

Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!

Anonymous from Reclaim Pride Brighton

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“Many blame queers for the decline of this society — we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it’s moral fabric — they couldn’t be more accurate. We’re often described as depraved, decadent and revolting — but oh, they haven’t seen nothing yet.” — Mary Nardini Gang (2009)

1. Existence Is Resistance

We are Queer. This is not synonymous with any of LGBTQIA+ in isolation, or any single, stable constrictive identity. Queer is never a singularity, it is fluid and shifting and growing. It rises and falls with the ocean, spits and flickers with the flames, screams and turns with the wind: it’s more than the sum of its parts. As an umbrella term for the individual letters in the acronym, queer, note the lowercase, has found popularity. Our definition of Queer however, note the upper case, is that of an oppositional force, forged in the fire of a war being waged on anything that challenges normalcy. Normalcy is white supremacist, is capitalist, is allocisheteronormative, is patriarchal, is monogamous, is able-bodied. Queer, is everything else.

“Queer is a territory of tension, defined against the dominant narrative of white hetero monogamous patriarchy, but also by an affinity with all who are marginalized, otherized and oppressed. Queer is the abnormal, the strange, the dangerous. Queer involves our sexuality and our gender, but so much more. It is our desire and fantasies and more still. Queer is the cohesion of everything in conflict with the heterosexual capitalist world. Queer is a total rejection of the regime of the Normal.” — Mary Nardini Gang (2014)

This isn’t breaking news. Queers before us have lived, loved, dreamt, fought and died on these ideas. But words are words. The reason why we choose the anarchist, utopian, militant and decadent Queer politic is because we’ve always inherently been in a hopeless conflict with the alternative. We’ve lived it. What does neoliberal acceptance do for queer sex-workers, or teenage trannies sleeping in the streets, or fag-bashing survivors, dyke addicts, punks with AIDS, fat drag queens, genderless prisoners? Pride-themed adverts won’t stop us freezing to death when we can’t afford to pay the bills, and can’t get a job because we dropped out of school when our abusive homophobic families kicked us out. Brighton’s rainbow police cars will still arrest you for illegally distributing free HRT, for daring to challenge the normalcy that demands years of suffering and begging and compromise and sacrifice before finally the normalcy agrees to expand and exploit you all the same. Queer people are made an underclass by design. Creating an underclass out of anyone that isn’t white, able-bodied, neurotypical, allocishet, monogamous is the entire mission statement of the capitalist nation-state. Our restricted access to housing, healthcare, money, safety, etc, isn’t accidentally lacking, it’s artificially restricted, made conditional on terms structured by the normalcy, with the threat of marginalisation, impoverishment and death hanging over us like the sword of fucking Damacles. It’s the same deal with the devil that whispers in our eras, “wait for things to get better...” — because what in the fucking world would make that happen?

“The first lesson a Revolutionary must learn is that he is a doomed man.” — Huey P. Newton (1973)

As Queer people we live inside of a society which is intent on killing us. The tension between Queer and normalcy began before any of our first screams, but it's our autonomy in force that creates: Queer as an oppositional force to a world that wants us dead. And more of us have been killed than my heart could possibly bear. Through malice, negligence, spite, ignorance, integration, apathy, people that would have been our parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, idols, heroes, mentors, lovers, children, died decades before the utopia they were dedicated to even stood a chance. To just say that we carry their legacy with them doesn't feel like enough, it's literally our history. As Queers it is our duty and our honour to burn the white supremacist, capitalist, allocisheteronormative, patriarchal, monogamous world to the ground, take the names of the hundreds, thousands, millions and etch them into the foreheads of dead cops with a knife. Plant trees and paint art and love each other in their names. The tension that requires the oppositional force is historic as much as it is economic, ideological and social. We are Queer because we have no other choice, and never have done. We exist, therefore we resist. It's not a slogan, or a mantra, it's a fucking battle cry.

2. The Fucking State of Things

There are essentially the two mechanisms that a society of normalcy uses to oppress Queer people and communities: elimination and assimilation.

Elimination is the cruel, snarling, sharp edge of the sword. It's fascistic and genocidal, enforced by the state or another entity with a monopoly on violence. It's almost a decade of waiting for life saving medication. It's letting countless die from disease. It's laws against faggots fucking or crossdressing. It's Section 28. It's the WHRC declaration. It's TERFs and "gender-critical feminists" being conspiratorial fascists. It's everyone who's ever demanded details about your genitals, deadname, sexuality with entitlement and aggression. It's putting trans people in gendered prisons, burying them under the wrong pronouns and filling the silence of mourning with their deadname. It's deportations to countries where these things are colonial exports. To be Queer, to defy the normalcy, is to provoke reaction that will attempt to eliminate you. Sometimes you're murdered in the street, sometimes you're not allowed to adopt a child. Either way, they're fucking terrified of you having your own family, legacy, community, for fear of the ideas and principles that may live on past your time. Our bodies face the brunt of the violence, our self-defence punishable with prison time – both methods of stripping you bare and attempting to eradicate your Queerness in whatever form it takes and through whichever method it takes. We're burned, stabbed, shot, starved and then thrown in unmarked graves, for the sake of profit and hierarchy. The mission is the ultimate denial of your autonomy and safety, the ultimate denial of your Queerness.

