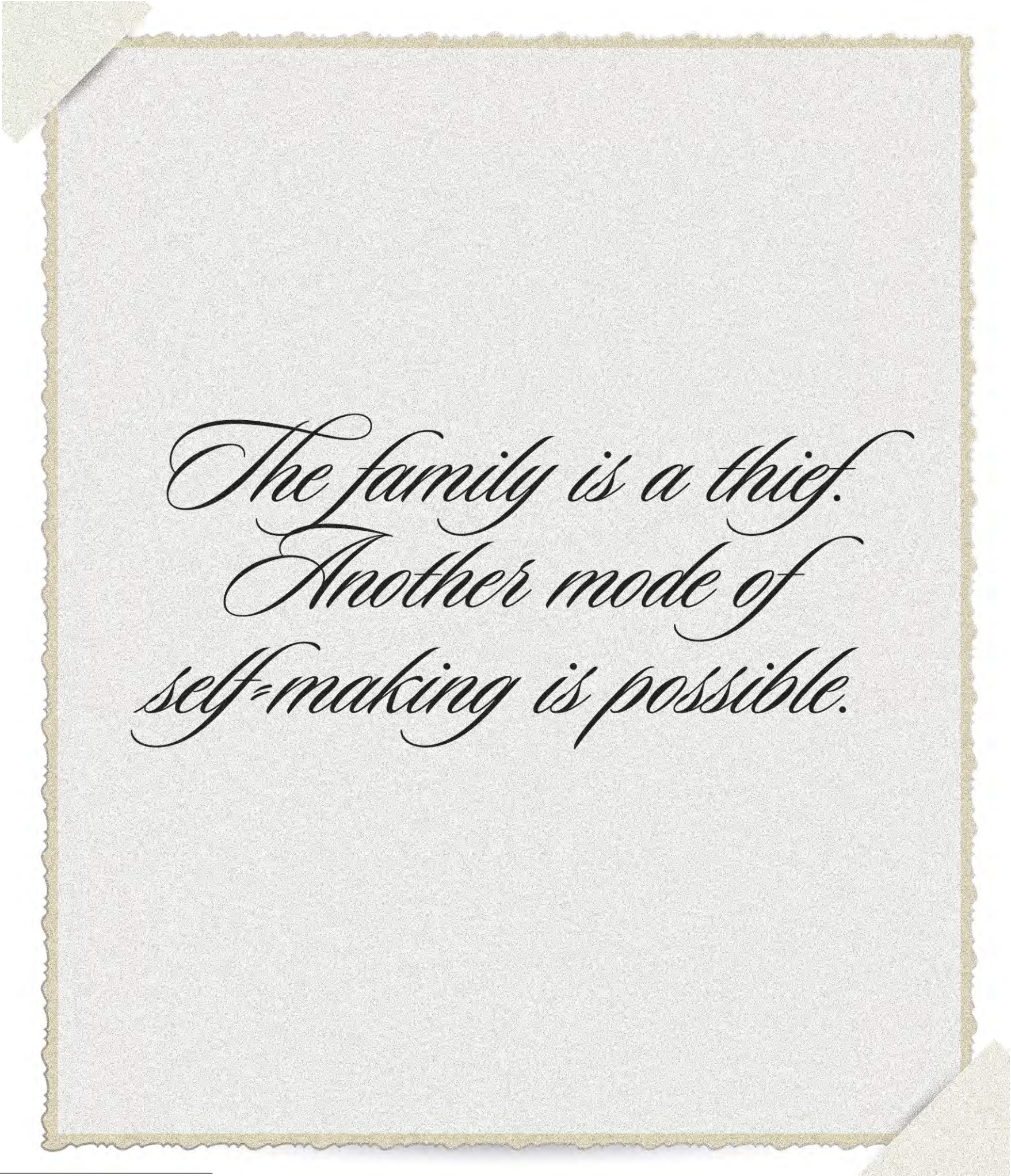
OK, but perhaps you are thinking: how could anyone call for ‘abolishing the family’ when so many non-white families are specifically targeted by racist and/or settler-colonial states, and ripped apart? The answer to this, to my mind, is that the slogans ‘Stop Separating People’ and ‘Let People Be Together’ are at least as good as ‘Abolish Family Policing’ and ‘Keep Families Together.’ Why invoke ‘the’ family when fighting the police, when we can be less exclusive and more precise? (I expand on this point in *Abolish the Family*, published by Salvage in 2022.)

