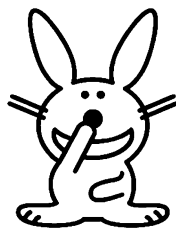


On the recent occupations

W. & T.C.H.

REDISTRIBUTE
VIOLENCE
NOT
WEALTH



Let me take
that blood off
your hands

CAPITALISM
IS MURDERING
MILLIONS
OF
PEOPLE!

I don't need to hear this on my way to/from work.

Don't moralize at me while I'm looking at my iPhone

Yes, stop causing a fuss, we're all fine here.

What makes you so sure of this? You're not being murdered.



MORAL OF STORY:
Anybody who says anything is wrong is wrong. There is only one way things can be and that is the way they are. If you don't like it, there is something wrong with you. GOODBYE

on the recent occupations


A COMMUNIQUE FROM THE
WOMEN AND TRANS* CONSPIRACY
FROM HELL



HALLOWEEN 2011
BALTIMORE, AMERIKKKKKKA

bmorereadinggroup@gmail.com

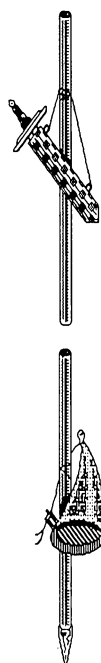


This occupation is inevitable, and yet we need to make it. There is no way for capital to continue its reign – this is clear. And yet, capital will not behead itself: we know that we need to struggle if we are to overcome it.  This statement is not a rejection of the occupation – as if it could be avoided, as if the present conditions were not so grave, as if we haven't all had enough. But there are things that need to be said. We submit this critique in the deepest solidarity with those people of color, women, queer, and trans* folk that have endured this occupation while laboring on making it more livable from the inside.

Before anything else, we must frame this movement within a prior occupation, that of white settlers on Nanticoke and Susquehannock land. The genocide, expulsion, and dispossession of native peoples is foundational to the ascent of the US as a center of global capital; we cannot reclaim this country, only acknowledge it as a unit of capitalist destruction.



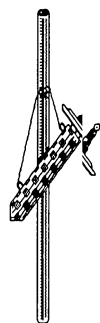
“We are the 99%”



If we want to use this figure to underscore how far polarized the rich and the poor are today, fine. But those among us who don't homogenize so easily get suspicious when we hear calls for unity. What other percentages hide behind the nearly-whole 99%? What about the 16% of Blacks that are “officially” unemployed, double the number of whites? The 1 out of 8 Black men in their twenties that on any given day will be in prison or jail? The quarter of women that will get sexually assaulted in their lifetime? The dozens of queer, trans*, intersex, and gender-variant folks that are murdered each year, 70% of whom are people of color? Is a woman of color's experience of the crisis interchangeable with that of the white man whose wage is twice hers? Are we all Troy Davis? As austerity grinds down on us, who among us will go to prison? Who will be relegated to informal, precarious labor? Whose benefits will be cut, whose food stamps canceled or insufficient? Who will be evicted? Who will be unable to get health care, to get hormones or an abortion?



We are critiquing this occupation for assuming we are there, while we have so far been left out. We're not asking for better wages or a lower interest rate. We're not *asking* for the abolition of capital, because we know that whatever's next will be something we make, not something we ask for. Even if we don't feel safe there, even if what little analysis and structure that has emerged thus far makes clear we are not a part of this movement, we radical feminist, anti-racist revolutionaries are going to keep bringing our bodies and ideologies to the occupation, for the same reason that women of color support and attend Slutwalk despite critiquing its white-centered politics: because we see potential for building resistance in our communities and affecting material change. But for this potential to be realized, we have to work together in solidarity with the understanding that unity must be constructed with an analysis of difference, not just plastered blindly over inequalities. Consider this text a chip at the plaster.



Anti-finance or anti-capital?

Nothing is more clear in the American debt-scape than racial character of everyday finance – but it is sexed, too. And not only because women, like people of color, were disproportionately solicited for subprime mortgages (across all income levels). There is no better indicator that women and people of color cannot be assimilated to the faceless borrowers of the 99% than the strategic location of payday loan offices, tax-preparation outlets, and banks that specialize in subprime mortgages. A map of foreclosures, of adjustable-rate mortgages, a topography of interest rates: all these overlap neatly on the demographics of racialized and feminized poverty. It's not a coincidence: today, race and gender are not grounds to deny credit, but indexes of risk. And as long as risk can be commodified, as long as volatility can be hedged against and profited from, our color and gender will be blamed for the inevitable collapse. This is the absurdity of everyday finance. *We* are the risk? *We* are the predators? Finance's favorite game is the schoolyard refrain: "I know you are but what am I?"

We know that economic crises mean more domestic labor, and more domestic labor means more work for women. Dreams of a "mancession" fade quickly when one realizes male-dominated sectors are simply the first to feel a crisis – and the first to receive bailout funds. The politics of crisis adds to the insult of scapegoating the injury of unemployment and unwaged overwork. And the nightmare of fertility politics, the ugly justification of welfare and social security "reforms." "Saving America's families," the culture war rhetoric that clings to heteronormativity, to patriarchy, in the face of economic meltdown. Crisis translates politically to putting women in their place, while demanding queers and trans people pass or else. And the worse this crisis gets, the more the crisis is excused by a fiction of scarcity, the more the family will be used to promote white supremacy by assaulting women's autonomy under the guise of population control. The old Malthusian line: it's not a crisis, there's just not enough – for them.



Let's be clear: Finance is not the problem.

Finance is a precondition and a symptom, a necessary and contradictory part of capital. Deregulation, globalization, deindustrialization: none of these words can provide a substantial explanation for the present context. Each is only a surface phenomena of capital's tendency to make its own systemic reproduction increasingly difficult for itself. Crisis and the reconcentration of wealth among capitalists is not only regular but necessary; the tendency to financialization has many historical precedents. Genoa in the 1557-62 looks like the Dutch Republic in 1780-83; Britain in 1919-21 looks like the US today. But even if financial booms and busts are as old as mercantilism, there is a qualitative change to the nature of these crises over the course of the eighteenth century, when capitalist production is imposed on the British countryside. Capitalist production creates an unparalleled need for credit, an unprecedented need to consolidate and centralize capital, a grotesque scale of fungible assets that strives to make everything solid melt into the sophistry of mathematics. Asset-backed securities and credit default swaps didn't make this crisis, they only allowed it to heat up and billow out of control.