“WAKE UP! Modern societies are founded upon a scapegoat mechanism and we are unwittingly cultivating ourselves as lambs for slaughter. We are and have always been the enemy! The pariahs! The outcasts! Don't think for a second we won't be targeted again when the shit hits the fan! OUR LIVES ARE NOT DISPOSABLE” – SPIT! (2017)

Assimilation on the other hand, turns our own against us. Normalcy, on the occasion it allows us to live, will require our Queerness to be conditional and policed and tamed and palatable to the

sensibilities of eliminationists. Fuck their conditions. We are offered marriage rights, a chance to settle into monogamy and standard capitalist family structures. We are offered business opportunities, where if you're exploitable enough, and exploit others enough, you could emulate RuPaul's bastardisation of drag culture, and be propped up as a token for media companies and sponsors to profit from, and in your spare time oversee a fracking empire. We are offered the opportunity to be politicians, and follow Lloyd Russel-Moyle in enabling centrists that are burning down the planet. Or perhaps a community delegate for a NGO like Peter Tatchell, being paid by the boots that stamp us as he politely asks them to stop – gesture politics at it's fucking worst. We are offered the chance, as Kathleen Stock does, to try and divide the Queers, pull the ladder up, assimilate a small group of cis lesbians and ally with the eliminationists. We are offered pronoun options on official documents, as long as you use the single binary options that they permit: they fucking dispise xie having car insurance. We are offered equal military service, to be an agent of imperialism, and this is a symbol of social acceptance. We are offered rainbow-washed corporatism, built by allocishets to profit off our symbols of struggle. The rainbows and pink triangles at Club and Bar Revenge mean nothing to every Queer that's been harrassed, groped, assaulted or spiked there. It means nothing to the minimum wage faggots who work there. Every fucking straggot that turns up to gawk at the faggots and trannies because "they know how to party" should be thrown off the pier. Every rainbow product of a ravenous pop culture is a parasite that keeps Queer labour, Queer personhood and Queer bodies conditional and subservient. We are offered state-supported, police escorted pride parades, as the state becomes the profiteers of our history, policing our public expressions and dismantling our radical notions of collective autonomy. They recreate and emulate the normalcy that seeks to eliminate us. The nominally-queer ruling class becomes as much of a force for normalcy as any other element of normalcy, with the added stinger of pacifying radical social politics. Elections do not save us. Tolerance does not save us. Acceptance does not save us. Assimilation will not save us. It will surely, but slowly, eliminate us.

"Build an agenda based on the needs of queer minorities. Reject the politics of assimilation, stop begging for tolerance. Welcome the celebration of sexual and gender diversity. Demand the transformation of the system. Truly desacralize democracy and demoralise the judiciary. Define our emotional and sexual needs on our own terms. Value critical difference instead of false equality" – Carlos Motta (2011)

Society is intent on killing you. If it can't kill you, it will try to take away everything that defines you, it will try to erase the history of liberation struggle, piss on the battlefield where our Elders died, it will try to hollow out your community. You will be chewed up and spat out into the culture of death and decay and hunger and loss. It will leave you worse than dead. Thus to be Queer is to fundamentally reject and resist both of these mechanisms, in you mind, soul, heart and body.

3. Queer Unity

"We need to rediscover our riotous inheritance as queer anarchists. We need to destroy constructions of normalcy, and create instead a position based in our alienation from this normalcy, and one capable of dismantling it. We must use these positions to instigate breaks, not just from

the assimilationist mainstream, but from capitalism itself. These positions can become tools of a social force ready to create a complete rupture with this world. Our bodies have been born into conflict with this social order. We need to deepen that conflict and make it spread.” – Mary Nardini Gang (2014)

Our weapon for bashing the fuck back? We call it Queer Unity. To stand as an agent of Queer resistance, of Queer insurrection, is the practice and principles of Queer Unity: issuing normalcy, and all of its hierarchies, a challenge: the “oppression, fuck off challenge”. It is the complete and total rejection of assimilation and the empowered self-defence against elimination, in all their forms. It is antifascism, anti-capitalism, anti-racism, militant feminism and abolition. It is embracing your affinity with individuals and communities who share your oppressors. It is every liberation struggle standing arm in arm, dismantling the borders on maps and borders in our minds: they are only weapons for normalcy to divide us. Through Queer Unity, no state, no pig, no fag-basher, no TERF, no fascist, no law can fucking touch us. The endless battle of attrition will not die through the mechanisms and structures that created and maintain it. It will be resolved through our affinity with the oppressed, our resistance to assimilation, non-violence, co-option, respectability. Queer Unity is the oppositional force required to dismantle the hierarchies that keep air from our lungs and fire from our eyes.

