

# **Confronting Manarchism**

**Or, Please Forward This to Every Man You Know**

Anonymous

Late 1990s

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# Let Patriarchy Burn!

## a feminist rant

“How many articles does it take until men start working on their shit? Arent you tired of hearing and reading about it? Maybe Smith and Wesson do a better job? At least stop considering yourself revolutionaries. YOU ARE NOT MY COMRADE.” — Molly Tov in Profane Existence.

So i'm talking to an activist man about misogyny within a particular group and he's telling me i need to get in there and change it from the inside, not attack it from the outside. That sounds like reformism to me. He says no, because in our united fight against capitalism we're on the same side.

But we're not.

Patriarchy is often bandied about as a term to explain men's prejudices or/and behaviour toward women. But just as the behaviour and attitudes of a boss towards a worker is not the intrinsic problem of capitalism but rather an expression of it, so gender relations are some of the symptoms of the cultural, economic, social and ideological system of Oppression, exploitation and power — Patriarchy.

An article about patriarchy (which was actually about sexism) on road protest camps appeared in Do or Die No. 7, and outlined some of the ways in which patriarchy shows itself, The list of 'complaints' was referred to as disgruntlement and claimed; "For all men's faults women are still very much respected on site and patriarchy does have its advantages." Patriarchy does have its advantages, but only for those who wish to maintain oppression. Any movement that does not challenge this oppression is not a fight for freedom. This article will examine how the ideology and practices of the radical ecology movement in the UK stunt the development of true resistance.

# Manifestations of Patriarchy In EF!

Patriarchy appears in a number of both obvious and subtle ways in advanced capitalist society. Unequal and unfair distribution of labour, rape and the constant threat of it, objectification of our bodies, women unheard, talked over, burdened with childcare and domestic slavery, depoliticised [their thoughts and actions made personal/emotional rather than political] and deprioritised. But instead of these being challenged in a radical movement like Earth First! they are replicated. As the article Patriarchy on Road Protest camps' suggests, gender relations on site range from the uncomfortable, through the intimidating to the ultimately impossible. The division of labour whereby men commit heroic' deeds and women do the washing up is petty compared to the tolerated incidences of rape and sexual assault that occur on drunken nights. Aware activists talk angrily about the experiences of sex on site, not being utopian freedoms but a charming variety of sexual coercion of schoolgirls to total irresponsibility around contraceptives resulting in unwanted pregnancies. These power abuses are not confined to sites but also to urban environments. One woman commented:

“When i first came to our anarchist social centre and thought it would be a good idea to get involved, it was this boy's club — there was this one woman who did shifts, but she just came in, cleaned up and served tea, it was the three blokes who'd sit around together, joke, and in this way sort out what's happening with it...it was a real effort on my side to feel responsible and become a part of the decision-making processes.”

Not acknowledging women as autonomous political individuals (depoliticisation) seems a common experience in political movements. When talking of the struggle i have found most inspirational, i was dismissed as only being interested because my former male partner was also, as if my political thought process was centred in my cunt. The accusation of being smitten with a single person instead of dedicated to revolution was something many women i spoke to also had encountered:

The anecdotes of everyday sexism are too numerous to list, but that they occur continuously and without paradox in the radical eco movement must be examined: these are not one-off, isolated incidents, but part of the patriarchal nature of Earth First! Without an understanding of — and resistance to — the multiple power relations in our society there can be no true social change.

# Flawed Philosophies and Failing Philosophers

The media construct of ecowarriors is not far enough removed from the realities to be ironic. One of the ideologies that is central to eco-activism is that of romanticism. Romanticism is a myth of patriarchy that creates opposites such as good/evil, man/woman, active/passive. This is a means of simplifying and justifying differences that are actually constructed. To be pushed into one of these definitions polarises us into restricted behaviour and restricted mindsets, limiting our beings and our potential. For example, the notion of ‘defence of the planet’ conveniently forgets the fact that we are fighting for ourselves. Instead the earth is the passive beauty, capitalism the evil dragon and we good fellows the noble knights.

## Look at me mum, i’ve smashed the world

Macho posturing can take many forms. From masking up in counter-productive situations, to throwing things without aim and mission, boasting about criminal records — or worse, criminal activities, or being the person down the tunnel the longest. These activities often operate at a level of competitiveness within the network rather than co-operation and suggest that activism is for the adrenaline and the recognition rather than the daily effort toward building mass resistance. Wanting to be seen to engage in heroic or hardcore activity relies on others’ failure to do the same, and instead of these activities inspiring others to take action they alienate — hence the problem of some people (“activists”) being asked to take action on behalf of other people; e. g.: people being asked to sue someone, or ‘save’ some land from road building. (Why does everyone need to take action when superman can do it for us?) Rather than using the most effective tactics available, macho activists need the most visual; hanging from harnesses is, in our ‘movement’, a more popular approach than mass direct action, and media stunts are seen as ‘worthwhile’ activity despite such an obviously problematic relationship with the media.

## Crucifixion is too good for us

The other side of the coin is the concept of activist suffering: — a few suffering for the needs of the masses. Accountable actions fall into this category, as do hunger strikes with unfeasible demands. As most people (in particular those with responsibilities such as children) are not willing to lose their liberty for actions of limited effectiveness. These actions remain the domain of a few who offer up themselves for ‘the cause’. As before, these misguided actions mean that most people are excused from taking action (who needs to do anything when Jesus will do it for us?) Those who suffer most in society do not fetishise or glamorise suffering. This privileged option

of personal sacrifice courts attention sometimes termed 'public awareness' but like macho media stunts does little to forward radical social change.

Alongside an ideology of romantic eco-heroism comes a cleat rejection of feminism (and other politics that draw attention to divisions between 'us'). This is of course essential to a polarised vision of the battle. We too are individually and collectively responsible for the shit that goes on, we too are the villains, the wrongdoers, and even 'the enemy'. — e.g. whilst struggling for the destruction of global capitalism we are still creaming off the Third World. Recognising our oppression we must also recognise our positions as oppressors, our privileges. This requires understanding the specific differences of our oppression: we are not equally abused by capitalism, this is dependent on our class, our race, our nationality, our sexuality, and our gender. The radical eco movement is only just beginning to address these issues and still fails to carry a concept of women's specific Oppression or women's specific resistance, separate from men's.

Some oppressions are treated with more priority than others: the rape of women (a near universal experience) seems to be of less importance than the rape of the earth. Rape is seen as an individual and personal problem between rapist and victim rather than rooted in our patriarchal system. In the same way the destruction of the planet may be partly carried out by construction companies, but these companies are not the core problem. Again, fights for 'indigenous people's land rights' do not distinguish between men's and women's land rights which are (again, near universally) different. Most 'tribal' societies have indigenous laws which have different access and control of land according to gender.

Similarly, women's resistance is overlooked, made invisible, written out of hystory: from the diggers to the dockers, go directly past the suffragettes, do not collect any credit. Or perhaps worse, women's resistance is only understood as the co-opted part of the movement. Just as mainstream society looks upon Greenpeace as radical ecology, the co-opted liberal end of feminism is falsely viewed as feminism. But feminism is not about whether white middle-class western women can wear lipstick or not, it is about poverty and violence and power. The simplifications of the feminist movement, behaving as if all women were equally oppressed and all men were similarly oppressive, are lessons for the radical eco-movement. The feminist movement ate itself by not acknowledging difference — that some women were closer to power than others due to their class or race. This meant class-and race struggles were not truly dealt with in the movement and that the mass feminist movement never became resistance for the benefit of most women but only for the privileged few.

An over-simplified vision of how to 'save' the world is not only wrong, it is dangerous. The radical eco-movement will suffer co-option if it is dominated by young white middle-class graduate men putting their concerns first: to be noticed, to be a hero, to set the agenda, to be special. For in the struggle for freedom the needs of the most dominant groups in society should come last. Women's resistance to patriarchy is not some sub- heading that can be dealt with 'after the revolution'. The global struggle against body mutilation, domestic violence, infanticide, sexual assault, rape, domestication, slavery, dehumanisation, poverty, forced sterilisation and forced reproduction is not nitpicking.

## Anarcho-misogynists Anonymous... A 12 step plan

These are some ways of challenging our social conditioning by a patriarchal culture. Macho behaviour is not specific to men, although often more common as males have been traditionally encouraged into stereotypical men (meaning aggressive, dominating, active, individualistic etc.) and women encouraged into equally limited and repressive caricatures instead of us all achieving our full potential as human beings.

**Women's Space:** Women, spend time in it, especially if you don't understand why it exists. The experiences of women's space are different to mixed space. And let's stop 'discussing' it in mixed groups — women's space is neither requested or demanded, it is taken and the opinions of men are irrelevant.

**Skill Sharing:** It is largely a myth. Usually it is about one individual teaching one or many, and obviously gives rise to many problems of hierarchy and patronising behaviour. Let's work on real trading...you show me yours and I'll show you mine.

**New Women Being Fuck Fodder:** This is particularly present, or maybe just most visible, on mixed protest camps, although also a problem in women's camps when they are treated like lifestyle cruising grounds, at squat cafes/social centres and in urban groups. Other women can 'buddy up' with women who are new and let them know they are valued as activists. Males can be friendly but not invasive. Everyone can pull up their friends or intervene if somebody is being out of order. Be honest, tell newcomers about problems like this so they don't think they're imagining it, or that this is acceptable behaviour.