For those that recall the warm and golden age of American industrialism with dewy-eyed nostalgia: this crisis began with the failure of US industry in the late sixties. Real wages have been stagnant since then. The oil crisis of 1973 was the hinge; we are living in the declension of US global power. There's no going back, no exchanging unproductive finance for good old-fashioned productive exploitation. Or is there? Today, American industry is indeed firing up again, as capital that had long flown from its shores returns to find wages lower than the so-called third world. "Reshoring": a name for the farce that follows the tragedy of the post-war boom.

History insists on the eradication of capital as the only possibility of preventing crisis. Finance reform and "sanctions" are not enough: we will never see "the military industrial complex dismantled, the police disempowered, and the public sector fulfilling its obligations to the people" by redistributing wealth. Corrupt politicians and greedy financiers are only a superfluous, insulting layer on the thing that is truly condemned: capital, which in our time is inescapable. With this realization, we don't need to occupy Wall street, or any bank. Why was Tahrir square chosen? Was it even chosen at all? We could occupy any corner, any room, any building, and it would carry the social significance of what needs to be either appropriated or destroyed. The better question to pose when deciding what to occupy, is what do we want to inhabit? (On this point, it is worth mentioning that the tactic to occupy has evolved since its recent revival in the 2008 occupation of the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago. What struck students in New York, California, Puerto Rico, London, Athens, etc. about this tactic was that its strategy to re-appropriate equipment, space, and organization could take place without recognition from the authorities. Demands were auxiliary to the best part: the immediate process of retaking control over the means of production.)



Whatever this occupation is, it is not a camping trip from capital -- we are still in the patriarchy, still in a white supremacy, still in a transphobic and disability-loathing society. In these places, assuming we are unified will only obscure the divisions produced by capital, divisions that need to be confronted before anything else.

On the politics of the occupation: liberalism, policing, and uses and abuses of equality

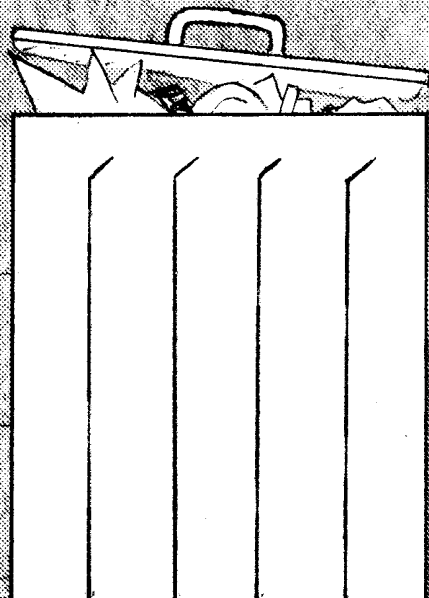
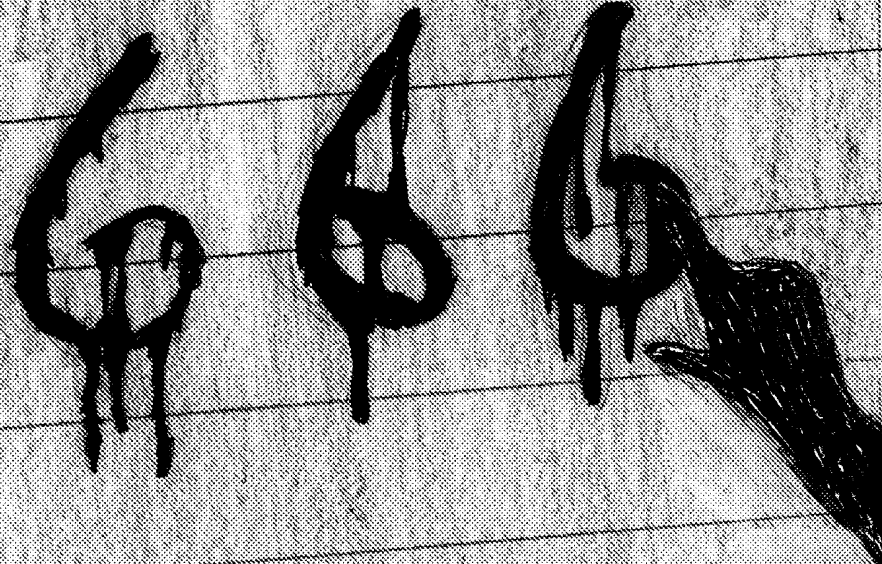
The “99%” rolls their eyes at anyone that takes offense to signs referring to the current economic climate as “Slavery 2.0,” or asserting that “The free hand of the market touched me in a bad place.” Comparing (white) student debt to hundreds of years of violence and forced subjugation, entrenched as a system of enduring systematic racism; mocking sexual assault for effect -- these statements send a clear message to those of us linked to such oppressive acts. By trivializing our experiences, these signs simultaneously control and silence how we talk about our marginalized statuses and traumas. To those of us who hoped for Occupy Baltimore’s status as a safe, anti-oppressive space, we read these signs as “BEWARE.”

While some are already bristling at the “identity politics” of those that are offended by racist, misogynistic, survivor-hating signage, the placards that have been denounced the most loudly are those that attack *capitalism*. Concerns about “public opinion” being able to identify and sympathize with our collective messages abound. These so-called debates actively skew the agenda towards the watered down, apolitical, and (com)modified. GAS play out as if we (the comprehensive “99%”) all endorse these views, but communist, anarchist, and anti-capitalist perspectives are in fact excluded before they are given a chance to be voiced. Meanwhile more privileged niche groups like (hella pro-capitalist) small business owners remain front and center. We who are “taking things too far” get left behind by the “99%”.