To be clear: magicking away the family while retaining class, sexism, racism and imperialism would not be family abolition: it would simply lead to mass death. Not having a family is a death sentence for many already. But that doesn’t mean we have to ‘replace’ the family with some other comparable institution. In the eighties, Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh suggested we should ‘put nothing in the place of the family.’ What we need, they said, ‘is not to build up an alternative to the family’ but ‘to make the family less necessary.’ A reliable commons of care would mean that our kinmaking could be economically uncoerced, i.e., more free.

By aiming at the universal provision of a baseline for everyone – shelter, healthcare, food, free movement across borders – family abolition aims at removing the elements of coercion that currently inflect our ‘choices’ about where, how, why, and with whom we live. To deprivatise the majority of reproductive resources (from laundries to kitchens to crèches) would empower people of all ages to choose and more actively shape their own households.

Family abolition is not, then, about separating people but about joining us together. It has nothing to do with removing, in a vacuum, the one and only support system many of us have got. Instead, it’s a demand for the conditions of possibility for our relationships to flourish and multiply.

It is impossible to abolish the family on its own, but the good news is that every campaign and struggle – ecological, anti-carceral, or queer – can benefit from the realisation that the family is actually a thief, a stay on the flow of care in the world, rather than care’s supreme source. Another mode of self-making is possible.



Sophie Lewis is a writer, speaker and teacher, and the author of *Abolish the Family: a Manifesto for Care and Liberation* (Verso, 2022) and *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (Verso, 2021)

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Dismantled by Design

– an Anti-Fascist Screen-Printing Story

By *Dave Springer*

I was born in Birmingham into a ready-made gang – a gang that shared the same blood – an Afro Caribbean immigrant family in ’66. My screen-printing story is entwined with and inspired by tales of my oldest brother, Benjamin Zephaniah, radical thinker of a sister, Joyce, and the other six of my siblings.

Two of my brothers, Tippa and Marcus, were in a collective called Negus in Birmingham, working with black youth. Joyce was part of the radical feminist group Birmingham Black Sisters. My family was different from the rest of the community: there would always be pan-African newspapers, literature on central American conflicts, Greenham common and Irish republicanism leaflets littered around the house.

Benjamin, Tippa and Marcus became serious Rastafarians and they moved into a squat in Handsworth called the House of Dread. I would go there on weekends to visit them. Sitting in the corner just listening to reasoning sessions while they were playing really good music. My brother Paul wasn’t into the whole reggae thing, he was unique. He was cool, going to see concerts like The Sex Pistols, Springsteen and the Stones. Joyce was into punk and reading communist stuff. The first march I ever went on was with her – it was in London, a CND one. She also took me with her boyfriend to Glastonbury; it was 1982 and cost eight pounds in.

So how did I get into printing? I had moved down to the smoke – Benji, Tippa, Paul and two of my sisters were already there. We were living in a housing coop called Umoja, made up of 35 houses in Newham. I was walking down East Ham High Street, out of work and on the dole, when someone shouted out my nickname and I turned to see a school friend from Birmingham. He knew I was quite good at art, and he had a friend Tyrone White who had a t-shirt company. He spoke with a distinct Jamaican twang and told me to go to a basement in Old Nichol Street, off Brick Lane.