**Sexual Coercion:** While this is such a common complaint, it is often kept hush hush, people not wanting to rock the boat. As people who value direct action we need to take it — girl guerrilla groups who have issued confrontational warnings or revenge attacks on known bastards have claimed mixed areas as places not to mess with women in. The actions we take against corporate scum can and should also be taken against raping scum.

**Question Everything:** Why do you really want to do that banner drop? Is it the best, most effective attack on this particular target or is it the one that gets you the most credit? If you can't be bothered to go flyposting and engage in sabotage, but you will get nicked for something high profile and dangerous... ask yourself why. Think carefully before every action. Just what and who are you doing this for?

**Shut Up:** Meetings are generally dominated by a few mouthy individuals with little particularly constructive, creative or original to say. Recognise that some people are more confident than others talking in meetings. Have go-rounds at the beginning and at the end: of meetings and somewhere halfway too. When someone new or someone who doesn't usually speak gets the guts to say something, credit them. Properly facilitated meetings are a great asset to those who don't jump in. And talk to new people or quiet people afterward; tell them you liked what they said.

**Wash Up:** It's such a cliché it's almost a joke. But it takes more than soapsuds to sort out the division of labour. On actions do the things you don't usually, offer to do the support work, stay in the office, do leaflet distribution, be — godforbid — anonymous. If it's an action that's public then it doesn't need the trust of an affinity group off to burn something down. Team up with less experienced people — write that leaflet with someone who's never written one before instead of your usual comrade.

**Sisterhood:** To misquote one of my male friends — there's No point spelling womyn all funny if you don't do the acts too. Solidarity in sisterhood can be interpreted in 100's of ways, be doing at least some of them.

**We Don't Need Another Hero:** Putting ourselves and others in hero-positions fictionalises our activities rather than reaching out to others. Bragging is neither skill sharing nor empowering others to act. Let's get humble because nothing we do is glorious, especially not when it's sensational. The sexy factor of an action isn't the be all and end all and media coverage is generally counter-productive. Get real — seeing a young dreadlocked white boy hanging off a thin rope on the TV does not empower the viewer into thinking they can do the same.

**Learn:** Inform yourself of women's resistance, historically and geographically. If you know all about the Spanish revolution but not about 12<sup>th</sup> century women's rebellion in China, widen your reading list.

**Abandon Your Privilege:** This is the hard one. First we need to acknowledge and recognise that as first world activists we occupy a global position of privilege. Most of us also have extra power due to our youth, our skin colour, our family class background. When we ignore our own or other's chains they don't just disappear, and when we topple these power relations most of us will get bruised on the way down. Admit we don't get the hardest deal. Listen to others, we might not know the best way. Get criticised, feel uncomfortable, and deal with it.

**Unity Against Patriarchy:** While the fight against patriarchy is women's struggle and it is imperative that 'feminist' men do not hijack this struggle, everyone should participate in overthrowing systems of oppression.

“Not only because men are capable of its perpetration but because we can be accomplices as well, by engaging in harmful ridicule and by our silence. But the struggle for respect for the specificity of gender can also include us, by acknowledging what we are, what we are not, and above all, what we are capable of becoming.” — Comandante Insurgente Marcos.



# Stick It To The Manarchy

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**Manarchy:** Aggressive, competitive behavior within the anarchist movement that is frighteningly reminiscent of historically oppressive male gender roles. Such behavior includes acting macho, holier than thou, and elitist. Manarchy often results in exclusivity.

We feel obliged to share our discomfort with manarchy as it presents itself in the anarchist movement. We are excited and inspired by the development and practice of anarchist ideals, and we must remain critical of our movement in an effort to maximize our effectiveness. Anarchism and direct action are powerful forces, yet we are still susceptible to taking on some of the oppressive cultural practices of the very system we are challenging.

We are two women and two men, all white and coming from economically privileged backgrounds. We are anarchists. We support direct action and the Black Bloc as a tactic for empowerment. In this article we focus on what has been coined “manarchy.” We intend to explain and criticize manarchist behavior by running through a series of experiences that we have had at mass actions, conferences, and in our day-to-day organizing.

Most insidious is the dogmatism of ‘no compromise’ that is often accompanied with a macho spirit that assumes a ‘tougher than thou’ attitude toward dominant culture as well as allies in the movement.

At the presidential debates in Boston, one of us saw a group of people bust through a police barricade of an already blocked off street. The move was far-fetched and ill planned, and resulted in several people being pepper sprayed.

This is tough, not tactical. For some of these people, being pepper sprayed became a battle wound that illustrated their no-compromise “radical” politics.

In a similar vein, two of us were at a Black Bloc meeting where one man declared: “If you’re not willing to take a hit [to the head with a baton] and you’re not willing to go to jail, don’t march with the Black Bloc.” He was frustrated with the fact that he had been marching with the Black Bloc at the Inauguration protests and upon confronting a police barricade, found that no one was backing him up. We question whether sacrificing oneself to a beating is an effective goal. We cannot overemphasize the importance of protecting each other, yet we also understand that people in different situations have different needs. In other words, not everyone can and wants to get beat up and sent to jail for an act that may or may not be perceived as tactically useful.

The man’s divisive statement assumes that he is one of the more qualified Black Bloc participants in the group. He found that no one else had stuck around to take a beating with him, demonstrating that he is tougher and, therefore, a better radical than others. His superior position—his statements suggest—gives him the authority to declare who is allowed to march in the Black Bloc. Thus, he feels comfortable telling others to stay home.

The no-compromise position has been exemplified by a posting on the Independent Media Center's website. In a critique of the Inauguration Protests in Washington, D.C., Slip writes:

"i think we really need to ask ourselves what our militancy means? is it really militant to allow to be searched to enter into are that you were scheduled to have your first amendright right? that's not militant or defiant. is revolt if you ask for permission for the same system you are protesting? permitted protests are in no way a resistance, let alone a revolution. to me, in this revolution the ends ARE the means. we have to live our visions and take control of our own lives. this is exhibiting in not just how we live our lives, and use our lives as tools, but how we extend our dissent into literally reclaiming our spaces, when we get into the streets. we can no longer pander and go through "the proper means" the proper means are practicing real democracy and claiming our right to free assembly. NO COMPROMISE."

In this critique, Slip raises an important point about the need for militancy, defiance, and fundamental subversion of the system. Yet, his analysis around "NO COMPROMISE" remains problematic. In a capitalist system, we all must compromise. No one is perfect, and we are all implicated with the oppression that this system is built on. Some are more implicated and privileged than others are.

It's ironic that the more privileged are often the ones who make the call for "no compromise" at mass actions. We should question who is able to "not compromise" at large demonstrations. For example, as four white, college students, it's pretty easy for us to be militants at mass actions. In addition to easy access to lawyers, the cops and courts treat us better than classes of people who are traditionally victimized. It is much harder for people of color, the economically disadvantaged, and people who are not physically capable of intense physical confrontation to take such a position.

Ultimately, we find the "NO COMPROMISE" position compromises a significant part of our ideals. We are working to build a world where people are empowered and loving. However, anarchist militancy tends to insult allies in the movement rather than act in solidarity. The narrative of non-compromised purity reminds us of the elite members of college fraternities saying, "you're not macho enough" and the Christian Right saying, "you're not holy enough." It is simply a form of chauvinism that divides people.

The intersection of the militancy and no-compromise position is strikingly similar to the martyr ethic of the religious movement's call for civil disobedience. In this tactic, people sacrifice themselves for a greater cause. In the past few years, civil disobedience has come under fire by radicals calling for tactics that are less cooperative with the system and more empowering and inclusive for the participant. Yet, anarchist reasoning has gone full circle; jail time and battle wounds have become the new self-sacrificial disobedience.

We would also like to note that religious movements calling for civil disobedience tend to emphasize love, while anarchists emphasize aggression. *Five Days That Shook the World*, a book written within the movement about "Seattle and Beyond", celebrates direct action participants as "street warriors". The Random House dictionary defines warrior as "1. A man engaged or experienced in warfare; soldier. 2. A person who has shown great vigor, courage, or aggressiveness, as in politics." In the context of which we are critical, a warrior is a self-proclaimed hero, dogmatic and competitive.

We do not romanticize the image of the non-compromising militant, ready to take anything on in the name of the cause. We are not Rambo. We are not the Navy Seals. We are not heroes. We are anarchists, building a space that is empowering, accepting, inclusive, accessible, communicative, and community oriented.

To build the movement we must be more than merely relentlessly physically rugged, devoted to the cause, self-sacrificial, and militant. Those who cannot afford — monetarily, physically, or emotionally — to risk arrest, lawsuits, or physical assault are excluded from this club. This means that many women, people of color, the young and elderly, and the economically disadvantaged do not have what it takes to participate in the anarchist revolution. Is this a revolution to benefit the participants who are mostly middle/upper class white males, or is this a revolution of young warriors sacrificing themselves for the good of the women and children they exclude? Both are unacceptable.

Mass actions are only one part of anarchist organizing. However, when they occur they should feel like gatherings where people are empowered, enjoying themselves, and in solidarity with their allies. Marching in the Black Bloc we have found many are tough enough to get hit on the head, but not open enough to say hello, let alone communicate tactical ideas, need, or feelings. This embodies the typical male gender role. If one wants to be a street warrior, we urge the warrior to direct his or her negative energies at the system and contribute positive feelings back to the movement.

