

Why She Doesn't Give A Fuck About Your Insurrection

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A Monday night. New York City. An empty bar.

To the traveler: “How’s shit in Bloomington?”

“Okay. Everyone’s obsessing over this French books, *The Call and The Coming Insurrection*. It’s annoying, ’cause it’s like they’ve forgotten all the feminism and anti-racism we’ve pounded into their heads over the past five or whatever years.”

Leijia laughs. “I feel you.”

“No, you don’t get it. Everyone! It’s this ridiculous insurrectionist bullshit –”

Leijia and I look at each other almost gleefully. “No, we know exactly what you’re talking about.”

The ladies agree: it’s about to fucking explode.

It has already begun to rip from its seams. You begin the chant: “off the sidewalk, into the future!”, but still wonder why we’re convinced it’s so fucking unlikely that our futures will soon converge.

We’re shouting from the same sidewalk, but where you see the potentialities of the street and liberal douchebags scared shitless to challenge their passivity, I notice the identities behind the bodies that remain docile as compared to those stepping off the curb.

Maybe everyday life will remain fucking petty and beyond salvation, but when that everyday life is suffocating our abilities to participate in a struggle for liberation, it’s bullshit to write it off as irrelevant. We are not living an isolated instance of resistance: if history can’t teach us anything else, we should at least realize that our goals must include all forms of liberation.

Fuck your coming to shit only to fight with cops, fuck NYC’s book release party for *The Coming Insurrection*, fuck the specifics of all the shit motivating the writing of this. Let’s talk about rectifying the pseudo-divide between “insurrectionist anarchism” and “identity politics”, reuniting barricades and unshaven legs, bonding riot and grrl.

I don’t want to suggest that starting a fucking vegetable garden will start the rev or that we should stay off the streets and talk about the patriarchy. But if you give a damn at all about making this sustainable and not pissing off approximately 52% of the population, we need to take this shit into account and shift the politics of insurrectionary anarchism into a place of total liberation.

I’d seen him earlier and swore that I’d get into a fight with him by the end of the party. “Thanks for bailing on me twice this week.”

“I’ve been busy, sorry. We’re here now. What did you want to talk about?”

“I heard you said that feminism distracts from the totality.”

“No, I said that you must view feminism in regards to its historical context.”

“I don’t give a fuck about historical context! I give a fuck about the ways in which patriarchy manifests itself now: talking about shits like Hegel won’t solve the fact that people are getting sexually assaulted here and now.”

Anarchas in England invaded a convergence with masks on last week, screaming about sexism while the boys talked about focusing on the Man. You say we should focus on the totality, but what is it but the totality that allows for the biopolitical manipulation and exploitation of the female body?

The totality doesn’t only manifest itself in bosses; it is present in all the oppressive bullshit women have deal with every day. You’ve said he’s a “nice guy,” a “good organizer” – well, maybe he is, but if he’s serial anarcho-rapist, I don’t give a fuck. You notice the totality when the cops beat the shit out of you after you made the choice to fight – I saw it walking to work yesterday, at the party last night, in your bedroom this morning, and in every kitchen we’ve ever shared.

The word totality is damn near perfect specifically because it is able to etymologically capture the fact that power exists on political, social, and individual dimensions. A totality is not fundamentally inescapable; we all seek to create points of contention and through this, liberation – in spite of the totality of it all. But whose definition of conflict and of liberation are accepted as valid, and whose are disregarded? And who defines totality, and its manifestations and distractions?

Maybe we should recognize a violently-defended “safe space” as being as library as a riot – at least in terms of throwing off the yoke of complete socio-political manipulation and fighting for our collective freedom from the oppressions and expectations of modern society.

Maybe we should question the basis of the liberation we aim for: you read shit that says “the more anonymous I am, the more present I am,” but what does that mean? That I must lose the emotions and experiences that make me who I am in the process of becoming a revolutionary actor?

It is my ennui that draws me to the street, my resentment that throws the brick, my desire that makes the nights in jail bearable – and these emotions don’t come from nowhere. Are all emotions beyond nihilist anger invalid and antirevolutionary? Because if they are, the lucidity and liberation I find through them are as well.

And if you accept these sentiments as valid, then why do you not find valid the urgency with which I pursue retribution for all the wrongs the totality has wrought, including the patriarchy? When you hear about striking workers, you don’t demand proof of the boss’s wrongs – you instead ask how to best support the workers. Why the fuck wouldn’t it occur to you to ask the same question when you hear that a dude’s been called out for abuse or assault?

They say that the totality continues to expand its scheme of control – and clearly, revolutionary feminists fight this as hard as you do, considering ourselves a part of a heterogeneous material force against all forms of social control. And the “feminists” demanding equal pay for their wage slavery? As much our enemies as yours.

“Yeah, we’ve been trying to figure out why we’re so alienating to women and people of color. But we keep trying to do it over beers, which is what created the problem in the first place. It’s just that we never think to call girls outside our mostly-dude social circle to talk politics or anything.”

“If you think that’s what y’all think the problem is, then you have a totally skewed perception of reality. The issue isn’t that you talk strategy over beers. It’s that the drinking itself – or the way that y’all do it – is alienating. It’s that you don’t give a fuck about politics because you’re more focused on getting some when there are ladies in the room. It’s that none of you give a fuck about all the shit we’re working on besides trying to start some kind of goddamn insurrection. It’s that you just don’t give a fuck, period.”