On the stairs it hit me for the first time the smell of ink, the fumes from the curing t-shirts in dryers – really distinct and all new to me. I clocked bootlegged Beastie Boys shirts; it was 86-87, I was a

massive hip-hop fan and loved these bands. Tyrone was black and so were all the staff. He showed me what to do printing-wise and I got the job. The start of my journey.

This black environment, all the conversations, the literature and music we played was great. I was big into Louis Farrakhan, I brought in lots of his tapes and Malcom X ones too. Tyrone was a living legend in the karate world. At 45 he was a heavyweight champion; he could leave you feeling wary but as soon as he smiled, he had you completely at ease. An amazing mentor, I was so fortunate. MA promotions was his company. We did a lot of work for Soul II Soul, as well as bits for shops like Harrods. The mainstay of the business was t-shirts for East End market traders. Quality wasn’t the most important thing – there weren’t even receipts for anything. It was good practice in learning how to print fast under pressure.

I’d heard of this place called Fifth Column printers, and I thought it sounded like some neo-Nazi name. I saw an advert in a fashion magazine and realised they weren’t a bunch of bone head printers. I went for an interview and instantly fell in love with the place. It was a million miles away from the sweat shop printers for East London geezers. Fifth Column felt like it had roots, the place was full of hanging plants above the naturally lighted print room. People sounded happy, had a great vibe, with a good aroma of weed. I set up a job with the manager and printed it; that was the interview and I started the week after.

It had been a coop, and they still had that ethic about them. Loads of anti-fascist posters, anti-apartheid shirts, Water Aid, Amnesty International, Oxfam. Politics was everywhere and I fitted right in there. No need to bring food: the owners shopped every week and there was a fitted-out kitchen, freezer, showers, a laundry room and a huge music system that I took full advantage of for the nine years that I was there. Pay was equal and it was a good wage. It was great, I was learning so much – like water-based techniques requiring more subtle ways of pulling screens. I became the number one printer and also the shop steward.

There was a lot of shit going down in South East London with the National Front. I knew a group of guys who were wanting to meet them toe-to-toe rather than debate things with them. Their ideology was to meet the threat physically and I was happy with that. We would sneak attacks on their pubs: cause some damage to them and a lot of damage to the fascists who were inside. There was a march on the Thamesmead estate, after a young black boy had been murdered. A fascist counter demo was on the same day. We knew we weren’t going to be on the official march so quickly we separated and went to find them, numbers didn’t really bother us. The guys I was with were serious specimens. You didn’t want to meet them anywhere let alone a dark alleyway, they were very dangerous. We caught a few of the opposition; I don’t have no pity for them. It was us or them and we didn’t take any losses that day. I was proud to know that we did something in response to fascist bullies in London.

I returned to Birmingham in 2004 and landed on my feet at Mission Print. I was there for the next 11 years, and I felt at home with the workers there. Mission had an extensive clientele base. Making loads of skateboard merch and lots of flatbed stickers, printed posters and art as well as the textile side of things. They were printing for street artists at that time like Jaime Hewlett, Invader and Faile. It was cool, and shifting the landscape in the early 2000s. A learning curve for me, time to explore new techniques, inks and screens.

At Mission, I printed for Pictures on Walls, the gallery whose roster featured lots of artists including Banksy. They held a pop-up Christmas show called Santa’s Ghetto in London. That’s where my love for printing live with the public started. They would choose the design, and I would show them how to print it there and then. When someone who’s never lifted the squeegee before prints their first t-shirt and walks away with it, it’s magic. It made me feel really good, just to see someone’s expression – the happiness that they’ve taken part in the creative process was a really cool thing to be part of.

In Birmingham, I noticed that there was a lot of racist graffiti around the coach station in Digbeth – the industrial neighbourhood that Mission Print was in. It pissed me off, especially that no one had

taken that shit down or at least painted over it. I had a conversation with Sam, another printer at Mission. We both shared a militant hatred of fascism and racism; he had also set up the first job branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union in the country at Mission.