Rather than the motto, “NO COMPROMISE”, we call for “whatever works.” And if that sounds too cold, we suggest, “Live the Revolution.” Quite simply, we urge our comrades to more carefully evaluate how our actions will affect our targets, capitalism, and oppression. We are not critiquing militant tactics, nor are we critiquing people who use them. We are calling for people to step outside the anarchist dogmatism and use tactics as they are useful.

We see importance and value in alliance building, discussing ideological and tactical differences, and understanding and respecting each other’s varying opinions. If a movement is uniform in all its tactics and ideologies, it is not only boring, but vulnerable to extinction. We need to work with those who have different opinions, while recognizing our common goals and organize in a way that respects and acknowledges difference through communication.

We hope this article helps to open up discussion. We encourage people to respond. Please contact us personally as well as publish your ideas.

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*Our article from a few weeks ago entitled, “Stick It To The Manarchy” generated a lot of. response and enthusiasm. We have a response to the criticism, clarifying a few points along with our analysis of the dialogue.*

# MANARCHY RESPONSE, FROM THE AUTHORS

People offered both positive and negative criticism, and we have learned through this process. We feel this dialogue is a vital element of a movement dedicated to challenging oppression. We do not claim that we are the most knowledgeable on these issues, and we certainly haven't escaped the oppressive mindsets the system is based on. We make assumptions that contribute to oppression, but we are actively working to first recognize and then change these assumptions in ourselves. We are not claiming authority, or insisting that we are right. Rather, we are sharing our thoughts in order to engage in a learning process that involves the greater community. This is why response is so important. This is not a process we can do alone.

Our criticism of manarchy and its implications is our way of contributing to the dialogue. Competitive, aggressive, elitist, and exclusive behavior is contrary to our understanding of anarchist ideals and practice. "Manarchy" is the term we use to describe this behavior because it exemplifies traditional male gender roles. Many people are uncomfortable with the use of this word because it suggests, contrary to our understanding, that only/all men exhibit manarchist behavior. Because we are not saying that manarchist behavior is inherent to any particular sex, some people have questioned the importance of associating it with a specific gender. However, the conduct we describe is the same behavior that men have traditionally used to hold and justify their positions of power in a patriarchal society. The word itself is not central to our point, and we are happy to hear suggestions for alternatives.

## MANY NOT ALL

People frequently pointed out that women can act militantly. We agree. There are many dedicated women who effectively use militant tactics. Simultaneously, women are not exempt from what we call "manarchy." In our previous article, we should have made this more clear.

People's criticisms were based on our lack of clarity as well as a more obvious mistake. After quoting Slip's analysis about "no compromise", we used the "universal" pronoun "his" for an ungendered quote. This word choice reinforces the very sexism and exclusion that we are trying to dismantle. We are thankful that Slip responded, and pointed out that we "are trapped in [our] own confines of maleness as well." We apologize and will strive to make sure it doesn't happen again.

We do not believe that militant behavior is specific to men, nor any category of age, race, or economic status. However, many people misinterpret our message.

For example, in Dave Hill's response he quotes us as saying, "many women, people of color, young and elderly do not have what it takes [to participate in the manarchist revolution]." A few sentences later he asks, "Is it productive here to take all women, people of color, young and elderly out of your analysis of 'manarchy'? are 'manarchists' only white men?" (NYC Indy Media).

Dave takes our “many” and reinterprets it as “all.” This word switch significantly changes our intention by taking an observation and turning it into a generalization about sex, race, and class and it’s relationship to behavior. As we said above, anybody can act militantly. In our previous article, after our discussion of the term “warrior”, which the dictionary defines as “a man”, we say “we urge the warrior to direct his or her negative energies at the system.” Yet, we’ve seen that most people who act exclusive, competitive, and macho at mass actions — the people who direct negative energies towards other people in the movement — are white, male, and often middle class. This is why we use the word “many”. This belief could be because of our backgrounds and we invite people to share their observations.

A few responses questioned our criticism of the term “warrior”. We recognize that the term can be used in an empowering way. On the other hand, as one collective writes, “As to your views on ‘manarchism’, they seem to correspond very closely to our general criticism, discussed and elaborated more than a decade ago, of the development of the so-called ‘street-fighter’ political (sub)culture, its roots, interdependencies and consequences. We also call it ‘anarchist Ramboism’, and identify its roots partly, just like you, in the macho culture of the bourgeois society,” (e-mail). The question is, are we reclaiming “warrior” and revolutionizing its meaning or is “warrior” merely a way to justify manarchist behavior?

## **WE DO NOT OPPOSE MILITANCY**

When we were writing the article we defined who we are in order to show where we are coming from. Among other things, we said that we are anarchists, march in the Black Bloc, and are supportive of direct action. This way, readers would understand that we are writing a critique from within the movement. We also felt pressured to “prove” ourselves by listing our militant history, but this would have fallen into the same trap that we are criticizing. Because we didn’t dwell on our militant history, many people who responded assumed we are pacifists, “fluffy,” and/or against militancy, despite our saying, “we are not critiquing militant tactics nor are we Critiquing people who use them.” Some not only assumed things about us, but judged us according to those assumptions. We wonder how our argument would have been received if we had said that we’ve collectively been to jail 4 times for 13 days, hit with batons 17 times, pepper-sprayed 5 times, tear-gassed once, de-arrested 5 of our comrades, broken 2 windows, led 1 police charge, and told a cop to “fuck off” at least 212 times.

We support aggressive tactics if they are Strategically useful. We are fully aware of and endorse tactical purposes of the black bloc including obscuring identities and supporting those who are willing to break the law. However, we do see a problem when people use aggressive tactics and then hold them up as trophies in order to claim authority, or in order to indulge their own self-image as better radicals. Our definition of manarchy includes “acting macho, holier-than-thou, and elitist,” but it is possible to be militant without being manarchist. As we said, we have observed a specific type of militancy that displays manarchist behavior and is based on “battle wounds”, “toughness,” “purity”, “insulting allies”, and not acting in solidarity with people who use different tactics. However, we agree with Slip that there is a “need of militancy, defiance, and fundamental subversion of the system.”

To clarify our position on no-compromise, we feel that no one should compromise one’s ideals. If you think you can survive without compromising tactically, then do it. However, don’t ostracize

others for their tactical choices. We're skeptical that anyone can "not compromise." How are we going to get to the next mass action without compromising? Train-hopping, stealing gas, bio- diesel, and bicycling are not options for everyone. This is why we question the abundant declaration of "no-compromise", and this is why we need a movement that supports tactical diversity.

## TOWARD A TACTICAL CRITIQUE

Constructive criticism is an integral part of building a large, effective, and revolutionary movement. Dialogue is important because it forces one to reconsider one's beliefs as well as learn about other perspectives, evolving the politics of our movement. One should consider what the specific critique accomplishes and aim to not only improve the politics of our movement but to also increase its numbers. There are some potential problems in this process; one wants to speak one's mind, but doesn't want to alienate people. Thus, one must frame criticisms carefully in ways that don't compromise the message and at the same time don't insult potential allies.

We also want to point out that although self criticism is very important, the movement should not get so caught up in it that we lose sight of our goals and targets. While building a society without oppression, we need to find a balance between internal dialogue and actually changing the structures of society.

In reading responses, we found our emotional reaction was often determined by the way others framed their argument. Many criticisms enabled us to seriously consider whether aspects of our position were flawed. On the other hand, many insulted us. In these cases, there's a part of us that gets mad and wants to dismiss the entire response. It's difficult to be told that we are wrong and or to be discounted as if we are not committed to anarchist ideology. We are doing our best to not get offended, to admit our faults, and work to improve ourselves.

Through this process, it became clear to us how important it is to clearly outline and explain criticisms to each other. For example, we were told "how dare you pontificate from the privilege of your college room about the actions taken by those most affected by the brutality of everyday living under capitalism,"(email). Referring to our status as college students does not address the actual content of the respondents criticism, and we feel it is not constructive to invalidate our entire argument because of who we are. Similarly, one person responded by signing: "go to hell," (nyc indymedia). We understand our position may anger people, and while we support self-expression, insults do not help us reach an understanding of each other's convictions.

We also received several sarcastic messages. For example, "Heretoo!," at NYC-Indymedia, mockingly writes, "We must exclude all manly men from the movement. We must establish quotas for inclusion of feminized males. All males seeking entry into the movement must either prove their femininity, or be administered adequate amounts of estrogen until such time as that they can prove that they are as wise, intelligent and all knowing as oracles who penned this article. All males presently in the movement must begin a self flagellation process on the basis of their gender immediately." While such responses may be attempting to give a useful critique of our article, they result in alienating us from their messages. From the Sarcasm, we understand that "Heretoo!" does not like what we say, but we don't come to a deeper understanding of the differences between our perspectives.

Moreover, insults create an air of aggression and hostility. This encourages a climate where we not only tell allies to “fuck off” but generally dismiss people and consider them unimportant. One correspondent writes “The snarky responses your piece is getting on Indymedia are just more evidence of the need to challenge the entrenched machismo of many activists” (e-mail). Our critique of manarchy is like our critique of sarcastic and purposely insulting feedback. We find them to be alienating, divisive, and counterproductive. With this dynamic, being in a consensus meeting, doing jail solidarity, and putting our bodies on the line in order to protect people is nearly impossible.