As a result of this policing, liberal populism has dominated the occupation’s process, statements, and proto-demands.

A vaguely counter-cultural disposition suits contentless politics perfectly. Liberalism uses platitudes of “unity” and “equality” not to insist that we should act in order to be unified and equal, but to say that we already are -- and as such, should “put aside our differences.” Liberalism refuses to see racism, sexism, and class inequalities as material and systemic, reducing these to the level of individual attitudes of perpetrators and victims. Because liberalism only registers and disciplines individual oppressors, never structures, it cannot account for the systemic biases that enable and justify individuals’ oppressive actions. In the process, the demands made by the oppressed for changes in their actual material conditions are ignored, or worse -- appropriated, co-opted. (Take, for example, so-called “reverse racism”: the idiotic triumph of the liberal individual over history.)





B.P.D.

The police are not “just workers” and they are not our friends

More than anything, the 99% will be divided by our relationship to the cops. They say: in the interests of “radical inclusivity” we should avoid anti-police messaging; the police, after all, are part of the 99% that have seen wages, benefits and pensions cut along with the rest of the public sector. They say: we must remember that the police are people too, and not exclude them from our movement before they’ve had a chance to express solidarity with us. We say: just wait. These arguments assume that an individual can be separated from their institutional/social roles, that a police officer can be engaged with in a purely personal sphere, completely distinct from their occupation as an arm of state repression. A classic liberal tactic, the emphasis on individuals claims to foster our essential unity by “humanizing” the perceived oppressors, but its real intention is to derail a structural analysis of oppressive systems, and invalidate the anger of those experiencing institutional violence. Advocating a cooperative, amiable relationship with the police brushes aside the violence of widespread racial profiling, sexual assault with impunity, the murder of innocents, and the war on drugs by universalizing a white, middle-class position that believes the police really serve and protect.



**ALL
CRITIQUES
ARE
BEAUTIFUL**

And it’s not only about police brutality. How can there be non-violence when there are still police? We need to know that as soon as we present a threat to any element of capital – before this point, even – we will be violently repressed. A peaceful, lawful protest by no means guarantees immunity against arrest and brutality: we only have to look at the women who were penned and maced at #Occupy Wall St. to know that. But unless this knowledge is at the forefront of our minds, the first to be arrested will be those that are most vulnerable to police brutality and to breaches of security. (A journalist in the room is a tip-off to immigration officials, not “good press”.) We must make our movement a safe space for the undocumented, for the homeless,

those with criminal records, and for anyone else for whom contact with the police never takes place on friendly terms. However “nice” a police officer may be to you (FYI: police are often very “nice” to those from the right class and race) does not change the fact that the police are a powerful instrument of violent repression, deployed by a capitalist state to enforce its interests: namely, white supremacy, male domination, ruling class power, and the limitless pursuit of profit.

Why say “99%” when you mean “me”?

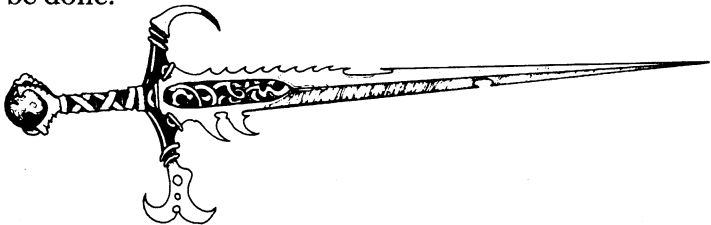
The reason #Occupy Baltimore has not yet been anti-capitalist is because, for all its rhetoric of “unity” and “inclusivity”, it is really a movement organized by and for the white middle class. There is a reason why the people most afflicted by capitalism are not coming down to the McKeldin Square. When the organizers act like racism is a “second-tier” issue (for instance, by saying “We don’t have time for that - We need to bring this back to the real issue: finance reform.” As if reinstating Glass Steagall will do a fucking thing!) it becomes clear whose movement this is. Let’s drop the false rhetoric: what’s wrong with the system is not that it isn’t fair to the 99%, but because it isn’t fair to *them*. The disappearing middle class reappears in the concrete environs of the business sector – to better envision the jobs and upward mobility they desperately want. Don’t get us wrong – there can be a lot of good in indignation, discontent, disillusionment. But we need to exorcise the living ghost of the middle class: the spirit of not giving a fuck who you fuck over. Why say “99%” when you really mean “me”?

And you know how it goes: the neutral “me” is the white dude with all the time in the world (we have to say it: the ideal occupier). Whiteness and maleness have been duly reinforced as the not-so-secret standard at this occupation, in many ways. One example: an announcement made by a young white man at a GA that “everyone is accountable when they speak to media, because they represent the occupation as a whole” (FYI: there is no literature, no point person, no infrastructure to guide new members; only judgment). The countless snaps and twinkles in support of such a statement demonstrated clear consensus. Those twinkles expressed a range of assumptions that people who are largely comfortable in their own skin tend to make: being present in a space makes you in charge of its representation; most everyone agrees with you (and should). Those of us that have daily to prepare ourselves for an imminent

bash; imminent fight with hostile, privilege-denying strangers; an imminent insult (intended or not), we take issue with this coercion into representation. We don't ask you to represent us (please god no); don't fucking assimilate us to your views, and then make us responsible for them. We won't even mention how much and how loud white dudes have been speaking.