“Our tactics are as varied as our genders, our activism as hot as our sex and our resistance as untethered as our desires. By detonating our interior colonies and struggling against all those who work towards our end we open new spaces of creativity and pleasure. Our love is a fugitive practice of destruction and deviance, liberation and difference. Love revolution, not State delusion, Homotopia.” – Homotopia (2006)

Queer Unity is a multi-purpose weapon for Queer liberation. It’s the brick that smashes a piggy car’s windscreen, and then is repurposed to build our homes, to build our communities, to build a new world. We share food, masks, bandages, hormones, to allow ourselves the space to collectively exist, while collectively resisting. We de-arrest and body block to protect each other, and then cook for each other. We take for ourselves the time and space to be nourished physically, emotionally, creatively, sexually, spiritually. And we need not require permission or fulfil conditions for this. We will not be for profit. Our bodies will not be cogs in your machine. Our bodies will not fear the rage-fueled backlash of normalcy. Our culture, code, creativity, will not be a token. We will not beg, debate, sacrifice or compromise for this. Queer Unity is non-negotiable.

Queer Unity is the endless possibilities that fill our stomachs and awake us from sleep. In a world where we are liberated from normalcy and it’s chains, it’s everything our autonomy guides us towards. In the meantime, it’s acting as if we are already liberated, and embracing the conflict with those who deny us this. It’s an age of sin and criminality that we birth with our blood-stained hands. It’s burning down industrial sites to heat up our dinner. It’s breaking into Parliament to host an orgy. It’s swinging a nail-studded bat at everything that serves to strengthen the clutch that normalcy has on our throats. It’s revelling in the downfall of social order, of class structure, of the state and it’s little tin soldiers. It’s the voluntary association of free individuals. It’s smashing every narrative around sexual or gendered differences. It’s making sexual health and boundaries of consent the baseline. It’s writing to and standing up for incarcerated Queer people. It’s walking someone home, it’s running a mutual aid stand, defending each other, being unapologetic in your

defiance of normalcy, it's unlocking your revolutionary consciousness, it's a lifelong union of love that isn't dependant on the fucking state or a single church, it's knowing our ongoing history of liberation struggle. It's Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, as Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, operating a radical mutual aid version of the "house culture" that kept black and brown queer communities alive in New York City in the 1970s. It's building horizontal Queer anti-capitalist spaces, refusing rigid structures, definitions and binaries, it's honouring the dead, it's not letting each other get caught, it's direct action, it's love for yourself, your community and your partner/s, it's living with hope for a world where normalcy has no power, and we are free. In doing this, we are building a better world for ourselves and the people we love. One that isn't dependent on capitalist or respectability politics, and isn't conditional on reforms that ultimately accept exploitation and violence as insurmountable facts of life. It's going to be beautiful. Queer Unity is when I smash a fascist's teeth out, and my lover cleans the blood off my knuckles, while my friends' stole us dinner, and we toast to the future we know that we're fighting for. Fluid, flammable and ferocious: we will keep each other alive while we burn the world down.

"You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time." — Angela Davis (1972)

4. Reclamation

Reclaim Pride Brighton began as a gesture of solidarity amongst Queer communities. In Highbury Fields, London, the Reclaim Pride march offered up a space for a collective, unapologetically Queer protest. We attended as a gesture of solidarity from Brighton's Queer community, whilst we all expressed our solidarity with queer anti-fascists from Los Angeles who were being brutalized by the police and Proud Boys in the aftermath of the Wi Spa incident. Off the back of that, we did one ourselves, in Brighton. A demonstration of Queer Unity as best we could express it, by fucking some shit up as a large crowd of shouting Queers. We gave ourselves the power to speak fearlessly, walk uninhibited and exist autonomously. The influence of state and capital had no power over our expressions of resistance, as Pride historically was as an action, and should always be. The core cell was only about five, and with only a few weeks of organising we managed to create a space outside of the structures that had bastardised Pride into the assimilationist corporate event that everyone knew it as. We have no official leader, we invited no official organisations and have no affiliations. We're Brighton locals from all over the country, who have formed this community of love and resistance out of the necessities of our existence. No room for politicians, no room for careerists, no room for reformists, no room for press. We refuse to play by anyone else's rules, because as soon as we do, our dreams of liberation are swallowed up and spat back out.