In addition to the way we were criticized, we sometimes had a hard time understanding the criticisms. “Methree” writes: “And some of the aforementioned perpetrators were not only male but white too! Oh the horror! Yes! ‘WHATEVER WORKS’ Right on! What doesn’t work: ‘politically correct racism’ and stagnating the movement with outmoded ‘identity politics.’” (NYC Indymedia). We understand that “Methree” takes a different position than we do, but we don’t understand what s/he’s talking about. In order to improve we need to know what it is we are doing, why it is bad, and how we can fix it. For example, it would be useful to have identity politics defined, see evidence of our “politically correct racism,” and hear arguments against or for “whatever works.”

More disturbing are the responses that deny our experience that manarchy exists. In these cases, critics reinterpret the examples we give. Anarchocommie writes:

As to the person who claimed that anyone who is not willing to get beat up, should not be in a black bloc... I do not believe I was at whatever meeting you are referring to, yet I suspect that the rationale behind this persons statements were as follows: the point of a black bloc (from a tactical perspective) is to protect the identities of those who are in them, since most people there are more willing to engage in actions outside of the constraints of the law, and which can generally be described as confrontational... I think this was the speaker’s point, not that we should all want to get beat up, simply that we must recognize it as a possibility and be willing to protect each other and at the same time, engage in those confrontational actions” (Indymedia).

Anarchocommie discounts our experience of manarchy and responds as if we are inventing this type of behavior, but our examples are based on first hand experiences. We’ve seen this behavior in people we work with as well as ourselves. However, Anarchocommie finds it hard to believe that manarchist behavior exists. Thus, in pure speculation s/he reinterprets a quote from a meeting that s/he knows nothing about. S/he takes our experiences and makes it sound as if we couldn’t possibly understand what the activist at the meeting had said, discounting our experiences. Judging from the responses to the article, we aren’t the only ones who witness manarchist behavior. We are certainly prepared to debate whether the examples we give are accurate, but that is not our point. We are saying that Manarchy occurs and we want to stop it. The examples are as much to explain what we mean by manarchy as to expose the flaws of specific behavior. If people dogmatically discount the existence of our examples, they are simultaneously ignoring our message.

We are pleased to have found such a large forum to discuss these issues. As a movement, we must be self-critical as a means of growth. We are excited by the opportunity to dialogue with many new people. We do not think that public discussion should replace one on one conversations. Unfortunately, we have not had time to personally respond to the majority of comments that were emailed to us. We appreciate the personal responses and hope to be emailing people soon.

Let's keep this discussion going.  
In Solidarity,  
Maggie, Rayna, Michael, and Matt,  
The Rock Bloc.c/o Student Action Collective  
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# An open letter to other men in the movement: by Dan Spalding

SHUT THE FUCK UP or, How to act better in meetings

“Even with my mask I often spoke the tyranny of power. My first duty was to cultivate a revolutionary silence.” Subcomandante Marcos

## Introduction

Being an activist these days means fighting for a thousand different things — indigenous rights, rainforests, corporate accountability, etc. Despite this diversity of campaigns, there seems to be some agreement on the kind of society we want to create. It’s a society that isn’t based on white supremacy, class exploitation, or patriarchy.

This essay is about how men act in meetings. Mostly it’s about how we act badly, but it includes suggestions on how we can do better. Men in the movement reproduce patriarchy within the movement and benefit from it. By patriarchy I mean a system of values, behaviors, and relationships that keeps men in power. It relies on domination, claiming authority, and belligerence. By the movement I mean the anti-corporate globalization movement in the US I am a part of.

I think people organizing for affordable housing, against police brutality, for the rights of immigrants (for example) are also fighting the same system that’s wringing the blood out of the bottom 99 percent of the world’s population and the environment they live in. However, I don’t know from my experience if the men who organize around those issues act the way the men in the movement do.

Just to be clear, those men are almost always white and from middle-class or wealthier backgrounds. In my experience, as someone who identifies as a man of color, men of color dominate meetings in basically the exact same way. But I find that men who do not speak English fluently tend not to do so as much. I wish I could think of more exceptions.

Who cares about meetings?

Good question. Most meetings of large-ish organizations (of more than 30 people or so) I’ve been to don’t amount to too much. The real work — doing research, getting people involved, organizing protests and actions, fundraising, media stuff gets done by working groups or individuals. Meetings are just about a lot of talking, right?

Well, yes and no. At worst meetings force a lot of people to get together and generally discuss everything that’s been done, everything that’s going on, and everything that needs to be done. These meetings tend to wander a lot. Responsibility is not clearly delegated, decisions aren’t made overtly, and the organization isn’t more focused afterwards than before. At the same time, there’s heated arguments over seemingly trivial things, or hurtful criticism of individuals. But those arguments and criticisms don’t amount to too much in the end.

But a good meeting is a different animal altogether. With good self-facilitation and a good facilitator (or two, or three...), everyone contributes to the meeting, without anyone taking control over it. People make constructive criticism, and try.

If you're serious about using consensus, you have to care about meetings. That it's not just how often you talk, but how and when consensus decision making is a model of the society we want to live in, and a tool we use to get there. Men often dominate consensus at the expense of everyone else. Think about the man who...

- Speaks for a long, loud, first and often
- Offers his opinion immediately whenever someone makes a proposal, asks a question, or if there's a lull in discussion
- Speaks with too much authority: "Actually, it's like this..."
- Can't amend a proposal or idea he disagrees with, but trashes it instead
- Makes faces every time someone says something he disagrees with
- Rephrases everything a woman says, as in, "I think what Mary was trying to say is..."

-  
Makes a proposal, then responds to each and every question and criticism of it — thus speaking as often as everyone else put together (Note: This man often ends up being the facilitator) And don't get me started about the bad male facilitator who...:

- Always puts himself first on stack, because he can
- Somehow never sees the women with their hands up, and never encourages people who haven't spoken

It's rarely just one man who exhibits every problem trait. Instead it's two or three competing to do all the above. But the result is the same: everyone who can't (or won't) compete on these terms — talking long, loud, first and often — gets drowned out.

This is a result of society's programming. Almost no men can actually live up to our culture's fucked up standards of masculinity. And our society has standards for women that are equally ridiculous. In one way, we both suffer equally. That's why we all yearn and strive for a world where these standards — which serve to divide us and reduce us and prop up those in control — are destroyed.

In another way these standards serve those who come closest to living up to them. Sure, we all lose when a few men dominate a meeting. But it's those men who get to make decisions, take credit for the work everyone does, and come out feeling more inspired and confident.

## **But I can't be sexist — I'm a hippie**

Oh, but you can. The irony is that you can basically do all the things listed above, even if you don't fit the stereotype of the big strapping man. I've seen hippies, men who would be described

as feminine, queer men, and others who in many ways go against the grain not go against the grain at all when it comes to dominating discussion. A hippie might speak slowly and use hippie slang, but still speak as the voice of authority, and cut off the woman who was speaking before him. A man who some might call feminine can still make a face like he smelled something when someone he doesn't respect says something he disagrees with, thus telling her to shut up; he may also politely but consistently put himself on stack every time someone criticizes his proposal.

## **So shut the fuck up already**

What's to be done? I've come up with a little idea I like to call, "Shut the fuck up."  
It goes as follows: Every time someone...

- Says something you think is irrelevant,
- Asks a (seemingly) obvious question,
- Criticizes your proposal or makes a contradictory observation,
- Makes a proposal
- Asks a question, or
- Asks for more input because there's a brief lull in the discussion...

Shut the fuck up. It's a radical process, but I think you'll like it.

Since my childhood, I was raised by my parents and by every teacher I ever had in school to demand as much attention as possible. In class I spoke more often than almost anyone else I knew. Surprisingly enough, some of my teachers were annoyed with me. But while they may have counseled me to raise my hand first, they never asked me to speak less or listen more. As a result I probably got twice as much attention from my teachers, measured in time spent with me, than most of the other kids I went to school with.

But a mere 15 years after I started learning to exhibit almost all the dominating male behavior I list above, something happened. I was in a class with a friend of mine. Let's call her Anne, because that's her name. Anne and I were in the same study group, and the night before she had gone over the exact question the professor was now asking. However, Anne wasn't answering, even though the rest of the class was silent.

I don't know what struck me to actually stop and think instead of answering the question myself, as I was won't to do. That incident got me thinking about who spoke most often in class, why, and what I could do. The answers to the first two questions I've basically given already. The third is a little trickier.

## **What else can we do?**

Lucky for us, being a man gives us a lot of authority. I mean that in a good way, too. Much like people of color are always assumed to be selfish or paranoid when they speak out against racial profiling, women are often assumed to be bitchy when they call out patriarchal behavior.

What does that mean for us? First, we shut the fuck up. This was easy for me in school — I just made a rule that I never spoke more than twice in a 50 minute class. Surprise! Almost every time I would have spoken, someone else . eventually said the exact same thing, or something smarter. It was frustrating when it was another obnoxious man doing the answering, but a lot of times it wasn't one of the two guys in class who spoke most often.

The problem is that the classroom is designed to have one person in charge, and it ain't the student. While you could point out problem behavior in class, there's not a lot of 'space' for it — it's not expected or encouraged, and would probably be dismissed by the professor.

The beauty of consensus is the facilitation. Not only can we facilitate ourselves — and we should — but we can facilitate each other. This is mainly the job of the person chosen to be the facilitator. But when the facilitator is ignoring problem behavior — or exhibiting it — it's easy for other people in the group to guerrilla facilitate.'