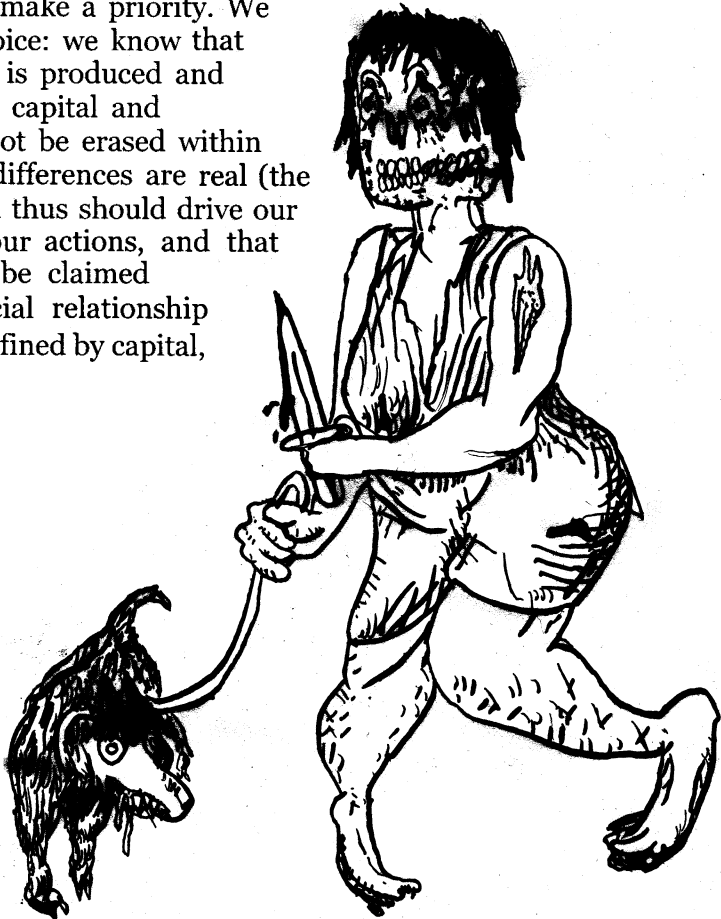
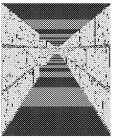
Rather than policing the radical voices taking anti-capitalist, revolutionary, and anti-police positions, we should give these voices space to be heard, and listened to seriously. The anarchist in-joke "Make Total Destroy" has a grain of truth: that the real political agenda consists in destroying state power, capitalism, and all its forms of coercive social control. Why was this phrase deliberately excluded from the agenda cards read out during a GA, while such platitudes as "We are All One" and "Peace on Earth and Good Will to All," were deemed worthy to be shared? The liberal-or-else reformism of the #occupy movement is perfectly encapsulated by the *imposition* of goals of peace and love. Fuck peace: we need to formulate a coherent political analysis and a revolutionary agenda to destroy capitalism and dismantle state power. Rejecting outright the eventual need for an armed uprising reflects an unwillingness to pursue the logic of our own (proto-)demands to their full extent.

Don't tell us to be "pragmatic," to focus on piecemeal reforms and wait for our day in the revolt. Actually, *reformism* is idealistic: reformism believes in democracy under capital, in the possibility of redistributing wealth that is systematically dispossessed from its producers. Our revolutionary desire to destroy capital is not idealistic, abstract, or merely theoretical; nor is it inactive: this aim is embodied in a multitude of actions towards different immediate and faraway ends. To us, this means the revolutionary aim is not purely negative, not only about destruction: we work to confront racism, sexism, and class war in our community as an immediate goal, without losing sight that we ultimately cannot live like this anymore. For Occupy Baltimore, this means the 99% must relinquish its presumed equality and acknowledge division if it is to grasp the real conditions of society, and what must actually be done.



“The 1% are winning every time we fight amongst ourselves.”

When the excluded call out a movement, we are often told to put aside our differences: it's only common sense that to accomplish anything, we need unity. But the only unity we have, the only equality we share, is the thinnest commonality – the democracy of consumers. Already, in conversations with supposed comrades, our critiques have been met with concern that the “mainstream” won't get it, that the precious, delicate momentum will be stopped. Interventions to a white-washed and patriarchal agenda (which is any agenda that denies the differential impact of capital on people of color and women) are always received as interruptions. At best, they are conceded to with invitations, with “outreach”, and with promises to be more inclusive. We say: inclusivity without an adequate analysis is just unstated exclusivity. This is not identity politics: this is the anti-identity politics. For it is capitalism that pushes us to rank facets of our identities; to select one group as the vanguard and press marginalized identities to choose which aspect of their oppression to make a priority. We refuse this choice: we know that our difference is produced and reproduced by capital and therefore cannot be erased within it, that these differences are real (the most real) and thus should drive our analyses and our actions, and that no unity can be claimed until every social relationship is no longer defined by capital, but by us.





John Blanche

Queers Against



Gay Capital



"99% HOMO"

Identity is bought and sold as a commodity; we are taught to express ourselves through acts of consumption. One of the most solid examples of this is expressions of gender and sexuality. One's status as a "man" or a "woman" is directly linked to the consumption of goods and forces us into oppositional categories, as if one's personal qualities are possessions to be bought and worn. Gender and sexual roles, expectations, and presentations are culturally polarized, raced, and classed. Capital ensures that the intricate and complicated ways we feel and envision our gender and sexuality hinges on our ability to purchase and assemble the correct assortment of clothing and body adornments. Men and women are expected to present themselves in specified ways in order to assert proper executions of gender roles and heterosexual identities; the consequences of transgressing these expectations are often dire. (One only has to walk into a high school hallway to understand what happens to a boy who presents himself the wrong way by wearing the wrong shirt in the wrong color.)

Non-male, queer, trans*, and gender-non-conforming bodies get regulated through forced assimilation, threats of violence (some subtle; some overt), social stigmas, the medicalization of our mental and physical states, and the perpetuation of standardized narratives about our experiences and lives. Capitalism's need to maintain heteropatriarchy trickles down to the commodification of gendered expressions, even when we try to resist. It is only acceptable or seemingly safe to be non-male or queer so long as we continue to purchase the right products. There is an entire niche market directed at homosexual male-identified people in particular with specific products such as television channels, travel tours, bars, and fashion trends. We are taught that liberation is the ability to make a choice about what color hankie to wear to match our outfit. Choosing between brands of skinny jeans or purchasing a slogan "Legalize Gay" shirt is not indicative of our freedom. The people who create these products are concerned with increasing profits rather than acceptance.