"This is a radical action! This is a protest! We are not here to politely ask for reforms: we are not here for the cops, the government, or for any company. What we are doing here today is reminding ourselves, not them, who we are. We are reconnecting with our community, because if we stand together like this every time we are abused, harassed, and humiliated, then no one can fucking touch us. [...]. That is what liberation means, and that is what pride means. So tell me what community

looks like! This is what community looks like!” — A speaker at the Reclaim Pride Brighton march (2021)

The euphoria of autonomy that was born from the Reclaim Pride march became what we have dedicated ourselves towards replicating in everyday life. Pride isn't just a necessity for one afternoon of protesting or celebrating, it's a necessity for every aspect of our lives — for every day that we exist under allocisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, and every other hierarchy that governs our lives. Pride is the manifestation of Queer Unity: the actions we take as part of our own liberation struggle. That's why we run a monthly mutual aid program to give out food, water, sanitary products, pronoun badges, literature, clothes and more. That's why we attend and organise counter-demonstrations to TERFs, fascists, state and capitalist institutions. That's why the city is plastered with our posters and stickers. That's why we're not going anywhere. And whilst all of these public actions are non-violent, Queer Unity as a practice does inherently require violence as a tool of self-defence and liberation. It's only just that a system built upon violence be dismantled and abolished through whatever means necessary. Pride is absolutely bashing the fuck back, against normalcy, the state, oppressive hierarchies, elimination and assimilation in all their forms. But that doesn't mean that we'll incriminate ourselves publically: plurality of tactics, opsec, and anonymity are important tools for any movement. In terms of where we stand in all of this, we aim for our actions and programs to build a consciousness and community that has the potential to grow into an insurrectionary liberation struggle. But we're still young, and far from perfect. This kind of project requires dedication, fluidity and engagement with criticism to fully blossom. We may be very far off now, but it gets us fucking excited to think about us, or whoever comes after us, getting there one day.

This isn't for allocishets “allies” to nod their heads and understand. This is for Queers, to everyone internationally who has been subjugated throughout history through violence that controls the autonomy of our bodies, emotions and social roles. This is a call out to your own tragic, deviant, fugitive history, to refuse to be sold, to refuse to bleed, to refuse to be governed by anyone but yourself, to reclaim fucking everything.

We are but one small group of Queers. We are Queer Unity. We are love, rage and solidarity. We are bashing the fuck back. We are reclaiming Pride. We are loving and supporting each other. We are actively working towards the downfall of a society that was built to oppress and kill. And we are fucking proud of it. We are dedicated to our principles and their implementation through actions. We are just getting started. And you should get started too.

Other Work That Inspired Us:

SPIT! Manifesto Reader: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d40a0bea6305d0001bc1663/t/5e71ae76539f800fe98afc3f/1584508595297/SPIT%21Reader-2017.pdf>

Xenofeminism Manifesto: https://www.laboriacuboniks.net/20150612-xf_layout_web.pdf

Gender Nihilism: <https://libcom.org/library/gender-nihilism-anti-manifesto> <https://alyesque.medium.com/beyond-negativity-what-comes-after-gender-nihilism-bbd80a5fc05d>

Mary Nardini Gang: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-be-gay-do-crime> <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-criminal-intimacy> <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-toward-the-queerest-insurrection>

Audre Lorde: https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf https://www.colorado.edu/odece/sites/default/files/attached-files/rba09-sb4converted_8.pdf

Queer/Trans Abolition: <http://www.deanspade.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Building-an-Abolitionist-Trans-Queer-Movement-With-Everything-Weve-Got.pdf>

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: <https://untorellipress.noblogs.org/files/2011/12/STAR.pdf>

An Army Of Lovers Cannot Lose (ACT UP): <https://actupny.org/documents/QueersReadThis.pdf>

Kill The Cop In Your Head: <https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Jackson/copinyourhead/>

Bash Back! Anthology: <https://libcom.org/files/Fray%20Baroque%20and%20Tegan%20Eanelli%20Queer%20Ult>

Queering Anarchism: https://libcom.org/files/Queering_Anarchism_Addressing_and_Undre_-_Volcano_.pdf

Anarchism and The Black Revolution: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lorenzo-komboa-ervin-anarchism-and-the-black-revolution>

Abolishing The Police: <https://abolitionistfutures.com/abolishing-the-police-book>

Mutual Aid Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next): <https://www.versobooks.com/books/3713-mutual-aid>

Other Reading Lists:

Abolition: <https://abolitionistfutures.com/full-reading-list>

Indigenous Anarchism: <https://iaf-fai.org/2020/04/23/recommended-readings/>

Queer Anarchism: <https://anarchistarborist.medium.com/queer-anarchism-queer-theory-reading-list-9b07150bc3>

Works of Lucy Parsons: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/lparsons/lparsonscw.html

Black Autonomy Network: <https://blackautonomynetwork.noblogs.org/library/>

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Pride Brighton in 2021. The zine is free to read, share and distribute.

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