Sometimes it's as easy as pointing out the people who have their hands up, but are somehow missed by the facilitator, or by suggesting straw polls or go 'rounds or other tools that get everyone involved. But it's usually not that easy. The worse the pattern of behavior in the group, the more natural the fucked-upedness will seem. And you'll often be given the evil eye by the people you're calling out, if not a verbal backlash. And finally, it's obviously not the job of the people most trampled on by patriarchal behavior to always be calling it out. That's where we come in. We are, at least at first, given the most respect when we call out bad behavior.

The problem is doing the calling out in a constructive way. It's all too easy to call people out in a hurtful and authoritarian fashion — thus entertaining everyone with your unintended irony, but also acting the exact way you don't want others to. When you call people out in a way that's hurtful instead of constructive, it still tends to keep the quietest people at a meeting from participating.

## **The solution**

So call people out, but try not to be too personal about it. Unless it's outrageous, wait until the person is finished, and then make your process point about how people should stick to stack, or consider not talking if they've just spoken, or whatever. And if it seems someone's pissed off at your calling them out (and white men make it real easy for you to tell if they're pissed off), make the effort to talk to him after the meeting is over. It usually doesn't take much to smooth ruffled feathers.

Unfortunately, it also doesn't take much for those same people to do the exact same thing the next meeting. So while part of the answer is self-facilitation and facilitating others, another part is also giving everyone the skills and confidence they need to assert their place in the meeting. This means having regular workshops, for new and experienced activists, on how consensus is supposed to work, it also means going through the formal process of consensus and explaining it during meetings. You can do it quickly, especially after the first few times. But when people assume that everyone is familiar with the process, those who are least confident (but still have good ideas) will be the first to drop out of discussions. Meanwhile, other people who think they know the process but don't tend to hold things up. I'll let you guess what I think the gender breakdown of those groups is.

Another key ingredient is talking to individuals outside of meetings. Talking honestly — “I know you care about the group, but in meetings it seems like you talk down to anyone who disagrees with you, and you cut people off a lot, and that makes it really hard for other people to participate” — is a big part of it. And as with any interaction, you have to keep an open mind to hear their perspective. Ideally, you could resolve things at this level and not have to bring things up before the group.

But it’s still a good idea to come up with a structure to address the way people act badly in meetings, for people to regularly “check in” with how they feel the process is going. It also makes it easier for people who wouldn’t normally criticize others to do so constructively. The structure could mean that once every two months the group has a “process” meeting, where the focus is on how people act in meetings, working groups, etc. It’s often easier and ‘safer’ for people to call out problem behavior, and easier and ‘safer’ for the culprits to own up to it and ask for constructive criticism.

Finally, it means constantly thinking about how we, as men, tend to dominate and control the world around us. To me this is most apparent (at least in other people) in meetings. To me, that’s also where it’s easiest to address. This is a continuous process. We have to always read about this, talk about it, inquire into how others address it, come up with creative and successful solutions, and apply them. But no matter where we take it, I think this struggle always starts with shutting the fuck up.

As men, we’re encouraged to dominate the conversation without even thinking about it. It’s too easy for us to do really good work — fighting genetic engineering, tearing down the prison industrial complex, freeing Mumia — and still act exactly like the frat boy next door. We have to confront each other and ourselves so that domination stops seeming natural, and so we can start doing something about it. So the next time you don’t think about how you’re talking, please think about how you’re talking.

## **And the bonus section.....**

But I can’t let a girl do this — I mean, I’m the only one who knows how

Shut the heck up! Sharing responsibility for projects is fundamental for ensuring that everyone in the group develops skills and confidence. I’ll give credit where it’s due: We men are pretty good at letting women bottomline work like child care, note taking, food prep... But we rarely have structures to let women take on our responsibilities.

In your meetings, are women taking on projects in proportion to their numbers? If you’re not paying attention, you should be. Along with consensus, sharing work is one of the hallmarks of democratic organizing. In my experience the most prestigious, challenging, and rewarding work belongs to men. Often, it belongs to the same men who dominate the meetings where these tasks are ostensibly delegated.

One way men make work theirs (in the worst way) is by hoarding information around it. What work has been done? What’s left to do? What are the priorities? The deadlines? If the work is done informally, not only is there no accountability for it getting done, but there are also no records and no regular updates. This makes it almost impossible to Pass on responsibility for the Project to someone else — unless you’re setting them up for failure.

Finally, there's language. Experts in the capitalist world tend to mystify their work. Whether it's "move to demur," "updating the HTML," or within the confines of this work the radios." First, that's usually a group of men speaking. Second, that's why you have start before the action. If the problem is just a few big egos and a lot of people's complicity, then you can delegate immediately. If there's more at work, you have to set up a structure so folks outside the de facto leadership meaningfully take on projects. That structure can include documenting steps and information, helping new people develop working relationships with other organizers, using everyday language instead of bullshit acronyms, and so on. But without a process it's much more difficult to pass on that responsibility.

And who do you think you'll be passing it on to?

(freely inspired by Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness.")

## Epilogue

This essay came out of my frustration with the male domination this movement and the absence of men's efforts to change it. It also came out of my need for self-reflection. This will ideally lead not just all men acting exactly like think they should, but also a lasting dialog on how we behave in meetings and what we can do about it. If you have any thoughts on what I've written, please contact me and tell me what you think [dan@midnightspecial.net](mailto:dan@midnightspecial.net) This isn't a declaration of war; it's just a starting point.

Time for me to shut the fuck up.

ARE YOU A MANARCHIST QUESTIONNAIRE

General Questions:

1. Do you ascribe to either: A) Passive-Aggressive Patriarchy:" (often come across as a victim/helpless/in need/dependent and get women in your life to be your physical and emotional caretakers? to buy you things? to take care of yourr responsibilities? pick up your slack? use guilt or manipulation to get out of your responsibilities and equal share of the work? do you treat your female partner like a "mom" or your secretary? she's fragile, a baby or weak? Do you put down your partner or minimize her feelings? Do you belittle her Opinions?
2. How do you react when women in your life name something or someone as patriarchal or sexist? Do you think of her or call her a "PC Thug," "Feminazi," "Thin-skinned," "Overly-Sensitive," a "COINTELPRO-esque" or "Un-fun?"
3. Do you see talking about patriarchy as non-heroic, a waste of time, trouble making, or divisive?
4. If a woman asks your opinion, do you assume she must not know anything about the subject?
5. Do you believe that women have "natural characteristics" which are inherent in our sex such as "passive," "sweet," "caring," "nurturing," "considerate," "generous," "weak," or "emotional?"
6. Do you make fun of "typical" men or "frat boys" but not ever check yourself to see if you behave in the same ways

7. Do you take on sexism and patriarchy as a personal struggle working to fight against it in yourself, in your relationships, in society, work, culture, subcultures, and institutions?
8. Do you say anything when other men make sexist or patriarchal comments?
9. Do you help your patriarchal and sexist friends to make change and help educate them? Or do you continue friendships with patriarchal and sexist men and act like there is no problem?

### **Activism Questions**

1. As a man, is being a feminist a priority to you? Do you see being a feminist as revolutionary or radical?
2. Do you think that you define what is radical? Do you suffer from or contribute to macho bravado or 'subpoena envy' (I.e. defining a true or "cool" and respectable activist as someone who has: been arrested, done lockdowns, scaled walls, hung banners, done time for their actions argued or fought with police, done property alterations, beat up nazi boneheads, etc.)?
3. Do you take something a woman said, reword it and claim it as your own idea/opinion?
4. Are you taking on the "shit" or "grunt" work in your organizing? (I.e.: Cooking, cleaning, set up, clean up phone calls, email lists, taking notes, doing support work, sending mailings, providing childcare?) Are you aware of the fact that women often are taking on this work with no regard or for their efforts?
5. Do you take active step to make your activist groups safe and comfortable places for women?
6. If you are trying to get more women involved in your activist projects, do you try to engage them by telling them what to do or why they should join your group?
7. Do you ever find yourself monitoring and limiting your behavior and speech in meetings and activist settings because you don't want to take up too much space or dominate the group? Are you aware of the fact that women do this all the time?
8. Do you pay attention to group process and consensus building in groups or do you tend to dominate and take charge (maybe without even realizing it)?

### **Sexual/Romantic Relationships and Issues**

1. Do you make jokes or negative comments about the sex lives of women or sex work?
2. Can you only show affection and be loving to your partner in front of friends and family or only in private?
3. Do you discuss the responsibility for preventing contraception and getting STD screening prior to sexual contact?

4. Do you repeatedly ask or plead with women for what you want in sexual situations? Are you aware that unless this is a mutually consented upon scenario/game that this is considered a form of coercion?
5. During sex, do you pay attention to your partner's face and body language to — see if she is turned on? Engaged, or just lying there? Do you ask a woman what she wants during sex? What turns her on?
6. Do you ask for consent?
7. Do you know if your partner has a sexual abuse, rape, or physical abuse history?
8. Do you stay with your partner in a relationship for comfort and security? Sex? Financial or emotional caretaking? If you're not completely happy or "in love" with your partner anymore? Even though you don't think it will ultimately work out? Because you're afraid or unable to be alone? Do you suddenly end relationships when a "new" or "better" woman comes along?
9. Do you jump from relationship to relationship? Overlap them? Or do you take space and time for yourself in between each relationship to reflect on the relationship and your role in it? Do you know how to be alone? How to be single?
10. Do you cheat on your partners?
11. If your girlfriend gets on your case for patriarchal behavior or wants to try to work on the issues of patriarchy in your relationship, do you creak up with her or cheat on her and find another woman who will put up with your shit?
12. Do you agree to romantic commitment and responsibility and then back out of these situations?
13. Do you understand menstruation?
14. Do you make fun of women or write them off as "PMS-ing?"