In spite of its flaws, many women-identified, queer, trans*, and gender non-conforming people are often grateful for gay capitalism and media attention. The image of the affluent, independent, professional queer consumer is far more positive than that of the hysteric or the pedophile of media past. Erasure and invisibility are indicators of oppressions and, after being demonized or otherwise ignored throughout much of history, acknowledgement of queer identity and culture can feel uplifting. But marketers recognize this and are ready to exploit this feeling of value for all that its worth, making gay capitalism extremely dangerous to the queer community at large. For one, the image of the Perfect Homo as an upstanding, affluent citizen is misleading. The Perfect Homo stereotype washes over the experiences of queer individuals who are not white, male identified, and/or middle class. The idea of being “queer enough” or “trans* enough” directly expresses the ways in which our bodies are constructed through classed notions of gender performativity. These standards are reinforced in our marginalized communities, creating prescriptive models of behavior that can be just as repressive as the ones in mainstream society, thus sustaining hierarchies of race, class, age, and gender. Our identities become dependent on our relationships to body modifications (hormone treatments, plastic/reconstructive surgery) which are only accessible by pleasing the gatekeepers in the medical industry – they hold the pens that change our legal sex, prescribe us appropriate “treatments,” and hold the scalpels that sculpt our bodies.

A final point of concern is that queer marketing labels all gender and sexually non-conforming people as gay. This essentialist construction of a singular gay identity ignores the many nuances of both sexual and gender identification and always conflates the two. It is important to note that homosexuality as a concept has not always existed; the categorization of homosexual identity came into play in the late ninetieth century and early twentieth century to demarcate deviance and secure heterosexual dominance. When markets target the gay demographic, they only care to capitalize off of a false, essentialist notion of difference. Gay capitalism and the pink dollar market only serve to reinforce an “us” versus “them” binary that continues to position us as enemies of the state. We must continue make it known that our deviance is not to be profited on, that we are people rather than commodities.

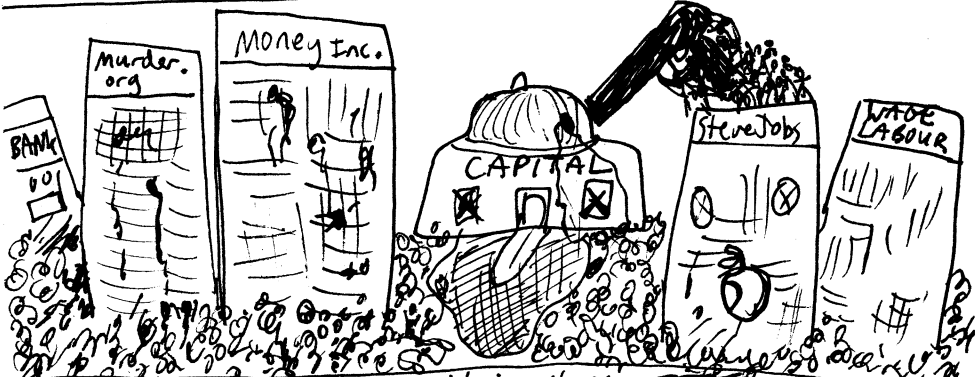


one day:

the fact's purzlay



And then there was a violent revolution.



And the hippies betrayed their class ~~allegiance~~ allegiance:



THE TYRANNY OF NON-VIOLENCE

The Occupy movement, committed to peaceful protest, espouses a politics of non-violence. At Occupy Baltimore, this is made clear by the list of rules posted around the space, half of which are prohibitions of political violence, illegality, and police-antagonism. While outlawing violence among group members itself is necessary to the cooperative functioning of the movement, and essential for establishing Occupy Baltimore as a safe space for all marginalized identities, the political platform of non-violence in relation to the state raises concerns for those of us with radical, revolutionary agendas which cannot be pursued by peaceful means alone.

The doctrine of non-violence essentializes and polarizes political struggles into violent and non-violent movements, ignoring the fact that successful struggles use a variety of tactics which cannot be so easily categorized. Advocates of non-violence point to the civil rights movement in America as a winning example of non-violent protest, refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Black Panther's militant actions. Drawing a moral line between Martin Luther King's dream and Malcolm X's nightmare, and characterizing their movements as oppositional, white pacifists fail to recognize the solidarity between civil rights struggles and black militants. It was in the interests of the white media and politicians to emphasize the conflict between the non-violent and militant factions of the movement, in order to divide and conquer Black resistance. Malcolm X was well aware of this white agenda when he said, "Instead of airing our differences in public we have to realize we are all the same family." While these leaders criticized each other's tactics, their understanding of racial oppression shared an analysis, and their political actions collaboratively contributed to the momentum of the whole civil rights struggle. Black activists all over the country used a variety of tactics to advance their political struggle, including both the Black Panther's Free Food program, and the forming of armed groups to protect homes and churches in Black communities from racist attacks. Riots, armed resistance, and revolutionary rhetoric were a part of the struggle just as much as marches, sit-ins, and boycotts, and this integrated diversity of tactics worked to strength communities, raise awareness, develop analyses, and win legal reforms. Those who claim the civil rights struggle as a non-violent movement, or attribute its power to non-violence alone, fail to see the struggle in its totality, manipulating history to support their ideology.