We started going out in the middle of the night and painting it all over. Putting up our own anti-racist slogans. Trying to lure them out with our work and catch them at it. It’s easy to walk into an area and see stuff like that and feel the whole neighbourhood is racist when it’s really just one guy. He can strike fear into so many people, so I really didn’t like it.

The workers at Mission pretty much ran themselves and it was a good vibe. They made up their own rules and if you fell out of line you were letting everyone down. I’m a kind of OCD person so I liked the aspects of keeping it in order and helping each other out. I’ve always put my faith in that way of working, work as a community and as friends. When you spread ink all-over a squeegee or leave palette knives dirty, you’re being selfish and short-sighted. I think what I took away from Mission was good friendships and helping each other. It was a really cool time in my life.

To this very day, we can see that capitalism is exploitation by design and needs to be dismantled by design. I know that screen printing, connected to resistance, can make this world a more informed, radical place and that’s a good thing.



Dave Springer is a print-worker and anti-fascist from Birmingham.

Never Surrender Hope

By Frank Riot

On 14th October last year, 150,000 people flowed through central London in what would be the beginning of a seismic wave of solidarity with the Palestinian people. While I was in the thick of the crowd, my phone buzzed and as I scanned the number flashing up my heart sank, realising I had forgotten an important birthday. If there is anyone I know who would instantly forgive me for this though, it is Zulu, and my profuse apology was met with his usual endearing chuckle. After explaining where I was, I held the phone up in the air, and from Louisiana state prison, Zulu’s voice joined our chorus of chants for a free Palestine. Through the clunky inmate mailing system we use to stay in touch, which is somewhat reminiscent of 90s Microsoft Email, he told me, “I loved that I could feel the spirit of the crowd protesting”. So, for the coming weeks we made a ritual of using one of the brief phone calls he is allowed to bring his voice to London’s protests for Palestine.

For almost five decades Zulu’s material life has been spent within the colourless barbed wired compound of Louisiana state penitentiary. This sprawling 18,000 acre plot holds a damning place in America’s long, dark history of racially driven brutality. Previously a slavery plantation, it also goes by the name Angola, after the African country from which many thousands were violently snatched to work the land. Although supposedly in a new era, today’s scenes of its predominantly black population disciplined by gun-wielding guards on horseback, as they are forced to farm the fields, could easily be mistaken for former times. Legal through the loophole in the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery but made an exception for labour as criminal punishment, inmates earn just 2 to 40 cents an hour for their backbreaking work. The preservation of its preceding characteristics has earned it the nickname “The last plantation in America”.

Here, Zulu – a descendent of the transatlantic slave trade – spent 37 and a half years alone, in a dreary, windowless 9-by-6-foot cell. One of the longest solitary confinement sentences served in the US, after his well-known friend’s Albert Woodfox. For those long, isolating years, the only time Zulu caught sight of anything beyond what he calls “The shoebox” was the daily hour permitted outside of it. In that hour, a small hallway window where he could faintly trace distant trees was his

sole connection with nature. When the blazing heat of summer hit, his shoebox became a human oven. “It used to get so hot, it felt like your skin was on fire, hot as hell!”, he recalls, as he tells me how he’d splash cold water across the cell floor to rest his body against for relief. He describes the mass incarceration crisis in the US, which currently has approximately 2 million caged, as “a war fought on people with prison bars instead of bombs”. Despite the state’s attempt to break his spirit, he remains one of the most defiantly warm hearted and vibrant souls I know.