### **Friendship Questions**

1. Do you tend to set the standard and plans for fun or do you work with the others in the group, including women to see what they want to do?
2. Do you talk to your female friends about things you don't talk to your male friends about especially emotional issues?
3. Do you constantly fall in love with your female friends Are you friends with women until you find out that they are not in love with you too and then end the friendships? Are you only friends with women who are in monogamous or committed relationships with other people?
4. Do you come on to your female friends even jokingly?



5. Do you only talk to your female friends (and not your male friends) about your romantic relationships or problems in those relationships?
6. Do you find yourself only attracted to “Anarcho-Crusty Punk Barbie”, Alterna-Grrrl Barbie,” or Hardcore-Grrrl Barbie?” (The idea here being that the only women you are attracted to fit mainstream beauty standards but just dress and do their hair alternatively and maybe have piercings and tattoos)
7. Do you question and challenge your internalized ideals of mainstream beauty ideals for women?
8. Have you ever heard of or discussed “sizeism” and do you think it is low on the oppression scale?
9. Are you aware of the fact that ALL WOMEN, even women in radical communities, live under the CONSTANT PRESSURE and OPPRESSION of mainstream patriarchal beauty standards?
10. Are you aware of the fact that many women in radical communities have had and are currently dealing with eating disorders?
11. Do you make fun of “model-types” or “mainstream” women for their appearance?

### **Domestic/Household Questions**

1. When was the last time you walked into your house, noticed that something was misplaced/ dirty/etc. AND did something about it (didn't just walk by it, over it, away from it or leave a nasty note about it) even if it wasn't your chore or responsibility?
2. Are you constantly amazed by the magical “food fairy” who mysteriously acquires food, brings it home, puts it away, prepares it in meal form and then cleans up afterwards?
3. Do you contribute equally to domestic life and work?
4. How many of the following activities do you contribute to in your home? (this is a partial list of what it takes to run a household):
  - Sweep and mop floors and clean carpets?
  - Wash and put away dishes?
  - Clean stove, countertops, sinks and appliances if they are messy and each time after you have prepared food?
  - Collect money, do food shopping, put away food and make meals for people you live with?
  - Do house laundry (kitchen towels, bathroom hand towels, washable rugs, etc.)?
  - Clean up common room spaces, even if it's not your chore?
  - Pick up other's slack?

- Deal with garbage, recycling, and compost?
- Take care of bills, rent, utilities?
- Deal with the landscaping and gardening?
- Clean bathrooms and make sure bathroom is clean after you use it?
- Feed, clean up after, and take care of housepets?

### **Children & Childcare**

1. Do you spend time with kids? If you do, do you spend time with children (yours or anyone's) in a way that is gendered? (do certain things with boys and other things with girls?)
2. If you are a father, do you co-parent your children? (Spend equal time AND energy AND effort AND money to raise them)?
3. Do you make childcare a priority? (at both activist events and in daily life)
4. Do you help make the lives of single mothers in your life and community easier by finding out if and how you can assist?
5. Have you politicized your ideas about child rearing and parenthood radical communities? Do you believe that individuals who are in the movement have children or that the movement has children?

### **Multi-Category Questions:**

1. When was the last time you showed a woman how to do a task rather than doing it for her and assuming she couldn't do it?
2. When was the last time you asked a woman to show you how to do a task?
3. Do you get emotional needs met by other women, whether or not you are in a romantic relationship with them? Or do you cultivate caring, nurturing relationships with other men in which you can discuss your feelings and get your needs met by them?
4. If a woman discusses with you or calls you out on your patriarchy, do you make an effort to be emotionally present? Listen? Not emotionally shut down? Not get defensive? Think about what she said? Admit you fucked up? Take responsibility/make reparations for the mistakes you made? Discuss your feelings and ideas with her? Apologize? Work harder on your own shit to make sure that you don't make the same mistakes again with her or other women?
5. Do you look inside yourself to find out why you fucked up in these relationships and work to both change your behavior and be a better anti-patriarchy ally in the future?
6. Do you organize regular house meetings or activist meetings to resolve conflict in the house/group?

7. Do you use intimidation, yelling, getting in someone's physical space, threats or violence to get your point across? Do you create an atmosphere of violence around women or others to threaten them (i-e.: throw things, break things, yell and scream, threaten, attack, tease or terrorize the animals or pets of women in your life)?
8. Do you physically, psychologically, or emotionally abuse women?
9. Do the women in your life (mothers, sisters, partners, housemates, friends, etc.) have to "remind" you or "nag" you or "yell" at you in order for you to get off your ass and take care of your responsibilities?
10. Do you talk to other men about patriarchy and your part in it?
11. When was the last time you thought about or talked about any of these issues other than after reading this questionnaire?

**Scoring:** ALL MEN need to work on issues of patriarchy, sexism and misogyny. However, this questionnaire may point out to you areas of particular focus or concentration for your own anti-patriarchal/sexist/misogynist process and development.

## “Are you Stuck on “Manarchy”?”

Poor Communication Can't Smash Patriarchy  
by sally darity, sallydarity@yahoo.com

The following is a response from an anarcha-feminist to the documents about “manarchy” that have been circulating in the past year or two, particularly the “Are You a Manarchist? Questionnaire”.

*Disclaimer: As a trans ally with genderfuck politics, I am aware that the use of the words “men” and “women” and other gendered words are limiting and exclusionary, as when most people use those words they are referring to biological gender. I use the words in my writing as inclusively as is applicable. The issue of male privilege is a sticky issue when it comes to trans-ness, but still needs to be addressed.*

Sexism is a form of hierarchy, and therefore anarchists should by definition be anti-sexist. Most anarchists benefit from one or more types of privilege, whether it be white, male, class status, heterosexual, ability privilege, etc. Unfortunately, eliminating racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors, as well as rejecting privilege, can be very difficult, especially if it is not clear exactly how we are privileged and how it affects others.

There have been efforts made by women within the anarchist movement to present the manifestations of male privilege and patriarchy, and ask/demand of men to act according to their anarchist principles, which means shedding attitudes and behaviors that are sexist. This is an especially complicated endeavor, as it is difficult to define exactly what is sexist and identify how something is gender-related. Feminists even have a hard time defining patriarchy. Some women from Philadelphia, the authors of the “Are You a Manarchist? Questionnaire,” took a stab at identifying gender-related oppression/domination issues and came up with sixty questions.

When I received the questionnaire in an email, I skimmed it and forwarded it to my local anarchist listserve. I thought it was a really good attempt at pointing out several gender-based issues that before had perhaps not been named. Not only that, but it was addressed specifically to anarchists, including several questions related to political activism. Shortly after I forwarded it, I learned that this is not a document that men felt completely comfortable reading through and learning something from. Most feminists know that hardly a feminist essay or article can go out on an internet forum without some male getting defensive. But, as I read the questionnaire more thoroughly, I realized that it really wasn't written to provide any sort of comfort to men; rather it was the Opposite. The document was undoubtedly dismissed because of defensiveness it caused. It was disappointing that a document like this could be dismissed so easily by men when there were several good points within it. After all, it pinpointed many issues that I hadn't seen named before and it was in a good format. It is composed of personal questions for the reader to ask himself, instead of a general essay format. It is probably easier and less daunting to read than an essay of similar length.

Whether or not some men felt comfortable with the questionnaire, at least many read it and it started up a dialogue. Around the same time that I forwarded it to the local anarchist listserve, we

had been discussing the use of the word “bitch,” and the fact that we were soon to have a group of anarchists visiting from a different city, one of whom we learned had date-raped someone. The conversations as a result of all these things have changed how some men have acted and hopefully their attitudes as well.

Despite the ease of reading this questionnaire, it doesn’t seem to have been written in a way that would encourage men to work on their issues. First of all, the title of the questionnaire is “Are You a Manarchist?” but there isn’t any way to tally your score and come up with any results about whether you are or aren’t a manarchist. That’s not really the point of the questionnaire, as the “Scoring” section states that “ALL MEN need to work on issues of patriarchy, sexism and misogyny,” that the questions are to be used as a guide. The reader does not get this information until the end. Meanwhile, the reader is probably answering a few questions with what he has a feeling are bad answers and he’s getting defensive because he doesn’t think he’s a manarchist. He’s also thinking, “Why does this only apply to men? Women do fucked up things too.” And so already he’s not focusing on his issues because he’s busy thinking about his defense.

The word “manarchist” is quite problematic. While it may be a clever play on words because it includes the words “man” and “anarchist” and it a simple word to describe patriarchy within the anarchist movement, it is accusatory, and is or can be perceived as derogatory. There were probably men who took one look at the word “manarchist” and got defensive and therefore didn’t take the questionnaire seriously if he even read it at all. Whether or not an accusatory tone is justified, it is important that our words are getting through to people who need to hear it, and so it is worth it to address the fact that the word “manarchist” turns people off right away.