The occupation insists on non-violence without a critical analysis of its own position, or an understanding of what non-violence even means in this era. The pacifists rely on vague platitudes, claiming to be objective and reasonable. We are supposed to be non-violent because violence is always bad, and we want to create a peaceful society. But this position assumes a dichotomy of peace=good, violence=bad which fails to account for the ways in which political violence can be purposeful and constructive, and peaceful action can reproduce and support the status quo. This pacifism, a product of white middle-class activism, appeals to a particular moral code, assumed to be universal, i.e. violence is never the answer, ever, in any situation, and those who use violence to attain their goals will suffer the karmic consequences. MLK prescribed non-violence as a strategy for resisting the institutional, social violence inflicted on the Black population every day; but, he also considered it necessary to support the armed liberation movements in Palestine and Vietnam. Thus, his ideas had root in a specific history of oppression, rather than being theorized, abstractly, as the morally superior tactic. Assuming a moral high ground runs beneath the Occupation's advocacy of non-violence, unchecked by an analysis of lived, everyday violence: it snobbishly equates direct confrontation with immaturity and ignorance, and passive resistance with dignity and spiritual victory. Like the liberal insistence on police inclusion, this idea speaks from a position of privilege which can choose whether or not to engage in violence. It presupposes an emotional, physical distance from conflict. Would these people tell Palestinians besieged daily by Israeli military brutality that they can't throw rocks at the armed IDF soldiers, that such violence undermines the legitimacy of their struggle against Israel's political, economic hegemony, and the forced occupation of their lands? Would they tell a woman who has been raped that she has no right to inflict violence on her attacker, or a community of color experiencing a violence police presence that they have no right to organize armed resistance? No person whose privilege exempts them from the direct experience of oppression has the right to tell someone else how to respond to or resist racial, gendered, and class violence.

Surely the pacifists would characterize the recent London riots as opportunistic vandalism perpetuated by ignorant mobs, which was the standard position of the bourgeois media, the UK government, and political conservatives. Yet the riots, perceived as inarticulate and apolitical, spoke the disenfranchised anger of

Britain's young, urban, people of color loud and clear. Beginning in response to the police murder of an innocent Black man, and specifically targeting corporations and the police, the riots had a radical anti-capitalist, anti-racial violence agenda--which is much more than we can say of the Occupy movement.

The platform of non-violence refuses to acknowledge the violent conditions of everyday life, or recognize that direct conflict is sometimes the only effective response to inhumane, brutalizing systems of racial, gender, and class oppression. Certainly any hope we have of dismantling these systems must not be limited to legal reforms and peaceful protests; we must not rule out the violent strategies of defensive action, factory occupations, riots, vandalism, and armed resistance. Proponents of pacifism warn that violence only leads to more violence, that the only way to end the cycle is through peaceful action which will call attention to our reasonable demands, and mobilize public/political opinion in our favor. Therefore, when peaceful protests are suppressed by the police, the protesters gain the moral highground, and highlight the unfair brutality of the state. But in order to come out of the struggle on top, karmically speaking, the protesters must only exhibit passive resistance. Otherwise, people might think we somehow deserved this brutality. People in the movement spoke about the incident of women being maced by police at Occupy Wall St. as if the violence they experienced was 'good press' for the rest of us, as in 'see look what they do to us when we try to be peaceful!' The press made sure to characterize the women as "non-threatening," and indeed they were all young and white. Would they have been perceived as more threatening if they were women of color? What if they were fighting back against the police? Would the video have gotten as much media attention? Would they still be 'good press' for our movement, or would they have deserved to be maced. Whether the women were threatening or not should not be factored into our sympathy for them as the recipients of police brutality. We should condemn all police violence against political protesters and agitators, not only those who meet the criteria of pacifists. We are calling out the hypocrisy of a position which disparages all violence, while strategically courting it for political aims.

The pacifist claim that we should all be martyrs to our cause, that suffering the violence inflicted on us ennoble our cause in the Objective Eyes of the World, becomes extremely problematic when applied to feminism. In this patriarchal society, women are socialized to endure the sexual, social, economic domination of

men which often manifests as violence against our bodies and minds: this violence takes the overt forms of rape, forced motherhood, trafficking and prostitution, and the more covert forms of economic disadvantage, unrealistic standards of beauty, and the cultivation of submissive personalities. People who do not conform to the gender-binary and its assigned characteristics are policed through institutional discrimination and actual social violence into assimilating with dominant heterosexuality. The non-violence argument applied to gender leads to the conclusion that people should not form organized resistance against gendered violence, but suffer it nobly in the hopes of winning over the hearts and minds of men to our cause. In this case, women are queer people have been practicing non-violence for centuries, and where has it gotten us? Putting the power to end gendered oppression into the hands of the people who most benefit from it only further dis-empowers oppressed people, and reinforces the patriarchal construct of men as the arbiters of all decisions. We do not want to wait for these men to decide we are human enough not to be brutalized. We realize that we have the power to challenge patriarchy with our organized resistance, and that this resistance must embrace violence as an effective political, defensive tactic.

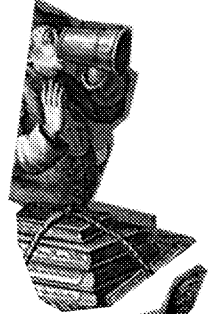
redistribute
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wealth



ANTI GREED?—a note on work

The language of “We are the 99%” and “They are the 1%” taps in to long-overdue and justified class anger at the disparity of wealth in the United States. However, it also quietly implies that there are two clearly defined and mutually exclusive categories that every individual neatly falls into. Instead of seeing the economic crisis as a systemic problem, the 99% perspective personalizes the issue so that it can be blamed on character traits of those individuals in the 1% category, like greed or selfishness. This quantify-and-categorize approach completely ignores power relations. For example, President Obama does not fall into the category of the most wealthy 1% in America – is he just as much a part of the 99% as anyone else? In spite of the excuses that Democrats like to make for him, he has a *lot* more power than the majority of working-class and poor people. Classifying people into an income bracket without looking at power relations, their relationship to the state and to production, is obfuscating. For another example, police officers are much further away than the president from being at the top in terms of wealth, but their role in society is to protect private property and its owners from the propertyless, and they have the power to enforce laws which value property over people with violence. Most of us have experienced having a boss who seems to have no responsibilities other than writing our paycheck and dictating our daily actions, even when we know from experience how to do our jobs more effectively than they do, and who belittles, humiliates, and harasses us. Regardless of how much the boss makes, their relationship to production is one that allows them not to do work while having control over those of us who do. Focusing on relations of power instead of income level makes placing individuals in one of two categories much more complex. It means acknowledging that not everyone in “the 99%” is the same, which can be a threatening idea for those who hope for “unity.” But there can be no genuine unity if we pretend not to see that some members of “the 99%” have more power and privilege than others. Looking at relations of power muddles our ability to determine whether individuals can be members of the 99%, but it clarifies and pinpoints the system which produces the exact disparity we are trying to describe when we talk about the 99% in terms of us vs. them.