It isn’t worth mentioning that the sexualization of every woman in the scene constitutes a manifestation of the patriarchy. But we can’t ignore the fact that every criticism ever raised against radical white boys is back with a vengeance... Fuck, couldn’t we have figured this shit out the first – or second, or third – time around?

To be entirely clear, I’m not trying to pull some neofeminist or essentialist bullshit where I suggest that all direct action is a form of violence rooted in the patriarchy, or that violence is macho, or that struggle itself is somehow “masculine.” (ahem.) Maybe the worst result of such reductions is that they place these tools – tactics, actions, strategies – in a specific domain that is entirely male. Tools that are, in fact, objects, to be acted on, rather than subjects, which act upon.

Nevertheless, while you can say all you want about the emotional aspects of the riot (“all negativity coming to a head,” etc.), there is a simplistic masculine nihilism based on a lack of emotion at play in blind and mindless destruction. This is the macho part: the lack of subjective sensitivity. This nihilism: smashing the windows of non-luxury cars parked on the street.

It’s not your goddamn penis. It’s the idea that boys don’t cry. It’s the de-emotionalizing effects of a male socialization, which in turn allows for a complete dismissal of emotional – “feminine” – concerns.

Remember the second New School occupation, when we broke in at 5 a.m. and nineteen ended up arrested? Remember how there were only four ladies inside? I don’t think the action was alienating to women. Instead, it was the complete lack of

conversation surrounding it and its subjectivities. Like when you say shit like “don’t be a baby!” instead at least making an attempt to take care of the people you know – yeah, maybe it isn’t the fucking insurrection in and of itself, but supporting folks in your community completely contradicts every commodified notion of ‘caring’ we know.

But fuck coddling, the action itself needs to be addressed as well. Throwing newspaper boxes in the street feels good, fine. But if it’s a bunch of rich white dudes doing it, then it’s as liberal as having a non-stop meeting during an occupation – because you are precisely replicating the situation you claim to be fighting.

Acts that resonate towards insurrection must fall into narrow parameters that exploit and address altogether material and tangible conditions. Mindless destruction fails to meet these simple criteria. It’s this kind of shit that’s most often written off as macho and alienating – risk with no clear goal or strategy.

More importantly, there’s the fact that sometimes it doesn’t matter what the fucking action is, because other, closer, more salient emotion overwhelms and gets in the way. Can you really say it’s petty when someone can’t come to a “street party” (i.e. militant action) because the asshole who used to beat the shit out of them will be there? Maybe it would be radical if we got to the root of the problem and just banned that person for life, regardless of “accountability.”

The Invisible Committee has proposed that liberation occurs through anonymity, that shaking off your responsibilities and all that bullshit makes you free. But if we begin with an understanding that identity isn’t the shit you buy, or the shit you do to earn money, or anything having to do with the fucking economy, then we have to ask: what the hell is identity? The personal is political, for sure, but is the political ever personal? Yeah: it’s those experiences of the totality that provoke an individual emotional response.

Erasing all that shit can be productive in fighting an internalized repressive power. But communities cannot exist without an aspect of accountability that is invalid with an utmost goal of anonymity. Anonymity can never be harmonious. You are anonymous from the lump sum of individual “imprisonments” (in the sense of things that deny you liberation). For some, this includes some backlash you fucking deserve – which is why it is completely impossible to hold people accountable within this framework.

And more urgently, women in the scene can never become ‘anonymous’ as long as men in the scene continue to treat them as sex objects or force them to think about sexual violence at what are supposed to be sites of liberation. We need it to be the exception, not the rule, that the woman leaves the scene when a hetero couple breaks up. We need people not to dismiss feminism as liberal bullshit, or an excuse to attack dudes. We need folks to make accountability a priority. We need community.

Solidarity within a single moment, with a single collective goal, depends on

very little – and will mean something for the revolutionary insurrection itself, but if we're talking about riots and street fighting, the politics of long-term solidarity are more urgent. While the process of liberating provides for a common goal that more or less overrides the need for recognition of singular identities, when the moments pass, it is exactly those ties between singular identities which allows the fires to continue to burn.

A few closing notes, probably in my own defense more than anything else:

First of all, it cannot and should not remain unsaid that this is written from a specific perspective that is extremely privileged and undoubtedly biased in a number of ways. Most obviously, issues and struggles of folks other than cisgender women who are violently oppressed by the patriarchy are not addressed. I beg the reader's leniency in recognizing that the reasons for this were for succinctness rather than invalidation.

Also, while I might have clarified or modified some aspects, the gists of the conversations quoted herein did in fact occur. However, historians take note: each conversation occurred over beers or booze (some more than others) and thus my recollections might be a little further from the truth than otherwise.

Finally, I want to point out that I don't see this as a war against dudes. If I did, your house would be on fire. This is meant to be the beginning of a conversation. Granted, a handful of written words will never replace a long conversation over too many cigarettes, but it's an imperfect way to address a problem when our time is better spent doing other things. To that end: beet at riseup dot net, let's chat.

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