Not only is it an abrasive term, it is not clear what “manarchist” means exactly. Around the same time as the questionnaire was out there in cyberspace, an article was being circulated independently of the questionnaire, called “Stick it to the Manarchy,” written by two women and two men. This article defined manarchy as “Aggressive, competitive behavior within the anarchist movement that is frighteningly reminiscent of historically oppressive male gender roles. Such behavior includes acting macho, holier than thou, and elitist. Manarchy often results in exclusivity.” Although that which is described in this definition is addressed in some questions in the “Are You a Manarchist” questionnaire, the questionnaire addressed many more issues than these. Therefore, readers of both these documents would be unclear about what is meant by “manarchist” and “manarchy”. On top of this, the “Stick it to the Manarchy” article seemed to lack clarity about whether it was a critique of masculinity, aggressive behavior, and/or tactics. In a response to feedback the authors of the article received, the authors clarified that the issues that they talked about could apply to men as well as women (while the manarchist questionnaire addresses only men), it was a gender-related critique only in as much that these behaviors were traditionally masculine. There didn’t seem to be enough of a distinction between masculinity and oppressiveness, and aggressiveness and oppressiveness. The latter was disconcerting because aggression seems necessary for the fight against hierarchy. But the authors cleared this up in their response also, explaining that they “support aggressive tactics if they are strategically useful”, and that the critique was of the usefulness of tactics as well as of peoples’ attitudes. The authors of the article got a lot of responses because several people had understood the article to be anti-militancy/ anti-violence to an extent, which is also the impression I got. With this impression, it seemed ironic when I came across something Starhawk wrote, which was a critique of attitudes and usefulness of tactics within the nonviolence movement. In “Webs of Power” Starhawk wrote,

“... Embracing suffering is problematic for women, who have always been taught to suffer and sacrifice for others. Conditioned to swallow our anger, to not strike back, we have not had a choice about accepting blows without retaliation. Nonviolence puts a high moral value on those behaviors, encourages men to practice them and develops them as a political strategy. Yet women’s empowerment involves acknowledging our anger, owning our rage, allowing ourselves to be powerful and dangerous as well as accommodating and understanding” (219). The self sacrifice is something the manarchy article also touched on which they called “new self-sacrificial disobedience” shown by jail time and battle wounds as a result of aggressive tactics.

The main issue is that the critiques of manarchy are not clear. The authors of “Stick it to the Manarchy” used words such as “macho” and “elitist” while the manarchist questionnaire uses “macho. bravado” and these are not such clear words, just as “manarchist” is not unambiguous. As far as I know, no anarchist thinks of him/her/himself as macho or elitist and so they aren’t going to understand what is wrong. A more recent article called “Just Ask a Woman” about the phenomena of men calling themselves “ex-manarchists,” insinuated that the act of taunting the cops was sexist. The author, Traci Harris, likened the taunting to frat boy behavior, chest puffing, and cockfighting. If it is the case that this behavior is “frat boy technique”, chest puffing and cockfighting then we need to identify what makes it that; what is the difference when women taunt the cops, and what’s so bad about that? It doesn’t seem to do any good to throw these words around without explaining thoroughly how they relate to gender and to our anarchist principles.

We can’t throw around words like “manarchist” that are unclear and abrasive in order to get a point across. When we call cops pigs, we’re not trying to communicate so that they can understand where we’re coming from, Name-calling is not a tactic that should be employed if we want any amount of understanding. Even if we say that “manarchist” is just a good word to describe something, it obviously doesn’t do a good job at it, and therefore should not be used. A funny post on infohop.org I found said it better: dadanarchist writes on Tuesday October 29 2002 @ 10:02AM PST: Official Communique from the Anarchist Revolutionary Council:

The term “manarchist”... and other similar reductionist terms are hereby removed from circulation. These terms simplify debate, function as discourse-ending words... and generally do not contribute to any sort of debate or critical discussion.”

Several of the questions within the “Are You a Manarchist” questionnaire were also unclear in terms of how they relate to gender and to anarchist principles. Because of the question format, it does not allow the reader to get an explanation of why an answer might be wrong, if he can grasp, for the most part, what the wrong answers are. When it comes to some of the questions, it may not be clear what the difference is between men treating women differently in a sexist way, and men treating women differently because they are sexual partners. Despite the use of the word “partner”, the majority of the questions are written in a very heteronormative way, in the sense that the questions were for men about women. Does this mean that gay men do not need to read this questionnaire, or should they only answer questions which apply to them? Should transgendered people also read this questionnaire? And why shouldn’t ([cisgender]) women? Not to lose the focus on patriarchy, but all people could learn a thing or two from asking themselves the questions that apply to them, for a lot of these questions are not necessarily specific to men.

Of course, in this case, several questions are missing. For example, in response to the question “Do you understand menstruation?” in the “Are You a Manarchist” questionnaire, a woman suggested one of several questions addressed to women on an internet forum, “Do you understand impotence?” which seems equally important.

These questions would probably be better received if it weren’t presented as simply as men vs. women. This is true not only because there are other hierarchical issues involved with most of the questions that the questionnaire asks, but also because gender itself is not as simple as men vs. women. Gender is fluid and should not be defined by institutions. Sex is a social construct, despite the fact that men exist and women exist, addressed and we cannot ignore that there are people who don’t fit into neat little gender packages that make it easier for us to talk about sexism. If we are to help people understand how patriarchy affects us, we need to treat it like the complex issue that it is. We can’t make it as simple as men vs. women, we need to explain how what we’re talking about is sexist.

If we are to see the eradication of patriarchy and gender oppression, women also cannot use the questionnaire to say “See, it says here you’re a manarchist. I’m right and you’re wrong”. We need to develop an anarchist definition and critique of patriarchy and gender oppression, and share it movement-wide. Women also need to take responsibility for our issues that are oppressive and repressive, as well as becoming empowered instead of remaining victims. If men see us blaming and criticizing yet not changing our own behavior, they will hardly be encouraged to change their own behavior.

At the same time, women are not obligated to hold men’s hands and guide them through understanding patriarchy and gender oppression. They need to have an open mind, try understanding instead of getting defensive. Guys need to stop and think about what is being said before they react. They need to take some time to consider where women are coming from, not just assume that their own experience gives them the appropriate knowledge to judge the situation fairly. They have to avoid dismissing a whole document or a whole group based on small parts or individuals that are confusing or offensive. If they don’t understand a question on the questionnaire or an article on patriarchy, they should discuss it with a woman and listen to her. They should discuss it with other men as well.

Without everyone trying to communicate better, we cannot make changes. If we cannot get through the issues within our own subculture or community of anarchist organizing and action, then how can we expect to live truly as anarchists, and expand it to wider communities.

# ADVICE FOR MEN — RAPE PREVENTION

Please read this message.

I just got something forwarded from a friend that is another version of a very common email forward, and I used to be one of the people who forwarded them too, but they annoy me a lot now. They are the “What women should do to prevent themselves from being raped” forwards.

I’ve seen probably dozens of these emails now. What women should wear, how women should act, when women should and should not go outside and if they do how they should behave, how they should look, what they should do when they are approached by a strange man, how they should fight or not fight if they are attacked.

Here is what bothers me about these emails, and it is a pretty simple thing — Women are not the people who can stop men from committing rape. Men are.

So, I understand the good intentions behind whoever is writing these things, I understand why they are forwarded around the internet with the advice to Forward This To Every Woman You Know message always there. I have forwarded these things myself, in the past. I won’t anymore.

If I’ve seen dozens of them, for years, I have to think that most people with email accounts, particularly women, have also seen them multiple times. And I’m sick of them. So I had an idea, and I’m really tired right now but because I just read another one of these messages, I’m going to write this.

You can forward this to everyone you know and put my full name on it, Jennifer Robinson. I live in Virginia. I don’t give a damn what people think of me for writing this. Most of these forwards don’t have the names of the original author for some reason.

## PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO EVERY MAN YOU KNOW

Ways Prevent Yourself from Being a Rapist:

1. Do not think you have the right to rape a woman.
2. Do not rape a woman. Do not rape a man.
3. Learn what rape is.
4. Rape is forcing someone to have sex with you when they do not want to.
5. Most rapes are committed by men who know the women they are raping. If the woman you are forcing to have sex with you happens to be your girlfriend, your neighbor, your cousin, your sister, or your wife, it is still RAPE.
6. When someone says no to you, that means you have no right to force yourself on them.



7. When someone pushes you away, or otherwise inclines, verbally or with physical movement that they do not want to have sex with you, and you force yourself on them, that is rape.
8. If you see a woman in a parking lot, don't rape her.
9. If you see a woman walking alone at night, don't rape her.
10. If you see a woman in a short skirt, don't rape her.
11. If you see a woman with long hair, don't rape her.
12. If you see a woman walking down a dark street at 4 AM, naked, don't rape her.
13. If you see a woman who is not carrying pepper spray for self protection, does not know karate, does not have a gun, and is not even holding an umbrella to ward you off, still don't rape her.
14. If you see a woman who has a sign on her head that says "I Want Sex", you don't have the right to force sex upon her.
15. If you're at a party, and a girl is drunk, and she wants you to kiss her and touch her but then she wants you stop, STOP.
16. If you're on a date with someone and they want to go so far, but then stop, you STOP. If you don't stop, it is called rape.
17. Rape is a crime, whether you go to prison for it or not, whether it is reported or not, whether you're convicted, or whether anyone believes the woman you rape, or whether you get a goddamn medal of honor for all the rapes you got away with committing, IT'S A CRIME and it's a crime against humanity, which has more to do with your conscience and morals and the rights of women to live as human beings on this planet without having to be in fear their bodies will be violated, than it laws and prison sentences. If you are a rapist, you have violated a person's right to simply live. News Flash — you do not have the right to do that. Neither does any other man or woman you know.
18. Rape is about power. It is not about sex. Do something else with your misogyny than rape a woman. Try, say, reading a book.
19. Men are the people who can stop rape. Not women. For proof of this fact, look at statistics on rape for a second. It happens every minute of every day, and it is usually not ever reported so Statistics on it are always underestimates. Women have been trying to prevent themselves from being raped for a few centuries. IT HASN'T WORKED YET.
20. Rapists destroy lives in a way that murderers do not. If you rape a person, you are as inhumane as a murderer.
21. Before you decide to rape someone, go to visit an emergency room one night, and ask the nurse on duty at the triage, how many raped women have been there that evening. Then ask about the rape kits they did on the women, the DNA evidence they collected. Then

spend a few years of your life talking with women who were raped and see how it has affected them every single day of their lives. You might reconsider rape after that