The system which produces a wealthy 1% with disproportionate power over the majority, along with many other disenfranchising relations of power within our personal lives and in the workplace, can be named – it is capitalism. A free market system based on competition, even with regulation, prioritizes profit over meeting people's needs. Some argue that the profit system is one that only needs to change by degree. Again, the impulse to quantify instead of examining the qualitative relationship, obfuscates the nature of the problem. The idea that “everyone” deserves a “little” profit or a “little” or “enough” wealth plasters over the reality that NO profit exists without exploitation. A comparatively egalitarian capitalism means accepting what some might call a “little” exploitation – but we know that any exploitation is not small to

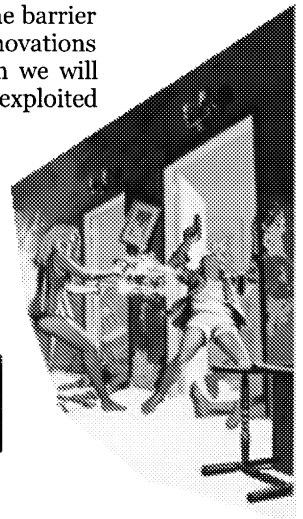
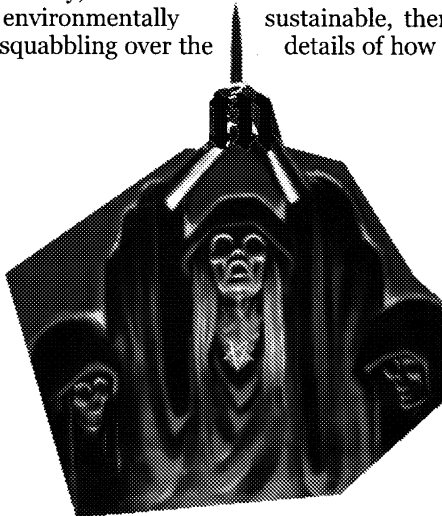


those people who end up bearing the burden of it. We know because throughout history it has been women and people of color who constitute the substratum for “equality” between all white men with property.

All that profit is, is under-compensating people for the work they do. A worker produces goods or services that have a particular value on the market, they are paid less than that value, and the difference goes to employer. Investment of capital – the investment in buildings and machinery and raw material – are a fixed cost and cannot contribute to profit. Only labor is variable – the only way to make a profit is to drive down wages, so it is in the owner's interest to pay the lowest wages and benefits possible in order to maximize profit. People accept lower and lower wages when there is a threat of unemployment, or a threat that someone else will do the same job for less money. The recent belt-tightening of the white middle class has sparked the outrage of the occupation movement, but there is no acknowledgement that they have been living in relative privilege while women and people of color who make up the majority of working poor have never had the option of “accepting” fewer benefits and no increase in real wages to match inflation. White heterosexual males consistently earn higher salaries than nonwhite, female and/or LGBTQ counterparts doing the same jobs with the same level of education. They are more likely to be hired for jobs that provide a living wage, and they don't routinely face disrespect, harassment, discrimination, and abuse at the workplace. It has always been in the interest of capitalists to stoke fear and mistrust between workers to keep them from unifying to demand more. Securing the privilege of the white male middle class ensures that these men will not politically challenge the capitalist system itself, but limit themselves to purely economic demands, like higher wages. The “1%” is able to accrue its vast wealth through the complicity and cooperation of the white male middle class, on the backs of women and people of color. As long as the white male middle class is satisfied with the relative privilege they gain from systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia, they will never realize that they are not as free as they would be if they renounced the benefits of bigotry in order to tear down the system that is only just beginning to ask them to tighten their belts. We don't want to simply negotiate the terms of our relative levels of exploitation. We want everyone to be free from exploitation.

Often the anti-capitalist demand for freedom from exploitation is taken to be a mantra against work. They jump to the conclusion that we are lazy – but this only makes sense in the context of capitalism, where work is commodified. What is work? Under capitalism, it is what we do to be able to acquire what we need to be able to live. People like to argue that nobody would work at all without the incentive to make money. Yet women have performed domestic labor without compensation for as long as the home has been separated from “legitimate” workspaces. Many people volunteer, and many more volunteer in times of crisis. Even in the midst of capital-driven competition, we see

spaces where people work tirelessly, with passion, to do what needs to be done: in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Haiti, and even in the absence of trauma, in spaces of protest. People take pride in their talents, feel a connection to the work they are doing, and are energized by this kind of work. Not wanting to be underpaid to do unsatisfying work is not being lazy. Work under capitalism is commodified into a means to an end to living, when living mostly means sustaining oneself just enough to be able to work. Persistent and vicious attacks on social programs which improve the lives of low-income people through welfare and education demonstrate how invested capital is in maintaining a state of affairs where people are barely surviving, just enough to continue to work and barely survive. Bare survival means not enough food on the table, debilitating debt, and no access to medical care, but it also means a lack of free time, energy, and resources that would empower people to do the things they love, participate in democratic decision making, and care for those who need it most, like our children, elderly, and disabled. We want our work to tangibly make our own and others' lives better, not create wealth so that others may enjoy power over our lives and freedom from doing work. This is what we mean when we say we want an end to capital. We are not talking about returning to a barter system, eliminating money, or fantasizing a pristine, primitive existence. Capitalism has developed machines that eliminate the problem of scarcity – we can feed the world several times over, but big agriculture destroys crops to keep prices up. The “law” of supply and demand is a lie – people always need food, but there's no profit in food if it is sold at a price that everyone can afford. Millions of dollars are wastefully spent in advertising to create artificial demand, while real demands are purposefully ignored. We don't have to give up the tools and innovations that have developed under capitalism, we just have to turn them to the purpose of meeting people's needs instead of generating profit. But until we recognize that it is the profit system itself that is the barrier to meeting needs, the barrier to race and gender justice, the barrier to genuine democracy, the barrier to new tools and innovations that would be environmentally sustainable, then we will be resigned to squabbling over the details of how exploited we want to be.