“Never surrender hope” are the words I came to know Zulu through. It is a mantra he frequently repeats and lives by, so campaigners fighting for his freedom requested I make it into a poster. For his birthday that year it was remodeled into a card that, frustratingly, never reached his hands, due to the austere rules that heavily restrict what inmates are allowed to receive from loved ones. A video of the card, which still had to be vetted and approved before it landed in his inbox, was the best we could do. A rule that no doubt plumps the annual revenue of JPay, the corporate provider of the prison email system, which made \$19.1 million in 2022. Despite the disappointing restrictions, Zulu responded with a cheerful wide-smiled video full of gratitude. An example of his ability to overlook the bad in favour of the good. I asked him to explain how he maintains his extraordinary positivity, and what he means when he says “Never surrender hope”.

He told me he thinks of fellow inmates he has witnessed crack under the weight of prison induced madness. That he can hear their screams, and he thinks of their families. That if he dares to give up, the system that has manufactured the criminalisation of him and many others will win the racial war against them. He says for that reason he refuses to surrender his hope, and no matter what the system has taken from him, he will never let it take his dignity.

Zulu also attributes acts of solidarity to fuelling his inspiring resilience and fortitude. When he suffered a painful setback on his journey to freedom in 2021, after a court case requesting his release was denied, he says the anguish but also love shared amongst his friends felt “more powerful than an 8.8 earthquake”. Friends who weave his words into

the music they make to circumvent the system that attempts to keep him unseen, or plant a 9 by 6ft garden with vegetation of his choice to visualise an alternative to the prison walls encircling him.

His calls often shrink the frivolous problems occupying my mind, and he has a particular knack for catching me hungover to share how many press-ups he achieved that morning like an impromptu motivational coach. Or sometimes they interrupt a moment of loneliness, and I am grateful for the divine timing. It would be wholly incorrect to think the benefits of friendship with someone incarcerated only go one way.

We take Zulu where we can, and in return he reminds us that there is hope and love even in the darkest of corners if we are willing to find it. In a recent message I described a new piece of art which sits in my room and says, “Love is our greatest strength”. To which he replied “That is correct. I tell you, Frankie, hate may have gotten me on this plantation, but love will set me free”.

Frank Riot is a visual artist and prison abolitionist based in London

frankriot.co.uk



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VENDORS

Name: War

📍 Location: Islington, London



Photos: Emil Lombardo

Where are you selling DOPE?

Highbury, Upper Street, Angel. Highbury is my main place but I kinda float around sometimes – Holloway Road, Archway, up in Highgate. I find that sometimes it's easier to be in one spot. I've got some really nice regulars. And just in general, I think that when people see you trying, just trying to do something – people are more willing to help you when you're trying to help yourself.

Do you ever get any bother?

About 2-3 weeks ago I was actually walking through Highbury and Islington park and I was speaking to a gentleman about the magazine. And then I noticed that some community support police were following me. They started saying "you're not allowed to ask people for money here." I said I'm not asking nobody for money, I'm just trying to sell a magazine, it helps me to support myself. I showed them the legal notice on the back of the bags and he began to read it out in a 'I know I'm right' sort of way. But then when it gets to the last bit where it says "just show them this message and tell them to jog on" – that shut him up. So, I said, would you like an edition, officer?

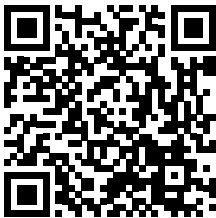
How long have you been a DOPE vendor?

It's a few years now – I've been doing it nearly from the start. I started to actually do this when I came out of prison. I would never knock it, because it's kept me going.

You have your good days and your bad days. But I can speak to people, I'm a people person. For me, I never, ever, ever thought I would sell a magazine. I've always worked, I'm actually a locksmith by trade. I find that it's a really good ice-breaker, because I've really been pushing my art. While I'm out with the mags, I'll also have my art with me. I do stuff to order for people as well.

Tell us about your art.

I do landscapes, mainly pencil drawings, shading – I can do the painting and stuff as well. I've sold quite a few canvases. My most of my drawings are A3. I try and get a little frame or something – recently I've found that the back of an old chest of drawers is a good canvas, you can do a little something on there. People are actually coming up to me now and saying "are you the art guy?"



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