22. Note that you are living in a patriarchal society which is the only reason why. committing rape will occur to you Note that, despite this fact, you STILL DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO RAPE ANYONE EVER.
23. Know that a few million human beings on this planet right now want you dead, if you're a rapist, because we're sick and tired of you walking around, and our self protection mechanisms haven't worked, and you're not about to be a real popular guy if anyone finds out you are a rapist.
24. Know that whether anyone ever finds out you committed a rape or not, you are still a repulsive, weak, pathetic, disgusting, grotesque, inhumane, repulsive, worthless, twisted individual if you rape someone, and this fact will remain true, and you will remain guilty forever, whether she tells anybody or not. And you can be the one to live with that.
25. Read Ms. Magazine instead of Playboy
26. Stay away from pornography. Most rapists love it. That should be a danger sign.
27. Stay away from women.
28. Stay away from little girls.
29. Stay away from boys.
30. You are not the superior sex, never will be, never were, never are. Women are equal to you, and sometimes women will be smarter than you. This is called life. Deal with it.
31. Sometimes women will not like you. That is our right. See above.
32. Sometimes women will rebuff your advances. In other words, we don't always want to have sex with you. Note, no one has any duty to have sex with anyone, ever. You are no exception.
33. Sometimes women will think you are stupid, will make fun of you, will not treat you well, will fire you from a job, will laugh at you, will refuse to go out with you. Just like men can do these things, so can women. This does not mean you have a right to commit rape.
34. If a woman has sex with you one day and doesn't want to have sex with you the next, that is her right. You do not have the right to rape her.
35. If a woman has sex with you and one hour later does not want to have sex with you again, that is her right. You do not have the right to rape her.
36. If a woman has sex all the time, with lots of men, and you think she is a slut for it, you still don't have the right to rape her.
37. Women have the right to have sex with who they choose, when they choose, wherever they choose if it is consensual. Just like men.

38. No woman has ever, will ever or does ever ASK to be raped. No woman LIKES being raped. No woman INVITES you to rape her. No woman has EVER ASKED FOR IT. Try to remember that.
39. You don't have a right to rape your wife, your daughter, your granddaughter, your best friend, your girlfriend, a girl you met at the grocery store, your boss, your coworker, your student, your professor, your niece, your next door neighbor, a woman you do not know, or ANYONE ELSE. Ever. Period. End of Story.
40. Do not forward around emails to people telling them what women should do to prevent themselves from being raped. Women have never, and will never be able to stop the phenomena of rape, even as women do a good job of trying to.
41. Very simple. You are the only person who can prevent you from raping me or any other woman. You. Not me. You. Not any woman. You. You must stop you from being a rapist. It is YOUR job. Take responsibility for it for a change. I'm tired of giving out the 1-800-656-HOPE number to women who have been raped. I WANT TO GIVE OUT A HOTLINE TO YOU. 1-800-STOP IT NOW But that hotline does not exist.
42. Go build a crisis center to stop yourself and every other man you know from becoming a rapist. Get funding for it, which will require a lot of work on a daily basis. Hire counselors. Hold group therapy and individual therapy sessions. Try, again, to get funding for it because it will be difficult to do so. Women have been doing this for decades. They're called rape crisis centers and we have too many of them. They should not have to exist at all.
43. When you converse with your male friends, be sure to warn them to NOT RAPE ANYONE if they are going out late at night, or if they are going out with a new girl, or if they are doing anything at all where rape might be an issue of concern. Women do this all the time, . warning their friends to be careful, warning their daughters, their sisters, their mothers to be careful, to watch out, to lock their doors, to keep their doors locked, to carry pepper spray. We have all sorts of advice we give each other based on our very rational fear of rape. Why don't you try giving every man you now advice on how to prevent rape?
44. If you know someone who is a rapist, do something about it. Do not ignore, tolerate, pretend you don't know or don't care, or congratulate him. DO SOMETHING about it, such as, telling him he is the scum of the earth, reporting him to the police, beating him up, or put up a billboard with his picture, his name and the word Rapist in bright red letters on his front lawn.
45. If you're a rapist, go to therapy for a few years, perhaps the rest of your life, spend some time in a psychiatric hospital, perhaps dozens of times, perhaps years, and try to figure out how to live with yourself and what you did, which is exactly what many women who are raped by people such as you must do.
46. Donate money to RAINN, since you haven't succeeded in stopping rape from happening yet, so we still need these sexual assault centers, and maybe you should try being the person who donates money to them, rather than the people who were raped. <http://www.rainn.org> 1-800-656-HOPE. Or donate money to your local sexual assault crisis center. Or donate

money to one of the women you know who has been raped so she can go to therapy, because statistically, there is little chance that you do not know several rape “survivors”.

#### 47. SEND THIS TO EVERY MAN YOU KNOW.

And when you get the next email telling every woman on the planet what to do to prevent herself from being raped, and it says, “forward it to every woman you know”, don’t do it. For an example, see the message below and consider how ridiculous it is that women should have to live in a world where we write, read, and send each other these kind of messages, and know that it is not fair, and wonder for a minute, why you never got a message like this before addressed to men.

A group of rapists and date rapists in prison were interviewed on what they look for in a potential victim and here are some interesting facts:

The first thing men look for in a potential victim is hairstyle. They are most likely to go after a woman with a ponytail, bun, braid or other hairstyle that can easily be grabbed. They are also likely to go after a woman with long hair. Women with short hair are not common targets.

The second thing men look for is clothing. They will look for women who’s clothing is easy to remove quickly. Many of them carry scissors around to cut clothing.

They also look for women on their cell phone, searching through their purse or doing other activities while walking because they are off guard and can be easily overpowered.

The time of day men are most likely to attack and a woman is in the early morning, between 5 and 8:30 a.m.

The number one place women are abducted from/attacked at is grocery store parking lots. Number two is office parking lots/garages. Number three is public restrooms.

The thing about these men is that they are looking to grab a woman and quickly move her to a second location where they don’t have to worry about getting caught.

Only 2% said they carried weapons because carries a 3–5 year sentence but with a weapon is 15–20 years.

If you put up any kind of a fight at all, they get discouraged because it only takes a minute or two for them to realize that going after you isn’t worth it because it will be time-consuming.

These men said they would not pick on women who have umbrellas, or other similar objects that can be used from a distance, in their hands. Keys are not a deterrent because you have to get really close to the attacker to use them as a weapon. So, the idea is to convince these guys you’re not worth it.

Several defense mechanisms he taught us are: If someone is following behind you on a street or in a garage or with you in an elevator or stairwell, look them in the face and ask them a question, like what time is it, or make general small talk, I can’t believe it is so cold out here, we’re in for a bad winter. Now you’ve seen their face and could identify them in a line-up, you lose appeal as a target.

If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell Stop or Stay back! Most of the rapists this man talked to said they’d leave a woman alone if she yelled or showed that she would not be afraid to fight back. Again, they are looking for an EASY target.

If you carry pepper spray (this instructor was a huge advocate of it and carries it with him wherever he goes,) yelling I HAVE PEPPER SPRAY and holding it out will be a deterrent.

If someone grabs you, you can't beat them with strength but you can by outsmarting them. If you are grabbed around the waist from behind, pinch the attacker either under the arm between the elbow and armpit or in the upper inner thigh — HARD. One woman in a class this guy taught told him she used the underarm pinch on a guy who was trying to date her and was so upset she broke through the skin and tore out muscle strands — the guy needed stitches. Try pinching yourself in those places as hard as you can stand it; it hurts.

After the initial hit, always go for the groin. I know from a particularly unfortunate experience that if you slap a guy's parts it is extremely painful. You might think that you'll anger the guy and make him want to hurt you more, but the thing these rapists told our instructor is that they want a woman who will not cause a lot of trouble. Start causing trouble, and he's out of there.

When the guy puts his hands up to you, grab his first two fingers and bend them back as far as possible with as much pressure pushing down on them as possible. The instructor did it to me without using much pressure, and I ended up on my knees and both knuckles audibly.

Of course the things we always hear still apply: Always be aware of your surroundings, take someone with you if you can and if you see any odd behavior, don't dismiss it, go with your instincts. You may feel a little silly at the time, but, you'd feel much worse if the guy really was trouble.

**PLEASE READ THEN FORWARD THIS TO ANY WOMAN YOU KNOW**

*I edited this based on my belief that conversation is more productive when entered into with an open mind. There is a place for catharsis, however I didn't want the many good points of this to be lost.*

# Conclusion

Brothers! Don't be dominators! Rise up with sisters, strong, proud, and with equality! Fight the Power, Bury the System!

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Confronting Manarchism  
Or, Please Forward This to Every Man You Know  
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