CAPITAL IS A WAR ON OUR SURVIVAL



I write this as a person that has witnessed firsthand, over her 30 years lifespan, the very fast and ongoing destruction of communities and habitats infiltrated by capital, in both “underdeveloped” and “developing” areas. During this short time, I have seen how the highest quality water in the capital of my country has given its place to lowest quality water full of carcinogens. I have seen the arable soil (including natural habitats, gardens, agriculture, parks) replaced by half-empty massive buildings and construction projects. I have seen local fresh food market replaced with junk food megastores. I have seen water and all the resources of local communities harnessed to provide energy and material for intensively populated metropolises. I have seen local pastoralists and farmers displaced from their land, their water and land polluted, their resources drawn away from them. In so-called developed countries, overexploited land is just the dominant landscape, apart from nature reserves, which are there because indigenous people and local communities have been displaced. These state parks package and commercialize fresh air and a peaceful, natural landscape.

What I have seen disproves capital’s claim that it provides benefits for people alongside profit for itself. Who is to blame? Population growth, the people themselves? Or capitalist production, which is engulfing societies and lands?

Jobs benefit capital, not people; the jobs that really benefit people are not marketable, and when there are marketed they are no longer for the benefit of people. In short capital prevents us from doing things that are fruitful for ourselves; instead we must work to benefit the market, whose central aim is profit. Community benefit or any self-satisfaction is subordinated to the pursuit of money.

Capital markets everything; even health and basic human needs.

Capitalist health and development programs in developing countries look at how to market drugs, pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified seeds, cement buildings, etc. These programs just want to show results in the shortest time possible,

instead of working towards the long-term health, well-being, and self-determination of the community. In the process, they disrupt and destroy community structures, place people in debt, increase inequality in the community while privatizing (removing communal access to) public land, water, services. If a community does not want a product, because it does not suit their needs, or is simply not needed, the community is called uneducated and backwards.

Independent subsistence – people satisfying their own needs by producing their own products (e.g. local agriculture) and through their own local and regional markets – are considered useless, since they don't contribute to national GDP (the main way of assessing economic “wellbeing”). Capital insists that the “underdeveloped” integrate to the progressive market. If GDP per capita is low, even if you have the things that you want, you are not developed and you should abandon your backwards livelihood. Capital has used instruments of debt like microcredit to take over the collective work and livelihoods of communities, making them poor dependents of the system.

As we see in the overdeveloped countries, the full marketization of satisfying basic human needs has produced so many problems. If the tap water is not safe, it is because millions of products (beauty, agriculture, and industrial) produced by capital enter our water daily. Instead of reducing the entrance of these materials to our water and food chain, capital forecloses open access to the public goods like water, depriving communities of locally administering their resources. It then markets a previously cheap or free public resource, like water, in the expensive and disgusting form of bottled water – a form which pollutes our habitat even further, and to which only a few people have access.

Capital has, by introducing mechanization, pesticides and fertilizers to agriculture, dramatically increased the production of food – but only exacerbated hunger. Local farmers have lost their livelihood in rural areas, and their previously high-quality food has been decimated. People no longer produce their food locally, and the quantity, quality, and access to food supplies remains determined by national and global market forces. The production of high quality food, and the satisfaction of basic needs by local and communal production, has been replaced by poor quality commodities, paid for with shit wages. We hear of famines in Africa daily – these are unprecedented in their devastation.

Urban-dwelling people in the global South (and North, for that matter) are also in deep hunger and have poor access to nutritious food. What they can eat is saturated with hormones and antibiotics. Local production of enough amount of high quality food has given its place to production of tremendous amount of toxicated food by large businesses. A huge amount of unused, processed, or semi-used food and material is thrown away as waste. The everyday production and disposal of excess is necessary to keep the capitalist cycle alive – and only further intoxicates our habitat.

Capital also prevents us from knowing just how horrible the food is that we eat; it continues to market its products as if they were good for us. Adding toxins to our food and water (such as arsenic to chicken's food) is considered safe – according to the criteria provided by capitalists themselves. Voluntarily listing these toxins is considered sufficient to make these products safe. The limits of research studies' capacity to assess long-term effects are simply not acknowledged, since that would disadvantage capital. Other holistic studies that show the negative effect of all these toxins accumulating in our bodies, ecosystems and food chains are simply ignored, or selectively reported. Newly emerging diseases are considered great opportunities for investment. Instead of stopping the proliferation of toxins in our ecology, capital concentrates on trying to market new opportunities to treat illnesses it has itself created. Capital does not want prevention, it wants problems: capital makes us ill and sells us tremendously expensive pharmaceuticals. At bottom, capital promises to solve problems it has itself created.

Capital promises to solve poverty, hunger, and climate change through market mechanisms. For example, carbon credits pay poorer, forestry-rich countries to limit the access of the local communities to their main livelihood, forestry, so that wealthy countries, which are the main producers of greenhouse gases, will have the ability to consume more material and energy, and to pollute more. Blaming local communities for deforestation is ludicrous; wood and paper businesses are those that cull and squander these resources, while displacing those who depend on them for their lives.

Biodiverse habitats disappear every minute: capital has caused human cultural diversity and ecosystems to be homogenized; plants and animals to be extinct; habitats to be unlivable. At the same time, capital justifies war among humans as means of creating jobs – but capital is a war on our survival.



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WATCH OUT

Women
 And
 Trans
 Conspiracy from
 Hell

History insists on the eradication of capital as the only possibility of preventing crisis. Finance reform and “sanctions” are not enough: we will never see “the military industrial complex dismantled, the police disempowered, and the public sector fulfilling its obligations to the people” by redistributing wealth. Corrupt politicians and greedy financiers are only a superfluous, insulting layer on the thing that must be truly condemned: capital, which in our time is inescapable.

